

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

Chapter 1-96

Chapter one

ALEXIA GREEN.

I have seen enough loan sharks on my door looking for Rhett Kingston to know very well the men standing outside my door fall in the same caliber.

The last men who came looking for Rhett had been gracious to leave the minute I failed to answer the door. As my heart plucks against my ribcage harshly I can only hope that these new men are no different from the rest. Emphasis on the hope part.

I peep through my door hole looking at the douchebags who are pretty well-dressed for loan sharks.

The one on the front is stacking a black signature brand shirt coupled with black pants.

The sleeves of his black shirt are pulled back up his elbows to reveal veiny, muscular arms that would put even the holiest nun to her knees.

Douchebag number two has Armani slacks and a black t-shirt too.

He too is as handsome as the man in front of him, only difference is the one at the front carries more power that exudes past the door straight to my titties.

And that in itself is a bad freaking omen.

I pull away from the door making subtle steps back to the scrapheap I call my house.

“Rhett, we can hear you, man”, one of the men says.

Humor in his voice but full-on threat laced in between.

I want to scream that the man they are looking for left me nine months ago, but screaming equals them knowing I’m inside and I wouldn’t want them to know I exist.

These men...these loan sharks are as petty as they come. And they pretty much stick to that adage of ‘if we can’t find Rhett then his little woman will have to pay the debt’.

The little woman being referred to, being me. The woman who has no cent to her name or a hundred bucks in her purse let alone afford the rent to this place.

“You really want us to do this? We are losing patience here, man”, the same guy tsks.

I tiptoe to the wall separating my bedroom and the living room, scooting down to take the baseball bat that’s my only source of security.

“Fuck this.”

The quiet baritone of another voice rings the air and I feel straight to my spine that I’m fucked.

It takes only seconds for my door to fling off its hinges, for the pieces of wood to fly in the air the way ash does after a fiery massacre and when the dust and ramble settle down and my heart is beating like a metronome, two very angry figures stand in front of me.

Their presence is like a black hole sucking the warmth from my house and injecting their evil into it.

Douchebag number two, the one with the chocolate brown hair that’s slicked back, hard masculine features and tattoos peeking from his neck, sizes me up.

I gulp an invisible lump of saliva, holding my bat like it’s a rifle loaded with bullets.

“Rhett’s not here”, I say boldly. When on the contrary, I’m one step away from buckling underneath their stares and admitting defeat.

“Check the room behind her”, douche number one commands, I hold my ground blocking the door.

“I said...Rhett’s NOT HERE.”

The jerk smiles, rubbing his jaw like I’m the cutest thing he’s seen in a while.

The guy behind him...the boss, the one in charge looks around my home as if every minute in here is like subjecting himself to a dose of gonorrhea.

I mean my house isn’t much. The kitchen’s connected to the living room, the cherry blossom wallpaper is barely sticking to the wall and the floors. Well, they’ve seen better days.

“Look we don’t want trouble, sweetheart. We are here for Rhett.”

I eye the door that’s falling apart behind them then I stare at him with the nastiest glare I can summon.

“Says the guy who knocked down my door.”

“Rhett’s door. You were not supposed to be here.”

He tries to pacify me, failing disastrously at it.

“Not supposed to be here? Is that the excuse you are giving so that I won’t call 911 on you guys?”

Douchebag number two is about to fire some snarky statement when the boss, the one wearing a scowl bigger than the size of his head, pulls him back, steps all in my face and before I can whip my bat and hit him, has his huge tattooed right palm around my neck.

“Where’s Rhett?”

He thunders, squeezing the air out of me, lifting me off the ground like I’m some dead fish being sold in a deli.

My bat falls to the ground as air slowly and slowly escapes my body.

I have to hang on for dear life because someone needs me. Right behind this door, someone—

My lungs constrict, my eyes strain to look at the furious man who’s hellbent on killing me for Rhett.

All for Rhett. Everything about Rhett! I hate Rhett Kingston with every fiber of my being. I hate that my death will have something to do with him, I hate that because of him our—

“Volkov, she doesn’t know shit”, douchebag number two says behind us but that somehow encourages this Volkov to sink his hands in my neck riding me of precious oxygen.

I close my eyes feeling life ebb out of my body but just as I’m about to give up, a sharp cry resonates in the air and everyone stills.

I whimper, holding back my tears.

No. No. Please no.

The cries echo around the house again and the boss lets go of my neck.

I fall to the ground, nothing short of a coughing mess.

“Is that..?” Boss asks. He moves towards the door; I hold his leg like a vise grip.

“She has nothing...to do with this”, I mutter.

His eyes linger on me for a while before he shakes me off his foot opening the door and revealing a yellow room with a bassinet next to my bed.

My baby girl's cries engulf the room.

"Rhett has a baby?" it comes as a surprise to both of them.

The boss saunters into the room, his darkness, his height, his anger, his tattoos tainting everything good.

And when he reaches down where my daughter was sleeping taking her in his big arms, I snap.

"Let her go. Rhett owes you money, right? I'll pay you. I'll repay every cent just please...please don't hurt her."

My baby, Millie, has no clue who's holding her. She stops crying holding onto the man's thumb the way she does with mine.

The Boss doesn't look at me when he says, "A million dollars", he mutters, looking away from my daughter to me now, "Are you in a position to repay me a million dollars right now?"

A million dollars? I almost laugh. Rhett fucking Kingstone owes these douchebags a million dollars?

"No but I- "

"Then you are in no position to negotiate Mrs. Kingston"

My body tenses, his eyes are on me like lasers tracing my features, his muscle pops like he's waiting for me to make a move or else...shit... they'll hurt my baby, won't they?

I mean they sort of look like the type who would do so. Hell, he was about to kill me seconds ago.

And yet with all that information inside my head, I offer myself on a silver platter
HAVING NO OTHER CHOICE.

"I'll work for you"

"I'm not in need of your...particular services Mrs. Kingston," he says. I hate it every time his voice booms the words 'Mrs. Kingston'. Because I've never been that in my entire life.

I hate the way he mocks me saying 'particular services' and I can read the unruly thoughts in his mind.

‘I wouldn’t fuck a mother who delivered a few weeks ago.’

“I’m a nurse, I can maybe-“

The sentence is barely out of me when he says, “They are both coming with us.”

Oh yeah, I’m royally and elementally fucked.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER TWO

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

I hate complications. And this complication comes in the form of feline blue eyes, sunshine blonde hair, delicately arched brows and a sinfully full bottom lip.

She might be a fine ass, hell finest ass I have seen for a fucking while but I look at that face and I’m reminded that her husband, her lover, the father of the child I’m carrying in my arms right now raped my sister and killed her.

I might have lied about the million dollars but fuck me for enjoying the fact that I’m taking his woman and his child away just like he took something from me.

An eye for an eye.

Una vita per una vita.

The weasel might leap out from the place he’s hiding once the news hit him that I have his little family with me.

I can only wait.

Patience. Control.

“I’d like to have my baby now.”

Her voice pierces through the air. Raspy, grating, bedroom sexy and still a complication.

I eye her for a second.

Alexia Green.

Then my eyes wander to the baby wrapped up in a white blanket like a muffin.

She's small. Way too small than anything I have ever held.

I want to hate the kid because well...I fucking hate kids and this one belongs to Rhett all the more reason to hate her. But that's the thing... I don't.

Her eyes might be closed but her hands once in a while fight past the blankets trying to reach for my hands.

"No", I growl.

"You think I'd run away knowing your men might shoot me the very minute I do?"

She asks me like I'm a child who hasn't understood the dynamics surrounding us.

"That didn't stop your husband from doing so, Mrs. Kingston." She's not Mrs. Kingston, I know that because I've read her profile. I've read everything about Rhett except this baby.

"Rhett has not been my anything for a long time. The name's Alexia Green and unless your boobs have milk in them, I suggest you hand me my baby."

Suggest?

She's got a pair on her for sure. Bigger balls than I've seen on a woman.

"Your baby seems fine to me, Mrs. Kingston. You on the other hand don't seem to be. What's bugging you right now?"

The fact that I'm holding your baby or the fact that you know where Rhett is. Don't try to bullshit me right now, where's Rhett?"

She laughs.

This woman, whom I'd lost control of hours ago laughs like I'm not the man in charge of everything bad she reads in her little fairytale books.

"What's bugging me? Gee, what's bugging me? My ex left the minute I told him I was pregnant, I'm all alone and Millie's all I have. I've been fighting men off my doorstep every single day of the week and right now I've been kidnapped by a man who was about to snap my neck had my daughter not cried. Yes, Mr. Asshole, I'm bugged by the fact that you are holding my baby!"

By the time she finishes, her tears are well underway.

She sobs, tries to wipe the tears with the back of her palms only for her to sob again.

I hold her baby.

Damn straight I sit there watching her sob, basking in her pain because a few weeks ago, I was the same helpless man watching everything I had crumble to pieces.

I'm no saint.

I'm no hugger who'll fucking assure her that she and her baby will be alright because the truth of the matter is, I couldn't give two shits if she cried and filled the Missouri River.

She belongs to Rhett and best believe she'll work herself to the bone till my wounds are healed and I find it in my stonecold heart to forgive.

"From the start", I bark, nursing back the Macallan that dislodges in my throat when my buddy Tommy struggles to Beaten black and blue, he wiggles in his chair like the piece of worm he is, trying to peer at me with the one good eye that's working.

The one good eye that won't earn him brownie points from me.

"Vic—please...I didn't know she was...one of yours. I didn't know she was your sister."

Tommy chants the same chorus he's been singing since I caught him and Rhett escaped.

I tip my nose at Maximo.

Maximo raises his fist about to punch him for the tenth time in the night when dear ole Tommy starts talking.

"Rhett said she needed to be taught a lesson. W-we cornered her just outside her college...she bit me trying to resist us,

she would have caused a commotion so I-I strangled her. S—she passed out.

When she...she came to, Rhett and I were already—

"Taking what wasn't yours. Assaulting her like she was nothing but a whore?" I smirk but beneath my smirk is the pain impaling me to the ground, the pain chaining and tethering me to my own guilt.

I drink the last of my liquor tipping my head at Maximo before I stand up and leave the gross warehouse.

Tommy's screams follow my way out and his pain is like a soothing balm to my wounds because I know Maximo has cut away one of his fingers.

Again.

“How long are we holding them hostage?”

“Until she repays me”, I quip, Maximo grunts at my bullshit.

“Rhett killed Catelina, not her. You are in a bad place, Volkov. Fuck, I am too but getting an innocent civilian won’t erase your grief”

He’s the only one, out of my men who calls me Volkov. Who’s close to me enough to call me out on my bullshit but right now, I want nothing more than to shut him up with a bullet between his eyes.

“It’s sure as hell making me feel better that I have her and not him”, I grit looking into the night and wishing to get lost in the darkness.

“Then what? She and her kid work for you their entire lives?”

No.

“Yes.”

“You are fucking sick, man”, he grunts, tired of trying to knock some sense into me.

The irony isn’t lost in me that he calls me sick when he’s my enforcer. The one who finishes my dirty work when I spiral out of control.

“You know Juana says Alexia and her baby light up the house. I’m guessing you haven’t been there for a while so what’s your excuse for visiting today?” he continues running his mouth.

Only when the car stops in front of my mansion, the same mansion my parents left me and Catelina. Do I turn to him and say, “I’M KEEPING AN EYE ON MY ASSET”?

I saunter into the house alone; Maximo having had driven off to take care of some raucous brawl at one of my clubs downtown.

My head throbs and my anger ignites at the new smell of vanilla and wildflowers that hog the foyer, the living room and I’m not entirely surprised that I’ll find the same scent in the kitchen too.

Only when I enter the kitchen, the sight that greets me is one that would make even a man of the cloth sin without thinking twice.

Her back to me, Alexia Green stands on her tippy toes trying to reach for something on the high shelves.

Her legs are creamy, milky, the type that belong to one of those Vogue cover models. For a minute there, all the blood that's keeping me sane flows right down south and the urge to mar those legs of hers with my teeth grows.

When my eyes rake north, past the back of her knees to her heart-shaped ass, anything remotely connected to fucking her brains out flies out the window.

The summer dress she's wearing, the one that I'm too familiar with because I bought it myself stares right back at me, taunting me, pushing memories I thought were locked away to the surface.

I have no damn clue what I'm doing as I strut across the room angrily.

I have no damn clue what gets to me the minute I grab her by the wrist scaring the wits out of her.

All I see is my sister's smile wearing the same dress this woman is wearing and I lose it.

"Take it off", I scowl.

"What?"

I lean closer, right to her ear where she can hear me loud and clear.

"I said... fucking strip!"

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 3

ALEXIA GREEN

Kidnappers aren't supposed to give you and your daughter a nice room.

They aren't supposed to leave you in the middle in the middle of freaking Chicago with a nice maid a big mansion and everything a woman like me can only see in movies.

I've spent two days roaming around the halls of the Volkov mansion, and so far, I've come to two conclusions.

The boss Christian vitello volkov or as Joanna likes to call him 'Vicious' is not an ordinary loan shark.

Hell, I'm a hundred percent sure he's not a loan shark but a very bad man who has guns and every rifle you can think of in the basement.

Oh yeah, I checked and I would be kidding if I said I'm not scared of the type of shit I got myself into.

The second conclusion, the one that the maid, Juana avoids every time I bring it up is that; a woman lived here.

A lover?

The love of his life?

A sibling?

I can't tell.

My baby, Millie, likes it here but I'm on high alert trying to grab every chance I can get to escape.

Which is why on a Friday night, the last thing I expect is to see is Vicious angry and about to incinerate little ole me.

"I said...fucking strip", he snaps, his eyes like red lasers cutting away every inch of my skin.

I will myself to say anything, anything but then the rifles I saw downstairs hog my mind.

I want to blame my cowardice on the rifles if it weren't for the icy golden browns he has for eyes all up in my face about to drown me in a vat of his anger.

"Alexia", he warns, my breath gets caught in the back of my throat as I struggle to speak up for myself.

"I'm not that kind of woman."

My voice sounds liquid as I hold my nose high with that bold statement.

Vicious coolly ignores me and before my mind completely registers what's happening, frissons run all the way down to my spine as adrenaline kicks up a notch in my blood.

His touch is cold, like his eyes.

His touch is lethal, suffusing all of me with unwanted heat.

His calloused fingers casually takes one of the thin spaghetti straps of the dress Juana lent me and it only takes a minute for the sound of fabric tearing to fling across the darkness like a ping-pong ball.

Another minute for him to completely annihilate the dress as I scream the words, “You asshole!”

The dress falls past my shoulders, past my aching very naked breasts, past my cotton undies and assumes the shape of a tiny heap around my ankles.

Confusion, anger and a whole bucket of fear wash over me the minute I cover my heavy breasts with my palms.

Cold night air assaults my skin as the tears I didn’t know I had, prickle my eyes burning my throat in the process.

“S—see anything you like? Should I bend over so you can get it over with?”

I know what type of man he is. Believe me, I just didn’t think he would...do it so soon.

True to my thoughts, Vicious takes a step back, removes his coat and one by one unbuttons his shirt, his stormy eyes never leaving mine.

Never missing to show me just what’s in it for me as long as I live here.

All I know right now is that if push comes to shove, I’ll give him anything he wants because my baby is in his house, under his mercy, if something were to happen to me, they would kill...

The six foot three bastard goes ahead and does something I hadn’t expected.

Something that would be considered a plot twist in one of those movies where the villain’s been the hero all along.

Every ridge of his muscles comes into sight, his tanned skin all hard and gleaming with scars as he steps forward towards me covering my shoulders with his shirt.

I stay still acutely aware that what I think he is doing is not what he’s actually doing.

When his shirt is all snag across my shoulders, draping my five feet height in his scent of sage and some sort of mulled wine, does he reach for the dress on the ground turn towards his heel and walk away as if he’s done nothing bizarre.

Freezing, creeped out to the point of my knees buckling, I whisper to no one, “I have to get away from this freakshow”.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

One a.m.

Blue eyes stare at me with fury robbing her pretty features.

One fifteen a.m.

Her nipples poke out at me taunting me to touch them.

One sixteen a.m.

Her sexy lips part and she utters something that disgusts me for the first time in my shitty life, 'Should I bend over so you can get it over with?'

One seventeen a.m.

My phone rings, the sound loud enough to break the fake slumber I've been trying to catch for four damn hours.

Maximo's name hogs my screen and I release a sigh knowing full well I'm not going to sleep tonight.

"We've got a problem", he starts, I act daft.

"You don't say."

"That little brawl from earlier, wasn't so little as I thought. Dante raided the place and you know Nico."

Of course, I knew fucking Nico.

He was the loose cannon looking for fights, the twenty-year-old who was trigger-happy.

And if Dante Keaton raided my bar, Nico might have lost his shit alright. Said something he shouldn't have, started said brawl.

"Tell me they killed the kid"

That will be one less responsibility on my shoulders.

Maximo releases a pained chuckle, "Not exactly, he's still breathing...for now. We are headed your way right now."

He cuts the call before I can say any more shit.

They are headed to my house. Headed for a little treatment from our new doctor.

I saunter outside my room wishing I had booze to give me some liquid courage when I talk to the woman sleeping in the room across mine.

My feet stop inches outside her room as I stare at the mahogany separating me and Alexia Green.

Should I knock? It's my house!

Should I apologize? Apologize for what exactly?

I knock.

A little light tap for her to hear and her baby not to wake up.

I hear shuffling from the other side before she opens the door. Her blue eyes glint in the night, her blonde hair is a tangled mess and as for her outfit?

She's wearing my shirt and I'm forced to look at her face rather than her thighs.

She's nothing special. I remind myself.

She's a complication.

"We have a problem. One that needs your skills", I whisper.

It takes a minute for her to put two in two together before she hits me back with another whisper, "Okay"

"Follow me"

Alexia works like an oiled machine the minute I show her the room with all the medical supplies she might need.

I lean against the door, watching her sort through syringes, cabinets and a bunch of pills.

"Everything's here. I'm assuming you had another nurse or doctor before you took me?"

Yes. The one who failed to save my sister from death.

"Doctor", I correct.

"And where is this doctor by any chance?"

"Dead."

Her cheeks pale, her eyes going an inch wider and I can tell everything running in her little head.

That's right, I'm no hero. I didn't take you and your child because I wanted to. I took you for revenge.

I want to tell her all that but instead I look her in the eye and said, "I killed him"

She drops a syringe on the tiled floor with a gasp as the sound of my doorbell rings aloud.

"Stay here. I'll bring them to you", I say disappearing down the hallway where I find Juana ushering two of my guys with Maximo holding onto a bleeding Nico.

Nico is mumbling something incoherent as Maximo tries to keep him walking.

Juana is in her nightgown gazing at me with that frown she slammed me with when bleeding men or my enemies showed up at my doorstep.

A look of disapproval for the life I was living and I didn't care, never really cared for the life I led on.

"He's lost a lot of blood, man", Maximo starts.

"At this rate we might as well as say he's a goner."

"Who is...gone? Who's...", Nico is still talking when I tell Jagger and Jett to help Maximo out and bring Nico to the medical bay.

Ten minutes later, we are looking at an unconscious Nico with Alexis working her little hands as fast as she can to stitch him up.

"She's really good at this than the last doc, isn't she?" Jagger licks his lips and there's no missing the lust in his eyes as he says that statement.

"Nico is so fucking lucky", Jett adds.

My anger is simmering hot but I lock it in.

If they want her, so what? She might be my prisoner but I'm not restricting whoever she wants to fuck.

"Hey you two, give the doc some room and wait outside."

"But Maximo we are not even doing anything wro-"

"Out, Jett or should I tell the boss himself what you and Jagger did tonight?"

Jagger and Jett are out before Maximo can add another word.

I turn to Maximo, my eyes still on Alexia's hands that are glued on Nico's torso while she stitches his wound.

"What did they do?"

"I'll fill you in later. Let's see if the kid makes it for the night first."

My men weren't exactly military-trained but they were honed and trained with skills that ensured survival for them.

Nico might have had a knife graze wound but I'm very sure he put up a good fight before going down.

It's only when Alexia is done does Nico wake up from his slumber, screaming like a lunatic into the night.

Before Maximo can move to shut him up, Alexia's already calming him down.

"Hey Nico. It's Nico, right?" she asks with a smile. A smile I haven't seen since I took her from her shitty apartment.

"What? W-what happened? Who the fuck are you?"

"I'm Alexia Green. My friends call me Lexy. Not trying to scare you or anything but you got stabbed and I patched you real nice but that doesn't mean this wound won't open up if you don't take it easy."

"Lexy?" The fucker smiles while he samples her name like it's the best fruit he has ever tasted.

I'm about to lose my cool for the second time in the night when another piercing shriek splices the air and Millie's cries echo into the room.

Alexia stands up, her calm demeanor gone and instead worry takes over her features.

"Is that a baby, boss?" Nico asks me.

My eyes are on Alexia as I say, "Take care of Nico, I'll take care of your baby."

I don't fail to miss the fear lodged in her eyes when I say 'take care' and 'baby' in the same statement or when I turn around and head straight for her room.

I find Millie crying her out in her little crib.

She's wrapped in the same blanket from a few days ago and I feel like a dick for not buying them any new clothes or new baby stuff.

Careful not to hurt her in any way, my hands wrap around the baby picking her up from her crib effortlessly.

She cries for another five seconds as I pace the room with her.

"Hungry?"

She cries. I take that as a no.

"You miss your mom?"

She cries.

"Come on, Millie. What's wrong? Did Nico upset you?"

She stops crying, her small eyes gazing at me like I'm a mystery she can't quite figure out.

"If Nico is the problem, we'll eliminate him then, won't we? You like that? I like that too because Nico is irresponsible and a pain in the...head."

I'm about to talk to this baby who can't understand me at all when her mother stands in the doorway.

"Don't talk about eliminating someone to my baby", she barks.

Her angry feet storm towards me and when she stops in front of me, she puts her hands out asking for her child back.

"Your shirt's covered with Nico's blood", I point out the obvious, she stares at her shirt uttering a quiet 'shit'.

"I don't have any other clothes except this shirt and the dress you tore off my body"

I'm an ass.

"My room's straight across yours, you can take any shirt from my closet while I arrange for new clothes for both of you tomorrow."

Defiance leaks from her and turns into a hurricane.

"I'm not wearing any of your shirts."

“But you want to touch your baby while you are covered in someone’s blood? As a nurse, tell me is that hygienic?”

“Ugh fine. Don’t go with Millie anywhere, I’ll be right back.”

Millie gradually sleeps in my arms and I watch in amazement as her pudgy cheeks fill up with air every time she snores.

Alexia comes back ten minutes later with a dark shirt that’s shorter than the one before.

I take a peek at those thighs again and I kiss Millie goodnight, handing her to her mother and retreating to my room knowing very well I’ll sleep with a very hard boner because of ‘Lexy’.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER FIVE

ALEXIA GREEN.

Don’t touch my baby.

Don’t pretend to know what’s right for my baby.

Don’t take dresses off of me like a caveman and later pretend you are a gentleman by handing me one of your shirts.

Vicious...Christian...Grumpy pants...man with a scowl bigger than Thanos; left my room half an hour ago.

Half an hour later, I’m drenched in his scent because of the shirt I’m wearing.

What’s even worse?

My baby turned out to be a traitor.

She hasn’t stopped crying since Vicious handed her to me and left my room.

I mean I’m not blaming my little cuteness at all for liking a man as humongous and as handsome as Christian Volkov but he is a big red sign with a NO.

No to liking a man who apparently killed his last doctor and if I’m not careful, I could end up being dead too. Six feet under. Dead by the hands of a deranged man.

How ironic would that be?

From being a psycho's girlfriend to getting kidnapped by a man who makes America's serial killers like Ted Bundy look like frigging Sponge Bob.

"I know he has big hands, baby. Big hands that might feel warm but he is bad, you hear me, Mills?

Handsome Man is bad. He is the enemy. We are going to escape the enemy and go back to being just as two. Shh, shh, sleep for mommy. Please, sleep for mommy"

Her tiny fists reach out for me and when she cradles my hand hugging it closer to her pudgy cheeks, tears are at the brim of my eyes but I don't cry.

I watch my baby fall asleep like everything is right in the world and I'm not in some mobster's house.

Once I put Millie back in her crib, the urge to remove Christian's shirt from my body is great but unless I want to die of hypothermia, I need his shirt on me.

I need his blankets, the ones on the bed to warm me up and erase the fact that I saved one of his men 'Nico' (The cute one with the dimples) from bleeding to death from a knife wound.

A knife wound from chopping apples? I think not.

A knife wound from slicing people up? I absolutely think that.

If I think his men are scary then Christian 'Vicious' Volkov is the motherfucking devil.

If there was anything an orphan, a single mother, a nurse out of practice never did, was to look a gift horse in the mouth.

If life gives you muffins, then take a huge chunk of those muffins while you can, it might be the last time you taste sugar.

My morning began with Millie fed, happy and giggling in Juana's arms.

I'm momentarily pretending that the boss isn't in the house and that at any moment he won't burst this little bubble of bliss I'm in right now.

Nothing makes me happier than sitting down without thinking about loan sharks knocking on my door or Millie going hungry because I haven't eaten in a day or two.

Right now, my face is full of chocolate croissants that taste like how I've always imagined Paris to be.

The sun's light flutters through the windows and for a moment, I close my eyes, my nose pierces the air and my smile stretches the corners of my mouth I almost feel guilty.

But I don't.

Again, don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Enjoy the food while you can. Enjoy the bed at night. Get a little bit fat while I think of a plan to get away from here.

My happy parade is ruined the minute I choke on nothing but air.

No...not air.

I choke on his scent. I choke on the aura that hugs my back when I sense his presence.

The sun itself recognizes him because the light that was once hugging my skin disappears and instead all I feel is cold.

"I warned you, dear. You eat too fast and you'll choke. Your mama doesn't like to listen, does she?", Juana chastises, cooing to Millie.

Embarrassment coats my face as I finish my croissant, pull the stool behind me and stand up to my feet which is the wrong thing to do in the first place.

Christian is standing next to me. No, scratch that.

Christian Volkov is standing next to me, his hard jaw directed at me, his golden eyes grazing every inch of me like I'm the worm from his nightmares that kept falling in his soup.

"Coffee? I can brew it for you", Juana directs the question at Christian who dismisses her with, "No. Leave"

Wow, someone woke up from the wrong side of the bed this morning.

Juana doesn't hesitate, she's about to take a turn and leave me to the beast when the said beast barks again, "Leave the child with the mother"

His words float in the air and they sear my skin raw.

Juana does as she's told, ever so dutiful. Never once acting pissed or anything.

Once Juana is out of the vicinity and Millie is in my arms making babyish noises, I take a step back and say, "Call me your little nurse, treat me like shit...sorry baby for cussing...but give my baby respect. She has nothing to do with Rhett or me or this stupid debt. Her name is Millie, not child but Millie. Get the name right."

His expression is bland.

The scowl on his face says 'I shouldn't be yapping around like I own the place'.

And his words cut my words into two.

"You are leaving with me today"

"Leaving where?"

"Does it matter?"

Fucking asshole.

"You are telling me we are leaving today and you are not gonna tell me where? I need info if I'm going to be treating one of your men today"

That switches off something in him.

One minute Shirtless Slightly pissed off Volkov is barking orders and the next minute his face, his body which has tattoos I hadn't seen last night, is so close to me that if he leans forward the only thing that will stop him from claiming my lips is my baby girl who is in my arms.

"How do you think this works, Sunshine? I give you my house, my food and you spend the rest of the day here like a queen? Is that the shit Juana has been feeding you? You are here to work. You are here to follow orders. I say you jump, you ask how high. I say you walk, Lexy you fucking run. I tell you not to speak, you bite your goddamn tongue. Don't mistake our dynamic. And I know the child's name, I just couldn't care less."

His words are like an acid bath in the Himalayas. Deadly, icy, poisonous.

Gritting my teeth, forcing the bile rising in my throat, I sass, "Should I go on my knees and lick your boots too?"

A dark chuckle escapes him and it travels up my spine, seeps into my veins and makes everything go haywire.

This son of a gun might be the only man who chuckles like he took the world, conquered it and tossed it back to us peasants.

"I'll never ask you to go down on your knees, sunshine. You'll beg for it yourself."

He doesn't take me to a slaughterhouse.

He doesn't take me to the dungeons where he kills his prisoners.

No, the man with the dark Armani suit that is enough to buy me and Millie like ten times in an auction took me here.

The floral dress feels like fluffy clouds against my body. It's off-shoulder and gives summer vibes.

"Turn around", Christian barks.

He is reclined against the plush upholstery, propping one leg over the other, finally gifting me a sliver of his attention.

His slacks ride up until the hem reveals his socks—black.

Just like his heart.

Instead of how normal villains pet some evil cat in their laps while devising murder, Volkov has my daughter in his arms.

And my daughter? Yap, Millie has forgotten all about this man being public enemy number one. She's holding his thumb.

I twirl around.

I obey.

Why? Because it's been a while since a man bought me clothes.

It's been a while since a man reserved an entire store for me and my baby. Make that, the only man.

"I don't like it", he says dryly.

"I like it", I turn around huffing.

"You like it?"

"Yeah". I nod. Volkov smirks.

"Too bad because you are not going to show off that ass in front of my men."

"Excuse you?"

I like the dress because it makes me feel less fat than I was a few months ago. Not because I want to seduce his men.

“You told Nico to call you ‘Lexy’. You know how he interpreted that? Like you are easy game. Like you and he could be a thing. You show up in a dress like this and that fucker will be tripping all over just to kiss your feet”

Nico? I mean he was hot. But not hotter than...

“Maybe I want him to kiss my feet”, I lie through my teeth when in reality, it wouldn’t hurt if Volkov was the one kissing my...no, no. Enemy. He is the enemy.

“I hired a doctor, sunshine not a slut who can’t—”

I’m half listening to Volkov, my eyes glued to the man entering the store.

The man who has dresses in one of his arms and a smile on his face.

The man I recognize from a past that’s too raw and too sensitive.

My breath hitches.

My head spirals. I can’t breathe. I can’t...can’t breathe.

I need to run.

Just like that night I need to run before he touches me.

Tears well in my eyes, fear digs its sharp claws into my neck.

I don’t think. I run back to the dressing room like a scaredy cat.

I leave my daughter with two monsters.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 6

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Twenty minutes.

Sunshine has been hiding in that damn dresser for twenty minutes.

Normally it wouldn’t be any of my business but the situation is abnormal in itself and she...well she’s my damn business.

Especially if I'm carrying her baby and Millie is starting to look at me with those tiny eyes that want to spew tears.

She might be okay for a kid. Better than all the fucking kids I've met in my life but I couldn't tolerate it if she cried again.

I glance at my Phillip Patek watch.

Scratch twenty minutes, little miss nurse has been gone for half an hour now and my patience is starting to stretch thin.

"You think the dress got stuck?"

Millie holds my thumb. Oh yeah, she's going to cry.

The salesman, the one with the name tag 'Fred' which looks as fake as a pair of silicone tits from a mile away, clutches the extra dresses on his right arm tight.

If my main concern wasn't Millie at the moment, I would have already had the skinny man by his throat spilling everything I need to know.

Why he looked so uneasy when Sunshine and he locked eyes.

Why Sunshine, the toughest woman I've seen by far, had that look on her face.

A look that's so familiar, it practically drips in the air.

A look I've seen every time before I snuff the life out of a living thing.

Fear. Carnal, raw fear.

And judging by the tears in her eyes, this motherfucker might have done something worse.

Something I'm praying won't make me get back home with bloodied knuckles.

Salesman Fred gulps an invisible lump of saliva down his meaty neck, chuckling nervously, "It might be jitters. Believe it or not, I've seen a lot of women in my store insecure about how their bodies look in a dress"

Insecure, my ass.

"The last thing Sunshine is, is insecure. She's sexy, she knows that. Don't you agree?"

Take the bait, you fucker.

“I-If you say so, Sir”, Fred’s voice barely comes out as a whisper.

A whisper that confirms what I might have already known.

The only thing left is for Sunshine to give me her version of the story and the man is as good as gone.

Millie blinks at me.

Once. Twice. The third time she does, her wails fill the air.

At the same time the glass doors to the store slide open.

Nico and Maximo storm in with curious gazes on their faces.

Nothing as unusual as being surrounded by a lot of fucking pink women’s clothes, a crying baby in my arms, a store manager who looks like he’ll faint and a blonde nurse hiding in the dressing room.

“Boss?” Jett calls holding back a chuckle, “This is the emergency?”

“Volkov?”

My feet are up, my arms are around Millie as I walk towards Jett.

“Take the baby, keep her quiet while I deal with the mother.”

“Whoa whoa, you want me to take the baby? I don’t know jack shit about babies.”

“Don’t cuss in front of her, her mother will skin you alive if she hears you”

Out of all the things I thought I would do one day, this isn’t it.

Maximo’s smirk pisses me off.

Jett’s hesitation is another minute in front of a weasel who shouldn’t be breathing as we all speak.

“Take. The. Baby. You drop her, I’ll kill you.”

Jett takes the baby. Millie cries harder.

I smirk at her loyalty towards me.

That’s right baby girl, only I get your affection. I suppose your mother too.

Turning to Maximo and feeling a thundercloud gather above me, I issue a command, “Keep him here.”

Salesman Fred is about to speak but I shoot down his non-existent words with a glare storming past the runway, past the glittery doors, all the way to that one damn dresser room that’s locked tight.

“Little Nurse?”

Nothing. Not a squeak, not a sassy word but just nothing.

And silence is the deadliest weapon to ever exist. Silence is my kryptonite. Silence is the same thing I got when I held Catelina in my arms.

“The child is crying, probably needs to be fed and since we’ve established my boobs have no milk in them you are going to have to come out, Sunshine.”

I cringe at the words leaving my mouth right now.

Little Nurse gets to say the words ‘boobs’ and hint at sex without thinking twice.

I never had that privilege. Never wanted such privilege.

In my world, saying the wrong things weakens your throne. Saying the wrong thing gives enemies the necessary ammo to destroy you.

Yet years of all that training reduced to this.

“M-Millie?”

Her voice is weak, too close to crumbling. My interest is piqued.

She’s never cried.

Looked like she might cry? Sure.

But cried? Never.

Ironical that the man who can make her cry is a skinny man in slacks and a polo shirt that shows wimpy muscles.

“Yes. The child. Open the door, Alexia. I’m not asking again”

“I-I can’t.”

“You can. Walk right to the door, unhinge the lock. I’m hoping you know what a lock is, Little Nurse.”

Silence.

I say fuck it.

Taking a step back, my boot connects with the door and with enough pressure, the door bursts open.

A little dust here and there, a few pieces of wood splintered across the floor but when everything settles, the sight in front of me ups my anger by a huge freaking watt.

“I-I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

Alexia Green sits by the corner, huddled together like a scared kid, quivering and shaking and what’s worse? Her dress is wet.

That dress she liked, it’s so wet that when I look it and look at her, she looks like she wants die right in front of me.

I saunter past the broken wood.

Little Nurse’s eyes never leave mine and by Whoever controls the universe I’m praying her eyes remain on mine and not the mess surrounding her.

Not the fear that has her cheeks wet with tears.

Not the fear that has her dress wet with her own pee.

She’s scared of him. Scared to the point of cowering in a room all by herself, scared to the point of –

I crouch in front of her.

Human touch has never been my thing since Cat. I dislike it. Hate it because at the end of the day it’s as insignificant as the pack of wild hair on Jett’s head.

Yet human touch has never felt tolerable like when Millie is in my arms. Or when this woman’s skin came into contact with mine the other night.

I raise my knuckle. Same knuckle that has a skull tattoo. Same knuckle that has ended so many lives.

It connects with her cheeks. Soft, wet, delightful skin of hers.

I wipe her tears. She sniffs back, “I-I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize.”

“Lo uccidero per te”, I add because I intend to. I intend to kill Fred for her.

“I-I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to...I didn’t- “

“What did he do to you, Sunshine?”

I ask, she gasps. She shrinks back to her little corner but my hand is still on her cheek.

Big, tainted, has no business being there.

“I-I can’t...”

Can’t tell me? Can’t out the weasel? Can’t because she’s scared? She’d give me a million reasons and I wouldn’t care.

I never took no for an answer since I was little. I’m not going to start now either.

“We are not leaving until you start talking. You are an employee of mine, I can’t have you running away every time your silly past traumatizes you. It’s bad for business and you don’t want to risk getting fired on account of your debt”

Sunshine doesn’t say shit.

I’m gripping straws right now.

“The child is with Jett. He doesn’t know anything about babies. Give him a few more minutes with her and he’ll probably drop her. Maximo is there too and his tough as nails exterior and daddy issues wouldn’t allow him to save your baby.

That leaves Fred. Dear ol’ Fred with your baby- “

“His name is Brad! Not Fred but Brad.”

“Go on.”

Her lips quiver. Another fresh of tears grace her cheeks, landing on my hand.

She doesn’t even know it yet but the more she cries, the more her cheek seeks out my hand. Seeks out comfort and warmth.

I have been a lot of things and comfort and warmth aren’t it.

“He was Rhett’s friend...they were all Rhett’s friends. I never talked to them. I never...never liked them but Rhett did and it was okay.

Everything was okay. Until...I was a virgin when I met Rhett and I gave it to him because he...he was the love of my life.

I trusted him. He’d never hurt me. He said he’d never hurt me but he did! He picked me up from the hospital I was working at that night and he told me it would be the best night in my life. It wasn’t the best night.

“I never wanted to have sex with his friends in front of him. Rhett said it was okay. I cried, I begged him not to...they were four plus Rhett. There was...there was no way I could fight them. I let them do everything they wanted. I let them beat me, insult me until I had enough courage to leave. To leave that town, the hospital, my life. Three weeks later, I was pregnant with Millie. A week later, Rhett tracked me down and learned I was pregnant.

“He stayed long enough to do a paternity test and when he found out Millie was his, he disappeared and he led the loan sharks right to my doorstep. I’m not a slut...I’m not a slut, I promise. I never wanted any of it but I also don’t regret having Millie whether she would be Rhett’s or anyone else’s because she saved me. And I...I left her with Brad. I’m still...still scared of that night. Of them.”

“Come here, Sunshine.”

Hesitant, out of her element, she slowly crawls to me like a kid learning how to walk.

When her face smashes my chest and her tears stain my shirt, I pick her up from the floor.

Rhett...Rhett...he just didn’t know when to stop did he? His psychopathic tendencies didn’t stop on my sister, he did to the woman crying in my arms, he’s done it to a lot of other women too if the scumbag is still living.

And I’m praying he’s living alright. I’ll be the one to gut him.

“I’m fine...you don’t have to.”

“You are not fine and you are allowed not to be fine. Here’s what’s gonna happen Sunshine, you are gonna take a shower. You are gonna buy all the dresses in this entire store and you are gonna walk out of here with a smile on your face because Brad won’t exist after this”

“I don’t want anything Brad owns.”

“Good, because I own the building.”

And I hired a sales manager, I didn't quite know shit about.

Still in my arms, cradling my shirt like it's the only tether holding her to this world, Sunshine and I saunter to the shower rooms.

I installed shower rooms in every store my sister owned because she was the type that liked being clean always.

Right now, I'm walking to the same shower rooms with a woman I have no business feeling sorry for.

I place her down.

Her feet touch the tiled floor but she's not letting go. Not at all.

"Little Nurse?" I raise a brow.

"I-I'm scared. I can't stand properly, I think my knees are still weak. I need an anchor, something to hold onto while I'm in the shower"

Crystal blue eyes gaze at me. Asking me to be her anchor. Asking her kidnapper to hold her.

The only thing I've held is her baby and it's still making me uncomfortable as fuck because I like it.

"No."

"You don't have to take your suit off."

"Still no."

"Then I can't do it."

Little.

Stubborn.

Obstinate.

All a deadly combination.

I hop into the shower with her.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 7

ALEXIA GREEN.

Urinary incontinence.

Or as I like to call it, loss of bladder control.

It happened to me once. On that frightful night. And the men there called me disgusting, called me a whore, all little words aimed at decimating my self-esteem.

Their words worked though.

Brad's words 'you are nothing but Rhett's bitch' ate me up for a whole two weeks.

Right now, I'm standing in front of a man who called me a slut a few minutes ago.

It was unintentional sure but that doesn't mean it didn't sting. Like how his words sting a little sometimes.

Except Vicious; cruel, dangerous, a million times scarier than Brad isn't looking at me like a whore or a slut after I told him my story and maybe that's the reason why I'm standing beneath a showerhead with him.

Slate dark eyes size me up, take my five feet in and impatience leaks at his seams.

I'm not like the women he dates. Probably. Maybe. Okay I'm not like a solid ten when it comes to looks but my selfesteem and my dignity are straight in the gutter.

I peed myself.

I sobbed.

I hid.

I don't give a hoot right now if I look like a hobo from the street.

"Need help with the dress?" he asks, my knees buckle harder.

"Yes, please."

"Hold on."

And I hold on.

Fall to despair.

Disappoint my baby.

Let Brad, Rhett and those monsters win.

“Are you going to tear this one in half too?” I ask trying to release the tension that is as thick as his head.

He leans down, his cheek, the one covered with a dark stubble grazes my cheek and I shiver.

His fingertips, cold, terrific, definitely colder than the Arctic, find the zip to the dress.

The one that is hidden by my hair and he is forced to swipe the hair from my back to access it better.

“Do you want me to tear it in half?”

“No.”

“Then I won’t”, he promises and I bite that promise with big hungry teeth.

With as much dexterity as a brute man like him shouldn’t have, he slides the zip slowly and torturously down my back revealing patches and patches of my definitely stinking skin.

The dress pools around my ankles, it almost feels like déjà vu from the other night.

Yet today he is not angry.

He is understanding.

He is gentle.

He pities me.

I raise my head.

My eyes lunge at his dark ones.

“Take the bra off and the panties.”

His voice is low, commanding, dripping sexiness, oozing that ruggedness to it that would make the entire population of women start a third world war.

Being naked in front of him?

Yeah, I'm too ashamed, too cowardly to say no to that.

He carried me when I had pee on me. He's standing in the same shower cabinet I am.

I take my bra off throwing it somewhere on the floor. My perky nipples reach out to him but I refuse to admit that's the case.

Vicious never takes his eyes off of me.

I can swear I see his jaw twitch but that's wishful thinking.

My breasts are full, heavy with Millie's food, my body isn't what it used to be, any man who would be attracted to me is either blind or short-sighted.

I wiggle out of my panties.

"I'm sorry about the pee and this. You can leave if you want to."

"You wanted me here and here I shall stay. You ready?"

I nod.

He doesn't give me any warning before he turns the shower on.

Water trickles down my body with vengeance.

"It's cold", I complain.

The gruff man who's getting wet and reaching for something behind me says, "Cold water is better."

"Not for me, it isn't. You are in your suit, I'm naked and it's hella freezing."

"Stay still"

Cool liquid drops on my head, his hands work inside my hair.

"Vicious- "

"You wanted an anchor; I'm being an anchor."

And that's his way of telling me not to speak as he shampoos my hair, as his hands lather soap and scrub the skin on my back.

He doesn't touch my boobs. Frankly to him, they don't exist.

But every drop of water, every time his hands touch my skin, I feel like I'm burning up with a fever.

Rhett didn't feel like this.

Rhett felt like how a man from the street touched you.

Vicious? He felt like heaven wrapped in hellfire. Marshmallows wrapped in spicy hot Cheetos.

"Did you know Brad before you hired him?" I ask.

I don't know what I'm asking because I know for a fact this man hires the worst of the worst.

Killers, drug traffickers, I don't think rapists would miss his list of recruits.

"If you are asking if I knew he was one of Rhett's delinquent friends, then no. I didn't know."

That half assures me.

"But now that you do, will you take Brad as my replacement to pay the debt?"

He rinses my butt with one of the shower heads that spews cold water and not once does he touch me.

"No"

"Why? Brad can pay the debt. I haven't spoken to Rhett in months."

Brad has a fancy job that can raise one million dollars in the blink of an eye.

"I need your services and Brad won't get to live once I'm done here."

I take a step back.

Cold water streams between us without a care in the world.

His dark hair is damp, rivulets of water streak down his forehead. His suit is practically clinging to him for dear life.

And his muscles...

Everything around us should be enough to distract me. The situation should distract me.

But nothing is going to distract me from what he just said.

“You are not going to kill Brad.”

“It isn’t up for you to decide, Little Nurse.”

“No, I told you the story, you want to kill him because you pity me or satisfy whatever fetish you have with blood and I won’t allow it.”

“You don’t want him dead? You want to cower in front of your enemies every single fucking day?”

“They are my enemies”

“You are my nurse”, his eyes flare. His knuckles fist.

Angry Vicious is staring at me now and all he sees is red. All I see is a monster I’ve unleashed.

“I don’t take lives. I hate that bastard; I hate Rhett and every single human who thinks puppies are monsters but I’m not gonna let a man die because of me. I’ll let God take care of him.”

“Your God didn’t save you. Your God brought you to a monster bigger than Rhett. He brought you to me and you want to know something? God doesn’t kill evil; He lets it thrive. He let me thrive.”

God brought Millie to me.

He brought me to Vicious when I was on the verge of starving for another week.

But I don’t tell my boss that, I look him in the eye and beg,

“Promise me, you are not going to kill him.”

“No.”

“Promise me.”

“Fine.”

“Good. Now, leave. I don’t need an anchor anymore.”

“Why?”

“Because I just remembered you are my boss, Boss. Bosses don’t get to see their employees naked.”

His scowl grows bigger. His eyes look like they’ll spew lasers and decimate me into ashes, but he respects my decision.

He leaves.

My sanity crawls its way back to my head.

Enemy. He’s the bloody enemy.

I take a quick bath. Quickest bath I’ve ever taken just to rush to my baby.

When I slide open the shower glass wall, veiny muscular hands greet me and in them is the same design of the dress that’s currently sitting on the floor of the washroom I was in.

Vicious looks me in the eyes and states ever so casually,

“There are panties beneath the dress and a bra too”

I take the dress from his hands and beneath it is a matching bra and panties that have exquisite lace at the edges.

“I don’t need the bra though. The picnic dress can do without- “

“You are wearing everything I’ve brought Little Nurse. This isn’t a negotiation.”

I take the dress. The bra. The panties.

He watches until all of them are hugged tight against my chest, the one that’s hidden by a towel, then he leaves.

Does he leave still wearing a wet suit? He does.

Do I care? I shouldn’t. But sweet Mother of Jesus, a wet and soaking Volkov is like a peach drenched in chocolate and wagged right in front of you.

There’s no way you wouldn’t bite it. I. Dare. You.

Christian is gone by the time I get out of the shower in a brand-new dress and with newfound confidence I shouldn’t have after what happened today.

The fear that was once grabbing every inch of energy my body offered has now been reduced to hate.

Hate for Brad. Hate for Rhett and hate for the women who birthed those Two bastards and failed to teach them manners.

I know I won't see Brad again because Vicious will either fire him or send him to a country too far away for me to ever be tormented again.

The thought puts a smile on my face, as my Converse shoes meet the outside of the dressing room.

Bones snapping sears my ears faster than my smile that can stay up.

Muffled grunting clogs my throat.

Blood, the blood I'm seeing right now clogs my throat and makes me want to barf. Ironical since I've seen worse.

Though the irony? The irony that's slapping my face like a bitch is the image in front of me.

My baby girl is in the arms of the man who has a sleeveless vest. Those snazzy ones that make musicians like rock stars seem cool.

Millie looks like she's sleeping unaware of the heavily tattooed man holding her. I'm guessing that's Jett.

I'm also guessing the man smirking while he holds a gagged Brad like a punching bag is Maximo.

And Vicious? He doesn't even see me as he delivers knuckle-breaking punches to an unconscious Brad.

He lied.

He broke his promise.

"You promised."

My voice itself makes me dizzy.

Blood drips from Vicious's knuckles but he doesn't acknowledge me. He turns to Jett and says, "Take her and the child home."

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 8

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

The thing about life? You know straight away what complications it will shove your way as soon as you inhale that first gulp of polluted earth air.

By the time I was five, I was selling my own piss to my enemies under the pretense it was lemonade.

By the time I was ten, I was selling dirt from our own backyard under the pretense it was Jupiter dirt. Spoiler alert, I didn't even know Jupiter existed.

By the time I was fifteen, I was stealing candies from babies for the heck of it.

My mother called me Vitello, after her grandfather who was a saint of the sort.

My father called me Vicious; he saw the real me.

I'm no saint, never went to the padre to confess my sins.

I wear the coat of villainy from children's books with pride.

Yet this part of me that likes being a villain grows into something much more when small hands touch my shoulder.

Brad's nose is already broken. My knuckles are red with his blood and my blood and it isn't enough to ensure men like him never see the light of day again.

Five or six fists aren't enough for Fake Fred and before I go delivering the seventh one, her hand lingers on my back.

Remember about knowing complications and knowing when life will hit you with them?

She's the first complication I didn't see coming.

The second complication?

It comes in the form of Alexia motherfucking Green slapping me across the face while she yells, "You asshole! I told you this was my fight; I'd handle him on my own but nooo...you are Vicious and that's about the worst nickname I've ever heard. Are you even listening to me? Tell your lapdog to let go of him"

Every word that comes out of her mouth needs to be scrubbed hard with soap and bleach.

But that's not why I'm not listening.

The blood, the déjà vu, her.

It zones me out.

I fail dismally to control my rage, to distinguish who is who, my blood boils, my heart craves for blood.

"Vic, stop", Maximo's voice sounds like a distant wail.

My anger redirects like a missile back to the five-foot something woman who's just slapped me and called me an asshole.

I've given her far more privileges but no one does that.

No one touches me the way she did. No one hurts me.

No one gets to hurt Christian Vitello Volkov. No one got to be my father with the belt again.

My hands trigger happy, I reach out to the kryptonite that's making me weaker, angrier, confused than I've ever been in all thirty years of my life.

I grip her neck. Hard.

"Kill me. Finish the job you failed to do back at my apartment. I'm pretty sure hell is better than being stuck with a douchebag who thinks he is God because men with tiny balls follow him around. Do it."

Blue eyes pierce mine and behind those eyes? I see her hurt. I see that special moment we shared back in that damn shower gone with the wind.

And that's good.

Hate me because I'm no knight in shining armor.

Hate me because I'm no fucking prince who wipes your tears and promises you a better tomorrow.

The more I state things in my head, the more my hands sink into her neck.

She's gasping for air; I'm having an episode that usually ends up with two or more dead bodies.

“Volkov, you go any further and that kid won’t have a mother. Jett will have to raise her all by himself.”

“She’s cute and all but I don’t think I can handle a kid, boss. I’m barely twenty-five, man.”

Millie senses the tense environment around us and she sobs.

I hate it when she cries.

Dazed, feeling shitty, I let go of the nurse and step as far away from her as I can.

I pick Brad up from the ground and whisper, “You are dead.”

“You could have killed her.”

“I didn’t.”

The orange embers from my lit cigarette dance with the wind.

This isn’t my first episode or the first time I’ve tried killing anyone that provokes me during said episodes.

It’s the first time I’m feeling shitty though.

Choking her after she told me her ordeal with shitty men? Yeah, I was a dick.

And a dick is all I’ve always been when it comes to women.

“And you think buying her an entire store of women’s clothes will earn you, her forgiveness?”

“I’m not looking for forgiveness.”

I’m not looking for anything from her except slaving her around till her boyfriend shows up to take her.

And then? That’s when this madness ends and the real fun begins.

“It didn’t seem like it. I’m going to warn you now and not later when all this shit bursts in your face. You’re a Volkov and a Vitello, that blonde nurse might not understand who she’s working for but I do.

Three months from now, you are going to claim the title of heir to the Cosa Nostra. A month later you'll be pressured into marrying an heir from the five families, failure to do that, you start a war.

That woman doesn't fit into the equation. As a nurse yes but as something else? She and her kid will be dead in your world faster than she can blink"

As Maximo drones on and on, my mind trails back to that slap that stung like a son of a bitch.

Maximo is right of course but my mind loops around the day's events over and over again.

"Any word from Demetri?"

"Yes and we have a problem."

Problem at work.

Problem at home.

Problem everywhere I point my gun.

Two shots of whiskey and none are drowning out the Little Nurse's eyes as she begged me to choke her or the fact that her naked body would look sublime under mine.

Two steps up the small stairs of my mansion and I pause glancing at the smoke that willows from my backyard.

The air itself reeks of plastic and garbage burning.

I ditch the front door, walk around the house all the way to the pool I never use, to the garden that graces my backyard.

The garden that has a very familiar woman trying to put out a fire.

A small lump of whatever the fuck that is continues burning, the flames getting excited by the wind.

"Juana?"

I shouldn't ask about the fire. I couldn't care less if a pack of wild dogs invaded the house. This house has become void since Cat died.

“Vicious. I didn’t know you were coming home. I’m sorry about this, I tried to warn her not to do it...but the fire is slowly starting to dim down so no worries.”

My ears prick up.

“The nurse did this?”

Started a fire in my backyard?

“She was upset, it’s only understandable that she burns her clothes. Frankly every woman has probably done something crazy when she’s upset-”

“What clothes?”

“Vic-“

“Tell me everything.”

“She put Millie to bed. Then she spent the whole afternoon burning every piece of clothing that Jett brought to the house”

Every bit of clothing I bought for her.

“Anything else?”

“She said umm...where she comes from, a man who strangles her and buys an entire wardrobe of clothes for her is no man.”

No man, my ass.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 9

ALEXIA GREEN.

I’m going insane.

Slapping men isn’t on my usual go-to list of things I want to do in life.

Burning clothes expensive enough to buy an entire island in the Caribbean isn’t what a poor person like me does.

In less than a week I’ve done all that.

The repercussions of that?

I hear his presence in the sound of his car trampling pebbles in the driveway.

I feel his anger when he calmly tells Juana to go back to sleep and he'll put out the fire himself.

The fire that I started in a fit of rage.

My balcony window has a perfect view of his backyard.

I barely think before I act.

My unsteady feet get out of bed, slowly and cautiously trying not to wake Millie up, I tread across my room straight to those closed balcony windows that show a perfect view of the night with a full moon gracing the skies.

My eyes dart to the man slowly taking off his jacket.

The man who somewhat makes darkness look like a land of rainbows and unicorns.

Why? Because he is bigger than the darkness. He is built and imbued with darkness so much that the same darkness obeys him.

I see it in the way his muscles seem to come to life as the moon casts a silver glint on him.

I see it in the way he picks a shovel from God knows where, scoops up soil from the ground and starts throwing the soil to the fire.

He does that once, twice and the third time, the fire goes out.

He watches the fire dim down. Watches every piece of clothing he bought for me turn into a black churned crisp.

I should have burned his entire mansion and escaped.

But today?

I saw the real Vicious. The Vicious that stormed through my house and threatened to kill me.

Every single place he touched on my neck has his handprints. How do I know? I checked.

I should feel scared. I should feel disgusted just like that night but I don't.

Angry at him? Yeah. But scared? No.

Tonight?

Vicious turns around like I've summoned him, his head angles up before I have the chance to hide and when our eyes lock, that's when the real fear claws at my neck.

"Pack any clothing you have; we are leaving for Moscow", His words hit me like lightning in a freaking desert.

He's in my room, barely looking at me or Millie who is in my arms right now.

"Moscow? As in Russia?"

"Stating what we already know delays us."

In a snag suit that makes Forbes billionaires look like burglars from NYC, my kidnapper is as unhappy as an unadopted kid.

More than unhappy, his jaw ripples with impatience, his eyes are so bland I feel like Millie and I might just be walking into a tornado without thinking.

Sweet Christian Volkov was an awkward man straight from one of those princess-gets-the-charming-prince types of books.

Angry Christian Volkov liked choking people. Or more like choking me.

But this...this Christian Volkov looks at me like I just murdered his favorite puppy and he couldn't care less.

"Well, I sort of didn't know we were going to Russia today. Why do we have to go? I have never traveled outside the States before, I don't even think Millie is qualified for travel."

"The child stays here."

I take a step back.

"I don't care what business you have in Russia but where I go, my child goes."

No one is separating me from my child. This man might keep us here as prisoners but no one is separating me from Millie.

Not Rhett. Not my past. Not a scowling man who drips hotness every two to three seconds.

Volkov tsks.

His hands in his dark suit, he takes precise and quick steps in my direction.

My feet scurry back while Millie sucks on my left tit unaware of the tension in the room and my heart a close second to falling on the floor.

“Lucky for you, I’m the boss, you are the employee as you boldly put it in that damn shower.”

I chuckle.

“You are forcing me to go to Russia because I kicked you out of the shower? What did you think would happen, Christian? That I’d get too emotional and ask you to fuck me in your freaking store?”

I’m angry.

The nonsense spewing from my mouth is just that. Nonsense. Emotional nonsense.

“Say it again”, he corners me.

My throat goes dry.

“W-what?”

“Say my name.”

Christian.

“Vicious?”

“Don’t play with me, little nurse. Say. My. Name.”

“I’m not going to Russia without my kid. You’d have to drug me to make me responsive and I know you are an asshole but drugging women is beneath you.”

The bastard lifts both of his hands.

One hand lands on my cheek, the other hand lands on Millie’s pink beanie.

I might have burned the clothes he bought me but I didn’t have the guts to burn Millie’s new baby clothes because she needed them.

“Who do you think I am, Alexia?”

“A bastard who thinks he owns the world and us mere mortals are chess pieces to him.”

The small corner of his mouth tips up but it can hardly be called a smile.

“I own the world and you mere mortals are as uninteresting as the salad dressing on my plate. Quit playing games. Say my fucking name.”

I have always prided myself in following laws.

Right now? I say to hell with following orders.

“No”, I retaliate.

He smirks. The devilish grin makes shivers run down my spine faster than his words can, “We leave in an hour.”

“Let me go. Let me go!”

Jett doesn’t let go in fact he drags me to the front door like I’m nothing but a paperclip.

“Stop this. Vic, please”, Juana begs the man following behind us.

The man who ordered his lackey to drag me to the door itself should I offer any ‘resistance’.

I can’t blame Jett for what he is doing but that doesn’t mean I don’t hate him at this point in time.

“Take the child back to her crib”

“She has a name. H-Her name’s Millie”, my voice weakens.

Please don’t do this. Please don’t separate us.

“Let her say goodbye, yes? Millie...she’ll need milk, she’ll need to be breastfed.”

God bless Juana.

Vicious says something to Jett because Jett lets go of me in an instant.

When he does, I run to Juana, I take my baby and I pray to the gods that Christian Volkov, Rhett, Jett, every single man I’ve met who’s turned to be a bastard to drop dead.

“Shh...shh, it’s okay. It’s okay. Mommy’s here, baby. Mommy’s not going anywhere.”

“Little nurse.”

“Anything, ask me anything but don’t separate me from my child. I’ll go as far as Egypt to treat your men but don’t take my child away from me.”

“Promise me.”

He uses the same words I said to him in the shower yesterday to blackmail me. To teach me a lesson because that’s what he does.

He teaches his slaves lessons about who he is and what he is capable of.

“I promise to do everything you ask of me.”

I sign my soul and my services to the devil. Twice, this time.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 10

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Demetri Sokolov is as unhinged as Oppenheimer with the atomic bombs.

But more than unhinged? Demetri is an impatient son of a gun that craves power the way the child on my damn plane craves her mother’s milk.

Going to Moscow isn’t a choice I’d rather partake in. Russian soil has never been kind to the likes of us Sicilians.

A, because Sicilians are way ahead in the mafia game than the Russian mafia aka the Bratva and B, Demetri’s grandfather

and my grandfather might have killed each other in a street battle before the truce was established.

Demetri Sokolov took the reign of the Bratva from his pops months ago.

I’m yet to claim the throne of the Costa Nostra and if there’s anything I know about that buzz-cut fucker is that he wants to tear down the truce and rule the whole world.

The Chicago mafia. The London mafia. The Costa Nostra. Bratva, you name it.

I tap on my tablet going over the guest list to Demetri’s private party.

A party that’s more of a conclave with every mafia leader in the world under one roof.

Yeah, I sense a trap. But either he's too stupid to realize killing us would cause chaos or he just doesn't give a fuck. And for Demetri? He's big and dumb alright, add in reckless and I already know Russia is going to be one huge pain on my-

"Really? Oh my God, I was born and raised in Chestnut Springs too. Well, not the born part. You get the idea."

Too mouthy for a woman.

Too cheerful for a woman who has no business speaking in this entire trip, the blonde pulls up a smile directing it at Jagger and Jett.

Color me surprised, that she hasn't smiled at me since I put her and the baby on a plane to a suicide mission.

She hasn't smiled at me, ever.

Frankly speaking, I don't even know if her teeth are white or black.

"Does Mrs. H still work there?"

"Noo, don't tell me", blonde's eyes grow too big on her face, as yet again ladies and fucking gentlemen, she throws my men a smile wide enough to give the Grinch a run for his money.

"You knew Mrs. H? She practically raised me too", she adds unnecessarily.

I haven't seen Jagger and Jett smile like that in ages.

And that's saying a lot because they are practically seated at the edge of the cabin in my private plane and I can still see those smug faces from where I am.

I pour myself another glass of gin. The gin trickles down my throat with a sour taste as Sunshine's laughter rocks the confines of my plane.

She can laugh too, apparently.

Laugh with me? No.

Laugh with my men who are ogling her like she's the next tantalizing meal to be presented in a trashy American TV food show? Yes.

Who gives a shit about laughter anyway?

The next glass of gin doesn't make it down my throat because Jagger's voice ups my sour mood to a hundred.

“You are tough stuff, Lexy. Cute but tough.”

‘Lexy’. That’s what her friends call her.

I’m no fucking friend.

“Alexia.”

Jagger and Jett lose the ridiculous smiles.

Little nurse cradles Millie in her arms as her smile falls flat and her azure eyes scream, she’d rather sit with Jett than me.

And I’d rather sit on a cactus than fuck her so here we are.

“Come here.”

She hesitates. I think for a moment she’ll go back on her promise but she doesn’t.

The fine ass with a head, thick and full of blonde hair, stands up, hands Millie to Jett (against my better judgment) and struts to me with a cheap picnic dress that hugs her curves and pushes her breasts up to reveal a very ample cleavage.

No wonder Jett and Jagger were smiling every two seconds.

“What can I do for you, boss?” she asks with sass barely giving the hint that she wants to at least sit down and have a chat like we are two proper adults.

Except she isn’t an adult.

Twenty-three years can’t be compared to my thirty years and the fact that I’m comparing shows how hard that alcohol is hitting my brain.

‘Sit next to me and remain quiet the whole trip’, I want to say.

‘Don’t smile. Don’t do anything. Just sit and breathe for fuck’s sake’.

I don’t say all that.

Instead, I say the one thing that rocked my mind when Maximo told me Demetri wants me in Russia.

“Seduce a man for me.”

I put my slave to good use.

“You in position?”

“Not yet. Demetri has his castle manned by guards at every corner I turn to. The cctvs are encrypted hard, hacking into them is like asking me to find an ant in a bag of sugar.”

“How many guards? How many can you and I take out if I provide a distraction?”

Maximo stills, I know the next question he’ll ask me before he can even ask it.

“What distraction? Jesus Christ, Volkov don’t tell me what I think you are saying.”

“Demetri has a kink for blondes.”

She’s blonder than any woman I’ve come across.

“She’s a civilian. She’s a mother. You are selling your own doctor, nurse whatever to a psycho.”

“I’ll get her out alive. All we need is Demetri out of the way and his plan botched.”

“Demetri will eat her alive”, Maximo sighs.

“I’ll handle Demetri.”

“You know you kill him and the Costa Nostra starts a war, right?”

“We’ll be there in ten.”

I hang up.

I have handled worse punks than Demetri and if anything, Sunshine is more than capable of standing on her own.

That woman has bigger balls than I have seen in two of my men combined. She’s tough as fuck.

Speaking of women and toughness, the woman in question descends the stairs in a purple floor sweeping gown that shows at least half of her creamy right thigh.

She covers her shoulders with some designer fur coat of the sort hiding those boobs that would make a man like Demetri fall to his knees and beg for a kiss.

I extend my hand to hers.

Sunshine completely ignores it as she stands next to me in heels that elevate her five feet three height to like five foot five.

“How long do I have to distract this Darius guy?”

“Demetri. The name’s Demetri. A few minutes depending on what Demetri has in store for me.”

A few guards to kill us.

Bombs, snipers, the usual shebang.

“Why me though?”

Because you are the kind of pretty that would have Demetri wagging his tail as he follows you all night.

“You are cheaper than a hooker. Your services might be required too.”

“How so?”

“In case Demetri follows through with his plan, I’ll need a nurse to stitch me back together.”

With the glare she’s throwing at me, I know for a fact she would leave me dead in some ditch and run the other way with her baby without thinking twice.

“Let’s pray to the Good God that Demetrius doesn’t follow through with his plan then. It’d be a shame if you died in Russia”, her red-smearred lips mumble sarcastically.

I don’t miss the Demetrius name either which is her version of trying to rile me up.

“And the child?” I ask.

“Jagger volunteered to babysit.”

Of course, that little retard volunteered to babysit while Maximo and Jett are scouting for bombs.

“You trust him with her?”

“Do I trust the man who isn’t dressing me up like a doll to seduce some Russian man to take care of my daughter? Yes.

Yes, I trust Jagger. Come on, boss let’s not keep Daniel waiting.”

‘It’s Demetri’ but by the time I correct her, her ass is already sashaying out of the front door.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 11

ALEXIA GREEN.

We are in his car as he drives up to the haunted looking mansion that resembles an old palace that probably occupied fifteenth century vampires a while back.

Volkov doesn’t look at me as he gets out of the car, walks around it and comes to open the door for me.

Then like the fake gentleman he’s been pretending to be, he holds out his hand for me and I completely ignore it.

As soon as my heels make contact with the ground which happens to be snow, I know deep in my bones that I hate Moscow and probably Russia too.

Russia is cold and unpredictable.

Russia has looming storm clouds that warn of something tragic happening.

Russia has a man who I’m supposed to seduce when I can’t even seduce a ninety-year-old man. One, because that’s too gross and two, I’m not exactly the seducing type.

Together with the man beside me whose height makes me feel smaller and miniscule, we walk straight to the entrance of whatever the hell is going on in there.

Tonight like every night, Volkov is wearing his signature scowl. The one that says I have too much trauma to smile.

Let’s not forget the very expensive, dark as his heart suit that matches his dark hair and the shirt that’s not buttoned to the collar.

“We get in there, you don’t stare. You blend in, you find your target and you carry out the mission without drawing too much attention.”

His hand lands on my back as he takes the fur coat off of me handing it to the doorman who ushers us inside.

The house is too grand to be described in words.

The curtains look like they've been imported from someplace fancy like Taiwan or Persia. The chandelier might just be made of real diamonds. Real freaking diamonds.

"Demetri owns all of this?"

Please say no. Please say no.

"Yes."

Volkov answers the question not in the least bit surprised by anything.

"What kind of business is he into if he owns all of this?"

"His profession won't matter when you come face to face with him. All you need to do is distract him for a few minutes."

"Distract him while you do what?"

"While I take care of business."

I'm panicking. The more I see everything in this house, the more I'm scared of this Demetri guy.

What if he is like a fat politician type of guy who gropes my butt now and then in the name of 'knowing each other better'?

I have worked in fancy restaurants as a waitress, I know how these types of men think.

The butler, the doorman, whoever this slender man is with the Romanesque nose that looked like it was sculpted by Picasso himself but in a bad way, stands outside the tall oak doors his eyes on Volkov.

"Mr. Vitello, we are honored to have you as our guest."

Volkov's hand caresses my back. The one that's naked and bare to him because this lilac dress he got me showcases my entire back and covers the upper side of my butt.

My nerves are a mess. But what drives me crazy? The feel of a hand that huge tracing the line of my back.

It's gonna be a long, long night and all I can hope for is that Millie sleeps through it all safe and sound back at the new mansion.

While the butler pushes the huge doors open and my breath is caught up in my throat, the man beside me leans closer to me,

“I’d be a dick if I didn’t tell you this but that fucking dress you are wearing looks so good on you, I’m almost tempted to gorge out all the eyes that will set their sights on you tonight.”

That’s his version of a compliment.

And in his world maybe that’s his way of saying sorry for dragging you all the way to Russia to use you on a probably deranged man!

I angle my face to the side only to really look at this man and realize that the Good Lord might have given him the face of a glorious mafia killer but the attitude and temper of a three-year-old after being denied candy.

“You are still a dick anyway for making me do this.”

Demetri isn’t old or fat. He doesn’t even look like a politician.

He looks even scarier than when Volkov tries to choke me.

Demetri looks and sounds like his name. Impeccably tall, hard facial features an example being the jaw that looks like it goes to a gym itself and a bigger muscle build than Volkov, he is the perfect example of what a soldier and a mercenary looks like.

Ooh and he is sporting a buzz cut. A buzz cut that looks as terrifying as the non-existent smile on his face.

“I don’t think I can do this.”

“It’s too late to back down. You are here, you are doing it.”

“Why can’t I seduce a guy like him?”, I ask, my eyes lingering on the man who’s laughing with other strange men by the corner.

I recognize his brown hair from television. He’s running for senator in Chicago. His name is...

“Dante Keaton is off limits. I don’t want you near him, I don’t want you talking to him. You ready?”

“No.”

“Good. Go.”

Christian is gone by the time I turn around to stop this madness.

In a throng of businesspeople who I know nothing of, the only right thing to do is obey.

Seduce Demetri and call it a night.

Easy peasy right?

“Demetri?”

That’s the best I can come up with.

My palms are sweaty, my throat feels parched as Demetri excuses himself from the man he is talking to and turns his focus on me.

He sizes me up, he doesn’t even blink as his eyes lock with mine.

“Nice party by the way. It’s really umm...chic. I’m Kimberly Ramos. You probably don’t remember me but...”

“Whose whore, are you?”

If I wasn’t too pissed off at his statement, I’d pay attention to his thick Russian accent but he just called me a whore.

“Excuse me? I think you have me mistaken with someone else.”

“No women are invited here. And if there are, they came because their men brought them out for company. You do not know me otherwise you would not have talked to Demetri.

So we remain with two choices, no? You are someone’s arm candy for the night but you think you can also get Demetri in your bed tonight if you are lucky or two, you are here for something else, something that concerns me.”

Busted.

I’m like a deer caught in headlights.

Demetri and his terrible English have me nowhere left to run and the man who brought me here...I turn around, I look for Volkov but he is missing.

Oh no. No. No.

“No one is coming to save you, woman. Demetri has you cornered, any attempts to run will only quicken your death.”

“My name is not Kimberly Ramos. I lied. I was kinda forced into this. You are right I don’t know who you are otherwise I wouldn’t have spoken to you or entered your mansion for that matter and for that I apologize.

I’m not a serial killer, I’m not here to kill you or anything. I’ve never even touched a gun in my life so if you can please forget we met, forget this happened, I’ll disappear and- “, my words die down my throat when Demetri throws a glare my way.

“You are coming with me.”

“This isn’t necessary. I have no weapon on me and I’m not a hired assassin.”

“Move.”

One of Demetri’s guys pushes my back with the nozzle of a rifle.

The other guy to my right clicks his tongue.

Demetri walks in front of me as we all trek down the red carpeted hallway.

I’m sweating buckets trying to assure myself I won’t die in Russia. My knees buckle but I try to remain positive.

Christian Volkov is somewhere in this mansion. He’ll notice I’m gone. He’ll look for me.

But this is the same Christian who brought me here. To sell me to Russians? Oh God.

My mini panic attack halts when at the end of the hallway, a gorgeous brunette appears wearing only mini shorts and a long baggy shirt that barely looks like hers.

Her hair is long and voluminous and so chestnut brown she looks like she jumped out of a fairytale.

Her face is bare of makeup but she looks like a Victoria Secret’s model.

“Dee. I was so worried.”

Shit.

Dee?

This woman hugs Demetri and jumps in his lap hugging her legs around his torso like he is not some terrifying ruffian who’s about to kill me for trespassing.

And Dee? I mean Demetri? He kisses her tenderly before he groans, “You shouldn’t be out here, malyshka.”

I’m no Russian interpreter but I definitely feel like malyshka translates to baby or some endearment of the sort.

“We’ve already established you are not going to boss me around anymore especially and most especially when they are both here. You invited them? They are going to kill you.”

Invited who?

“They are not taking you, what’s mine from me.”

I cough out the pang of jealousy and confusion from my throat.

Demetri’s woman acknowledges my presence and something about her eyes looks familiar.

Like I know her. But from where?

I don’t get to indulge my curiosity any longer because a few seconds later, the sounds of gunshots loud like thunder ring from down the hall.

I’m already on the floor screaming as I watch Demetri take a gun from his waist, hold on to his girlfriend tight and scurry down the hall.

His men follow him shouting stuff into their walkies.

And I?

I lay on the floor flat, my hands above my head, my prayers going to God that He saves me and that my life doesn’t end like this. Meaningless.

God doesn’t save me.

He sends my savior in the form of the devil himself.

“I expected you to be dead by now, Little Nurse. Get up, our time’s up.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 12

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

“Why am I not surprised to see you here?”

I nurse a shot of vintage wine.

Demetri offers the best of the best after all. The only thing that puts me at ease is that I know the bastard drank the wine too. I watched him do so making it safe to say the wine isn't poisoned.

Sunshine seems to be managing the conversation with Demetri too well. I see her smile. The same smile that she gives every guy like it's free candy on Halloween.

A minute later, Demetri escorts the Little Nurse out of my vicinity and I would react if it isn't for the fact that Maximo hasn't given me the clear I need to take down any man I want in this room.

The other reason happens to be the fact that I'm occupied.

With him.

“It's a small world, Volkov. What? You think you are the only one who wants to hear what Demetri wants to say?”

Dante Keaton asks, showing his usual smug bunny teeth that make him think he looks smart.

The truth of the matter is, Dante Keaton has never been smart. He might happen to be the biggest douchebag I've met and trust me with my line of work, I've met a lot of them.

“I didn't know he was inviting low lives too is all.”

Dante chuckles. I take a sip of the piss wine.

What's taking Maximo too long damn it?

“Always arrogant, Volkov but then again what I can expect from a stuck-up Sicilian heir. I was the head of the Chicago mafia before you invaded my turf, maybe our Russian friend recognizes who I am and who the thief is.”

I made the Chicago branch better than what Dante had and that's a fact.

“I should stick to politics if I were you. Business and greed don't work hand in hand Keaton. I might be stuck up but at least I'm not the one botching business operations all in the name of crying over spilled milk.”

His men shot Nico, raided my bar and all for what? Because I sell more load than the weasel in front of me ever will?

"I'm taking back what's mine. You get the saying. In three months you'll be taking what's yours unless perhaps something were to happen to you and your seat miraculously became up for grabs."

"Is that a threat Keaton?"

"A threat would be holding a gun to your head and making sure I don't miss. That's a threat, this? This is advice."

"Volkov? Damn it, come in. You hearing me? They jammed the signals. Jett found Demetri's men slaughtered. You have to get out of there. It's a trap. Dante Keaton set a trap for all of you. Demetri isn't the one going to kill you all, Dante

Keaton is. Dante..."

The earpiece in my ear loses the signal completely.

I chuckle at the turn of events.

So what? Demetri called us to a regular meeting and not a genocide and Dante Keaton wants to take advantage of all that by killing every mafia head in this room?

Well played, I didn't see that coming.

"What is it you said about threats?"

My Glock is already up and directed at the dead center of Dante's forehead.

It takes me one bullet to fry his brains out. One bullet to end him and rid the world of an asshole planning to be a senator so he can embezzle public funds properly while shipping weapons into the country unseen.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you. You shoot me and you take the fall for every man that dies tonight."

"I underestimated you this time."

"No. You became too cocky in this game. The secret to success has always been patience. Wait for the right time, the right place and moment and then poof!"

Jamie Keoghan, head of the Irish mafia drops like a bug on the floor. Dead, unconscious? I don't give a fuck as the next man that ends up on the floor happens to be the head of the Los Angeles mafia.

I don't wait for the third man to fall.

I rely on instinct. I point my gun away from Dante's face to the ceiling, shooting the lights out.

Darkness hovers around the room, gunshots rain like sulfur from the depths of hell.

Nothing worse than a group of panicked heavily armed men who sense death and are too cocky to accept it.

My hand locked on my gun, I shoot whoever I have to as I make my way down the same path that Sunshine and Demetri went to.

My mind ticks with rage, adrenaline pumps into my blood like a fix and in a haze of confusion, fury and disorientation, my mind goes back to the child back in the damn mansion a few miles from here who is expecting to see her mother tomorrow.

Little nurse dies and that child falls on me.

I can't raise a child.

Not with these conditions I can't.

The dimly lit hallway crawls with dead men, I'm almost on the verge of giving up and calling it a night when her screams punch the air louder than the gunshots.

Up ahead, trembling against the ground, hands covering her head as if that would stop a sniper from blowing her brains out, Little Nurse screams and cowers in fear.

"I expected you to be dead by now, Little Nurse. Get up, our time's up."

Her pretty blue eyes turn to face me and I swear any man would be dead from her gaze alone.

"Vicious? Vic-?"

She doesn't give me a minute to breathe.

Her shaking body wraps around my waist it hits me like a gust of wind on an already shitty night.

"You're gonna have to let me go if we have any chance of surviving the night Alexia."

Her sternum shakes against my chest. Her wet cheeks caress my neck. Her legs tremble as they hug my waist.

And this stubborn little thing? She refuses to let go.

“Get me out of here, please.”

She begs.

She hugs me.

I kill more than four men while she’s latched on my upper body like a baby monkey to its mother.

The only difference is this wild monkey is scared as fuck.

Every time I fire my gun, her body only captures mine further. The more she clutches my body, the more my sanity and my blood rush all the way to my dick.

We make it out of Demetri’s house with me covered in blood and Sunshine’s hold around my neck enough to choke me.

“This is the part where you let go and run to the car.”

“No...I don’t think I can. One wrong step and they’ll kill me. I can’t die like this. I can’t die here. I can’t leave Millie.”

“No one is dying. All I need is your little feet running to the car while I cover you. I’m right behind you, Sunshine. I promise.”

Maybe it’s the blue eyes.

Maybe it’s the adrenaline and the thrill of having had to shoot my way from Dante Keaton’s men.

All I know is as I watch my nurse run to the car in five-inch heels, I swell with pride.

‘Run like the flash, sunshine. I’m right behind you.’

Ensuring no men follow us, getting rid of the earpiece that has proved ineffective in contacting Maximo, I get in the car.

A few minutes later, Sunshine and I are on the road.

Except everything on the road looks too blurry, the steering wheel in my hands feel like Jello, Alexia shouting my name feels like a distant wail.

Before my eyes shut down and I black out, I realize two things.

One, Dante Keaton spiked the vintage wine and knowing him, he probably did it with poison.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 13

ALEXIA BROWN.

The first time I watched Fast and Furious on the piece of crap Tv I had back then, the movie franchise had thrilled me.

The car chases, the gun scenes, the totally impossible stunts that were out of this world but nonetheless made the world seem like it could be conquered.

I'm not denying I watched the movies because of Vin Diesel or The Rock but somehow those movies made me dream.

Made me dream that maybe if I wasn't a nurse barely have finished my residence, in some alternate world I would have been a spy or some cool badass chick running from the cops in street cars and all that.

Well right now?

After having bullets fired on top of me and men dying faster than candles on a disastrous Tinder date around me, I realized that the Fast and Furious movies lied.

Getting shot at wasn't fun.

Negotiating with Russian men who looked more like the Russian mob wasn't in any way thrilling or all of that spy espionage the movies preached about.

And lastly whatever Vin Diesel or Dominic Toretto did with his cars didn't apply with cars of this century or of the real world.

Not at all they didn't.

I'm not going to lie that the whole night had caught me by surprise.

I'm also not going to lie and say Christian Volkov didn't save me today.

Because he did. He shot men without blinking without even telling me to get off of him because I was slowing him down.

Granted this whole night was his fault but after some slash of bad luck, I thought said bad luck wouldn't catch up to us.

But it did.

One minute my hands were shaking against the car seats, my head leaning against the passenger window and the next minute...

I don't know when I realized we were goners.

Maybe it was when I asked, "Do you see them? The black SUV behind us? I-I think they are following us."

Volkov didn't answer which was strange.

He liked ignoring me but he should have said something. Anything.

The next time I called his name, Christian's eyes were already half closed. The hold he had on the steering wheel was already weak leaving me the totally confused driver with the out-of-control vehicle.

I didn't get to touch the steering wheel because the SUV following us picked up speed and in mere seconds, they were driving side to side with us against the slick tarmac covered by sleet.

"Volkov?"

My attempts to wake Christian up only grew futile.

The next time my lips parted to scream Christian's name, the SUV rammed into us swerving us off the road, all the way to the snow, all the way until the car overturned, until my screams sounded like hollow wails and my eyes flashed before my eyes.

And when life flashed before my eyes all I could think of was of my baby girl.

My baby girl.

Icy liquid hits my cheek, the smell of oil burning with something dastardly like metal flogs the air and assaults my lungs.

My throat stings in pain and the urge to exhale the air chokes me.

My eyelids flutter open in panic as I cough out liquid after liquid that looks red in the snow.

Oh God.

Pain bites every part of my body like termites feasting on nearly dead flesh. Every vessel in my body feels like it's working overtime in trying to keep my heart alive and beating in the middle of all the freezing cold.

I cough some more. More blood expels from my mouth tainting the white snow.

As soon as the realization that I'm coughing up blood hits me in the chest, my hands meet the snow underneath and I attempt to stand.

"Ah—Ah."

"Your leg was jammed up pretty badly, Little Nurse. Any attempt to walk on it risks you never walking again and I don't need to be a nurse to know that."

My eyes follow his voice.

Volkov. Alive, definitely with torn clothes but alive.

He stands before me, his back to me, his eyes ahead of what is in front of us.

I look around too, memories of what happened assault every working cell in my brain.

No. No. No.

"We had an accident. Those jerks they...ran us off the road. You were unconscious. I thought we were...how?"

How am I sitting on snow?

How am I alive?

How is he standing?

"Thought I was dead too. Turns out Dante Keaton isn't a coward after all. Bastard spiked the wine with sedatives instead of poison."

I don't understand half of the things leaving his mouth.

My heart is lurching all the way to my stomach as I examine everything around us. And everything around us?

Yeah, it's snow alright.

Miles and miles of snow and up ahead the only thing I see is trees that are too frozen with icicles to provide any warmth.

We are in the middle of nowhere Russia.

Millie. What'll happen to...

"Where's the car Vicious? What happened to the car?"

His hand stretches out and he points in the east direction.

What happened to the car? It exploded. Its smoke can be seen like a beacon from outer space itself.

I start to panic. My nerves turn erratic.

I never liked snow. I don't like Russia either. I don't like the man who's not facing me either.

"Y-You did this! Your stupid plan with Demetrius, Duncan whatever his name is, caused all of this! And now we are stranded in the middle of nowhere. Do you not understand how much trouble we are in right now? Right after I begged you not to come to Russia?"

You've handled situations like this, maybe a million times but I haven't. You might want to die but I don't because I have someone waiting for me. I should have never agreed to any of this."

The tears I've held back since Demetri and his 'you are coming with me' words hit me come flowing down my cheeks.

I would have already been dead if someone didn't start the shootout.

Demetri would have chopped me to pieces but it doesn't matter now, does it?

I'm already dead. Here in this ice desert with this ice-stoned heart douchebag.

My eyes are on the snow, on my leg that has a gnashing cut that stings.

A second later the snow on the ground in front of me gets colored by drops and drops of blood as Vicious squats in front of me.

His icy hand clutches my chin, leveling my eyes with his fierce ones.

"Calm your frozen titties down because no one is dying. Well except me if you don't remove this crappy metal off my shoulder, little Nurse."

Shrapnel, a piece of the car itself is lodged inside his left shoulder. The blood surrounding it makes it worse.

I gasp before I even ask what's obvious, "You got injured?"

"Yeah, no shit. I need you to take it out."

Take it out? Taking it out means him bleeding out and I don't even know how deep it's lodged in there.

"You'll bleed a lot if I do."

"A little blood never hurt anyone."

"Are you seriously quoting the worst line ever said by men when you have a piece of metal rammed in your shoulder? A little blood will hurt you. You'll lose a lot of blood if I take it out!"

He stares at me like I spit in his favorite cigar holder. Then he takes a few steps away from me gazing down at me like I'm a pest.

The man doesn't think for a second, doesn't even breathe in preparation for what he's doing; his right hand clutches the shrapnel and he pulls it out in one go smirking.

Smirking at me? At the pain? At the situation?

"Can't carry you with a shrapnel on my shoulder. Let's hope for both our sakes I don't bleed to death before we reach the safe house."

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 14

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

The wound stings like a bitch.

My hand is applying pressure to it as much as I can but we both know none of that is going to stop the bleeding.

What stings worse than the wound? The snowing. The sleet. The five foot woman who's stubbornly refused my help with her leg injured pretty badly.

I trudge through the ankle deep snow, stopping against a pine tree under the pretense of taking a breath when she and I know, I'm waiting for her.

It's almost sunrise.

We've been trekking for almost two hours with no rest.

Rest means risking getting found.

Rest means running into wild animals that might just be hanging around the corner for the next prey.

Rest means getting hypothermia and with the dress, the Sunshine Blonde is wearing, I'm surprised frostbite hasn't caught up with her yet.

And maybe I'm being an ass but her catching frostbite means less weight, less responsibility and karma serving her back for some of that 'I don't need your jacket or your help, I'm fine'.

The fur coat is keeping her upper body warm but her lower body?

She's definitely freezing. She's not fine.

By the time she reaches up to me, her mop of sunshine blonde hair is a mess. Snow, branches, cobwebs. I didn't know cobwebs existed in this hell of a place but apparently, she found them.

Her small hand clutches the tree, her short breaths look like her panting from where I'm standing, she winces when she lifts her injured foot from the snow to look at her wound.

The wound on her ankle has advanced to swelling in her right leg.

"Need help?"

"You asked me that ten minutes ago and what did I say?"

"You were fine."

"Then I'm telling you ten minutes later, precisely right now that I'm fine."

"You don't look fine to me, Little Nurse."

"A man who fails to take a nurse's advice on not bleeding himself to death shouldn't be the one pointing fingers at who's fine and who isn't. How far is your safe house?"

Probably a mile. Can't trace it because Maximo's already gone away from it by now.

She raises her brow, "Is there even a safe house?"

I almost chuckle. Other women, I would have left them to die but this one? She straight up challenges me and that in itself is conflicting.

“You are welcome to walk the other way if you think I’m walking us around a damn ice forest for the fun of it.”

“You could be delaying our deaths under the guise there’s a mysterious safe house in the middle of nowhere.”

“There’s no delaying death. When it comes, you know it, you feel it inside you.”

I’d felt it a couple of times. Only, it refused to take me along.

“How do you know there’s a safe house? Just answer me this and I’ll be quiet. I’ll walk for another four hours if need be.”

“We are on Demetri’s property, the accident happened on his property. Maximo and Jett are supposed to be in the safe house, if they haven’t left yet anyway.”

“Wait, you are telling me you have a safe house on the property of the man who almost killed us?”

Demetri didn’t try to kill us. Might want to though, but I entertain her all the same.

“Yes. Don’t we all?”

“No. No, we do not all have safe houses in the middle of the property of some deranged Russian psycho with guns.

That’s like saying you have a house built near the white house.”

The thing with this woman, she panics when she’s troubled. Talks a lot too.

“You are tired.”

“I’m going insane too in case you haven’t noticed. You are driving me insane by acting like we are in Disney land and not here where nature is against us, our bodies are against us and I think I heard a wolf howl a few minutes ago so let’s add animals ripping us apart to the list of the things killing us today while we are at it!”

I tramp through the snow in her direction, the sound of snow getting crushed echoes in the air.

I tower over her.

Five feet of nothing and she’s been dragging us down the whole trip.

Five feet of nothing and she’s been throwing every thought that comes across her mind to me without thinking twice.

Five feet of nothing and I'm ensuring she makes it to the safe house whether or not I make it.

She's just that. A five-foot woman glancing at me with blue bedroom eyes that want to decimate me into a churned burnt crisp.

"No one's dying."

"I don't think that's your choice to ma..."

"Say it with me, no one is dying when I'm here."

"No one is dying," she repeats and punches me in the gut.

My hand reaches out to her cheek. To caress her? To wipe tears that don't affect me in any way?

No.

I touch her tangled hair, feeling its texture and that texture would feel right fisted around my knuckles as I watched taking her from behind.

I'm losing it.

I'm losing too much blood that the majority of it is directing itself to my cock and leaving my brain with nothing but a few scruples.

"Hop on my back, Alexia. Now."

It's an order.

Not this mellow back and forth chit-chats we've been having.

This time I'm serious.

She's wasting time, I've got no time to lose.

She blinks twice, she licks her lips. Submissive and sexier than before she breathes out, "Okay."

One word.

A breathless okay and I cuss inwardly for having brought her to Russia.

Because now?

That safe house will be me and her.

Sunshine and my darkness.

Her sassiness and my seriousness.

Her unfiltered words and my impatience for them.

That combination in itself is worse than Demetri figuring out I'm on his property.

Frankly speaking, I'd much rather duel to the deaths with Demetri Sokolov than be shackled up in one room with Alexia Green for more than a day.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 15

ALEXIA GREEN.

Russia is unrelenting.

The winds blow right at us carrying the sheer cold that makes my cheeks go numb. I can't feel my toes either and that might be a sign my body has stopped resisting the cold.

The chances of hypothermia clawing every cell in my body, I loop my arms around his lean neck the more.

He doesn't speak.

Doesn't even groan at the wound that throbs the more he walks and the more he carries me.

Deep down, being afraid and all, a strange feeling settles in the pits of my stomach maybe because I'm starting to understand this man more than I should.

He doesn't feel anything because he's not allowing himself to.

Almost as if the very thing supposed to make him feel is hollow. And I know his heart is made of stone metaphorically speaking but right now?

His ugliness seeps into the air and I smell it and it almost makes me want to cry.

I've hit rock bottom so many times and each of those times I allowed myself to feel. To cry, to break something, to shout and call my ex a 'bloody pig' for everything he did.

This man however?

Vicious trudges on in the snow as if he's not about to die.

His jaw is locked too tight like he's crushing his molars inside his mouth but other than that? His face reveals nothing.

No pain, no anger, nothing.

Two steps in, my eyes are on his dark silky hair. The one that now falls to cover both sides of his forehead.

Has anyone ever touched your hair, Christian? A woman, a friend? Just anyone?

My eyes slowly fall to his cheeks, hardened by years of scowling, probably getting angry most of the time and you'd think someone who was angry most of the time would have an ugly face but not him.

No, he's as handsome and as intriguing as a black cat and I'm not even a fan of cats.

Did your mother caress your cheeks when you were young? Did you allow her to do that in the first place? Were you loved as a kid? How'd you turn out to be like this?

How'd you turn out to be 'Vicious'?

"You are not speaking. That makes me believe you are either dead or staring."

His voice startles me adding new hives to my already cold skin.

"I'm not dead and pretty sure you wouldn't want your nurse dead either."

I hold on to his working shoulder. The one that feels like a ton of bricks lined up together and sculptured to mold a mountain of a man.

"There are many nurses out there, little Nurse."

The way he says Little Nurse every time frustrates me but there's still something about those two little words that feels fuzzy on the inside.

"Then you should have left me in the car to die if there are many nurses who'd willingly work for you."

"Are you saying I'm not an easy man to work with?"

"You said it yourself, not me. I'm here and not in Chicago because of you so yeah, I think you are not an easy man to work with."

“I’m carrying you.”

“You are carrying me out of guilt.”

After you’ve countlessly scared me half to death with threats.

Vicious doesn’t reply. Instead, I feel his back straighten and his eyes glance at something far off.

Covered with snow and next to a huge willow tree, the small cabin blends with everything and if you didn’t look close enough, you’d almost miss it.

“The safe house”, I exhale.

Christian confirms my suspicions by taking a couple more steps to the small cabin. Thirteen steps later and he slowly drops me on the small stairs leading up to the cabin.

I watch as he taps something by the side of the door and some sort of digital key card asks for a code.

One shoulder bleeding, he uses his other hand to tap in the code and the sound of the door clicking roars louder than the wind.

“Come on.”

The cabin might be ugly from the outside but on the inside, it looks like a modern apartment from Manhattan.

Expensive leather couches, a kitchen blended with the living room that has almost everything including marble counters, a sink, a kitchen island, two cookers and a two-sided fridge.

Christian barely looks around as he storms inside the small house with his shoes on and a bigger scowl than when he ordered me to hop on his shoulder.

“Are Maximo and Jett here? You said they would be...”

“They are not. They left.”

“Okay and what does that mean for us?”

“We are stuck here unless I get a signal for this”, he waves a black talkie in the air.

Throwing it on one of the couches he disappears down the small hallway where I’m assuming the bedrooms are.

He shows up a few minutes later with a duffel bag and a red first aid kit in one hand.

Except this time, the man towers over me shirtless, a bleeding wound on one shoulder and his suit pants hanging lowly on his torso you can almost see the V lines escaping inside his pants.

If he sees me ogling, he completely ignores it because as soon as he throws the duffel bag in my direction mumbling, 'Clothes', he moves right to the kitchen, dripping more blood as he moves.

I take the bag; I open the zip and peek inside to see the clothes.

My clothes feel almost wet, I should be removing them from my body and wearing the very large sized t-shirts from inside the bag.

Instead, my feet scurry to the kitchen and the image I find there almost pains me.

Vicious sits on a kitchen stool, the first aid kit opened, a needle in his other hand as he tries to reach his shoulder.

My hands catch his before he can continue with the futile attempt of trying to patch himself up.

"Let me do it."

I'm almost pleading.

Did the last doctor do this for him or did he just patch himself up to avoid human touch altogether?

"No."

Ouch.

"I'm the nurse. This is literally what you brought me here to do."

"I didn't think I would get hurt. You were here to treat Maximo and Jett if they got hurt."

"You are not a superhero Vicious; you could have gotten hurt too. Actually, you did get hurt so why don't you quit being a big baby and let me look at your wound?"

His gaze bores into mine and I almost feel his wrath.

His legs, the ones that feel and look humongous trap me between him. I'm standing between his thighs, he either accepts my help or we stay in this uncomfortable situation for hours.

“I let you look at my wound and you’ll end up getting hurt. Any time anyone inflicts pain on my body, I react. I won’t think, I’ll react.”

It takes his brown eyes and the fury flashing in his eyes to understand what he’s telling me.

I peruse through every moment I’ve been with this man.

Every time he’s reacted and done something out of the usual norm for a man as evil as him.

Like the time he choked me when we first met. When I told him I didn’t know where Rhett was and he reacted by choking me like a madman.

I didn’t hurt him then. Or did Rhett hurt him and me not telling him about Rhett’s whereabouts provoked his reaction?

The second time he reacted was when he choked me back at the store. After I had just slapped him, after I had hurt him.

Ooh.

“Who stitches you up when you are too wounded to do it yourself?”

Why do you hurt people when you get hurt? Did someone hurt you? I want to ask all of that but I don’t.

“Maximo.”

“Do you hurt him when he does it?”

“Yes. He can take a punch or two and you can’t.”

If he punched me, I’d probably die on the spot.

“We have to stop the bleeding and you need not to hurt me while I’m doing so. That’s why I’m going to recommend a distraction.”

“A distraction?” he asks surprised.

“Your body reacts that way because you are stuck reliving a memory. A memory of someone probably hurting you so any time a different person hurts you, you think it’s the same person and you react. A distraction keeps your mind from reliving the past and focusing on the present.

Focusing on me and realizing I’m not gonna hurt you. At least not intentionally.”

His eyes which have already gone wide glaze over my eyes, over my nose and settle for my lips.

The action itself makes the apple of my cheeks flush and burn with scorching red heat.

“What distractions do you propose?”

“You can tell me jokes.”

“I don’t joke.”

“I could ask you some questions umm about you or the weather or something of the sort.”

“Not distracting enough”, he grits.

The bleeding isn’t stopping and the more I fail to disinfect the wound the higher the chances are of my debt collector dying tonight.

“Well then, what do you propose?”

“Touching you will be a good distraction.”

My spine goes ramrod straight, my heart pounds in my mouth so much so that any attempt to swallow saliva would choke me.

“Vicious, I-“

“I’ll not cross any boundaries.”

He coos in his dulcet voice and I almost melt even in this zero degree weather.

I look at the wound, I look at him.

I should let him die. But he saved me.

“No crossing any boundaries.”

I warn him.

I pick up the needle and the bottle of disinfectant.

His eyes light up like a Christmas tree as his uninjured hand pulls my waist to him.

When I’m close enough to touch his wound, his left hand sneaks up my dress, caressing my thighs and leaving a trail of hot lava stinging my skin like pinpricks.

I feel his palm, huge and warm, against my butt.

“A thong underneath this dress? You are killing me right now, little nurse.”

I guess his hand caressing my butt is distraction enough.

I start assessing the wound, at the same time all too aware that if his hand goes inside that thong, he'll find it wet and soaked.

It doesn't help either when he pinches my butt and I moan like a woman who hasn't been close to the male species for years.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 16

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

Talking about the weather after she called me a big baby would have had me snapping her neck in two faster than she could stitch me up.

Telling each other jokes was like pretending I gave a shit about the Arctic wolves in Alaska.

The amount of blood I was losing was messing up with everything. My brain, my sight, my strength.

The only thing that was keeping me sane for every five seconds was her voice, her scent, her sunshine blonde hair up too close to my face.

So I asked what I wanted since I saw her.

A piece of that ass.

And Rhett?

Yeah the scumbag didn't deserve this woman in the least bit. Not that I deserve her either but there's no denying there's something to her that penetrates through my skin.

She smells like lavender. She smells like what a woman sent to destroy you would smell like.

All things good, all things seductive and definitely all things that would stray even the mightiest from their thrones.

“Just one more, okay? You are doing fine.”

She assures.

A look of pity and pride lights her face.

My sanity might be already in the gutter but my ticking brain, the one that calculates and expects things to happen in a certain way is so off its mark, I think I might have lost too much blood to think right.

My hand just found what nirvana feels like.

And it feels like soft, creamy skin, lacy panties and enticing heat.

Her ass, her thighs, the smell of her arousal isn't the only thing distracting me in this room.

I want to haul her over the counter and rub that goodness between her legs all over my mouth.

I want to turn her over and take her from all the positions her little body can endure.

I want to kiss her and smudge that red lipstick off of her till she understands what being kissed till those lips swell means.

More than that?

I want to fuck her and be done with this obsession I have with my nurse.

“There, all done. That should stop the bleeding until we can get a way out of here. Vicious? I think it's time to let go now.”

Half aware, half thinking, I pull my hand away from her dress and her scent fades away from me before I can assess whether she's done with the job or not.

“You should take the antibiotics for the pain but make sure they aren't expired.”

Then she glances at me for a minute before she disappears to the living room.

It takes about five minutes for common sense to knock into my brain and remind me that every minute spent with this woman risks the chances of me damning myself to hell and thinking with my dick.

I can't touch her again.

If her ass felt that good, her lips, both lips, might be strappingly better.

I can't let her touch me either because she's the forbidden fruit. Rhett's ex, who also happens to have his baby.

Let's not forget the minor detail that I'm using her as bait for Rhett.

Or the fact that she's a civilian who knows nothing about the type of work I do. The type of work that contradicts what she does.

She saves lives.

I enjoy taking lives.

She's with me 24/7 because I need her ex. I'll have no use for her once I have Rhett Kingston.

I'll have no use for the child either.

The child who is with Jagger and damn we have to get out of here as soon as we can.

She's changed into a shirt that barely reaches her thighs coupled with ankle-length mismatched socks.

Surprised to even say it but this woman could wear a scarf on her head and she would still look gorgeous.

"There's one gun under the armchair. The other one is strapped to the edge of the first cupboard in the kitchen. In case you fail to reach that, there's a rifle under the bed."

"I don't...I don't know how to use a gun-." Her voice quivers.

I take the Glock in my hand and place it on her hand, "Remove safety, aim, fire."

"No, you don't understand. I am not waiting here for men to come and find me when I barely know how to aim straight or use a freaking gun! I'm coming with you."

"I have to get a signal to contact Maximo. Your foot is injured, you coming with me risks us both ending up dead."

"What if you end up dead? What do I do then?"

"You will not."

"Take me with you. Just don't leave me alone."

“You’ll be fine. Stay put, wait for me, do not open the door for anyone. You hear me? No one goes in through that door except me. I know the code to get inside meaning I won’t knock on the door or ask you to open it for me.

Now, tell me where the guns are Little Nurse.”

“Christian, please- “

The first time she said my name. I am tempted to kiss her.

I’m also tempted to go back to the kitchen with her frame between my thighs and my hand caressing her sweet ass.

“Alexia”, I warn.

“Under the armchair, strapped to the first cupboard in the kitchen and under the bed.”

“Good girl. Do not open this door no matter what.”

CHAPTER 17

ALEXIA GREEN.

“Good girl. Do not open this door no matter what.”

I should stay. He’s right.

I’m injured. Both of us traveling to wherever he’s going to get a signal on his walkie-talkie is a big risk.

I could slow him down or worse, we could both end up dead.

With all that information in my head, my nerves still swallow me whole and spit me right out.

I’m not a ‘good girl’.

And not only am I scared to death but I’m scared of Demetri and his men finding me here and shooting me long before I know how to remove safety, aim and fire.

I don’t stay.

I don’t follow his rules.

I wait till he leaves.

Twenty seconds later, I walk as fast as my injured leg can to the bedroom. Once in the bedroom, I don't look at the room twice or anything for that matter because I kneel on the floorboards, peek under the bed and find a hunting rifle strapped to the bottom part of the bed with tape.

I take the rifle.

Thirty seconds later, I tie a wooden spoon against my injured leg. That should be able to help me walk in the snow without difficulty.

Fifty-five seconds later?

My throat feels desert dry as the night greets me like an old friend.

The gun in my hands feels heavier than the boots adorning my legs or the snow that's falling harder than earlier.

What's even harder?

Following Christian Volkov in the middle of the night and trying to stay hidden.

The man moves like a lumberjack accustomed to the harsh weather of Alaska.

Except this place isn't Alaska but a place so much worse.

Eyes straight, never stopping to rest, his gun set on one hand, Christian Volkov moves like a machine.

We've been trudging against the snow and the harsh weather for what seems like an eternity and so far, I feel like the amount of sweat my body is perspiring is enough to drown an entire island, my back hurts, my lips are chapped and my heart is beating erratically against my chest at the chance of being caught by Demetri, a wild animal or worse, the guy I'm following.

The guy who told me to stay put in his fancy safe house while he made sure we got out of here.

"DiMarco? Shit, come in...Coordinates: the safe house you left with no water and no food! Jagger? Ten-four, come in?"

Fuck."

Vicious' echoes shake a few birds from the trees.

From where I'm standing, hiding behind a tree with a rifle in my hand, I can taste his frustration.

He stops walking.

He taps his walkie-talkie twice then stops.

I think he's given up.

I should rush back to the safe house before he knows I followed him all the way here.

My feet barely touch the snow before new noises fill the air.

It's not me. It's not Volkov.

How do I know? Because I don't speak Russia and the men speaking into the night are definitely Russian and they are headed this way.

Volkov angles his head in the direction of the men's voices.

Like a predator, he waits with his gun barely lifted and his talkie on the other hand.

Like a prey, I'm shaking at my hiding spot.

'Run, Christian. Hide. Just hide!'

The idiot doesn't hide.

The noises only get closer and the weather grows angrier. The fear clawing my neck has paralyzed me on the spot.

A few trees get snapped out of the way, the sound of snow getting crushed by heavy army boots resonates in the small space between Volkov and me before everything turns to hell.

Two men appear in front of Volkov.

Big like Demetri. Ferocious like your typical Russian mobsters. They are Demetri's men and they are heavily armed with more guns.

I should have carried the other two guns from the kitchen and the living room.

They are going to kill him.

They are going to kill me.

Buzz cut number one, the one whose hair is blonde and has a gnashing scar on his chin says something to Volkov.

Volkov chuckles and my head swims, all my thoughts swirling in one direction. His laugh is as burning as his touch.

Then as if my boss couldn't get any sexier enough, he opens his mouth and speaks Russian.

The first dude, Buzz cut number one, chuckles but his smile is a condescending one.

The telltale pulse of dread travels up my neck.

What happens next happens so fast, I barely have enough time to take my rifle, hold it well and aim it at the two Russians.

One of the men has his gun locked and loaded on Volkov's forehead.

The other guy tells Volkov something between the lines of 'say your last words' and 'time to meet your maker' in Russian.

My hand flies to my mouth.

This is it. This is how he dies and how I'll die. This is how—

Time slows in reverse.

One minute Christian is about to be blown his brains out and the next, he yanks the gun from Buzz cut number one.

Before Buzz cut number two has a chance to react, my boss doesn't blink, doesn't even think as he fires his gun shooting the man between his eyes with his other gun.

Like he's playing Russian roulette, he aims the second gun at the man who was about to kill him shooting him in the head.

Both bodies fall to the ground like logs. Their blood taints the snow with dark red.

The scream I'm trying to unleash dies down my throat. They are dead. He just—just killed them.

In my moment of getting shaken to the bones by the blood and gore, I stare at Christian who is wiping blood off his talkie like he just killed a bug.

Except right beyond Christian, I see the men hiding behind the trees, the men who are loading their guns to spray him with bullets.

Oh no. No.

He killed two men but there are like six men about to kill him.

Vicious might have killed two men in less than a minute but he can't handle six men alone.

I can't watch him die.

"Remove safety, aim and fire."

His words rack my brain.

I steady the rifle in my hands.

God, I can't do this. I can't kill anyone. I can't protect him.

I point the rifle with shaking hands in Christian's direction.

All I have to do is to aim at the target.

I see three men already holding their guns up at a clueless Volkov. Yeah, I can shoot them.

I remove the safety, at least that's what I think it is, I place my index finger on the trigger, I aim at the target and then?

I fire the gun.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 18

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

"Boss wants you alive but Dante Keaton? He pays us better and he wants you dead, friend."

"The great Costa Nostra heir has been reduced to this. Weak because of grief. Tell you what? We'll put you out of your misery and grant you the wish of seeing your whore of a sister back in hell."

The two men were going to die by my hands as soon as I sensed them.

I was meant to torture them, use them as examples for the other six men hiding by the bushes of some sort.

These two men crossed the line. I reacted and the men lay near my feet in pools of their own blood for mentioning my sister.

Demetri sent eight men to capture me. Two traitors. Six cowards.

A total of eight men.

That's the math going on in my head, there are supposed to be eight men out here in the night with me.

My mind didn't predict one possibility though.

And that one possibility presents itself in a spray of bullets heading in my direction and feminine screams piercing the air.

She fires bullet after bullet like a madwoman.

I duck out of the way, but the six men? The six men supposed to deliver a message to Demetri?

They all meet the snow one after the other as their shooter reveals herself from behind a tree.

With a grey hat on her head, her hair getting swayed by the wind at the edges, an oversized peacoat eating her up and big boots covering her legs...wait is that a spoon tapped to her boot?

The little minx never lets go of the trigger.

Her screams never stop.

Her terror of shooting without looking at where she's firing only comes to an end when she runs out of bullets.

"Did I get them?"

You got them alright; you killed them all damn it.

I'm already up on my feet and whatever calmness I had established a few minutes ago dissipates into the air like vapor.

Snow stretches between us, wind hollers between our distance, my anger fills to the brim.

“You were supposed to stay back in the house.”

Instead, she followed me and I couldn't get a whiff of her scent, her stubbornness or the lies flowing through the teeth she's showing me right now.

“You left me all alone. What if they made it to the house and shot me?”

“You shot them. You killed them.”

You killed Demetri's men. Any chances of negotiating with that fucker after killing eight of his men are close to none.

Her blue eyes filter past me, her rifle – she had to take a rifle out of all the guns in the house – drops to the ground as she takes two unsure steps toward me.

“No, I-I didn't. I meant to scare them not-.”

“You shot at them with the intent to kill. Not twice and certainly not thrice.”

Your bullets might have already killed any non-existent wolves that exist within a mile radius.

“I'm not you”, her voice quivers. “I didn't mean to do that.”

I should be less of a dick.

Yet right now she has me seeing red at her stupidity, her stubbornness and her defiance.

I know she's not me.

I've touched her ass, I've smelled her innocence, I've seen the child this woman has brought to the world.

And everything about her is pure.

Her hands are the hands of a healer, not a taker. Not like mine.

She couldn't hurt a fly If she wanted to but I don't make her feel that way.

Making her feel better is the least of my concerns right now.

“This is what happens when you think you know fucking better. The rule was simple Alexia, stay, wait for me but that's too hard for you to...”

Warm liquid trickles down my neck, touches my shoulder and wets my shirt.

I touch my neck, my fingers come out red.

“Christian-“ her pretty voice calls me but the world spins.

Every damn time she calls me ‘Christian’ something shitty happens.

Her hands are already on my coat, covering my chest as the whole world spins.

Her breath hits my chin, I gaze down at her and utter the most ironical statement I have ever spoken.

“You shot me in the neck.”

“Your stray bullets...hit me on the neck.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 19

ALEXIA GREEN.

“I need the code, Christian. Please just give me the code okay?”

His body lies limp against the wall of the cabin.

The hand that’s covering his neck has turned red, his face is already pale matching the color of the atmosphere, the color of my face; matching the staccato beating of my heart.

“Y-You shot me”, he slurs like he can’t believe it.

I can hardly believe it either because this was not what I intended to do.

There are six men, he was one man.

They are going to kill him.

I have a gun, I thought I could...

I killed the men.

I almost killed him.

My attempts to try to open the door dash into the ground like my hopes, I move away from the door.

I kneel where the six foot man is trying to hang on to dear life and I sob.

“I’m sorry. I’m so so sorry. You should have never come back for me. You should have never taken me as Rhett’s replacement to pay his debt because I’m jinxed. I need the code to the door, Christian. You could die if I don’t look at that wound. I want to fix you, please let me...let me fix my mistake.”

“Cat?”

He hallucinates.

My hand touches his cold cheek.

“Alexia. It’s me, Alexia. Your little nurse? Work with me, Volkov. Just this once please, work with me.”

It’s hard to even admit it but I miss him calling me ‘Little Nurse’.

Right now in this situation, the nickname doesn’t sound too bad.

“Cat. Catelina’s...birthday.”

“Catelina’s birthday is that the code?”

He nods. He looks like he’s fading into nothingness and I don’t want him to.

He is my kidnapper but the thought of him dying makes me want to chop my heart out with a serrated blade.

“42...99.”

I’m on my feet, my fingers working fast to input the code.

Once I input the code, the door lock clicks and I smile with relief, “Thank you. Thank you!”

Dragging him into the house is almost as difficult as dragging him across the snow while he was half alive, half conscious.

Christian mutters a couple of things in his delirium, by the time I drop him on the couch, I’m already panicking trying to salvage as much equipment as I need to patch him up and look at the wound.

Is the bullet still lodged in his neck? No, he should have been dead if it did.

Did the bullet slightly graze him? Even if it did he's lost a lot of blood and for a man his size I'm pretty relieved that his strength is keeping him from joining the eternal pits of hell.

The antiseptics I used earlier to stitch him up are finished.

The only close antiseptic I could use right now is the bottle of Martell in my hands. The only thing that was in the fridge.

Maybe while I'm at it, I could drink myself out of this disaster that has my hands shaking and my throat quivering with a fresh bout of tears.

"Okay. We are okay. We can do this. We made it here, getting you better is nothing difficult. Oh God, please save him.

Help me. Help him-."

My shaky hand lie on his hand as I try to pry it out from where he is applying pressure to his bullet wound.

His veiny hand doesn't let me touch him.

His body's reaction is to fight me even when he's half conscious.

I'm about to beg when the sound of static and a groggy voice filters between us.

"Volkov...Vol...kov. Come...in. Volkov, can you read me?"

Is that the walkie-talkie?

My eyes zero in on the device in Christian's other hand.

Oh God. He didn't leave the talkie after I shot him?

He didn't lose it?

I grab the talkie.

"Anyone? Anyone there? Can you hear me? Maximo? Jagger? Jett?"

"Where's Volkov, Nurse?"

The voice smoothes in like bland music on the radio.

It doesn't matter though because whether or not Maximo is disappointed that I'm the one answering and not his boss is the least of my concerns.

“He umm...he’s occupied. We are in Demetri’s property. Some kind of safe house in the middle of nowhere. Come get us!”

“Where’s Volkov?”

Dying in front of me.

“Injured.”

“Shot?”

“Yes. Do you not hear me right now? We are in Demetri’s property! His men found us, they can find us again. Retrieve us from here, please.”

“Who shot him?”

“Why does it matter? Your boss is injured!”

“He’s dealt with men far worse than Demetri’s men. No one could have shot him. Riddle me this, Ms Green why are you the one talking to me and my boss is shot? What really happened?”

“I—I shot him. Accidentally. I was trying to protect him and things got out of hand.”

I wait for the line to go dead or for Maximo to tell me he’ll eliminate me and the child that’s with him at the moment.

The man chuckles.

A two minute chuckle that would be funny if I wasn’t scared.

“Is he dead?”

What?

“No. What sort of question is that?”

“Can you fix him?”

Yes. No. I think.

“I’m trying to.”

“Fix him. Demetri will be there by tomorrow to get you both out.”

“Thank you. Thanks so much for...wait did you say Demetri? Demetri’s men attacked your boss, why would he come to rescue us?”

“You are in his property. There’s no way I can take you out of there without him seeing me. The boss understands this.”

“The boss is shot! God, the boss is...”

“I understand this is hard for you, Ms Green but every minute we waste here is another minute Volkov nears his death.

Get to work.”

“Okay.”

“Do you need me to stay on the line?”

“Yes. Please.”

I need someone to make sure this is real and that I’m not in some type of crazy dream with men with guns and a Russian psycho out to end us.

“Very well.”

Volkov is practically shaking by the time I get his hand away from his neck.

The wound that meets my eyes is gnashing but not a bullet wound.

The bullet grazed him.

“I didn’t shoot his neck.”

“You aimed for his neck? My day keeps getting better and better.”

Maximo laughs like the whole scene is comedic and not brutally cathartic.

“It’s a graze wound. I can stitch him up.”

“I have to warn you, Nurse. He gets grouchy when he gets hurt.”

“I know. He’s told me. Right now he’s too hurt to get grouchy, I think I can do this.”

I start cleaning around the flesh. The minute the cotton soaked alcohol touches his flesh, Volkov flinches.

Then a second later, he continues mumbling, “Catelina. Cat. Cat.”

“Do you wanna hear the child?”

I’ve already started stitching and my hands still.

“Millie? You are with Millie?”

“I’ve had the child with me since I started this call.”

I thought she was with Jagger.

Maximo is a hell lot worse because he gives off broody mercenary vibes.

“Where’s um Jagger?”

“Handling business.”

“And Jett?”

“Handling business too.”

What business?

“How’s Millie doing?”

I’ve missed her terribly. We’ve never been away from each other for this long.

“She’s asleep. She senses you are not here because she has been crying.”

“Did you feed her? I pumped some milk for her before I left. It’s not enough but it should have gotten her this far.”

“Fed and changed her diaper. The child’s fine. How’s Volkov?”

Maximo changed her diaper? And fed her?

I have to get to my baby. And fast.

“I’m down to the last stitch.”

“Good. Keep him alive. See you later.”

“Wait let me say goodbye to my daughter. Maximo? Maximo?”

The line goes dead.

I huff in annoyance.

With blood stained cotton wools around me, a half bottle of alcohol near my knees and bandages all over, I contemplate the thoughts of drowning in alcohol or sleeping on the ground and calling it a night but the man on the couch doesn't give me a chance.

Volkov starts shaking again, his hands grab the fabric of the couch in his fists almost tearing it away.

When the back of my palm sweeps his dark hair from his forehead, feeling his temperature, it's almost high enough to burn my skin.

"A fever? You battled your way here, there's no way a fever is taking you, you hear me? I won't let you. I hate you but I won't let you die. I won't let you do this to me."

I take off his coat, leaving him with his dark shirt that's straining to hold his body together.

My hands work on his feet, taking off his army boots and leaving him with his socks.

I head to the one bedroom in this hell of a place to get a few blankets to cover him and when I come back to check up on him not only is the man shaking but he's sweating so much so that his t-shirt is soaked and drenched in sweat.

"I have no choice", I whisper to no one.

As fast as I can to get him better, I peel his clothes away from his body.

Taking off his shirt is the most difficult thing at the moment, lifting his head up is like trying to lift a boulder but I manage it.

I take his pants off too. And his briefs and socks.

I'm not going to lie and say I don't take a look at his body because I do.

His body is a meshwork of perfection and imperfections.

Tattoos peak from his ribs stopping near his chest.

Every time he shakes and inhales, sweat coats his body and his scars become as visible as the lump in my throat.

This man has gone through a lot, hasn't he?

What's the meaning of his tattoos? Or the skull tattoo that's inverted on the back of his palm?

I want to touch him. Why? Because I think I can erase his scars?

Christian Volkov looks like the type of man who doesn't need a woman to wipe away his scars.

I'm not the woman to wipe away his scars too because I'm broken and unworthy.

Taking the blankets, I cover him up.

He stirs on the couch, muttering incoherently, "You promised! No, find your way to me! Cat? Catelina! No! You are not...not following him. Y—You are my constant. The only good thing. Cat? Cat please."

He calls this 'Cat' person with emotion, my heart tugs at his pain.

Who's Cat?

Why is she not here?

He loved her. You can feel it in the way he calls her out, the way he says 'please'.

He's never said the word 'please'.

Never even thought a man like him could beg.

I sympathize with the man who brought me here to Russia, my hands brush his stubble and his cheek.

"You are having a nightmare, Christian. You have to fight the fever."

"Catelina?" His voice softens.

My heart falls to my stomach at the affection he has for this Catelina.

"No. Not Catelina. Little Nurse."

"Little Nurse?" His voice turns raspy.

"Yes, yes I'm here. It's me and I'm telling you we are going to make it."

"Come...here."

I shouldn't move to him.

I should clean up, watch his fever and pray he makes it out alive.

Instead the part of me that feels a tad bit guilty for his situation wins.

He's still cold.

He'll need a warm body to keep him warm.

He'll need me.

I take off my coat and boots.

I pull the long black shirt above my head, getting rid of it.

My panties and bra are off of me too and down to the carpet.

Biting my bottom lip apprehensively, I pull away the blanket.

I join the naked man on the couch.

I let his hands pull my waist closer to his body.

Together in a country I don't want to be in, with a naked man I loathe, I sleep knowing tomorrow might be worse.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 20

ALEXIA GREEN.

"I've lived in an orphanage my whole life. I'm just one of those people who didn't have parents that could love her enough to keep her.

Our warden used to say my parents were rich folks because I was left on the orphanage's door all dressed and pretty in fancy clothes.

I was four years old I think. Funny enough I can't even remember my life before I got to the orphanage.

I can't remember my mom. Can't remember if I had a dad or siblings.

Did you have a family too, Volkov?

Of course you did. You look like you do. A brother? Parents?

Anyway when I turned eighteen I was kicked out of the orphanage. I was too old to live there I guess.

And you want to know what they gave me? Fifty bucks.

Fifty bucks to get myself a job and take myself to college. I thought I was done for but then I met this woman, Lisa Collins.

I'll never forget her. She helped me get a scholarship to med school and I thought my life would be okay from then on.

Except it wasn't the same because I met Rhett. I fell in love with him because he was the first guy to show me love.

I betrayed Lisa, got out of med school, ruined my scholarship because Rhett told me he'd provide me with everything I needed.

And now I'm here. Paying Rhett's debt and giving my baby a life she doesn't deserve because my whole life has always been jinxed.

If you keep me around, I'll ruin everything you've worked for.

I've already shot you. I probably ruined your deal with Demetri too. Let me go. Please."

His nose bumps my forehead, his shaky breath hovers over my lips.

His hands, the ones that feel like steel around my back, bring me closer to his chest the more.

Almost as if he's scared I'll disappear if he doesn't hold me closer to him.

My boobs are smashed against his chest.

I can feel all of him everywhere on my skin.

His legs are tangled with mine, his stubble is tickling my cheek, his hands have me caged, I can feel his length tickle my thighs but I ignore it because he's sick.

I might be sick in the head too for jumping on this couch but I don't regret it because he sounds calmer than he did before.

"Stay. You promised. Stay. You'll never leave. I'll not allow it."

He's talking to Cat again, isn't he?

"You don't mean that, do you? As soon as you get better, I'm pretty sure you'll choke me for hurting you and lock me up in your dungeon."

"Stay. You are never leaving, Little Nurse", he murmurs.

But I hear him.

He is delirious with a fever and I latch on his words the way a kid does with candy for the first time.

I trust him.

I believe he wants me to stay.

And the feeling that comes with his words, travels down my spine in a shiver going all the way to my curling toes.

I hug him. I kiss his neck.

I pray for Christian Vicious Volkov to get better and get us back home to Millie.

xXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXx

He's gone.

The minute I open my eyes, I feel his presence away from me.

Sunlight flitters inside the cabin, the freezing cold bites my cheeks as my eyes wander to the empty space next to me.

The empty space that has me feeling a bit more pained than I like to admit.

The mess I left yesterday on the floor is gone and so are his clothes.

Looking around the cabin, I push the blankets away from me and grab every piece of clothing I own from the carpet.

"Volkov?"

He's not in the kitchen.

What's in the kitchen however is a plate of eggs and bacon left on the counter for me with a note inscribed on it.

'Eat.'

There was no food last night. Where did he get the food?

He's not in the bedroom either.

"Volkov?"

Oh God, did he leave me alone?

I scurry to the door and the voices on the other side stop me.

Russian.

They are speaking in Russian and both voices are so familiar it fills me with dread.

One of them is Volkov.

And the other? Demetri.

Demetri's here.

I push the door open, wind slaps my thighs and I shiver inwardly.

Brown eyes spear mine.

Blue-dark eyes take my outfit in.

I'm dressed in a t-shirt above my knees and socks. Nothing fancy but the look that Volkov gives me is enough for me to wish the ground broke and swallowed me whole.

Demetri looks at me and smiles a full on demented smile.

"The woman is awake."

Demetri is alone. No men. No guards. Just him alone.

I see two jeeps in front of the cabin. Each of them heavily barracaded with armor designed to stop bullets.

"Go inside", Volkov orders.

He's back to his usual grumpy hot self.

Looking like he doesn't have a stitch on his neck or another stitch on his shoulder beneath those clothes.

But more than that?

He acts cold. So cold, my heart grieves.

"You are okay", I mumble.

"You are supposed to be inside."

“Give the woman a break Volkov. Yebat, you are as dense than usual, friend.”

Demetri’s Russian ascent sounds less scary than his face. Or than the day he wanted me dead.

“We are not friends”, Volkov quips.

Demetri’s eyes are back on me. Menacing and unyielding.

“I’m getting you and her out of here, that makes us friends, no? She will want to be my friend after we talk.”

“No”, Volkov answers for me.

Honestly speaking, I don’t want to talk to Demetri either.

He scares the beejesus out of me.

“It’s a good thing you are on my property then, isn’t it Volkov? This is not Chicago or Sicily, I am not your lackey, I am not Dante Keaton. I call the shots here.

Miss Green, can we have that talk now? Meet you at the car right there.”

Demetri doesn’t give me a chance to speak back, he trudges out to the snow, all the way to his Jeep.

Then the man leans against his Jeep, his eyes on me, daring me to do what he has just asked or else it’s over for me.

“Get your coat.”

“I don’t want to talk to him. He’s the reason we are in this mess in the first place.”

“You fail to do what he says and he kills you. I won’t stop him.”

Because we are in Russia because he couldn’t care less?

“What does he want?”

“I don’t know, Alexia. What did you tell him when you saw him last?”

“Are you insinuating something? You told me to seduce him, he didn’t give me a chance to seduce him because he wanted to kill me. I didn’t tell him anything. How could you think I...I flirted with him?”

“Get your coat and boots.”

I get my boots and coat.

Not because I like it but because speaking to Demetri somehow seems to piss Christian off.

And since I'm pissed off by his attitude it's only fair that he's pissed off too.

"You saw something you shouldn't have. That means I either kill you or let you off with a warning", Demetri starts, my eyes go wide.

I didn't see anything. Except men firing at us.

"I didn't—"

"You killed my men too."

"They were going to kill us if I didn't."

"I can't kill you. I can't retaliate because your boss over there will start another pointless war. So what do I do with you, woman?"

"Let me go? I didn't see anything that's worth mentioning."

"But you saw her."

Demetri's eyes gaze dead cold into the snow ahead of us.

"The woman? You called her 'malyshka'."

"Beautiful, baby whatever you Americans call your partners. She is my partner. She is my better half. She is my what do you people say? Soulmate. She dies and Demetri will wreak havoc on the world, on you and your measly life."

"I don't understand. I don't even know who she is."

"That's good, Alexia Green. And I want you to keep it that way, forget you saw her, don't mention her to anyone. Especially and most especially, him."

We both glance at the man standing outside the cabin, looking at us like he wants to tear us to pieces.

"You don't want me to tell Volkov about this woman? Why?"

"It's none of his business. Do we have a deal or don't we?"

"Only if you get me out of your country and promise to leave me and my boss alone."

He chuckles, "I'll leave you alone but your boss and I have business together. The kind of business that won't end because you don't want him in danger."

"Fine."

When Demetri leaves in one of his jeeps and leaves the other one for us, I walk up to the porch.

Back to the man angrily scowling at me.

"What did he want?"

"He wanted me to work for him", I lie.

I won't tell anyone about malyshka. Not that anyone would be interested anyway.

"What did you say?"

"I said no."

"Good because you are not leaving until you repay every damn cent your ex owes me."

Yesterday he told me to stay with a different tone. A tone that had my delusional heart pounding hard against my chest.

Today he is telling me I won't leave but with a completely dead tone that has my insides swirling bitterly.

Did I do something wrong?

Except sleep naked with him all night.

Did I do something else wrong?

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 21

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

'I was four years old, I think.'

'I fell in love with him because he was the first guy to show me love.'

Her words were so distant I thought I was having a nightmare and she was trying to keep me awake.

I am not having a nightmare though.

I am not completely sure how we ended up in this situation but here we are.

Here we are after she disobeyed orders, walked out of this place, followed me and shot me in the neck.

Being alive doesn't surprise me at the moment.

Like I said, I've given in when it comes to death only for it to leave me behind in this wretched world.

What surprises me this morning?

Her.

All of her on me. Too close for my liking. Too in my face to push her off.

Pain stings my body from all the joints. What pains me more?

Her hand wrapped around my length without a clue in the world.

I'm hard. Not morning wood but harder than I've been in my life.

Her blonde hair splays all over my chest, the top of her head touches my chin and the rest of everything is worse.

Our legs are tangled in a meshwork of a lookalike web.

Her tiny hands. Jesus Christ, her tiny hands are wrapped around my torso in a firm grip.

What has me stop breathing for a minute?

Her pussy.

Soft, lush, hugging my leg, gripping me in between her legs with innocence and not a care that a man like me could do the unthinkable in this situation.

Her scent fills my nostrils.

All I breathe is her.

All I see is her.

All I want? All I want is my little nurse with me like this on a freaking bed teaching her a few manners with my—.

“Damn it”, I groan.

She shot me and all I can think about is her in bed with me.

The bullet might have short-circuited my brain but I’m not sticking around long enough to let her get inside of my head.

I need to keep away.

Keep away from her mess, her beauty, her sassiness, that dirty mouth and everything that encompasses Alexia Green.

I give myself a few minutes to let her scent wash off of me but the few minutes are eaten by the sound of the knocking from the door.

“Demetri”, I mutter.

It was only a matter of time before he showed up. After all, we killed his men.

Taking her tiny hands from my waist, I try to pull them away from me but the brat not only squeezes my dick but my waist too.

“Alexia.”

Wake the fuck up.

She snores.

Her lips land on my chin.

Gently, the one thing I’ve never been, I take her small frame from me.

It takes a whole five minutes to get myself together.

Another five minutes not to want to jump back on that couch and have the best sleep I’ve had in my shitty life.

"You owe me eight men, Volkov."

Demetri speaks to me in Russian.

"Two of them worked for Keaton", I close the door behind me, the Russian fucker smirks at me like we are not rivals.

"You owe me six men then."

"You here to get payback for the mess at the party?"

"I'm here to know why you have a goddamn cabin on my property and I'm learning about it now and why you sent your woman to distract me."

She's not my woman.

I chuckle, "You're not as stupid as I thought, Sokolov."

"I'm stupid with a gun, trust me. And right now my gun's itching to be let out and finish you where you stand. Let's try this again, shall we?"

"You arranged a conclave. Sent for every leader in the States and Europe to meet you. Why would the Bratva do that?"

"You thought I wanted to leave everyone dead? I'm unhinged but that sounds cowardly. I deal with enemies the way I deal with women, fast and direct.

If I wanted you dead, you would know. But it seems Dante Keaton wanted all of us dead huh? He blames the massacre at my house at you. The bastard's already yapping that the Costa Nostra heir wanted every mafia head dead."

Of course he is.

"Killing you would make me sleep like a baby at night but I wouldn't need to resort to cheap antics to do that."

"I thought so too. Everyone thinks so too which is why Dante remains a problem."

"Why did you want all of us in Russia?"

"To strike a deal."

“What type of deal?”

“It doesn’t matter. With what Dante Keaton pulled, everything is as good as dead. Which is why we want you taking over Chicago.”

I’m already in charge of Chicago, Dante Keaton has only ever been a loser thinking he runs the city when the truth of the matter is; I do.

I don’t give my answer.

The door creaks open.

Five feet of sunshine blonde hair comes into sight.

Her pretty blue eyes land on both of us.

My eyes are on that pretty face of hers that’s too damn distracting and at the creamy thighs peeking from her shirt.

I get to see that.

I get to see those thighs.

You slept on my arms naked for God’s sake, those thighs are mine.

Mine. Mine. Mine.

Demetri snickers. I can see his eyes peruse her like she is his next meal and I want to rip said eyes out of his skull myself.

She’s not mine.

Get your act together. She. Is. Not. Yours.

“The woman is awake”, the bastard next to me says with the worst English I’ve heard in a while.

I don’t return eye contact, I barely want to acknowledge her.

“Go back inside.”

Demetri is not going to look at those thighs while I stand here whether she’s mine or not.

But this woman?

This woman has a knack of surprising me every damn time.

Why?

Demetri demands to speak to her.

And they speak alright. Like they are lost lovers reuniting in the snow and discovering the moon is not made of cheese but rocks.

I'm seeing bright red stars by the time Demetri leaves and she returns to me.

"What did he want?"

"He wanted me to work for him."

She lies.

That's the thing about being close to people all your life. You see through their bullshit straight away.

And this one is just like any other average person I've encountered.

A bad liar.

Untrustworthy.

Not worth my time if she's working for Demetri hard enough to lie to me.

Does she find him good looking? Is that the reason why she is lying?

Is he better than me? What did he promise her? Money?

Does money get your loyalty, Alexia?

I don't ask that. I play daft.

"What did you say?"

"I said no."

"Good because you are not leaving until you repay every damn cent your ex owes me."

I don't speak or look her way when we get to the jeep.

I only stare intensely at her when we get back to my mansion in Moscow and she practically flees the car to get to her daughter.

"Mommy's home. I missed you too, baby. So much. Has Millie been a good girl for me while I was gone?"

"She cried for a few hours but our buddy Max here had her calm. Isn't it Maxie?" Jagger wiggles his brows.

"Call me Maxie one more time and your balls will be grilled in a skillet."

Alexia bites her bottom lip holding back from lashing at the language being tossed around near her child.

"Don't cuss", I warn Maximo.

"You got shot. By her", he mutters loud enough for me to hear but not loud enough for the rest to listen in.

"Wipe that smirk off your face because it was a cheap shot. Didn't see it coming."

Didn't catch her scent or hear her coming either.

"The Volkov I know sees cheap shots coming. The Volkov I know doesn't get shot."

"I was as surprised as you are too."

"I'm surprised she's breathing and Demetri let her live in the first place."

Demetri didn't kill her because she's secretly working for him.

Why? How? I'll find out.

Soon enough.

"Thank you, Jett, Jagger, for taking care of her", she turns to us, her eyes at Maximo, "I know it wasn't easy taking care of her but thank you too."

Maximo pulls up a grin, "It was my pleasure, Nurse. Always my pleasure."

What?

He doesn't even like kids.

He hates them almost as much as I hate Jett's stupid hair.

Little Nurse doesn't look my way and I know I'm ignoring her but her ignoring my presence chews me raw.

"If you'll excuse me gentlemen, my baby and I—."

"Alexia", I cut her off.

She stills.

She looks at the smiling baby but not at me.

"Take a shower, pack your clothes, I'll stay with the baby."

Millie is her kryptonite because Little Nurse's worried blue eyes land on me.

"I have to feed her, she's probably hungry."

"You are in need of a shower, the baby will wait. In my arms."

"Vicious I—."

"Take the damn shower. Your child will be waiting for you when you are done. We'll be heading home."

She hesitates.

But she walks up to me, handing me her baby.

Then her feet stomp upstairs and I don't know what's worse?

The fact that I don't want her to take my scent off of her body in that shower.

The fact that I want to join her in that shower.

Or the fact that I know all her features by heart.

Those boobs, heavy, full, supple.

That back. Ramrod straight. Could easily fit in my hands.

That hair; silky and long and fragrant.

Those legs. Creamy, toned, pretty.

“I want surveillance on the clubs, Dante might try something to ruin us because I’m not dead.”

“I’m taking that’s your way of telling us to leave?” Maximo asks.

Millie holds my thumb, smiling.

“Yes. Now.”

My men leave without a word but I don’t miss the look on Maximo’s face.

‘Go easy on the Nurse.’

I’m planning on nothing but easy after this Russia fiasco.

Everyone’s gone.

I’m standing in my living room with a kid so fucking cute it’s almost impossible to want to give her up.

“Believe it or not, I kept her safe for you kid. You need a mother to breastfeed you till you are big enough to feed yourself.

Your mother and father are cut from the same cloth, Millie. One is a coward who’s a dead man when I catch him and the other one? Your madre is a traitor, kid.

I show her kindness and she switches her loyalty to Demetri. I couldn’t blame her though I’ve been bad at being good since I was old enough to hold a knife.

The masks are off, Millie. I wouldn’t be a Vitello if I showed your mother mercy.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 22

ALEXIA GREEN.

Russia feels like a distant nightmare by now.

Why?

Christian Volkov hasn't stepped into the house since I saw him last at the airport.

Since he kissed Millie on the forehead, smiled, ordered his men to get me home and hopped in a black vehicle, disappearing.

The only signs I have that he is alive and well is...

"You can't keep doing this. I know it's your job but this is getting out of hand. You've barely had time to rest for weeks", Juana complains feeding Millie her bottle of milk.

I wipe the hair from my daughter's forehead.

As long as my baby is safe, everything else is okay.

"I'll rest later. I'm fine, Juana. Really, I'm fine."

"Being pale and stitching men twenty four seven does not look fine to me. You are pale and thin and the idiot doesn't seem to care while he runs his businesses God knows where."

"Juana—" I start to warn her.

Her eyes are scalding hot when she says, "I might be his servant and I tolerate a lot of the things he does but this is unacceptable. Vicious is out of his mind."

Before my throat can open up and release lies from my mouth 'that I'm fine and I'm doing okay', the doorbell echoes into the air.

The sound is enough to wish that I was in a coma and not in this hell of a mansion.

I have already treated around seven men today and it's barely five o'clock.

Yesterday they were fifteen.

The day before, a lot more than fifteen.

Smiling weakly despite Juana's approval, my feet shuffle to the door and when I open it another bleeding man stands on the other side of the door.

Oh God.

Now this...this is working for a million dollars.

If I keep working like this maybe I'll be able to pay Rhett's debt in two months or less.

Twenty five minutes later I'm adding gauze to the ribs of the blonde-haired guy who looks like a kid trying to play gangsta.

"What really happened? This cut is so precise it doesn't look like you got it in a bar fight."

The kid rubs the back of his neck awkwardly.

"Thanks for patching me up, Doc but I really have to go."

I discard my gloves.

I might be exhausted but that exhaustion is slowly starting to delve into anger.

"Do you know how many guys I've had bleeding in here today?"

He nods a 'no'.

Hands on my hips, my left foot tapping the ammonia squeaky clean floors, I give him the truth.

"Seven but I guess that makes you the eighth one. Hell I bet by the time I get to bed, I'll have seven more men to stitch up.

Wanna know the most interesting thing too? Every man that walks through here has the same precise cut. Not enough to cause damage or God forbid death but enough to need stitches.

The way I see it someone is setting me up with a tremendous workload as punishment and you are going to tell me who."

Because I'm freaking tired of this.

It's my job yeah but why punish me like this?

Why do this to me, Christian?

Because I shot you?

"I don't know what you are talking about—"

"Don't lie to me right now. You do not want to lie to a woman who's been cleaning wounds for a week. And worse you do not want to cross a doctor who's half exhausted half functional.

What happened?"

The kid lifts his hands in defeat groaning at the pain from his torso.

“Okay, Okay. I don’t want any trouble but the boss finally spoke to me today and I was excited.

He asked me if I wanted to train and of course I said yes. He’s the boss you’d be mad to decline a chance like that.

Rumors in the club are he’s been in a bad mood for weeks. I didn’t think he was in a bad mood when we started training but then he started saying weird stuff ya know?

That I could take punches to my face and any cuts to my body because he had a doc on the go to fix me up.”

What the hell?

“You let him fight you and cut you because he told you he had a doctor to fix you?”

“Ummm, I didn’t let him cut me. I fought him with a knife like he instructed and I ended up here.”

“The other guys who’ve been here, did he send them too?”

I don’t know why I’m asking, the answer is in the air itself.

“Boss has been the one training everyone since he came back from Moscow. Day and night, he beats the shit out of us and calls us weak. I mean we are weak yes but Jett and Nico weren’t brutal with training like he is.”

Oh God.

These stupid stupid men.

But there’s one man who’s ridiculous in all this and that’s Volkov and the control he has on these men.

What type of loan sharks are these men?

“Why do you all do this? Why want to join forces with a madman?”

“A madman? Our boss is the—.”

The sound of a phone ringing interrupts us. The kid takes his phone from his pockets, color draining from his cheeks as he picks it up.

“Boss”, he starts.

My heart skips for absolutely no reason.

“No. No, I’m done. Yeah. Okay. Straight away, boss.”

He hangs up.

His eyes fall on me.

“Boss wants to see you.”

Weeks of silence and he wants to see me?

I’d probably be lying if I said my heart isn’t pumping and traveling up my throat all the way to my mouth.

The club labeled ‘Lux’ on the outside with big neon lights looks magnanimous on the inside.

It holds more than one DJ booth, a dance floor bigger than any small apartment I’ve ever lived in, rock and punk music

flowing through the speakers, neon lights blinding and spectacular, and bar counters holding all kind of drinks any city has to offer.

Jude, the kid who brought me here, talks to the beefy security guard into letting us pass.

Two minutes later we are trudging through drunk and rowdy bodies.

Some drunk, some too high to give a hoot where the night will take them.

Jude leads me to the center of the dance floor that holds a few expansive velvet grey couches.

Maximo’s face comes to sight first and disappointment hits me in the chest.

Where is Volkov?

“Nurse”, he acknowledges me with a nod as the women who were sitting on his lap a few seconds ago disappear.

“Thanks for fixing me up, Lexy. I owe you one”, Jude winks at me, disappearing to the club too.

I sit opposite Maximo feeling out of place.

I'm wearing the same dress I wore when I last saw Christian.

The only other dress I have in my closet because I burnt the rest.

Music blasts between us.

Maximo's gaze is hard but not scary enough to bite.

"What does he want me to do?"

Why did your boss want me here if he's not here in the first place?

I shout over the music.

"Stitch him up but by the looks of it he doesn't need your help anymore."

I follow Maximo's line of vision.

Upstairs where no one else seems to occupy, where there is an opaque room made of glass, Christian Volkov takes a few steps into what I'm assuming is the VIP section.

My eyes are on the woman giddily running behind me to catch up.

She looks pretty. Real pretty with make-up, a skinny Victoria's Secret model-like figure, let's not forget the fact that she is a one hundred percent lookalike of every guy's fantasy.

It doesn't matter.

It shouldn't matter.

It matters.

As soon as I turn to face Maximo, my cheeks are lined with red fury, my throat clogs up and I reach for the drink in front of me.

I dunk the entire liquid from the glass down my throat and it burns me all the way to my stomach.

God, what is that? Alcohol? Gin and tonic? Vodka?

That's pretty strong.

"You shouldn't have drunk that, Nurse. The drink wasn't for you."

"Why did he call me here? To humiliate me? To beat ten more men up and I could patch them up while he watched?"

No, you know what? Don't answer that. I'll ask the boss myself!"

My feet are already up by the time Maximo calls my name.

I feel dizzy.

Yap that drink was not for me but I don't let a little alcohol bring me down as I climb the stairs or as I make my way to the VIP section.

A few groans leap from the other side of the room.

My hand hovers over the glass door that won't let me see anything.

Alcohol pushes me to do the unthinkable.

I push the door inside slightly.

I peek my head in, oblivious to the sight awaiting me.

No one could have prepared me for this.

His hair is the first thing that comes to sight.

Volkov is seated in a chair that's big enough to be classified as a medieval throne.

His back faces me, his thick head of dark hair meets my eyes.

He can't see me because I'm behind him but I can see everything.

I can see what he's watching.

Who he is watching.

The woman from earlier is bent over his desk. Naked, spread, her ass cheeks red. She looks like a meal placed on a plate to be devoured.

Except as her knees shake, and she lets out all kinds of moans, anger hits me square in the chest.

That anger simmers down to something fuzzy when I spot something inside her core.

Is that a vibrator inside her?

"P—please Sir. I just...want you...inside me."

Passion drips into the air like perfume and I smell it till it consumes me, till it threatens to fill me up to the brim and sink me into the ocean like the Titanic.

I want to be the one on that table.

Bent, filthy, spread apart.

But I want this man behind me, hands on my back smashing my naked form against the wood of his desk to hold me steady as he slips in and out of me.

I want this woman out.

I want to be the one watched like that with something vibrating between my legs.

The alcohol is taking over. That must be the case.

I'm not sane.

Christian Volkov doesn't speak and maybe that's what has the woman coming harder with every vibration and with every sound.

Gagged, blindfolded and bent over a desk is fun but what's more fun?

Being in the eyes of a predator.

Not knowing if the predator is going to hunt you or not.

Being scared and thrilled at the same time of what will happen next.

Him not speaking builds anticipation, builds tension, builds...

I lean against the side of the door, my hand slowly tries to lift my dress up.

I just need touch.

Touch to burn the jealousy coursing through my veins.

Touch to remind me every mold this man is made of and forget it.

"You should know by now you are mine, Little Nurse. No one gets to touch what's mine except me. Not even your little greedy fingers."

I sober up.

Panic and embarrassment coat my skin like sticky syrup.

I should...

“Don’t even think of running, Little Nurse. Do not run.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 23

ALEXIA GREEN.

Caught between headlights, not sure whether to run or stay still, my throat runs dry.

The woman bent over the desk wiggles trying to make out who Christian is referring to as ‘Little Nurse’.

Like an enigma, a force to reckon with, a man who couldn’t care less if anyone walked in and saw the whole situation, Christian stands up from his seat.

He takes his little precious time buttoning his jacket.

But when he turns around?

I’m almost whooshed out of breath.

Fiery golden eyes graze me inch by inch.

His entire body towers over me even though the distance between us is too big of a chasm to make me affected.

Run Alexia.

Run.

Run.

Run.

“You try to run and I’ll hunt you down, Little Nurse. Do you understand the concept of hunting?”

“Yes”, I breathe with a swallow not sure if he hears me at all.

“Not the kind of hunting I do, Sunshine. I’ll chase, I’ll shoot down, I’ll take so think long and hard about what you want to do.”

The naked girl.

The alcohol.

My new talent at pissing this man off.

I look him in the eye, I take in that Daredevil face that dares me to defy him.

I’ve only known one thing when it comes to Christian Volkov.

I live to defy him.

I’ll live to disobey each and every order of his because he uprooted me and my baby from our normal lives and brought us here.

To this chaos.

My feet start leading me backward.

“Alexia.”

That’s the only warning he gives me.

That’s the only word I need to hear from him to run.

I turn around, false energy flowing to the sinews of my legs, convincing me that I can run down the stairs out of the party, into a cab and straight home.

I only make it down two steps before he stops me.

My lungs burn with wasted energy.

My breaths come out quipped.

His cold hand slips up my neck serial killer-style.

His fingers dig into my skin, cool enough to give me a cold, hard enough to scar.

The darkness that is his aura and his six foot body engulf me from the back cutting off my oxygen supply, cutting off the willpower left in my legs to hoist me up.

“What is it with you and rules, Sunshine? Just why the fuck do you have to be so you?”

I don’t understand.

Please let me go.

He sweeps hair from the side of my shoulder exposing my neck as the cool air—his breath slaps me and makes me shiver.

“Doesn’t matter really. You and the woman waiting for my cock inside her have no difference.

You crave attention, seek it and pretend you don’t like it. Don’t you, Alexia?”

Why can’t I speak?

He has me in a chokehold.

His scent. His disgusting words.

“Why are you here, Sunshine?”

“Y—You called for me.”

“I called you about an hour ago and you showed up ten minutes ago so don’t give me that crap. Someone must have told you I wasn’t entertaining visitors.”

“The woman inside is a visitor.”

“She’s an easy fuck. Pleasure, not a visitor. Not you. What. Are. You. Doing. Here?”

His teeth grit, they hover near my ear, my will shatters and I melt against his chest.

“I was worried.”

I spill the truth.

You weren’t coming home, you were punishing me and I still wanted to see if you were doing alright.

“It isn’t your job to worry, Sunshine. Your job is to sight tight like Rhett’s little bitch and pay back everything he owes me.”

His words sting, alcohol might be hogging my brain and making me not act right but I'm not sticking around to be treated like dirt.

I try to pull away from his grasp, the hold he has on my neck tightens.

He's going to choke me, isn't he?

Going to exorcise whatever demons he has inside on little ole me.

"Let me go."

"I hunted you. I caught you."

"Let me go, Vicious!"

"No can do, Little Nurse. The fun's only begun."

His hands grip my waist, a second later he hauls me over his shoulder as I scream and hit his back for him to let me go.

He hauls me back into his creepy VIP room or office.

The woman bent over the desk stands up straight taking her blindfold off.

Her eyes almost well with tears, her mouth forming a small unflattering smile.

"Boss?"

"Get out."

Vicious orders.

"No. No. Don't get out, please stay. Stay."

It takes seconds for the woman to pick up her bra and g-string from the ground scurrying out of the office.

Vicious carries me right where the woman was, setting me down and cornering me with his arms on both sides of my hips.

"Put me down."

"No."

"This isn't funny."

"I'm not smiling."

"What do you want?"

His slate eyes skim over the column of my neck, to my boobs, to my tummy and then back to my lips.

"For your debt to be paid and you and your child can get the hell away from me."

"Millie never did anything to you."

"Yeah? Your fucking child holds my thumb like I'm her fucking hero. Did she hold Rhett like that? Say yes and I'll make sure that bastard dies without fingers. The child gets to hold me like that. Me only."

My brows furrow at him. At his words that are one contradiction after the other.

"Then let me go. Let me and Millie go."

"Can't."

"Why?"

"Think of it as the eighth wonder of the world. I can't figure you out. I can't make a damn prediction about you. I can't let that bastard win again."

"Again?"

I thought this was all about a stupid debt Rhett had made.

What did he mean again?

And why did it look like it pained him a lot to say that?

"You're a goddamn apple you know that? Sinful, forbidden and too complicated."

"Volkov? Put me down!"

"Why? Not comfortable enough?"

"No. I don't want to sit in the same place you wanted to fuck some woman."

His righthand lands on my thigh, a myriad of goosebumps pepper my skin like raindrops.

His thumb strokes my skin traveling higher.

Higher. My throat constricts.

Higher. My breasts feel heavy and needy.

Higher. My hands reach out to his hand to stop him.

“I told you I’d take, Sunshine. You want me to bend you over a different desk, I’ll make that happen but the reality of this night is I want to see that soaking pussy up close.

I want to see it quivering and whimpering for attention as it begs its hunter to get rid of the agony.

I want to watch you and be reminded you are nothing special.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 24

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

The thing about wolves is they fight back when provoked.

The thing about wolves is they take too when they are unprovoked.

The thing about bunnies? They act all cute and fluffy on the outside but deep inside they are vile little creatures who eat their young.

The woman in front of me might be a bunny in the cute retrospect but you look a little closer and you see her sins on her face.

A liar.

A coward.

But most of all?

A submissive and a dirty one at that.

Her eyes say no every time I breathe her way but her body?

It screams in the loudest way possible that she wants to be dominated, used and treated like a little slut.

I would do that for her. Any time of the day if I wasn't pissed about the Demetri situation.

"Vol...Volkov-", her voice whimpers as she squirms against the marble surface of my private office.

An office different from the VIP one.

An office where no one would hear her because the rooms are all soundproof.

An office where it's my darkness snuffing her flames of defiance out.

Her hands are tied behind her back and her ankles are tied against the chairs next to her.

She moves if she answers every damn question correctly.

She moves if I let her.

"Why did you burn your dresses, Sunshine?"

"Volkov...please-."

"That's not an answer. No answer means we stay like this all night."

We stay like this all night till the alcohol in her body disappears from her bloodstream.

I'm not letting her drunk horny ass out there to a bunch of assholes who would pounce on her without hesitation.

I'm no saint but I'm no giver either when it comes to her.

"I—I was mad okay? I said I would handle...Brad and you ignored me and handled him in the worst way possible."

"He's dead."

I finished him off.

I clutch the dress that I ripped off her body in my fists sniffing it, while my eyes go over every naked feature of hers lying on my desk.

And that pussy.

Pretty.

Pink.

Fat.

Gleaning with juices.

“P—please”, she begs.

Nothing like a little mouse in heat who has no clue about how to end the torture and clandestine want streaming her body like a fix.

“Why do you work for Demetri?”

The change in the atmosphere does everything to confirm my suspicions.

“I work...fo..for you.”

“Bullshit. Legs wider. Don’t hide what’s mine from me.”

Breathless, dripping, she whimpers,

“Okay.”

“What do you want Alexia?”

Because I sure as hell want to get behind you and take you six ways to Sunday.

“My own cl...clinic. A few normal friends. To pick up coffee from a cafe while I head to work...to be normal.”

Unpredictable.

I scoff.

“What do you want right now, Little Nurse?”

“R-Right now? You...to fuck me.”

“Tough luck. I don’t fuck my servants. Stand up straight, we are getting you home.”

She stands up.

Her baby blues look at me and well with tears.

“You destroyed my dress.”

“We’ll get new ones. I’ll fireproof them myself.”

“I don’t want dresses.”

“Yeah?”

“I want you.”

“That’s the alcohol talking. One cup of coffee to sober you up and you’ll wish you never asked me to fuck you.”

“No I won’t.”

“Agree to disagree. Come here, little Nurse.”

She wobbles in her heels walking straight to me like a kid learning how to walk for the first time.

When she reaches where I’m standing, the minx interlocks her hands around my torso, her face, her body, everything of hers too close.

“I’m not too drunk. I had one glass. Uno. Just one. I want you.”

No you don’t.

Can’t tell her that because my dick is too hard to want to believe the statement.

“Did the nurse arrive home safe? I saw you taking her out back.”

“I need you to get her a clinic near a coffee shop. Big enough to go under the radar with cops, legal enough to let our men get fixed over there without raising questions. Buy her new friends to work with her at the clinic.”

“I’m sorry, what?”

Maximo's surprised voice resonates from the other end of the line.

I cut the call.

I'll explain later.

A clinic away from my house and in the city is the perfect bait for Rhett.

The fucker wouldn't step anywhere near my mansion whether his woman and child are in said mansion or not.

But if they were in a clinic. Far from my mansion, in the city, Rhett would show up.

Simply killing two birds with one stone.

Give the little Nurse her wishes.

And smoke out a rat from its hiding spot.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 26

ALEXIA GREEN.

I woke up in my bed naked and tucked into bed like I hadn't spread my legs for a man who called me Rhett's little bitch the other night.

I woke up in my bed, untouched, unsatisfied and appalled by my actions.

I begged him to fuck me.

God Lex, this is why we never drink. Because a few hours later, my core yearned to see him.

When his men showed up at my house, that is, Nico, Jude and a few other guys I didn't know, I felt disappointed Volkov wasn't with them.

Nico came with the news that starting tomorrow I was going to have a new clinic courtesy of the boss.

Was he trying to get rid of me?

Trying not to see me around the house because my body disgusted him?

“Take it off.”

“Seriously? You are doing this to me again? No. You want to hear it in Spanish? Germany? French? No!”

Right now, here he is.

I’m mad and I don’t even know what I’m mad about.

His absence?

His rejection?

His rules that I’m definitely not going to follow?

“Take it off”, he commands again, one fist clenching, the other fist clenching around the coat in his other hand.

His dark shirt that’s pulled up his forearms reveals more tattoos on his arms and how the veins are about to pop because of two mere words.

Two words I’m not going to follow.

“It’s my shirt”, I growl back.

The low timbre of his voice breaks through my own cloud of rage as he corners me against the small space we are in.

“Take it off or I do it for you.”

I think I’m feeling out of breath.

Maybe it’s his eyes. Or the rage from him dripping into my system and rendering me weak.

I give in.

“You want to risk me walking naked back to my room?”

“I’ll carry your ass from here naked if you don’t stop with the sass and do as I say.”

He’s not playing.

I don’t think I can win this round.

“Can you at least turn around?”

“No.”

I huff at his macho tone.

“You’re an asshole”, I say peeling the shirt off, knowing very well what I have underneath is black cotton panties and no bra.

Bras hurt my boobs when I’m asleep so I just freestyle. I’m beginning to wish I didn’t freestyle today.

The second his eyes land on my chest, I cover myself up with my hands.

He chuckles. He places his coat on the counter.

His hands reach for the third button on his shirt.

He starts unbuttoning his shirt.

If it was day one in this mansion, I would have asked what he was doing.

I would have called him a shameless pig.

Right now, my throat parches for a taste of his skin, of his abs, of his muscles, of everything that makes this man a machine.

Oh, Sweet Jesus, I think I’m gonna melt.

When his shirt is off him, he hands it to me and takes the one that belongs to Rhett tossing it in the trash can by the fridge.

I take his shirt. I put it on me and every second I button the shirt, I feel his eyes rake every expanse of my skin and liquid heat shimmers from my spine all the way down...down...down.

“There. Are you happy now? If you are, I’m going to go back to sleep.”

“Not quite yet.”

He doesn’t block my way but he’s not entirely letting me go either.

“What do you want? I’ve already done everything you want or is there more?”

“Don’t do that, Sunshine.”

“Do what?”

“Pretend like you hate it here.”

“I hate it here”, I scoff.

I hate you.

“I’ve seen you with Juana, I’ve seen you mark your way around here and the report I got from my men after you treated them was you liked doing what you do.”

Maybe I do.

Maybe this place isn’t a complete mess like the homes I’ve lived in.

Maybe here I get to be something, I get to be used like I’m something more important than an orphan riffraff from the streets.

Maybe here Millie and I get the basic necessities like food and water.

“I like helping people”, I give him the truth.

That encourages him because this man’s heated gaze lands on me, he licks his lower lip and fleeting thoughts of what I’d like him to do with that mouth wander into that part of my brain that’s locked with a key thrown in the bottom of the ocean.

Logic dictates that I shouldn’t feel a thing. That I should run.

My body? It reacts in all the worst ways and this time I can’t hide behind the fact that ‘I’m drunk and alcohol is to blame for everything’.

My heart pounds so loud I can hear it in my ears. My breathing comes out ragged, I rub my thighs together beneath his shirt to hide and shame away the throb building and ticking between my legs like an atomic bomb about to detonate.

He hasn’t touched me yet but I feel him.

My body remembers his warmth on that couch in Russia.

Just like that night, he is the fire and he’s burning me to the point of I can feel my own skin flail like butter on a skillet.

I have to take control.

He rejected me. Well technically he did the right thing because I was drunk but still? Aren’t one-night stands done when two individuals are drunk and reckless enough to bone each other?

“So you don’t hate it here, do you, Sunshine?”

I look him in the eyes. Anything to get him to back away.

“No, but I hate you.”

Christian Volkov is equivalent to the robots big tech companies are trying to build.

He can be a robot when he wants to.

He can be a psycho when circumstances deem him to.

Right now, I think he’s a bit of both.

My words don’t do a thing to break his shell of an armor. No in fact he smirks, he gets closer, he bends his head so that his mouth is near the shell of my ear and close enough for his breath to skate across my already flushed skin.

“You might hate me, sunshine but I bet if I slid my hand in your panties, you’d be wet and ready for me.”

My pulse howls in my brain.

Any semblance of calmness am trying to showcase hangs by a thread.

“No, I wouldn’t.”

“No?”

I’m panting when I say my next words.

“After yesterday, I guess you’ll never know.”

“Because I didn’t touch you?”

“Because the only way I’d be wet for you was if I had alcohol in my system.”

I’m poking a bear and the funny thing is, I think I’m winning.

Even after I breathe in a gasp of air and lies coming out from my mouth, I think I’ve won.

My victory doesn’t last a mere two seconds.

Christian’s big hand slips into my panties. Muscle memory has me arching my back against his hard chest.

Before I can pull away, turn around and maybe slap him, his thick finger slides between my folds exploring me like a pirate finding his bounty.

“What...what are you doing?” I moan, my words come out like a weak string of jumbled words.

“Such a fucking liar. You are not just wet, Little Nurse, you are soaking”, he strokes my slit again, hovering an inch away

from my entrance, “and all this for me. All for me.”

“F—fuck you”, I stammer, his thumb pad finds my clit and he matches the throbbing emitting from my little mound with no problem.

My legs are unsteady.

My toes feel like they are on fire.

Whatever he’s doing to my clit has me gasping for air, I think I might be done for the night.

“Soon, sunshine. Soon.”

My heart plucks, I hold onto his arms as he sets me off with two of his fingers that are too thick to fit my folds, massaging that line between my core.

I whimper.

My body writhes for more.

My clit throbs harder.

My wetness feels slick against my thighs.

The sound of Volkov’s back hitting the fridge feels like something I could care less about as he holds me tight, mouth near my neck, his breath a fresh cool of mint that’s holding me captive.

“Hate me all you want, baby”, he pauses.

Without warning his thick finger plunges inside me as a reckless moan slip from my mouth with reckless abandon.

The sound of my arousal coating as his fingers slide in and out of me flogs the night and makes me hornier, makes the air hotter, makes me more needy.

“But this cunt? You hear how she weeps for me?”

Just when I think he’s going deeper, Volkov pulls his finger out of me leaving me an empty miserable mess.

His hand disappears from my panties.

His warmth disappears from my back.

My back flat to the fridge, Volkov turns to me.

His eyes dart over me, a wicked grin on his face. To scathe me more than his absence inside me, he places two of his fingers inside his mouth sucking.

“Such a sweet little thing”, he says releasing his fingers from his mouth with a pop that has me almost begging for them back inside me.

I don’t know what upsets me more, his arrogance or what he says next.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 27

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Shouldn’t have touched her.

Shouldn’t have tasted her.

Shouldn’t have coated my fingers with her damn juices.

Sinking into her tight wet heat might be the best thing my fingers have done for a while.

Tasting her, savoring her taste like a bottle of the finest wine from my motherland has my dick hard as steel and my mind an inch deep into that silky wet heat that’s bound to be even better squeezing my dick.

“I didn’t know...Boss. I thought-.”

“Thought what?”

It’s been two days out of the house.

Two days I haven’t confronted Nico.

Two days under the shower nursing a boner brought by my little nurse, my mind recalling over and over how slick she was, how good it'd feel to bury myself inside her forever and take and take till I left nothing in its wake.

Till we became one and the obsession and the torture shredded itself away from me.

“That she was single.”

“She’s in my house, kid. What gave you the assumption that she’s fair game to just anyone?”

“What did he do?” Maximo is on the verge of chuckling as he nurses himself to a bottle of Macallan 18.

“Wait did you touch her, Nico? I mean you are reckless sure but touching her? Ouch”, Maximo adds.

My hand on my chin, I can still smell the nurse on my fingers — reason number one why I don’t want to coat myself with Nico’s blood.

That would ruin everything even if he deserves it.

“It won’t happen again.”

“It won’t. You are getting reassigned today.”

“Boss, it was one mistake. A mistake I won’t be repeating. My mom is in the city, I can’t...can’t get reassigned.”

I care about Nico’s mom like I care about the kangaroos in Australia.

“Should have thought about that before you thought of taking what’s mine. Get the fuck out of my sight, Nico. I catch you staring at her, touching her, thinking you could nail a chance with her and your mom being in the city will be the least of your worries, you hear me?”

“Yes Boss. Thank you.”

Nico scurries out of my sight.

Maximo’s ass is already off my couch as he throws me an amused suspicious look.

“What?”

“You’ve been acting off for the past few days. My guess is you already fucked the nurse and you know how messy that will be or you tried to fuck her and she rejected you. Which is it, Volkov?”

I almost want to laugh.

She offered herself on a silver platter and I was the one to walk away.

She wanted me to fuck her no matter the dirty little lies she cheated herself with.

Truth was, that night, in that kitchen, we wanted to do it but I’d never beg for it because I wanted Alexia Green to beg for it, to be desperate enough to want me filling her inch by inch and still hating herself for it.

I don’t dignify Maximo with an answer. The unsubtle ringing of his phone cuts our little chit-chat short.

He picks up the call; I take the glass of whiskey from his hands and chug the rest down.

I’m off my game.

I’m twitchy.

The woman in my house is driving me crazy and I think I’m well on my way to joining the nearest madhouse.

“Xavier who? Don’t know any Xaviers. Wait, what did you just say?”

I’m pulled out of my reverie by Maximo’s straight stance.

His teeth ground in his mouth, the next time his jaw ripples, my attention is slowly diverted to him.

Last thing I need today is for things to go wrong when I already have a lot on my plate.

Judging by his stance, his pissed off look, the way his eyes revert back to me, I know for a fact things have gone to shit and I’m one bullet away from blowing my brains out.

Maximo hangs up.

“Who’s Xavier?”

I don’t know any bloody Xavier either.

“The nurse was supposed to see her clinic today. Jagger and Jett took her to see it and meet her acquaintances. Xavier is one of the people who work in that clinic.”

“Christ, Maximo. You hired a guy to work there and be her friend? When I told you to look for friends, I meant women or fuck anyone else but men.”

“That’s the least of our concerns right now. Jagger and Jett were ambushed. Couple men took the nurse and her kid.”

My body is already up from my chair.

My blood runs cold. My lungs fill with choking air.

“What do you mean men took the nurse and the child? Dante?”

“It’s not Dante.”

“Who?”

“Demetri is in Chicago. The men were Bratva.”

Fucking hell.

In a dress I recently bought her after she burned her old ones, wearing shoes I bought her, her sunshine hair is a mess.

And not just a mess, my chest rumbles with pained laughter.

The way they are seated?

In a restaurant, her eating and Demetri holding onto Millie as he wiggles a new toy in Millie’s face, one would call this the irony of the century.

A kidnapped woman having the time of her life with a Russian psycho.

A Russian psycho looking at what’s mine and thinking he owns it.

She smiles. That smile that escapes her heart shaped lips now and then and makes her light the world like she goddamn owns it.

That smile she has on the enemy.

But beyond that smile, her lipstick is smudged.

Add in that hair that’s all over the place and everyone would call me Einstein for knowing they had straight sex off the bat.

“What do you want to do?”

Maximo asks.

“Watch.”

Let the betrayal sink in.

Figure out why the hell she’s too rhapsodic for a captive.

“Do you see her smiling or is it just me?”

“Volkov-.”

“Nah, that’s a fucking smile alright.”

Demetri flags a pale waiter and with a nod, he gives Alexia the go-ahead to order more on their table apart from the desert that’s already lining the corner of her lips.

Chocolate muffins.

I didn’t even know she likes chocolate but apparently Demetri does.

The little nurse is about to bite into the chocolate smeared pastry in her hands when she cocks her head to the side and our eyes meet.

Her blue eyes go an inch wider, like a kid caught stealing ice cream from the fridge.

Those pretty lips of hers part as she drops the pastry back to the plate, pushes her chair back and straightens her dress before she walks to us with unsteady feet.

Demetri, the bulky man who looks like a stain of black in this white pristine restaurant spots me, his grin is enough to make my hands twitch, the hands he has on Millie are enough to want me to chop them off.

I should be questioning why he is here.

As far as I know, I was going to take care of Dante Keaton and Demetri was supposed to stay in his lane.

Not near Chicago and damn right, not near my nurse again.

“Volkov”, She breathes, her eyes dilating with sheer fear, her throat throbbing with a nervous swallow.

“Care to explain what’s going on here or should I skip dessert and finish the fucker where he sits?”

“Don’t, please.”

My fury skedaddles inside my body like an IED about to detonate.

I look at her and my anger rises by a thousand watts.

Is she begging for Demetri?

“Don’t what, Mrs. Kingston? Don’t hurt your boss? Don’t hurt your lover? Just what are you begging for right now, Alexia?”

She flinches at my tone, the only thing keeping me from running blind with rage is those glossy blue eyes that scream traitor.

“Mercy.”

I’ve heard that word so many times and every time someone says it, I’m taken back to the past. No one gives you mercy in this life. Absolutely no one, the sooner she learns that the clearer the world will be for her.

“I don’t do mercy. You should know that. I don’t open my doors to traitors. I don’t protect those who double-cross me.”

“Don’t start a fight here, this is not what it looks like. Dee and I were-.”

Dee? Did she just call him...Dee?

I unholster my gun from my back, a few waiters mutter under whispered voices telling the customers to evacuate as soon as they can.

I could care less about firing my Glock in a public restaurant or my name appearing in the papers.

Or that cop Jefferson Miller finding a reason to finally put me behind bars.

The little minx holds my hand, her little fingers curling around my gun, trying to stop me from doing the inevitable.

“Stop, please.”

“Why are you with Demetri? What business do you have with Demetri? Why are you sleeping around with that Russian bastard?”

Those blue eyes gaze at me like a kaleidoscope, like a glass broken into pieces and I couldn't care less.

I look at her and I see her with Demetri kissing which explains the smudged lipstick, fucking him which explains the bedroom hair she's sporting right now and I lose it.

"Stop this. Just...just stop."

"Then make a choice, sweetheart. Nothing's for free in this world if your loyalty can be bought by quick sex.

Walk back to Demetri, crawl back to his sheets or come to me where your life will be a living hell after this. No rainbows, no privileges, no unicorns just me and my demands. And you want to hear one of the demands I'll dish out to you when you crawl back to me?

I want you to scrub that man off you and afterward, I expect you on my bed, naked, prim and proper for me to take.

Make a choice, nurse."

Her hand tightens around my trigger-happy hand.

Then with tears welling in her eyes, she whispers, "Let's go...home."

"Get the child from Demetri. Take her home to her crib", I order Maximo.

I hold my nurse's hand and the gun in one palm and walk out of Seven Seas restaurant like a scorned man.

And this scorned man?

He's going to punish her alright.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 28

ALEXIA GREEN.

"You hired people to work with me?"

A cheery Millie in my arms, I almost want to sink between the men beside me as we all stare at the four individuals conversing in my new clinic.

“Technically the boss did but you need people to help you, Lexy. It’s a huge clinic you’ll be bringing Millie along to work, that’s a lot of work for one woman.”

I swallow nervously.

The clinic is huge just as Jagger says.

Metallic fancy sinks everywhere I look, a few wards separated by spick blue curtains, white tiled floors and an impeccable lighting system, to think that I own this feels a little bit overwhelming and exciting.

“I guess.”

Did Volkov do all this for me?

Even the air in here feels fancy.

I bet the air conditioners in here cost about a thousand dollars each.

“You ready to meet your new servants?”

“Don’t call them servants, Jett. They are associates, calling them servants makes me look like I’m some big boss. A disrespectful mean big boss.”

“You are their boss”, Jagger affirms.

I swaddle Millie, a vast pit of nervousness growing in my stomach.

Of the four individuals, there’s one man and three women.

One woman with a simple dress matched together with a cream cardigan. She seems likable.

The other woman is dressed in black clothes and goes for like an ‘emo’ vibe with those boots that look like the ones on And the last woman, well apart from her healthy head of brown hair, there’s nothing wrong with her.

Neither is anything wrong with the man sending me a small smile my way.

“Ok fine, let’s meet my associates.”

“Fucking finally,” Jett cusses.

My hand is already slapping his hard stomach before we take the first step, “Don’t cuss at my baby.”

“Sorry, ma’am. Ducking finally.”

Two steps in and the fresh air that dusts the squeaky-clean floor turns ugly.

Heavy boots sound behind us, tension flocks the air like a bad omen.

Jett and Jagger turn around and I watch as they each take out their guns from behind their jeans.

I don’t want to turn around, simply because I’m afraid whatever monsters standing behind me won’t only attack me but my baby.

The baby sucking that’s sucking off her bottle of milk like a greedy cute monkey you want to hold forever and never let go.

No.

This can’t be happening.

“Give us the woman and the baby and everything will go smoothly. No one gets hurt, no one dies.”

The Russian accent is heavy in the man’s tone and my ears perk up.

They want me and Millie?

Why do Russian men want me and Millie?

Are they with Demetri? No, he promised to leave me alone. He wouldn’t go back on his promise but how much do I know about the man?

“Yeah? I would say the same to you, man. Walk away, don’t start anything you can’t finish”, Jagger threatens and from my periphery I see him already raising his gun to aim.

My associates are already terrified as they look at the mess ensuing right now.

I glance at my baby.

I do the math.

If they decide to shoot, Millie and I are as good as dead.

I turn around.

The two men are Russian alright and their guns are already out too.

“What do you want with me?”

“Our boss wants a word with you.”

“Who is your boss? Did he authorize you to shoot at a bunch of people who’ve done absolutely nothing to you?”

“We are not going to shoot if you cooperate.”

“Who is your boss?”

“Demetri. Demetri Sokolov.”

That good for nothing liar!

“Jett?”

“Get behind me, Lexy. No one’s leaving, no one’s going anywhere with Demetri’s men.”

“Jett? Look at me. Please, just look at me?”

The gun in his hand, Jett side-eyes me.

“I’m carrying Millie right now. There are four innocent people behind me, if you engage someone is going to get hurt. I can’t lose my baby.”

“You are not going with them.”

“He’s not going to hurt me. I have something on Demetri and I know he’s not going to hurt me.”

“Jett, drop your gun”, Jagger’s resigned tone filters through the air.

“Are you insane? Boss is gonna kill us if we give her to them without putting up a fight.”

“We are going to die either way if we pull the trigger while trying to protect everyone here from getting shot. Drop your weapon.”

Jett lowers his gun.

Millie kicks her feet, slapping her bottle.

Demetri’s men usher me out of my clinic.

All I can think of?

Will Volkov find me in time before Demetri does whatever horrendous thing he's planning?

"Can I hold her?"

No, you cannot hold Millie.

I resign back to the chair with my baby who's almost done with the milk inside her bottle.

Confusion mars every inch of my body as I blink at the sight in front of me.

"Why are you in Chicago? Why are you summoning me with a bunch of men who have guns? We had a deal!"

Demetri looms in the dark corners of the study leaning against the wall, legs crossed at the ankles.

"I didn't want this either, Mrs. Green. Frankly speaking, America as a country rattles my body in the wrong way."

"How old is she?"

My eyes lapse back to the woman in front of me.

The woman who hasn't stopped asking whether she can hold Millie.

"Why did you bring your boyfriend to Chicago, malyshka?"

She chuckles lightly. My left brow lifts.

"So sorry for everything but malyshka is something Dee calls me. That's not my name and I think we got on, on the wrong foot."

"The wrong foot? I'm in a creepy study room where my daughter and I are captives, I think we are way past the wrong foot, miss."

Demetri snickers, "Told you, you would like this American woman."

"Don't call her American woman, Dee. It's disrespectful."

"Sorry", Demetri apologizes and I feel like I'm in an alternate universe.

Demetri Sokolov apologizing?

Who is this woman?

“Can I tell you a story?”

“Yeah?”

I breathe out but the saliva I swallow tells me this story is going to be anything but a fairy tale.

“There were two siblings. A boy born to continue a legacy and a girl born to take the family to great heights by marrying into another powerful family that would solidify the power the family had.

“The father of the family didn’t like the girl very much. He had always been an ambitious man who wanted boys to strengthen the family.

One day the girl, out of curiosity like all kids are at the age of five, went into her father’s study and by accident broke her father’s watch.

A watch that had been in the family for decades. Angry, the father seized this as an opportunity to take out his anger on the girl.

“Their mother could only stand and watch because their society was a patriarchal one. Women had no say, men controlled everything.

Before the father could hit her daughter, his only son begged for mercy. Only by begging for mercy, he looked weak in his father’s eyes...”

“Wait, wait, why are you telling me all this?” I ask.

She smiles sadly. “Because you have to understand everything from the beginning. The girl in the story is me, Alexia and this is the story of my life. Can I go on?”

I nod.

I don’t know what to say to her.

“My brother, he offered himself for punishment instead of me. He begged for mercy on my behalf and my father gave him the opposite.

So for every little mistake I made, my father locked my brother in our basement for weeks. And every Wednesday of that week, my father would go in there with his belt in hand, with his anger on his sleeve and beat my brother till he bled.

“And every Wednesday I would cry myself to sleep as I listened to my brother’s shrieks. My father said that was the only way of teaching my brother that women made him weak,

that women would only lead to his death, that he had to give up his love for me because nothing was as useless as that.

“When we reached eighteen, my brother got the courage to do what our mother failed to do. He got us out of that hellhole. With no money, no connections but two plane tickets to here, he raised me, Alexia. My brother raised me and sent me to college to have a better life than he ever had. College was college. And it wouldn’t have been more fun especially and most especially when I met my sister, Carissa.”

“Your sister? You didn’t mention you had a sister.”

And I’m a hundred percent sure I listened to her story keenly.

Malyshka’s eyes go wide like she’s trying not to let the tears fall. Demetri is already off the wall coming to sit next to her and rubbing his callous hand on her thigh to calm her down.

“I’m okay. I’m okay. I didn’t know I had a sister too. It was a huge campus; it was a huge city but what were the chances of meeting my twin sister? It was fate. Carissa thought so too. Her parents adopted her and when we did a little digging, I found out my mother gave her away during birth to protect her from my father’s wrath. My father hated me. If he had twin girls, not me or Carissa would survive. My brother didn’t know he had a sister too and I planned on telling him.

“No, Carissa and I planned on telling him but on the day, we were supposed to meet just outside our college, her...her boyfriend sent his friends to take her. I would have looked for her, I loved my sister. I was going to tell my brother everything so that he would start looking for her but...but...”

“I kidnapped her”, Demetri adds in, like it pains him to even admit it.

I’m near tears but I try to act like this story isn’t affecting me at all.

“Why? Why would you do that?” I ask.

Malyshka entwines her hand with Demetri before she looks up to me, “He wanted to start a war with my brother.”

“Of course he did”, I scoff.

Demetri liked starting wars with everyone. Including my boss, Volkov.

“He took me to Russia that night. A month later, he told me about Carissa’s death. But the surprising thing of all? My brother thought I was dead. I was alive, Carissa was the one who was dead but he didn’t know that. And I didn’t want him to find out I was alive because I fell in love a second time with Dee. With Demetri. If my brother found out I was

alive and I was kidnapped by Demetri, he would go on a murder rampage and I wouldn't want that. I love my brother but I also love this man with all my life."

My throat bobs with emotions as I struggle to speak up.

"H-how do I fit into the story? I don't know you, I don't know your brother and I don't know Carissa, sorry for her death by the way."

"Because...Rhett Kingston and his friends killed my sister. Your ex took my sister away from me."

The bomb she drops has me flinching back as I tighten my grip on my baby.

Rhett was Carissa's boyfriend?

I knew he was a psycho, a rapist but killing an innocent woman?

"I—I didn't know. I had nothing to do —"

"I know you don't. He was seeing you and Carissa at the same time and I don't blame you but Rhett for everything."

"Okay."

"But I am still going to ask for two favors from you, Alexia."

What the hell is going on today?

I don't think I can keep up with everything.

My fear has elevated by a hundred, my hate for Rhett churns my skin and worry occupies every pore in my body.

"I love Demetri so much but I also love a man who has been my shoulder to cry on for years while I was growing up. I can only hope he forgives me and wants to talk. As for my brother, he hasn't let any woman near him since my 'fake' death apart from our nanny. You are the only one he seems to listen to so I beg you of this, help him recover. Thaw that cold heart of his and teach him love is not weak. Teach him that violence is not the only thing he can have in his life. That is all I beg of you."

I might be crazy for asking her this.

My mind tries to wrap around her words and I feel a headache coming in.

"These men...who are they?"

“I need your help getting to my first love, Maximo DiMarco. And I need you to help my brother, Christian Volkov move on with his life.

My name is Catelina Sofia Volkov, it's a pleasure to meet you. Demetri has told me a lot about you.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 29

ALEXIA GREEN.

“Then make a choice, sweetheart. Nothing's for free in this world if your loyalty can be bought by quick sex. Walk back to Demetri, crawl back to his sheets or come to me where your life will be a living hell after this. No rainbows, no privileges, no unicorns just me and my demands. And you want to hear one of the demands I'll dish out to you when you crawl back to me? I want you to scrub that man off you and afterward? I expect you on my bed, naked, prim and proper for me to take. Make a choice, nurse.”

I did not sleep with Demetri.

My hair is a tangled mess because I have spent almost an hour trying to wrap my mind around your sister's confessions.

My hair's a mess because I have been running my fingers over my scalp trying to decipher what's what.

I can not leave you because your sister begged me to stick around in exchange for paying whatever Rhett owes you back.

But Rhett didn't just take money from you, did he?

He took your sister. The only thing that mattered to you and you want to know something?

Catelina is alive.

You don't have to live like this because your sister is alive.

I should say all that but I promised Kat I wasn't going to ruin whatever relationship she had with Demetri.

I'm to the point of exhaustion and tears when I interlink my hands with a steaming furious Volkov.

I try to swallow my emotions and put on a brave face.

“Let’s go...home.”

I give myself up like a pig stuffed with an apple to the mouth on a silver platter to this man.

From the coolness of the gun in his hand, and the tight hold his fingers grip mine, I know that tonight is going to end up badly.

As he puts his gun back to where it was behind his pants, orders Maximo to bring Millie home and yanks my left wrist so painfully, a few burning questions plague my mind.

Why am I tolerating this?

Why am I allowing this to happen to me?

Because of Rhett? Because he murdered an innocent girl that I feel guilty of? Because I think I can do what Catelina asked me of and heal this man?

I heal wounds.

This man isn’t wounded, no he is scarred and the difference between wounds and scars is wounds heal, scars linger and fester and mess with your body in all sorts of ways.

Scars can’t be healed.

His dark vehicle is already awaiting us by the time we exit the restaurant.

Volkov doesn’t even tip the valet as he yanks his car keys, walks me to the side of the passenger door, opens the door for me and I hop in.

A second later he gets into the car, hands on the wheel, eyes on the road, he starts driving.

All the while I look at my left wrist which has already turned red.

I try not to sob.

Don’t cry. Don’t cry. Don’t cry.

Oh God.

A tear falls down my cheek and I wipe it away only for another bout of fresh tears to attack me out of nowhere.

He doesn’t even look my way.

He doesn't hand me a tissue.

He just sits there, drives, jaw locked, eyes emotionless.

While I, pathetically crying, wanting to say so much but being restrained by my promise to his sister.

'I don't open my doors for traitors. I don't protect those who double-cross me.'

I remember his words and they sound like getting a shot of acid to my ears.

If he thinks I'm a traitor for hanging out with Demetri that means he trusted me in the first place.

This man who has been brooding, seeking revenge after his sister's death, let me into his life and trusted me and now that trust is broken?

"Christian-."

"Don't."

His voice cuts mine down before I can even go further.

So, for the next fifteen minutes, I look out the window and hide my tears.

I swallow down the bitterness and accept my fate.

My fate comes in the form of a grand hotel with gleaming windows, a height that of a skyscraper and a luxurious logo that says 'Davenport' and screams expensive hotel.

This isn't home.

I don't get to voice out my discovery because Volkov unbuckles his seat belt and hops out of the car.

The next time I see him, he's standing just outside my car window illustrating with his finger for me to hop out.

I open the door.

His cologne, damp air, the smell of rain hits me face first.

We don't exchange words.

He slams the door behind me shut, once more taking my wrist and dragging me around to wherever he sees fit.

“Mr. Volkov, welcome to Davenport. It’s been quite some time; can I interest you in-.”

“No”, Vicious dismisses the receptionist so fast, I almost flinch at the word ‘no’ on her behalf.

Her eyes fall on me and she gives me a look of pity and awe.

Couple minutes later, Vicious and I are standing in an elevator as he presses ‘P’ on one of the buttons.

The tension inside is enough to drown a fish. The rattling in my chest is enough to drown out the sound of a moving freight train.

The look in his eyes is enough to incinerate everything around us and leave ash in its wake.

And yet?

I obey.

For the first time since I met this man, I obey because I get to see the man who calls himself my boss, my debt collector, my master.

And this master has the very intent to do everything bad his twisted mind thinks of and the silly thing going on in my mind is?

If he does this, will he not be angry with me anymore? If he does this, will he revert back to being the Christian that held me in that shower, the Christian that held me on the couch in Russia, the Christian that...

The elevator doors part, Christian walks in with me and the room inside is so breathtaking I would have had time to gawk if it wasn’t his own version of a slaughterhouse.

Low hanging lights that look like they are made of cedar, a built-in kitchen by the side that doesn’t take too much space to make everything look like it’s squeezed in, the living room which is farther inside and looks like a lounge room with the light from glass-floor windows dazzling it with a modern country feel.

And the windows? I have a feeling if there weren’t stormy grey nimbus clouds, they’d give a spectacular view of the sunrise and sunset.

The spiral stairs leading to whatever it’s upstairs are also made with wood and attached to the red-bricked wall that houses a few ornaments.

Christian steps into the room.

My wrist in his hand, I walk behind him matching his lengthy strides.

He only lets go when he sits on the couch, eyes zeroing in on me and turning bland like there's nothing interesting he sees about me.

An action that stings but I suck it up. Suck it up like a buttercup, Lexy.

"Strip."

The word is delivered coolly.

But the impact it has on me?

It shatters and completely rearranges my insides.

Hands reaching out to my back for the zip to my dress. I drag it down.

The dress gets stuck around my waist where my hips start to bulge and I pull it down completely letting it fall to the ground and pool around my feet.

"The bra and panties go too, Mrs. Kingston. You've already done it with Demetri, I shouldn't have to tell you what to do."

The words keep on coming and coming.

Each word stronger than the last.

Every bit of venom spitting from his mouth, punches my inside one punch after the other.

I take my bra off.

Thunder growls behind me and I almost jump.

I shimmer my way out of my panties. Every piece of my clothing falls to the ground. Every piece of me spiraling down with it.

I'm naked and bare to him.

Standing like a prized good and nothing more.

"Remember what I said if you made the choice to come work for me for reasons, I have no clue about? Bathroom's upstairs in the master bedroom, the one with the big bed, you can't miss it. Scrub every place he touched off of you, scrub that man's filth from what's mine. When you are done, I want you in the middle of that bed, waiting for me like how a good little slave does for his master. Do you hear me, Mrs. Kingston?"

Crystal fucking clear.

“Y-yes.” My betraying voice cracks.

Christian dismisses me like a dog.

My unsteady feet lead me upstairs.

I find the master bedroom alright.

I also find the bathroom equipped with every type of body wash there is.

I step into the shower cabinet; I scrub myself clean of his touch.

But instead of Demetri’s touch?

I wipe myself of Christian’s touch knocking myself over and over for feeling like this.

For feeling like his indifference bothers me.

When I’m clean everywhere, I pick the towel from one of the racks and I dry myself.

I hang the towel back to the little hooks once I’m done.

Like I was commanded, my shaking hand finds the doorknob and the sound of heavy rain echoes from outside.

Opening the door feels like I’m hammering myself down to the ground.

Time to sit on the bed and wait for him, I guess.

Expecting to find the bed empty, Christian is already seated at the edge of the mattress, his eyes graze every inch of me and instead of the fire I saw the other night in them, I see nothing.

Absolutely nothing.

He doesn’t call me to where he is seated.

My feet take a mind of their own and walk to him.

I don’t even question what I’m doing when I sit on his lap and I feel his cold hands; the very edge of his fingertips sinking into the line on my back.

You wanted me like this?

Here I am, do your worst.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 30

ALEXIA GREEN.

He doesn't kiss me.

Yet he holds me like fragile glass.

He doesn't look me in the eye.

Yet his hands do the talking and the seeing.

He pushes my hair away from my neck, capturing it in his fist till it hurts but not enough to yank my hair from my scalp.

I don't yelp from the pain.

I moan.

Like a wanton mess, my head lolls back and I give him a view of my chest offering it for his devouring.

I don't feel his mouth on my skin.

No.

He uses his teeth to taste me.

He uses his teeth to bite me. To bite every inch of skin he can find.

When I feel pain, the cool lick of his tongue comes crushing on my skin, massaging everything away.

He tortuously builds a trail of marks from my neck till my stomach burns hot, and my head dissolves in a mixture of heat and needy passion.

One fist in my hair to steady me, his other hand explores my body like an engineer learning the schematics of a building.

I feel him on my stomach, patting my navel and doing the opposite of what I want.

I want him to go south.

I want him to end this torture.

To be done with his cruelty and we can move on.

Can I call this torture though?

If this was torture, he wouldn't go through the formalities of touching me, he would do it and be done with it.

If this was torture, I would be screaming, I would be running out of my mind trying to get him off of me.

Just like that night with Brad and Rhett and everyone who was present that day, I would scream for this to be over.

I'm two seconds away from convulsing in pleasure when his big hand takes my left breast in his grasp.

His hand completely eats my breast till he is full with it and that's not enough for him.

He squeezes, he kneads, his teeth land on my right nipple and he bites. Hard.

My body arches off his lap, doses of pleasure coursing through my body like adrenaline, like a rush that mounts the throbbing in my pussy to a whole new level I never thought I would feel.

Painfully full and pearled, he does the same to my left breast.

Biting, licking, leaving room to want more and more.

My thighs already feel slick against his crotch.

The same crotch that is covered with suit pants and is as hard as iron beneath me.

The same crotch that is poking my pussy and wanting to be free.

The same crotch my pussy is hauntingly begging for.

I'm too distracted with him licking the underside of my boobs to notice his hand disappear between us.

The next time I feel Christian Volkov, two of his thick fingers pump inside my eager pussy embedding themselves all the way to the hilt till my knees shake and my hands reach out to hold his shoulders.

He doesn't move.

Two seconds with two of his fingers inside me and I lose it.

My hips start bucking, my eyes fall down to his.

I don't speak. He doesn't either.

What he sees is his slave bouncing up and down his fingers like a greedy person who's never felt anything remotely good as this.

I don't correct his thoughts. Because it's the truth.

One finger the other night felt good.

Two fingers? They stretch me out, they hit my g-spot. They cross me to the promised land.

A spot only this bastard discovered.

Rhett never made me feel like this. Rhett never had sex with me till my insides started tingling. Rhett never found that spot that Vicious has found with his fingers only and not the real thing.

My insides shouldn't be tingling in the first place.

But I would be lying if I said listening to my pussy take his fingers in and out didn't make me weep for more.

My toes curl, I feel like peeing, my eyes hold his glaring ones and I ride out my orgasm with a staring contest going on between us.

What I don't expect next?

I don't expect this man to stand with me naked in his arms.

I don't expect this man to smack my body against a wall slightly.

I don't expect this man to grip my hips, place my thighs on each of his shoulders and bury his head between my legs.

My back arches off the wall when his mouth latches on my clit sucking it into his warm mouth and teasing it with a tongue that could go to a war of dueling and win that competition with a gold prize.

Rhett never went down on me. He said he would never kneel for a woman.

Christian isn't exactly kneeling and he isn't exactly going down on me in the literal sense but the way he eats me out has my lungs gasping for air.

His teeth grasp my little mound tugging slightly and letting it go before his tongue licks everything his fingers did for me.

Licking me clean.

He doesn't give me time to come down from a high.

His tongue is everywhere, between my folds, back to my clit, hovering outside my hole before he dives in like he could care less about me having a heart attack.

This is him seeking his own pleasure, I realize. This is him feeding off his favorite meal and leaving no crumbs.

As soon as another wave of orgasm hits me and warm liquid trickles down my legs to Christian's shoulders, spraying everywhere, Christian murmurs with excitement in his voice.

"A squirter."

I realize then and then, I might have challenged a maniac and this angry maniac might make sure I never make it to see the light of day again.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 31

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

The look on her face as I let her thighs off my shoulders steadying her trembling feet on the carpet tells me she's never done this before.

She's never squirted.

Which leads to the next question hounding my brain.

Did he not make you squirt? If you didn't have sex with him then what happened between you and Demetri, Sunshine.

Her juices soak my suit, soak every bit of clothing on me but my eyes are on her.

Looking, searching for the truth, pounding her walls in so she can explain everything better and I would stop this madness.

Her eyes meet mine, glossy, greedy, lustful.

I hold eye contact, my height intimidates her, the whole situation should scream 'I'm not stopping till she spills her guts out and tells me the bloody truth' but this woman bites her bottom lip putting up a front that looks pathetic and ugly in my eyes.

She's willing to do this for Demetri.

Everything for Demetri.

I won't kiss those lying lips.

I won't dish out sex to her like I'm her maddening in love Romeo.

This is about punishing her. For Demetri? For the lousy way I'm feeling? For the fact that despite the anger washing my insides like stinging bleach I'm a sucker for that pussy that tasted like nirvana.

That pussy that whimpered in my face, shaking for another lash of my tongue, begging to be fucked.

I'll take her.

I'll eat whatever she hands me and want more afterward.

I'll push her little buttons today till she spills her guts.

I step away from her.

Swollen nipples, marks on her chest, everywhere I could find where that bastard possibly touched her, legs smeared with her juices, hair a mess, Alexia Green looks better than the Monalisa on the wall.

I'm no Leonardo Da Vinci, but a painting smeared in dark colors as the background to show her lies and her naked form hogging eighty percent of said painting would definitely sell far more than any paintings I've seen.

Her chest rises with an inhale and every time it does, her tits bounce up and down, her nipples calling out for my hands.

Calling for touch.

I unbutton my coat, proceeding to my shirt and all the while the horny little thing watches, fists slapping the wall at her sides, eyes drawing maps on my skin.

Unlucky for her, she doesn't get to touch me.

Not with those lying hands she doesn't.

By the time I discard my pants and briefs, my dick springs free, harder than I had ever been for a woman, impatient to sink inside her and pretend my anger is the only thing that's pushing me to touch her.

To mark her.

To warn off any other man who thinks he can touch her.

"On the bed", I command.

The Alexia Green I have tonight?

She's submissive as hell.

Doesn't put up any fights.

Doesn't fight back.

Doesn't sass around.

Doesn't question that I'm taking her when I don't have to.

Doesn't question that I fully intend to sink into her for the rest of the night till my ego is humble enough to take the beating that she calls Demetri Dee and there's something going on between them I have no idea about.

She walks to the bed.

I watch that ass and that mess of a hair that's starting to dry out and feel my nerves race like a teen on meth.

Beautiful.

Gorgeous.

Too beyond pretty to explain her in one word.

That's who she is.

That's what I see when she lays back on the bed and opens up her legs like she's serving me dinner and she's proud of it.

I'll eat that pussy for dinner, lunch, brunch, you name it. Because that's how addictive it is.

Her core gleams, leaking for me, awaiting the monster that's far worse than what she has faced before.

I scout to the floor, picking up my suit jacket and reaching in one of my pockets for her white panties.

The ones she left downstairs and I greedily took them despite the circumstances.

I don't waste time breaching the distance between me and the bed, I don't waste time climbing to the bed, climbing on top of her, settling myself between my thighs.

Her eyes are eager.

Her nose does this thing she does when she's anxious, when she's anticipating.

Sunshine clutches the drift before I can even take her hands and tie them together up her head.

She offers me her wrists.

I take her wrists; I stretch her damn panties and I cuff her wrists above her head.

I touch her. She doesn't get to do that.

She's wet enough.

She's ready.

I position myself near her entrance that's calling onto me the way a siren does to a lost sailor at sea.

I seal my fate.

I sink inside her landing home.

She squeaks beneath me; her legs hug the back of my thighs holding me still.

It takes a minute not to lose my mind at her inner walls that are gripping me like a vise, not letting me go.

She tries to yank free of her wrists but they are already locked in place.

For a moment, we stay like this.

Her holding me in with her tight pussy, me getting over conflicting emotions and telling myself to move.

I have to move.

I have to feel.

Her blue eyes gaze at me and twin with tears but she doesn't shed any.

The woman's look lingers at me before she closes her eyes and nods, her tits reaching out for my chest.

'Start moving.'

'Fuck me.'

She doesn't have to say the words for me to understand them.

It's written on her face; written in that mouth she won't open to say anything.

To stop me.

I add another inch, the grip of her legs almost pokes my back but that's not why I stop.

I stop when her cry pierces the air in half.

I stop when her tears finally fall from her eyes lining her cheeks.

I pull out.

"No. No. Please just...I'm fine. I'm fine", her voice comes out like a whisper but I'm already taking her panties off her wrists taking it with me.

I'm already stepping away from her and the bed, picking my clothes up.

I'm already by the door ready to call this night over but her hand on my arm stops me.

"I'm fine. Let's...I'm fine, okay?"

"Visible tears are on those cheeks, Alexia. How far will you go to protect Demetri from my wrath?"

Her eyes fall to my feet and that's how I get my answer.

She's willing to do anything for Demetri.

Completely and utterly anything.

"I'm doing this so...that you can stop being mad at me. I'm doing this for you."

Liar.

“You want me to stop being mad at you?” I almost chuckle.

“You know what would make me feel better right now? If I didn’t search an hour for you and the child only to find you in the arms of Demetri scheming behind my back. What business do you have with Demetri?”

“I’m sorry.”

Which simplifies to, I can’t tell you.

“I thought so.”

I’m out of the room with a raging migraine and into the next room that at least holds some of my clothes.

Once I’m clad in a fine suit, my cell phone in hand, I head for the lift planning to hit some bar downtown to drown out everything that has transpired tonight.

The rain is pouring hard by the time my feet stand outside the hotel I built with Kai Davenport.

A valet brings my car around handing me an umbrella and requesting to walk me to my car, which I gladly refuse.

I snag the umbrella and I stop halfway on my way to the side of the driver’s door when my little nurse’s voice beckons from behind.

I stop just beside the driver’s side of my car, turning around to face the blonde who walks to me without an umbrella and with a dress that’s now sticking to her body in a way that aggravates me.

For a clever nurse, walking out in the rain seems dumb and reckless.

I push the umbrella to her side, the raindrops assaulting me in the process.

“Can we talk? J-Just for a moment?”

Thunder growls from above, wind breaks out from all directions littering her skin with goosebumps.

“Go back inside. Right now, Alexia.”

“I didn’t...didn’t-.”

“Go. Back. Inside!”

She’s trembling for God’s sake. Because of my words? Because of the cold?

I don’t give a damn right now because her health is the topmost priority right now.

It’s in the middle of her trembling, her teeth rattling together, her health concerning the hell out of me that I fail to do the one thing Vitello Volkov does every single time.

I don’t pay attention to my surroundings.

By the time the black speeding vehicle comes from behind me, Alexia Green shields me with her body.

Two shots are fired.

The screeching sound of a car escaping the premises rings loud in my ears.

Sunshine smiles at me, her limp body falling on me before I feel liquid, thick, red rushing down her dress.

Tainting my hands.

Tainting her dress.

Tainting the ground beneath us.

Running down her lips.

“S-she’s been shot!” I shout.

It feels like déjà vu again.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 32

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

“Pull up the security cameras, every square mile of the hotel, the front, the back, the street they took. I want everything, Kai.”

“Volkov, I’m doing everything I can since I got informed of everything that went down.”

Her blood is still on my hands.

Past memories of Catelina in my hands, losing that much blood on me haunts and plagues me.

Can't sit and do nothing.

Can't stand and watch her die.

I brought her here and no one has said a word. No nurse. No surgeon.

No update on how long the surgery will take. Nothing.

"Well work harder, damn it! Get me results! Give me a name!"

"You are not in the right state of mind right now, Volkov. You have a bullet still lodged in your shoulder."

"It went straight through."

And the other one hit her.

On the back of her neck, on her shoulder, on her spine, on the back of her head?

No. She was still gripping my hand when we got here.

She was still breathing.

She is still breathing.

"Doesn't mean you are doing fine."

"I got shot at like some pig in hunting season. My nurse is fighting for her life in there, doing fine is the least of my concerns. Give me a fucking name or escort your pompous ass out of here."

She's not Catelina.

She's not following my sister to the land of no return.

I should have stayed.

Fuck, I should have stayed on that bed.

Pacing around a minute longer and my men appear out of nowhere, the worry etched on their faces confirming what hasn't hit me quite yet.

She got shot.

She put her body right in front of mine.

The little minx gambled her life for me.

I've been shot a couple times, I have tasted death and escaped it but she hasn't.

And the irony of death?

It took the ones who didn't deserve to die and left the people who didn't deserve to live in the first place.

"Boss? How is she doing?"

"Doctor won't say shit", I cuss.

Jett and Jagger have that forlorn look on their faces.

They know like I do that in our line of work women don't get to walk away alive.

"She's a fighter. She'll pull through", Nico offers his unwanted advice but right now I bite into his words and suck up the pain from my shoulder.

She'll pull through.

My nurse isn't going down like this, not when she has a kid back in my house.

She wouldn't die leaving her kid in my custody.

And that has me chuckling painfully.

That woman would escape hell if it meant rescuing Millie from my clutches.

I try not to think about Millie. The kid is seeing her mom whether I have to fight the devil himself or not.

"Kai?"

Maximo's surprised tone next to me has me caring less that New York's most eligible bachelor has been standing next to me as soon as my nurse got inside those big theater doors at the end of the hallway.

"Flew in as soon as I heard there was a shootout at our hotel. The first shootout."

"Camera feeds?"

Maximo asks.

“Already getting sent as we speak.”

Silence falls like heavy hail on my head, the smell of ammonia and medicated stuff feels nauseating and unsettling.

The sight of hospitals, this type of environment feels like the walls are closing in.

Feels like my old doctor advising me to let go because Cat was no more.

Standing here not being able to control anything, the universe flipping a huge middle finger in my face has me losing my sanity, my grip to reality fades, Maximo rings a nurse to look at my shoulder.

A nurse that's not Sunshine.

The sooner the nurse approaches me the feeling of wanting to crush her eats me and blinds me but my mind fades out everything and focuses on one thing and one thing only.

Blue eyes, mysterious like the vast ocean that goes on for miles.

Blonde hair up in a ponytail, down her shoulders, in a mess.

Pearl white teeth smiling at me.

“I let you look at my wound and you'll end up getting hurt. Any time anyone inflicts pain on my body, I react. I won't think, I'll react.”

“Who stitches you up when you are too wounded to do it yourself?”

“Maximo.”

“Do you hurt him when he does it?”

“Yes. He can take a punch or two and you can't.”

“We have to stop the bleeding and you need not to hurt me while I'm doing so. That's why I'm going to recommend a distraction.”

“A distraction?”

“Your body reacts that way because you are stuck reliving a memory. A memory of someone probably hurting you so any time a different person hurts you, you think it's the same person and you react. A distraction keeps your mind from reliving the past and focusing on the present.

Focusing on me and realizing I'm not gonna hurt you. At least not intentionally.”

Alexia's words ring out loud in my head as the nurse who's already started disinfecting the wound does her job.

Focus on her. Focus on her recovery. Focus on the blue eyes and that smile.

Distract myself with her memories praying to the same God that took Cat to spare the nurse instead.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 33

ALEXIA GREEN.

What sucks about life?

We only get one chance. No do-overs.

No 'can I retake this scene again'?

No 'I messed up can I jump into your time machine and stop this from happening'?

Nope.

Just one chance.

I followed him out of that hotel because somehow knowing his story, the reason behind his distrustful nature, his spiteful tone had me wanting to cure him.

I was going to settle for the 'no kisses' sex just to stay with my captor.

I saw the gun gleaming in the rain and the speeding car heading towards us and I reacted.

That one chance at life?

I was ready to give it all.

No, scratch that, I did give it all.

And then the bullet hit me, then the blood splashed out of my body like a box of expired juice getting thrown in the trash at Costco.

At that moment, my life splayed right before my eyes and regret hit me.

Would I jump in front of Christian Volkov to save him again? I would.

But would I risk my chance at life knowing my daughter was going to end up an orphan? Rhett was already a lost cause and God forbid; he took custody of Millie after I was gone.

So, when I open my eyes at this very second, my body numb, every part of me stinging like hell, I take a minute to sob quietly.

I sob as I listen to the machines go all haywire with the beeping due to my increasing heart rate.

I sob when the first rays of light hit my face and I taste sunlight.

I didn't think I would get to see the light of day.

I didn't think I'd ever get to see Millie cry or turn my life around or slap Rhett a couple of times as I watched his ass getting dragged to jail for everything he did.

Once my cheeks are sodding with tears, laughter chokes me and then like a maniac I laugh at the pain, I laugh at this second chance at life and I laugh at the last face I saw before the lights went out.

I laugh at myself and at my bad decisions.

"Umm I feel like I should give you some privacy?"

My neck biting me in all the wrong ways, I turn my head at the curvy woman seated on the couch at the far end of my hospital room.

Only then do I see the flowers and the teddy bears and the fruits? All for me?

My eyes travel back to the woman with the dark hair, chubby cheeks that are rosy from what I'm assuming to be embarrassment and the killer floral dress she's wearing topped with a cardigan.

I might have been shot enough to make my memories all fuzzy but I don't know her.

And I would know her because except for the Virgin Mary look she has going on, the woman is pretty, curvy and I'm expecting her to be really short when she stands up but she is really pretty and she might not even know it.

She blinks at me.

I blink back at her.

Who are you? And where is...

Pretty Miss Cardigan stands up walking up to me with a card in her hands.

“I brought you a ‘get well soon’ card. The name’s Brenda Gibbins, we’ve not met yet but I saw you back at the clinic and I wanted to say hi before well...the Russian men showed up.”

“T-thanks”, I groan.

God, I feel awful.

“I’m one of your assistants back at the clinic and everyone has been praying for your recovery. They’ll be happy to know you are awake.”

Her smile and her cheerfulness are in contrast to everything reading on my face right now.

I’m sure I have eye bags under my eyes.

There is also the possibility of drool lining the side of my mouth.

“H-how long was I out?”

“Um a week at most but don’t worry I have been taking care of Millie and she’s doing better than-.”

My ears peak at the mention of my daughter.

“Millie?” I sit up, a headache wades in like a bee sting to the head.

“How is she? Has she been feeding? Is she here?”

“Alexia, you have to calm down, like I said she’s fine. I’ve been feeding her what I can and as for where she is, the man who came to my apartment is watching her.”

“What? What man? Why is she with you and not...where she’s supposed to be?”

Brenda chuckles nervously her fingers digging into her tote bag.

“Well two days ago, a man showed up at my doorstep and threatened to kill me if I didn’t take care of your baby till you woke up.”

My throat parches as I swallow hard to breathe out his name.

“Volkov?”

“No, it wasn’t him. I know Christian Volkov because he’s pretty famous and all plus he practically owns our clinic but no, it wasn’t him.

It was one of the men who work for him, the one with the rock star hair and the scary gaze?”

Maximo had a buzz-cut. Jagger had hair that wasn't long enough to be termed as 'rock star hair'. Nico had...well I guess normal hair?

“Jett?”

Brenda nods.

Before I can prod her for more answers, the door behind her flies open and the devil being spoken about walks in.

Jett's gaze lingers on Brenda before he stands next to her both of them towering over me and reminding me, I'm on a hospital bed.

The irony.

The nurse lying in a hospital bed. And apparently for one week too.

“Okay, I think that's all for now. I'm gonna go check if Millie needs something-.”

Brenda doesn't get to finish her sentence because Jett's hand captures hers and she squeaks.

“Not so fast, kitten.”

Kitten?

Brenda gazes at me for help.

Jett's glances at her taking in her cardigan and her dress before his eyes fall on me.

“How are you doing?”

“As good as anyone who has been shot. Where's my daughter?”

“With Maximo, outside. You'll get discharged soon”, Jett says.

I almost don't want to ask in front of Brenda where his boss is.

Why is he not here?

Did he visit?

Why is Millie not in his house? With Juana at least?

“I want to see her.”

“And you will, right after the nurses give us the go-ahead that you are fine.”

“This—this looks like a private moment. I think I should give you two some privacy”, Brenda trembles.

Jett’s hold on her wrist isn’t wavering.

“Off to meet your wimpy boyfriend?”

“He’s not a wimp!”

If sweet Brenda was pretty, then angry Brenda was on another level of beauty.

Her cheeks are on fire, whatever game Jett’s playing seems to excite him and torment her.

“He offered you so I wouldn’t shoot him.”

“You pointed a gun at us! He was nervous.”

“Men who offer up their women to a man with a gun delivering a baby are no men, kitten”

This time I’m the one to interrupt.

“Why?”

Why is Millie being delivered like merchandise?

Like an unwanted thing?

Because they thought I was dead and they had no use for my child anymore?

Jett looks at me, reads the sadness that I wear like a badge on my face and then releases Brenda’s wrist.

“See you next time, kitten. Make a tuna casserole next time I visit.”

Brenda gives me a warm smile, sending a glare to Jett as she whispers loud enough getting out of my room.

“There won’t be a next time!”

“She’s cute”, Jett chuckles.

Resting my head against the pillow, my body in knots and not from the stitches I can feel on my shoulder, I ask about the boss.

“Why is he sending my daughter away?”

“No one is sending anyone away. He’s just making a few changes after what went down the other day.”

“Yeah? What changes?”

“Alexia you got shot and there’s no way of saying this but a slight tilt to the wrong direction and they wouldn’t be fishing one bullet from your shoulder blade but two and I’m no nurse but I’m pretty sure the second one would have gone straight for your lungs.”

Two?

“He got shot?”

“Went straight through.”

“Did they stitch him up?”

He would never allow himself to be stitched. I know Volkov and that’s how bad he operates that he can treat himself; he doesn’t need help.

All I can hope is that he allowed Maximo to stitch him up at least.

“He’s fine but what I’m laying down right now is, the Volkov mansion is too hot for you and the baby. So we relocated you to Brenda’s home. No one would cause any trouble there; the place is under surveillance and close to your clinic.”

Which translates to: Volkov kicked me and my baby out.

Ouch.

It shouldn’t hurt.

The place was a prison for us anyway. Yeah, I bet Brenda and her boyfriend are nice people.

I bet they won’t look at me and Millie as charity.

“Where will he be? At the mansion?”

“Yes.”

Rip my insides out.

“D-did he come to visit? At least just once?”

“He brought you to the hospital and that’s it.”

He didn’t visit?

He kicked me and Millie out?

After we almost had sex a week ago?

After...

It’s fine. It’s fine.

It’s not fine.

“Thank him for me. For everything.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 34

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Almost midnight, the air con coughs groggily, you’d think a place like this where I’m sending a ton of dollars that would pay more than ten of my men would have better service.

But their services are shit, welcome to the sad reality of power.

Something creaks to my right, heavy snores fill the entire room and I’m appalled to look at the woman sleeping beside me mouth open, snores as heavy as a lumberjack’s power saw maiming the air.

I breathe in.

I hold it, releasing the tension once more.

Day four of being in this room and it’s almost as worse as sitting down and listening to my douche of a dead father teach me about love and weaknesses.

The irony isn’t lost on me when I recall my old man had no single bone of love in his body. Not for my mother, not for me and not for Kat.

As for his weaknesses? The man died from a gunshot wound by a rival gang, Martinelli's gang to be precise.

I'm nursing a gun wound to the shoulder, still recuperating from a graze wound to the neck and a shrapnel wound to the other shoulder and my ass is still here.

Alive and kicking.

Guess I'm not weak, old man.

An innocent woman in a bed lies in front of me.

Machines drowning in a sing-song tune beep around me.

Juana sleeps on the next couch snoring like a tranquilized moose, a loose blanket covering her.

I swing the bassinet in my hands, watching Millie sleep.

Three days with her and we've been visiting this hell hole to keep her mother company.

To remind her mother if she gives up on Millie, me and Millie are stuck like this.

Together. Forever.

Day five, Alexia Green still remains immobile on her bed. Like Sleeping Beauty with no one to give her a magical kiss back to the real world.

I have a feeling kissing her would land her in a deeper coma. That's how poisonous I am to her.

Day six, Millie and I go shopping for new clothes but she cries all the way home.

Juana gives her her bottle of milk but the little kid refuses it finally realizing I lied to her.

Mommy isn't coming home, is she?

I almost see it in her little blue-brown eyes when we visit her mother.

I'd explain to the kid that mommy is sleeping and the surgery was a success but along the way I'm starting to think the docs have been bullshitting me too.

Day seven has Kai Davenport visiting me and Millie with the news I've been anticipating for a while.

Millie plays with her squishy toy in my arms as Kai gives me a report of what finally went down.

“Trinity. They blurred the plates and tracking their minivan wasn’t easy but we’ve got them”, Kai reports.

Maximo’s eyes are on me before he chuckles, “Didn’t think the padre had it in him to issue an attack on you. He’s your biggest follower, sarcasm intended.”

“He is”, I affirm.

Trinity?

Couldn’t have seen that coming.

“Not if someone gave him a seat at the highest food chain to eliminate you”, Kai suggests.

Millie throws her toy, grabbing my huge thumb in her tiny hands.

“Dante”, I say.

Dante Keaton.

“Bingo. The fucker is desperate to find his family and to be back on the streets. He’d hire anyone just to get rid of you.”

He’s got guts, I give him that.

Kai tips his head at me, “See you in the next war, Vitello.”

Then he leaves.

It’s me and Maximo left in my study and then a minute later, my men filter in one by one.

“You did the background checks on the four assistants like I asked?”

“Yes boss”, Jett answers, “Brenda Gibbins is the right choice. Suburban neighborhood, boring life, can blend in with people unnoticed. Perfect place for them.”

I look at the child.

Giving her to Jett feels like giving an egg to a toddler. The chances of said toddler breaking it being high.

“You understand what you have to do?”

I ask. Jett nods, “Yes, Sir.”

“And when the nurse wakes up and asks?”

“You never visited, Boss.”

Jett takes Millie, Jagger assists with the luggage.

I feel the girls’ absence in the silence that hits like thunder.

“What now?” Maximo asks.

I pour myself a glass of whiskey.

“I visit Trinity Chapel. I confess my sins to the padre.”

I make sure the padre meets his maker.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 35

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Click. Click. Click.

The sound of my shoes against the vinyl-tiled flooring echoes louder than the usual hullabaloo of the congregation chanting Hail Marys to account for their sins.

Silence lurks in this holy place but then again, it has ever been silent if my memory is not failing me.

One. Two. Three. Four steps in and I spot the small rusty brown booth stacked away by the corner and oh so near the altar to remind every sinner that stepped in that little chamber that not only was the priest listening but the Good Lord too.

The ominous chants from the parishioners burning incense by the altar don’t fail to bring back old memories of Cat and I living in this place after we left Italy.

Why?

My father might have been a cynic but like everyone in the Mafia world, the belief that a man’s soul might have departed from him but the Lord would never depart from him was pretty much trusted by everyone.

So at twenty with an eighteen year old girl looking up to me for food and shelter in a foreign country, in a foreign city, the first sanctuary I thought of was church.

Here.

The very same place I taught Catelina how to pray, how to hold the crucifix right, how to confess her sins, how to look up to Jesus because only Sweet Baby Jesus would save her from the cruelty of this world.

Except this same church is the same one that held drugs and acted as a warehouse for every drug lord in Chicago.

This same church is the same church I walked away from to start an empire that didn't hide behind religion or false words.

My fingers drawl over the wood on the benches.

Same benches I sat in looking up to God for answers while uttering seven Hail Mary's in a day.

My feet drag themselves all the way down the hallway.

Calm, definitely not spooked by the old lackluster paintings on the windows and ceiling because this building is a mockery to the cathedrals in Italy.

I'm no holy man but if the big man upstairs is watching-and he definitely is, he will understand.

He should understand what I'm about to do.

The smell of wax and herbs meant to wade off spirits draws me in like a bee to finger-licking good honey.

The confession booth, my final destination lies before me.

I open the squeaky door on the confessor's side and blink. The smell of mold and the disgusting sour sweat of sinners crawls into my nose.

Nostalgia hits me in the chest and not in the fun 'remember when we drank beer' type of way.

My legs used to dangle on this seat but right now I'm squeezed like salami in an overcrowded fish market waiting for the real sinner to jump to his side of the booth.

It doesn't take seconds for the padre to arrive.

I spot his holy cap, his white clothes and his meaty neck from the wire grille dividing the priest and the confessors with a crucifix hung above it.

He clears his throat, a sign that I should start telling the man who has never sinned, a portion of my sins and wait for his encouraging words that are bound to cleanse and heal my soul.

The usual voodoo shit Father Giovanni is used to.

I do the sign of the cross reciting, “In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

His chair creaks, and I see his eyes through the wire grille trying to confirm what is too obvious.

“S-Son”, his voice squeaks, recognition being an edge to his tone, “How long has it been since your last confession?”

“I think you are well aware, Father”, I play along to his bullshit.

I see his meaty throat throb with nervousness and I cross my legs resting a hand on my knee.

“But if you must know, I have sinned Father. About to sin anyway. I can’t help it; Father and the gods above can’t penalize me for wanting to kill a man who drew gunfire on an unarmed man.

God himself hates cowards, isn’t that written somewhere in the holy book? That cowards are worse than murderers.

And for this coward, well I have a special type of punishment in mind.

Cut a limb, watch him bleed. Cut another limb, tie it up something tight to stop the bleeding before I yank another-.”

“You are not too far gone, son. There’s still time to repent and start anew.”

I chuckle, knotting my fists before my face comes close to the wire grille that’s separating the both of us.

“Do you really want to do this, Uncle? Beat around the bush and pretend we both give a shit about confession?”

“Christian”. His bulging eyes meet mine across the chained metal. “We are still family.”

“Don’t give me that crap. We stopped being family the minute you wanted to sell Cat and me to the highest bidder. That was decades ago, I was a kid, I let that shit slide and we agreed, Uncle. Next time you double cross me, I’ll spill your blood and smear it on your filthy followers for them to see.”

My uncle starts shaking, his fat body squeaking against his seat, his sweat reeking all the way to where I’m sitting.

Filthy bastard.

I can see why he was banished from Italy.

Men like him don’t know when to stop when it comes to money, when it comes to power.

“What did he promise you? Another church? A ticket back to Italy without you winding up dead?”

“I-I never wanted to. I’d never betray family. Your war with him would leave the seat empty and as the next in line I needed help to get there-.”

“Next in line? Giovanni you are a fat lousy son of a gun who betrayed the family, whether I’m dead or not the Cosa Nostra seat would never fall into your hands. Not in this life it wouldn’t and certainly not by Dante Keaton’s fucking help.”

“Any more sins, I gotta hear about Father?”

“Christian, my boy. You are kinder than your father, surely you would not end me. we are family, boy”, he slips in that Italian accent that will help remind me of my roots.

I have never been one to care about my roots. Not with the kind of father, I had anyway.

Wearing my gloves, pulling out the gun from its holster, I sneak in the nozzle through the wires with a clear aim that’s straight through his brains.

If he moves, I’ll still shoot. The place is small enough to ensure the bullets reach him.

If he begs, cries, I still shoot. No leeway. No way out of this.

“Want to know the craziest thing, Uncle? If you would have shot at me, we wouldn’t be having this conversation. You’d be alive and kicking probably balls deep in the whores you fuck on the altar but you didn’t shoot me, Giovanni.

You shot at what’s mine and you know the code. No one fucks what’s mine except me.”

One bullet. Straight through his head.

Blood smears his side of the booth.

I put back my silencer in its resting place and walk out of the booth a guiltless man.

No one heard the shots.

His body will be rotting in there before anyone goes to confession.

The padre is dead. My work here is done.

Time to check up on Sunshine.

Sunshine's hair flies with the wind and not even the ear muffs on her head can tame that unruly hair in place.

Her smile makes the sunset behind her look better in comparison to the rest of the days as she waves goodbye to her colleagues with the only working hand she has at the moment.

Seeing her is enough to want to turn my car around but a certain punk in scrubs has me staying put.

Boyish smile, a little taller than her with chestnut brown hair, the man whispers something in her ear and she giggles before handing him her keys.

He closes up the clinic for her.

What a gentleman, all fucking sarcasm intended.

My phone is already by my ear.

"That man you hired as one of her assistants. What's his name?"

"What's this about?"

"Un-hire him."

"Can't do that. The nurse likes him and Xavier came in handy with the Demetri situation."

A six-year-old could pick up a phone and call me telling me Russian bad men were in a clinic.

This Xander guy wasn't just as replaceable.

"Fire him, hire a woman instead."

“I’m going to hang up now, Volkov. Want to fire him, how about starting that conversation with your nurse?”

He hangs up.

The Xander guy is already walking the nurse down the street with a smug smirk by the time I spot them again.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 36

ALEXIA GREEN.

“He’s hot just so you know. I think he likes you”, Bree’s eyes turn dreamy as she hands me our dinner.

A few days in her apartment and I’m starting to feel a bit normal. A bit happy too if I am being honest.

The ‘he’ she’s referring to is Xavier, another one of my assistants from my four assistants.

“I don’t know anything about him.”

Actually, I do.

He’s from Texas and disappointingly lacks that southern twang most gentlemen from Texas have.

He practiced nursing a bit in Michigan before he got this gig. He’s single, lives with his mother who he seems to love a tad too much to let her live alone.

And that’s it.

His information alone is enough to make me want to stay away from him.

He’s a good guy. I’m good but trouble follows me like lice on unwashed hair. I can’t do that to him.

“You didn’t know anything about me either and we are besties now”, Brenda nudges.

I sigh taking a bite of my cheesy pasta that has a side of peso sauce.

“I’m sorry about your boyfriend by the way. Sorry, I kinda drove him out of here.”

Bree picks at her food before she hides the pain away.

“Honestly, I think you moving in is the best thing that has happened to me so far. Victor stormed off right after that Jett guy threatened him. He didn’t have a job and he slept on the couch most of the time. Sucks to even say this but he was just using me for my money.”

“I understand, I’ve had my fair share of douche exes too.”

“You mean Millie’s dad? Christian Volkov?”

I almost choke on the cheese and the pasta.

“He’s not...the dad.”

He’s not my anything.

“Sorry. Oh God, sorry. I just thought...he’s paying my salary and paying me extra to house you and Millie so I thought he was your baby daddy or something.”

“I don’t think he likes children. Frankly speaking, I think he’d rather have a vasectomy than put a child in a woman. He’s just my boss, just like he’s your boss.”

I would dive more into ‘my ex owes him some money so he kidnapped me to repay the debt’ or ‘he fucked me halfway then kicked me out his house the next thing’ but I won’t. I won’t let myself think about the monster sleeping in his huge mansion like a baby because Millie and I are out of his house for good.

Nope. No thinking about him.

Or the inch of his dick that was in me that stretched me out too well giving me pain and pleasure till I bled.

Nope, definitely not thinking about him and his monster of a dick.

“Ooh ok. Is it true that he’s some sort of gangster behind closed doors? That he is not as clean as his business partner Kai Davenport?”

“Gangster, maybe. His business partner? I don’t know any Davenport.”

But I’ve heard of the name Davenport somewhere.

“You don’t know any Davenport? He’s like the most sought out bachelor in—.”

The doorbell rings loud, a second later Millie’s sobs filter into the air and I abandon my pasta rushing to my room.

She's been crying a lot more since we started living at Bree's.

My only hope is that the new environment is the only thing affecting her and nothing more.

I want to hold her but I can't hold her with one arm while the other one is in a sling.

Bree has been helping me hold her but right now she's probably entertaining her guest.

"Hey, baby. The doorbell startled you? Don't worry, it startled me too. You hungry? Can't be, Bree said she changed your diaper when I was away at work. Want your toy?"

I wiggle the Winnie the Pooh squishy in her face but she sobs harder.

"Come on, Mills. Don't be like that to mommy. You know I hate it when you cry, baby."

I caress her cheek with my thumb, her big blue eyes stare at me and sparkle before she takes my thumb and sucks it.

Okay, she's definitely hungry.

My boobs are heavy too. I can pump out some milk for her or breastfeed her on the bed but I need help getting her in my arms.

"One minute, okay? One minute then mommy is all yours."

I pull away from my baby giving her a flying kiss before I walk out of the room heading to the living room.

My feet barely see Brenda's visitor when I smell his scent in the air.

"No", I murmur.

Christian Volkov stands in the living room, all muscle, all black suit, all scowl on his face as his eyes graze over the miniature furniture and his eyes...brown swirling with dark colors in there, land on me.

The room feels like a mouse trap choking my windpipe.

His presence here suffocates me and wrings my lungs of air.

I remember him and that night.

I remember the hospital and how he didn't visit.

A vast pit of distaste digs miles and miles into my heart.

“I think we ran out of sugar. I’m gonna get sugar from the store”, Bree says nervously before she grabs her coat and dashes out.

I almost remind her that we all can see the sugar in the jar on top of the kitchen island from where we are standing and that it’s almost too late for a night to go to the store, but my lips don’t move.

“Little Nurse”, Vicious’ voice comes out all gravel, all hard and panty dropping.

He takes a step towards me and I take one back.

“Don’t come any closer.”

“I’m not gonna bite.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Checking on things.”

“Well, you checked, now get the fuck out!”

His nostrils flare with astonishment. I’ll take the bunny slippers from my feet and kick him out with them if I have to.

“Your anger tantrums are usually cute but I’ve had a long day and they are starting to piss me off, Sunshine.”

“You’ve had a long day? Aww Daddy Vicious had a long day and he wants kisses to his boo-boos? I got freaking shot and

you didn’t...you just...abandoned me in that hospital! You didn’t visit me.”

His eyes linger on me, tracing my nose, falling to my lips before his eyes are back on me.

I’m being held by my strength and my strength only when he looks at me like that.

“I wouldn’t have healed you.”

I took a bullet for you.

“That’s not why people visit sick people.”

“Did you want me there?”

“No, after that night I don’t want you near me. You probably made the right decision kicking me and Millie out like a bunch of strays and I can’t thank you enough, Vicious.”

He moves like a possessed ghost.

One minute with him being away from me, the next minute with him being so close to me I have to raise my head for our eyes to meet.

“How’s your shoulder?”

“Still in pain, don’t act like you care.”

“I won’t. How’s your pussy?”

I raise my hand to slap him but he catches it in time.

“I only ask because you cried that night. I can’t heal your shoulder but I can heal your pussy, Little Nurse.”

Let go of me.

Get out.

Instead, I ask, “How? Are you some magical Barbie of some sort?”

“No.”

“Then get out and don’t let the door slap you on the way out.”

He pulls me by my wrist, his lips graze my ear then his voice shivers my timbers.

“But I’d kiss that pussy again to erase the pain.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 37

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

“The padre died of a heart attack, that’s the official report”, Maximo informs me as we lean against the silhouette of my car taking in the dump that is the southside of Chicago.

This place isn’t just cold but crime reeks faster than the stench building up in my nostrils.

And that stench is garbage alright.

“What do you think is happening in there? You think they killed the kid”, humor laces his voice faster than the annoyance festering in my veins like potent poison.

Getting rejected is one thing but being denied sex hits harder.

‘But I’d kiss that pussy again to erase the pain.’

‘No, thank you. Now get out.’

Not that I haven’t tried getting sex elsewhere but two steps breathing in another woman’s direction and my dick falls flat, languishing in dissatisfaction and grief.

I don’t give two shits about whatever her deal with Demetri was. After the near-death scare, I don’t think I give two shits if she’s plotting my death or not.

That’s how crazy I am for pussy.

Add in her fucking scent that hits me every two seconds reminding me she kicked me out.

Told me not to show my face in case it was an emergency.

I couldn’t touch the child either or hold her till she stopped crying.

Fuck.

I gaze at the metallic makeshift trailer home ahead of us and shake my head.

This neighborhood is worse than any of the places I’ve visited. And in my line of work, I’ve visited many.

But Guepos? Guepos puts the sh in shit.

“No. Troy wouldn’t kill him before talking to me”, I quip before two men appear from inside the trailer with rifles bidding us that their boss wants to see us.

“Fucking amateurs”, Maximo murmurs as we both stand to our feet moving.

“Don’t shoot, don’t do anything crazy.”

“Don’t do crazy? You’ve been doing things out of protocol since the nurse and the kid left. If anyone’s trigger happy, it’s you, Volkov.”

“Troy isn’t worth it.”

“Killing the padre in front of witnesses wasn’t worth it either. Let’s get the kid.”

The trailer-bus-turned-house looks like the regular beat-down houses you see around junkyards.

The living room is squeezed in but Troy Sullivan and his men make it seem like eight men including us isn't a crowd.

Troy, the son of a gun, is licking grease off his fingers, his meal being the boneless chicken splayed on top of the coffee table.

Some chick sits on his lap all scared and trembling and the kid we came to rescue is on the floor beaten black and blue with wrists chained together by rope.

"Vic, Vic, my man. I had a feeling you'd show up", Troy starts.

Maximo and I prefer to stand instead of sitting on the unsanitized couches behind us.

"You threatened to kill one of my men if I didn't show up so here I am Troy. Speak your terms."

Years of being raised in this dump and this man not only has an unfiltered mouth but also an unhinged mind that would rattle whoever came up with building the atomic bomb.

Troy Sullivan is a genius but the type of wacko man who doesn't know who his friends are and who his enemies are.

Any other person and Troy would have killed them.

But me? I'd destroy him in an instant.

He knows that, I know that. This whole meeting is a waste of time.

"Nah, Vicious. I'm one of your men too but this...this kid doesn't get to walk out here alive. He broke the code."

I look at the man on the floor.

His right eye is closed shut, his lip is busted and his whole demeanor screams 'I'm pissing my pants off'.

Days of training and the kid is a disgrace to be called one of ours.

But he's new and way too young to die in this place.

"What code?"

Troy grins, looks at the little lady in his arms and barks, "He touched my sister. You know we don't do that around here. No one touches my sister, no one especially from your side of the wall comes here and takes what isn't his."

“Jesus Christ, Jude. Troy Sullivan’s sister? Do you have a fucking death wish?” Maximo asks Jude.

I look at Jude and feel like grilling his balls for making me be here tonight over his balls being deep in Sullivan’s sister.

“I-I didn’t know. S-she was at the bar and we hit it off. One thing led to another and-.”

“What did you say, boy?” Troy grows on edge.

He draws his firearm out.

The sister that was in his arms minutes ago falls to the couch as Troy points his gun’s nozzle on Jude’s head.

“You saying my sister seduced you or something? Are you saying my sister went to Vicious’ club without my permission? Is that what you saying?”

“No. No. I mean yes. I mean she wasn’t...she was.”

I’ll murder this kid myself.

“Put the gun away, Troy”, I encourage, Troy’s finger looms over the trigger.

“Nah, Vic. You are here to take this punk’s dead body and bury it. That’s the courtesy I owe you.”

“Please...don’t”, Jude whimpers, I groan into the night.

“Quit the crying, you are not going to die. Not yet at least”, Maximo fires.

Jude’s eyes are on me.

“You kill him and whatever business I have with you runs into the mud. Guepos is a small division in my grasp. You are as easily replaceable as the cups in my kitchen, Troy.”

“You can’t replace me. I’m the best you got.”

In Guepos? Yeah, he is. In the larger picture that’s Chicago? No, he is not.

“The interesting thing about cups is they are all the same and they do the same work too”, I turn my direction to the woman on the couch, squatting on the ground to get her to focus on me and not her brother,” You know what your brother does for me, don’t you?”

She nods.

“You know the rules, you know the ins and outs and you know how much of a cut I get and your brother gets, don’t you?”

She nods.

I turn to Troy, ”See? Just as replaceable.”

“He touched my sister”, Troy grits.

“Your sister seems fine to me. Did Jude force you to do anything?”

“He didn’t. I like him-.”

“No you don’t, Glynn. No you don’t!”

Troy looks like he’s about to burst into a splat of tantrums and it’s only seven pm.

“Let my man go, let’s call this a night or else I’ll let Maximo handle this and you know how my enforcer handles things, don’t you?”

Maximo will torture him and his band of yahoos that are holding the rifles like kids from an apocalyptic bad tv movie.

Troy backs off from Jude.

I step forward and grab Jude from the floor by the shoulder helping him up.

“You broke my man’s nose, Troy. Not giving you something back wouldn’t live up to my name.”

“I just let him go. He touched my sister and-“.

The sound of bone cracking fills the air.

Troy drops to the floor with one punch from Maximo.

Troy’s passed out. Our business here is done.

“T-Thanks boss.”

“On a scale of one to ten, how bad do you need to go to the hospital?”

“Boss I’m fine, just a little bruise here and there that can’t be-”

“You are gravely injured. You need a nurse.”

“Boss really I’m fi-.”

“You are seeing the nurse, you little piece of shit, for dragging me all across town to get you out!”

“O-Of course, boss.”

Jude occupies the back seat.

I hop into the bloody car pissed off than I was when we got here.

Maximo starts the engine but not before he says, “Your obsession with the nurse is going to get us all killed, won’t it Volkov?”

It might.

My dick’s already dying.

My sanity is hanging by a thread.

Her blue eyes avoid mine as she attends to Jude’s bruised lips and possible cuts on his brows.

“What did we say about fights?”

“Unfortunately the fight came to me this time around, doc. I swear”, she rubs what looks like cotton swabs on Jude’s lips and he winces.

She blows on it.

She blows on his miniature wounds like he is a kid.

“Did the same person beat you up this time around?”

What person?

How long has Jude been coming here to the clinic?

Last time this kid got hurt, I beat him up and cut his torso with the same knife he was supposed to attack me with.

“No. I got into a mess, boss got me out of that mess”, Jude says something that’s at least earning him brownie points with me.

“I’ll prescribe this for the pain and as for the eye, a good ole ice pack out to reduce the swelling.”

“Thanks, Lex.”

“I don’t want to see you here again, Jude. No more fights, I’m serious.”

“No more fights.”

Jude stands up, I take a few dollars from my wallet shoving it in his chest.

“Get a cab. Go sleep like a baby this week because next week, work just doubled up for you, kid”, I whisper, the kid takes my money exiting the other way.

It’s just me and her now.

Her back to me as she discards everything she used to clean the kid’s wounds and my feet pushing me towards her.

She’s in scrubs. I bet she’d look better with nothing on.

“You are not going to speak to me, Little Nurse?”

“You are not a patient, I’m not obligated to speak to you except to render my services if you need them.”

Damn, firecracker and her lying mouth.

The sexual tension between us is off the charts.

I’d tell her I visited her when she was in the hospital, I’d tell her I’m delaying going home because she is not there in the first place but I’m not that kind of man.

The kind of man for sentiments or what men call love.

I’d never love her.

What I’d do because my dick couldn’t get the memo however was fuck her and move on.

I take the scissors by the counter. The clean ones at least, running the edge of the blade on my palm.

“What about now?”

She turns around, her face goes pale at my bloody palm before she starts doing what she’s good at.

Fixing the broken.

“W-why would you do that? You are bleeding, those scissors might not have been sterilized-.”

“You wouldn’t speak if I wasn’t your patient. I’m your patient, speak to me.”

“You are crazy.”

“I know.”

“I hate you.”

“You should.”

“Why are you doing this?”

She dabs an antiseptic soaked stuff on my hand and I wince, the small wound stinging.

“I need a distraction. A distraction from the pain. From hurting you”

She’s the only one who can hurt me and I won’t react. She doesn’t know that yet.

I don’t need a distraction.

She’s five feet hell of a distraction.

“Ooh I almost forgot but if you hurt me, I will come back to haunt you because this is your fault in the first place. Fine... umm a distraction. Lemme think.”

Lemme touch your tits. One time. Maybe ten times to remember the feel of them?

“Oh, I know. A joke.”

Stab me in the heart with those scissors right now.

“What do you call a three humped camel?”

I’m starting to hate camels.

“What?” I ask.

“Pregnant!”

She chuckles, doing whatever it is she’s doing to my wound.

I wonder if she's gonna blow it.

"Tell me another one."

Her eyes latch onto mine and in slow motion she pushes her chair back and steps away from me.

"I don't have to. You're all patched up, boss. Now, get out and God so help me if you think of stabbing yourself with those scissors I will leave you to bleed to death."

I look around. Everyone's gone for the night.

"Who's driving you home?"

"That's none of your concern."

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 38

ALEXIA GREEN.

Today was cool.

I got to hang out with Millie, walked in the park while my assistants; Brenda, Layla, Xavier and Wes covered for me at the clinic.

They all know Christian Volkov and the men that work for him and if any man comes in with a wound or something serious, they are not supposed to question anything but just do their job.

By the time I got back, a lot had to be done like signing over the latest inventory, treating Volkov's men who had a rather violent fight down at the bar the whole process included taking out broken pieces of glasses from a man's hand.

By six, everyone was beat and I offered to close up with Millie going home with Brenda.

Looking back now maybe I should have closed up and gone with Brenda too.

But I'm not going to lie, evening walks all by myself have been normal-ish or as normal as a woman would feel working in an illegal place that looks legal to the outside world.

"I'll take you home."

"I'm not going anywhere with you."

“Don’t be stubborn.”

“Don’t force me to do things I don’t want to in the first place.”

“Maximo is driving you home then.”

That was minutes ago.

A few minutes ago a giant of a man cut his palm with scissors because I didn’t want to talk to him and left this clinic leaving with a tiny fragment of my heart with him.

I despise him.

Yet I miss him.

I can’t shake him off.

Yet I don’t want him too far away.

What sort of Stockholm syndrome is this?

What is happening to me?

I’m in the middle of cleaning everything up when the main door to the clinic buzzes.

My hopes rise above my conflicting emotions.

Is Volkov back?

I’ll send him away.

Yeah, I’ll do that.

It’s not like I want to talk to him or generally do anything else with him for that matter.

I’m already up from my desk, walking slash running slightly down the hall to the door.

My hand shakes as I pull the tinted glass door open.

“Don’t tell me you...you? What are you doing here?”

“Can we come in?”

No.

“Sure.”

Her perfume smells like cherry blossoms and something Dior. Demetri who is behind her smells like sandalwood and leather.

She removes her coat and her NYU cap that's really doing nothing to hide her face.

Demetri is wearing regular old jeans, black tee and the occasional leather jacket.

He doesn't seem happy.

He's never happy but tonight it's extra.

"You should not be here!" I whisper shout.

Malyshka...no...Kat steps forward taking my hands in hers.

"I heard you were shot, Demetri and I couldn't get to the hospital because my brother had his men all over the place."

"Okay."

What should I say to that?

Gee, thanks because you wanted to visit me while your brother never even tried stepping foot in my hospital room? Ooh and your brother might be a few minutes near here and he could see you and kill me for thinking I'm working for your Russian fiancé or whatever?

"We were worried. I had to make sure you were okay. Are you fine?"

"I'm fine, Kat better than fine but you really shouldn't be here, do you understand? Your brother was here? What if he decides to turn around and come back here? Maximo is also waiting for me outside if he-."

Her eyes dilate, her smile wobbles.

"Max is...is here?"

"Malyshka", Demetri warns, "coming here was a bad idea as it is. Engaging Di Marco right now is worse than bad, it's suicide."

"Can I see him?"

What the...

"Can you call him here?"

Tears spring from her eyes, I look at Demetri, he replies back with, "Do not call him or I will burn you and everything else in here."

I thought my clinic was a safe haven.

Turns out the Volkov siblings plan on tainting this place with blood.

Their blood? My blood? I have a feeling it will be both.

He's smoking a cigarette in the dark.

Heavy army boots, black leather jacket, a buzz cut that screams mercenary and military trained, Maximo DiMarco is the epitome of villainy.

He looks like a villain, he talks like a villain and he works for the biggest villain, Christian Volkov.

I'm signing my death certificate for even doing this.

"You like to smoke a lot?" I ask him.

He stops leaning on his car, standing upright to face me.

How did he not see them come in if he was parked across the street from my clinic?

Or was he here having a smoke and recounting the people he has ended? Probably zoning out on how thrilling it is to be Christian Volkov's right-hand man.

"Are you ready to leave? I don't see your bag with you."

"No, yes, I mean I thought we would chat a bit."

"Is something wrong with your child?"

"What? No."

"I'd offer to babysit if you want."

I pause.

"You want to babysit? I thought you guys hated children."

"Millie is a special kid."

“How so?”

“She likes tattoos.”

My baby does not.

“No she doesn’t.”

“Get your bag, close the clinic, it’s getting a little late.”

“About that...” I swallow saliva and feel like it’s choking me, “Well...I just need you to like come with me back to the clinic for a...”

“No.”

His voice is final.

He’s already starting to move toward the driver’s side of the car when I speak out loud, “I think there’s a mouse in my clinic!”

“A mouse?” He asks incredulously.

Yeah, a mouse is better than the Russian man and his girlfriend who you supposedly think is dead.

“Yeah. I have a phobia of mice...I mean mice. Can’t you just come and kill it so I can get my bag?”

He sighs before he crosses the road, legs fast and heads to my clinic.

I follow behind with sweaty palms.

They are going to kill each other.

This is a terrible idea.

Maximo opens the door.

Catelina doesn’t give him time to breathe because there she is, standing at the reception, gorgeous brown eyes, brown hair, perfection written in her clothes even though a single tear falls from her eyes when she whispers.

“Maximo.”

Maximo doesn’t move.

He stills before he does the one thing I thought would be the last resort for him.

He takes out his gun like a maniac pointing it at Cat who's standing a few feet from him.

It doesn't get better when Demetri shows himself.

"Malyshka", it's a call for warning.

Get Maximo under control or I kill him for pointing a gun at you.

"It's okay", she hushes.

Maximo's finger is on the trigger.

Cat starts moving towards the gun.

"Max? It's me, remember?"

"Bullshit", Maximo voices, raw emotion in his veins.

God, help us all because I think Demetri wants to take out his gun too.

"Remember when you found me under that fountain at your mom's party? I was five, you were ten and you told me pretty girls shouldn't have wounds on their hands.

When you were twelve and your father...he cut you, i—I hid you in my room and you said a pretty thing like me shouldn't sob for something broken like you. When I was...when you followed us to America, you said home wasn't the same without me, home was where I was because I was-."

"Trouble", Maximo's harsh tone splices the air, "My kind of trouble."

She only takes a few steps in our direction before Maximo meets her halfway grabbing her whole life form and smashing it with his body.

They embrace like lost lovers in a maze having found each other.

"H-How? How?"

He asks.

But you feel it in his voice.

The emotion, the longing, the feeling of a man coming back alive.

"A miracle. I—I've missed you. I'm here, I'm here."

“Alive. Alive? You. Are. Alive?”

“I’m-.”

Maximo wraps his hands around her clamping his lips with hers, kissing her like he believes he is in a dream.

Demetri watches. He’s pissed but you can see it in his eyes. He’s happy for her. Happy for them.

“Demetri saved me that night”, Cat whispers, her hand reaching out to Demetri who gladly takes it.

“Saved you how Catelina? We saw your body, your brother he-he...”

“I know. It’s a long story and I want to explain it all to you.”

“Get your hands off her”, Maximo growls.

Demetri thunders back, “I have every right to hold my fiancé the way I see fit.”

“Fiancé?”

“Hey, hey! No one is starting a fight here. Demetri is her fiancé; apparently you love her as well Maximo and she loves the both of you. Solve your problems elsewhere the more we stay here, the more scared I am of Volkov showing up.”

The more scared I am that he will hate me for keeping his sister a secret.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 39

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

“I visited her by the clinic today, she and Millie look happy. The young man was also kind in helping me-.”

“What young man?”

I ask Juana, putting the documents down first and taking a swig of my whiskey.

“The dashing nurse. Xavier, I think. He’s a sweetheart in helping people around”

I bet he fucking is.

He probably licks the floors clean too for the Little Nurse.

“Vicious?”

“You can go to sleep; I don’t need anything else.”

I glance back at the documents.

And in all honesty, I can’t see shit and that’s not the alcohol talking but a whole lot of crap happening in my body as I imagine some punk nurse-man getting cozy with the sunshine blonde.

My sunshine blonde.

“Vicious? If I may?”

Juana turns back.

Not leaving but staying.

Not letting me lurk in the darkness with the alcohol and my demons but trying to get through to me.

I ignore her.

Ignoring her will push her and her advice away and that’s what I’m hoping for at the moment.

“Cat wouldn’t have wanted this. She always wanted you happy and right now, I fear you are clinging on to the past and it will drown you along and leave you...”

“I’m already dead, Juana.”

I was dead months ago.

Now I’m clinging to flimsy hope, to a woman that doesn’t belong to me, to a child that shouldn’t be in my world and to a false sense of security that I can be happy.

The only kicker in this villain’s story is, Sweet Baby Jesus was always out to get me.

Started out with being born in a family where patriarchy was as important as breathing.

Add in a violent father who couldn’t take the fact that I would die for my sister and I knew it was me vs the world a long time ago.

Years trapped in that basement waiting for my mother to cry by the door and do nothing, waiting for my father to show up with a belt and make me bleed, that's where Christian died and Vicious was born.

Vicious didn't cry for help.

The neighbors weren't going to help the son of Moretti Vitello anyway because he owned them and he owned every inch of Italy.

Vicious grew balls, watched his father die and escaped here with his sister building an empire with only sweat and scars to show for it.

Vicious didn't feel and it was good for a while.

Until the nurse and the kid.

Juana doesn't speak again.

She gets the message. She mumbles a goodnight leaving just as fast as she came in.

I take my cell phone; I dial Jagger's number.

He answers on the first ring and the background noise sounds like a woman whining.

The irony that my men have been getting sex every damn place they want and when they want and I've been stuck fixing their messes kicks me in the shins.

"You got the nurse a phone like I instructed?"

"Yes, boss. Delivered it today."

"It has a tracker on it?"

"Yes, Boss."

"Did she take it?"

"At first no, a little convincing from the dude she works with and she took it."

Xander, Zeke, Xavier, whatever his name is needs to go.

"For my sake and your life's sake, I hope you are not fucking Troy's sister like Jude."

I listen to the sound of sheets rustling before Jagger exhales, "Of course not, boss."

I hang up.

Me: Can I visit you?

Little Nurse takes her time to text back. I watch the three blue dots disappear and reappear like a preschooler biting his nails after texting his crush.

Two minutes, forty seconds later and she texts back.

Sunshine: I'll call the cops, you creep.

Me: It's your boss. Save my number.

Sunshine: I know. Didn't you see the creep part? And you are the creep in case you are wondering.

I grin.

Me: What are you doing right now?

Sunshine: Feeding Millie. What about you? What are you doing? I bet you are drowning some man in a vat of petrol, aren't you?

I've never drowned a man in my life.

That's more Maximo's style.

Me: Can I come and watch?

Sunshine: No. I don't want you near me. Near my baby or near my boobs

Me: I won't touch anything. I promise.

Sunshine: It's still a no, you creep.

Me: I'd be a creep if I said fuck it and showed up at your door right now.

Sunshine: Good night, boss. Keep your creepiness in your mansion.

Me: I'm coming over.

The documents can wait for my signature tomorrow.

I need sleep and apparently the only way I can get sleep is if the nurse is near me.

Right now, she isn't.

I need to get to her.

A gentleman should have knocked.

I've never been raised a gentleman in my entire life.

Her screams meet me by the door and I live up to my 'creep' name by budging in through her friend's front door like a bulldozer.

The weak door rattles against its hinges.

I move around the dark living room knocking a few things over and trying to recount the direction of Sunshine's room in this dinghy they call home.

I don't have to recall Little Nurse's room because her whimpers, her little shrieks give me the direction.

By the time I get to her room, I'm surprised to hear her friend snoring in the other room without a fucking care in the world.

The woman can sleep through a war if she can't hear Alexia's screams. I give her that.

My first instinct is to check the crib.

Millie wiggles in her sleep but her eyes are closed shut.

Her mother however?

She writhes on the bed, she screams in her sleep, sweating, taking the sheets in her hands, flailing her legs.

"No! Please, don't. Please stop. I beg you. Please!"

She's having a nightmare.

I know what sort of nightmare it is but I can't erase her memories. I can't kill Brad again because the bastard is probably rotting in the shallow grave I buried him in.

I can't find Rhett either because the bastard must have disappeared to the edge of the world.

What I can do for the nurse however?

I hop in the bed.

I touch her neck but it doesn't calm her down.

It doesn't stop the monsters in her nightmares from attacking her.

As she flails, her fist connects with my lip and the copper taste of my blood fills my mouth.

Jesus Christ, just how much did Rhett and his douche friends do to her besides what she told me?

I'd stop this but I'm no nurse.

I stopped my nightmares when I was a kid all by myself.

"Little Nurse?"

I call her.

Her eyes are closed but she moves her head slightly towards me.

"R—Rhett? Let me go. I w-won't tell any...anyone."

She sobs.

I do what my brain tells me to do.

I never claimed to be her savior. Never claimed to be the prince with the horse and the magical kiss.

If I fucking kiss her, she bites my lips off.

I push the covers over me meeting her warmth, I reach out and touch her shoulders but she's still stuck. She still needs her anchor.

I trail my hand over the dip on her waist, tracing the bulge of her hips finally reaching the hem of her panties.

I don't hesitate as I move in.

I don't hesitate as my hand slides into her panties finding her clit and applying pressure to it.

Her face that was etched in worry earlier starts to erase those worry lines on her skin.

She leans more into me, her words being hushed, her hips and muscle memory telling her to ride my fingers.

When her wetness soaks my forefinger, I dive in for the kill pushing inside her walls.

“Christian”, she moans, half asleep.

“That’s right, baby. I’m here and I need you to focus on me Sunshine. On me.”

“On you”, she murmurs in her sleep, I push deeper not enough to curl my finger and rub that spot that will have her mewl like the sassy nurse I know but enough to keep her focus on me.

“You need to come back to me, Little Nurse. Fight ‘em and find your way to me.”

“Christian. You. To you.”

To me.

To your captor.

I curl my finger against the tight muscles holding me captive. I push deeper and find that spot.

She arches, pulling me deeper, her lips somewhere on my neck, her breaths making this creep hallucinate how this night could go.

When she comes with a sharp inhale, I push in and out of her tight cunt letting her get familiar and not too startled.

Her hands land on my shirt as she pulls away from me.

With the moonlight flocking her room, her wide blue eyes look like the full moon lassoed all the way up close.

“You came.”

“I promised, I would”, I try to pull away my fingers from her pussy but she nods in the darkness.

“Let them stay.”

“You were having a nightmare.”

The only way I could pull you out was a distraction.

A distraction, the only thing binding our nightmares.

“I know. They come and go sometimes. Tonight, they were umm...intense.”

“I noticed. How are you feeling right now?”

She smiles.

White pearl teeth, face bare of makeup and who said women didn't look pretty with makeup?

I've seen this woman with makeup once in her life. Once in Russia and makeup or not, she's a firecracker.

"As about as normal as any woman who'd find her boss's fingers deep inside her. I told you not to come, creep."

"I couldn't keep my creepiness to my mansion."

I hit her back with that sass that has me here, fingers inside her pussy in the first place.

"I'm glad you are here but that doesn't mean I forgive you for everything you've put me through."

"I know."

I wouldn't forgive me either.

I look at the blonde hair stuck to her forehead with sweat and I make a decision for her.

"You are going to learn how to fight."

"What?"

"I want to teach you how to fight. How to defend yourself. Next time it could be some other stupid creep budging through that door or someone worse in your nightmares. Fighting evens the grounds for you."

"Do you teach me how to use a gun too? And I'm being sarcastic because I don't want to know how to fight."

"You shot me in the neck and killed six men in hysteria. You and guns are off-limits. But I'll teach you everything else."

"Do I get a say in this?"

"No."

"I'm starting to regret you coming over."

"No, you don't. You are creaming all over my fingers, Little Nurse."

“Goodnight”, she blushes then her head falls on my chest and she cocoons herself with my body.

“I want you gone by morning, creep.”

I nod.

To keep her happy.

To keep sleeping in her bed.

I’ll be here tomorrow night too fighting her nightmares for her.

When I think the night can’t get worse, the universe strikes again as my phone pings with a message.

The nurse is sleeping.

I take my phone out.

Maximo: The Five Families have chosen. Looks like you are marrying Athena Pallis next month to get your throne.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 40: ATHENA PALLIS

Era il mio principe oscuro.

He was my dark prince.

Forged in the darkness, meant to stem evil around him, meant to pretend he was someone else underneath a false sense of duty and obligation but I knew him.

I was his light in the darkness, I loved his evil, I knew the prince lurking beneath all that armor.

The prince who once talked to me and made me feel I was worthy.

I was pretty.

I was powerful.

Mio principe wiped my tears at the age of ten when my mother had one of her panic attacks at her lavish parties and lashed out at me.

Mio principe held me and listened to me tattle about my miserable life.

My prince looked me in the eyes and told me, “You are a principessa. Don’t let anyone treat you otherwise.”

Fate and his past had separated us but a love that was forged and written in the skies couldn’t be erased.

Destiny worked.

I believed in destiny.

I believed in myself.

Just like Christian Vitello had once told me; I was a princess and a princess got everything she wanted including his heart.

“Silencio!”

Allagra Pallis, my mama, CEO of Pallis Motors and the head of the Five Mafioso Families slaps her hand on the thirty-two seat conference table.

At the age of forty-five and with a face that didn’t seem to age. Allagra Pallis was a force to be reckoned with.

Imbued with a tongue that would rival the gods themselves, a witty mind that wasn’t passed down to me in any way and a short-circuited temper, Allagra was the epitome of perfection.

The epitome of my imperfections.

The epitome of the stinging jealousy that stung my heart when she mentioned my dead sister who she wished would be heir to the Pallis family instead of me.

She didn’t tell me that herself.

No, Allagra had a way of kicking me to the curb by smothering me with love and expectations and I sat and followed Mama because she was the queen in this chess game.

I was the rook meant to be tossed around.

“Moretti betrayed us all by starting a war and leaving us in debt. Yet we expect his son to take the reins and damn us all to hell? His son will ruin us to the mud”, Ginno La Monda,

the sixty-year-old who owns La Monda winery speaks up, the worry lines on his forehead not being a match to mama's scowl.

"What do you propose, Ginno?" Mama asks.

Ginno rubs his bulging pot belly giving everyone a peek at his newest Versace suit from the new clothing line Versace just launched and a Philip Patek watch on his wrist.

"We deny him the seat."

"You want us to go to war? Moretti Vitello was a fuckup but his grandfather started all this, the Cosa Nostra is his birthright. The boy deserves a chance."

"Don't be too much of a prude Allagra, that's not your style. When Moretti damned us all you took the reins, you were ready to be heir. Damn it, you are the one keeping us afloat. But we are getting too old for this, let our children take the throne."

He looks at his son. Ginno La Monda Jr.

And I know Junior, we have attended balls together and he is not a good enough mafia don.

He is no prince.

He is no Vitello.

Mama chuckles ridiculing Ginno where he stands, the other families chuckle too, "Are you proposing we hand the seat to your son?"

"He is more than capable of-."

"Your son couldn't hold a candle to what Christian Vitello Volkov has done in Chicago. While your son stays and eats like a pig in Daddy's overpriced mansion, Christian Vitello has built an empire with no money and no resources but his wits.

He lost a family member and he is still going on strong. How many of us have stood strong after we lost people we cared about?

I lost my daughter when she was four and I have never been the same. You lost your wife, La Monda, and you've been balls deep in mistresses ever since. Basilio? Domenico? Can you all compete with everything the boy has done over the years?"

Basilio Agrusa and his family all nod their heads with a 'no'.

Domenico Albano joins my mother in her stance.

Ginno La Monda looks like he's about to burst a vein, "Then what do you suggest? We hand him the seat we've worked hard to maintain since his father ruined us?"

"He agreed to our terms a year ago when we reached out. He agreed to claim his birthright under our terms."

Ginno laughs, his meaty hands slapping the glass table again, "Which one of us should hand our daughter to the brute?"

Huh, Allagra? I kid you not the boy will want revenge for his father, he will run us to the grounds and I will not covet my bloodline with Moretti blood."

He might be a brute but Christian Vitello has his own way of processing things.

None of these people know him.

Not like I know him.

Clutching my Brunello Cucinelli handbag, straightening the La Perla minidress I have on, I speak up.

"I will marry him. I'll marry Christian Vitello."

Mama's sharp eyes are the first ones to shoot me down and before she can scold me for speaking out of turn, Ginno claps his hands.

"Great. How befitting. It's decided then Athena Pallis will marry the Cosa Nostra heir and keep him in line from killing us all. Meeting adjourned."

Everyone leaps out one by one.

My mother struggles to keep her anger in check but fails when we are left alone.

"You were to observe, you were to listen you were not to-."

"Mama-"

"You do not speak out of turn; you do not give these men ammunition to destroy you because once they have it you are as good as done. How many times have I taught you that, Thena? How many times I have taught you we women need to be careful in this type of world?"

I glance at her blue eyes, the ones that earned her the name 'Alessandro Pallis' pearl'.

She was my father's pearl.

I'll never be like that and maybe some part of me hates her for it.

Maybe I want to move away from her shadow. To the only man who has ever understood me.

"I love him."

I utter the words I have been speaking in my dreams for years out loud and feel my heart weigh a little less.

I have loved the prince who consoled me in my mother's garden and never spoke to me again.

I have loved him since high school.

When he ran away to America I cried that night for him, for us, for our future but destiny has intervened.

"Ooh, Athena. Men like him, fueled by revenge and darkness, never have it in them to love. A love like that will consume you."

"Dad was like that and he loved you. He loved you to the very end, there is hope for me and Christian, I know there is. I will make sure there is."

"Thena-."

"I'm not a kid, I'm sorry I'm not like Alessandra, that I couldn't be enough for you after she and dad died but this is what I want, he is what I want and I will fight for him."

Fight to the death.

Fight for his darkness.

Fight for his love.

I arrived in Chicago even after my mother's protests.

I have been to Taiwan, to Beijing, to Moscow, Mexico but never this north of America.

Never too close to where Christian Vitello operated.

I was too scared, too shy to speak to him but he will get the news soon.

He will know we are to wed and he will remember me.

I went shopping in a few stores though, to look good for him, to seduce him. My nerves were all over the place as I skimmed over all the outfits I would get to wear for him.

Tonight, in the bustling cold night of Chicago, my driver and I are parked across a shabby ‘almost falling apart’ building.

We followed Christian all the way here and he has not come down yet.

Does he carry out his operations here? In this dump?

“Ms. Pallis? I think it’s getting late, we should head back to your apartment because your mother wouldn’t like to hear any of-.”

“Do you work for my mother or do you work for me, Alonso?”

“For you, ma’am.”

“Then if I say we are staying here till my fiancé comes down then we stay all night if we have to.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Christian didn’t come down.

Not after ten hours of gazing out the window anyway.

When he came down, mama’s words rang in my mind.

“A man like him does not have it in him to love anything or anyone.”

Then why is he holding the blonde woman outside the shabby apartment like they are his prized possessions?

“A love like that will consume you.”

It’s already consuming me, mama.

His eyes, his smile.

He is happy with this woman.

This American whore.

It hurts.

It hurts even more when he pinches her butt and kisses the child like the nasty thing is his.

Why do they look like a family?

Why is she stealing what's mine?

He's mine. I saw him first. He became my prince first.

"Alexia Green, twenty-three years old, orphan has a three-month-old child with one Rhett Kingston. She's been off and on the streets for a few months up until recently according to the neighbors, two loan sharks invaded her home and took her."

"The clinic she works in is indeed your fiancé's, ma'am. I couldn't get every detail since her co-workers are a little tight lipped but your fiancé's men have been there a lot. Seems like Alexia Green is the head nurse."

"I'm doing everything I can to find Rhett Kingston, ma'am but no private investigator can work under the pressure you have me under. No, money is not an issue.

I'll find him for you ma'am."

"I found Rhett Kingston. He's in New Jersey."

Rhett Kingston is my ticket in getting rid of Alexia Green and now no one will stand in my way in winning what's mine.

In winning the heart of Christian Vitello Volkov.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 41

ALEXIA GREEN.

Five a.m. for training.

Five a.m. before I hit my shift at the clinic at eight a.m.

Three torturous hours in the backyard of the same mansion I miss and dread at the same time.

Three hours with the same asshole who slept in my bed, giving me orgasm after orgasm till I fell asleep.

Long gone is that man though.

The man in front of me is an absolute ass.

“If I can’t see anything, how am I supposed to hit you?”

I shout over the brisk cold morning breeze.

I might be wearing a fleece jacket and leggings but I fear hypothermia does not acknowledge my attempt of trying to stay warm.

“Listen. Pay attention to everything around you.”

His voice chafes my insides as I try to pinpoint his location with a scowl and anger threatening to rip the blindfold I have on my face.

“This is dumb”, I whisper holding on to the stick and hitting nothing but air with frustration.

“Are you complaining, Little Nurse?”

Gee, am I happy that I’ve been hitting air for more than fifteen minutes?

“You wanted to train me to fight? Then fucking train me instead of wasting my time with a stick and a blindfold that will never come handy in anything. If this is your version of torture, waking me up at five for this nonsense then you’ve won, Volkov. You’ve won!”

My lungs are burning, the blindfold burning my eyelids and my frustration’s about to go at it for another round.

I raise the damn stick and hit air again.

The only difference this time is the stick is yanked from my arms and thrown off somewhere where the leaves crunch.

One minute I’m angry and the next minute, fear fills me to the brim as all the wind is knocked from my lungs.

Coming from behind him, his huge hands bunch around my waist, pulling me plush to his chest.

I collide with him like a stone falling from a ten-story drop.

Aggressively landing his face in the crook of my neck, I feel his lips against my neck, his breath skittering over the ticking vein on the column of my neck.

“I’ve won? I’ve not won yet, Alexia. This is not how winning will feel like.” His hand pulls my jacket up, and the fear escalates to another level.

On the edge of my leggings, he doesn’t stop.

He doesn’t give me a moment to say stop as he sneaks his hand inside my leggings the only thing stopping him being my tight closed thighs and my panties.

“You know how Brad and that bastard ex of yours knew they had won? When they had you just like this, Alexia. Blind, unable to do anything but cry, standing like this like a good girl about to receive everything they dish out.

My question is, Little Nurse, when I open up those legs for me, will you let me take you in every way I want to? Will you let me do whatever the fuck I please because you are blind and I’m too strong for you?

Time’s wasting, Alexia. I’m being generous here giving you time to think but your assailant? Your assailant won’t give you time to get over your melodramatic past, he’ll take it.

Take what isn’t his, enjoy it like it’s his to take pleasure in and you’ll be the same woman that night, helplessly crying, admitting you are blind and-.”

Maybe it’s his words.

Maybe it’s the cold that slaps me like a bitch.

Maybe it’s my melodramatic trauma.

I pull away from him.

I push myself off his chest, ricocheting forward with tears in my eyes and newfound courage hanging in my hands like iron fists.

I turn around and I lunge forward punching the ever-living shit out of his face.

And I don’t stop.

My fists sting, my throat wells with emotions.

“I’m not weak! I’m not blind! And the fact that...that I’m a woman doesn’t mean...doesn’t mean I have to give you...you don’t own me! You hear me? You don’t own me Rhett and I’ll never let you-,” Another punch, my tears soak the blindfold as my arms tire of throwing punch after punch.

“There’s the little firecracker”, Christian’s voice brings me back to reality.

I take a full minute to cry before I step back, taking the blindfold off of me.

The air is still as damp as when I got here.

It takes a minute for my eyes to adjust to the light.

A minute to stare at the grass before my eyes skid to the black boots, up his cargo pants, up that tight black shirt that looks like it's painted on and up past that jaw to those eyes.

He has a cut on his lower brow and a bruise on his left cheek but the man looks at me and smiles.

One of those rare smiles that makes my stomach topple over and my heart beat with dumb insanity.

"You did it."

His congratulation comes out blandly like I finally made unburnt toast for the first time.

Pride surges through me and I smile amidst my tears.

He steps forward, I throw a glare at him.

"Don't ever touch me like that. Don't ever touch me like my bastard ex. I don't care what methods you use to train your men but don't use them on me. Please."

He can read the fear in my eyes.

He knows what I need right now.

But he totally disregards it as he takes my form in replying back to me with, "Same time tomorrow, nurse. Don't be late."

Then he is gone back to the house and it's time for me to leave.

No kiss from him.

Not the hug I received yesterday when he left my apartment.

The cold Vicious is back and this time it feels like something has shifted.

Something between us.

“I could just eat you up, my little princess. Are you full yet or are we going for another round of feeding you relentlessly?”

You little milk monster.”

I chuckle.

Millie sucks even harder, her little fists curling around the edges of my hair and pulling.

If I didn’t know she was a cluster feeder, I’d be at the hospital right now complaining that my baby feeds a little too much than your average babies.

But this is Millie and Millie is the most perfect little thing happening to me at the moment.

As Millie feeds and I recline to my seat switching on my phone and looking at my texts, disappointment gnaws on me.

Christian hasn’t texted me. Not that he usually texts but I thought...I kinda thought he would ask how I was doing.

Wishful thinking, I guess.

He’s a busy man judging from the number of his men we had to stitch up today and I was also busy so that would explain the no texts part.

‘What’s going on with you, Lexy?’

I don’t get to dwell in my thoughts for long because my office door opens and Brenda walks in with a few bags that smell deliciously like Chinese takeout.

“You’re a lifesaver. Really, you are”, I thank her as she places the food on the table, her eyes on Millie who’s slowly closing her little eyes.

“I had to feed you guys. I won’t be home till later tonight.”

“Ooh, you are going on a date or something?”

She hasn’t been on a date since we moved into her house and honestly speaking, I’d love for her to meet someone.

She’s the kind of woman that deserves happiness.

“Date? God, no. Since my ex, I think I’ll lay low when it comes to dating. Layla, Wes, Xavier are going out for drinks. We’d invite you but like always you’ll say no so here’s Chinese takeout.”

I feel her disappointment in me with her words.

And like the usual lies I bring up, I tell her, “Millie is tired and I gotta wake up at five tomorrow, I can’t do drinks right now Bree. Sorry.”

“I liked him before but sorry not sorry, our boss is a cunt.”

I laugh.

Bree is like the mother of sainthood, hearing her cuss is a little perplexing.

“Yeah?”

“I mean you are here balancing a job, taking care of your kid, waking up at five to head to his mansion for whatever he needs while he’s what? Tongue deep in some brunette’s mouth downtown?”

I still.

“What?”

“Yeah, I mean he’s a real asshole for-.”

“No, I mean the other thing.”

“Oh.”

Brenda takes out her phone all the while my raging heart feels like it’s about to splinter.

She pulls up a video pointing it in my direction.

“You see that? Paparazzi somehow hogged his club and they took this video while Christian Volkov was kissing the pretty brunette. I mean she’s pretty not going to lie and he might be a good kisser seeing as to how I’ve never seen him all PDA with any woman but he’s still an asshole.”

He grabs her by the neck.

He’s the one who initiates the kiss.

He’s the one who’s sucking this woman’s tongue as if he wasn’t fingers deep inside me...

The one that stings harder than the bile rising up my throat and the tears piercing my eyes?

The real kicker?

The real kicker is he's never kissed me.

He's never shown me that type of affection.

"Lex? Lexy?"

"Can you watch Millie for me?"

"What? Where are you going?"

To let my rage fly.

I don't use the front door.

The front door to the club has a bouncer trying to kick paparazzi out of the club.

The front door to the club might have his men who might have strict instructions to keep me out.

The back door that is in a creepy alley does nothing to lessen the panic, the bitterness over what I'm doing.

The door is open, sneaking in won't be hard.

Except I'm barely in when a large bulky man cuts me off, blocking the pathway.

"Go home."

"I want to see him", I know I look like a mess. A cab ride and trying to hold yourself together does this to someone.

"He will not want you here."

"Well, I don't care, do I?"

"What are you doing here, Alexia?" Maximo asks and the question nearly keels me over.

What am I doing here?

"I don't know."

"He's not worth it. Men like us are never worth it."

I know.

“Is that the reason why you still keep pushing Cat away from you?”

“Yes.”

“You love her”, I accuse like it’s my right to do so.

Like I know what love encompasses.

“The Russian fuck also loves her and that won’t change who she is and who her brother is when shit blows over.”

I don’t get it.

“Let me in.”

He doesn’t move.

He sighs into the night, his cigarette breath almost choking me before my emotions can finish the job.

“I’m gonna let you in on a secret seeing as to how we are already sharing secrets and whatnot.

The man in there will never be with a woman like you. It’s not you, it’s not him, it’s the whole fucked up system we were raised in.

You are good, Alexia. He’s good when his demons aren’t tormenting him and that’s the difference between you two.

You are sunshine. He’s part of the dark people call the void, none of this is a fairytale, none of this is like the tv garbage that feeds you Disney happy endings and fucking magic.

Why? Because the fate of the Mafia Don has always been written down for him before he even took a gulp of earth’s polluted air.

He is the heir of the Sicilian mafia, the Cosa Nostra itself and you are—we are nothing when it comes to their lives. Take another cab back to your baby, be a nurse and repay your debt praying he doesn’t demolish your life by the time you are done.”

They are the longest words Maximo has ever spoken to me and I suspect to anyone.

The tidbits of information sink in and my eyes widen for a minute as everything becomes clear.

The whole thing with Cat and her family’s legacy.

The whole thing about how Volkov owns guns and has cabins in Russia.

Of course, he's a criminal.

Of course, he...he...is mafia.

Of course, I should take that cab back home and stay away.

"Get out of my way."

Maximo scoffs, "They never learn, do they? It's your funeral, Nurse. Remember that."

He steps out of the way.

I mingle with the crowd, hyperventilating and processing stuff just as quickly.

I see the VIP section. The same section we were in that led to another private room upstairs.

I take the stairs two at a time.

I burst into the door like a freak.

I get dished with a sucker punch to the gut because that's how it feels like.

That's how it feels when you watch the man you just found out you liked and is a mafia don kissing another woman and peeling off her clothes just as fast.

"Vic! Vic who's she? Who's the bitch?"

The woman cries covering herself with her coat or something.

Nestled on that desk of his, Vicious' eyes land on me.

"She's no one."

Cut me in half, why don't you?

"Hey, excuse you. We are all in the middle of something."

I regain my voice and it feels like nails on a chalkboard.

"Oh sorry. So sorry, I just thought that maybe you'd like to know that the same man who's gonna bend you on that desk and fuck you had his fingers inside me the other night after he burglar-ed his way into my apartment.

Oh, and he's probably carrying all sorts of STDs from being a good-for-nothing-."

"Alexia", he growls.

I hold his eye contact and I hold my ground.

Don't let him see you cry. Don't cry. Don't cry.

"Yeah, so have fun doing that with him I guess and I'm not a bitch, bitch."

"Don't. Move."

His voice comes out as an order.

I despise him. I hate him. I wish he could get his big head stuck in a...

"You want to cause drama. Do it but there's a strict rule against you being here. Who let you in?"

He's standing in front of me now. Smelling like that woman.

"What? Are you scared I'll ruin your fun?"

"What are you doing here, Little Nurse?"

"Don't call me that. Don't ever call me that."

"I helped you out of a nightmare. That's all there was. Whatever fantasies you have about me, nurse. Let them remain to be just that, fantasies. I'm going to call one of my men to take you home. You'll sit tight, you'll remain quiet I don't care whether you have to bite your damn tongue to do it but you do as I say.

See you tomorrow, nurse. Same time, don't be late."

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 42

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

Thirty days and counting.

Thirty days and I would be on my knees proposing to a woman I had as much interest in as the cigarette holder on my desk.

I knew this day would come and frankly speaking, marrying some woman from my motherland didn't do shit to unnerve me.

In the grand scheme of things, this woman, this wife of mine would be there to sire my heirs, to listen, to obey and be stuck with me till I got the final nail to my coffin.

I didn't care then.

Right now?

The thought of marrying Athena Pallis leaves a bitter aftertaste in my veins, in my blood, in this life that has started having more meaning than it should.

As a man about to be married, I should have been celebrating but try celebrating when the bane of your existence was a mouthy five-foot blonde who told jokes about three humped camels and stared at you like you were her life.

The part of the one percent wayward males that she thought would worship the ground she walked on and love her.

Five hours and more of her presence had me nursing a very raging boner for her all day.

Another hour in my club and I wanted to sink into the nearest woman I would find to make a point.

The nurse meant nothing.

I could fuck anyone.

I could marry Athena Pallis and be back in Sicily where I belonged.

A few kisses to the woman who had enough perfume to drown the entire fish population in Japan had me raging mad.

One kiss and sunshine blonde hair came into sight.

Another kiss and this woman wasn't going to please me tonight.

I knew it, my dick knew it and my fucking body knew it.

There was one woman.

The woman I'm staring at right now.

The woman whose blue eyes shatter right before me and I can't console her.

Can't console her because I can't offer her anything.

Rhett was a dick to her; I might fall in the same caliber but pushing her away is the right thing.

The right thing.

I almost chuckle as I watch her descend the stairs, as I watch Nico of all my men take her home, escort her to the door and out of my club.

Yeah, that's right, nurse.

Walk the fuck away from me.

Venom and stench spill from my mouth as I turn to the woman who is half naked and half expecting me to go through with this.

I have blue balls singing like crazy.

They are not for this woman though.

They are for her.

My tormentor. My insanity. My damnation.

"Vic?"

"Get out."

"Vic, I don't mind a little audience honestly I can-."

I take my gun out, spiraling.

"Get out."

She doesn't ask for anything more.

She sees it in my eyes.

The need for blood.

The need to calm whatever is happening to my chest.

What the fuck is wrong?

The nurse cried but so what? She's cried every damn time we've been together.

She ran out of here and the shitty thing is I didn't run after her.

I can't run after her.

Not after that night.

That sick night I buried my sister on a rainy day alone with only the picture of Rhett and his girlfriend in my trembling hand.

Catelina's murderer and his blonde girlfriend.

I vowed to destroy him and everything the bastard owns not...

What, asshole?

What is it about her?

I leap into my pockets, taking my phone out and dialing the only one who gets me when I spiral.

"I need to let off steam."

I need blood.

"Got it", Maximo hangs up.

"I—I swear...I don't know where Rhett is, please...please spare me. I told you everything I know. Let me go and I can...

can find him, yeah, I'll lure him out and-."

"Did you lure out the girls you forced yourself on to too?"

The disgusting prick snorts back tears wiping his face with dirty hands like the dirt he is.

I see him. I see Brad and I see that tall sack of bones called Rhett hurting Alexia and resentment and violence hits me like an electrostatic discharge striking a lightning rod.

"R-Rhett said they wanted it. We only did it because Rhett said-."

I don't let his words slip from his pervy mouth.

My shoe connects with his jaw and like the useless sack of shit he is, he falls to the ground more blood splattering over his grimy self.

“Rhett wanted you to do it? There’s something called consent you fat fuck. Consent? You know the word? Of course you don’t, you are the type of prick who went to school to chase skirts instead of some common sense.”

Another boot to his ribs makes him wince.

Down a spiral, falling without an anchor, my blood ticks and ticks, hollering, gnashing by the time everything comes to a silent crescendo, blood grazes the floor and a man is dead.

Trevor whatshisname is dead.

Brad is dead.

Tommy is dead.

Only Julius and Rhett are remaining.

The two assholes who touched the woman who mattered to me more than anything.

The two men who touched the nurse too.

I didn’t do this for her though. This was for Cat. My spiraling is because Cat is dead not because a certain nurse might be done with me forever.

“Feel better?” Maximo leans against the driver side’s of the door as soon as I step out of the warehouse.

“No.”

And I still have to wake up and train her sassy ass knowing she hates me more than her ex.

“You ready?”

She’s wearing a different fleece jacket today and an even more different pair of leggings than the ones she had on yesterday.

The only kicker to this is I’m hard as stone looking at those Amazon leggings that were invented to make a woman’s ass look good and to torture us men into knowing that ass isn’t yours.

Her ass isn’t mine.

The nurse doesn't speak. Normally she'd cut into the tension with something funny or some complaint of the sort but she doesn't speak to me.

Doesn't give me her blue eyes either.

What she dishes out to me however?

A cold slap of karma right to my face.

I should tell her I didn't fuck the woman she saw last night. Wasn't planning to either after my dick fell flaccid on the kisses I shared with whoever the woman was.

That what I was doing was an experiment to prove to myself I could fuck another woman.

I was still Christian Vitello and this heart was long dead.

She takes the blindfold; she covers her eyes.

She takes the stick; I stand right in front of her.

Somewhere she won't miss.

Somewhere she'll hit and she'll be forced to treat my wounds because that's her thing.

She'd treat anything living, whether it was Hitler or the man who treated her like garbage the other night.

That's Alexia for you.

She knows I'm in front of her, I can see it in that quivering bottom lip of hers, in those ears that listen in.

She raises her stick, she splices the air, the wood connects with my face breaking on my face and stinging almost half as bad as when Daddy dearest hit me when I was young.

Blood guzzles on the right side of my face.

She takes off her blindfold, retreating her stick, her eyes on me, on the blood that I don't give a shit about, I expect her to talk to me, say anything.

Say you hate me.

Talk to me, damn it.

She doesn't.

Juana picks the wrong time to walk in and witness our little altercation in the atmosphere. Always dramatic, always concerned about me, the tray with a jug full of juice falls down from her hands hitting the ground with a bang.

“Vicious? Oh God, what happened?”

“I think I’ve mastered the stick thing. Let’s move to the next stage of training tomorrow. See you again, boss. Same time.”

She leaves.

Juana’s cries about why I’m bleeding fall on deaf ears as I watch my nurse walk away from me without an ounce of pity.

I messed up.

I messed up badly.

Two days of silent treatment have me seeing stars.

Two days of no touch from her feels like my whole world is getting pulled beneath my feet.

Two days in and I’m a stalker chasing after the nurse I kicked out of my house because I couldn’t afford her getting too close to me or getting hurt.

All that is garbage right now.

I want her close. Her and Millie. I want them.

They won’t get hurt because I’ll protect them.

I have the means, the resources, they’ll be safe with me.

“You think anyone would miss him if he disappeared?”

“I don’t think he’s disappearing, boss. The guy likes his work, I’ve seen him in action and he likes the job”, Jett praises looking over the table a few feet from us but his gaze is lingering on a certain woman.

The one with the dimples. The one who’s too sweet looking for an ass like him.

My eyes are on the punk whispering stuff into the nurse’s ear and she laughs.

I have barely seen her teeth in two days and here she is, fucking ray of sunshine in a pub with a Texan cowboy nurse who doesn’t understand the concept of boundaries.

The nurse is dressed in a blue body con wrap dress that hugs her sweet curves and strains her boobs so much so that any guy from a street way can see her cleavage.

And so does Xavier, the guy chatting her up with whatever nonsense he's whispering into her ear.

He's not that funny. He doesn't look that funny from where I'm seated.

"You are right, Peter Pan over there goes missing and the whole police force comes after my neck."

"Sir?" Jett looks back at me.

My eyes are on Xavier.

Hiring a sniper to wipe him out of existence is better. No one would suspect my involvement not even when the punk works in my clinic and is clearly besotted with what's mine.

"You think anyone would miss him?"

"I don't understand, boss. Xavier's been reliable so far."

Xavier has been reliable once. Just once.

"Truth or dare guys with a side of shots! I'll go first, Xavier. You've been giving Lex googly love eyes since we got here so...I dare you to lick this drink off her nose."

The honey blonde haired woman shouts over their table loud enough for anyone within a quarter-mile radius of this city to hear her.

I decide then and then I'm firing her. She's Linet, right? No, Lana.

"Layla, I don't think Lex is-" Brenda interrupts only for the nurse to speak up for herself.

I'm firing this Layla ASAP.

"I'll do it. I'm definitely one hundred percent down to truth or dare. Can I take a bathroom break though? I think the cocktails did a number on my bladder?"

Like hell she's doing it.

She stands up, Xavier gives her hand a squeeze before my little nurse excuses herself with a blush.

I'm up from my seat not giving two shits that I've been spying on what's mine for an hour trying to surmount enough courage to apologize.

The truth here being I didn't come to apologize.

As soon as Juana said she was going to babysit Millie, I knew something was up.

I knew my nurse was having fun out there...the only stinger as I drove here was that she wants to forget about me and being the greedy bastard I am I can't let her do that.

She gets into the ladies' washroom and I follow her in like a puppy.

Two women are in the washroom, they spot me from my reflection in the mirror and silently walk out.

I close the door behind them. Locking it.

Alexia reapplies her red lipstick, doesn't acknowledge we are in the same room...or in this case washroom.

"Do you know diarrhea can be inherited? That it's hereditary?" I ask.

She huffs. Doesn't look at me.

"What are you doing here, Vicious?"

"This is the part where you say how."

"I want you to leave."

"Ask me 'how'."

"How?"

"Because it runs in the jeans."

Silence. Grating silence.

"It's a joke."

I explain. A joke that I scoured through the net while I was thinking of her. a joke that has me looking like some cheap ass manager called Fred from Costco.

"I know."

"Are his jokes funny?"

“Don’t do that.”

“You’ve been handing the punk your precious smiles like he fucking deserves them and I want to know what type of jokes he tells. I’ll tell you better jokes.”

“I don’t think a mafia don should be telling jokes in the ladies’ washroom. That taints your resume as the big bad wolf.”

She knows?

“Sunshine-.”

“Why are you doing this to me? You push me to the side, you treat me like dirt and when I’m ready to heal, ready to move on you show up. You demand answers, you change into this and I’m...I’m tired. I’m telling you right now that I’m tired. I’m done. This...whatever this is, it’s done.”

I take a step towards her; she turns around to face me.

No mirror, no reflections just us.

“I didn’t fuck her.”

She chuckles, sitting on top of the concrete that holds the sink.

“Is that supposed to make me feel better? Because it doesn’t. After everything you said, I don’t think it even matters anymore.”

“Don’t give Xavier a chance.”

She scoffs. She has every right to do so.

“You kissed her, that pains more. The first time we...in that hotel room you didn’t kiss me. You...you treated me like...”

“I’m not Rhett, baby. I’ll never be like Rhett.”

“You felt like him though. Treating me like dirt, like I’m unwanted and that night? You did worse than Rhett, you crushed me and it hurt right here because you showed me that it was easier for you to kiss anyone but me. I’m never enough for anyone and it’s high time I accept that instead of accepting the scraps men like you feed me.”

“You are more than enough, Alexia. Fuck me and Rhett and any other man who has made you feel otherwise.”

“Then why did you kiss her? Why do I get the cold version of you when they get the warm version of you? Why do I get scraps when they get the full meal? Because I’m a slave? Because you see Rhett in me and despise that?”

I take another step.

Her eyes brim with tears.

“Because I look at those lips and see my Achilles’ heel.”

I take another step towards her.

Her bottom lip quivers.

“I look at those lips and I know as soon as I claim them there’s no more you, there’ll be us and I won’t let go. Not when you say no, not when you want to leave me, I’ll tether you to me and give you everything you desire. Everything other than love because I’m incapable of that.”

I take another step.

The final step.

And now there’s only so little distance between us I can bear.

The minute I try to take a step again, her right leg pulls up from where she’s seated.

Her heel, a silver type of five-inch heels stabs my shirt right where my heart is.

“I’m incapable of it because I have never...I’ve loved one woman and it was a different kind of love. I don’t know how to love the other way but I know you matter, Sunshine. You matter to me.”

“That isn’t enough for me.”

“I know.”

“I have a game to get to so if you’ll-.”

“If that cowboy touches you, I’ll give him a pair of concrete boots and toss him into the river.”

“He’s not a cowboy, he was born in Texas but that doesn’t mean-.”

“He’s not touching what’s mine, Sunshine.”

“I’m not yours”, she stabs her heel further into my chest trying to push me back but I grab her leg and kiss her ankle.

“You are if I’m going to win you over and earn your forgiveness.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 43

ALEXIA GREEN.

“You are if I’m going to win you over and earn your forgiveness.”

This having had been spoken by a man who ripped me out of my life and said I had to work for him to repay my ex’s debt.

What I know is, there’s no debt. There’s just the fueled anger he feels toward my ex because my ex killed his sister.

A sister he seeks vengeance for when he didn’t know about her existence in the first place.

And for that, I pity Christian Volkov.

I pity his anger.

I pity the fact that his wound, where I hit him, the other day is as fresh as the pain I felt seeing him shed blood.

Blood I should have cleaned off of him but I was too mad to do so.

My heel poking his chest, ready to go further if he tries to pull any stunts, we hold eye contact.

The words he just said sink into my bloodstream and add a savage rhythm to the haywire beating of my heart.

He wants me to teach him to love?

The heir of the Sicilian mafia cares about me but he doesn’t know how to go from there.

I shouldn’t be flattered but why does my heart beat when he kisses my ankle again leaving a mess of nerves that boggles my very sanity?

“You do know we are in a public washroom, Vicious. Please stop.”

“You smell good”, he sniffs my ankles and my skin and the action has no right being that hot but it is.

“I have to go back to them.”

“Ditch them”, he suggests so casually, his eyes dragging lazily on the leg that’s lifted up to stop him from crashing his chest with mine or any body part of his on me.

“I came here to have fun with them, not you so let go.”

“You can have fun with me, little nurse.”

I chuckle.

This man wouldn’t know fun if it hit him in the eye with a ladel.

“Yeah, what kind of fun do you have in mind, mafia don?”

The more I say it, the more it should frighten me.

“You, me and the kid. We could go out”, he suggests.

“We are already out and Millie’s probably sleeping.”

“We could stay indoors then.”

“You are not winning me over here, Don. Not in the least bit.”

“I’ll do whatever you want to do then. Anything that doesn’t involve the cowboy.”

I want to correct him that Xavier isn’t a cowboy but I’m too tired to fight.

And since I have sweet Vicious all to myself, I decide to use him.

The house smells like him and a hint of the bunch of men who show up at a regular in the clinic.

There’s too much darkness during the night indicating Juana and Millie are probably asleep but otherwise, it’s still the same way I left it this morning.

The only difference right now is being here with him without being here for training brings back feelings of nostalgia.

Feelings of how good it felt waking up to a room full of sunshine and Persian rugs warming my feet everywhere I went.

When we reach the kitchen, I switch on the lights and I point at one of the kitchen stools telling him to sit.

The six foot two man goes ahead to sit on the stool that looks minuscule beneath him.

I open the drawers and take out one of the first aid kits I stashed around the house when I was still living here.

“I need the shirt off too, Vicious.”

I place the kit on the marble top, he smiles slickly before he starts unbuttoning his shirt, taking it off till I can see the ink on his toned muscles.

“I can take the pants off too, Sunshine.”

“No thank you.”

He chuckles, I roll my eyes walking towards him and his bulky frame.

When he opens his legs for me, I settle between his thighs, my height being at an almost level with him.

Just like I thought, he didn't treat the cut on his head. Knowing him he probably washed away the blood and let it stay like that.

“Can I touch?” He asks.

“No.”

“Hips?”

“No.”

“Tits?”

“No.”

“Why didn't you treat this? The cut looks like it's opening up.”

“Ass? Just a squeeze?”

“You squeeze my ass and I'll castrate you with a serrated blade, whether you are mafia or not.”

“Ouch, nurse. You have a vendetta against my balls?”

“Don’t be cocky. Why didn’t you treat this?”

“I have a nurse, she hit me but I still wanted her to treat my wounds.”

“Because you can’t let anyone treat you?”

“Because I missed my nurse.”

My stomach topples over. A cough erupts from my throat which makes him laugh.

Taking the tiny stitches and an antiseptic to clean it, I dab a tiny bit of antiseptic on the cotton swab wiping the blood around the left side of his cut.

He winces but he doesn’t touch me.

“Does it hurt?”

“A lot, I think you should blow on it.”

I blow on it.

Why? Because I hurt him and failed to check up on him when I should have.

But he also had it coming when he decided to kiss another woman whether or not we had a relationship of the sort.

When I’m all done, my gaze sweeps over his chest and over that neck that I shot which is all healed up and nothing but a bad memory.

I check his shoulder next asking him to raise his arm.

“Does it hurt?”

“A little.”

“You’ve been overexerting your shoulder like a madman. The other one is barely healed either and from your knuckles, I know you were in a fight; do you even care about your health?”

“I do now.”

“You are impossible.”

“You are beautiful. We can watch that movie now if you want.”

Right, the movie I wanted to watch.

He makes buttered popcorn; I finish cleaning up by putting back the first aid where it belongs.

When we hit the couch, keeping him at a distance on the couch while I scroll through his unlimited shows, I face him only to find him staring at me in the dark.

“What do you want to watch?”

“I don’t know. Never watched anything before.”

“You have a TV as big as the size of your average motorbike and you don’t watch anything?”

“Never understood the concept of watching people’s fake lives displayed on a small digital box.”

I almost smack him with a cushion.

Life was sad for me at the orphanage yes. I was probably poor all my life too but that does not mean I did not appreciate the power movies and TV had on my life in general.

“You did not! What about when you were a kid? I’m pretty sure you liked movies then.”

“My life was the movie, sunshine. My father didn’t allow us to have any tech gadgets and I never moved out enough to talk to kids about what they liked.”

I shouldn’t ask.

I know half of the story but I want to prod further.

“Why?”

“Because my father was an asshole who locked his kid in the basement, in a dark and unrelenting place to teach him a lesson.”

“For how long?”

Cat cried when she told me the story.

Christian smiles like it’s a funny memory but I know it had to hurt.

Being locked in the basement alone with no one to talk to messed up with someone.

“Till he couldn’t have enough energy to pick up the belt anymore and I couldn’t tolerate any more of his crap.”

The belt to hit you? Oh God.

“Vicious-.”

“Pick a movie, I’ll watch with you.”

I thought hard and long about what to pick.

What could absolutely touch the heart of a man who has been too scarred nothing seems to faze him anymore.

Almost as if he never wants to feel.

In the end, I settle for ‘Me Before You’.

That movie wrecked me and I swore I would never watch it again after how much I cried. I’ll watch it again for him.

We watch the movie silently; I peer at him now and then and his focus is so caught in the movie I almost want to cheer him on by the sidelines.

Here’s something fun, Christian.

Here’s something to thaw your heart and make your inner child happy.

By the time, Emilia Clarke is shown on the screen reading Sam Claflin’s letter, my nose is filled with snort and my tears choke my throat it stings like I just ate a jalapeno without a glass of milk for relief.

My hand on my heart, I turn to check up on Vicious.

Only to find him right in front of me.

When did he move to this side of the couch?

His hand threads the side of my hair, tugging and tucking it behind my ear.

“Vicious?”

The hinge of his jaw wound up tight, his brown eyes melting into the darkness, his eyes land on my lips then up to my eyes.

I shiver.

He leans closer.

Unbearably close.

Too close to make my heart jump out of its chest close.

Then this man, this abused man, who's destined to be one of the most wanted criminals clashes his lips with my cheeks.

A second later, it's his tongue that traces my skin, that traces my blush.

"You didn't...didn't like the movie?"

"I didn't like seeing you sob for people who don't care for you."

God.

"The movie itself was emotional, you watched it you know what I'm talking about-."

"I was watching you."

"Vicious."

"Christian. Call me Christian."

"You are too close for someone who's on a first date."

"Date?"

"It's a movie date."

The look of confusion he gives me almost wants me to crawl into a hole and die. I shouldn't have said the date.

He probably doesn't think this is a-

"Does that mean I get to kiss my date after the movie is over?"

"You didn't even watch the movie."

"Date rules are date rules, Sunshine."

I nod.

I give him consent.

He bites into that consent like a greedy son of a gun because within seconds, his mouth covers mine in a wet possessive kiss and suddenly I start to understand what he meant by Achilles heel.

He kisses me like I'm the sweetest oblivion.

His Achilles heel.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

SPECIAL CHAPTER 44: RHETT KINGSTON

"Another round?" the smarmy bartender asks.

I gaze at him for a minute before I flash a smile, "Another round it is."

The tall kid who looks like a poser for one of 'em posters that commercializes the benefits of eating healthy works on another round of tequila shots.

Tequila shots I've been guzzling down in the same shitty bar in Jersey trying to regroup, figure out the next plan, figure out the next place I'll look for to settle down and roll in green.

Since Chicago, money has been a problem.

Shit.

One wrong fuck, one wrong woman, a little fun with my friends and I pissed off the wrong jerk.

But when have I not pissed the wrong dude?

I wouldn't be who I was if I didn't have guys chasing after me for vengeance, for money, for any type of shit any common lowlife is chased after for.

Rhett Kingston has never been a lowlife though.

I learned from a young age that being good didn't bring food to the table, being good didn't mean you were going to the big man above, to the kingdom of heaven to eat and roll around in wealth.

Frankly speaking, anyone who thought there was a big man above was either crazy or deluded like the normal folks who went to church on Sunday to cleanse their sins.

I didn't need to cleanse my sins.

I had accepted a long time ago, that I was irredeemable.

If people saw me as a villain then a villain I would be and I would rock villainy like no punk to ever exist.

Another glass on the mahogany counter, another spray of tequila into the low-ball glass and I repeat the same drill.

Take a drink and let that scotch with a hint of vodka burn my throat.

I've stayed in Jersey for a week which is longer than I've done in any city since I started running from the madman who has his men all over the city, all over the damn state and all over the airport.

The best plan for me right now is to escape to Mexico, rebuild from there.

But a) Mexico needs money. Money I can't borrow from my friends since some of them have been MIA.

And b) Mexico needs documents. Documents I don't have, documents I can't forge unless I get help from my buddy up the force.

The same buddy I've been trying to call and the calls land straight to voicemail.

One shot in one hand, the other hand gripping my phone tapping on the same number I've been tapping for a week, I dunk down the drink holding my phone to my ear.

"Answer the damn phone, Julius."

It rings, some snazzy Taylor Swift song plays in the background and it's déjà vu all over again.

I call, the punk lets his phone ring and he doesn't pick up. That's his routine.

I brace myself for the voicemail but it never comes.

Julius finally picks up my call.

"W-what are you doing, Rhett!"

Sucking in air through his nostrils loud enough for me to hear him all the way in Jersey, Julius' irritation feels almost as tangible as the liquid in my mouth.

But then the fat fuck has always been irritable since we met in high school.

I was the brawn.

Brad was the brains.

Tommy and Trevor, well fuck if I remember what they contributed to the friend group but Julius?

Yeah, he was a fancy rich kid who came in handy when we needed weed or a bottle of Macallan to celebrate.

“Need some help.”

“I-I can’t offer help, you know that. And calling me? You know we can be traced! You know we are being chased and

hunted and you still keep calling. You might tempt fate and death more often but I’m not going to die with you, Rhett.

I’m not gonna die.”

“What are you talking about?” My interest is piqued and if I dig a little deeper, my fear is starting to show.

“He killed Brad. Tommy was taken and he’s never been seen since. Trevor’s body was found buried at some place in a junkyard, police say there’s no evidence on the culprit but we know it’s him.

We should have never fucked his sister, man. This man...he is not resting till he eliminates us. You and I are the only ones who aren’t dead and for my sake, I’m gonna hang up and you are not going to call me again.”

The line goes dead.

Every bone in my body rattles as my heart beats erratically.

I had some fun with Carissa, big whoop.

She never had a brother. She was an only child. Whatever this guy’s beef is, it’s major than Carissa and I’m not sticking around to find out.

I snag a few dollars from my wallet placing them on the table for the drinks.

My ass is off the high stool I’ve been on for half an hour.

The only problem is as I vacate my seat, I spot the blonde guy with the fancy Rolex watch by the booth seated by the corner.

His eyes are on me like I’m his target and he’s been waiting on me.

I can't leave the bar.

I can't give him the chance to shoot me or nub me the minute I step out of this public pub.

I sit back down.

My hand grazes the Glock holstered on my waist.

If push comes to shove, I'm not above shooting civilians just to get myself out of here alive.

Is that one of Christian Vitello's men?

Couldn't be, I covered my tracks well.

Plus, his men aren't the fancy kind and neither is the brute of a lapdog Vitello has, called Maximo DiMarco.

And if Vitello sent his men? Yeah, he would send Maximo alright.

I order another shot of tequila, buying time, waiting them out.

This works two ways.

They get tired, they leave and corner me another day.

Or they get tired and they attack.

Two drinks in and I gaze back at that booth trying to remain subtle.

This time the blonde guy makes eye contact and from his left side, where his seatmate is hidden by the vinyl booth, pops out a woman.

"Fuck me", my mouth waters.

Draped in riches and beauty, hair the color of deep caramel, silky skin like she's been bathing in milk all her life, the woman gets up from her seat.

Holding her diamond-crusted purse, a little smirk on her, we hold eyes and she tips her chin at me like she knows me.

I don't know her though. Then again, I can't remember the last hole I sunk into either.

I've never seen a piece of fine ass like her all my life.

She teases. I watch as she walks up to me.

One thing's for sure, she is not one of Vitello's goons.

The other thing, the eye contact, the confidence, she knows I've been hiding, she glories herself in finding me and I entertain her.

For a while anyway.

The stool next to me gets pulled away before she occupies it.

"Cranberry juice please", she flags the bartender.

I catch the heavy ascent in her voice and stash it into the little box of 'who this woman is and what she wants'.

The juice arrives in minutes, she takes a sip from her bendy straw, her lips wrapping around the straw the way she would around my shaft.

"You are a hard man to find, Rhett Kingston."

"Depends on who's trying to find me, gorgeous. What do you want?"

She chuckles.

"Straight to the point? I like that about American men. Always business."

"Yeah? We can be more than business if you want, baby. Name the time and place."

"I'm not here for any of that, Mr. Kingston. My business is quite different if you would care to indulge yourself in it."

"Pardon my damn French, but what sort of business do you have with the likes of me? You and your man have been seated there for a while, waiting for me. The question is, what side are you on?"

The ones who have a bounty on my head or the ones who want to save me out of the jam I'm in?"

"My name is Athena Pallis from Sicily, Italy. I don't know any French either but I have a feeling you and I have a common goal."

"You don't say?" I ask all humor cupping my voice.

"You upset a very powerful man, Mr. Kingston. Now I don't know what you owe him but I can help you if you help me.

I'm supposed to marry Christian Vitello Volkov before he claims his throne as the Cosa Nostra heir but your woman poses a problem."

Out of all the things this woman was supposed to say to me I didn't expect what she had just said.

Christian Vitello was mafia? Behead me right now why don't you?

But more importantly...

"What woman?"

"The woman in his house, the woman who seduces him into thinking that he can be normal when he is nothing near normal. The woman with your child."

I almost cough.

"Lexy?"

"Yes, Alexia Green as she's called. My fiancé took her and her child to repay your debt but she is doing more than repaying her debt. She's overstaying her welcome. I need your help in taking her away from my fiancé.

Win her over, convince her she still loves you because you share a child or do anything to get her back and I will not only repay your debt to my fiancé, I will fund your house and anything else you and your woman will need."

He took Lexy and my baby?

Lexy and my baby are with him?

I don't understand what debt she is talking about.

I don't owe Christian Vitello any money, he is after me because of Carissa, his supposed sister.

An unfortunate accident sure but she wanted it. Carissa wanted me and my friends that night.

"What do you get in return, princess? Sounds to me like your fiancé wants to do nothing with you."

"Get your woman away from him. She is the only obstacle to this. Do we have a deal or do we not?"

Lexy was the one who got away.

And if we are being honest here the only woman who made me think that for a while, I could be good. That was until she said she was pregnant.

I couldn't afford to be a father. Not me. Not ever.

But she kept the baby. She didn't give her up for adoption.

Shit, Lexy.

"I guess we have a deal, Athena Pallis."

"Good. I'm giving you a week to get your affairs right."

A down payment of one million dollars in cash acted as a good motivator to side with Athena Pallis.

I got the money, sure but was Alexia worth the hassle?

One million dollars could get me out of the country right now and set me for life.

Set me for life, alone.

I loved her. Damn me but I loved the Blondie and she had my baby and worse, she was moving on with a mafia heir.

Ego and jealousy wring my neck. She still loves me. She's always loved me and that was a character flaw on her side but to me?

Yeah, knowing she would love me forever was a reason to go on.

She was the one person I could count on when it came to love and if she loved another man was I still Rhett?

My keys jingle as I plunge one key to the lock of my apartment.

"Take the money and go, Rhett", I slur pushing my door open.

My apartment is flogged by darkness and it takes a minute to find the lights and switch them on.

I hear movement in the darkness and as soon as I turn the lights on and turn around, my gun is already in my hands ready to shoot.

"Don't shoot!"

“You are in my apartment, in my damn living room that earns you a bullet to the head. Forewarning though, I might be tipsy, buddy but I’m sure as hell a good aim.”

“Don’t shoot. You and me, Rhett. We have a common enemy. You are running from Christian Volkov, aren’t you?”

I chuckle, “Either this guy is Santa Claus or I’m just one lucky guy who everyone believes can beat this motherfucker. You look familiar, I’ve seen you around. Wait aren’t you the punk running for Senator in Chicago?”

“Dante Keaton, pleasure to meet you.”

“Rhett Kingston, I’m not interested in what you have to say. Get out of my house.”

He takes something out of his suit pocket and I aim my gun better between his eyes.

Removing the contents of the folder, a bunch of pictures lay splayed across my dingy coffee table.

“She is your woman, isn’t she?”

Pictures of Lexy kissing Christian Vitello litter my sight.

Not one kiss, not one scene, a ton of them.

The next pictures are of them in a park walking and the man? He is holding my baby, my fucking woman.

“I know Athena Pallis tracked you today, I know she offered you a better deal than what I’m about to offer but do you see them? That’s him taking your family away and you might not be a family man but there’s a code among us men.

We don’t let men like Christian Vitello steal what’s ours. He has my family too and I need your help to get them.”

My eyes zero in on Lexy. She’s pretty, sexier, happy but in his arms.

“Here we go again. What are you proposing Mr. Senator?”

“Our enemy is Christian Volkov. Athena Pallis might get him off your back for a while but you think the guy will stop chasing you, chasing us?

He’s one vengeful fucker if you’ve come to know which is why I say you get your woman and your child but we kill him first before we do so.”

“I don’t know if you’ve noticed but he is a mafia don, tons of security, tons of men willing to kill us if we so much as spit in his direction.”

“Believe me I know. I’ve been trying to get rid of him for eons. But look at those pictures, do you see what I see?”

My woman.

My child.

“Your family is now his weakness. That’s what we use to kill him.”

“They get to walk out alive.”

“Of course, Rhett. You are the one who’ll do it.”

“How much are you paying me for this?”

I won’t need money to get Lexy but a little insurance wouldn’t hurt.

I’m tired of running.

I’m tired of running solo. I’m going to get my family back.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 45

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Her skin is smooth gold.

A swipe of mascara on her lashes, something rosy on her high cheekbones, gloss on her heart-shaped lips, the rest bare and natural.

Yet nothing can compare to the feel of her lips.

Succulent, made to fit my mouth, made to damn any man of the cloth to his knees.

I’m no man of the cloth but I’d dip my hand in that proverbial pot of seven deadly sins if it means she gives me these kisses for eternity.

I suck her tongue, I explore her mouth, taking everything, she has to give and more.

I take her whimpers, I let her taste, her scent, her damn skin imprint on me even when I know this will be my downfall.

That's how maddening a kiss is.

That's how frighteningly good Alexia Green tastes like.

She matches every kiss, my little nurse never backing down, never showing me that she doesn't want this.

My hands weave through her hair, silky, so smooth around my fist, so...so...so mine.

Her bottom lip quivers and her hands find themselves on my chest.

And like the minx she is, the more I kiss her, robbing her of breath, taking and taking, the more she claws me on my bare chest.

The irony being that as her fingers create more scars on me, she turns me on even more.

The kiss itself diverts blood from my mind all the way to my crotch.

All the way to my dick which has no modicum of sanity when it comes to her.

It wants her, it craves her, it barely breathes when she is pissed at me.

I barely breathe when she is pissed at me.

I feel her need to breathe.

But the need to also be choked by something you have no clue of and still want that which chokes you.

Another kiss.

One last lick of her lips and I pull away my forehead resting against hers.

"What did you put on those lips, Sunshine?"

Her pants of breath hit my face as we both open our eyes and collide into this abyss that feels like a meth-induced limbo.

"I've never—wow, I've never been kissed like that."

"Yeah? I've never kissed lips so damning like that either."

A frown lines her face and I hold her chin in place.

Nothing is ruining this movie date or whatever. Watching her all night was great.

Watching her fall over some guy on TV? That part was not so great.

“Talk to me.”

“You have more experience than me when kissing. I mean I have a kid but that doesn’t mean I’ve kissed a lot of guys.

What I mean is, are you sure I didn’t disappoint you in the kissing department? You’ve done mafia stuff, tons of them, I’m sure you’ve encountered female models who have kissed you before.”

The laugh rumbles from my throat.

Mafia stuff? This is why she is the one turning my head around and not some chick at the bar.

This is Alexia Green. Mouthy, nervous, brave when she wants to be and so breathtaking that not even the dark room is hiding her pretty features.

“The only mafia stuff I do is eliminating people like Brad when I want to.”

“Ooh.”

“And I’ve kissed women before but that wasn’t kissing. This was kissing, feeling you everywhere all at once.”

She blushes then her eyes are back to mine searching.

And since I’m too far gone with this woman, I lay myself on a silver platter for her.

“Ask me. Whatever is going on in your mind, ask me.”

“Tell me you don’t kill good people because if you do, I’m taking my daughter and leaving straight away.”

“Define good people.”

“Christian!”

She pulls away from me and I grab her wrist.

“I don’t want you moving in a direction that is not to me, Sunshine. You wanna move? Move to me not the opposite direction.”

“You kill good people?”

“No, I don’t. My father used to, I’m not my father.”

“What other mafia stuff do you do?”

“Guns to the government, to the mercenaries, to foreign military.”

“Never to bad people, right?”

The people I just mentioned are bad, she doesn’t need to know that though.

“Yes.”

“And drugs?”

“Not the hard stuff.”

“There is no good stuff.”

“We don’t sell to kids, Sunshine. Only in my clubs, to people who want to indulge in that kind of thing anyway. Is that all?”

“For now. Can I get another kiss?”

Her breath hot on my lips, her hands lying on that part of my chest that has a beating organ I didn’t know was capable of beating, I take in her divine face purposely settling for a kiss on the forehead.

“Go to sleep, Sunshine.”

“I’m not sleepy.”

“We’ve got training tomorrow; I expect you to be up by five.”

I pull away from her, she sits on the couch, her feet on the ground a minute later.

“You are not going to bed?”

I’m hard as iron underneath.

“I need to undo what the kiss did”, I state the obvious, her eyes trail down to my crotch and a vein in my shaft throbs.

“Go to bed.”

“I can help.”

“I don’t want you to. It was our first date, right? Then a kiss is enough for a date.”

“Okay. But I read somewhere that if you want to get rid of a boner, think of grandma’s panties. I have never personally worn grandma panties but-.”

“Go to sleep, you little minx!”

My voice rumbles out like a groan.

She chuckles her way out of my sight with a sly ‘goodnight’.

And when she’s gone?

Shit, I think about grandma panties and hop into a cold shower a few minutes later.

XxX

“He decides to attack you from the back, what do you do?”

In my shirt, in my sweatpants, she looks like she’s drowning in my clothes but that doesn’t stop the grin from my face as I watch her arm herself with a kendo stick.

“Knee him in the...I don’t think my daughter should be listening to me cuss but if he attacks me from the back, I could knee him in the nuts.”

Millie sucks her bottle; I hold her bottle for her as we watch her mother train.

“He’d expect that move in seconds. Anyone attacks, you counterattack with something unexpected.”

“Something like what?”

“Let’s find out. Jude!”

Jude comes outside once I summon him.

He has been doing his due diligence since he crossed Troy and his sister.

“Yes, boss?”

“Attack her, don’t go all out.”

“What?” The nurse asks and at the same time, Jude faces me.

“Boss, I don’t think I should be doing this. I can hold Millie and you can-.”

Millie will cry as soon as she’s out of my arms. That’s how much loyalty the baby girl has to me.

“Who messed up with Troy? Who had me driving all the way across town to get his ass—butt from Troy’s garbage of a home? Get in there, kid. Right now.”

The kid circles Alexia and the nurse mimics him by moving too.

They circle each other for a few more minutes before my patience runs thin.

“Jesus Christ, I will shoot someone myself if none of you attacks.”

Jude and his sloppy foot movements are the first to launch the attack.

He throws in a fist; it lands on Alexia’s side of the ribs because one minute she’s standing and the next minute she’s on the ground writhing in pain on the grass.

I don’t think, I cross my damn patio giving Millie to a stunned Jude and crouching on the ground to help the nurse.

“Little...Alexia? Show me where it hurts.”

“Boss, I’m so-.”

The nurse turns to face me but instead of her crying from what Jude has just done, her fist lands on my cheek.

It doesn’t do much to inflict pain but it leaves me stunned.

“What the heck? I thought you were Jude”, she exclaims.

I seethe, “I thought you were hurt!”

“I let him punch me so he could think I was hurt and I could attack him. You said to do something unexpected, I was doing something-.”

“You getting hurt is not something unexpected.”

“Neither is you overreacting. You told Jude to attack and this was me taking my chance of attacking.”

“This is not me overreacting. You’ve not seen me overreact, Alexia.”

Not after you got shot in front of me.

“What? You want to punish me for following your instructions? What? Will you bend me over your knee like an insolent child and spank my ass for following-.”

I don’t let her sass distract me from the fact that my heart leaped out of my mouth when she slept on the cold grass pretending to be hurt.

“Yes. If spanking that ass red instills some scruples, then fucking yes.”

“Umm, I think I’m going to take Millie to Juana and give you guys some privacy.”

As soon as Jude’s footsteps recede. My arms band around her waist and I haul her over my shoulder despite her calling me an asshole several times.

I’m not close to being an asshole, Sunshine. Not yet.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 46

ALEXIA GREEN.

“Vicious?”

My voice comes out like a pant, a plea for help but that seems to agitate him as his hold on my wrist tightens and as he pulls me up to his own version of hell.

I’ve never been to his room.

If I knew faking being hurt would have riled him up, I would have done it sooner.

Anything just to get another kiss because that’s how much power this man has.

And yesterday when the wet heat that had surrounded us eviscerated into thin air and he told me to go to sleep?

Dear Lord, I couldn’t just go to sleep.

Not without imagining that mouth again on a different part of my body, not without imagining him maddeningly kissing me and ramming into me the way that kiss felt.

And the kiss felt like being pounded by a freight train.

One of the many reasons my hips buckled against the bed yesterday as I imagined Christian Vitello taking me all the way to Sunday.

A few stairs in and Millie's cries sound downstairs.

She's fed and I even pumped her another bottle to keep her happy and drowning in the bliss that's milk but that doesn't mean I don't stop when I hear her crying.

My feet remain rooted as I gaze at his hard profoundly broad back.

Lord, of all men I had to be stuck with this one.

The man who screams Italian heritage just by his tattoos, his dark hair and those swirling dark-brown eyes.

"I have to get her. Something might be wrong."

"She's fine."

"She's crying."

"No, that's her telling me she fucking hates Jude and she wants me to hold her and I will hold her. Straight after I teach her mother some few lessons about not fucking my brain up."

I want to say I did what he instructed but the thunder in his eyes cautions me not to.

Instead, I blurb, "Will you hold me too after you've inflicted your punishment?"

I try smiling.

But he scowls more leveling me with a, "No."

His eyes savagely threaten me to move.

Move away from him.

Move with him.

He's angry, I know.

Rhett was a storm when he was angry. A bad storm to me.

But Rhett isn't Christian. Putting them in the same sentence feels like a crime that risks jail time.

Rhett is a man trying to play cynicism while Christian?

Yeah, this man basks in cynicism like he was born to it, like he grabbed that part of evil by the horns and made it obey him. Made it be him.

With that in mind, I don't know what takes charge, my heart, my mind or the information that does so little to make me abhor this man.

I start walking.

He doesn't acknowledge the feat because as soon as we start walking, so do his legs take two stairs at a time and I struggle to keep up behind him while being choked by his scent, by the clothes on me that smell like him and by the anticipation and fear of his punishment.

Standing outside his bedroom door feels like I've conquered four stages of hell and the fifth stage is awaiting me.

He kicks it open, locking it behind us.

I take in the room, it's as dark as him maybe even darker than he is.

Other than that, it has no life and oddly enough it screams of him.

It reeks of him in an all-tormenting manner.

He lets go of my wrist and I miss his warmth around it.

Seating on the edge of the bed, eyes locked in on me like I'm the main show, his eyes roam over my clothes and the words rumble out of his mouth without patience.

"I want my clothes back, Alexia."

Alexia.

Not little nurse. Not sunshine, but Alexia.

"Juana took my clothes together with the laundry, I don't have any clothes to wear."

My complaints don't even remit a bit of pity from him.

He sits there on a throne he's built, executing me with a glare.

I guess this was the punishment.

He likes it when I strip, that's his kink and maybe it's starting to be more of my kink too.

I reach for the hem of his shirt, taking it off when I very well know that underneath I have no bra.

I took it off as soon as I breastfed Millie and took a bath.

The minute my shirt is off, the cold morning breeze of Chicago hits me with vengeance and I shiver throwing his shirt somewhere in the room.

If I thought his eyes were stormy before, right now they are a whole different shade of color.

I reach for his sweatpants. The ones I had to roll around my waist like three times to make sure they fit and underneath I have lacy panties.

The same extra pair of lacy panties that Bree told me to sneak in my purse for our night's out.

The sweatpants pool around my ankles and I kick them out of the way shivering as I do so.

I wait for his words as I stand only in my underwear and a lot of insecurities backing me up.

He's seen me naked before.

But last time he was under the guise I betrayed him for Demetri, technically I did but still.

I might have been naked that time but he didn't pay attention to my body that much.

Right now, I start to ask myself whether my stretch marks from my pregnancy with Millie can be seen, whether my...

He finally speaks, "Come here."

I take a deep breath and approach him on shaky legs.

What on earth does he have in mind? He pats his knee, and my eyes dart between his face and his muscular thighs, spread out as if he wants me to lie on top of them.

"You are...you are going to spank me?"

Surprise prickles my throat and I blink twice.

"Can't think of a better punishment."

I have never been spanked.

My legs teeter on the edge of walking to him or stopping.

“I’m not asking again, Sunshine.”

Trembling, eating away the distance between us, I stand in front of him and do as he says by positioning myself over his lap, my elbows resting on the bed and my ass in the air.

It doesn’t take seconds before Christian rubs his rough hand over the expanse of my ass, his cold like a brand of cold iron searing itself in my skin.

I hold back a moan.

“Such a beautiful ass”, he says, all content and happy to have it to himself, before his hand lands on my skin lightly and I let out a yelp from the pain.

“That’s barely the warmup, Sunshine”, he growls before he adds, “The real spanking starts when this ass is bare and the lace is off.”

Oh God.

Another light slap and my fists dig into the sheets of his bed.

His bed. His room. Him controlling everything and I copiously relinquish that control.

He spans me harder this time and I cry out in agony. The feeling unlike anything I’ve ever felt before.

When I writhe, I hear his dark chuckle slitting every nerve in me and mending it again.

“All warmed up then.”

He voices.

It takes point something seconds to hear the lace being torn off of me.

Another point something seconds to feel his hands gently skimming through my ass, going over the stretch marks on my hips and still tenderly rubbing against the feel of it.

Meanwhile every action he does has me suffocating for breath, I throb, I ache, I need him.

“You are going to have to count Little Nurse. Every slap, every sensation, I want you counting. You got that?”

No. Yes.

“Mmmhmm”, I whimper.

His hands are one step shy away from touching the bane of my desire. The one that started to throb as soon as the first slap came.

“This works with words, Sunshine. I’m pissed off but I’m not slapping this ass red if you don’t give me consent.”

No.

Don’t do that.

Don’t ask for consent.

Take it, just like...just take it like the ruthless man you are.

Otherwise, you asking for it, makes my heart somersault and it shouldn’t.

It shouldn’t somersault even when you think that holding my daughter is the most precious thing. It shouldn’t somersault even when you stop things from going further when you’ve got a boner like last night.

“Yes”, I whisper holding back tears for this man.

No restraint, no mercy, his hand lands on my ass hard.

So hard I tremble against him.

So hard, I feel it all the way up my spine.

“O-One”, I groan.

Then another.

Punishing, changing that pain into pleasure with every hit, every breath I waste by counting when I should be moaning and begging for him inside me.

Because I feel the punishment alright and its pain.

Pure delicious pain that has my ass on fire and my pussy leaking like a broken faucet.

The burning sensation not only churns my throbbing clit but it churns my brain leaving me a breathless hot mess with my thighs slickly coated with my wetness.

Unexpected tears prick my eyes and I try to get away as soon as we hit the ten-count mark.

He doesn’t let me get away though, damn him.

He turns me around, my ass sitting on his lap, me and him face to face.

“Don’t cry.”

“It hurts.”

“It’s punishment, it’s supposed to hurt.”

The way he says it, the way his hand sneaks between us as he gropes a handful of my ass running his fingers along it, soothing the burn with his cold touch.

“It was too much.”

“That the first time you got spanked?”

“Yes”, I admit.

“Good, if Rhett did this to you too, I was gonna do more than clip his nails off his toes.”

“I want to get off now.”

“No.”

“You already did your punishment and I got it, okay?”

“No, if you are still sassing back, you didn’t get it, tesoro. This hurts the same way it stings seeing you on that cold grass not knowing whether you passed out or not.

You got shot once in my presence; you are not getting hurt again unless it’s me doing the hurting.

Plus, feel that,” He skims through my wet folds and I hold onto his shoulders, “That’s you pussy telling me it likes spanking way more than it likes my mouth on it.”

“Christian-.”

“Relish the pain, milk it into pleasure.”

“Okay”, my head spins around his fingers like creeping veins meeting wall for the first time.

I grind myself against the feel of his fingers and by the time he pushes one of his fingers hitting that spot that only he knows the location to, I sink in his neck and I bite him.

I bite him for the pain.

I bite him for the heady pleasure.

In return, another one of his fingers fills me whole stretching me to the max, pushing in and out of me till they curl inside me, rubbing my hilt, robbing from me my breath and my climax that has my toes curling.

I struggle for breath; I lick his neck like a cat in heat that wants more. Because now, I want so much more.

“Clean yourself up, Alexia.”

I lick my desire of his fingers, grinding against his hard crotch, my eyes on him, the connection between us like a tight rubber band.

The worst thing is, I fear this mafia don has no clue how many fireworks he is igniting in my heart.

xxxx

Mafia Don: Sent dresses for you at home. Wear any of them. Date after I’m done working.

Me: Do you always text like a forty-year-old secretary of some billionaire tycoon? Can’t wear the dresses, I’m still at work.

Can’t go on a date right now either.

Mafia Don: Already a billionaire tycoon, Tesoro. What time do you get off work?

I grin.

He started calling me ‘tesoro’ since a few days ago. The day where he left me unsatisfied and so needy I ended up jerking off in his sheets as retaliation.

Me: I don’t know. Your men are pretty banged up so Xavier and I have a lot to do at the moment.

Brenda took Millie home. Wes is out of town because his mother is sick and Layla well Layla slacks off most of the time so it’s me and Xavier.

Mafia Don: I’m coming over.

Me: You are done working already?

Mafia Don: No.

His texts stop after that.

In the next half an hour, Xavier works on stitching, I work on removing the occasional bullets and shards of glass that Vicious' men come with every day.

By the time we are done, I practically want to hug Xavier when he brings me a cup of Greek yogurt in my office.

"Listen about that night at the club, Layla got out of hand with the truth or dare game. I wanted to apologize seeing as to how I didn't get the chance to do so that night. I understand why you left-."

"God, no. No. I didn't leave because of you. I mean because of the game. I-uh-wasn't feeling so great that night and I didn't want to interrupt your night."

His face lights up and I kind of feel guilty for lying.

He rubs the back of his neck like an awkward teenager as we both take a sip of our Greek yogurt sitting on my desk.

"Good, great, would you maybe want to go out sometime? Some place else other than the clinic? For food of course, instead of yogurt."

My voice never leaves my mouth.

Thunder in the form of a pissed-off Christian Volkov stands in the doorway of my office.

"I'm afraid she can't, Peter Pan. She's otherwise busy with her man."

"Christian?"

I stand up and place my cup of yogurt on my desk before walking to him with a perplexed look.

"I didn't think you would actually show up."

"I said I was coming over, Tesoro. I meant it. Gimme a kiss."

"What?"

His lips clash with mine, his hand gropes my ass and I fall victim to his kiss without remembering that Xavier is right behind us and he might be witnessing everything.

Wait a minute, is Christian...is this bastard marking his territory?

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 47

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

"I've had a long fucking day, man. You know what I'd like? To be in her presence and watch her hand me a smile God knows I don't deserve but here I am finding myself in a predicament.

To kill or not to kill you? To wrap this up or to stay put and finish you off?

She's with some smiley country bumpkin right now who secretly thinks she can be his. I'm itching to kill the fucker and kidnap her from that clinic but I have to do this for her. You understand, right?"

Trepidation coils in his gut, you can see it in the way he snorts back bitter tears, in the way his hands tremble as he crawls to me bleeding on the slimy warehouse that's abandoned and in south side Chicago.

"I—I'll do anything. I'll work for you! I'll—serve you—."

The laughter that rumbles from my throat is more than ironic.

I turn to Jagger and Jett who are standing behind him watching this pitiful man act more pitiful than an abandoned street cat.

"You hear him? He wants to serve me? What are we, in the nineteenth fucking century?

Here's what I think you should do, Julius. My men here are going to give you a voice recorder yeah? Ask Alexia Green for forgiveness, tell her she's fucking worthy than your slimy ass."

"Y—yes, I'll do it. I—I'll do it."

Jagger places the small recorder on the ground kicking it with his foot right where Julius' slimy bloody hand picks it.

Like throwing a bone to a starving dog, he presses the button, his voice groggy, his tears doing nothing to calm me from the high and the blood rush traveling my veins at his discerned death.

Because he'll die alright. Here, alone and away from the grand office where Maximo nabbed him in the first place.

"Lex...I mean Alexia...we were wrong that night, we should have stopped, we should have listened when you said no.

Rhett said you wanted it, I swear I thought—but that doesn't mean I should have engaged, I should have...taken advantage of you.

I'm a thirty-year-old man who still lives with his parents and who has accomplished nothing since he was born. I took out my insecurities on you because you had everything, Alexia...you were a nobody who turned herself into a nursing student and I—I was jealous.

I'm a low self-esteem man who thought that rolling with what my friends did made me powerful...that taking you made me powerful. It didn't, Alexia and for what it's worth, I've regretted that day ever since and I hope you can forgive me. I hope you can forgive us."

He hands me the recording, accidentally touching the lapels of my jacket.

The same thousand-dollar jacket I wore for Sunshine for our date tonight.

Julius notices it quickly but by the time he mutters a sorry, my left foot is already connecting with his jaw.

He winces and rolls in the greasy muddy water like a pig.

"I'll—I'll give you more information."

"Yeah?" the sarcasm drips colder than the night.

Crawling like the worm he is, his face banged up, his will to fight dimming, Julius raises his arms up in defeat.

"I-I know where he is. You want...want Rhett? I know where he is but you have to promise me that I get out of here alive.

I...I know where he is! He called me last week. I can get you to him but first? P-promise."

He should be dead but Rhett is the one man I've failed to find among these bastards.

Fear does things to a man. And Julius is pretty scared if he's willing to rat out his buddy for his freedom.

"Where?"

Where is that bastard?

"My life for...for that piece of information. Promise me."

"You think you are in a position to bargain?" Jagger lashes out and I throw him a glare crouching to be at a level with Julius.

“The Vitellos always keep their promises, Julius. You have my word.”

“He called me, I didn’t call him. I swear I cut off communication with him a long time ago.

But then when he called, I thought of—finding out where he was, you know? Rhett’s in Jersey. Now you let me go. I did everything you asked.”

I stand up, brushing the dirt off my shoulders.

“Funny story is, I haven’t been a Vitello for a long time, Julius. My father was a Vitello, soon as I reached the States, my sister and I changed our last names and took our mother’s surname, Volkov.

So keeping my promise to you as a Vitello, means jack shit to me. My old man barely kept his promises, I’m not about to keep mine either.”

“No. No. You promised me. I’m valuable to you. I’m more valuable than you’ll—.”

I tip my head at Jagger stepping back.

A shot rings in the air, Julius falls to the floor.

Dead.

Leaving the drat warehouse, my phone to my ear, I dial Maximo.

“Rhett Kingston’s in Jersey. Tear the city apart if you have to but find him. For Catelina.”

Maximo goes silent for a minute before he replies, “For Catelina.”

I hung up.

Sunshine: I don’t know. Your men are pretty banged up so Xavier and I have a lot to do at the moment.

Me: I’m coming over.

Sunshine: You are done working already?

Me: No.

That was fifteen minutes ago. Fifteen minutes stalling with Julius when my woman was in her clinic with another nuisance I wanted badly to eliminate.

“He’s gone you can stop kissing me now”, she huffs.

I grasp the hint of annoyance in her voice but that doesn’t mean I’m done tasting those lips of hers.

“You are angry?” I ask because I’m fucking fuming at the scene I walked into.

That Xander guy feeding her yogurt. Yogurt of all things instead of something healthy.

“You kissed me because you were jealous and I’m telling you right now Xavier is my coworker. You are the one who hired him in the first place.”

I wasn’t but I don’t tell her that.

This Xavier guy is here in my damn clinic because my men were stupid enough to hire a guy who looks like the next Chris Hemsworth, only smuggler and a doctor. Women fell for that shit.

“I missed you. Missed these lips that have been on my mind all day.”

I steal a kiss from her lips, groping a handful of her ass.

Jesus, she smells great.

“Yeah? Is that the reason why you arranged a date without asking me first?”

“Would you like to go on a date with me?”

She blushes, her hands planting themselves on my chest.

“It doesn’t work like that but since I’m all done here, yeah I would like to go on a date with you, Christian.”

“Say it again.”

“Christian.”

“You know what I’m thinking right now? More than I care to admit? Me and you in a bed, my hands on you, these pretty lips opening up and moaning my name like you know who you belong to.

I warned you, blondie. One kiss and there would be no restraints. One kiss and you are mine. No Xaviers asking you out, no man getting to cup that pussy like he owns it. It’s me and you, Tesoro.”

“It hurt...last time. I’m not sure whether-.”

“I’ll lick it better, Tesoro. No one’s getting hurt, you are not getting hurt under my watch.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 48

ALEXIA BROWN.

He had asked about how my day was while his fingers interlocked with mine and he drove us to our supposed date.

I suggested changing my outfit. I wasn’t exactly dressed to the nines with a plaid skirt and a white blouse and the eversaving messy bun but he said I looked good.

That all of me looked good before he trapped me in his car with his scent, with his growl, with his small kisses to the back of my palm, with his words that had me wobblier than a cup of hospital Jell-o.

God, if he called me Tesoro one more time and looked at me like that, I would spread my legs in every direction he wanted.

Call me shameless, call me wanton but no one was going to resist this man and he knew it and he prided himself in knowing.

“You want me to wear a blindfold?”

I ask, my throat feeling a little bit parched.

“I’ll be by your side. Promise.”

His voice enveloped me with reassurance but spanking is one thing, blindfolding me means I’m walking in blind and while I like being blindfolded when we train, he’s gonna blindfold me in public.

Where there are lots of people, where there are people who might try anything.

“Christian I—I’m scared.”

Wrestling with the steering wheel by trying to avoid traffic, he brings my hand to his lips.

Another kiss.

Another flutter in my heart.

Another swarm of butterflies roils in my stomach violently.

“That’s the thing about trust, Alexia. It’s scary at first but when you jump and you let someone else keep you from falling all that fear from earlier feels like a weight pulled off your shoulders.

Your ex was a waste of space who wrecked you, I’m not going to promise to give you the world but fuck me, I’ll try, tesoro. I’ve never done this but I’ll try not to mess this up.

Do you trust me, sunshine?”

Nausea, the good kind of nausea hits me in the chest.

A light tingling throbs between my legs and tears I didn’t think I would have tonight sting right there at the back of my eyes.

“Okay”, I admit breathlessly.

“Gotta give me more than an ‘okay’, sweetheart.”

“I trust you. Yes, to the blindfold.”

“Attagirl.”

“Do I get to know where we are going now?”

“No.”

“That’s no fair, Christian.”

“Life’s never fair, tesoro.”

I smile but my heart beats warning me of something tragic.

It’s been so long since I’ve had something good but the problem with me? Every time a good thing happens to me, the universe finds a way of chasing away that good, reminding me who Alexia Green is and what kind of life she has before her.

“You do know I know we are on a plane, right? I’m guessing your private jet.”

“Yes”, his huge hands cover my entire butt cheeks.

I’ve always been curvy. Big boobs, hips that couldn’t be hidden no matter the type of picnic dresses I wore.

But Christian's large build makes me feel petite, in his eyes, in his hands, in his lap.

And his lap might be my favorite seat.

"Then I don't see the need for a blindfold", I whine, planting my hands on that part of his chest that's bare to me because of the open-collar shirts he likes wearing with his dark suits.

"I do. I get to trace every inch of this face without your eyes distracting me."

"My eyes?"

"Those big blue eyes of yours, the color of a treacherous sea, the hue of the skies on a calm day."

"Ooh."

"What 'ooh'?"

"I always kinda detested the whole blonde with blue eyes thing. People judge when we blondes have that kind of thing. Blonde and blue eyes are the perfect target for people to call you dumb and a whore."

"Who called you that?"

I chuckle.

"No one really but you see it in their faces when you go asking for work at a restaurant and the first thing, they ask you is, will you wear this or that when serving customers? A waitress job suits you blah blah."

His hand swallows the entirety of my cheek as his teeth trudge forward, capturing my bottom lip between them.

"The first time I saw you I knew you were smart."

"Yeah?" the fact that I can speak while straddling him and his lips so close boggles my mind.

"You had your bat in hand ready to hit two men who would destroy you in seconds just for your baby."

"Well, I do love my baby. I'd kill for her, you know."

"Me too, tesoro. Me too."

I don't drill him for questions or the fact that he just admitted to loving Millie. Why you ask?

Because Christian Volkov kisses me like it's his sole occupation.

I don't even register when we land.

I don't register when he pulls me up in his arms and we get out of the plane, the smell of briny sea air hitting my nostrils.

The swishing of the plane rings loud between us and I lock my hands behind his neck burying myself in his neck.

His only response to that is a low growl that fires my nerve endings and prickles my skin all over.

"Ready?"

I swallow hard my heart kicks in and I don't easily trust myself not to fall when he places me on the ground.

"Yes."

The sounds of waves crashing behind us tell me I'll more than love this.

He kisses my cheek before his hands grip my waist letting my legs come into contact with the ground.

My shoes sink and I utter an 'Oh my God.'

Christian yanks the blindfold away and the sight that greets me has my heart hanging in the air like the mythical sword of Damocles.

It's not much but for a woman like me who's ever been taken to Walmart as some sort of a date and fucked in the parking lot of said Walmart after the aforementioned date, this...this...is the best thing anyone has ever done for me.

A white mansion stands on the cliff, lights on, looking like a palace straight from a Disney fairytale.

That's not all that catches my eye.

What catches my eye is the romantic setting a few feet from us.

A candlelit dinner with white curtains fluttering between.

A king-sized bed, placed on the mat with petals trailing all the way to my feet and behind us, I don't even need to glance back to know we have a whole sea raging at our backs.

"Christian, I—I-."

"They went overboard with the bed. I said a date and they brought a fucking-."

"I love it."

I turn around and hug him.

I feel his heart beat against his chest and that's what I feel too.

That's how my heart is beating too.

"You do?"

"It's beautiful", I coo, pulling away from his warmth our eyes locking.

"I've got another surprise for you."

"Yeah? I don't think I'm done cooing over this surprise though."

"You'll love it", he assures me, taking something from his suit pocket.

How long has that been there?

The small gadget is placed in my arms and I eye it not knowing what it is.

Luckily Christian comes in to help me, "Press the button here. It's a voice recorder."

"O-okay."

"Lex...I mean Alexia...we were wrong that night, we should have stopped, we should have listened when you said no.

Rhett said you wanted it, I swear I thought—but that doesn't mean I should have engaged, I should have...taken advantage of you. I'm a thirty-year-old—."

I don't take a minute to listen to any more as my head registers whose voice this is.

Who the voice belongs to.

The same guy who came inside me and said I was his little whore and I would never be anything else other than that.

“Turn it off! Turn it off! Turn it off!”

I scream, stepping on the recorder till it breaks, till it gets buried in the sand.

I pull away from him, his touch scalding.

“W-why?”

“Suns-.”

“What did you do to Julius?”

Flashes of that night, that terrible feeling of being cornered and being able to do nothing strangles me.

“He’s dead”, Christian says matter-of-factly.

He killed Brad. I told him not to do it.

He killed Julius.

Wait did he...

“When? All of them?”

“Tommy was dead before you left the mansion, Trevor last week and Julius, tonight.”

“I told you not to. You—You touched me after...after you killed him?”

“I bathed.”

“That doesn’t make it any better! I told you I’d let God deal with them; I told you I didn’t want their deaths on me. They were cruel, I am not. I don’t condone-.”

“They were going to die either way.”

I laugh, bitterly, “You don’t listen, do you? You don’t take orders from anyone. You don’t respect people’s privacy.”

“Privacy is the last thing you and me have, Sunshine. I own you; you are mine.”

I am. And he knows it.

“Because I owe you money, then by all means I’ll work hard to-.”

“Don’t do that. Don’t bring in a meaningless debt into this. We are more than that.”

“No, we are not. No, we are not if you can’t respect my decisions.”

He takes one lengthy stride and captures my waist in his.

“You want to talk about respect? I respect the hell out of you, Alexia. For your bravery, for your cheery view of life but I’m not your average man. I’m not going to sit back and watch your nightmares steal air from people who deserve it. They occupy your nightmares; I wasn’t going to let them occupy the same earth you lived in too. You knew that when you told me about them, you knew that when I met you. Anyone who touches you doesn’t get to tell the tale, sweetheart, hate me or get angry but that’s the fucking reality.”

“Let go of me!”

“No. I’m going to feed you, I’m gonna watch you eat and you’ll talk to me till we are both beat and tired to do anything else.”

“I don’t want this anymore.”

“Lying brat”, he grits and with the little space we have between our bodies and just because I’m mad and I can, I raise my right hand and I slap him.

The slap echoes into the night.

My handprint taints his face like a face tattoo.

When his eyes are on me, all dark and greedy, my throat throbs and runs dry, my skin burning with an all-tickling sensation.

“Christian-.”

“Run, tesoro. Run.”

He lets go of my waist; it takes a minute to breathe a handful of air but his eyes?

His eyes are ablaze.

I obey him.

I turn around and I start running across the sand like a maniac.

It doesn’t take minutes for me to start hearing his footsteps behind me.

When I look back, he’s chasing me.

I’m the prey.

I'm the one he's hunting for provoking him.

And every step I take away from him, knowing he's right behind me hunting me thrills and excites me to no end.

I'll spread my legs for you, Christian Volkov but it will be under my terms and my terms alone.

So?

Game on.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 49

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

My dick half mast, a knife digging at my skull and her scent so derogatory I don't give a hoot about the bloody date, I give her a head start.

Allowed her a two-minute sprint before I chased her.

Her ass comes to sight in that plaid skirt that does no justice to the ass beneath it.

I know that ass, I have felt that ass in my palm and damn, if it isn't the most perfect ass on the planet.

I tell her to run watching her eat that dose of bullshit she's trying to feed herself.

She knew my identity thanks to one of my men who had told her about it and even then she knew I was going to go after those fuckers, she knew I had beef with her ex, she knew I was going to avenge her but that didn't mean the brat accepted it.

She said she didn't want to do this.

Then why are you running, little nurse?

Why do your eyes keep looking back, straying to see if the monster can keep up?

Why do those blue eyes of yours whirl with anticipation every time you see me chase after you?

The truth was in this fucked update though.

Alexia Green had never been chased her whole life. Not by a man anyway.

Not by a deserving man and hell if I was a deserving man but I was going to chase her.

No, scratch that, here I am chasing her.

Feeding her thrill.

Showing her if chasing her around turned her on then I'll go to a marathon for her.

She doesn't stop.

Add in the wind, the sand, her hair flying out of that bun and she looks like Aphrodite learning the ropes of ensnaring men.

The little minx takes off her sandals before she sprints up the marbled pathway to my mansion.

I still chase.

Because that's how far gone I am.

Her hand touches the oak exterior of the door before she opens it, getting in and closing it behind her.

I take my time. My sweet time enjoying this little game of hers. Knowing pretty well the repercussions of her actions, of her filthy little lies end in one way.

Her pussy is mine.

Her puffy lips mine to devour the whole night.

Fun thing is, it's just her, me and a whole lot of furniture in that house we can break.

My feet land on the porch, I breathe her scent in the air and it's like a spritz of energizing oxygen, like a dose of petrol to the already churning fire inside me.

I touch the knob twisting it, slowly shoving the door with my shoulder and the crystal palace that would have been Catelina's birthday gift if she were still alive greets me on the way in.

Old Volkov would have never stepped foot here because of grief.

New and definitely stupid Volkov doesn't feel a thing other than the uncanny obsession with the blonde with a sassy mouth that drives me crazy.

Grief feels like an old forgotten feeling. I loved my sister and right now, that's what I feel as I traverse the mansion.

I loved her. I have no feelings of guilt or rage, but love. Catelina was gone and that...that was in the past.

I pass by the foyer, the two grand staircases greeting me on the way in.

The nurse's scent hangs low in the air but what gives her up is the shuffling of feet from the kitchen and the otherwise trail of sand on the floor that also goes to the kitchen.

Easy prey. I mentally chuckle.

When I get to the kitchen, she's nowhere in sight but I can hear her. Hear her little breaths, hear her small doubts creeping in her head.

Thanks to Nico who planned this whole thing, a bottle of Macallan awaits me on the counter and I snag it pouring myself a glass.

The liquid churns my throat but I dunk it all down.

"You want to run and hide, then be better at it, sunshine. You want to be hunted, then be better at being prey. A better

prey doesn't breathe so loud I can fucking hear her moan in the air. A better prey doesn't...you are wet, tesoro. I can smell it in the air, I can practically lick those wet thighs with how slick they sound.

"You want to play? Let's play."

I place my glass down, I narrow around in the kitchen island.

"Behind the door? You are too smart for that."

I still check behind the kitchen door, slamming it to fright the little thing from her hideout.

"In the counters? You are too sexually frustrated to tolerate hours locked in an enclosed space."

"You are somewhere with space, aren't you? Somewhere where you would sneak your hand between your legs without making a sound. Somewhere you would rub what's mine and muffle your voice chasing your own pleasure.

Does it hurt? By any means tell me because I made a promise, sunshine. Nothing's gonna hurt when I'm here. Well except from pleasure and that's dependent on you."

I pass by the pantry, the patting sounds of my shoes warning her I'm too close to catch her.

I know where she's hiding and for the sake of it, I give her time to think she's won.

She makes another sound, I chuckle.

Knowing her she probably called me an asshole like usual. Knowing her she's probably frustrated at herself and at me.

"What will it be, tesoro? You come out or I get you and if I get you, your pussy is my endgame. I'll take that sweet thing, I'll want you on my face, spread out, open to me so I can lick every damn inch of that sweetness off of you."

"One."

She doesn't come out. I smile.

"Two."

Not even a peep of her golden hair.

I don't get to three though. I don't think I have the patience for it and neither does my dick.

My hands grip the rail that acts as a door handle to the pantry and grabbing it open, sunshine blonde hair, a pair of pleasure filled blue eyes gaze at me.

"Christian", she breathes.

I stretch my arm out for her.

"Come here."

Barefooted, knees shaking, eyes dilating with lust, Alexia walks to me and she's even sexier than before.

Always sexy.

"Please", her bottom lip quivers, I catch her chin.

"Please what?"

"Make love to me."

"No."

“W—what?”

“I fuck, Alexia, and I do it hard. Making love isn’t in my MO but that doesn’t mean I won’t rut senselessly into you for making me chase you.”

“Y-you told me to run.”

“I never told you to hide though.”

“I-I-.”

“I want the skirt off, I want everything off of you, I want you on this counter, legs spread showing me how you would have touched yourself if I didn’t find you. Right now, sunshine.”

I take a step away.

The urge to kiss her lips is stronger but seeing her climax takes the cake.

“I don’t want to be the only one stripping. If I strip, then you strip.”

“Make yourself come and for every orgasm, I’ll strip.”

“Promise?”

I don’t do promises.

Yet for her-.

“I promise.”

Seeing her strip is my favorite pastime but seeing all of her? Call me the Biblical Samson because I would gladly let her shave my hair away.

My sweet fucking Delilah.

She’s pretty everywhere. Pink flowery nipples, full tits, gorgeous curves add in that killer face and I got myself one hell of a firecracker.

I lean against the fridge, I watch her ass slap the counter, her ass in the air, her legs spread apart as her elbows rest on the marble top of my kitchen island.

“You are not just wet, little nurse. You are soaking wet and need me. Show me how that cunt likes me.”

Shy at first, she cups herself with her hand before her thumb swirls over and around her gleaming clit, lapping her juices, her whimpers shuddering with how fast and beckoning her tight little hole calls to me.

Her eyes on me, her chest heaving, one of her fingers hovering over her hole and the minute she pushes inside creating a picture worth a million words, I myself lose control.

I never lose control.

But with her? That control looks like a bunch of socks I keep losing every time she's around.

I don't care about the rules, as soon as her finger is inside her hole. My pants are already off, my shirt, briefs and suit following.

One lengthy stride and I'm in front of her, holding her hand controlling the rhythm.

She holds onto my shoulders.

I take her lips, I take her moans, I take everything she has to offer savagely like a caveman who's learned how good meat is with fire.

The minute she withdraws her hand from her core, my dick swoops in.

She's wet enough. She can take it.

I sink into her with one thrust.

The problem of sticking your hand into a jar of Nutella however? One lick isn't enough.

Having her once tonight will not be enough.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 50

ALEXIA GREEN.

His lips trail over my face, kissing me everywhere he can before his hands grip my thighs, his fingers etching into my skin sardonically like the ink covering his skin.

The wanton moan that leaps from my throat echoes out like a cry when he thrusts into me.

One powerful thrust that rattles my rib cage and sweeps the very ground from my feet.

Except I'm not even standing.

I'm in the air, lost in his scent, lost in the stubble that caresses my cheek as he fills me up to the brim so much so I think if he moves, he'll stretch my walls to a limit that will guarantee a few stitches.

He heaves. His breath hits my shoulder, his chest rumbling to an angrier beat than mine.

For a moment I think it will be like the last time we were like this.

I think he'll pull out and slam into me again and my pussy?

Yeah, I think she likes being stretched despite the pain that has my claws on his shoulder.

My pussy likes being chased, likes being played by this man, likes being soaked with the thought of him rutting into me senseless like he said.

He doesn't pull out.

He doesn't give me soft.

He burns me; he chars me with that gaze I can't look away from.

My heart heaving, my boobs reaching out for his touch, for a smidgen of his affection, Christian doesn't give me affection, he gives me the truth with no bullshit coated in between.

"We haven't started the main event and your pussy is already clenching around me. Your pussy is already marking her territory, I want to mark my territory too, Tesoro. All night, all fucking day."

Then he holds my chin with one hand, his other hand sneaking between us, finding my clit and teasing my little wet mound that throbs and shivers under his movement.

He watches me.

I bite my bottom lip trying to hide all the string of cusses that want to burst out of me from the mounting and overwhelming heat.

"Don't hold back that raspy voice from me, tesoro. I want you to scream, I want you to tell me just how good you are sucking my dick in. You feel that? You feel how we fit?

Like a goddamn lock and key, baby. A lock and key", he murmurs.

When he pinches my clit, I lose it.

I open my lips and I exhale,” Oh God...more...please...more.”

He’s inside me and he is not moving.

But the orgasm that ripples through me has me gripping his length for sweet sweet survival.

I pull him in and he feels it because he smirks like a son of gun who knows what he’s doing.

“More what?”

“More, Christian”, I heave.

“That’s right. Not God, not anyone else but Christian, got it?”

“Y—yes. Yes.”

He pulls away, a few inches away from me and when his eyes drop to where we are joined, I almost feel another wave of pleasure possessing my body at the lust in his eyes.

He stares at us, at me, intently like he’s trying to paint the whole picture in his head permanently.

Like the unpredictable mother fucker he is, he asks another question that has me sexually frustrated.

“Your period?”

“On the 17th”, I answer him and my heart almost breaks.

I get it. Condoms and protection and all that shebang is important but that doesn’t stop me from wondering if he sees this as a one-night stand and nothing more.

No commitments, no babies.

“Good. I don’t take risks, Sunshine.”

“I guess I’m not worth the risk, huh?” I ask.

Don’t sound bitchy. Don’t sound bitchy but that statement comes out so catty I know he hears the bitter bile in my tone.

“You are worth the risk, if I’m counting every minute till I fill this pussy with my come and watch it drip all night. I don’t fuck without protection, a few minutes with you and the concept of protection seems like a long-forgotten memory.”

“Ooh”, I shy away.

“Yes, ooh and I’m thinking of you too. I can’t fill your womb with my babies if you don’t give me consent so we settle for filling you up with my come today.”

“And next time?” I ask naively.

Because I want to hear him say it.

Because I know right now, I can’t get pregnant but what if I could? What would he do then?

“I swell you up with our babies.”

I eat his words like candy. Licking, sucking, nibbling.

Because that’s what kids do, they suck on candy without knowing that diabetes is a thing, that their teeth rotting is a possibility.

I know this isn’t going to end well. I feel it and I push that feeling away and jump on the bandwagon of happiness taking his lips.

Taking his groans, taking the pleasure that curls my toes when he starts moving, when I start feeling him in my tummy, everywhere all at once.

He was right though.

This man doesn’t make love.

Doesn’t do it vanilla like how my first and only sex was.

He ruts into me like an uncaged animal, he takes my breath from my throat yet again pumping my heart to an odious beat that tugs at my heartstrings and has my pussy singing hymns like crazy.

He bites my bottom lip sucking it.

He fists my hair as his length pushes inside to that spot that feels like it belongs to him now.

Then he pulls out and it’s the most devastating feeling before he fills me up to the brim again, my ass arching from the cold marble top.

When my ass finds the marble again, it’s his warm hands I find instead protecting my butt from being bruised by the rough concrete.

I try to grip reality. I try to last but another mind-blowing orgasm rattles my body and has me landing in his arms like a bag of bones.

He lets me ride out my orgasm, pushing gently, kissing the top of my head, telling me how good my pussy likes him, how good of a girl I am for pulling his dick inside me no matter how tight my little hole is.

I latch on his dirty talk and I die on that hill because sex has never felt this good.

But this isn't just sex, is it?

For this man, this is his sport and he dominates it like freaking Serena Williams with tennis.

One minute my pussy is weeping for him every time he pounds inside me and the next minute, he pulls out not giving me a moment to breathe before his face lands between my legs lifting me up the counter with Herculean strength.

I hold onto his shoulders checking out that ink on his back I hadn't noticed before.

With the lighting, the ink reveals itself to be two massive wings on his back running from his shoulder muscles and stopping at his waist.

The dark outlines, the details, everything about those wings turns me on.

Because that's what this man does, he makes me soar. He makes me live.

His fingers dig into both sides of my hips and I don't complain because we've been here before.

Another reason why I'm not surprised when my back hits the wall and his face disappears between my slick thighs.

He hoists me up against the wall licking every part of me till I feel it all the way up my spine, up the ticking bomb that is my heart.

"So sweet", he grumbles, his breath strumming my clit before he dives in for the kill.

He bars my clit between his teeth, his tongue darting inside me and licking every part of me like he just found his new obsession.

I'm a writhing mess.

I'm so overcome by everything this man dishes out to be more than shy.

And Christian?

He worships my body.

“I want this pussy seating on my face, baby girl. All night, taking my breath away.”

I mewl, clutching his hair.

“Ch-Christian”, I moan.

“I’ll give you the whole world, sunshine. After this, ask me for the whole Chanel collection and it will be yours, all yours because I want you so full of me, your pussy will be the shape of my dick.”

“Y—yes.”

Yes, to slaughter.

Yes, to everything you offer.

Yes, to practically everything.

By the time he’s done with me and my body exhales doling out another surge of pleasure that turns my legs weak, Christian slowly slides me down against the wall until I’m face to face with him.

His lips glean with my juices but that doesn’t make him any pissed or annoyed in the least.

He kisses me one more time and I taste myself wanting more of me but he pulls back.

“Your taste is mine now, sunshine. Don’t be greedy.”

Then he picks me up bridal style, hauling me to his bulging arms.

My ear rests on his heart, the one that fires up like a motor that’s just learned how to operate.

He carries me upstairs and I almost fall asleep were it not for the fact that the coolness of the mattress jolts me awake.

I open my eyes and there he is.

Rugged looking, hard features, that scowl melted into a smile, God he’s so handsome.

So, mine.

Both of his arms corner either side of my head and he dips down for a kiss before I feel his dick in line with my core.

“I want more, tesoro. More than once, more than twice, for the whole night if it’s possible.”

I chuckle, cupping his cheek.

“I know. I can see it in your eyes. I can see I have unleashed a monster.”

“Not a monster, baby, but a madman who found his favorite brand of crazy. That’s how it feels when you clamp down on me and suck everything off of my body.”

He pushes the tip inside me and I arch my back off the bed.

It still burns but the anticipation of feeling him inside competes with the pain, the latter winning.

“I haven’t gotten a chance to taste my pretty tits.”

He rams into me, his kisses raining down my clavicle to my breasts and when he lunches at my puckered nipples driving into me as he does, I realize maybe he is a madman and maybe I feel pretty good being his crazy circus.

Problem is?

The madman doesn’t stop.

The madman fucks me all night showing me heaven, nirvana and the stars and still having it in him to make me come more than thrice in the night.

And each time? He comes inside me and I feel his release all the way inside, to depths I didn’t know were possible.

He doesn’t just mark me, he doesn’t take my breath away, Christian Volkov walks away with my heart and I willingly allow him to.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 51

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Color my face white and give me a rainbow wig if that makes me a clown because right now?

I might be the biggest clown of all and I would still do it again.

Her blonde hair splays across my arm, her pussy hugs my thigh and it's taking all my willpower not to reach out and fill her up again but she's had a few hours of sleep.

More like three hours of sleep and I still want an in to her pussy.

That's how pussy-whipped I am. That's how addictive she is.

Visible marks of my teeth, a few hickeys line her shoulders and just because I can and she looks so perfect in her sleep, I lean in and kiss her.

She stirs but she doesn't wake up.

Am I too much of a cynic wishing she would wake up and I would take her all the way to Sunday?

I would bend her over again, ramming into her tight warm heat till I saw stars.

And the truth we both know is, she wouldn't refuse me.

She didn't refuse when I took her bareback, she didn't refuse me dominating the fuck out of her because secretly my little nurse was a submissive.

But how much of a submissive, was she?

How far would she allow me to take over?

Her eyelids shut, I take a peek at her open mouth that's letting out snores like a bear cub and grin.

Those pink lips of hers were around my shaft yesternight, taking as much of me as she could, learning how to give a blowjob.

I couldn't come inside her warm mouth when it was her first time and she got hella pissed at me for that.

I was happy though; happy those bastards hadn't taken all of her and made her fear intimacy.

Watching her sleep might be my favorite thing and I could do it all day were it not for the phone that rings out loud somewhere downstairs.

The grip she has on my thigh grows stronger.

Whoever the fuck is calling grows persistent.

At the end of the day, I'm forced to tear her hands away from me, missing her scent altogether.

I go downstairs to find the ringing device somewhere near her bra and, picking both of them up, the name on the caller ID flashes bright.

Maximo.

I take my pants and my shirt, putting them on.

"Volkov-."

"Did you find him?"

The urgency in my voice speaks for itself.

I want Rhett Kingston caught; I want him dead now more than ever.

Why? Because that fucker poses a threat to me and the blonde in my bed.

I don't know how he operates but he'll want her, he'll want his child. He'll want them because his ego can't take it.

That's what I counted on when I took Alexia and her baby from him but right now?

I want them on my side for different reasons.

They are mine now.

No sack of shit is ruining that.

"Yes."

One word.

An affirmation and my trigger finger grows happy.

You are dying, you useless limp dick.

And then? It's winner-take-all. And I'll take both of them.

"You bring him to Chicago?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

“Home.”

“I’m on my way.”

“Copy.”

I should be asking why he took Rhett to my home instead of to one of my slimy warehouses but I don’t.

I don’t question his one-word replies and I should have. I really should have because Maximo DiMarco isn’t a man of many words but he sure as hell hands me a ton of advice I don’t ask for now and then.

When I hang up, my next call is to Jett and he picks up on the first ring.

“Casablanca mansion. Bring Brenda and the child, tell Brenda to bring some clothes for the nurse. Escort them to the clinic, if the nurse decides to go to work.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“And Jett?”

“Yes, boss?”

“Carry a gun if shit decides to hit the fan.”

“Right away, boss.”

The drive back home turns my mood sour than I was hours ago.

My mood doesn’t feel any better when I spot Maximo’s car outside of my home and a rather familiar Russian brand of car lining my driveway.

Demetri fucking Sokolov.

Of all the assholes to ruin my mood today, this fucker is still in Chicago and in my house.

I storm inside my house.

This isn’t how my morning was going to go. I was going to stay in bed, buried inside my nurse’s tight heat or having my tongue lapping up all her juices and feeding my addiction for her in small tantalizing doses.

Shit hits the fan alright.

Especially when Maximo stops me before I reach my own living room.

“Where’s Rhett and what the hell is Demetri’s car doing in my estate?”

“Gotta calm down first, Volkov. You gotta hear both sides of the story.”

Before I can question what’s going on, Juana’s frame appears behind Connor her chubby cheeks padded with tears.

She’s not crying for her usual emotional telenovelas, I realize.

She’s crying for me. I know that look, I also taste it in the way Maximo holds my shoulder.

Like Judas Iscariot kissing sweet Jesus before he handed him to the sharks.

I tune out their voices, I take brisk steps towards my living room knowing for a fact nothing surprises me anymore.

The only thing that surprises me is the six foot two Russian ruffian standing in my living room like he owns the place.

Smearing his boots on my Persian rug with a smug grin like we are best buddies since he decided to extend his stay in Chicago.

“Volkov, you gotta hook me up with your interior designer because your home is quite the beauty. She’s got good taste, no?”

“What are you-.”

My voice dies down, that barrel of surprise I thought I wouldn’t expect to feel hits me like an arrow to the chest.

A lithe woman appears from behind Demetri, patting his shoulder like she’s scolding an insolent child.

Not that Demetri isn’t insolent but still. Call this a twist to my never-ending life because I take a step back watching my mother’s hair bounce off her shoulders, watching the same shade of eyes I have look at me and brim with tears.

What?

“Christian”, she calls and that acts as a catalyst for me to take another step back.

“Chris, it’s me.”

“No”, I rumble.

She's dead. Is anyone seeing what I'm seeing? Am I still high on pussy?

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't-."

"You faked your own death, sorellina?"

"Volkov, she can explain", Maximo interrupts us and raucous laughter reverberates from my throat as I turn to face him.

"You knew?"

He knew Catelina was alive?

How long?

"It wasn't my secret to tell."

"Wasn't your secret to tell? She's my bloody sister! You saw me lose my mind over her, you saw me lose the only good thing fuck, Maximo!"

Anger and grief clash, betrayal feels like a knife dug deep in the crevices of my heart.

I don't feel a thing when I raise my fist and hit Maximo square in the jaw watching him tumble to the ground like the backstabber he is.

Trust, trust is a funny thing.

The man I trusted the most, doesn't just break my trust with the truth, he breaks my trust more when my sister, Catelina, mi sorella, the apparent walking ghost leans to the floor and tries to pick him up.

"Baby. Are—are you okay?"

What the hell did she just say?

She cries for him; she cries for him and not me!

Her fratello, the man who has been having nightmares over her apparent death, the man who wanted to jump in that casket for her.

The man who held her dead cold body. H—how is this possible?

I grip her by the arm pulling her away from Maximo, red being the only clear thing I can see in my vicinity.

“You are going to explain everything, word by word and afterwards? You are never going to see the light of day, Catelina Sofia. You are going to understand what it means to be in the dark for so long because you have nothing to live for. I raised you, Cat. I took you away from your own nightmares and gave you a life most girls your age could only dream of and this is how you repay me? Staging your own death, tormenting your own brother. Non tormentiamo la famiglia!”

I seethe.

“You-you are hurting me. I-I never meant to hurt you, I never meant to-.”

“You want to act up on someone, I’m your punching bag man. But you continue holding my fiancé like that and you and me are going to have a problem”, Demetri speaks, his words like nails on a chalkboard.

I stare at her arm and at her ring finger confused.

A mocking gleaming diamond stares right back at me.

I stare back at Maximo who’s already stood up looking at me the way Demetri is doing.

Like they are angry I’m hurting the love of their meager lives.

I might be the biggest fool right now and the fact that I missed all this presses on my brain like hot iron.

“What happened, sorellina? What happened to my sister? The one who knew getting mixed up with our father’s world would end her? What happened to my sister, Catelina? The one who loved her brother above all else?”

“I lo-love you. You are my only family, of course I-.”

“Do you? Show me, Catelina. Leave both of them and we can go back to how things were.”

“I can’t”, she whispers and none of those tears are getting to me.

“I love them. You are my brother and I love you too.”

“You made your choice. You chose them”, I let her go, letting that coat of disdain be my armor.

Juana cries by the corner. Don’t worry Juana, you weren’t the only fool getting played tonight.

“Christian please just listen-.”

“Get out! You want to be their whore, be my guest because I’m done carrying the guilt over never giving you a good life, of letting you die in the hands of those brutes.”

She clings to my arms and the scent of betrayal hovers and covers me like stark darkness.

“If you could just listen...”

“Malyshka”, Demetri steps towards her to catch her shoulders and the idea of flailing him raw like a pig over fire spikes my mind.

Him and Maximo. Both of them? With her?

“If you could let go of your anger and your quest of vengeance maybe I could explain! Maybe I could explain everything! You think I wanted this...I never wanted my brother to be miserable because of me, I never wanted to enlist the help of some woman to make you happy, I never wanted-.”

“What did you just say?”

The two bastards are by her shoulders now, protecting her like they own every inch of her.

One Russian rival and the other, the brother I wished to have.

His betrayal feels like a punch to the teeth.

“Your obsession with vengeance had you roping a woman and her child into this! You will let them go; you don’t want to see me? Fine, but you will let Alexia Green and her child walk away.”

“She knew.”

Ooh the daggers keep on coming from different directions.

The nurse knew too.

“How much did you pay her to make me happy, sister?”

“That doesn’t matter-.”

“It matters if you want your two fucking lapdogs to walk out of here alive. How much did you pay my nurse?”

“I promised her she would walk away from this unharmed and that’s what I’m doing right now.”

Unharmmed? I'll more than harm her alright.

"Get out of my house, Catelina. You and your boyfriends, get the hell out!"

Maximo lingers. His gaze stays for a second before he takes my sister, my own flesh and blood, into his arms dragging her crying mess away from my sight.

Demetri stays. To gloat. To rub it in my face. I don't care. As soon as I process the news, he'll be dead. Catelina will be back in her room locked and never seeing the light of day again.

"I knew you were brutal but not this kind of brutal. I should have ended you when I had the chance maybe then my malyshka wouldn't be sobbing for a piece of shit who has a stick too far up his ass to realize what he has just gained."

He walks away, they all do.

I'm left picking up the pieces with a sobbing Juana by the corner chanting 'Catelina, my little girl is alive'.

Then the universe, Budha, sweet baby Jesus sends me another hit that's bound to be the final nail to my coffin.

My phone rings.

The plan is to toss it away but the caller ID reads 'Sunshine'.

Another traitor.

She wasn't working with Demetri that day, was she? She met with Catelina, she snagged a good deal of making me happy, prepping me up before my not-dead sister came knocking at my doorstep.

A game well played, little nurse.

Well, played.

I take the call, her treacherous voice filters through my ears.

"Whatever happens, being with you was the best thing that ever happened to me. I don't care whether you are the same grumpy asshole who never smiled before and stole me from my home. You made me live more than anyone ever has. I-I lo-."

The line goes dead.

The ticking sounds of an IED about to detonate fill my ears.

By the time I look at Juana, registering there's a bomb in my house and we need to evacuate, the bomb goes off with a bang smoke and rubble imploding everywhere like confetti.

They say when death comes for you, there is light at the end of the tunnel, some say they see Jesus.

I don't see a light.

I don't see Jesus.

I see fire coming at me.

I feel fire eating away each piece of skin it can find on me and the sound of Juana's ear-curdling screams backing the pain.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 52

ALEXIA GREEN.

Okay, the sex was definitely the best I've ever had in a while.

Not in a while. Ever. He was the best sex I ever had, period.

Something about being tossed around in bed and being pummeled had me jutting my ass out like a cat in heat for his touch, for more and for all the crude words he had to say to me.

That didn't mean good and steamy sex could erase the feeling of waking up to an empty bed though.

"Something came up." That's what Jett says when he shows up at the mansion that definitely smells of sex with Brenda and Millie.

I put up a brave face.

He could have woken me up and told me what came up but this is Christian we are talking about and even with great sex, the man answers to no one even me.

I take a shower in his mansion and every touch of the hickeys he left on me elicits a breathless moan from me. Because that's how I feel.

Breathless. Taken aback. Subdued. Dominated thoroughly. And I liked it.

Jett and Brenda don't ask about the hickeys on my neck that are still exposed even after wearing the itchy turtle neck dress that Brenda brought with her.

Them not asking and pretending everything is normal almost makes me feel fine.

It's fine. So, what if you woke up to his come dripping out of you and wishing you guys would have a shower together afterward?

He's not that type of man.

But why don't I feel fine even after me and Brenda sit outside Café Croissant a few minutes later with my baby playing with my thumb?

"He's gone now, so spill young lady. How was the sex with Chicago's most feared XY chromosome?"

Brenda asks after Jett goes inside the café to get our orders.

"Good."

Brenda nearly murders me with her gaze as she lifts her hands in mid-air unbelievably, "What? You can't just say it was good like you hooked up with some dude bro from the subways. You had sex with Christian freaking Volkov! Wait, did he not make you-."

"He did", I huff, my core sore and throbbing, "he made me come lots yesterday, I didn't think my body could go to such limits but he proved me wrong."

"Oh honey, then why do you look like you didn't get some big D yesterday?"

I chuckle, flipping her off.

"No one calls them D anymore, Bree. You know that right?"

"You are not denying it was big either. Wink. Wink."

"Stop", I blush readjusting Millie's beanie.

My sweet little baby. Looks like I betrayed you too, Millie. Mommy couldn't say no to the mafia don's big D.

Christ, calling it D feels weird.

"All I'm asking is, you got some yesterday and I know it's been a long time and also judging by the caveman marks he left on you, he enjoyed it ergo you enjoyed it too so again what is the problem, woman?"

“He left. Without a note or something, I’m not saying we are in some romcom or anything but is asking for a simple note a little too much?”

“Does he know that it wasn’t a one-night stand? Did you talk about it?”

“Well uhh he did kinda say my vajayjay belongs to him now.”

Saying vajayjay in front of my kid is probably better than saying pussy or risking the people who are also having coffee while sunbathing outside this small café hear me.

“Shut the front door! He went all caveman on you? Like you are mine and all that stuff? Where is that bulky bodyguard with our orders, I think I might need more ice cubes in my latte because this just got hot.”

“Brenda-,”

By the time I tell her it wasn’t that special if he left at the crack of dawn like he was all done fucking a stripper for a night, Brenda pushes her chair back and stands up.

“I’m getting us dessert with that latte and you are spilling every little detail about your night. Every detail, Lexy.”

The tumultuous exhilaration I feel as I watch Brenda sashay back to the café to hurry up our orders and come back to listen to gossip, sexy gossip no less brings a warm sensation to my chest.

I never had this before.

A girl best friend to rant about my adventures in sex with mafia men? Never would have seen this coming.

I trace my finger over Millie’s baby-soft forehead, she likes it when I do that.

She gives me her smile, cooing as her toothless gums stare right at me.

“You like the sun? I like it too, baby. I like us always hanging out like this even if the mafia don isn’t with us today.”

She grabs my thumb taking it into her mouth like a greedy cute monster.

“Life’s been good to us, Millie hasn’t it? We are eating enough in nowadays and look at you, girl. You have an aunt now. Do we love Aunt Brenda? Oh yes, we do. Yesssh we do, baby.”

The chair where Brenda was seated is dragged away as Brenda occupies it.

A heavy sensation drops like a lead weight in my stomach as I raise my eyes to see who sits in front of me.

It isn't Brenda.

It isn't Jett.

With a creepy hat and all dressed in lethargic black, animosity blazes between me and him, fanned by years of cruelty and his lies.

A spark of something dangerous lingering in his eyes is what has me wanting to stand and run in a different direction.

"Don't even think of running away, baby doll. Is this how you greet your baby daddy, Lexy?"

His paper-thin stunt at humor curbs my throat with invisible claws and churns my stomach with bitter bile.

"You are not my anything, Rhett", I dish out the venom as my ex and I come at loggerheads.

Millie holds my thumb tighter like she can feel the change in atmosphere, like she can feel the dangerous thudding of my heart.

Because that's how it sounds.

Thud.

Rhett's eyes slide over my face, his green-brown eyes holding me captive and paralyzed in fear.

Thud.

Rhett reaches out to me and places his cold hand on my right cheek wiping the perspiration I didn't know I had since he showed up.

Thud.

I pull my cheek away.

Adrenaline shoots inside my body in lethal doses encouraging me that the time to fight or flight is now.

"Is that so? Because what you are holding is mine, doll. Don't forget that. It took two to tango, it took us two to make her."

“Don’t talk about her. She is not yours, you never wanted her! You don’t even know her name!”

“I’m sorry”, Rhett says and it feels like all the air has been knocked out of my lungs with a lead anchor.

This man might have seven-day stubble and have grown his hair out, accentuating features many women would think is hot, but I see him for what he truly is.

And what he is, is a monster. A deranged psycho conjured up from the depths of hell.

This psycho will never change.

“I don’t want your sorry, I don’t want you near me. Leave me and my baby like you did before.”

“I can’t do that, doll. You know that saying where you know you love her after you let her go? I love you, doll. I want you and our child back.”

“You are crazy.”

He chuckles then irrational anger bottles inside of him you can see it in his face.

“Crazy for you? Yeah, I am. Crazy about how that piece of shit dragged you into this? Yes. Fifteen minutes I had to sit here listening to the fatso you have for a friend ask you how good sex was with Christian Volkov.

It doesn’t matter, though. He forced you to do it, doll. I get it and that will be the last time he ever touches you. You are with me now.”

How could I not have never seen his craziness up until that night when he handed me to his friends?

Right now, his craziness is a bright screaming yellow that could blind an old man with astigmatism.

“You think he forced me? Forcing me would be what you did to me. Remember that, Rhett? Remember that night when I cried to my boyfriend to help...to save me from his friends?

He didn’t force me to do anything. I opened my legs for him wider than I ever did with you because Christian Volkov is more of a man than you will ever be.

The irony is, I would get kidnapped by him over and over again and never regret it ever.”

Resignation and anger sculpt his mouth into a humorless smile,” Stand up, you are both coming with me.”

“No. Never.”

I grit.

“Yeah? You want to play with me, Lexy? Right after I just apologized for all the shit I did? Fine, let’s have it your way. How about a game of Russian Roulette then?”

Dread curdles in my throat.

“W-what do you-.”

“In front of us, do you see the granny with the falling wig? The one dressed in awful yellow? Look at her cheek.”

My throat constricts as I look at the Granny’s cheek. The one laughing at something the younger woman is showing her on the phone. There’s a red dot on her.

Oh God, is that a...?

“One word from me and the sniper I have on hold snaps her fake dentures off her mouth. That’s one person who dies if you don’t cut the bullshit and walk away with me right now Lex.”

“Stop- “, I sob.

“Let’s move on. See the kid eating chocolate croissants by the left table with her even more adorable parents?”

“You wouldn’t...you wouldn’t kill a kid.”

“Don’t tell me what I’ll do and what I’ll not do when I’m pissed off, doll. I love you but do you think listening to you boast about how good of a slut you were to another man makes me happy?”

“What do you want? W—why are you doing this to me again?”

“Because I need you the way I need oxygen, Lex. That’s why. Walk away with me, you, me and our child will have a good life together. Fail to walk away and everyone here dies including your two pals unconscious somewhere inside that café right now.”

Brenda? Jett?

“Rhett please-.”

“I’m not an evil man, baby. I came back with a lot of power to change our lives for the better. All I need is a yes. Tell you what, I’ll even let you talk to your captor one last time. That’s how generous I feel.”

“Rhett-.”

“Call him. You want to tell him what’s going on right now, be my guest but I hold the power, doll. Take out your phone. Call. Him.”

I take my phone from my purse with trembling hands, my eyes doing the begging, my Millie starting to cry out of concern.

The phone against my ear, Rhett holding the power, I dial Christian’s number and I try to speak my heart out.

“Whatever happens, being with you was the best thing that ever happened to me. I don’t care whether you are the same grumpy asshole who never smiled before and stole me from my home. You made me live more than anyone ever has. I-I lo-.”

I don’t get to finish my words because Rhett yanks my phone away from me cutting the call.

He hugs me from behind, his hand touching Millie’s forehead and Millie sobs.

She sobs just like how I sob at my helplessness and the chain of events repeating itself again.

Me and Rhett.

Rhett and me.

Pain all over again.

His disgusting lips bite my earlobe as he says, “Boom! And there goes your man. Dead, burnt to ashes and I’m still here.

I’m always here, doll and I’ll be better. You’ll love me again and we’ll be happier than before. Get up, Alexia. You know the drill, do anything crazy and the next bomb won’t target your boss alone but an entire café.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 53

ALEXIA GREEN.

Don't engage.

Obey. Obey him, Lex.

Obey because no one is coming to save you.

Christian he—is dead?

“Why do you have to make this hard, doll? You are the one who makes me do things I don't want to do. You think I like hitting you? You think this makes me happy, Lexy?”

He asks me.

It's the same questions he's been asking me every time he slaps me and kicks me on the floor like a dog, he wants to kick to the curb but can't.

I raise my eyes from the pits of despair I've been wallowing in.

‘You think I like being hit constantly? You think I don't want to die? You think I can't still feel your hands on me promising that you won't hurt me and that you love me?’

It's been two weeks!

Two weeks and my cheeks throb like crazy. No amount of ice packs he throws to me tone down the swelling.

Two weeks and my back is sore, every part of me is sore, every part of me is crumbling and sifting through my hands like sand and I can't do anything.

I can't hit him.

I can't take the gun mocking me from the back of his jeans because he has the power.

He has my baby.

He holds Millie every chance he gets making sure I'm not alone with her.

Making sure my baby forgets me and all the resolve in my body to fight dims.

Right now, as he stares me down with ire and fake compassion, he has Millie in his arms and all my baby has done is sob constantly.

“R-Rhett please...I'll just feed her. I won't do anything else, let me feed her please. Please, I'm begging you...please let me...”

My voice cracks.

My chest hurts.

My stomach growls both with contempt for this man and the bleeding marks on my hands.

“Don’t cry, doll. I don’t like seeing you cry.”

“Then stop this madness! You have us locked tight in this house; you already killed him. You know no one’s coming for us so please stop—please just...stop.”

“Do you miss him?”

That maliciousness is back in his voice and on his face.

The Rhett that watches TV while Millie cries in his arms is back.

The Rhett that took one good look at my body that had been littered with hickeys from...from Christian is back and he is angry.

And he is holding my baby in his psychotic hands.

“Rhett-.”

“Do you miss him? Do you wish it was me dying in that explosion instead of him?”

Yes. A million times yes.

But the universe likes assholes like Rhett.

The universe likes taking things from me but I won’t let it take Millie. Not Millie, not ever.

So, I lie.

I lie like I’ve been lying to him to save Millie.

Because being with another man upped the kill switch in Rhett’s mind. He went from crazy to borderline insane.

I say anything wrong and I earn another kick to my ribs, another slap, another night sleeping in the basement and Millie has to feed, I can’t die because Millie has to be fed.

“No. I love you”, I mutter, my throat constricting and threatening to wring out all the air I’ve been holding in my lungs.

“Damn right you do. Stand up, clean yourself. I want you in the bedroom waiting for me, doll. Don’t try anything stupid.”

On wobbly legs, looking at Millie one last time, my legs lead me down to the bedroom in this fancy condo Rhett brought us to.

In this place, no one will ever think to look.

In a city that would be the last place Rhett would be.

In Miami.

I use the wall as my clutch, the bitter tears on my cheek feel warmer than the riot in my stomach.

By the time I sit on the bed, my clothes torn apart, my hair all over the place, I don't clean myself up.

I sit. I cry then I laugh.

"What did you think Alexia? That your whirlwind romance would save you from the real world? You dug your grave; you chose this bastard and you'll rot in this place forever."

I say out loud.

Feeling nauseous over the blood on me, my own blood lining my thighs and hands, I steel my jaw.

I wait for Rhett.

Just stay still, let him have his way and he'll let you hold Millie.

I'll be with Millie after this.

Rhett's footsteps echo from the hallway, the last time he did this I fought, he hit me and he still got what he wanted.

Right now, even as he walks in, even as he gazes at me with contempt for not cleaning up like he instructed, I remain immobile.

He towers before me.

He holds me by my chin.

I'd say I know what he is thinking but this is Rhett. He's an unreadable bastard.

Our eyes lock, the spitfire in his eyes comes in the form of him letting go of my chin and slapping my cheek so hard I barely have time to blink.

I cough against the mattress, blood spewing from the corners of my mouth.

“Is this how you prepped yourself for him? Is this how you opened your legs for him? Or are you only sad when it’s me doing the taking, doll?”

The metallic taste of blood in my own mouth almost makes me gag but he is not done.

I feel his grip on my hair holding me up, leveling me up with him.

I don’t sob.

Sobbing fuels his ego.

My scalp hurts, a migraine sweeps in like a torrent hurricane but I bar my teeth holding in the pain.

Me not crying somehow aggravates him.

Because this man thinks he is the only one who can make you sob, can make you beg, can make love to you.

I watch as his hands knot into a fist and I smile.

Hit me you heartless motherfucker.

The punch comes as expected.

What doesn’t prepare me as always is the pain.

The pain that travels like static from one part of my brain to the other nearly cracking my skull open.

All the sounds stop at once, all the light snuffs at once too as my body gives in to gravity.

Rhett finally wins again.

“What is it, Daddy?”

My tiny hands gloss over the small necklace in my hands that dazzles and sparkles like a princess dress.

Daddy’s hand ruffles through my hair messing it up and I laugh telling him to stop.

Mommy combed my hair and put my favorite ribbons in it so that Daddy and I could go to the festival together.

“That is a present for Mommy, hopefully she doesn’t get too mad that we forgot about her Chinese takeout.”

Mommy is always funny since she bought her big belly from the supermarket.

She cries at Daddy every time and she says it’s belly hormones. Daddy says it’s my little sister telling us she’s healthy. I can’t wait to meet her.

“Will she get mad too because we got chocolate and ice cream before dinner?”

“Hey, that’s our little secret, princess. We pinky swore”, he chuckles and I chuckle along with him, playing with the pretty necklace.

“Secret! I cross my heart and hope to die.”

Then I jump in his arms and he holds me with his big hands, the ones I like swinging from while he holds meetings with the boring people at home.

“How did we get so lucky with you, Alex?”

“I’m always lucky!”

My little hands entwine around his neck only for a brief moment.

Our driver, Mr. Mancini, shouts from the front, “Sir Alessandro-.”

Red and green lights coalesce, thunder booms from the outside of our car, my father holds my little body and hides me beneath the car seats as something crashes the right side of our car sending us flying.

I scream my heart out, the sound of metal crashing and dirt and dust chokes my lungs as tears brim with every spin we take, with every smell of gas and something more.

Our car comes crashing down with a thud.

My chest burns.

My throat hurts.

Tears make me not see anything.

The sound of our car honking echoes over and over.

“Stop it! Stop! Stop!”

I scream.

“Ale...Alessandra— “ Daddy’s voice makes me still.

I open my eyes and there is Daddy above me.

Warm liquid falls on my face and it’s...red.

“Daddy?” I call even though I can see the metal pinning him to the roof of the car.

The metal in his gut that’s dropping some of his blood on me.

“Daddy, no! No. No please. Mr. Mancini? Mr. Mancini, Daddy is hurt.”

I turn to face our driver. He is not hearing us because the car is making a lot of noise.

He will save Daddy.

Mr. Mancini’s face is close to me and his eyes are open with blood falling on his face.

My voice tumbles out as a scream.

“Al...ex. Baby girl, y—you have to move.”

“No. No.”

“See the...the door? T-the lock? P-Press on it.”

“No.”

“Press on it, baby girl. Let’s play a game of...hide and seek. This—is where you run and hide and I come find you. Alex?

For d-daddy, yeah?”

“You’ll...find me?”

“Always. The lock.”

Daddy stares at the lock and I follow his gaze.

I press on the lock and the door opens bringing in the cold harsh wind.

“Run and...hide.”

“Okay.”

I crawl underneath the metal, my hands finding the grass and the dirt.

Daddy smiles at me nodding at me.

I cry but I obey.

Daddy will come find me.

I run and run and run till I find a tree and hide behind it.

Like how daddy used to do it, I count.

“One, two, three. One two three. One two-.”

A banging sound explodes behind me. A large fire blows out smoke to the stars.

“Daddy?”

The smell, Daddy, Mr. Mancini, the car, the fire, it becomes too much.

I start walking away from the fire.

Each step makes me forget.

Each step makes the pain in my chest hurt less.

My brain locks down.

Gulping breath like I’m just from drowning, I open my eyes.

Dad. I had a dad. My dad he—he died, protecting me?

My migraine intensifies. I try to stand as old memories clash with my new ones.

My first thoughts go to Millie.

“Millie.”

Rhett hit me.

Then he put me here.

Where is here? Why did he switch off the lights?

“Doll- “, Rhett’s voice calls out from the darkness and I try to scoot away from him.

“Don’t touch me. Where are we? Why don’t you switch on the lights you bastard and confront me face to face?”

He doesn’t speak. Why is he not speaking?

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 54

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Death is fickle. Always has been to me. Always will be.

My body stings like a bitch, breathing doesn’t come easy either as I inhale a dose of fresh fucking air and the whole wide world raises a middle finger to my face at the irony.

Bullet wounds didn’t kill me.

Shrapnel to the shoulder, one that cut through me like Swiss cheese and made me bleed like a dying dog but it didn’t kill me.

Now a bomb should have.

From the impact, the collision, the precise way it was set. And it was set to burn me to death alright.

I felt the fire. I smelled my charring skin. It was the smell of bacon, like a pig with an apple in its mouth being slowly roasted over a pile of fire.

And I should have died.

Yet...

Beeping machines radiate dancing sounds that echo from one room to the other, some heart machine adds to the unbearable rhythm by my left and the whole shebang that comes with hospitals hits me all at once.

The medicinal smell. The beeping machines. The light that’s too damn bright for my liking. The flowers smell awful and the ‘get well soon’ cards.

I never did like hospitals.

Maybe it was dear old daddy's fault. Or maybe it was my moral code altogether.

Takers weren't healers.

Murderers didn't taint sectors meant to maintain lives.

The white crisp ceiling stares at me from above and from the decor and everything else, they tell me I'm in the best hospital money has to offer.

Yet with the best mansion money has to offer, someone snuck a bomb in my house.

Someone planted a bomb under my men's noses and Juana died.

I remember her haunting cries. I remember trying to reach her and I remember giving up on her. Giving up on both of us.

I sit up straight, pain prickles every part of me it can find but I relentlessly push my body to move.

You survived a bomb, Christian. Moving out of bed is nothing in comparison.

My legs meet the cold tiles as I grit using the IV pole to hoist myself up.

I yank away the wires on my hands, blood dripping along with the wires that fall to the tiles.

Then slowly and tortuously, I make my way to the floor-ceiling window hidden by blue curtains.

When I push the blue curtains, the city stares at me in all its glory.

Of course they brought me here.

The connections I have with doctors in LA are enough to offer health services to the entire state.

The sun glints without a care in the world, traffic buzzes down below and some fuck is groping some chick by the pond in the park right in front of the other suburban pets.

It's LA alright.

I take a minute to pretend I care about the fact that my neck burns and half my body feels like it's been ripped off.

I take a minute to think about Juana. Another minute to mourn her.

Then, I start to process, I start to compartmentalize, each scene, each detail, each and everything that led to this.

It's in the middle of thinking and processing that the door creaks open.

I don't bother to gaze behind me.

The strong perfume speaks for itself that it's a woman.

Catelina most probably.

She gasps, I hear the shift of the atmosphere when she opens her mouth to speak, "You are awake." She states the obvious. "And you are bleeding."

I turn around.

Caramel hair comes into sight, bland brown eyes land on me, concern etches her face but I feel nothing for her.

I don't give a shit about her pity.

I don't even care whether I've been bleeding for God knows how long.

"I'll—I'll call a nurse", she stutters.

"Maximo", I utter.

She gets the message. She's trained to obey. She's trained to understand what men like us mean every time we open our mouths to speak.

"But-."

"Get out, bring Maximo in."

"Okay. I will."

God, her submissiveness churns me. she's probably been here for days taking care of me, thinking that I'd be grateful the minute my ass left that bed.

I didn't ask for her help.

I didn't ask her to come here.

She turns around and makes an attempt to leave but I look at her, I remember her perfectly.

“Principessa?”

That has her turning.

Then Athena Pallis looks at me like I’m her Prince Charming who’s awakened and conquered hell itself.

“Yes, Christian?”

She’s hopeful. I pity her.

My name bouncing off her lips feels like acid churning my skin.

“Leave America. Go back home.”

“We are to wed. You are hurt, I need to-”

“Did I stutter principessa? I’m fine you being here doesn’t help my cause. We are to wed, are we not? Do you not know the terms of our marriage? I lead, you follow. I bark an order, you obey. There’s too much heat here and the last thing I need is more collateral. Leave for Sicily. Today.”

“You’ll come?”

I have to.

“I’ll try.”

“You promise?”

“I don’t make promises.”

I made a promise to one woman and she fucked me over so royally I almost want to chuckle at the whole thing.

“I’ll wait.”

She leaves.

Seconds later, Maximo walks into the room and another female walks in crying.

The drama goes on when Demetri follows her inside and together, we are all a band of Peter Pan’s lost boys. Only spiteful and less merry.

“You should not be moving! Christian, I thought you-.”

“That I would fake my own death too, sorella”, I bite back at Cat.

Maximo and Demetri glare at me, their over-protectiveness of what’s not theirs aggravates me.

“You have no right to talk to me like that. Not after everything, not after I watched you for a month fighting for your life.

Christian, you almost died. Juana died! But you survived, just for once stop being stubborn, let go of that anger and please just let me-.”

“Who?”

I flip the question at Maximo.

Despite the bad blood between us, I know he looked into who was responsible. Why? Because a second ago, my sister was in my house too and she would have died for real this time around.

“No. This ends here, no one is going after anyone. No one is avenging anything; it was an accident. An unfortunate one-.”

“Rhett Kingston”, Maximo answers me while Catelina slaps his gut, throwing a glare at him.

I had a feeling it was Rhett.

After the phone call, it was clear as day, who the nurse chose.

And she chose her fucking ex over me.

Not that there was an us. Not if Catelina told the little nurse to open her legs for me to make me happy and in return my sister would grant her freedom from me.

A good ole dagger to the spine as it’s called. Betrayal at its finest.

“He had any help?”

“Yes. Dante Keaton. We have him.”

“And the nurse?”

“Where is that little brat hiding with her bastard of an ex?

“No trace. A month of searching and nothing. No clue, no whereabouts about where they could be but we are still questioning Dante.”

“Where is he?”

I’ll cut him to pieces. That piece of shit.

“We have him down at the docks, I can take you down to-.”

“I got it. Your services are no longer needed because you are fired. A pleasure working with you, brother but I can’t have my own men fucking my sister behind my back.”

Cat sobs.

Maximo takes the order without a word. Demetri has something to say and he doesn’t sugarcoat it.

“You are hurt, you had an IED detonating in your face so I don’t mind you being a fucking cunt but you talk about her that way and I’ll give you something more than third-degree burns and heartache. We’ve been chasing your bitch for weeks now with no avail but if you think you can do it alone, go right ahead but my woman won’t be involved in any of your bullshit.”

“Dee, please.”

“We are leaving”, Maximo quips.

Together, the throuple of the year walk out of my room.

A scream rips from his lips, Jagger tases Dante’s whipped chest and I watch with exhilaration as the bastard wriggles in his chains looking for an out but there’s no out.

His chains hang him from the ceiling, his legs prove immobile.

That was the first thing I took when I got here.

I took his will.

I shot his legs.

Whatever willpower he has in his body is fueled by the muscle memory of human beings wanting to escape that which hurts them or kills them. Not because he wants to live.

He knows he’s not walking out alive, all pun intended and that makes him a little tight-lipped.

He’s not speaking if he knows he’s gonna die.

I raise my hand, Jagger stops torturing him, stepping away while Dante coughs out blood.

“I know what you are thinking. That killing you will be endangering myself, but the truth is I’ll kill you, I’ll sleep like a baby at night and no one will bat an eyelid in my direction.

What about your political allies you ask? Well everyone knows better than to be at loggerheads with the head of the Italian mafia.

What I am asking of you is simple Dante. Your death doesn’t have to be insignificant; you tell me what I want to know and you die a fucking hero.

You looked for Rhett, didn’t you? You asked him to help you eliminate me just like you did with Father Giovanni, quite unoriginal if you ask me but nonetheless brilliant. The fucker almost did it as you can tell by the burns on my face. Now, where’s Rhett, Dante? Where is that lowlife hiding?”

Dante spits on the floor. A move that says he’s not telling me squat.

I press a button, and the TVs right in front of us air a view of one of my vacation homes in Cuba and right at a woman scolding her two kids by the pool.

I wasn’t stupid enough to let his family stay in Chicago after what this bastard pulled.

I relocated them.

“You want to do things the hard way? Then let’s do that. They are happy, aren’t they? Don’t look at me like that, you know I’m not a monster. I would never harm children like you.

But my hands are tied right now, Dante. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do to make sure I don’t get what I want. So here are the terms, tell me where Rhett is and you die like the scum you are or fail to tell me where Rhett is and you aren’t the only one who’s gonna die.

Your family will go down with you, Dante and then there’s nothing that’s gonna be left of you. No legacy, nothing. I’ve got detonators on standby and at my command that little family of yours you see on my screens will be nothing but rubble.”

“You b—bastard”, Dante shouts.

“Ah, he finally speaks.”

“Let them go!”

“One.”

“You can’t do this...t—they have done...nothing.”

“Two.”

“H—he is in Miami!”

“Where?”

“One of my...my late mother’s homes! Down in Key West. D-don’t hurt them.”

“I won’t. I’ll do them the courtesy of wiping you from existence.”

I pull out my gun.

One bullet between the eyes and Dante’s lifeless body goes limp.

The chain from the ceiling rattles trying to hold his weight.

I turn to Jagger. We need no words.

“I’ll clean the mess.”

I’m coming for you, Sunshine. I’m coming to ruin your fairy tale ending and show you just how ruthless crossing Vicious can be.

And the bonus?

Your little lover will die in front of your very eyes.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 55

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

A well manned Condo.

Guards man Rhett’s house or in this case Dante Keaton’s dead mother’s house every hour of the day, every hour of the night.

Dante forgot to mention he paid Rhett a pretty good sum of money if the douche can afford to hire men who carry rifles and protect him like he’s the next Prince of England.

The windows are tinted, no one looks in, no one figures out what is going on on the inside.

Unlucky for Rhett and sadly his men, my mood is so chaotic that I don’t mind bulldozing right through his house to get to him.

Jett takes care of the two guys by the front.

Kill 'em. Tranquilize 'em. I don't care.

Nico takes care of the one guy by the pool and thoughts about how the little nurse might have swum in that pool in a skimpy bikini while Rhett watches all while holding my baby girl in his arms spikes a kill switch inside my head.

Jagger and Jude make sure that no other men are around and no nagging neighbor interrupts us.

I want it to hurt. I want to take it slow with this sly motherfucker.

The thoughts of shooting the door down ran through my mind.

If there wasn't a child in here, I would have shot my way through the front door.

But Millie is around.

I've had an hour to master the schematics of this house and so far, there are two bedrooms and knowing Rhett he probably has the mother and the child in different bedrooms.

He's the kind of twisted man who wouldn't want any interruptions while he tastes what isn't his.

And the thought itself fuels my urgency.

Picking the lock of the back door is no hassle, walking inside too isn't a problem either because the living room is like fifteen feet away.

By the time Rhett heard me, I would already have done what I needed to do.

The first bedroom holds empty bottles of beer littered across the floor, Rhett's messy clothes line the bed, no sign of the Blondie, no sign of the child.

I move on to the next bedroom, the sound of an announcer talking about the NBAs coming from the direction of the living room.

The next bedroom is just as messy but I find Millie sobbing quietly as she throws her little legs while lying on the middle of the bed, like a bag he dumped and forgot to check up on her.

"Hello, baby girl. Missed me?"

Because I sure as hell missed you.

She sobs harder, looking a little thinner than the last time I saw her.

I grab the bottle in my bag knowing it would come in handy. Holding it in her mouth, my baby girl stops crying and immediately sucks like she hasn't been fed for an entire month.

Her blue eyes grow big and a piece of my heart I didn't think had stopped beating jumps in joy.

"Let's get Mommy", I murmur.

Strapping her to my chest tightly with one of her shawls, my gun is in my hands as I walk down the hallway to where the light from the TV calls to me like a beacon.

The disgusting prick's head peaks from the gaming chair he's seated at.

A few bags of chips lay on the ground, on the table while the large screen on the wall displays a game between the Lakers and another amateur basketball team.

The nurse isn't anywhere in sight. I know because she wouldn't entertain this kind of behavior.

She wouldn't leave Millie alone first of all.

The easiest thing to do would be to shoot him in the skull and let him die.

But I want to see him actually beg for his life.

I don't make a spectacle to announce my arrival, my gun's nozzle meets the back of his skull, Rhett's body tenses as he raises his hands in mid-air like we are in an NCIS show and I'm a cop who'll spare him and send him on his merry way to jail.

There's no jail for this monster.

He switches the TV placing the remote down.

"Hand me the gun too", I growl, he has one. He'd be stupid not to have a gun.

"Whoa whoa buddy, why don't we all come down-."

"The gun", I press my gun further, his hands fish out the gun from the back of his pants and I take it disarming it, clocking out the magazine and throwing the toy somewhere in this mess.

"You have the gun, you have my attention. Take anything you want, man. I don't want any trouble."

“You’ve been a slick motherfucker, you piece of shit.”

I look at Millie. Her mother hates when people cuss around her but the moment deserves it.

Rhett takes a minute to grasp who is behind him and another minute to stand up and turn around, finally coming face to face with me.

“Christian Volkov”, he calls me arrogantly.

Like we were Boy Scouts at some point in time and we finally reunited.

“You know I never thought that you would find-.”

My finger on the trigger, I shoot the dart right for his leg.

I didn’t come here for chit-chat not after everything he’s put me and everyone around me through.

“The fuck?” He asks, taking out the dart, falling to the ground like a shriveled weed.

Millie halfway done with her bottle, I walk around the couch, my army boots stopping right where his face is lying on the ground on a day-old pizza.

“A few milligrams of coral snake venom in your bloodstream causes paralysis. And right now, that poison is attacking your nervous system, eating at it like an ant that has found a grain of sugar. Eight minutes here or less and your vision will start to blur, any attempts to speak will be muted by your slurred speech and when it’s time to meet your maker, the last thing that’ll hit you will be muscle weakness. Just like how unmoving my sister was when you raped her. A sister I didn’t know I had up until recently so will you be unmoving too, Rhett. To feel weak and have no one to help you. I’ll find Alexia and if you are still on borrowed time, she’ll inject another dose in you and we can all watch as I rid the world of your filth.”

“Y-you...she...never...to-together”, Rhett attempts to speak, I hold the bottle for my baby girl as we both watch him struggle to grip reality.

“Boss?”

Nico’s voice filters through my earpiece and I take a step away from Rhett.

“What’s the situation?”

He wouldn’t interrupt me if there wasn’t.

“We found Alexia but we have a problem.”

“What problem?”

She’s refusing to come with my men. She’s running away from me?

“I’d rather y-you come down to take a look at her yourself. She’s in the basement.”

Arriving at the basement tells me from my men’s gloomy faces, everything has gone horribly wrong.

When I finally reach up to where I can hear her, my anger watts but my heart fucking drops.

“I know you are there. I can hear you. You are...you are Rhett’s men, are you? What? You’ve finally come to kill me is that it? Then do it, you assholes!”

Her shouting makes Millie cry.

The sound of Millie crying has Alexia retreating from the corner of the basement she’s hiding in.

“Baby? Millie, is that you? Gimme my baby! Rhett? I know you can hear me, just gimme my baby! She needs to be fed, please just...I want to hold her, just once I want to...”

She walks to where we are and I hold her wrist pulling her to me, pulling her to where Millie is sobbing between me and her mother.

“Millie”, the nurse sighs, her hands reach out to touch Millie but she doesn’t touch her.

“Please, turn on the lights. Turn on the lights so I can see my baby”, her voice quivers.

She can’t touch Millie because she can’t see her.

She can’t see that the basement already has lights because she can’t...my nurse can’t see.

I examine the dried blood on her skull and I put two in two together.

Head blunt trauma could lead to a lot of things.

And in her case, Alexia Green is blind.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 56

ALEXIA GREEN.

Days, weeks, months in here and I have already accustomed myself to the darkness.

Rhett thinks he's punishing me by leaving me alone in here.

Here where I can hear voices from my own head whispering in the dark, here where I can hear rats shuffle across my feet, across the corner, mocking me.

But I've survived.

I've cried. I've screamed. I've eaten the food he throws on the ground to me like a dog and I've survived.

I thought of giving up but every time I feel like giving up, Rhett appears in this darkness holding my baby and every time Millie calls to me, I shout at Rhett to give her to me.

He doesn't give her to me of course.

He stands there, probably wearing night vision goggles and stares down at me reminding me who has the power, reminding me if I don't stay in that little corner in this darkness, he'll hurt Millie.

And so I've stayed.

I've slept in that corner praying that my baby survives this and a neighbor, anyone comes to rescue her.

I don't care if I'll rot. I've always been one to be followed by bad luck so it doesn't matter if-.

Today?

Today things changed.

Days in this darkness and my ears do the seeing.

I hear the men come down the stairs but none of them get too close, none of them touch me but I know they are going to.

This is how Rhett operates.

He likes a show.

He likes torture.

So I do what I've been doing for so long, I steel myself, I count, I wait.

After what feels like an eternity, heavy boots stomp the wooden stairs, I listen in, everyone stops murmuring but I know who is here.

I know who the man of the show is.

I know who these men are.

“I know you are there. I can hear you. You are...you are Rhett’s men, are you? What? You’ve finally come to kill me is that it? Then do it, you assholes!”

Rhett doesn’t speak. Of course he doesn’t.

I’m about to insult all of them when my baby...my girl, my—my-my.

“Baby? Millie, is that you? Gimme my baby! Rhett? I know you can hear me, just gimme my baby! She needs to be fed, please just...I want to hold her, just once I want to...”

I sob.

Rhett wins. He knows he’ll win anytime he brings my baby down here.

“Millie”, I huff, standing up roaming in the darkness and trying to follow her cries.

“Please, turn on the lights. Turn on the lights so I can see my baby.”

They don’t turn the lights.

They don’t take pity on me.

Rhett doesn’t acknowledge my cries of defeat as anything.

“Alexia.”

The rough baritone voice gives me whiplash. Unsteady on my feet, unsure whether to trust my craziness and finally admit I’m crazy, my weak feet will me to go back to my little corner.

I think the madness is finally getting to me because I can swear that the man standing in front of me is—.

“Nico?” Volkov’s voice comes out heavy.

“Yes, boss?” Nico’s voice rings out from the distance.

“Take the baby to the car, keep her safe.”

“Yes, boss.”

A guttural aching sound leaps from my lips.

“No! Let me...let me hold her!” I cry but it comes out as a scream in this small room with darkness.

I take hurried steps forward but I trip and huge arms catch my fall lifting me off the ground and to his chest.

“The child is going to be safe”, Vicious assures, his scent fogging my senses as tears erupt from my eyes.

“I th—thought you died”, I sob.

The grip he has on my thighs tightens and he whispers, “You would have wanted that, wouldn’t you?”

The vitriol in his voice is heavy and I don’t have enough strength in me to tell him that not a day went by in here when I didn’t feel guilty over his supposed death, not a day went by in here when I didn’t regret not telling him how I felt.

“M-My baby”, I mutter weakly, “The lights. Please.”

“The child is paper-thin and weak. You are filthy and dirty, any attempts to touch her will result in her getting sick. Do you want that, Alexia?”

Paper-thin?

Weak?

“N-no”, my voice wobbles and I look up at him only to feel something warm being wrapped around my eyes.

“Christian what are you—”

“For the light.”

For the light not to hurt my eyes because I’ve been in the darkness for so long?

Three words, he tells me.

Three words, he lies to me.

I wrap my hands around his neck, not caring what will happen next because the only thing beating in my mind is getting out of this hell hole.

Getting away from Rhett.

He stomps his way up the stairs and every time my ear locks in on his chest, that erratic heartbeat that Christian had when we were together is gone.

Instead his heart barely beats. As if he's cocooned it with enough muscle to shield his heart from exposure.

I want to ask how he could think I wanted him dead.

The news of his supposed death impales me...how could he think that...

"Is he dead?"

Vicious' voice rumbles from his chest.

I know we are in the living room because it smells like Rhett and his empty beer cans and pineapple topping pizza.

And that's where Rhett's villainy came from. Anyone who chose pineapple as a topping on pizza was borderline psychotic.

"Dead, boss", Jett speaks back.

The last time I saw Jett, he was with Brenda in that café. Did Brenda make it out alive?

"Add another bullet to his skull just to make sure."

We start walking to the main door I assume. When the smell of briny sea air hits my nostrils and seagulls sound from a distance, that's when Jett shoots Rhett and the sound coming from behind us is enough to make me cower.

"He's gone, Alexia. The man you chose over me has left this world in the most insensible way possible. He couldn't fight you, never even had the chance of throwing the first punch. And now you are stuck with me again."

"I d-didn't choose him."

My voice breaks. My heart churns.

"Yeah? Did you not open your legs for me because my sister offered you freedom from me? Did you not walk away with him from that café leaving your phone intentionally when you could have carried it and I would have found you? I watched the tapes, Alexia. Every single fucking traffic camera that showed you and Rhett moving, you had every chance to walk away, you had every chance to use everything I taught you and get Millie away but you stayed put. You let him drag you around because you were always his,

weren't you? And now I'm going to show you just how being mine should feel like. I took the fairy tale Prince Charming highway ride and it didn't work out. Let me be your villain, Alexia. The killer of all your little dreams. The monster of your nightmares."

His voice teeters on the edge of lunacy, like a volcano of rage threatening to splinter inside of him.

I want to say so much.

I want to reveal so much.

But my voice rolls in like sandpaper on glass, as reality washes in like a clean bullet to the heart.

The sun is shining, the seagulls chatter, the waves crash somewhere on the distant horizon; I can feel the sun on my skin and even with the blindfold I should see some light.

I should see some light.

Why can't I see the light?

I thrash in this man's arms. This man who gave me hope in the basement, held me as if I were precious, rescued me and promised me more suffering but he already knew life had stabbed me in the back already, hadn't he?

"P-put me down", snort fills my nostrils, my willpower crumbles.

Her puts me down.

I stand and bask in the sun on weak legs.

My hands slowly retrieve the rag on my eyes meant to put me in a semblance of calmness and the mantra that 'life's just peachy'.

The rag falls away, my eyes open. I guess life isn't peachy after all.

"I can't see the sun."

My voice is low but it slams into my brain like a fatal crash.

I can't see. I can't see anything. The darkness inside there...the darkness was me.

XxX

Millie is in my hands and she coos giving me strength.

“We have good news and good news only”, some doctor says, I don’t have to be told what the news is.

I know what it is and it’s worse than good.

“Head trauma caused some of the blood vessels in her eyes to rupture resulting in her blindness. Scans show that they are already healed.”

“But?” Vicious asks.

“But I think some sort of mind block and specifically her own trauma is resulting in her temporary blindness? Therapy should help her and I could recommend her with some-.”

“Your job is done; you’ll be paid on your way out.”

I can feel the doctor looking at me.

Pity? That’s the last thing she should feel. This isn’t trauma. Not the trauma I remembered, not the trauma I went through with Rhett.

“Good day then.”

“Nico? The child.”

I don’t fight when Nico takes Millie, I haven’t fought them since I discovered my condition.

She’s safer with them where I won’t...won’t hurt her.

“Mr. Volkov please...”

“Do you have a problem, Brenda?”

“No.”

“Help her pack up for Sicily.”

“Yes, boss.”

Everyone leaves my room and someone comes to hug my knees.

“Ooh, Lex! Millie, they are not going to do anything to her. Despite how cold he acts; Christian has been calling the best pediatricians to check up on whether Millie is really fine or not. Lex, speak to me please?”

She holds my hands.

She asks me to speak and that's when my bitterness breaks like a dam.

"I—I'm blind! I can't—can't do anything. T-this is all my fault, Juana dying, him hating me...this is all my fault!"

"No, it isn't. Everything is going to be okay."

"No...no it's not."

She holds my cheeks; she wipes my tears.

"Everything is going to be okay if you manage to keep yourself alive and the little life living inside you alive as well. Xavier and I did a few tests on how your blood sugar levels were and if your blood was...if your ex did something psychotic, only to find you pregnant. You are pregnant, Lex."

No.

Rhett took me two weeks ago and that's not a substandard number of weeks for conception.

Even if it was, he used a condom and didn't even finish off because apparently, he couldn't imagine being inside me after 'I let that foolish bastard inside me.'

His words. The baby isn't his.

Which means...

"You can't tell him. Y-you can't tell Christian I'm pregnant."

"I haven't. Xavier won't either but don't you think his knowing could stop everything?"

"Stop what?"

"Lex, he—he is going to Sicily to marry Athena Pallis."

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 57

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

Family traitor: I heard you rescued Lexy and Millie. Are they okay? Can we talk?

Family traitor: You are being a child, Christian and I'm the child in the family! Do you want to talk about Carissa?

Traitor number two has entered the chat.

Traitor number two: Glad your nurse is fine, Jett filled me in on the situation. Sorry.

Family traitor: Sorry? What do you mean you are sorry, Maximo? Did you get hurt, Christian?

Traitor number two: You are supposed to be asleep, Trouble.

Family traitor: Is that the reason why you left home early?

Russian menace has entered the chat.

Russian Menace: Fucking finally, Max. It's time I entered the family chat, no?

Family traitor: Dee, you are literally texting from the kitchen. I can hear your laugh from here.

Russian menace: Max told me I needed to handle a certain missus texting instead of sleeping. Malyshka, you are sick, you need sleep.

Family traitor: And I will if Christian texts me first.

Traitor number two: Sleep, Trouble. Now.

The texts were sent twenty minutes ago before I boarded the plane and their love or whatever they call it chokes me to no end.

I rub a hand over Millie's back and she burps before she slowly falls to slumber in my arms.

Once her snores hit my right shoulder, I slowly bring her to my arms kissing her forehead before I place her back in the portable crib I insisted to be brought along with her belongings.

My tablet's screen flags with one notification after the other.

Messages from the Five Families. Each one of those greedy bastards inquiring whether I'll hold my end of the bargain and take my father's throne.

Each one of them spoon-feeding me with the do's and don'ts conditions of how I'll take a step up and snag my throne.

The Chicago news already got a load of gossip about me and Athena.

My engagement is splashed across all media outlets and the process of making calls to run down the rumors is one I'm not about to go through because in some sense it's true.

Athena Pallis is the final piece in my jigsaw, in my legacy and right now with my head screwed straight to my skull and betrayal reminding me constantly that in mere weeks I was about to give it all up for a woman I didn't know well; I say 'fuck it'.

Marry Athena Pallis. Take my throne. Pray to the Good God above that I'll tolerate the woman long enough to make families with her.

But first...

"Send the nurse to my cabin." I tap my earpiece, finally placing it down on the table.

It takes a few minutes before sunshine blonde hair appears in my doorway with a guiding hand and I get pissed.

Brenda holds onto Alexia's right forearm like she's some fragile porcelain doll imported from Russia.

"Let her walk."

"Sir-."

I throw Brenda a glare and that's enough for her to let go of Alexia and walk the other way with a frustrated sigh.

The little nurse holds the walls like she needs them for survival when the fact of the matter is, she doesn't.

Her blue eyes shuffle across the room and the downer might be she can't see me but the better part of my life? I can stare at those blue eyes all I want and she wouldn't know.

She wouldn't get to know how I felt on the inside.

"Walk to me", I growl.

She stops mid-step, her head cocking my way but her eyes straying from me.

"Fuck you!" Her voice spits venom.

"No thank you. I've done that once and it cost me my life. So, no to fucking you, Alexia. And you continue shouting and cussing like that and not only will Millie wake up but she'll be major pissed."

Her back goes ramrod straight; a few wisps of hair fall on her face as her lips part.

My damn anger morphs into something else that flows straight to my dick and hardens it.

Blind.

Wearing those picnic dresses that show the upper side of her boobs and curves that run for miles.

Barefooted.

Hates my guts.

She's the perfect epitome of Napoleon. Killer of men. Killer of my heart. Killer of my thoughts because ninety-nine percent of those thoughts linger about her; her betrayal and her sweet taste; her deception and her tight cunt wrapped around my length; her lies and her kisses that would have me kneel for a woman for the first time in my life; her choosing him and the way she makes me want to shield her and tear her apart limb for limb.

"Millie."

"You breastfed her and left her to Brenda. I guess leaving people is a skill you are honing in nowadays."

That has her feet moving fast into the room, without minding she might fall, without for a second thinking about her blindness because in reality, blind nurse and not blind nurse, they are still the same woman to me.

"I love my baby! You do not have the right to point fingers at me at not loving my baby."

"You left her just like Rhett left her, is that how you love Alexia."

Her chest inhales.

I crash the distance between us eating it like a greedy motherfucker because I can, because I have to.

My hand lands on her collarbone and she flinches taking a step away.

I'm not done with her though.

I lock one arm against her waist bringing her close to me. Chest to chest. Breath for breath. Bosom to my chest.

"D-Don't touch me!"

“This isn’t touching. You know how touching you should feel like, Alexia. Or should I remind you in case you forgot?”

“Kiss me and I’ll bite your face off, you fucking psycho.”

“Psycho? Is that what you are calling me now? The last time I had you like this you were screaming for me to fill that needy cunt.”

“Gimme my child.”

“Why’d you leave her?”

Her eyes brim with tears but this woman is as fierce as an MMA champ, she’d rather lick her wounds as far away from me as she can than cry before me.

And I want her to cry.

I want it to hurt.

“It’s none of your business.”

“You are both my business.”

“We are your slaves. That’s what we are. You intend to chain us to you while you...you get married to another woman.”

Aah.

There it is.

She knows. And she hasn’t confronted me about it.

“Would that hurt you if I married another woman fucked her so loud, her screams would reach you all the way to your slave chambers?”

“Let me go.”

“Don’t pretend you gave a shit about me, Alexia because that actually makes me feel a whole lot better about myself. Maybe I wasn’t a complete fool at all when I let you in. Maybe you didn’t run away with your ex, leaving me inhaling a hella lot of smoke next to a dead body”, my sarcasm drips and soaks me in red.

Somehow the little brat garners enough strength, finds my face and slaps me.

The slap almost rattles the confines of my plane but I stare back at her my chest heaving, my blood roaring for me to chain her lips with hers and be angry at her later.

“I didn’t leave my baby”, her voice comes out harsh like a whip, “I don’t want to carry her around and drop her or...”

“Have you ever hurt her?”

“No.”

“Then what makes you think you’ll hurt her now.”

“My condition”, she blurts.

I chuckle, still holding her.

“You are not dead, Alexia. You are not paralyzed. You are not going to hurt Millie with people around. You don’t need help moving around because you are not weak just blind. Temporarily blind I might add.”

I shouldn’t console her.

The irony is I want it to hurt for her but the pain on her face before, guts me.

She shouldn’t cry. Funny. But she can stab me in the back whenever she feels like it.

“Why are you marrying this Athena?”

“What reason do I have not to marry her?”

“Then why are you keeping me around? Rhett’s dead, your vengeance is done. I’m a free woman.”

“You are a free woman if I say so. I’m keeping you around because I feel like it. You tired of having me around, Alexia? Am I not bad enough for you?”

“Little nurse”, she whispers, I hold her chin up.

“What?”

“Y—you call me little nurse not Alexia. If I’m still the same even in my state, then you shouldn’t address me any differently.”

I hold her cheek, she leans into my hand like she is in heat.

“My little nurse died the minute she took off with her unhinged ex. The little nurse I would go easy on, give her dates if she asked for them and join NASA if it meant writing her name in outer space for all to see is gone. The woman standing in front of me is Alexia. Nothing more than any woman I would pick from the street and keep around.”

“I’ll leave if you marry her.”

I smirk.

Then I take her mouth savagely, sweeping my tongue inside her puffy lips. Her tongue curls around me offering me her moans while we are at it. We kiss hard and wet, sinking ourselves into this grave we’d rather dig than fill with earth. You are never leaving me again.

XxX

She’s holding Millie. Her first time obeying and listening to me since I took her from her ex’s clutches.

I catch sight of the runway down below at the airport.

The people who look like miniature rotten apples on a field, greet me from the inside of the contraption I’m in reminding I am back home.

Back to this great land my forefathers conquered and pitched a flag in it like Neil Armstrong.

The plane descends, the runway making us tumble a little bit as the nurse that’s currently in my arms with her child wiggles her ass against my crotch.

I feel her body tense and I push away her hair, eyes on Millie, lips on the column of her mother’s neck.

“Relax, we just landed.”

“In Sicily?”

“Mhmm, now be a good girl and get off my lap before I tell everyone to evacuate and remind you just how good I stretch you.”

“I thought you said you will never shag me, Mafia don.”

I note the careful precision she says ‘shag’ instead of ‘fuck’ because of Millie, but that doesn’t mean my boner subsides.

She hops off eventually.

The door opens and Sicily air slaps me in the face.

That’s not the only thing that slaps me in the face though.

As soon as we all step out and touch the ground of my private hangar, the pack of wolves in the form of paparazzi hound me with questions.

Then like giving a bomb to a fanatic, Athena appears out of nowhere locking her hands around my neck and slapping my lips with her red ones.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 58

ALEXIA GREEN.

They kissed right in front of me.

I didn't need to be told they did to know that. Didn't need eyes for that either because his fiancé squealed something in Italian and kissed him giving the paparazzi ammunition to puncture and splinter my heart.

'Care to share about your love story? From childhood sweethearts to getting married?'

'Christian Vitello back in Sicily. Is it time?'

'When is the wedding, Athena? What's the theme? Any information you can share with us?'

'One more picture of the couple, God knows we won't get enough of those once you two set sail for the honeymoon.'

Brenda held me from breaking down that time.

She's still holding me even as we arrive in Christian's family mansion, even as Jett picks a sleeping Millie from my arms taking her to my room upstairs as Brenda and I follow behind.

Once we are in my room and the smell of something sweet like jasmine fills my nostrils only then does Brenda talk to me, her good mood being a sharp contrast to mine.

Christian went with Athena the opposite way as soon as we left the airport and the paparazzi.

They are about to be married. This Athena sounded like she was in love with him and the sort of woman who would offer herself to Christian if he asked.

Jealousy sinks into my neck like fangs ridding me of all my blood.

Maybe I should tell this Athena that her fiancé slept with me a month and a few weeks prior putting his child in me, maybe I should tell her yesterday her fiancé and I were kissing each other like the world was ending.

“How are we doing, honey? You hungry? I saw you eat a whole burrito on the plane but I know you want some more food, don’t you?”

“I can’t stomach anything”, I say truthfully.

“Morning sickness or jealousy sickness?”

Both.

“Is she—she beautiful?”

“Lex, don’t do this to yourself.”

“She looks like the goddess she’s named after, doesn’t she?”

“You don’t want to tell him about the pregnancy? Fine but at least you can leave, run away and start fresh.”

“Why haven’t you run Brenda? Why are you in Sicily with me?”

“He made me his stand-in nurse till you recovered, can’t exactly run but if we are being honest here, I think he’s using that as an excuse to cover for the fact that he wants at least one friend near you.”

“He hates me.”

He kissed me last night like he loathed himself for craving something so potent.

“He’s the Cosa Nostra himself, I’ve heard rumors about him and when he hates someone, he eliminates them, not keep them around.”

He’s keeping me around to make me suffer just because he suffered.

I feel it in his words. The way I made him suffer, the way I made Juana die.

Eventually my topic with Brenda diverts to lighter topics about the clinic, about how Xavier was left in charge and surprisingly about her new on-and-off thing with Jett.

Imagining her and Jett takes some use to though and I tell her goodnight as we both crash out for the night due to jet lag.

Maybe it's already past midnight, maybe it's already day and maybe my blindness is a huge setback but that doesn't mean my ears and other parts of me don't work.

I hear him open the door, I sniff his scent of mint and bergamot in the air as he stops to my right where my baby girl is sleeping in her crib and says "Goodnight, baby girl" which makes my heart beat twice as fast.

His nose and his legs lead him to the bed and I feel the mattress dip in to accumulate his huge weight.

I feel him on top of me.

I feel his hands cage me between him but I don't open my eyes not that they will see anything but he'll get the message I don't want him here.

Not after he's just slept with his fiancé.

"Alexia?" He calls.

A whiff of his whiskey-coated breath knocks me back and burns my eyes and throat.

"Are you sleep?"

"I need you."

I open my eyes and I hope he can see the glare I'm throwing him right now.

"You'll wake the baby up."

"I'm your baby too, baby."

Yap. He's drunk.

"I want you to leave, Vicious. You had fun in the sheets with your future wife and you think I'll take you with open arms afterwards? Hate me all you want but I'm not going to be the other woman."

"You are not the other woman", he whispers tenderly,.

I want to arch my back off the bed and find his lips, kissing them but I can't be weak. I can't tolerate being handed scraps whether I deserve it or not.

"Yeah? Well, you've made it pretty clear who you are with and what I am to you."

"One kiss then."

“You are drunk otherwise sober Christian wouldn’t beg. He’d punish me, then he’d take.”

“One kiss then. Please.”

“Christian-.”

“I’ve been dying for a month without you, sunshine. All I’m asking for is a kiss.”

“Did you sleep with her?”

“No.”

“And let her kiss you?”

“Only at the airport. She came for me; I should have stopped her before she did.”

“I can’t let you touch me while you reek of another woman.”

“I bathed before I drank myself into oblivion.”

“Why?”

“Her scent doesn’t feel half as good or any good like how yours feels on me.”

“One kiss. Then you leave.”

The kiss comes like lightning on a sunny day, taking me by surprise and leaving me writhing beneath him and the covers.

He doesn’t let me have a breath before he plunges his tongue inside my mouth, his taste and mine being elevated by the alcohol splotched in how good his lips feel.

Him pulling away lets me breathe but it also makes my core and my spine shiver in sweet delight.

God, he kisses like it’s his sole mission on earth even when he’s drunk.

“Sunshine? I think I lied. I want more than a kiss.”

Me too.

“No. You are going to be satisfied by that single kiss, leave my room and if you are serious about talking and dumping your trust-fund-baby fiancé then we’ll consider more. For now, get out and don’t let the door slap you on your way out.”

I feel his lips on my forehead and I close my eyes falling for the endearment.

Then he leaves and the throbbing between my legs doesn't leave with him.

When I wake up, feel the warmth of the sun through my balcony and hear footsteps inside my own room, I expect to hear Christian's voice.

Not...

"Alexia? Alexia Green. I'm Athena Pallis, soon to be the wife of your boss, can we talk?"

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 59

ALEXIA GREEN.

Doesn't take eyes to see her sophistication from a mile away or her beauty that speaks in itself the minute she calls my name.

I can just imagine her at the edge of my room, her Cartier handbag or God forgive me, Prada handbag; resting on the little couch in my room.

I can see her glass skin shine with the morning sun and I can imagine that she's dressed in some matching definitely worth my life ten times over, mini dress and coat.

Her perfume, Coco Chanel or something of the sort billionaire heiresses coat themselves with, meets me from the bed.

While she might look and sound like she took a plunge into the fountain of youth, I know I must look like I was rolling in hay all night.

My hair is always messy when I wake up. Add in the droll coating the corners of my mouth and this is not how I imagined I was going to battle it out with Christian's fiancé.

I try to move, but her footsteps heightened by the sound of her sharp heels hitting the floor stop me.

"No. No, this will only take a minute."

Then the sound of her heels moves over to my side of the bed, right to where Millie is probably awake in her crib and staring up at space wondering when mommy will come unwrap her and she can have her little kicks and yawns.

"Your child is beautiful."

“Thank you. She gets that a lot.”

It might be her cute cheeks that make her cute and those blue eyes that twinkle when she’s full and having men with tattoos carry her around.

“Is this the kind of life you want for her?”

The room goes from a hundred percent happy to a negative point something percent dull.

She probably meant it in a nice way but in what universe is her statement freaking nice?

“I’m sorry, what kind?”

I play dumb.

I play the role of ‘mistress’ having been caught by the main chick and it sure as hell feels bad to the bone.

“You do not have to hide your whorish side from me, I know what you’ve been up to and let me tell you it will not end well.”

Okay, Athena Pallis is definitely a cunt. A rich one at that and she uses that to make me and my daughter feel like the roaches being sprayed with bug spray at her home.

“You don’t say. So I take it this is not a social visit?”

I feign sarcasm.

Sarcasm is the last thing I feel when her words ‘whorish side’ sink in.

But this is me, isn’t it? No matter where I go, no matter the country, no matter my disability or not, that word follows me everywhere like gum on a shoe.

‘Whore’. I’m no one’s whore!

“You are his mistress and don’t worry he did not have to tell me that for me to know. Men in our world keep mistresses and we women dismiss it as nothing short of warm holes that our men need to fill to feel better about themselves.

Right now, you, Alexia Green are a warm hole to Christian. A pest living off of his money and his mercy but even pests die.”

“Is that a threat, your royal cuntness?”

I have no idea where the bite comes from but I dish back her words and fist the sheet underneath wanting to strangle the bitch in front of me.

If I had her type of poison, maybe I would have fucked her man yesterday knowing full well he was engaged.

Maybe I would have snapped a few pictures and sent it straight to her mailbox!

“Not a threat, if I throw out threats you will be the first to hear them, Alexia. Believe me. This is simply what you ragazze americane call girls’ talk. You are a pest and there will be many more that come after you.

The difference between me and the said pests is, I have dignity. I would never allow a man to give me scraps while he gives his wife the whole world because that will be you.

He will buy me everything my heart desires and you will get my leftovers. You will go and there will be another woman in this room like you but I will be by his side. I will be on his bed. He will not just sleep with me like a hooker he picked from the street but make love to me.

You will be nothing once he lets you go and that’s what makes us different, Alexia. So once again I ask, is the life you want for you and your daughter?”

Her words cut me deep.

They flail my heart raw and throw me to another sulfurous fire that consumes me.

In her own, I’m rich but I’m trying to call you a whore using better words, she’s right.

Christian hasn’t called off the wedding and he won’t just because I asked him to.

And when he goes through with the wedding, what will be next?

Me and Millie watching him be a doting husband to the Prada bitch in front of us?

Me and Christian’s child being named mistress and bastard?

No. My baby won’t be a bastard. My baby won’t have any labels meant to bring him down.

I will protect him.

“You want me gone? That’s why you are here.”

“Ah she catches on quickly. I can see why he is fixated on you.”

“That’s not the only thing that brings him to my bed at night, warm hole or not.”

She doesn’t speak. I know what she’s thinking though.

She didn't expect any fight. She expected to waltz in here and insult me till I cried and begged for forgiveness which is not going to happen anytime soon.

"You want a good life for your baby, do you not?"

She knows I do.

I don't dignify her with an answer as she proceeds.

"Then I will give you that life on a silver platter if you want it, Alexia. All you have to do is say yes and it will be done."

My throat throbs.

Selling myself to the lesser evil is the better choice.

I can't watch him marry her. I can't be here when he does that and maybe Brenda was right.

I need to run from this madness. Run from him, start afresh because there is no us.

If there was an us, he would be in my room right now and not his fiancé.

"How?"

"I will get you out of here, give you a better-paying job to sustain you and your child and where you are going, food and shelter won't be a problem."

"I'm not exactly in tip-top condition to work. And this is Sicily, I barely know anyone or know any Italian."

I can feel her smile.

I'm a peasant in her eyes and I'm begging her.

"Which makes it better for you to work here more than any place else. My fiancé doesn't take kindly to people backstabbing him. Once he figures out you left, he'll scour everywhere looking for you, everywhere but my place."

"You want me to work for you?"

"Goodness no. You'll be a maid in my mother's home, you can handle a maid job can you not? No one would think to look for you there."

A maid?

A maid, I almost chuckle but I gulp it down with the bitterness and the feeling of having had lost.

“Your child will be taken care of; the other maids can take turns watching her while you dust the house.”

Yeah? While I dust and lick your boots too?

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity take it or leave it but I am the only one that can get you away from him unless you want to stay and—”

“When do I start?”

“All I will need is your child and you in the garden, there one of my men will lead you to a car and escort you out before anyone notices. Say you need fresh air or alone time with your child in the garden because if this is going to work right under his own nose, you need to do it right.”

“Okay.”

Done and dusted.

Sold. Again.

To get away from him.

If he hated me before, he’d hate me forever for this.

It doesn’t matter though because by the time he realizes I’m gone and finds me, he’ll already be married to this woman and they’ll probably have four fat babies as heirs.

I do it for my babies.

I’ll work and get enough money to leave Italy with my babies and start anew.

Xxx

“Just because you came highly recommended by the madame does not warrant special treatment neither does your blindness or your child.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

I follow the cranky old woman holding onto the wall now and then to keep up.

The Pallis mansion is a maze, I’ve been here for five days adjusting to everything and it still feels like I’m walking in circles.

“This is your first day starting to work and I expect utmost diligence from you, young lady. The lady of the house might be back any minute now and she hates messes. Do not make a mess of things young lady.”

“I won’t”, I say meekly, the maid’s uniform chafing my skin.

“And when guests are around here, do not make eye contact or in your case, keep your head down and pretend you are invisible. You hear me?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Tabitha comes to a stop and I almost bump into her before her voice drops low and loses its sharpness.

“Madam Allagra, you are back so soon. We expected you to arrive a little later in the afternoon.”

My heartbeat skyrockets the minute this Madam Allagra speaks.

“Dealing with Ginnio requires patience. My patience ran thin and here I am. You understand of course.”

“Yes, madam. Mr. La Monda has proven quite for some time how difficult of a man he really-.”

My feet push me forward.

Her scent. It’s familiar.

Her voice. Definitely so familiar.

My lips quiver, I can feel their eyes on me and that makes my voice struggle to come out.

“I’m sorry, Madam. She is one of the maids brought by Miss Athena. She has still not learned her way around.”

“Athena was here?”

I take another knee-buckling step as my brain and my whole body ticks in disarray.

“Mom...mama?”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

Gone like the wind.

Left her belongings as well.

I should be fuming mad; I should be hunting her down with the intent to stop this cat-and-mouse game that has grown weary on my part and her part as well.

But I know why she left.

Quite frankly I can picture every teensy thought that ran in her mind as she whisked away into the night with a sleeping Millie like she was Houdini herself.

And as I sit here, smirk on my face, mannerism and decorum painting my skin, deep down my body yearns.

Hunt her down.

Corner her into a dark little corner and punish her.

Spanking her won't do.

Not this time around.

Touching her wasn't going to be a thing but the nurse's taste is still locked in my memory. And she tasted like the forbidden apple dripped in all things tempting.

The woman in front of me clears her throat and I stare at her remembering where I am and what this is.

A date.

A means to know each other well ahead of the upcoming nuptials.

"Sicily is different from Chicago, I'm sure. You must miss it a lot."

She spikes conversation and the atmosphere itself is as bland as the pasta sitting in front of me on my plate.

Still, I entertain her. She's to be Mrs. Vitello Volkov soon anyway.

Her eyes glean with anticipation as she awaits my answers. I take a sip of the prosecco wishing it was scotch instead.

"I don't."

She pushes a few locks of hair from her face, her cleavage clearly meant to show me she was game if I asked for said game.

And here lies the problem.

I'm so damned by Alexia Green that the thought of kissing another woman or fucking another woman leaves a bitter aftertaste in my mouth.

Her disappointment is clear, so I engage her with a question for the sake of appearances.

"What did you want in a husband, principessa? You must have dreamt of some swooning prince charming before you got forced to marry me, right?"

Her eyes stare up at me and they are the wrong shade.

Not blue.

But brown.

Not defiant.

But submissive.

"You", she breathes, her chest puffing and huffing, "I've always wanted you as my husband."

God bless her poor little soul.

"Yeah? I'm the prince charming you've always dreamed of?"

"I didn't want a prince charming and you are no prince charming Christian so yes I've dreamed of this day since forever."

"This is a marriage of convenience you know that. It won't end with me hanging around your thumb and head over heels with you, Athena."

"I know."

"And you still settle for less?"

"You are to be the head of the Cosa Nostra, I wouldn't call that less."

"Ah, power. You get power when you marry me."

“No. No. You misunderstand me. Being a leader takes a toll on someone. I heard how my father nearly lost himself under pressure and my mother was always there, supporting him, being-.”

“An anchor for him”, I finish her statement.

“Yes, an anchor. You might not fall head over heels for me but I will be there whenever you need me, I’ll be your anchor.”

Same word but uttered from different lips and that’s what makes this marriage a bigger sham than any sham in history.

“I already have an anchor, Athena. An obstinate anchor but she’s there.”

“Christian-“, she grows agitated.

The emotion is clear on her features and in the way she holds her fork. Like she wants to maim me with it.

“You are a mere business transaction, a mere means to the end. You understand the ropes, you know how this works. You are the means to my throne and you know it so for my sake and your...feelings’ sake let go of the fairy tale and welcome to the real world.

I’m not your prince charming. You don’t need to set up dates and hire paparazzi to show anyone we are more than what the marriage certificate states.”

I figured out the paparazzi were here, the minute the man with the wide-rimmed glasses a few chairs from us read the menu upside down, and there was the woman who’d barely touched her salmon, let’s not forget the waiter who poured us the prosecco like he hadn’t a clue what he was doing.

“We can be more than that.”

She suggests.

“I can’t give you what you want, principessa.”

“You can if you just try, you can!”

And here she is.

The little girl I met years ago, the princess, the spoilt brat, the last heir to Allagra and Alessandro Pallis’ fortune.

Bathed in wealth, lived in her pink castle getting everything her heart desired.

I wasn't looking down on her. She was a rich heiress and she wore it like armor.

Unfortunately for her heart, she wasn't my kind of woman.

"This date is over."

"Stay, please."

I put my napkin on the table.

My phone burns hot in my pants. I saw the text messages a few minutes ago, that the nurse and my Millie were gone.

Took another minute to read Jett's litany of texts of him apologizing for not keeping a watch on them.

A few more minutes seated here and I wanted to applaud the blonde minx for escaping. A blind woman really can escape from a fortified mansion lined with everything the best security has to offer.

"We've talked, we've cleared things. There's nothing left to do here unless...this whole thing is a distraction."

Her eyes go wide but she masks it with a sweet face no fucker would suspect.

"I just wanted time with you that's all."

Time to get me away from my mansion?

Time to get me away from my nurse?

I see a pattern. I smell something fishy and it sure as hell isn't the salmon in this restaurant.

"You'll have as much time as you want with me on our wedding night, principessa. Drive home safely."

"Roll the tapes", I bark.

Jett pushes a button, and the CCTV cameras angled in the little nurse's room play the clips from the last minute when I rolled into her bed and she kicked me out.

We skip over a few clips to where a woman and a familiar head of hair walk into the room.

Athena Pallis strides into my mansion, her room with confidence.

I wasn't here by then because I was nursing a hangover far away from the bane of my existence.

"We had no clue she visited, boss", Jett interrupts.

"I was in the kitchen that time preparing breakfast for Lexy", Jett's woman aka Brenda aka the woman I saw last night while I was drunk, sneaking into Jett's room speaks too.

She paid one of my guards to cover for her. How scheming for a goody two shoes meant to be the princessa of Sicily.

"Up the volume", I order.

Jett presses another button and Alexia's voice splices the air.

"Is that a threat, your royal cuntness?"

Sassy, pissed, yeah that's her.

"Play back a few seconds before this."

The tape starts.

I watched it five times and maybe more.

Alexia Green, gotta hand it to her bravery, settles for less in the name of trying to escape from me.

Athena Pallis? The woman's got bigger scheming balls than I gave her.

Which begs the question, how far is Athena Pallis willing to go to ensure our marriage happens?

What skeletons do you have in your closet, principessa?

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 61

ALEXIA GREEN.

"Pardon her behavior once again, madam. She is--."

“D-Dad had business in Chicago but he promised he’d take me to the carnivals in America one day. You didn’t want us to go, you wanted us to stay home and keep you and the baby inside you...you were pregnant at the time but you still came with us to Chicago.

On that night, you stayed back at home because of your swollen feet...I made fun of them, I said you...you look like a cute baby hippo and Dad laughed. When we went to the carnival on our way back to you, me and Dad we...had an accident. He—he told me to run and hide while he...he stayed behind with driver Mancini and they-.”

“No”, her voice rings sharply in my ears drowning me in more memories.

I knew her voice because I remembered each fleeting moment she braided my hair and called me her baby angel.

I remember her blonde hair, the one I got wowed by every time Dad twirled her in his arms calling her pretty.

The same shade of hair I got from her.

“Mom”, I sob, my heart beat erratic. I take a step forward looking for her hands, for her warmth.

“Mom, I remember.”

“No. No. It can’t...it can’t be.”

“You said I was an angel, that I united you and Dad when you thought you would never ever get pregnant.”

“Ale? Alessandra?”

Then it all comes back. Me at the orphanage. Me being asked what my name was but I couldn’t pronounce all of it so they named me what they heard me struggle to say. Alexia.

“We all loved Miss Alessandra but she perished in the accident with-“, Tabitha intervenes.

“Mr. Mancini...the driver...he was your husband.”

And she was...Tabby. Mean Tabby. The twenty-something woman who used to force me to drink porridge because it was good for the bones.

I feel the minute Tabitha turns to me.

“Stop this nonsense, girl!”

“Tabitha? The doctor—call the doctor now”, my mom orders but the truth tastes so bitter and so sweet in the air.

I found...my mother.

“I should have searched harder. They wanted to do an autopsy but I was there, everyone had been reduced to ashes. My Alessandro was dead, I thought you were dead and I wanted the pain to be over so bad. I came back to Sicily without looking back, raising my child with half a heart.”

The DNA tests came in yesterday.

It was ninety-nine point nine percent a positive match.

Me, her daughter.

She, Allagra Pallis, my mother.

“Mom, stop. You shouldn’t blame yourself because you didn’t know”, The voice that speaks now is different than the voice she used on me a few weeks ago.

Athena Pallis consoles her mother. Our mother.

“I should have known”, Allagra sobs harder.

I hate listening to her cry but maybe she should feel a little bit of pain.

I saw Dad die, that trauma was so hard on the four-year-old me that I buried the memories in the back of my mind and lived in an orphanage suffering my way into the world.

If she searched for me, there would have been no Rhett. There would have been no pain. There would be no...HIM.

But Millie wouldn’t have existed either and she is my whole world.

“Can I talk to your sister? Alone please?”

“Of course. I will be one phone call away if you need me.”

Athena leaves without a word spoken to me.

No surprise there. She's not exactly the type of sister anyone would wish to have right after she threatened me and made it clear the only way I'd not sabotage her marriage to her fiancé was by me working as a maid.

"Tell me everything. I want to know everything about you, about my granddaughter and most importantly about who the father to your child is and why you are here working as a maid when he should be supporting you."

"You know about my pregnancy?"

"The doctors who were here did more than make sure you were my daughter. They took tests to make sure you are fine, Alessandra."

"Lex or Lexy...I don't go by Alessandra."

"Ooh. Okay."

The disappointment is there but I know she'll be in for one hell of a disappointment once I tell her everything.

"I will hunt them down. All of them."

"Mom? We've been over this, it's all in the past. No one is hunting down anyone because they are already dead."

Millie's soft baby noises come from my mother's arms as I slowly arrange the milk bottles on the counters in the kitchen.

"Let me help", Tabitha beckons to my right and I sigh.

"I'm not a little girl anymore, Tabby and this blindness is only temporary."

It doesn't feel temporary though.

"You could hurt yourself", she lashes and my heart constricts.

The last time I had this type of affection...it's been ages.

"Tabitha, let her be."

"Yes, madam."

"This Rhett...I cannot believe a monster like him could share DNA with a little girl like this. Who's cute? Yeah, you are."

You are, Millicent Pallis. And soon I'll be a grandmother to your sister or brother. I'll be a grandmama."

"Grandmama?" I chuckle.

"What? You don't like it? Grandmama has a better ring to it, don't you think?"

I hold back a smile.

"Grandmama makes you sound like an evil mafia grandmother from Russia, Mom. Grandma is better."

"We are...mafia, sweetheart."

"Mom-."

"Word's already gotten out that you are alive. Everyone wants to see you and I know this has been one hell of a month and I will do anything to protect you but we have an image to uphold otherwise it all leads to suspicions and whispers among the families."

"Athena is marrying Christian Volkov, isn't that holding the Pallis' image well enough?"

I can feel her scrutiny but I'm praying she doesn't see me trying not to break when the words marry and Christian fall from my lips.

"Ale, I will do anything to hide you from the world and I want to hide you from the world so bad because it has been nothing but cruel to you and yet I want everyone to respect you. To respect you as my daughter instead of calling you names behind my back."

I hold onto my small tummy that's barely visible but firm enough to tell I'm pregnant.

"I've lived with a mafia don for months. I've seen this world and I'm not sure I like it nor do I want to re-enter it."

Yeah, I told her about Christian and the supposed debt Rhett owed.

I couldn't tell her that Christian is my baby daddy though or that I think he controls my heart and my very body.

Mom's about to add something when Yan, my personal bodyguard enters the room with those heavy boots that always announce his presence.

"We have a visitor, ma'am."

Saliva wells in my mouth and my hands shake slightly.

How many times have I wanted to hear that?

“It’s late, visitors aren’t allowed in my mansion at this hour.”

“I told him that too. Thing is, he’s not leaving.”

He? Him? After weeks of nothing...though I know he’s preparing everything for his wedding with Athena but still.

If there’s anything I know about him it’s that a silent Volkov is a dangerous one.

“Who?” Mom asks.

“He says he’s your future son-in-law. Christian Vitello, ma’am.”

“Athena doesn’t live here; she is not here either.”

“I told him that. He says he’s not here for her but for umm...Alessandra.”

My heart jacks up speed.

“He has no business with her. I paid him back the one million dollars you owed him and that’s courtesy considering I’m letting him marry one of my daughters when he had the other locked up in his mansion as his personal nurse.”

“Mom-.”

I don’t know what I’m about to ask.

I don’t know why I want to beg but tears curb my throat and eyes.

He is here. for me? To punish me? Because he missed me? I’ve missed him too. So bad.

“You are not his prisoner anymore, Ale. Yan?”

“Yes, ma’am?”

“Tell him to leave, if he doesn’t, use force if you need to but don’t break his legs. He’ll need his legs while he walks Athena down the aisle next week.”

No.

Yan’s footsteps flow down the same way they came in.

If he’s wise, Christian will leave. Yeah, he’s going to leave.

It takes a few seconds for gunshots to echo from outside, then for two words to splice the air.

“Little. Nurse.”

He shouts. No, not shout. It’s an order and that order is followed by two other shots outside.

“Get down! Ale, get down, now!”

“Mom...I need to see him. He won’t leave if I don’t...”

“You are not his prisoner, you hear me? You and Millie are free from him.”

Millie’s cries resonate in the kitchen and I can hear Mom try to shush her.

“I’ll never be free from him. Not when that man occupies my dreams and nightmares. I’ll tell him to leave, I’ll tell him to stop all of this.”

“He is the father to—you are carrying his child?” she’s not mad but she’s not thrilled either.

I clutch the counter; I take the metallic stick that has been my eyes in trying to find my way around the house.

I leave the kitchen, the living room, till I meet the railing of the main door and pull.

The night breeze hits my loose sundress without mercy almost knocking me down but I walk down the marble stone pathway.

The path that’ll lead to the gate.

I don’t make it ten steps from the door when I hear grunting and heavy breaths in front of me.

“Drop the stick and walk to me.”

The anger that ripples off of him cuts my breathing and ups the invisible lump of emotions in my throat.

“C-Christian-“, I breathe out.

“Don’t call me that, Alexia. You lost the privilege to call me that when you took Millie and ran.”

“S-stop this.”

“I won’t repeat myself. Drop the fucking stick and walk to me.”

Trembling from the cold, from the coldness of the marble beneath my bare feet, from the winds that slap my cheeks, I drop my stick and unsteadily walk in the direction of his voice.

“Miss! Don’t!” Yan’s voice warns me.

“Yan?”

“Ah, so that’s his fucking name. Yan? You have a death wish, Yan? Don’t think I haven’t seen you walking my woman around these parts like she’s yours. I wanted to skin you the first time I saw you touch her shoulder, you prick.”

“Ch-Vicious stop, okay? I’m here, let Yan go! He has done nothing to you!”

“Done nothing? Is trying to keep me away from what’s mine, nothing to you little nurse? Because I’ll tell you just how pissed this Yan guy has made me.”

“He was protecting me, okay? Just stop!” I beg. For Yan. For mercy.

“Beg”, his voice comes out like a whip.

“Down on your knees, beg for this miserable punk’s life”, Christian threatens in hot, enraged words.

“And you’ll leave?”

“On your knees”, his low growly voice comes out chopped. Straight for my heart, straight to the skull, maiming me.

If this makes the bastard turn and leave before he gets killed in my mother’s front yard, then I’ll kneel.

Slowly, being careful not to hurt my tummy or let him see it through the dress, my knees kiss the ground and the cold itself punishes me.

“Seems she cares about you that much, doesn’t she? I’ll count to ten, Yan, disappear from here, walk back to your boss and tell her to do her worst.”

Another grunt, another struggle.

“One”, Vicious starts.

“To.”

I hear Yan's heavy boots padding the ground.

"Ten", Vicious finishes and he shoots. Yan's body falls to the ground before he starts howling in agony.

"Yan? No! Yan? Yan!" I shout.

Before I can stand up and try to look for Yan in darkness, Christian's scent fills my nostrils and steaming hot anger crawls up my spine.

"You killed him! You—You killed him!"

"He's not dead but he'll have to crawl back to his boss to deliver my message", Christian assures but nothing about this is assuring.

The bastard's fingers land on my chin, tilting me up till he can meet my eyes while I can see nothing.

He's kneeling too I realize.

His chest meets my sensitive boobs, the ones that are huffing and puffing trying to catch a breath.

"Don't touch me, you bastard!" I shout, my bottom lip quivering.

I wanted him to find me, part of me did. And I didn't picture it like this. I thought he'd say he missed me, beg me to come back to him or at least say he'd realized he and Athena weren't a good match.

But that wasn't Christian 'Vicious' Vitello Volkov. That wasn't his style.

His lunacy knows no bounds, he doesn't touch me.

No. To add to his arsenal, his breath skitters over my cheek before I feel his warm tongue licking away my tears.

"I hate it when you cry."

"Just leave", I quiver.

"I hate it when you betray me because that's what you've been doing, little nurse. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus once but it seems like you want to give the guy a run for his money. The first time you betrayed me you did it after a kiss and your cunt welcoming my cock home, the second time it was after one kiss, little nurse. Twice the betrayal, twice the pain. The only common factor is, I'm like a rubber band bouncing back every time and this is me bouncing back to you. Come back to me."

“No.”

“Very well. See you at your sister’s wedding because best believe I’m kidnapping you and Millie afterward.”

He doesn’t wait for my words.

His lips clash with mine.

Not a kiss. Not a peck.

He feasts on me.

He ravishes me.

He marks me.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

SPECIAL CHAPTER 62: ATHENA PALLIS

Rhett Kingston and I had a deal.

He was supposed to take Alexia and the money and leave.

He took the money; he took Alexia and their child but he tried to kill Christian which was not part of the deal.

I suppose that was the reason why I hadn’t felt a shred of guilt or pity when Christian finally caught him and killed him.

I thought Rhett dying was the end of everything.

I thought taking that woman away from Christian’s house and as a lowly maid in my mother’s house would solve everything.

It didn’t.

It doesn’t matter now. Not right now when my goals are close to fruition.

“On the bed, back to the mattress, legs wide enough for me to see what I’m getting myself into”, Christian orders seated at the seat located at the edge of the room.

The hardness of his voice, the grating tension had me coming the minute he kissed me brutally.

One kiss a moment ago and I felt like my body was aflame.

Mio principe kissed just like I thought he would. Brutally, vengeful, lustful.

All three a combination that detonated my womanhood and left me breathless.

He told me to strip.

I stripped.

He asked for my presence here.

I almost ran over a few cars off the road just to get here.

His scent which is a hint of bergamot and overwhelming mint brushes over my skin and fans my already swollen lips swirling the anticipation that the night is bound to bring.

I've practiced sex before. I know what I need to do to ensnare a man.

To ensnare my husband.

After tonight, he'll be back in my bed. Tangled in my sheets, finche morte non ci separi.

Till death do us part, Christian. Till death do us part.

I thought he wouldn't touch me till the wedding but here he is, his hungry gaze on me, his unwavering eyes locking me down to the bed and seizing the very oxygen away from me.

I get on the bed as instructed, my back to it.

My knees are in the air and slowly, teasing him, showing him that I will be his forever and him mine, I open my legs wide.

I'm dripping, I know.

I also know that if a woman came this much from one gaze, then the sex would be great.

I've never come this much before. Not with other men, no.

With him, I'm positive I will.

"How many times have you imagined yourself in this position, principessa? Begging for my attention and touch?"

It's his words alone that have me swallowing a lump of saliva down my hot throat.

“Christian- “, I moan.

He takes another chug of his whiskey, his eyes on my face.

“How many times have you touched yourself wishing it was my cock filling that cunt instead?”

Oh, Dio!

“M—many”, I heave.

More than I can count.

Even with other men, it has always been him on my mind when I engage in sex. Always him.

“Show me Athena.”

My thighs clench.

My right hand moves to my front slowly and slowly reaching a part of me that has always been his.

I’m wet from his words alone.

I’m wet from his stare alone.

I circle my hand on my clit, before my fingers plunge into...

“Because you’ll have to wait an eternity to have me fuck you”, the rest of the words slip from his mouth and I pause, confused.

Christian swirls the drink in his glass, his eyes not even on me.

“I-I don’t understand.”

My heart slowly falls, about to crash in the worst way possible.

“I don’t understand either how a posh prima donna like you sinks so low as to work with the likes of Rhett Kingston.”

My heart falls harder.

“Christian-.”

“It’s Vitello to you and think long and hard about what you are about to say.”

“I love you.”

I lay my heart on the table. He will see. He will understand.

“You’ll stop.”

“I have loved you since the first day we met.”

“Yeah? Sorry to break your heart here sweetheart but I barely remember our first encounter, that’s how fucking meaningless you were to me Athena. Just a face, a forgetful one.”

“You don’t mean that.”

He stands up, he places his glass on the mahogany tray and walks to me.

When his hand lands on my chin, I lean closer for his touch my tears on the verge of soaking myself and his hand.

He remembers me. I know he does. He’ll forgive me. I worked with Rhett to ensure me and him had a future.

“Wanna know the funniest part, principessa? I would have walked you down that aisle whether or not you worked with that fucker behind the shadows.”

“Then we will marry.”

Our eyes meet. Violent waves of tears sting my eyes as I repeat, “We will marry.”

“I would have let that shit with Rhett Kingston slide whether I almost had half of my body burnt or not but you messed with her.”

“Please...”

“You messed with what’s mine. She came back blind because of you and that’s not the worst part. The worst part is, you made her leave me. Twice.”

I hug him. I wrap my hands and beg because this man is all I have ever wanted in my life.

“I’m sorry...I’m sorry...”

“Juana died because of your immature jealousy and you should be dead as well but it won’t be that easy. Not after the hellish weeks I’ve been through. So listen up and listen well, Athena. That pest you kicked out of my house. You called her that, didn’t you? I want her back in my home and you are going to help me achieve that.”

“I’d rather die!”

I lash out.

“Careful what you wish for. This in itself must feel like death, doesn’t it? The motherfucking irony of the century being you sent her to your house to be a maid only for her to be your long-lost sister and heir to everything you own.”

“She’s not a Pallis.”

I hiss. I sob harder.

Because I’ll never accept her. I’ll never accept her taking my home, my mom and now my—my—no, I will fight.

“Don’t be too easy to read sweetheart. I see that bitter bile in your eyes and anything, absolutely anything you try on the nurse or her baby will return to you a hundredfold. Don’t test me, Athena. I’m all out of patience today.”

He pulls my hands away from him stepping back with a sneer.

“You’ll never get your throne if you don’t marry me! I’m your ticket to your throne.”

“All that is needed is to marry a Pallis, Athena. Word on the street is you are not the only Pallis in town.”

“My mother will never allow it! The five families will never—.”

“Keep your phone close. I’ll call. Now take your clothes and leave the room. I need to shower. Apparently, she hates it when I reek of another woman. I can’t have that when I visit her, now can I?”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 63

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

An insane fiancé.

A nagging sister.

Days shackled up with men like Nico talking non-stop about how he missed his fucking mother who was back in Chicago.

The five families breathing down my neck.

All four of those things had enough ammo to tick the bomb about to detonate inside my head.

But it took more than that to add a chink to the armor I had cocooned myself since I got to Italy.

My motherland hadn't welcomed me with welcoming hands.

No, it had welcomed me with daggers to every piece of skin on me it could find and I bit down on that pain and took it like a good boy.

This was the first of many tests.

Rome wasn't built in a day but it took a day to collapse it altogether.

One misstep.

One slip-up.

And I'd lose that throne before I even took a bite out of it.

As I stared at the dollar bills on my study table on Monday, one million dollars in cash with Benjamin's smug face lining those bills, I knew I was going to slip up.

I was going to sacrifice my throne if push came to shove.

Why?

She left me.

I knew where she was, I was going to fetch her. Punish her. Pin her down. Fuck the disobedience out of her.

The thing about my little nurse though?

She's an anomaly.

Unpredictable if we are going to look at the whole damn picture.

Of all the women in the world, she happened to be Alessandra Pallis and that made everything complicated.

Her newfound mother, Allagra Pallis, sent me one million dollars on Monday and a wedding gift for my upcoming wedding to her daughter, Athena Pallis.

It was a warning too but Allagra Pallis doesn't know how way back my nurse and I go.

I bought my nurse first.

I called dibs on her first.

I claimed her first.

Not even her mother is going to save her. To take her away from me.

She is mine. Millie is mine too. No take-backsies.

That would summarize why I am here.

Hearing some limp dick groan a few feet from me because of a bullet wound that didn't go straight for the bone and shatter it.

I should have aimed a bullet to the head of this Yan guy.

I surveilled this house since my nurse and Millie got here and apart from the untrained guards, this Yan, this son of a gun, touched her shoulders, whispered things in her ears and held Millie like she was his.

This Yan should be dead.

My little nurse's tears line her cheeks.

I licked some away but she won't stop and I'm one committed fucker kissing her like my head is underwater.

Because really, it has been underwater.

Without her, everything has been a mess.

I can't fix the messes because she's not near. I can't fix the messes because she and Millie left my house hollow.

Her lips whimper against mine.

I pull away from her, kneeling on the ground with her but my forehead resting on top of hers.

God, she's beautiful.

And Allagra Pallis wants me to walk away from her? Not a chance.

“W-Why-.”

I don’t wait for her question.

I take her lips again this time hurrying up to sneak past her lips and plunge into that mouth that carries her damning scent.

So good, little nurse.

Addicting.

Makes me a madman.

I touch her cheek, smearing it with some of the blood I got from the guards who I had to shoot and slice because they wouldn’t let me in.

I even asked nicely but no.

Everything always has to be hard when it comes to her. And I like it hard.

Her hands shove at my chest and I hold them close to that beating organ that has betrayed me since day one when it came to this woman.

When her tears touch my cheek again, warm and salty, I pull away.

“What do you want, huh? To torment me? Your debt has been repaid so stop this!”

“I want you. And if you think one million dollars is enough for you, you are dead wrong.”

Back in my mansion. Back in my bed. All mine.

“T—they’ll kill you.”

Her voice comes out hushed.

I know they intend to but Allagra Pallis can’t risk a war. Can’t risk killing the man who will own every inch of Italy and then some.

“You want that?”

“It doesn’t matter what I want because you and me are done. You are marrying my sister and you have made it clear what we are, so leave. Leave right now Vicious!”

Her breaths come out choppy but my eyes are on her baby blue ones. I can look at them all night and she wouldn’t have a clue.

I grip her chin.

“You and me are done when I say we are done. It doesn’t matter whether you are a heiress to some family title because you were mine first.”

“I’m not your property.”

“Test me, little nurse, but at the end of the day, you’ll be back in my sheets chanting my name.”

“Never. Never again.”

“Why?” I ask.

Her throat bobs with another bucket of fresh tears.

“Because the universe gave me a second chance and I won’t waste it. Y-You will never get over me running away with Rhett and I’ll never get over you marrying my sister just to hurt me. That’s why. We are not compatible and things are better off like this.”

“Better for you? Because you’ll have to marry someone else? You are a Pallis now, arranged marriages are a common thing.”

Her eyes go wide.

Aah, Allagra didn’t make her aware of that did she?

I’ve heard the rumors about Alexia’s coming out party.

To introduce her to the world but I’ve been on this side of the world for eighteen years to know one of the heads of the five families will want to marry off his retard son to what’s mine.

I won’t allow it though.

“I’ll do what I can to keep you away”, she lies through her teeth.

My lips crash on her forehead before I say, “You can try.”

I stand up, I pick up her walking stick that has her looking and feeling like she’s disabled when matter of fact is, she’s not.

Allagra’s guards circle me within minutes and I leave of my own accord because I’ve already established who she belongs to and no iron gates or her title is keeping me away from taking her and Millie.

Alexia Green has always been a difficult, stubborn, definitely the kind of trouble that invites a headache type of woman.

A man with scruples would run the other way.

A man too far gone with her blonde hair, her snarky personality and her child didn't run the other way.

I was at her house latching on her lips desperately two nights ago.

Two nights later and I'm standing at her coming out party.

It's a lavish ball of the sort, with a charity gala splashed in between to make it seem relevant and that attracts all kinds of rich all across Sicily.

Everyone is here to meet the blind heiress of the Pallis name.

Fathers are here to flag their sons to Allagra Pallis because it's the mother-in-law you always have to win first.

Allagra Pallis hates me. Right now, the same hate that she shot me with when she told me to get off her compound doesn't subside when we lock eyes.

Just to spite the woman, my hand snakes around Athena's waist harder pulling her to my chest.

Athena gasps, her hand lands on my chest like we are intimate lovers.

I entertain her though.

I need her tonight.

My eyes skim over everyone at the party.

"Chri—Vicious, thank you for-."

"This is not me forgiving you for anything, Athena. I called you because I need you, don't get mixed up on what this is.

Smile."

I take another sweep of the room.

Blonde hair comes to sight. The kind of blonde hair I wanted to see when I got here.

Her hair is up in a ponytail displaying that graceful neck that has even Ginnio La Monda junior salivating when he speaks to her.

Alexia smiles at something Junior whispers.

“There she is. Go talk to your sister, Athena, pull her aside privately and if you try anything... well if you are smart enough you wouldn’t try anything.”

“My mother will-.”

“Your mother wouldn’t bat an eyelid if she saw her daughters getting acquainted away from a noisy gathering.”

“Please don’t do this.”

“Move. Now.”

Athena chugs a glass of Cranberry drink or something of the sort before she moves to her sister cutting the conversation my nurse was having with junior short.

I stand back, try to mingle and once the sisters exit the room, I follow quietly.

It takes five minutes for Athena to pull away from Alexia and by the look on my nurse’s face she’s confused by whatever it was they spoke about and the sound that my shoes make when I approach her.

“Don’t-“, she warns, taking a step back.

She’s draped in red.

Red like danger.

Red like her lipstick.

Red that wraps around curves.

Red that’s as slick as the satin material in red.

I take a step toward her and I see when she realizes she’s cornered.

She can’t leave if she doesn’t know which way is out.

“Whatever mind games you are playing, they won’t work, okay? I’ll scream if you even think of-.”

I eat the distance between us, taking her naked back because of this backless dress that has her looking like a strawberry drenched in hot sinful chocolate.

“What did you and Junior talk about?”

“None of your business”, her nails scratch my neck but I hold her still.

“You are my business.”

She stops fighting understanding it’s worthless to fight.

“I’m going to get married.”

Her words come out as dirty filthy lies and they still hit me like it’s the truth.

“Yeah? To keep the big bad wolf away? Who are you marrying? Junior?”

“It doesn’t matter but I’ll be off limits and you won’t be able to pull stunts like these anymore.”

“Stunts like these? You ran away from home, if anything I’m the man who deserves a fucking medal for being patient enough to wait for all this drama to be over.”

“You sent my sister over to distract me”, her voice cracks, ”D-Did you promise her sex so she—she would pretend to be my sister for a minute?”

Your sister’s a bitch who doesn’t deserve your tears.

“Why are you doing this to me, huh? Why can’t I...be happy...just once without thinking about you and the pain that comes with it? Can’t I be happy too, Christian?”

“Alexia-”

“Don’t touch me!” she sobs but she leans into my hand like a cat in heat making this a hell of a lot easier than it should be.

I’ve been with this woman and I know how emotional she can get but this...this new.

Her sobbing every few seconds should be prodding questions in my head but I push the thoughts to the back of my head as I cup the thigh peeking from the slit of her dress.

“Christian”, she hisses but she doesn’t push me away.

I work my way up her leg, pushing all the way to her inner thigh. Her skin feels like I’m touching it for the first time. Soft, creamy and smooth for scarred hands like mine to touch.

My little nurse opens her legs for me, giving me access to her.

“I’ll make you happy, Sunshine”, I growl, finding her damp panties. “I’ll give you the world.”

I pull her panties to the side, running a finger on her already wet pussy.

She holds onto my shoulders, her face getting lost in my neck.

“P—Please”, she begs. I chuckle.

The way she reacts, the way her body gets excited at one single touch makes her look like she’s in heat.

Like she’s dying without me and that’s how I want her. Needy and begging for my touch alone.

I find her clit massaging it tenderly before I pry her folds, lining my fingers with her pussy. Wet. Soaking. Dripping for me.

Two months without a taste, little nurse. One month in a coma. Another month in an empty house without you. All torture.

“Oh God”, she moans.

I slap her pussy, going back to tease her.

“D-Don’t stop...plea—please.”

I hear the chatter behind us and grin.

Plunging two fingers inside her, I kiss her cheek and she grips my coat to the point of tearing it off of me.

My little wildcat.

“Whose pussy is this? Who does she belong to?”

Another thrust and her wetness soaks my fingers.

“Y-yours. You...You”, she moans holding back a scream.

I thrust even harder, the sounds of her cunt swallowing my fingers enough to wake the dead,

My body is shielding her from the main event. From the people...

“Harder, little nurse. Say my fucking name like you mean it.”

I hit her spot, rubbing it, stimulating her, knowing she’ll hate me after tonight.

“Y—yours. I’m...more, Oh God...I’m yours, Christian Volkov. Y-yours!”

The curtains from behind us part away.

My nurse comes so hard, she squirts.

Everyone from the party heard her, and everyone from the party sees her come apart in my arms.

These folks have always been traditional and this seals the deal. They all are witnesses.

If I touch.

If I ruin her for any other man. Because none here are man enough to rival what I claim is mine.

I marry her. That’s the law of this land.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 64

ALEXIA PALLIS.

This isn’t a tap-out situation.

I can’t just tap him and push away from him because I’m a mess.

Still horny.

Emotional than I ought to be because of my state.

And covered in my own...

“I’ve got you”, he caresses my hair and I hide in the hollow of his neck gritting my teeth and spitting bitterness.

“I hate you. I hate you for humiliating me like this. I’ll never forgive you.”

“I’m getting out of here first then you can fucking hate me in the warmth of my bed.”

His voice burns my skin and if I wasn't mad at him, at the moment, I would be mad at myself most.

One perk of being blind is that my eyes do the seeing and right now they hear the gasps and murmurs, the ridicule, the pointing fingers, I know they are calling me a whore too.

I was so wrapped in the orgasm that I didn't stop to listen if we had a crowd.

Can they see me? Can they see the liquids trailing down my leg?

I hear Mom telling the person I'm assuming to be Yan to close the curtains.

Then their voices come out muffled before Christian's hands wrap around the back of my thighs lifting my feet off the ground and pulling me plush to his chest.

His scent fans my cheeks ablaze, the sensation traveling all the way down to my core that still yearns for more.

I blame it on the hormones.

A day ago, I vowed to get this man out of my chest.

A day ago, I told my mother I would marry anyone who as much as raised the question to distract her from destroying Christian's marriage to Athena after she learned I was carrying his child.

A day later, here I am on his chest as paparazzi flock around us the minute he carries me outside.

I tune them out.

I rest my head on his chest, telling myself I'll scold myself for my stupidity after I've calmed down.

We plop inside what I'm assuming to be the backseat of his car.

I hear him tell the driver to drive and I don't even fight.

I sit on his lap.

I pretend to be a good girl and accept what just happened.

Then before I know it, my eyelids slowly shutter closed and I fall into my captor's hands.

Again.

It's not his searing gaze that wakes me up, it's not his scent or the soft pillows caressing my face either; it's the smell of food that arouses me from sleep.

I didn't eat anything at the party because I couldn't stomach anything when every few seconds someone would pop up to speak to me and ask me questions about my father's accident and how I'd survived.

Or force myself to remember their names and their Italian surnames that were a mouthful.

I sit up, my back against the headrest.

I know he's here which is no surprise when I hear him bark an order.

"Eat."

"I can feed myself, I'm not a child."

"I don't trust you with a fork", he retorts and anger bubbles in my throat.

"Because I'm blind?"

"Because you are angry enough to stab me in the eye."

I would.

If I didn't like his face in the first place. I certainly would.

He might be the devil but he's a handsome fucking devil.

"Open up, Sunshine."

"I'm not hungry." My stomach growls and I wrap my hands around it.

The only problem is when I wrap my hands around myself, the dress is gone.

I have my bra but my panties are gone too beneath what I feel is a shirt on me.

"You made a mess, little nurse. I had to clean you up and change you."

"You had no right. I want to go home! Right now!"

"This is your home."

“Millie needs me.”

He’ll listen if I mention Millie.

“I’m working on a way to bring her here”, he says simply and I arch a brow. My mother will never allow it.

Frankly speaking, after what I did with Athena’s fiancé she might be consoling my sister and mad at me enough not to let this man get what he wants.

Not me. And certainly not Millie.

“Eat, Alexia then we can fight later.”

I open my mouth. I need food for the life growing inside of me.

Wait a minute if he dressed me does that mean...did he feel my bump? Did he see that I’m...

The first thing I taste is the corn salad followed by a healthy amount of peso over fried rice. I swallow it down and move forward for more.

He chuckles but otherwise the food keeps on coming, which I’m grateful for.

The silence between us stretches and it’s cut into two once in a while with my loud chewing and my moans every time my taste buds tingle for more.

“Full?”

“Yes”, I mutter, “Thank you.”

I hear the clatter of plates and cutlery followed by the sound of small wheels against the carpet and I figure he had the food on a wheeling tray and he’s now pushed it away.

The bed dips, his overwhelming scent assaults my nostrils and before I know what’s next his lips crash into mine like a tsunami.

In the heat of it, drowning in his tongue that has always seized all reason and composure from me, I feel the covers being yanked away, I feel him...shirtless, between my legs.

He kisses me hard.

Without mercy.

Without caring if I want it or not.

But do I want it?

If I didn't want it, I would have bit his tongue and made him bleed just like his nuptials with Athena have made me bleed on the inside.

My hips buck the minute he rubs his pants-clad erection against my already wet core.

Because that's all it takes.

One touch. One kiss and everything sane in my mind flies out of the window.

Sizzling pleasure builds in my tummy, when his hand slaps my inner thigh.

"Open, Sunshine. I want these open for me."

His deep voice is laced with a timbre of anger and I shiver.

Malevolent butterflies flutter in my stomach seemingly being in competition with the rhythm matching of my skyrocketing heartbeat.

He doesn't waste any time and I can't read him. That's the problem, blind or not I have never been able to read him.

He said he'll give me the world. Because he loves me? Because it was the only thing he needed to say for me to be in his arms?

He just finger fucked me in front of everyone and now that I say it out loud, I realize how insane that sounds.

He did it in front of his fiancé. Why?

Every thought racking my brain dissipates into thin air when his fingers pinch my clit and his thumb starts matching the throbbing that my little mound seeks to be relieved.

"C-Christian", I moan.

He takes my moan and swallows it. He kisses my cheek, my jaw right before two of his fingers plunge into me without mercy.

Stretching me wide.

Moving in and out of me till I have to hold tight to his shoulders, digging my nails into his skin and possibly drawing blood.

That's how good it feels.

And my body, this fucked up body that has his child, a beating heart beckoning to him anticipates how he'll feel like in a few.

The first time we did it, it was spectacular minus the Rhett kidnapping me afterwards part.

I know how he feels. I know how he will feel. And it will be more than heavenly.

Good girls wanted guys who could go slow and torturous and all things vanilla.

I might have been one too until I met him.

He's no Prince Charming.

He doesn't go slow.

He doesn't do vanilla.

He takes and takes leaving you nothing but a puddle of desperation to have him again.

I know that. I should have known that when he started kissing me anyway.

But his next statement still shocks me.

"I said I'd punish you, little nurse and this is only the start."

He lifts my leg on one of his shoulders and I almost die of shame when I know he can see all of me so clearly. Not even the shirt I have on is saving me from his eyes.

"Fucking pretty", he quips, his finger still torturing me in a way that has me moving forward for more and more.

His hand moves to my chest and the material is yanked away from my body in one sweep.

The bra follows before he kneads my right tit, playing with a puckered nipple.

I'm already short of breath, muffling my moans by biting down my lip even when it feels so, so good.

Oh God.

"If you could see how well your cunt wraps around my fingers, you'd understand my obsession, little nurse. It's a piece of fucking art right here. All for me, everything on this pretty little body, mine."

"N—No", I whimper.

He stops, I cry out of frustration.

“No what, Sunshine?”

“I’m not...yours.”

“Yeah? Tell me to pull out then, sunshine. I fucking dare you.”

I remain silent. I can’t. I can’t and I won’t.

“Didn’t think so”, he mumbles before he gives me another earth-shattering orgasm that has me pulling his fingers inside me more.

I only take a breath before I feel something cold between my butt cheeks.

“C—Christian...”

“I said I’d punish you, Sunshine. I wasn’t bluffing. Stop me now, say something because once I start, I won’t stop till I punish you for running away-.”

He pauses.

Then his large hand covers my slightly hard belly before he adds.

“And thinking that you could hide this little guy away from me.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 65

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

I changed her clothes.

I wiped what was mine, and might have licked her come off of her too.

Unless she had a tiny melon sowed into her skin overnight, her tummy screamed a few weeks pregnant.

I talked to Brenda just in case.

One mention of me killing Jett if she didn’t spew the truth had her blabbering what I already knew.

Pregnant.

Was pregnant before Athena Pallis offered her a job as a maid.

Was pregnant when I was away from her and she reconnected with mommy dearest.

Was pregnant being paraded in her party as an heiress about to be wedded off to any man there.

Full with my kid or kids if I got lucky again.

The thought of fathering children has never been on my to-do list. Intentionally at least.

Getting Athena pregnant was something I would have done if the situation called for it. Not because I thought this world or myself included could give a kid a better life.

But her?

The full of surprises blondie in my bed?

She was giving me a child and she kept the truth away from me.

Why?

Did she think I wouldn't be a good father?

That I'd be Rhett?

That I'd tell her to terminate the pregnancy?

So many questions, so many answers needed from her.

That wasn't my top priority of the night though.

Her being pregnant was the final kick my heart needed to know this woman would be mine forever.

I fed her.

I fucked her.

I punished her. And the punishment is lodged up her ass despite her being mad at me.

See my little nurse likes the pain, likes being flipped in my bed, hard, rough, taking it like my little slut.

"Troy started acting up again, boss. He knows you are not here so he thinks he can-."

"Be the big boss", I scoff.

Should have guessed Troy Sullivan would be the first man in Chicago to want to run things.

I killed Dante.

I'm out of Chicago and everyone will want a step up the food chain including Troy.

"How did you handle the situation, Jagger?" I ask him.

I left him in charge and although he likes being with Jett everywhere they fucking go, I trust him than the other men I have in Chicago.

Jett and Nico are here in Sicily. And Nico has been a pain in my tail bone nagging me about seeing his mother who's in Chicago.

"Uhm I didn't, things got a little hard and I had to call Maximo."

"Damn it, Jagger. He's fired, you know that. You couldn't handle a little fire with Troy?"

"Troy had the cops involved; it was messy. Boss, I couldn't fix it without his help."

"Was it handled?"

"Yes."

"And Maximo?"

"He rehired himself."

I smirk.

"Of course he did. Keep me updated."

I hang up.

Then I dial a number I don't want to dial but I owe him one.

He answers on the first ring.

"Christian?" a feminine voice filters in through the phone.

"Where is Maximo, Kat?"

"In the shower."

I can't even start to fathom them together. It didn't sound better when I found out the truth, it doesn't sound better right now either.

"Tell him I called."

"Please, wait. Can we talk now that I have you?"

"I'm busy at the moment, Kat."

"How long will you stay mad?" she sounds hurt. I know I've hurt her but her betrayal did more than hurt me, it maimed me.

The lies. The Demetri part and especially the damn Demetri part. Of all the assholes in the world, she had to pick Demetri.

"I'm not mad. Goodnight."

"Please don't shut me out. I'm afraid for you, Christian. Being home, your title, I know everything is hard."

"It is."

"Then talk to me."

"She's pregnant."

I hear her gasp before she even speaks, "Athena?"

"No. My nurse."

"Alexia? Maximo told me about her being Alessandra Pallis. Oh God, that is good news but-."

“But what?”

“Christian, you said it yourself when we were young. You’d never have a child to continue the Vitello line.”

“I don’t...want a child.”

“But?”

“I want an entire population of children with her.”

Kat chuckles and I smile like a chum listening to her laugh.

“Gotta go”, I say.

“Thank you for forgiving Maximo.”

I hang up then I knock on the bathroom door that has been closed since I came inside her tight cunt and planted a butt

plug up her ass.

“Sunshine, I knock the door down or you open the door yourself. Take a pick.”

She doesn’t speak.

It takes two seconds before the door opens and she steps out looking every bit fucked with the wild hair and the shirt I put on her after we were done.

“I want to take it out”, she whines.

I cup her cheek. She tries to pull away but my hand is already snaking around her waist.

“It stays on until I say otherwise. If I find it gone, I’ll have to inflict more punishment and we’ll be up all night. You are the nurse so tell me is fucking my woman all night healthy for the baby?”

Her face softens and for a minute I want to kiss her but her mask of anger is back on.

“I’m not your woman because you are marrying my sister. You don’t have to pretend to care about the baby because I’ll take care of him or her myself.”

“Are you begging for me to punish you? Because I will, little nurse. Keep talking like that and we’ll go at it all night. Your cunt is my obsession and we both know you won’t say no if I bend you over-”

“I’m sore”, she puffs.

I kiss her forehead.

“I know. Let’s go to bed.”

She doesn’t protest and I lead her to my bed.

The very moment she moves into the bed, covers herself and gives me her back, I hug her from behind, my hand resting on her tummy.

It isn’t big yet but I can’t wait to see her swelled with my kid.

And I can’t wait to deal with her mother who’ll be here with an army tomorrow morning just to take what’s mine back.

Bring your army, Allagra Pallis. I’ll slaughter each one of them in front of you.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 66

ALEXIA PALLIS.

A warm tingling sensation travels up my spine as pleasure licks a delicious path all the way to my puckered nipples.

I groan in my sleep, stirring awake when the lash of his tongue makes my hips buck from the bed and I arch seeking him out more.

I feel his warm tongue lapsing all my juices, I feel his teeth on my mound and the minute his breath hits my entrance and his tongue takes back charge, I moan, my hands moving between my legs to feel him.

It’s not a dream.

Even as my eyes stay open and I see darkness, I can feel the sunlight on my face and I know for a fact it’s morning.

It's morning and the beast has awakened seeking me out again as if he didn't fuck me till he made sure I couldn't move.

I spent almost half an hour in his bathroom yesterday trying to wipe his come off my legs because dripping in front of him sounded embarrassing on my part and weak too.

He'd think I wanted more.

Technically I wanted more but still.

When his tongue darts in and out of my entrance, my orgasm hits me like a tremor; evoking gasps and sweat from me.

He pulls away from me and not only does the warmth dissipate but I feel empty.

He put a butt plug inside me yesterday and told me not to remove it.

I didn't remove it which means he did.

"Morning, Tesoro", his lips find my cheek as he wipes the hair that's sticking to both sides of my head including my forehead due to sweat.

Then he lifts my shirt, kissing my tiny baby bump and I almost want to sob.

"Morning, baby", he coos.

I try to push him off of me but he pins my wrists above my head, our noses touching.

"Now I understand that you are still mad at everything that went down yesterday, maybe even upset that you didn't see Millie this morning but is that any way to greet the man who gave you the best orgasm just now?"

"I didn't ask for one!" I huff.

"But your cunt didn't say no either when she drenched my face."

"Oh God, stop talking like that."

"Are you embarrassed, Tesoro?"

"Christian, please let me go. I'm even asking nicely this time."

"And I'm telling you nicely my woman and my child are staying with me."

"For how long?"

He chuckles.

He places another kiss on my lips before he gets off the bed.

“I’ve got clothes for you at the edge of the bed. Wear them because breakfast is coming up any second now. Eat. All of it, Alexia. I mean it.”

“You are not...you are leaving?”

“I won’t be gone for long.”

My heart shouldn’t sink but it does.

Where is he going?

How long will he be gone?

Who is he meeting?

Athena? To explain everything that happened yesterday between us?

I hear the shower start to run and a few minutes later he steps out and the fact that he is undressing in front of me brings mixed feelings from me.

Is he undressing because I’m blind?

Or is he undressing because I’m in the room and he’s comfortable with it.

“Try to be a good girl for me, will you?”

He asks.

I stare at what I’m assuming is his direction and snark, “No.”

He chuckles on the way out and it’s just me and the silence in this room.

I dressed up.

And Christian only left his sweatpants for me to wear and as a result, his pants are rolled around my waist like two times to ensure they don’t fall down all the way to my ankles.

Someone brought me food, it wasn’t Brenda though and I have a feeling Christian told her not to come into my room because he thinks I’ll use her to escape.

I ate like my life depended on it because that's how delicious it was and with this pregnancy, I'm hungrier than when I was with Millie.

And when I was with Millie, I didn't have the choice of picking which food I wanted and which food I didn't want. Nor did I have the cash.

I pace around the room again.

I tried to open the door but it's locked so I'm trapped here till Christian comes back. That bastard.

It's been an hour or two, I settle to go back to bed but two minutes after my feet touch the covers and the rattling of the door knob has my attention.

"Christian", I whisper, almost excited.

Except with the way that door is rattling, I don't think it's Christian.

Christian would have a key.

Christian wouldn't struggle with the door like that.

Oh God. It's not him. Then who is at the door?

Slowly, trying not to knock into anything in the room, I get out of bed, my feet touching the smooth carpet before my knees touch it a second later.

I crawl down the bed, making sure to be still as possible.

Whoever my visitor is, he manages to open the door and I hear his footsteps.

Pat.

Pat.

Pat.

The scene plays like a horror movie.

The problem is in every horror movie, the woman lying beneath the bed always gets caught.

They always get caught.

And the realization has my throat bobbing in fear.

I can't be anyone's captive again.

I can't go back to being with how it was with Rhett.

Pat.

Pat.

Pat.

He doesn't speak and that's even scarier.

He's just moving around in the room.

Like a predator sniffing out prey.

Like a predator spooking prey till it goes crazy.

I know my legs are shaking.

And they are shaking because I'm not alone.

I have a baby inside me and what's worse? My blindness limits my chances at fighting but I will fight.

I will...

"Alessandra?" a familiar voice calls. Warm and soft.

I know him but from where?

"Alessandra, it's me, Hunior. We met yesterday at the party? Listen, your mother enlisted the help of the Five families to get you out of here but we have to move now before Vitello comes back."

That sounds like something my mother would do.

I slowly slide from underneath the bed, using the mattress to support me before Junior's hand lands on my back helping me up.

"Junior?" I ask.

"It's me. We have to move, everyone is waiting for us downstairs", he holds my hand leading me to the door but I pause.

"I don't have shoes."

A second later, I feel fluffy warm slippers near my feet.

“Wear those. Everything is going to be okay, Alessandra. We promised your mother you would be safe.”

But I wasn’t unsafe with Christian though.

“Okay”, I mumble, plunging my feet into the slippers.

Junior locks his hand with mine and together we move out of the room running down the hallway.

But how did he get past Jett and Brenda?

Wait why can’t I hear any gunshots? Or any struggle at all?

“Mom sent you?”

“Yes”, Junior says still holding my hand tightly.

“Did Lincoln and the other guys come to rescue me too?”

“Yes, they are just outside. We have to hurry up, Alessandra.”

My feet come to a stop and I pull my hand away, stepping back.

“My name is Alexia and my mom doesn’t have any guard called Lincoln.”

He’s not here with my mother.

Oh God.

“Alessandra, just come with me. Everything will be easier if you come with me.”

“No!” I shout, ready to run the other way.

“Alessandra? You don’t have to get hurt just come with me and everything will be-.”

“Why are you doing this?”

“He can’t have everything. He’s not God.”

I turn around ready to run but thin sharp fingers dig into my neck.

Junior didn’t the room alone, did he?

No they were two people.

And the one choking me was deadly silent if I couldn't hear her.

Her voice hits my face, "And I won't let you get everything I've worked hard for."

Then everything goes pitch black as something hits my head.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 67

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

I had breakfast before I left home but her fucking taste was still in my tongue.

Tasty and so ravenous.

If it wasn't for the fact that I'm doing this for her, I wouldn't be here.

I'd be at home. Preferably inside her.

That can come later though.

Little nurse might be mad at me but she's still horny enough to beg me to fuck her.

A duty I take very seriously.

Nico stands by my side as every leader of the other families settles themselves in the conference chairs.

Basilio Agrusa settles himself to my left.

Ginnio La Monda, the fat fuck, settles to my right.

Allagra Pallis sits next to Domenico, albeit begrudgingly.

I had seen these people in my youth.

Back when age wasn't their kryptonite and their ambitions weren't as high as the Berj Khalifa.

I saw how my father handled them, used them like his little puppets.

I'm not beyond following my father's footsteps to keep them in line either.

“Ladies, gentlemen-.”

“Oh, cut the crap. I want my daughter, Vitello”, Allagra slams her hands on the glass rattling it.

I expected this behavior from her when I called in a meeting.

For her to lash out? Yes.

For her to do so, so soon? No.

“Allagra”, Ginnio jumps in my defense, “We understand witnessing your daughter getting cozy with umm...Christian

Vitello is a little bit hard but you know the rules.”

“He is engaged to Athena!”

“And he is clearly not interested if he laid claim on Alessandra”, Domenico comments.

Allagra almost blows steam off her ears.

“Are you listening to yourselves? You speak of my children as if they are goats being picked and dropped by this man. He cornered my daughter. She—she is blind.”

My fists tighten.

Is that the crap she’s been feeding my little nurse?

That she’s a frail blind bat that needs to be kept an eye on?

That woman might be blind but she’s got the biggest and toughest steel balls I’ve seen on a woman.

“Did you not throw a ball for anyone to claim your daughter’s hand, Allagra? For God’s sake, sit down and let’s get this over with-.”

“He will not take my daughter from me. I refuse to allow him to-.”

“It’s a good thing your daughter has free will, doesn’t she? She fucking chose me, she’s carrying my children so why don’t you sit down and shut the hell up while we get this meeting to start.”

Basilio looks between me and a fuming Allagra.

Ginnio’s jaw can be seen on the floor.

“She is pregnant, that changes everything”, Domenico says as if his words would be able to keep me from my woman.

“No, he will not get his throne if he doesn’t marry Athena, that was the deal!”

“Technically, Alessandra is a Pallis too”, I challenge.

Allagra’s face turns pale.

Pale with fear? No. She wouldn’t be Alexia’s mother if she got scared easily.

Pale with running fumes? Hell yes.

She’s about to oppose me, the other leaders are about to shoot whatever statement she comes up with down (because there’s nothing better like getting on the good graces of the next Cosa Nostra heir) when my phone buzzes in my pants.

I take it out.

The name Jett litters my screen and I don’t have to be told shit just went sideways.

Every time Jett calls nothing ever goes right. Lesson learnt from the past.

“Hello?”

“Boss”, Jett groans.

Motherfucker.

“They took her, I don’t know how they did but they took her. Brenda and I are-.”

“Were you fucking Brenda when they fucking barged in and took her?”

“Boss-.”

“Get your ass here. Now! You’ve got the footage?”

“From the backup cameras, yes.”

“Send it to me and Jett?”

“Yes, boss?”

“You and your wet dick better pray they are both alive.”

I hang up.

Everyone heard me.

Including the woman seated at the edge of this conference table gazing at me confusedly.

That puts her out of the equation.

Allagra Pallis had nothing to do with this.

Domenico and Basilio still wear the same stupid concerned faces.

And Ginnio?

“What happened?” Allagra asks, “Where’s my daughter?”

“Is the padre here?” I ask.

Nico nods at me and I tip my head at him to bring in the padre.

“What did you do to my daughter, Vitello?” Allagra stands.

Impatience leaks from my seams and I stand pulling the gun from my holster and pointing it at her.

“Sit the fuck down. Sit. Down.”

“Boy, this is not the way to earn respect”, Basilio comments and I move my gun a tad close to his head.

“I never asked for your respect, old man. Call me boy one more time and the next bullet lands between your eyes.

You are going to sit down; the padre is walking in here and doing what he has to do and then? We are all going to play a nice game of Russian roulette.

A little forewarning though, you are all sitting here with no weapons and no bodyguards to come to your rescue. I wouldn’t try anything if I were you. Not with the kind of moods I’m in.”

Nico walks in with the padre.

The one carrying a few rosarios in his hands, the purple cloth by his meaty neck an insignia that he is a holy man and the holy book he’s carrying lying to everyone that sees it that he’s as pure as the air from Antarctica.

Hypocrite.

My gun is on him next as Nico takes his out, pointing it at a dazed Allagra.

“Start the initiation, father.”

The father reads the room then he tenses.

“There...there are rules followed for generations when it comes to initiation. There’s a system-.”

“Father”, I grit, my molars grinding in my mouth to dust.

My phone dings in the other hand.

Jett has sent me the footage.

The father wipes sweat off his bald forehead chanting a few Hail Marys before he starts to stutter,

“With God as the witness and the other families, Ginnio La Monda, Domenico Albano, Basilio-.”

“Get to the last part now, Father, before I sin and smear the walls with the blood of a holy man.”

That gets him shaking.

Looking between me and the book in his hands, he decides to listen.

“Christian Vitello, do you accept to be the next head of the Cosa Nostra, taking over your father, Moretti Vitello’s legac-.”

“Yes.”

“Then by the power bestowed upon me-.”

“Get him out”, I signal to Nico.

The next minutes go on with me looking at the footage again and again.

Getting mad again and again.

Plotting how I’m going to kill them over and over.

I look up at the four pairs of eyes glaring at me like I’ve gone mad.

Maybe I am mad.

Maybe madness comes with the new title.

“Christian Vitello of the Cosa Nostra? Kinda has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it?”

“I will end you”, Allagra doesn’t coat any bullshit.

I turn to Ginnio La Monda.

“What about you, old man? Any words to the new boss?”

He chuckles. Like we are buddies discussing how vintage his house wine is.

“Your father would have wanted this to go down differently but I’m sure he is proud.”

I laugh.

“Are you proud of me, Ginnio? I might have been a kid when you visited me in my father’s basement but I remember your words clearly. Tied in chains, beaten black and blue and you were there watching me, agreeing to my father’s sick methods. You told me I was weak, that I would never take over my father’s throne because death would snag me before I did. Spoiler alert, it seems death and I have a love-hate relationship.”

“Christian-.”

“It’s boss to you.”

“Your father was teaching you a lesson. I only-.”

“Wished I could die and rot in that basement while you manipulated my father to your bidding?”

“No. No. Of course not.”

My heart churns at his fake words.

“I’d put a bullet right in your mouth and out the side of your head but it seems as though I’m in a conundrum. Your son seems to might have forgotten his place in the world and I might be the only one who can get him straight. You just had to do it, didn’t you? The thought of a Moretti and a Pallis being together gave you heartburn. All that power and none going to you? It must have hurt.”

“Christ—Boss-.”

“Call your son right now, Ginnio.”

Nico opens the conference doors, a rifle in his hand this time.

Anyone tries anything and they are dead.

The walls are soundproof. No noise out, no noise in. No bodyguards, no savior is coming to save them till I have what's mine.

I saw Junior in that footage.

Taking advantage of her, luring Alexia out of that room with his accomplice.

That tall sack of shit is going to pay though. Him and his fat fuck of a father.

"I have not spoken to my son, he-he might not be in the country-."

I tap my phone. I came here prepared.

What I didn't expect was for them to take my woman from my mansion while we were here.

"Ten million dollars sent to a cancer research center in Hungary from your bank account. A million euros transferred to your mistresses in the East Coast. Five million transferred to charity towards the kangaroos in-."

"You wouldn't!" He stands up but his phone starts to buzz in his pants and I watch as his soul leaves his body when he realizes the amount of money he's lost in a minute just by looking at said phone.

I tap my screen, "Three million from your offshore accounts transferred to-."

"Stop!"

"Make that call, Ginnio. Your money or your son."

"You should have died in that basement. I should have ensured he killed you", Ginnio blabs, his face flustered, that tie around his neck a little bit tight for him.

In the end he chooses his death.

He calls Junior.

I yank the phone from him watching it ring.

I place the phone against my ear.

"Papa. We've got her", Junior speaks. Like he's won villain of the year.

“You failed all your SATs and not for lack of trying but because the teachers declared you clinically stupid. Which is why a clinically stupid fucker wouldn’t pull such a plan on his own.

Hang up and your father dies leaving you nothing but the clothes you are wearing right now or listen up and listen up good. Your accomplice is there, isn’t she? Give her the phone.”

Junior goes silent.

Ginnio looks at me like he can breathe better knowing his money is now safe.

It takes two long minutes for me to hear heavy breaths from the other side but she doesn’t speak.

Typical.

I move around the conference table right to where a pissed off Allagra is staring.

“Here’s how this is going to play out, princess. You are going to bring what’s mine back. You know where we are, don’t you? You are going to wipe any blood on her and you are going to pray to your God that when Alexia gets here, that she and my baby are not hurt otherwise-.”

“Why would I do that?”

Bingo.

I spotted her caramel hair in that hoodie.

My mistake was letting her live.

I won’t let Athena Pallis live when I see her again.

“Funny you should ask that.”

Lowering my gun, stepping a foot back, I aim my gun and fire and Allagra Pallis falls back on the floor clutching her wounded leg that’s starting to color her white pants red.

“That’s one bullet to your mother’s leg. Enough to make her use crutches for weeks and not paralyze her. The next time I aim, your mother will be using a wheelchair for life.”

“Y-You wouldn’t...she is Alexia’s mother too, if you kill her, she will never forgive you.”

“I can live with that. But can you live with getting your own mother killed?”

My nurse can hate me but she'll still be breathing.

"Athena?" Allagra asks from the floor, shocked.

"Mom? Don't you dare hurt her, Christian! Don't you hurt my mother; she has nothing to-."

"Twenty minutes. Bring my woman back in twenty minutes or your mother is dead and I don't bluff, principessa."

I hang up.

Then I turn around and I fire my gun at Ginnio. The bullet goes through his skull and he falls to the ground with a thud.

That's for putting ideas into your son's mind that he can have what's mine.

I walk to my seat and looking at everyone, I declare, "Now we wait."

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 68

ALEXIA PALLIS.

Fear is and always will be a bitch.

To be so immobile that not a single limb in your body can move because something invisible as fear is tethering you to the spot.

That's got to be one of the worst feelings ever.

And that fear eats me up when in my drowsy feel I can hear my captors scheming.

I can hear her voice, pitchy, pissed off sounding like an echo from where I am.

The place they are holding me in feels like a basement.

You can hear the echoes.

You can hear the outside world like a foggy memory.

You can hear her five-inch stilettos tap the concrete unevenly.

Most importantly I can smell the sweat reeking off the man in front of me and the rust from whatever chair they have me tied to.

My head pounds, any thoughts of opening my eyes would result in the pain intensifying, so I sit, chained to a chair, gagged like a dog, forced to let that fear consume me.

Junior's breath skitters across my neck. I'm too out of it to shout for him to get away from me.

Get away.

Get away.

Stop touching me.

He can't hear me though.

He knows this.

He takes advantage of it.

The next thing I feel from Junior is his wet lips on my neck, dirtying me, sniffing me, licking me in a way that brings bitter bile up my throat and tears to the rim of my eyes.

He doesn't care though.

No, not even when he sneaks his hand between my thighs, caressing my skin while that fear gnaws my head.

Please don't let him go further.

Please, God, don't let him...

Please get my child and me out of here safely.

"You smell so good, Tesoro. Like jasmine and lavender."

Don't call me, Tesoro.

No one calls me Tesoro except...

Why is your father not here, baby?

Does he not know we were taken?

Is he not coming for us?

Oh God.

"We will get married soon. I will cleanse you of every impurity that brute has left on you."

"Junior!" Athena skreiches.

Her voice builds the headache that splits my head into two.

"Stay the fuck away from her. We are not done yet."

"We are not done? Athena my father and I will take your sister and no one will even know we did it.

We struck a bargain; we get rid of your sister for you and you remain the Pallis heir and the woman marrying that bastard."

"Don't call him a bastard, Christian Vitello is man enough than you will ever be. Whether you get reincarnated ten times or not. What do you plan to do to her?"

Junior's breath and the sweat coming off of him in waves disappear from reach.

His villainy laughter pilfers through the room.

"Don't tell me you are growing a conscience right now when you are the one who brought forth this idea to my father. Whatever is going to happen to your sister is none of your concern."

"What about the baby?"

My sister asks.

Like she somehow cares about me and my baby's well-being.

Sisters didn't kidnap each other because of money or power.

In K-dramas, sure.

But in real life? No.

Athena Pallis has her own special award for sister of the year. Damn her.

“What baby?”

Two words.

Two words that have my heart falling to my tummy with no clutch whatsoever.

“I did not agree to kill a baby”, Athena roars.

Junior speaks something.

I can’t decipher what.

A phone rings somewhere in the room and my mind goes back to his words.

‘What baby?’

I survived Rhett with a baby I didn’t know I had.

I can’t die now.

My baby can’t die now.

They are not going to take you away from me, baby.

I won’t let them. I will never let them.

Athena screams something about not hurting someone.

My head spirals.

My brain ticks.

“We have to take her back! Now!”

“We did not come this far to surrender to—.”

“He has our parents! This is done! Your father will be dead if we do not-.”

“He is lying.”

“You do not know him like I do. He delivers his promises.”

“Fuck, Athena!”

“My mom can’t...I can’t lose her. Untie her, w-wipe the blood...just make sure she is breathing and everything is fine with her. Junior, now!” she wails.

The next few minutes are defined with me going unconscious and gaining consciousness every few seconds.

Every time I do, I see Junior and Athena scolding each other while I lay still in the back seat of a moving car.

Then I close my eyes and darkness eats me alive.

The only thing that ticks like a bomb in my brain is protecting my baby.

My baby is going to make it.

My baby has to make it.

Otherwise, I will...die.

Because this will be my fault.

I should have never ended up in Italy. I should have never had my memories back. I should have never met my mother or become a Pallis.

Athena wouldn’t be jealous.

Junior wouldn’t have met me at that party and wanted to marry me.

The next time my eyes open, Athena and Junior are escorting me to the inside of a building, nervous and shaking more than my weak legs are.

They take the elevator, shoving me inside with them and Junior presses the biggest button out of all the buttons on the wall.

Every time that red light reads, we’ve moved up to another floor, nausea kicks in.

I want to throw up so bad but I’m afraid to.

What if I throw up blood across this shiny metallic floor?

What if I throw up and my baby...something happens to my baby?

The lift doors open, Athena and Junior step out both of them dragging me by my arms.

I hear a few men mutter 'ma'am' and 'sirs' but Athena and Junior don't stop moving.

We pass by a few glass doors and the blinding lights until we reach the glass door that looks like a glass room from outside but you can't see anything on the inside.

Athena pushes the doors and Junior and I enter along with her.

The light hurts my eyes so bad, I prefer to close them.

"Thena!" the voice of my mother yells from the floor.

"Mom? Mom! Hold on! We'll take you to the hospital. We'll get you there, nothing is going to happen."

Mom? Our mother?

"Get your hands off of her", Christian's voice, hard and vengeful washes over me like a cooling balm on a wound.

Christian? Christian's here!

"Nico?" Christian says.

A few seconds later, new warmer hands grab my shoulders and I realize Junior is not touching me anymore.

"I've got you, Lex", Nico's voice assures and the tears I've been holding fall down my cheeks in fat chunks.

"Where is my father?!" Junior's voice sounds angrier than before, scaring me whether or not I'm safe now.

The next sound that assaults my ears makes my headache triple and my heartbeat skyrocket.

A shot. The sound of a bullet getting out of the nozzle of a gun.

The sound of a bullet hitting an unprepared body.

Junior doesn't speak after that.

I don't have to be told he's been shot by Christian to know that.

"Get her up", Christian's voice booms again.

Like a vengeful monster on a murder roll.

"Lean by the wall, Lexy. I'll be right back."

Nico guides my hand to what I'm assuming is the wall before he walks away from me.

"Thena! No—No—Not my daughter! D-don't...please don't kill her...she regrets it. Thena, tell him. Tell him you regret everything!" Mom screams.

"I'm sorry, Mom", Athena's voice comes seconds later and I lean away from the wall realizing what's happening right in front of my eyes.

The eyes that I have closed since we entered here due to the lighting, will themselves open.

I open my eyes and everything comes out pitch black before the images start to form gradually.

On the other side of this large room is Christian...my...the love of my life...holding a gun...ready to shoot.

On the other side of the room, my mom is on the floor...bleeding, begging...and the woman Nico is holding straight must be...

"Athena", I mumble as I start to walk.

As I finally get to stand between the distance that separates the man I love and the sister that hates me.

My eyes well with tears as I look at my mafia don and whisper, "Christian, please don't."

Don't kill them.

Don't hurt them.

Take me out of here. Please

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 69

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV

Allagra Pallis is bleeding on the floor, smearing the tiles with more blood.

Blood that I have spilled. Blood that I will continue to spill until the ticking bomb that's my brain pounding stops.

Ginnio La Monda Junior's body lies cold on the floor.

Eyes open, bullet between that brain that wasn't going to contribute jack shit to the world.

I rid the world of an idiot today and that little information does nothing to dent my conscience. Oh, my conscience is clean as ever.

And it will be even cleaner when I pull the trigger and call this a day.

Athena stands in her fancy pantsuit, a few feet away from me.

Eyes bloodshot from sobbing, hair all over the place, blood-her mother's blood in her hands, she has accepted her fate.

And her fate is to die.

Motherfucking damn it, she should die.

Except one bystander blocks the way.

My nurse, always the bloody pacifist.

Always the savior.

Always the woman who sees the good in people.

Maybe that's where I lost my brain.

Falling for a woman whose goal is to take lives and preserve them.

And right now, she does just that.

She stands between Athena and me. No scratch that, she stands between Athena and the gun.

A gun she knows I'll fire.

Not because the bitch deserves to die.

Not because I've had enough of this nonsense.

But because of the dried blood on my woman's head, the bruises on her wrists, the tears running her cheeks.

The only good thing that came out of this, other than the La Monda bloodline going extinct, is those baby blue eyes that gaze at me.

That beg for me to spare her shit of a family.

Eyes that can see me.

"P-please", her lips wobble.

I groan a loud 'fuck' for being this weak.

Beckoning her with my gun, I grunt into the small space that reeks of bitches and blood.

"Come here."

She smiles. A smile that has no right toppling my heart but it does.

You undo me, woman and that's new.

Everything about you is new.

Alexia walks on wobbly legs as Nico stands behind her ensuring Athena doesn't hurt her.

I know who Athena Pallis is. She's the kind of psycho that needs a straitjacket and a mental hospital picking at her brain.

I've seen her type before and no sudden 'my sister has spared me from death' will make her wash her sins and turn her ways to sweet baby Jesus.

Athena gazes at me for a second before her eyes fall back to her mother and she kneels on the floor.

"I'm sorry, mom. I'm...I'm sorry."

Then the woman takes out her phone and calls someone. A doctor? A bodyguard? Who cares?

I meet my woman halfway, taking her in my arms, lifting her off the ground and kissing the top of her head because she has no idea how much the thought of her being in danger does to me.

I killed Ginnio La Monda for her.

I shot her mother for her.

I shot Junior for her.

And if she showed up crippled or God forbid, dead? My insanity would have made sure no one walked out alive not even me.

“Christian”, she sobs in my chest.

I start moving not giving a fuck what more she has to say.

I don’t let her see Allagra. I don’t think I’ll ever let her see her mother again after today.

“Clean this up. Call the guys to bring Millie home.”

“Yes, boss”, Nico replies.

My feet are already outside the room, headed to the lift and a few minutes later in my car.

She attempts to move but I hold her still.

“Don’t even try, little nurse. Don’t even fucking try.”

I drive us both with her in my arms.

I can finally breathe when her scent hogs my nostrils.

My heart, the damn organ, can finally release that tension once my woman and my child are safe in my arms.

She cries all the way home.

I don’t console her. I should. I know it was hell.

But I was in hell too when she disappeared, when she trusted Junior to get her out of my house and worse, stood between me and the gun.

What if I shot Athena without seeing her first?

She'd be dead.

My child would...

They would both be...dead!

I called in a few doctors as soon as I dropped her in her room.

Then for the next few hours, I'm shackled up in my office nursing my own demons.

It hasn't even been a month in this damn country and I'm on the verge of spiraling.

Cat was right.

This is too much.

The ironic thing is I have always been one to like a challenge. And being the Cosa Nostra heir from today on means more challenges to take on.

All I have to do is keep my woman from having the same fate me and my sister had.

I'll marry her alright.

And I'll treat my child right. He will never have to be forced to take the throne if he doesn't want to.

As for my wife, she'll be a queen and I'll worship the very ground she walks on whether she makes me mad at times or not.

The tapping of my office door from the other side earns a 'get in' from my lips as one hand cups the glass of scotch and the other hand swings the bassinet holding Millie, who's asleep.

Nico and the other guys brought her half an hour ago.

Allagra Pallis was taken to one of the hospitals she owns in Sicily and Athena was seen accompanying her.

I'm keeping my watch on the wench.

And if she tries anything, that final bullet will kill her and her mother.

She knows this so let her try. Try, Athena.

“A few bruises on her, all of them can be healed with the few ointments I left for her.”

The other doctor speaks.

“Her sight is back. I stitched the cut on her forehead and I’m pleased to say she has no concussion.”

“The baby?” I ask.

What about the baby?

“In good health, sir.” The third doctor says then I turn around facing all of them.

“That means I can fuck my wife without harming the baby, right?”

The one with the wide glasses, coughs.

Then the other doctor with a balding spot, clears his throat and says, “Yes of course, sir but I would recommend at least a week’s rest for her. She needs to keep her energy levels up.”

“Sure”, I say blandly.

The three doctors take their exits with contented faces. I’ll be wiring in a couple of thousands of dollars to their bank accounts just for tending to her for one night.

Placing my glass on the desk, I pick Millie up.

God, she’s gotten big.

“I’ve missed you, baby girl. This is the part where I say if you both ever leave me again, I might just burn the world trying to find you. Mommy can’t feed you today, but I’ve got a few bottles for you. Want to warm them up?”

She responds by lunging at my chin and trying to suck it which earns a chuckle from me.

Millie and I barely make it to the kitchen island when three pairs of eyes lock on me.

“Jesus Christ, shoot me now”, I mutter.

My sister pushes the men breathing down her neck as she runs to me with a smile and a carrot in one hand.

“Christian!”

“What are you doing here?” I glance at her and the two men tainting my kitchen.

“I’m here for Alexia after everything she went through.”

“And them? What are they doing in my house?”

Demetri grins, that awful Russian accent in his voice, “We are here for malyshka.”

Shoot me again.

“Hey, baby. Remember me?” Cat speaks in babyish noises picking Millie from me, “Yessh I am, Mills. I’m your aunt. Aunty Cat. You must be hungry. Come on let’s feed you, baby.”

Millie and Cat walk to who knows where.

Demetri the lovesick six-foot three, bulky man follows them.

I huff moving to Maximo as we both lean against the marble that encompasses the kitchen island.

“You are chopping carrots now?” I ask.

“I’d chop peppers for life just to spend time with her.”

I grunt.

“That’s my sister you are talking about.”

“Doesn’t mean I’ll stop loving her.”

I know.

“How does it work? With Demetri?”

And the fact that Cat went and got herself two men will never not piss me off.

“I hate him most of the time but he loves her, I love her and she loves both of us. That’s enough I guess.”

“Ring me up when you get tired of that Russian fuck and we’ll kill him together.”

That earns a chuckle from him.

I chuckle with him and it feels like old times.

“How’s your nurse doing?”

“Good, so I’ve heard. Haven’t seen her yet.”

“You destroyed the Five families, the ones that have been established for generations for her and you are telling me you are here getting pissed about Cat’s love life instead of seeing her.”

“Yes.”

“You’re an asshole.”

“Says the asshole who took my sister away from me.”

“And your sister came back to you, she’s here for you no matter what she says. We all are. So get your ass upstairs where you belong.”

“Don’t try anything with Cat. Not in my house for God’s sake.”

Maximo smirks, patting my shoulder.

“I promise but I can’t promise you Demetri won’t want to fuck her tonight.”

I make my way upstairs, washing my brain with bleach after Max’s words.

He was joking of course but what if he was not?

Fuck.

By the time I make it upstairs into Sunshine’s room, her body is covered by the white comforter on the bed, her little snores filling the room.

I want to wake her up and spank her for everything she just did.

But she needs rest, per the doctor’s yammering.

I’ll let her rest.

I’ll let her sleep like Sleeping Beauty and I’m her awaiting prince with the kiss.

I’m no prince though.

I’ll punish her for every little action she did when she took Junior’s hand and left the room.

I’ll deny her the very thing she wants most till she comes crawling back.

Me.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 70

ALEXIA PALLIS.

Disappointment chews me up and spits me right out.

It's been two days with me being immobile.

And with two days, I've been with Millie and she's been so fussy since she started teething.

Right now, she's asleep and I gaze outside the window, loving the fact that I can see the sunrise again, I finally have a part of me that I thought I lost forever.

But with eyes comes the disappointing part.

I see him walk to his car, get in and leave the premises.

For two days, I have only seen him through my window and that's when he's leaving the house.

Christian comes back to the house late at night when everyone is asleep.

He doesn't come to his room though.

And I've been occupying his room since he put me in it.

Technically me and Millie have been in his room.

He doesn't sleep inside here which has me worried.

Where does he sleep then? His study?

Here? When I'm asleep? But even I know that's not the case.

I've been sleeping naked in hopes that he will barge through my door at night and kiss me, fuck me, just do something that means he still sees me.

And yet, nothing.

He never spoke to me since the Athena incident.

I know he is mad.

He wanted to kill Athena, I stopped him.

And looking at it from his perspective, it seems like I chose Athena, my sister, the woman who kidnapped me and wanted to sell me to Junior, instead of him and our baby.

Because that's the truth.

I put myself and our baby in danger by standing in front of him while he held a gun.

For that, I'm sorry but it seems like he's done with me.

The only thing holding me here is our child and that makes me want to sob.

Just like old times, we are back to being strangers and I hate it.

I hate him.

The door behind me creaks open and I wipe the tears I didn't know I had on my cheeks.

"Oh girl, you can't stay cooped up in your room forever and I'm not telling you, I'm ordering you."

I turn to face Cat and then Brenda enters a minute later with a tray of breakfast.

I take a look behind my shoulder one more time, my chest tingling with emotions.

"Is he always working?" I ask.

Maybe he doesn't have time to stay in the mansion.

"Well, he's the Cosa Nostra so...", Brenda tattles before Cat slaps her shoulder lightly.

"That's it. We are going out tonight. A girls' night out for the three of us ladies."

"I don't think Jett will want me gone, there could be an eme-."

"We are going out tonight and that is final! And before you both ask me if we'll even be allowed to go, we are free women and it is a free country. Our men do not control us."

I bite my lip gazing at the woman who's so unlike her brother and chuckle, "Speak for yourself, sister. You've got two men."

I've got none.

Brenda chuckles and together we all laugh quietly.

Well, you know ‘fuck this’.

Christian barely remembers me.

I have girlfriends now who want to hang out with me.

I deserve to live.

“What about Millie?”

“I’m sure Max and Dee won’t mind”, she says.

Brenda looks at her like she’s gone crazy, “Your men love you and I get that but you give them too much credit. One’s a Bratva leader, the other is an Italian mafia enforcer. What could go wrong with a baby?”

“Well Maximo has taken care of Millie before.”

Both women stare at me with wide eyes.

“He has?”

“Yeah, when I was back in Russia. He said he liked it.”

“He did?” Cat asks amazed, “I think I love him even more.”

“So, you are all in?” she asks.

“Yes!” Brenda and I both say.

What could go wrong?

XxX

“No.”

“What do you mean no?”

“None of you are leaving, Trouble. Not in those dresses you are not.”

“Dee?”

“I’m agreeing with Maximo on this. No, malyshka.”

Cat takes my arm and interlocks it with hers. She does the same with Brenda’s.

Jett throws Brenda a glare which is funny because he looks like a mama bird holding Millie and the broccoli she's chewing.

"I don't need your permission to dress however I want and neither do I need your permission to dress however I want either."

"Trouble."

"Brenda, Lex and I are going to have fun tonight and you all are going to stay still watch Millie and bond over football, whichever you prefer but we are leaving."

By the time Maximo opens his mouth to say something, Cat drags me and Brenda out of the front door.

"That was so ballsy of you", I compliment.

"Ballsy? You haven't seen ballsy, Alexia. We are going to walk them like dogs, Lex. My brother included. You ready?"

I don't know what she means by that but yeah, I guess I am.

The downside of being pregnant was I couldn't get drunk.

Such a bummer.

The upside of things was that, Cat, God bless her, had bought some pheromones perfume from some voodoo lady who had promised her it was legit and worth it.

She sprayed it on me on our way here. Spraying just a little on Brenda and herself.

I thought it was water not gonna lie.

A thousand dollars for a supposed Arabic perfume that had pheromones sounded like a rip-off.

Spoiler alert it wasn't.

"Where have you been all my life, Bellissima?"

His chest meets my back.

He is not the only man who's been drooling over me tonight.

I'd like to say it's the cocktail dress I'm wearing but I think it's the perfume because Brenda has three men dancing around her while she giggles and shies away.

I ignore Pedro, Paulo...I think his name started with a p or ended with a p, I can't remember.

All I do is close my eyes, gaze up at the ceiling that spews neon lights on all of us wannabe dancers, finally being able to breathe.

I forget everything that has happened till here.

For once in my life. I choose happiness.

And that happiness sure coats my skin when one of GIVEON's songs thrums through the speakers, steadying me to a slow-mo dance.

Petro who's behind me dances along with me.

I can feel his heat.

Feel his breath that clearly states he wants to dance but not this way.

Maybe in bed, maybe doing a different kind of dance but I know deep down, there's no way he's going to touch me more than he has tonight.

I'm almost getting lost in that sweet limbo when someone grabs my wrist.

I open my eyes and Cat's grinning face comes into sight while she holds up a phone for me that shows 'fratello' on the screen.

My Italian is rusty but I know what Fratello means.

"No", I mouth.

Cat grins, shouting, "Whatever he says, he's not going to ruin your fun. I promise."

"I don't want to talk to him!" I shout harder over the music.

"Well he wants to talk and he sounds pissed", she giggles.

Yeah, she's drunk. Maybe high too.

I grab the phone.

Petro places his hands on my hips as he breathes near my loop earring.

Placing the phone against my ear, Christian's voice washes through the phone straight to my pussy.

"Five seconds, Alexia", he grunts.

"Hello? Who is this?"

"Five seconds to get his hands off of you or the next time you see him it will be in a casket."

"I'm sorry, I don't think I ordered sushi tonight. Hello? Hello? I think the network is unstable."

"Fuck. Are you drunk?"

How. Dare. He.

He knows I'm pregnant. Does he think I would endanger my kid like that? Our kid like that?

"Fuck you and your fucking sushi. I hate it and I hate you."

"I'm not the sushi delivery guy, Sunshine. We both know that."

"Doesn't mean you don't stink like rotting fish, you bastard!"

"Five seconds, little nurse. Act like a fucking brat but get his hands off of you."

"No and screw you, you are not my boss."

Technically he was. Is. It's kinda not clear right now.

But I hang up before he can have the last word.

Do your worst, Christian Volkov. I dare you.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 71

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

"Allagra not starting a war against you is courtesy, son. She understands Athena is at fault here but killing Ginnio and his son has dire consequences", Domenico scolds.

If it wasn't for the fact that this man hated my father and his leadership, I would have already stopped this conversation.

But Domenico is alright for a guy.

"I understand", I tell him.

Domenico straightens his suit, stands up and gives me one last glance before saying, "You are not your father but you have to put a lid on that anger, son otherwise it might just cost you everything."

"Is that a threat, old man?"

Domenico chuckles, "I wouldn't dare threaten the boss. Take care, I mean it."

If I believed in Hollywood bullshit like karma, I would heed to his advice.

I don't have to take care of myself because the world has always been fickle. The bad thrives, no matter what, the bad always thrives and the light shrinks.

I've thrived for so long that karma doesn't faze me.

But I'll do everything I can to keep the light that is in the form of a five-foot woman with sunshine blonde hair and a tummy full of my kid from shrinking.

Immediately Domenico leaves, I roll up my sleeves, working over all the contracts lining my desk.

The title doesn't come with the dirty stuff only. There's also the paperwork stuff and legal businesses that I've been drowning myself for the past few days, feeling like a shell walking every time I enter my room, linger in the corners while I watch Alexia and Millie sleep.

And my little nurse has been clever.

Like waving cheese to a mouse, she's been baiting me into doing exactly what my dick and brain want to do.

And that's to take her. Feast on her. Brand her with my hickeys.

The little minx has been sleeping naked beneath my damn covers.

I noticed it the first day. And the second. And both times were torture because all it took was to yank those covers and take my pound of flesh.

Which is why when my phone rings and Maximo utters nonsense about a girls' night out, I know for a fact Alexia Green is trying to fuck with my head.

The sad thing is? I allow her to.

I allow her to get under my skin.

I leave work just to run after her.

That's how much she has her sharp nails wrapped around my neck.

The lengths I'm willing to go for this woman makes Shakespeare's Romeo look like your average guy buying pizza to win over the girl of his dreams.

"Vitello, this place belonged to my great grandparents."

"Yet instead of renovating it back to being the greatest winery in Sicily, you converted it into a nightclub. Don't bring sentiment to the table, GianPaolo. This place means nothing to you."

"Vitello-."

"Ten million, final offer. I might be generous enough to buy your staff too."

"You can have any nightclub in Italy. You have your own nightclubs in Italy that bring in more bucks than this place of shit."

I chuckle, pushing the briefcase to his side of the glass table.

"That's one thing we agree on, Paolo. This place is a real piece of shit that should be valued at one million or less but I'm feeling a little generous tonight. I'm asking myself the same question you are asking yourself. Why this piece of shit? It barely brings enough money to build a barn but you see her?"

I point at the glass wall that acts as a barrier between us the VIPS upstairs and the common folks downstairs dancing to some upcoming Italian rapper's music over the speakers.

Gianpaolo and his Cartier shades zero in on the crowd below but my eyes are on a particular blonde having the time of her life while some bozo touches her waist.

Two days without touching her and this is the best thing she can do to rile me up.

Gotta praise her though it's working.

Jealousy feels like a fix in my veins.

Gianpaolo and his stupid glasses are also riling me up at the second.

I stand up.

I tap the glass right where my blondie is and Gianpaolo finally catches on.

“That’s my wife down there and the soon-to-be dead man dancing along with her.”

“You are doing this for her?” Gianpaolo asks with disgust.

Of course he’d be disgusted, this man has never had a magical pussy show him how good heaven feels like.

He’s never fallen in love and I can’t blame him seeing as to how no woman would settle for his weasel of a face and his junkie persona that’s known all over Italy.

“No. I’m buying myself a club so I won’t need to explain myself to the cops why I nearly killed a man and threw him out of my establishment.”

“I can kick him out.”

“No. That’d be too easy. Everyone needs to know who she belongs to and my wife needs to learn a lesson. Sign the damn documents, Gianpaolo. I don’t have all night.”

He fusses. As expectant as a man-baby who parties all night, fucks women all day and eats away his inheritance.

Taking the pen, he signs over the paper.

Like the greedy million trust fund baby he usually is, he nubs my briefcase that’s loaded with said ten million dollars before he exits the room and eventually the club.

I gaze down again.

I called my nurse ten minutes ago.

I asked nicely.

I’m done playing nice.

I take off my suit coat. I’m not ruining that expensive fabric with some punk’s blood.

I give that prick a few more seconds to feel my future wife up knowing this might be his last time he has hands.

I make my way downstairs. A few people gasp, a few chicks murmur my name in a fit of giggles, I spot my traitor of a sister nursing back shots by the bar counter and best believe I'm calling one of her boyfriends to pick her up.

My own family has become my enemy as I have come to realize.

There's Cat and bringing my wife to this club.

There's Maximo and being head over heels with my sister. And playing compadres with Demetri.

There's Jett who's too hungover with Brenda to think about anything else.

Then there's Nico and his 'I'm missing mommy' tendencies.

At this rate everyone around me is useless.

My nurse's blue eyes spot me as I walk over behind the punk touching her.

Pretty, azure, glowing, Jesus Christ those eyes.

Her pouty lips part. I've been dying to kiss them and make them swollen but she needed rest.

I needed to put distance between us so she'd crawl back to me.

Who's doing the crawling now?

"Wanna get out of here, Bellissima?" the guy asks.

My woman's eyes are on me, fear written in her pretty features.

She even wore lipstick, ladies and gentlemen.

I never get to see her in lipstick except when she's entertaining other men.

"C-Christian?" her bedroom sexy voice filters to me even with the noise flocking around us.

The prick hasn't noticed me behind him yet.

"I have heard the rumors about you and Vitello but if you are here, Bellissima, it means the arrogant bastard isn't satisfying you like how a real man should. Let me show you how a real man wrecks you from the-."

I tap his shoulder.

As soon as the ‘Bellissima-name-calling’ prick turns around, I grab his collar then spin him around so my woman is behind me and not in front of him when he collapses, my fist connects with his throat.

The prick chokes on his words.

He sputters and flails backward falling to the dance floor among the shrieks and the ‘Oh my God’s’.

Weak and definitely not a ‘real man’, he starts coughing as if that will save him from me.

I straddle him, I grab the lapels of his cheap jacket, my fist connecting with his face.

The bastard doesn’t know what hits him.

One punch, his nose starts bleeding.

Two punches, his screams cause people to scatter to the nearest exit.

Three punches and the sound of bones crashing rings my ears.

My knuckles are bloody. His face is beyond recognition and unfortunately, he passed out.

I stand up, taking my phone from my pocket as I flag the bouncers by the exit.

I dial Maximo’s number, “Pick your woman up from my club. Tell Jett to do the same.” Then I cut the call.

Two bulky bouncers show up in minutes. They don’t question me as they look at the mess on the floor and the blood on my shirt.

“Basement. Tie him up real good”, I order.

Then I turn to one of them, turning around to point at two very drunk women who are vomiting all over the floor.

“Keep them here until two guys come for them.”

“Yes, boss.”

To the blonde with the blue eyes and a mini cocktail dress, I grab her hand pulling her behind me as we make our way through the people bold enough to stay even after the blood and gore pizzazz.

I want to take two steps at a time up the damn stairs but the woman behind me not only has short legs but she is pregnant... in a fucking club.

When we make it to the VIP section, I push her in, closing the doors and pressing a button on the remote by the table that turns the translucent wall windows opaque.

No one sees us.

No one gets to witness the hell I unleash on her.

“You could have killed him”, those are the first words she says to me.

“He’s going to be dead alright. Give it a few days and he’ll be dead.”

“Christian.”

“Don’t use that tone on me, young lady. A club? A fucking club? Dancing with some rando?”

“He didn’t do anything.”

I rip my shirt at the middle and the buttons fly in different directions.

I take the shirt off. I’m not having this conversation with blood on me.

“And you know him for how many minutes exactly?”

“Does it matter? I came here to have fun and Pietro happened to be part of the fun.”

I take one step towards but there are ten more steps between us that need to be gulped down.

“You want to have fun? Then fucking call me. I’m one phone call away.”

“You’ve barely been home! You have ignored me for two days! You have shown me I only matter to you because of this baby I’m carrying! Don’t play the jealous boyfriend card because honestly, it stings.”

“Yeah?” I grit. My teeth grinding in my mouth.

“You want to know what stings, Alexia?”

“Don’t call me that.”

“What do you want me to call the woman getting on my last nerves.”

“Baby. Tesoro. Little nurse. Don’t call me Alexia because that’s the only thing feeding my delusional self that we are not drifting apart.”

Two days of pent-up sexual frustration rears its ugly head and I combust.

“You stood in front of a damn gun.”

“I know.”

“I was going to shoot.”

“I know.”

“You and Junior could have been dead.”

“Junior?” her eyes well with tears and I gaze at her tummy that’s not yet swelled up.

Vicious junior or Alexia junior could have been dead.

“Then you looked at me like you were not sure I would choose you. Like you weren’t sure I wouldn’t hurt you. Damn it, baby after everything we’ve been through-.”

“I chose you. I didn’t choose my family. I chose you, I came home with you. I stayed in that room watching you leave and come home with anxiety because I wanted you. You.”

Tears spill over her bottom lashes and run down her cheeks.

I hate seeing her cry. I don’t think it’s even good for the baby.

“You danced with another man tonight.”

Her bottom lips quivers.

“My man wasn’t giving me attention. I had to get his attention somehow.”

Look at my spitfire.

“You have my attention now, nurse and the douche you were dancing with is going to die tonight and any other man who touches you the way I do will wish he never grew a dick in the first place.”

“Okay. Is this the part where we kiss and makeup?” she asks adorably.

I grin.

“This is the part where I haul your ass over my shoulder take you home and wash every bit of skin he touched.”

I don’t have to tell her to come to me.

I'm already headed in her direction, taking her waist into my hands.

A waist carefully sculptured for me.

Her eyes level up to mine. My pregnant soon-to-be wife is upset that she's not getting some dick tonight.

I'm equally upset that I gave in too easily and spared the bastard who touched her, a pass tonight.

I'll torture him tomorrow.

"Not even one kiss?" she asks, pouting.

I wipe her tears with my thumb about to deny her that kiss.

Her scent makes me stop.

She smells better than usual.

So fucking good, my brain fogs with thoughts of turning her over and taking her bareback.

Here.

Now.

Now.

"Christian, everything okay?"

I hold her even closer, burying myself in her neck.

"This scent...you smell so good. Is it because of the babies?"

"What?"

My fingers dig her ass.

"You smell too good, Tesoro", I'm panting when the words come out of my mouth.

"One kiss and we go home."

I tell her.

"One kiss", she smiles giddily.

And I give her the kiss because my pregnant woman is driving me crazy and it ain't even our wedding night yet.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 72

ALEXIA GREEN.

The Arabic perfume worked a little too well.

“Christian?”

“One more round, Tesoro. Just one”, his gravelly voice assaults my ear before his hand wraps around my middle turning me around face down on the pillow and he slams into me again.

I moan into the pillow.

I arch my back.

The feel of him stretching me over and over keels me over and sweeps air out of my lungs.

“That’s my princess. Taking me in so well like she fucking owns me because you do, Tesoro. You own all of me.”

Jesus sweet Christ.

I clench around his length as hives break down on my skin when his huge hand lands on my back making sure I’m bent over for his devouring.

Every torturous time he pulls out after making my body release a shattering orgasm I didn’t think I would have after the fourth time in a row, he slams back hitting that spot again and I’m one beyond satisfied woman.

He slaps my ass.

His back touches mine.

Then once again he buries himself in the crook of my neck inhaling that perfume that has become like meth fueling his blood.

“I want to stitch you to my skin, Tesoro. Can’t do that even if your cunt is begging me to because it would hurt you. But I really want you to myself.”

“Mmmhmm...yes...please...”

I want to be stitched to you too forever if everyday is going to be like this.

His hands sneak beneath me while I’m bent over for every devilish thought he has in mind tonight.

It takes a minute for my nipples to feel him.

It takes a second to feel his hands gripping my breasts, taunting my sensitive buds, cording another wave of pleasure up

my spine and all the way to my throat as I mumble something sheepish.

He grows big inside me and I know very well what happens next.

What has happened at least three times in the night.

Ropes and ropes of his come fill my womb, the erotic sound of my core as he pulls out steals all the air from me.

He rides through his orgasm as my eyes dim, as sleep wraps its warm hands around my neck.

“I knew you were special the minute I laid eyes on you.”

“My little firecracker.”

Kiss.

“My obstinate little nurse.”

Kiss.

“You are branded so deep inside me, only thing left for me to do is tattoo your name on my fucking chest. That’s how much I want you to know I’m trying best to do what guys do when they are in love.”

Kiss.

“I suppose I’ll have to do normal couple stuff with you? I can deal with dates, picnics, sex every day, all night of course but for fuck’s sake I’ll not be singing, Tesoro.”

Kiss.

His rough voice sounds in my ear like a twisted symphony. My heart strums with a melody that makes my skin tingle from euphoria and happiness.

I try to move but his hands have me caged and my legs...

I open my eyes, splashing water around us.

“Christian?”

I feel his chest warm my back as I stare in front of us.

Our legs are in the water. Well, his impossibly huge legs mesh with mine in the water as bubbles fizz here and there inside the bathroom tub we are in.

Sweeping my hair from my shoulder, his lips touch my skin and I sink back to his chest like a purring cat.

“You passed out”, he says softly.

Embarrassment coats me.

“I did? I felt sleepy, I think and I-.”

“Passed out because your fifth orgasm took your breath away?”

“Don’t act so smug, you monster. You didn’t even let me take breaks before you went at it for hours.”

“Your cunt is addicting like that, sunshine. I might want you for dinner, breakfast, lunch, brunch, whatever is available for me.”

I blush and I hold on to his tattooed arms tracing the burns on his left arm.

He doesn’t push me out of the tub or away from him when I do so.

Guilt eats me and I ask, “Did it hurt a lot?”

“Not as much as it fucking hurt knowing you were with Rhett.”

“I’m sorry”, I kiss his arm. “I’m sorry for Juana too. I know you loved her like a mother and I know it’s all my-.”

“That was the past, sunshine. No use dwelling in it. We gotta accept it happened and move on. And none of it was your fault, you hear me? It was Rhett’s and he’s probably rotting in a shallow grave right now.”

“Okay.”

“What’s your favorite color?”

“You want to know my favorite color?”

“Normal boyfriends know that, don’t they?”

I chuckle, turning around to look at him only for him to give me his usual scowls.

God, he’s so handsome.

Even with some of the burns creeping on his neck and covering a small inch of his jaw, this man is so...so handsome.

“Boyfriend?”

“You are mine. I am yours. Boyfriend.”

The intensity in which he says those words.

The warmth in those brown eyes.

I move away from his chest as carefully as I can and turn around to sit on his lap in the water.

I’m well aware he’s naked and so am I but after hours of being flipped around on the bed, shyness might as well as flown out the window.

“You want to be boyfriend and girlfriend?”

His hands cage me in, pulling me towards him.

“I’ve never given a shit about labels but I know it matters to you so yes, I want to be girlfriend and boyfriend. Scratch that, I’m already calling dibs on your ring finger. Only I get to put a ring on your finger, you understand little nurse?”

“Does the same rule apply to you too?”

“I’m all yours. Baby. I can show you I’m yours right here right now.”

“No”, I giggle, my hands slapping his chest.

“I’m sore.”

“My fault. I should have taken it easy.”

“You know I don’t like easy. I like you rough and my favorite color is blue just so you know.”

“Blue like your eyes?”

“Nope. Blue like life. I associate blue with life, blue in the sea, blue in the skies.”

He grins, my stomach topples over.

“You want to know what my favorite color is?”

I chuckle.

“Yes, mafia don. What is your favorite color?”

“Well, I liked black. Black means nothing, black means sin, black is frowned upon but now I think my favorite color is blue too.”

“You’re such a copycat.”

“Only for you, baby. Only for you.”

His touch is callous. He’s a beast of a man, the tattoos only add more to that element but more than that, with me he’s completely different. A big softie. My big teddy bear.

“Me next, what’s your favorite food?”

I ask. He stops to think for a minute before his eyes turn to me, all dark and cynical.

“Apart from you? Nothing.”

“I’m being serious, Christian.”

“I’m not smiling either, baby. What’s your favorite food?”

“I am not a picky eater, I eat almost everything as you’ve come to notice since I started living with you but in my mom’s home, Tabby used to prepare this pasta dish with truffles and it was amazing. I think that’s my favorite food at the moment.”

His jaw ripples when I talk about my mother.

I know he shot her.

I know he didn’t kill her for me either.

“We’ll get pasta tomorrow with truffles. Is that good for the baby? Shit, I almost forgot to ask if tonight was good for the baby? Does anywhere hurt?”

His hand glides towards my hard tummy and my skin tingles, I almost want to sob at how caring he is when he hasn’t met our baby yet.

“I’m not hurt. I think the baby is fine.”

“You think she can hear me?”

“I don’t think so.”

“That doesn’t mean I can’t speak to her though. Hi, princess, it’s Daddy here and you are the luckiest baby girl because you get to have a gorgeous breathtaking mom and an awesome dad too. Not gonna lie, I wanna see your mom swell up with you in the next coming months. She’ll be the prettiest pregnant woman to dawn the streets of Sicily, won’t she?”

“I was fat as a whale when I was pregnant with Millie.”

“And Millie turned out to be a cute kid. Babygirl over here will be like Millie.”

“You want a girl?”

“I’ll take a mini you any day. Plus, Millie likes me. I’m good with girls.”

“I want a boy.”

“Yeah? A boy to steal you away from me?”

“No one is stealing me away from you. Not ever.”

And that ‘not ever’ makes my heart jump as if warning me that something tragic is about to happen. I don’t pay heed to that feeling though.

I’ve been in misery for so long that the thought of being happy scares me. the universe scares me but not today. Not after being with this man. No, nothing will happen.

I lean and take his lips.

The kiss is soft and intimate and travels all the way to my toes.

When I pull away resting my forehead on his, I’m almost afraid to say the next words but there’s no moving forward unless we handle this.

“I’ve got to see my mom, Christian. I know you’ll hate it but she’s still my family and I love her.”

He grunts.

He releases a strangled breath.

“Will that make you happy?”

“Yes.”

“Fuck, then we’ll visit the mother-in-law tomorrow.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 73

CHRISTIAN ‘VICIOUS’ VOLKOV.

Her pregnant, me in a hospital means I can tolerate more security.

And those security follow her into her mother’s room while I stand in the room too.

Athena Pallis sits by her mother’s bedside as Sunshine talks to her mother, crying, giggling, whispering stuff like your average mother-daughter conversations.

I know them though.

Allagra Pallis is no more a normal mother than I am the next Queen of England.

Athena Pallis is no more a normal sister than I am Tom Cruise.

I hate her family.

Mother-in-law and sister-in-law hate me even more.

Though for her sake we tolerate each other in the same room.

“I’m sorry Millie couldn’t come. She makes a fuss when she’s in hospitals.”

“I’ll see her at home”, Allagra coos.

“She’s at our home”, I interject.

Allagra glances at me like she wants to hang a noose around my neck. After all, I'm the reason her left leg is bandaged and she's currently on a hospital bed.

"You took my granddaughter?"

"I took my daughter and returned her where she's supposed to be", I fire back.

My little nurse bites her bottom lip agitated.

"She's my daughter, Millie is my granddaughter the only place they belong in, is with me."

"Yeah? Even after your psycho of a daughter tried getting rid of them? My wife and my kid stay with me."

Alexia flinches but I can see the blush that creeps to her cheeks.

Yeah, Tesoro. Get used to that name because we'll be married soon and no family is yours is going to dictate how we live or how we breathe.

"Athena didn't mean to-."

"Didn't mean to? Are you actually defending-."

"Christian, stop", Alexia interrupts.

Athena looks like Saint Mary over there while I look like the bad guy puffing and huffing at the wrong crowd.

"Mom? I'm living with Christian, me and Millie are. I love him but that doesn't mean I don't love you. We'll visit from time to time and you and Christian are going to get along because you want me to be happy. Isn't that, right?"

Her blue eyes pin me down.

If she thinks I'm going to hold hands with her family while we sing kumbaya then she's dead wrong.

"Isn't that right, Christian?" She asks again.

Damn those eyes.

"Yes."

"Mom?"

"He's not good for you."

“He has saved me countless times. He is who I chose to be my side forever and if you can’t see that, maybe you never knew me very well.”

Allagra shakes her head.

She looks at me, rolls her eyes, then she looks at Alexia.

“Fine. This is the warning I’m giving you right now, Christian Vitello. If you hurt any of my daughters, I will come at you with everything in my arsenal, I will bury you it doesn’t matter whether the whole of Italy will come for me, I will end you if you ever hurt any of us again.”

“Same goes to you.”

I say with a smile but I mean every word too.

If Athena starts her bullshit again, I will kill her and I will fuck my wife like I didn’t just end the sister she never needed in the first place.

“I have to go but the doctor told me you’ll be discharged tomorrow, I’ll come visit home sometime, I promise. You can visit too.”

And I’ll add more cameras and guards to make sure my mother-in-law doesn’t try anything funny while I’m away.

“At least let Yan work for you. He was your personal bodyguard; he knows how to handle any-.”

“She has guards to protect her”, I interrupt, “and besides Yan was incompetent in trying to stop me, don’t forget that, Allagra. Yan is an incompetent bodyguard.”

I should have killed Yan that night.

Because Allagra knows her daughter and the empathy she carries for people who don’t deserve it.

“I’ll have to fire him then-.”

“Mom-.”

“I hired him for you.”

“Fine. Yan can be my bodyguard again.”

I almost want to smash the face of the guard standing next to me. He might have noticed it too because he subtly takes three steps away from me.

“He’s right outside.”

I bet the fucker is.

A few kisses, a few I’ll see you later and Alexia is ready to go.

“Can I talk to you? Privately?” Athena stands up and asks.

“Absolutely not”, I shoot down the idea and for once since we arrived in this hospital, my woman agrees with me.

“Whatever you have to say to me, you can say it in front of them too.”

I am one proud man when she says that.

“I’m sorry. Words can’t explain how deeply sorry I am for Rhett, for Junior and everything-.”

“What do you mean for Rhett?”

Athena looks at me, sunshine looks at me. And she is not happy.

“I—I was jealous, I thought the only way to win...to win Christian back was to enlist your ex’s help...”

“Oh my God, you told Rhett to kidnap me, didn’t you?” The pieces fall into place and the mood shifts from slightly less tense to aggravatingly tense.

“I didn’t...I just paid him to get you out of the way, I didn’t know he was going to-.”

“He took Millie and me! He beat me, have you ever been beaten to the point that your ears ring and your mind shuts down lying to you that you are in a happy place and not in a horrific place where a man is threatening to kill you and your child? Have you ever been hit to the point of all the blood vessels in your eyes ruptured and you lost your eyesight for weeks? Because that’s what he did, little sister. That’s what he did. He—he...”

My feet are already guiding me to Alexia and I wrap my hand around her shoulders.

“He raped me, Athena. Again, and I couldn’t—I couldn’t...and then you wanted to give me to Junior like I was a piece of furniture you had grown weary of. Do you know what that feels like? Don’t fucking tell me sorry because I don’t want it. I can’t...can’t accept you as my family.”

“I’m admitting myself to a psychiatric hospital. I realize I’m not well, I have dark thoughts that—I will work on-.”

“You are not just ‘not well’, Athena. You are mentally ill and Dad would be ashamed of the person you’ve become.”

“Alessandra”, their mother intervenes but my little nurse struggles from my hold and storms out of the room.

I turn to Athena.

“This is her saying she is cutting you off so don’t even think about stepping a foot in my mansion or stepping a foot near her.”

“I never meant to hurt her. I was-.”

“You hurt her, Athena. Bottom line is you hurt her and I pray for my sanity that you are going to the madhouse to get yourself analyzed otherwise any shit you pull against me and her will end with you dead this time around.”

“A-and you think you won’t hurt her?”

I chuckle.

I would never hurt Alexia again. Not this lifetime at least. Not ever.

“I don’t just think it, Athena. I know it.”

I step out.

Alexia is by the wall sobbing and the guards are standing a few feet from her like the men in black.

And then there’s Yan. Also present.

“Sunshine-.”

“Don’t touch me! You knew! You knew she was involved with Rhett and you didn’t tell me!”

“You have to calm down, Alexia. The baby-.”

“The baby is fine! Answer my goddamn question!”

“I knew.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“For this exact reason.”

And the mere fact that Athena was a bitch who didn't deserve your tears.

"I thought we had no more secrets."

"We don't. We won't. I don't have any secrets I'm keeping from you right now."

I hold her cheek, wiping her tears.

"Don't...touch...me", she whispers closing her eyes but she's not pulling away from my hand.

Pregnant Alexia likes me by her side.

She yearns for me and my heart swells because it might be her and the baby that want me around.

"Do you want pasta? Mmm? With truffles?"

"Don't bribe me with food."

"Not bribing you, baby. Keeping you happy."

"I want cupcakes too."

"Anything for you."

"Christian?"

"Yes, baby?"

"You keep secrets from me again and I will leave you."

"No secrets."

She stuffs her face with pasta, talking about how this one is good without even the truffles.

I'd tell her it's spaghetti a la carbonara but I watch her gobble down the entire food on her plate, giving her mine too to feed from.

I'm enamored.

I've got the hots for this woman so bad, I'll buy her this restaurant too just to watch her eat across me with no inhibitions.

My phone buzzes in my pants and I pull it out reading the text Maximo just sent.

Maximo: We gotta get back to Chicago. Troy Sullivan is acting up again.

I will castrate Troy Sullivan, my-fucking-self.

Me: Thought you handled Troy yourself. Jagger said you handled him yourself a while back.

Maximo: Yeah, I did but the prick doesn't know when to quit. He killed a cop, Volkov. Same cops I told him not to touch.

Damn it.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 74

ALEXIA PALLIS.

"So this waiter comes up to us and he asks what can I get you and your brothers?"

Kat laughs, happy tears shining in her eyes.

"Noo. Then what do you say?" I ask, the man seated next to me digging his fingers into my thigh under the table.

"I can't say anything because Dee is already standing up from his seat", Cat explains, Demetri grins beside her.

Maximo huffs, sipping the wine like the most disgusting thing he's had in a while.

"Always the dramatic one", Max says.

"So Dee grabs the waiter by the collar and asks him, does this ugly motherfucker look like my brother? Maximo, offended also stands up and the waiter looks like he's about to piss himself...no correction they intimidated him and made him pee on himself", Kat chuckles then she bubbles with pig-like snorts that have both men seated beside her grinning with pride.

"I would have wanted his nose broken for calling me your brother, trouble", Maximo corrects.

I don't have to be a genius to figure out their hands are lost somewhere beneath the table on her thighs too but for my sake and my grumpy don's sake I pretend I don't know that tidbit of information.

"He didn't know we were together."

"No one is calling you our sister in front of our fucking face", Dee warns lunging for her cheek to land a kiss.

"Hey, hey, no cussing in front of the baby and you are in my house, so keep your hands to yourself", Christian warns and I hold his hand, stopping him from ruining a perfect dinner among friends.

"Behave", I whisper.

"I am behaving."

He doesn't whisper that part.

"You call that behaving, you've been ruining the dinner since the stories started", Brenda who's seated next to Demetri together with Jett, points at Christian with a fistful fork of salad.

"It'd be best to remember the hand that pays your salary."

"Oh please, I'm not the only one who sees it", Brenda pokes the bear again and everyone agrees.

I chuckle lightly.

"You said dinner, we are having dinner. Why is everyone ganging up on me?"

He asks the question with sheer authority that sounds brittle but the dumbfounded look on his face is cute. Especially and most especially when his hand hasn't left my right thigh since we sat down.

"Because you're a spoilsport. I don't think the concept of fun has ever been in your system", Kat jumps in.

"I can be fun", Christian defends himself and everyone chuckles even Maximo.

"I am fun. Sunshine, tell them."

Oh, baby.

"Well, he umm...he is fun when he wants to be. He once told me a joke."

Right before he cornered me in the ladies' washroom, intentionally.

Demetri scoffs," Volkov and jokes? Pfft, I'll believe it when I see it."

"Wanna tell them?" I ask.

Christian scowls.

"No."

"For me?"

"No."

"For Millie?"

I flutter my lashes at him then gaze at Millie who's chewing her salmon while seated in her baby seat at the edge of the table.

"Don't bring Millie into this."

"Out with it, Volkov", Maximo says, startling all of us.

Huffing like this dinner has been exhausting him, which I know it has and he's only being calm because I'm here, Christian asks, "Did you know diarrhea is hereditary?"

"No, I did not", Brenda quips, her face smug.

"Why is this diarrhea hereditary?" Demetri asks in his Russian accent which makes it even funnier.

"Because it runs in your jeans", Christian finishes and the whole table bursts into laughter even Jett who's been looking pissed since the club thing with Brenda a few days ago.

"I'm sorry...what?" Kat asks.

I chuckle slightly.

"That is the most ridiculous joke I've ever heard. Where did you...where would you hear a joke like that?"

"Google."

"You googled the joke?" I ask.

My heart flutters.

“For you. Yes.”

And that is enough for me to take his lips despite the audience we have.

It’s not like I’m the only one who wants this dinner to end and we can skip to dessert and yeah by dessert I mean sex alright.

“We are going to Chicago tomorrow.”

Maximo speaks, breaking the mood in half.

I pry my lips from Christian, looking him in the eye.

“We are going back to Chicago?”

“No. Just me and Maximo.”

He washed the dishes.

I whined about Chicago.

I said I wanted to go.

He ignored my pleas.

I used fake tears, used threats but Christian Volkov is a hard nut to crack when it comes to protecting what is his.

After the goodnights, he brought me and Millie upstairs, took Millie to the adjoining room-her bedroom before he came back to our bedroom and fucked me senseless.

I might dislike him at the moment but I don’t think I’m ever getting over how good it feels to hold onto his shoulders while he rams into me, how good it feels to hear him groan and call me his over and over, how good it feels to be carried in his arms after sex and being cleaned tenderly like the most precious thing he owns.

Right now, his hand massages my tummy like he has been doing for days while his lips kiss my shoulder.

“Are you still mad?”

“That you don’t want me to sleep? Yes.”

“No, about the Chicago thing.”

He's so oblivious I almost want to kick him out of bed.

"Baby, I need you and Junior safe. Chicago is not safe."

"But Dante is dead, it was in the news."

It was in the news. Something about Dante being burnt beyond recognition. Personally, I wouldn't want that for anyone but I met the guy in Russia once and he looked and was an absolute dick for trying to kill me and Volkov with poisoned wine.

"Dante is not the only man in the world who wants me dead and by extension wants you dead too."

"We are safe wherever you are."

"Not in Chicago, no. I'll be gone for a few days. A simple in and out operation and I'll be back before you know it. I wanted to tell you about it tonight but Maximo and his big mouth blabbered it all."

"How many days? I don't want you saying 'a few' because a few days can turn into weeks or months. Give me an exact date so I'll wait for you and prepare myself for your arrival."

"Three days."

Three torturous days.

He kisses my shoulder, the action making my back lean into his chest more.

I sleep naked most of the time. Because that's how comfortable I am with him.

"How are you going to prepare yourself exactly?"

"I'm not giving any details but it might include something having to do with sexy lingerie."

"Christ, can't wait to see that."

"You can stay and I'll wear lingerie for you tomorrow."

"Baby."

"You are still going to Chicago, aren't you?"

"I have to. Can I get a taste of-."

"No and goodnight Mr. Vitello Volkov."

He doesn't fight but I can feel his erection poking my ass and I want it bad.

I blame it on the hormones.

"Goodnight, sunshine."

But he shuts it down too quickly.

He's been gone two days and I miss him terribly.

His grumpiness.

His possessiveness.

Gah, I even miss the words 'sunshine' and 'little nurse' like hell.

Which is why as soon as I drag my feet downstairs cradling Millie in my arms and my phone pressing against the back pockets of my shorts, I don't blame Brenda and Kat for acting weird.

I've been a bit sluggish.

"How uh how was your morning?" Kat asks, standing stiffly as a board by the fridge.

"Great, I barely slept a wink but it was great. I don't see Demetri anywhere. Did he leave too?"

"No. He has something to take care of...you know women—I mean work."

Her chuckle makes me raise a brow.

"What are you hiding behind you?"

"Nothing."

"It's clearly something if you are nervous and Brenda is pretending to eat raisins."

I look at Brenda then at Kat before she pulls out some sort of magazine from behind her.

She pushes the magazine on the counter towards me and I pick it up with one hand, the other hand holding Millie in place.

'CHRISTIAN VITELLO VOLKOV'S NEW FLING?'

...Amidst rumors of him being involved in the mafia and some might dare say the leader of the said mafia. Christian Vitello Volkov was seen tonight getting cozy with Jefferson Miller's daughter, the same Miss Universe from last year's...

blah blah blah...dating....blah blah couple of the year...

I try to remain calm.

Last night, he texted saying he missed me and Millie. He hasn't texted me today. I checked.

But he was on a date last night?

A date with a freaking Miss Universe?

I take my phone out and I text the only number that has a heart in it.

My heart to be exact.

Me: Can't wait to see you tomorrow.

Don *heart emoji*: Got a bit delayed, sunshine. Might not make it tomorrow.

Oh. Ooh.

Me: Because you are too busy entertaining Miss Universe?

I send the message and I switch my phone off.

Those pictures were hella cozy.

And that woman was...she looked like the carbon copy of 'if young Salma Hayek had young Brad Pitt's baby'.

And let's be honest here, young Salma Hayek was a bombshell back in the day.

And a young Brad Pitt was hottter than jalapeno poppers.

Damn him. Her and her pretty hair.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 75

CHRISTIAN 'VICIOUS' VOLKOV.

“Nah man, I was doing this for you. For us, man! With you gone, someone needed to step up, show all these

motherfuckers that whatever Vic started still goes strong. Come on, Vic, while you’ve been off prancing around the Eiffel Tower, business’ been booming.”

I’d correct him that the Eiffel Tower is in France not Italy but what’s the use of teaching a dead man some fucking geography?

“Shut up.”

Maximo grabs him by the collar.

The wind whistles around us as the cicadas chirp inciting every bit of brutishness I feel towards the man kneeling on the ground in front of an already dug grave.

Troy Sullivan did this to himself.

Funny thing is he still sees us as business partners.

In his warped mind he still thinks he’s walking out of this alive.

“An ex-army seal, a good cop, never gave an undeserving ticket, never took bribes from any of the shitty men that run illegal operations in Chicago, went to church every Sunday, hell he probably told the pastor to bless his three girls.

Three girls, Troy! The cop you killed had three girls, that cop you killed lost his wife to breast cancer two years ago. He was those three girls’ fucking breadwinner and they have no one right now.”

“He sniffed around where he shouldn’t.”

Troy says not in the least bit remorseful.

I kill. I have always killed.

But even with a name like mine and a mobster lineage following you for generations, a man has gotta draw a line in the sand somewhere.

Killing good people is where I draw the line.

I don’t kill to kill. I kill people who deserve it and that cop sure as hell did not deserve a bullet to the chest.

“He pulled you over for speeding. You think I’m not up to date? You think I’m not well aware of that trigger happy finger you have against cops? You drove past the limit; he pulled you over and you shot him dead cold in the chest. Traffic cams have that on tape.”

Troy chuckles, Maximo doesn’t release him.

“Yet I’m a walking free man. See you understand me, Vic. I get that the cop was an inconvenience to operations but-.”

The more words he spews the more aggravated I get.

It took almost a day to hunt him down.

A day from my woman and our children.

I’m on edge. I’m even sick from not seeing her or being with her all because of this piece of shit.

Maximo doesn’t need any words from me.

He pulls his clip, aims his gun at Troy shooting the man in an instant.

Troy’s body falls limp into the grave.

Jude starts shoveling back the sand into the grave and I walk away into the night, exhausted as fuck.

My little nurse might be asleep at the moment. The thought of even calling her when my moods are awry pangs at my throat.

I can’t speak to her. not when my demons lurk close. Not when guilt eats my conscience.

A dead good cop.

Three orphaned girls who I’m going to make sure they get adopted by a family who’ll do right by them.

Then there’s Troy. A man I should have put down a long ago. He was unhinged. He had it coming. He had it coming.

The weight of it all feels like an anvil crushing me and it doesn’t stop.

Not when Jefferson Miller’s, name Chicago PD’s chief; flocks my screen.

I pick it up.

He mumbles a location and twenty minutes later I'm seated in a café that reminds me of the woman I left home.

Did she eat well? I told Brenda to get a few pastries, not too much sugar for the baby, but too much sugar to calm the sweet tooth Alexia has.

"I've looked for evidence to put you behind bars once and for all. And I should pin this on you, I should pin this murder on you."

"I know."

Jefferson gazes at his cup of black coffee, swirling his finger against the rim of his cup before he looks up to me.

White silver hair, age finally catching up to him judging from the small warts and the wrinkles on his sagging skin, Jefferson Miller looks like he's seventy instead of sixty.

"He was a good man. I went to his daughter's quinceanera. I watched him spiral after his wife's death. I was going to lay the badge so that he could take over."

I don't say anything to that.

I have no words to say to that honestly.

"You're a slick fucker but you don't...you've never put down anyone who didn't deserve it. Troy Sullivan did this. One of your men-."

"Not anymore."

"He's dead?" Jefferson asks, not in the least bit surprised.

"The cop's death was placed as a hit and run accident. I have footage from the jam cams and I know you do too, why didn't you arrest Troy?"

"He didn't deserve to breathe. If you weren't involved in this, I knew you'd take him out."

Of course. Jefferson isn't exactly a good cop but he wouldn't taint his hands with someone's blood either.

"Troy Sullivan will not be a problem anymore. I promise."

I'm about to call this a night.

Hop on my plane fly back to my favorite place-mine and Alexia's bed but it's never too easy with cops.

“I brought in Troy’s minions for questioning and they squeaked quite a lot about you.”

“You brought me here to arrest me?”

“Put cuffs on the King of Sicily? I’m not dumb but the evidence I have about you is invaluable not only to Chicago but to-.”

“What do you want?”

He takes his sip of the coffee.

I haven’t taken a sip of mine since we got here.

“My daughter’s in town-.”

“I’m not fucking your daughter.”

“I wouldn’t want you as a son-in-law either, Volkov but a little quid pro quo tonight won’t hurt. My daughter is right across the street.”

I look past the glass of the small café we are in, gazing at the Brazilian cuisine restaurant opposite us.

“She got dumped tonight. I know that because I paid her boyfriend to dump her to see if he was serious about her. He left a few minutes ago, leaving her alone to nurse the heartbreak.”

And I thought my father was cruel.

“Where do I get into this?”

I’m not fucking nor touching his daughter.

“She blames herself. Probably tells herself there’s something wrong with her. Assure her there’s nothing wrong with her.”

I didn’t even know he had a daughter.

“I have a woman.”

Pregnant. Pretty. Waiting for me.

“Christ, I’m not telling you to marry my daughter, Volkov.

XxX

Brunette, one brown eye and another blue eye, small frame, perfect bone structure, Jefferson Miller's daughter doesn't look nearly as ugly as him.

Quite frankly, I'm thankful on her behalf she took after her mother's features and not her father's.

Other than that, there's nothing interesting about the woman seated in front of me.

She smiles nervously, apologizing every ten seconds as she dabs at her running mascara.

"Your father forced me to be here. I'm not going to lie and pretend I'm thrilled being here either but if I'm going to watch you sob, I owe you the truth. That scumbag you are crying for doesn't deserve you. Matter of fact, I don't think he was meant for you in the first place but this is good. Some people are meant to leave our lives so others can step in and show you being you matters and the rest of the world can go fuck itself."

She sobs again.

"S-sorry, sorry...these tears aren't for Jason, I promise. I think I already knew he didn't love me, he was in love with the idea of me. Dating a model is all the hype these days and I'm not just that...you know? I'm more than my body."

Another dab at her eyes.

Another swell of pity dwelling her features.

"Jason sounds like a prick", I say.

She laughs.

"Yeah he was. Four years and not even a ring on my finger let alone a declaration of love."

My ears perk.

"How long does one have to wait before you propose?"

"Ooh, I umm...depends on the relationship? You want to propose to your girlfriend?"

That term girlfriend pisses me off.

"She's my wife but she doesn't know it yet. Putting a ring on her finger makes it official at least for her. I'm content either way."

"Well your girl—your wife seems like a lucky woman, Christian and the way you talk about her, I think you should go for it. Marry her."

I will.

“And you? Where do you go from Jason?”

“I don’t know...I really don’t.”

“I’ve got a friend. Kai Davenport, you’ve heard of him. You two would look together, Jessica.”

“Are you setting me up with your friend on our ‘non-date’?”

“He’s at least better than Jason, I can guarantee that.”

And he’s a single and lonely bastard burying himself in work every chance he gets.

“Can’t wait to meet him. I think I’m done moping around. Thank you and I’ll be sure to thank my father.”

“Anytime. You ready to go?”

Escorting Jessica Miller to her car isn’t the easiest feat, especially when the paparazzi pounce on us like a hound of dogs with a juicy bone.

Haven’t slept a wink since I started mobilizing Guepos and Troy’s minions.

Troy’s sister, Glynn put herself first in taking over Troy’s spot. She hated him. I didn’t know why. And I didn’t want to prod further.

The problem of putting a woman in charge is that there’s always going to be a bunch of sexists causing trouble.

Sexists who’ve been driving me bonkers. I might be in Chicago for a while and as soon as I tell the blondie, I watch the three dots on my screen dance around.

Sunshine: Because you are too busy entertaining Miss Universe?

What?

Me: You’re going to have to be more specific. Miss Universe?

She doesn’t text back.

I wait.

Ten minutes later, I call her.

She doesn't pick up. Goes straight to voicemail.

I call the only person available in my mansion. At least who's loyal enough to do my bidding.

"My wife, where is she right now?"

"Just a minute. Found her. She's in the garden." Jett speaks. I release a sigh of relief.

"Alone? With no phone?"

"With Yan and I can see her phone in her pocket."

Yan. Of course, Yan is there.

Her phone might be off.

"I want to speak to her, Jett. Get your phone to her."

Jett cuts the call and when my phone rings again, I expect to hear my little nurse's voice, only to be met with Jett's voice again.

"She says she doesn't want to speak with you, boss."

What the actual...

"Is she there?"

"Yes."

"Give her the phone."

"Boss, still the same answer."

I cut the call. Peeved at best.

Guess I'm taking the first flight home.

And I'm skinning Yan for whatever shit he said to make my woman mad at me.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

ALEXIA PALLIS.

I did some shopping. Then I checked my texts. No other texts from him since I last texted.

Brenda bribed me with some sugar in the form of cupcakes to cheer me up. Then I checked my phone again. Nothing.

We watched some trashy reality show. I still peeked at my phone. And nothing from him.

Part of me was upset.

The other part of me that loved Christian Volkov was worried.

Had something happened to him?

Or was he with...no. I wasn't going there.

By the time me and Millie hit the hay, it was hard catching sleep.

I contemplated calling him but he hadn't called me back since he tried to speak to me yesterday through Jett's phone.

Jealousy and anxiety ate their way up my spine.

I must have fallen asleep for some time because the next minute I come to; I don't have to be told Christian is in the room with me.

His naked chest hugs my back. His smell overpowers everything including the hard pounding in my chest.

Then his kisses land on my shoulder and even in the dark, I try to pull away only for the hand on top of my tummy to hold me in place.

"Jetlagged, having taken the first flight home, almost fired my driver twice and this is the welcome I get, Tesoro?"

I don't speak.

I could pretend to be sleeping but he knows I'm awake so I give him my back because he owes me a goddamn explanation.

"I was promised lingerie when I came back? Baby, you are not only not wearing lingerie but also fully clothed in our bed. Since when do you sleep with clothes?"

Since you stopped answering my texts.

I don't speak. The second time for the night.

"You are allowed to be fucking mad, you are allowed to give me the cold shoulder because you are the only woman who would do that and it would affect me but you've gotta understand I got myself into a situation back in Chicago."

Now I turn and my eyes are burning with jealousy and a few tears as I face him. I won't cry though. No pregnancy hormones are going to make me cry for a man.

"Question. If I went on a date with a man because of a 'situation', would you be mad?"

We are in the dark sure but I can trace every feature of his because I have it memorized in my heart, in my system, in my mind.

I can see those dark eyes linger on me and the fact that he has not removed his hand on my tummy makes talking to him harder.

"Is the man me?"

You wish.

"No."

"Then I'd kill the man on the spot while you watched."

"Good, then you got my answer. You went on a date with another woman while I was stuck here pining for you to come back home to me. I'm not a killer per se but I sure as hell wanted that woman to disappear from beside you in that damn magazine. Just why...why would you do that?"

"Ask me."

"That's all you have to say to me?"

"Ask me about everything I did in Chicago and I'll tell you everything. No secrets remember?"

"Did you kiss her?"

"The only lips I hunger for are yours."

Stop.

"Did you sleep with her?"

"She's not my type."

I gasp, he rubs his smooth hand on my tummy like he isn't breaking me to pieces.

"What's your type? What if she was your type?"

"Impossible."

"My type's a stubborn blondie I know who's pregnant with my kid, the only woman I'll let touch me when I'm hurt, the only woman who has me riding economy class so that I can get here on time and grovel if that means she forgives me for any type of shit I've done to her. Her name's Alessandra by the way but that fucking name is a mouthful, I'd rather call her mine. She has an ant-shaped birthmark at the base of her spine too."

"No, I don't."

"I've held you in ways no man has, believe me, I know all the birthmarks peppering my little nurse's skin."

His hand lands on my cheek and I'm too afraid to lean into it.

His reassuring words should be enough but the same way he's pissed when a man is close to me is the same way I'm pissed when some woman gets close to him.

Looking into his eyes, at least I think it's his eyes, I ask, "What happened in Chicago?"

"A good cop I died. His life cut short by one of my men. In return I had to end the life of said man for what he did. I'm no god but the bastard had it coming for all his sins. The chief of Chicago PD threatened to put me behind bars if I didn't go on a date with his heartbroken and sullen daughter. I should have said no to the date, sunshine. I get that but that would have meant Jefferson getting on my ass and my stay in Chicago being longer than I promised. I didn't kiss her, didn't fuck her, wouldn't even dream of touching the girl. I talked about you though."

"About me?"

"Do you want to marry me?"

He says those words so casually they almost sound like a mere 'do you like cookies' but when the words finally hit me, really hit me, I almost choke on saliva.

His steady breathing licks my skin like wildfire.

Then like a Machiavellian with no limit when it comes to wrecking me over and over, he speaks, "I wanted to buy you a ring so I asked for the biggest stone they have and apparently they needed to fit you for the ring itself?"

"Christian..."

“I’m not one for such formalities but you’d look too fucking good with my ring on.”

“Christian. It’s too...soon.”

That has him stopping altogether.

The warmth from his hands disappears.

“What do you mean too soon?”

I love you.

I haven’t told you that yet.

You haven’t told me that yet.

“Nothing. Let’s put everything behind us...”

“It’s cute you think I’m putting you leaving my ass high and dry behind us. Why do you not want to get married?”

“It’s not your thing?”

“Try again, sweetheart and it better be the truth this time or we take all those clothes off and I spank the answer out of you.”

“No spanking. Please.”

“Sunshine.”

“You have not confessed.”

“Confessed to what?”

I gulp the nervousness choking my throat.

At the risk of sounding like a cliched Hallmark TV damsel, I whisper into the night, “We’ve not confessed to loving each other.”

He laughs.

A full-blown chuckle that timbres all the way from his tummy up his chest and with an extra flair to mock me.

“I don’t need words to show you I love you, sunshine. I fuck you like it’s my last time to do so, I kiss you like a teenage boy discovering how good a female’s lips taste like, I crave for your pussy like a-.”

My hand covers his mouth and he licks the back of it like a freak.

“I could go on and on about you if that’s enough to say I love you and if it’s not I love you, Alessandra Pallis Volkov.”

“I love you too, don.”

“Will you marry me?”

“Not now, no. In the future maybe.”

He only kisses my palm like my words are a fleeting whisper because he has the upper hand.

His hand travels to my back, pulling me to him till my boobs are smudged to his chest.

“How about I show my future wife how badly I missed not hearing her voice?”

THREE MONTHS PREGNANT

“Turn around.”

He orders and I don’t hide the giggle that bursts from me or the blush that creeps to my cheeks.

I turn around.

I’m sure I’m red and I’m sure I don’t even mind as my man gazes down at me admiring my ass with no shame.

I try to turn back to face him but his voice pins me down.

“Did I say you could turn around?” he asks.

My knees shake.

My feet feel like they’ll give out and he knows that.

He knows how horny I grow when he orders me around.

“I have to try the other dresses.”

“I like this one better. It brings out your ass more. And the cut out of the front part shows your bump in a sexy way.”

I turn around. The saleslady standing next to the L couch gives me a fake smile because she’s kind of embarrassed to have to stand there and listen to Christian gawk over all the dresses I try on.

“You said that about the other dresses too.”

“Baby, you make everything in this store look good.”

No I don’t.

“I look like a pregnant whale and I’m not even due yet.”

Christian’s eyes hold me on the spot, hypnotizing me and sending goosebumps all over my skin.

It doesn’t help that he’s in his usual dark suits that show a bit of that chest I like licking now and then.

He’s fit. He’s muscular. The dark hair falling on his forehead makes him look every bit of menacing and scary. But in a hot way.

I look like I jumped in a vat of donuts and decided to eat my way out.

Standing from the couch, he eyes the saleslady, uttering something in Italian.

“Dacci un’ora.”

At least that’s what I hear before the saleslady bows at me and walks out of the shop that has me and Christian in it.

The distance between us vanishes in an instant as his height towers over me completely.

I haven’t been wearing heels lately. Which means he’s been towering over me, eating my height into two at home and at work when I go to visit him and I end up begging him to fuck me in his office.

“What did we say about making fun of your body?”

“That I shouldn’t do that.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m the prettiest pregnant woman to walk the earth. Whether I have stretch marks or not.”

“And?”

“Whether I weigh look like a baby hippo, it won’t matter because I’ll be your baby hippo.”

“Damn right you are. Fucking sexy is what you are.”

The seductive way his deep voice feathers across my forehead has me squirming.

“Christian?”

“Mmmh?”

“We have to go home.”

“We are not yet done shopping for your clothes.”

“I don’t think I can stay another minute like this.”

“Like what?”

“Like I want to jump your bones.”

He smiles, then he leans in to kiss me leaving me breathless.

“Lucky for us, I own the store.”

“You bought it?” I ask puzzled.

“I buy everything you like, Tesoro.”

FOUR MONTHS PREGNANT

“Baby? Baby?”

I poke his chin and he doesn’t wake up because he sleeps like a log.

My hand skims over his chest, skimming over those carefully sculpted abs that feel like he’s been going to the gyms since his baby gums popped out his first milk teeth.

I feel like peeing most of the time.

But more than that?

I crave this man like a drug I can't get enough of.

My hand lingers on the waistband of his shorts contemplating whether to dive in or not.

I have come to terms that he is no saint so when he comes home looking like he's fighting demons inside of him, I let him be with me.

Because being with me is the only way he remembers that he is alive and that the reality is he has me and our baby and Millie.

And when those demons mess with his head, he mostly doesn't speak. No, he makes love to me like I'm the only one who can exorcise those demons he's fighting.

Afterward, he carries me to the tub and washes me, making sure I'm clean and that he doesn't hurt me in any way.

Tonight, he was rough.

I'd never tell him that because secretly I like rough and I like that I'm the only one he can come to when he's feeling like that.

I decide to sneak my hand into his shorts only to be stopped by his rough and sleepy voice.

"You are supposed to be asleep, tesoro."

"I should but I-."

"Is it your feet?"

They are not swollen per se but God knows last night while I was reading seated on his lap, my feet throbbed.

"No. I'm hungry."

"God, of course you are", he makes it sound like he's used to it by now.

"Pasta? Chicken? Rice?"

"Ice cream."

"Ice cream in the middle of the night? That doesn't sound healthy, baby."

"You've been denying me ice cream and giving me healthy yogurt every time I ask for it. Now I want it and I want it bad."

"I don't think there's any ice cream in the fridge though."

“Christian please. The baby needs it.”

Because that’s what gets him to cooperate. Every time.

“You sure?”

“Mmhmm.”

He kisses my forehead before he groggily gets out of bed taking his car keys and I know very well he won’t wake Jett up or God forbid, Yan.

He’ll go to the store himself to get me that tub of ice cream.

FOUR AND A HALF MONTHS PREGNANT

The Cosa Nostra heir, as much as all of Italy knows who he is, in order to appease the cops and any legal authority; he has to act like any normal businessman in the aristocratic society we live in.

For that to happen, he has to throw charity galas.

This week’s charity gala is for abused woman trying to get back on their feet.

I know Christian threw it for me even though he didn’t say it.

And I feel damn well when the men in the party who would rather marry off their daughters to brutes than make them heirs, invest their dollars in a cause like this without knowing they are helping those same abused women in their households.

I glance at Christian from across the room.

He looks like he’s busy listening in on whatever those old geezers have to say but in reality, I know he’s thinking about me and how he’ll tear off this dress on me and rub my tummy afterward while speaking to our daughter. Or son.

I raise my glass of mango juice and he gives me a smile.

A smile that sweeps the ground from my feet as happy tears brim into my eyes.

As soon as those tears flock to my eyes, Christian Volkov comes to me in a rush.

It doesn’t matter the kind of audience we have.

It doesn’t matter these men who probably view women like us as weaknesses.

My man doesn’t treat me like a weakness.

He-he loves me.

“Where does it hurt?”

That’s the first thing he asks me.

I look at him and say words I never thought I would say to anyone.

“Marry me.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 77

ALEXIA PALLIS

It is said that a woman is most nervous on her wedding day.

It doesn’t matter whether she has beef with one of her bridesmaids.

It doesn’t matter whether that cousin of the family she hated was going to be part of the congregation wishing her a happy marriage.

It doesn’t matter whether your groom and your family hate each other.

I didn’t have beef with any of my bridesmaids.

I don’t think I have met all my cousins to know which one to hate.

Mom is going to walk me down the aisle and I know she still hates Christian after months of trying to get to like each other.

But all that doesn’t matter.

What matters is this...my wedding.

My wedding?

And those two words work in my brain sending all sort of weird nerves in all parts of my body.

I’m excited.

More than that, I’m nervous.

Which should be okay, the article I read about ‘How not to have cold feet’ said it would feel like this.

To want to throw up but to want to grin so hard your cheeks hurt.

My blue eyes gaze at me from the mirror.

Gleaning, mellow, brighter.

I have never seen myself glow like this.

My bridesmaids tell me it’s the ‘pregnancy glow’.

I call it the ‘being in love and everything turning in your favor’ glow.

My eyelids are dusted with a light brown shade.

I’m almost unrecognizable.

My cheeks are painted with a red blush that accentuates the high cheekbones I didn’t think I still had due to the pregnancy fat occupying most parts of my face.

Pink shiny lipstick coats my lips and my blonde hair falls straight to my shoulders.

I almost want to cry when my eyes linger on the overflowing white wedding dress that hides my legs.

The dress that coupled with all the makeup and the happy eyes makes me look like an angel reborn in a world that was cruel to me years ago but has somehow changed tides and worked in my favor.

It’s a remarkable wedding dress.

Cut out on my tummy, enough to show that glowing baby bump and enough to show everyone who will be looking that the being of our love is about to be manifested, I look at myself in the mirror once more and utter.

“You did it.”

You did it, Alexia.

Escaped the matrix that was cruelty.

Got that Disney happy ending I thought was only the stuff for all those delusional women being fed fairy tale shit by Hollywood.

Guess fairy tales are real, huh?

“If you cry then I’ll cry then we’ll have to spend another hour or two getting your makeup done again and God knows, my brother will kill me”, Cat’s hands land on my shoulder.

“I won’t cry.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah. Is this real?”

I ask breathless.

“As real as ever, Lex”, Brenda joins from behind, looking at me through the mirror. “Jett tells me his boss is about to shoot the priest due to paranoia.”

“Oh God.”

“You’ve got the man in a chokehold, Lex so why don’t you get your ass up so we can all get you to the cathedral and watch you cuff the man of your dreams.”

“The fact that my brother is getting married before me boggles my mind, honestly.”

“He planned the wedding in three weeks, Cat. That’s how much of a delinquent your brother is.”

“Hey watch it, that’s my husband you are insulting.”

“But am I?”

He is more than a delinquent.

He’s insane.

And he’s the man I’m marrying today.

XxX

Five minutes after my bridesmaids walked before me, it’s now my turn.

Even with the veil over my face, the lilies I’m clutching in my hands; my hands still shake and I feel like I’m sweating buckets.

“You love him, don’t you?”

The woman holding me as we gaze at the huge cathedral doors, asks me.

I smile.

“Our love for one another is the only thing I’m sure of in the world, mama.”

She smiles. At least pretends to be happy for me because she has to.

I’m not backing down from this.

“I stood right here when I was about to marry your father. No one held my hand and in fact I dreaded my wedding day because your father was forcing me into it.”

“Mom-.”

“All I want to say is all I felt was anger on my wedding day for your father but you? I see longing in your eyes, Alessandra.

I see the same love I developed over the years for your father, in your eyes. And all I can do is wish my daughter all the happiness in the world.”

“Thank you, mom. Thank you.”

Because it means so much to have her here.

The cathedral doors open, the whooshing wind hits my veil and face as we start that torturous walk down the aisle.

‘O Sole Mio’ by Enrico Caruso floods the vast space of the cathedral.

It translates to ‘my own sunshine.’

A song handpicked by the man whose eyes are on me.

Every step.

Every intake of breath.

Every time my heart feels like it wants to leap out and run to him.

His eyes are on me.

And God is he the only one I see as thousands of eyes stare at me.

People don’t get cold feet or nervous because of the eyes.

No, they get nervous at the man standing at the end of that aisle, the man who has half your heart and you have his and by agreeing to be married, you are agreeing to take both of those halves and making it into one.

You are agreeing to let that man cherish and love you even better than you love yourself.

His eyes skitter to my tummy and I see his little smirk and smile.

‘Yeah, you did that, baby.’

‘You kidnapped me, knocked me up and now we are getting married.’

The aisle feels like a treadmill pushing me back from my destination instead of towards my destination.

But when I get to the end of this red carpet?

It’s like I’ve won the war against Napoleon himself.

It’s his eyes that praises me.

It’s his adoration that says he can’t wait for this to be over and we can hop into that honeymoon car that says ‘just got married’.

Mom hugs me, going back to take her seat in one of the pews in the front row where everyone is seated.

The man of my dreams stands in front of me stretching his hand out for me so we can stand side by side, say our vows and be married.

Maybe I should have taken his hand earlier.

Maybe I should have cried so I could ruin my makeup and I could be delayed from coming to the wedding by an hour or so.

Maybe I should have never showed up to the cathedral.

Maybe...maybe...so many maybes.

Because it all happens in a blur.

I don’t even get to blink.

Because that’s how evil lurks. It barges right in.

The sound of a bullet getting shot in mid-air shrieks like a banshee in this holy place of God.

You know what I see and hear when my fairy tale comes crashing down like a house of cards?

‘Tesoro.’

One word.

One whisper.

Then the love of my life falls into my arms as the chaos around us turns non-existent.

I can’t hold him.

He’s too heavy. He’s too heavy.

My back meets the ground with a thud. My dress might have broken my fall but the crushing weight of Christian on top of me, not only hurts me, my tummy, my accelerated breathing but everything else too.

People scream.

My voice quakes.

‘Christian? Christian, wake up.’

‘Wake up, please. Baby please. I can’t...can’t breathe...can’t...can’t...’

Can’t scream.

Can’t do anything but watch as blood trickles around his neck falling to my face in rivulets.

Can’t do anything as his blood smears me.

He was shot. He is shot. I can’t do anything but listen to his heartbeat slowly dim out of existence.

I can’t do anything as I lay on the ground feeling all his life pour out of him.

At some point, I hear someone call my name but the pain is too much.

Too much to enable me to shout for help. Too much to...

Everything turns black.

XX

It's not the beeping of hospital machines that gives it away that I'm in a hospital.

It's that sickening smell of blood that clutches onto my skin that tells me where I am.

I open my eyes and pain stings me all over.

At the same time a familiar head of blonde hair comes to sight as she closes the door behind her.

"Mom?" I hiss but she's already left the room.

I grab the wires connecting me to the machines and the IV and yank them away from my skin.

I've gotta see Christian.

My wobbly feet make it up to the door as I open the door.

I catch sight of my mom again taking a corner down the hallway.

Gripping the walls, trying to stay hidden from the nurses who'll ask questions as soon as they see the blood dripping where the wires were connected to my hand, I lay low following my mom as quiet I can.

I don't think I have the energy to shout.

My mouth feels dry.

Whatever sedatives they gave me have me feeling sleepy.

I struggle to walk.

Slow and steady.

Slow but trying to be fast.

Mom disappears in another wing before she enters in one of the rooms.

Christian must be there.

From the same room, some doctor walks out talking on the phone like his life depends on it.

I don't pay him no heed when he disappears in the opposite direction.

No, my eyes are on my mom who walks out of the room.

Then at the woman who is being held by two men from collapsing to the floor.

Why is Cat crying? Why do Maximo and Demetri look like that?

"M-mom?"

I call.

Everyone notices my presence and their faces go blank.

Cat's too devastated to even speak. All she does is sob and I near where they are. I near the room.

My legs shake. From the sedatives? From what is happening? I don't know.

"Alessandra, no. You...you have to be in your room. The doctor..."

"I need to see Christian."

"Alessandra..."

"Where is Christian? I need...I need to see my husband."

Mom tries to hold me but I don't want to be held by her.

I want my husband.

I push her off of me then with every bit of strength, I walk into the room they just exited.

The sight that greets me draws me to a halt.

"W—where is Christian?" I ask.

"Ale-."

"Where is Christian? Why is there...why is there someone covered by a white cover...where is my husband..."

"Alessandra..."

I move into the room, my feet telling me to get out and go back to my room.

Christian is probably waiting in my room for me. Yes, he's in my room. He's in my...

My hands don't stop. I reach for the white cover concealing the dead body on top of the cold metallic stand and I pull it away.

"Christian?"

No.

I lean to his face.

No breath.

No breathing.

My hand clutches his heart, the same heart I slept on most nights listening to it beating.

No heartbeat.

No pulse.

Gone. Dead. Life snuffed out of him.

"It's not Christian!"

"Alessandra."

"No, my Christian has been through worse! He survived a bomb for me, he got shot twice for me...he has survived worse mom!"

"Alessandra, he is gone."

"No, he's not! He's not gone because he promised... he promised to stay forever. He promised to take the kids to school every day... he promised to be here when I need him! He's not...he's just sleeping, he's messing with me... he likes joking. Ask... ask Kat, she'll tell you... he likes joking. He's joking."

"Honey, you have to-."

"I need to wake him up. If you love me, help me wake him up. We are getting married; we are going to our

honeymoon-."

"He's dead."

“No! No! He is not. Baby, prove her wrong. Wake up.”

“Alessandra...”

“Prove her wrong and wake up!”

“Alessandra...Maximo? Maximo, she’s bleeding!”

I feel the blood trickle between my legs as my will to live fades too.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 78

SPECIAL CHAPTER: DR. GIUSEPPE.

“The bullet velocity was high therefore there was no side-to-side movement, meaning it passed through non-critical parts of the brain causing less damage and ensuring his survival.”

Decades in the medical field and what happened in there still have my hands shaking.

He was brought to the hospital nearly dead.

His family begged us to save him.

From the blood loss, from the bullet wound, forty-four percent of patients shot in the head make it to the hospital without dying.

Even with the statistics, a fraction of that forty-four percent don’t make it out of theater.

Not him though.

We lost him. Then beating all odds like a charging bull he fought for life, he puzzled all of us and hours of retrieving that bullet and ensuring his brain wasn’t swelling paid off.

“Y-you saved him? T-thank you. T-thank you, Giuseppe.”

“He’s out of the clear for now, we are observing his vitals to make sure nothing-.”

“Have you told the others?”

I am about to. They must be anxious.

“No but I will.”

“Tell them he’s dead!”

I understand her pain but as a doctor having witnessed one of the greatest miracles in there, I cannot tell the people waiting out there with hope that Christian Vitello Volkov is dead.

“He just fought to live and I know you are relieved to hear he is alive. With that being said, I cannot tell them that-.”

“He is better off dead than going back to that life. They shot him, Giuseppe, they shot my...”

“This is unreasonable. They will want to confirm he’s dead. I cannot-.”

“I trust you; I have trusted you for decades. You helped me and now you will help me save my son from the life his treacherous father put in his way. He will not die like Moretti. He will not die a gangster, bleeding out and fighting for a life that is not worth it.”

“Lucia, what you are asking me to do is.”

“You have children, do you not? Giuseppe, tell me now if your daughter got stabbed once in a park she regularly visited and survived. Would you let her play in the same park again? Would you risk the chances of her being stabbed and nearly dying again?”

“What you are asking of me as a doctor, I cannot condone it. Your daughter is out there praying for him, she will be devastated. Your...his wife, came in a rough state. She is pregnant with twins! His death will traumatize her, compromise your grandchildren!”

Christian Vitello had taken the reins from his father a few months ago.

Today he was to wed.

Judging by his bride who was partly conscious and partly out of it when she arrived, the woman loved him.

I was in the theater consulting with some of the best neurosurgeons when we operated on Christian Vitello.

The man fought for a chance to breathe.

He must have fought for the woman in the blood-tainted wedding gown and for his future kids.

“I will not lose my son again. I left him to fend for himself in America, I disappeared scared that Moretti’s enemies would find me and kill me. I abandoned my children. I will not abandon him this time.”

“Lucia, please...”

“Do what you must or I will be forced to go after your children, Giuseppe.”

“Lucia.”

She hangs up.

Ten minutes later, I am looking at a man who is about to lose everything without knowing.

The surgery was a success but the degree in which his brain would be affected was up to chance.

Chances were he would be paralyzed, chances were this man would never get to be as normal as he was then, chances were the extent of the damage triggering amnesia.

The former were better.

The latter was playing God. If he left here and his memories were no more, he would be a different man, he would be leaving his woman and his children behind.

A choice made for him. A choice he never chose.

“We don’t have all day, doctor”, one of Lucia’s men disguised as a nurse presses. The other man brings the wheeling body cart that is reserved for pushing the dead into the morgue.

I check his vitals. Thrice. Twice.

The syringe in my hand shakes.

Throwing all the ethics imbued in us since I dedicated my life to saving the lives of others, I kill a man.

An opioid overdose.

His body shakes, taking in the poison I just drugged him with.

The two fake nurses work fast, putting his body on top of the cold trolley.

Then they disappear from the room.

I watch as his breathing stops and his heart stops beating.

It takes a minute for his family to be informed.

I rush out, taking the call.

“My men will get him out. There’s an ambulance with a team of doctors ready to help him. Thank you, Giuseppe. Thank you.”

When a whole two minutes is gone and Christian Vitello’s family is dragging his pregnant wife out of the room in the opposite direction as she wails, I rush into the room.

Taking the antidote; and via intravenous injection, I administer a single dose of 100 micrograms/kg naloxone to reverse the opioid overdose.

It should restore breathing.

After two minutes, it should be able to counter the effects of the opioids.

Lucia’s men charge into the room in time carrying with them a body I’m assuming to be dead wrapped around with white covers all over.

I watch as my patient’s chest starts moving. He starts breathing.

Christian Vitello Volkov lives.

But is he alive really?

Even as we swap bodies, even as I watch and help Lucia’s men carry him out to the waiting ambulance that immediately has doctors putting him under medication and observation, even as I watch the ambulance drive off; did I save a man today?

Saving a man did not feel like this.

Saving a man’s life was walking to his family, wiping their sad faces and telling them the patient fought and he conquered an obstacle.

As I walk back to the hospital using the front doors this time around, my conscience leads me to my best friend from my college days.

“Edoardo, how is she?”

As if knowing her health will wipe my hands clean.

“Francesco broke the news that Vitello was no more. I know it wasn’t easy losing a patient, much less your best friend’s son. Lucia Volkov’s son shouldn’t have gone down like this. Giuseppe, I am truly-.”

Francesco and all the men who were in that operating room have been paid off to take the secret to our graves.

“How’s your patient doing, Edoardo?”

Free me from this torment.

“She lost the love of her life; she’s taking it harder than the rest of the family. A little bleeding which is an early sign of pregnancy occurred a few minutes ago but she has to take it easy. Her pregnancy... is a high risk one. With the amount of stress, she’s under, I’m afraid-.”

“She’ll live. Her babies will live. They have to.”

For the man who fought for them today.

They have to.

They. Will. Live.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 79

TWO YEARS LATER.

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

His eyes skitter to me and the bastard spits the blood on the floor.

He could spit his intestines too and I wouldn’t bat an eyelid let alone flinch.

I turn to the other man, yeah, this one has that fear of death in his eyes. The fear of not knowing what will happen next and to what lengths I’m willing to go to milk information from him.

I could tell him that not a spine in my body pities him.

Frankly, not a bone in my body feels anything as Yan hands me the knife and I slit the throat of the first man, watching his body go limp against the chains.

“Franco! Franco, no! No.” His friend shouts.

He could shout day and night like he’s been doing since Yan nabbed him but no one’s going to hear him. No one’s going to come to his rescue.

There’s no Robin Hood outside this warehouse that’s going to match in and save him from me.

There is no such thing as fairy tales. Learned that the hard way though.

“This is the part where I threaten you with severing one of your limbs and you play the tough guy act that you are not going to tell me anything. Then we go round and round in circles and honestly I’m going to sleep in my million dollar mission and you are going to rot in here dangling from that ceiling like a dead fish in an overcrowded market. Tell me what I need to know.”

His lips quiver, his eyes glisten with tears.

He peed himself as soon as Yan gave him the first punch.

Add in the blood and this reeking place of shit and the only thing I want to do is end this man too and call it a night.

“Have m-mercy”, he begs.

Have mercy?

Have mercy?

Who had mercy on me as I watched the man I loved being lowered in a casket on a frightful rainy day, not being able to jump along with him, not being able to end it because I needed to be strong for my babies?

Who had mercy on me then?

Who had mercy on me when they took him from me?

I grab his hair, not caring whether I’ll be left with a few strands of it in my arms.

I’m not above killing this one too.

Two years hunting these people has led me to dead ends but I won’t rest. HE wouldn’t have wanted me to rest.

I look him the dead in the eyes and say, “Mercy is for the weak. Two years ago, you and your dead buddy here were around Saint Anne’s cathedral. Carefully tucked outside the church with a rusty getaway car no one would think to look at. You aided the man who sniper who shot in the church... who shot my husband like he was a dog... in escaping. All I need is a name. The man you aided in escaping from that church.”

“I didn’t know...his name. We were paid to show up by Elio!”

“Well, your boss is dead and he didn’t know jack shit. Elio is dead, Elio was not the sniper. Your time’s running out here.”

“He had an accent. American. Not Italian. We dropped him off at the airport. Yes, yes and he... the plane he took was to New York. Yes, I remember he spoke to the phone and reported he had completed the mission.”

My ears ring.

The mission?

Because shooting and killing the man I loved was a mission.

I let go of his hair, I step back and turn around throwing the knife somewhere on the ground.

I hear the chains dangle behind me.

I know what comes next.

“Now you release me.”

They think they’ll leave here alive.

“I gave you information.”

They think they are entitled to leave after they took what was mine.

When I started this, I knew there was no going back.

I knew I would leave a few bodies in my wake but this is the...this is the only way I get to heal; I get to feel, I get to not be idle and be returned to that crushing pain that feels like I’m drowning.

I look at Yan and he nods in understanding.

The last thing I hear as I walk out of my warehouse is the man’s screams as he fights death.

The night swallows me whole, taking me in like I’m one of its children and maybe I am. I mean darkness recognizes darkness. A sinner recognizes a sinner.

Going by the same drill, I hop into my car, drive to one of my shitty apartments downtown and once I’m there I hop into the shower.

Cold water bites my skin.

Then in...

One.

Two.

Three.

The tears start, a sob escapes my throat, a wail chokes me and then my mind replays back to the word I have obsessed over for two years.

‘Tesoro’.

Tesoro.

I recall him on top of me. Blood. Blood. His blood.

I watch the blood running down with the water in the shower then I hold onto the tiled wall sobbing till the ache stops.

It never really stops.

I step out of the shower, I dry myself of the tears and the water, I comb my hair down, I wear makeup and I wear one of my dresses that make me look alive. Okay.

Because I need to be okay.

For them.

“Mama”, Liam stirs in his sleep, holding my hand.

I run the other hand on his forehead, swiping his hair away and giving him a kiss.

“Hey, baby.”

He smiles in his sleep.

I smile too because his happiness tugs at my heart.

I turn to his brother, Ethan who’s snoring the night away with his favorite Shrek toy.

I kiss him too, covering him up when I well know he’ll kick the covers away while he’s sleeping.

One last kiss, one last look at them sleeping and I walk out of the room.

“And cookies?”

The small voice asks excitedly. I don't even have to know it's Millie because that's her high pitched 'I'm happy' voice.

“Yes”, my sister chuckles.

I walk into my kitchen where Millie is seated on one of the kitchen stools swinging her legs as she watches Athena put flour in a coffee mug.

“Mug brownies? Again?”

I ask.

Millie turns around. The smile she gives me as she hops from her stool is enough to wash away the pain a bit.

“Mommy!”

“You are not supposed to be up, peaches. It's almost nine.”

“Aunty Thena said brownies.”

In my arms and growing bigger by the day, she points at Athena who holds her hands up with a smile.

“Hey, I'm not the only one who goes cuckoo for these brownies. I know you want them too, Ale.”

“You are spoiling my kids a little too much.”

“Am I? Considering Brenda was here with new toys for Liam and Ethan, I think I'm not the one doing the most spoiling.”

“Brenda was here?”

I ask. They visit, I know.

But when they visit when I'm not here, that raises questions and the nagging and the calls from Cat about checking in.

“With Jett yeah, said something about having a vacation in Sicily.”

Yeah right, a vacation all the way from Chicago to Sicily when places like Maldives exist.

They are here to check up on me. As if I'm not okay.

“Uncle Jett! Uncle Jett!” Millie claps, “He said I’m growing big mommy.”

“You are growing big, peaches.”

“Bigger than Lee and Ethan?”

“Bigger than Liam and Ethan, baby. One brownie then it’s off to bed. Deal?”

“Two.”

“When did you learn to count? Fine, two. Deal?”

“Deal.”

She giggles and the next minutes tumble between tickling her, making Oreo mug brownies and tolerating my sister’s worried look.

When Millie is off to sleep after bedtime stories about the prince who saved the princess, I plop onto my couch, wine in hand.

“Okay out with it. You’ve been giving me worried looks since I got here.”

“I’m not one to judge…”

She starts.

“You shouldn’t be.”

She really isn’t considering everything she did in the past with Rhett and the whole Junior fiasco but my sister redeemed herself.

Of all the people to help me get back on my feet it was her and shoot me because I love her and her fancy accent and her fancy ass clothes.

I’m wearing a sundress right now; she’s wearing something casual Versace.

“I love you, I love these kids and that is the reason I am telling you to stop.”

“If you loved me you wouldn’t be asking me of that.”

“Every night for the last few months, you have been out with Yan doing God knows what and every night you come back here, I see that pain on your face and worry. You have to let go.”

Because that’s easy.

Letting go?

“He wouldn’t have wanted me to let go.”

“Ale I’m not telling you to forget him. No that is not the case, I’m telling you to focus on the kids, to focus on moving on-.”

“You think I don’t love my kids?”

“I never said that. I never said that. I know you do, you show up for them, you wake up for them, that I know. I am just saying...”

“Demetri and Maximo are out playing husband to Kat. Everyone has moved on, no one cares anymore. If I don’t avenge him, who will? If I don’t find Chri... my husband’s killer who knows whether my kids will be safe?”

I know we have guards. I know we have the best security has to offer but even in that church, in that moment, we had guards, we had security and they got to him.

They. Got. To. Him.

“Alessandra.”

“I got a lead today. New York. I might need to go there to finally find the answers I’m looking for. This will be it, okay? This will be the last time.”

I sip my wine.

I see her trying to accept my bluff. I feel her hand caress my shoulders and I want to cry but I won’t cry.

I seized crying in public for my kids.

Nah, this time I do it the cowardly way. Alone, hidden and in the shower.

“This is you telling me I have to babysit the kids and not tell mom about this, isn’t it?” she asks sarcastically.

“Yes, and don’t pretend you don’t like my kids. You show up here every time without me inviting you, sis.”

“I’m their favorite aunt. Alessandra?”

“Hmm?”

“This better be the last time. You say he would have wanted you not to let go? I say he would have wanted you to be

happy. Because you deserve happiness.”

I swallow the emotions balling in my throat.

Deep down she might be right.

Deep down I don’t want to listen.

“Security cameras at the airport couldn’t catch a glimpse of his face because he was wearing a cap but I got the private plane he boarded”, Yan explains as I glance out at the clouds.

I haven’t moved out of Sicily since HE died.

I didn’t want to move out of the place that had the last reminders of him.

Now, I’m going to New York all in a bid to catch some weasels relating to his death.

“The cabin crew?”

“Dead.”

“Of course they are. But you’ve got eyes on the pilot, right?”

“Yes. He’s still holed up in New York. Contacted him and he’s open to talk to me.”

“You know what we do if he refuses to talk, Yan.”

“That’s the thing, the place he wants to talk to me at, is a public place. Tons of people, tons of cameras, I can’t kidnap him or drug him without raising attention.”

“He’s slick but he’s no match for me.”

We arrived in New York later than I expected but that didn’t cause delays in meeting the pilot.

I would have been especially happy if I got a one-on-one with the pilot but Yan insisted he’d go.

Me talking to the pilot might spook said pilot into running away and I can’t have that.

There's a reason this pilot isn't dead.

Either he's good at hiding or he doesn't know anything about the sniper I'm looking for. My money's on the former.

Yan and the pilot picked a café.

A café that shows both of them by the window. I sit on the park bench from the opposite side of the road pretending the newest issue of Vogue magazine is interesting enough to read.

To the men it might be.

I mean the magazine has a snazzy picture of Poppy Woodcock, daughter to business tycoon, Benedict Woodcock and as I gaze at the brunette's figure accentuated well by the bikini, I fucking realize that is a terrible last name to give anyone.

Pulling my eyes away from the magazine and across the road, the pilot slides something wrapped in a brown bag across the table to Yan.

I'm about to try to lip-read whatever they are saying when the black Range Rover Evoque pulls right in front of the café.

I can't see Yan or the pilot. Shit.

The Range doesn't move as its driver pops out.

Draped in a bespoke Willian Westmancott suit, a suit that costs a whooping fifty million dollars, it takes a minute for him to adjust his dark shades, it takes another second for him to go around the car and open the passenger side of the door for a woman.

The brunette in leopard print heels and bedazzled in luxury kisses him on the lips appreciatively.

It's the woman from the magazine.

I should be moving.

Cross the road.

Make sure nothing happens to Yan or the pilot.

Yet paparazzi storm out of nowhere taking pictures of the couple that look like they hopped out of a 'couple of the year' magazine.

Poppy Woodcock flaunts her boyfriend.

Her boyfriend grabs her ass possessively.

That's not the only thing plastering me in place.

That's not the thing that has my heart beating, crushing, begging to be let out.

That's not the thing that has my eyes stinging with tears and pain and guilt and bewilderment.

I stand up, the magazine falls from my hand.

I look at Poppy Woodcock's boyfriend or man or fiancé and my throat goes dry.

"Christian?"

Something heavy presses down on my chest as I cover my mouth then hot fat tears cascade down my cheeks willing my body to move.

"Christian!" I shout like a maniac.

I'm about to run across the road not caring whether I'm seeing an illusion of him again when a large hand covers my mouth pulling me back.

Normal me would have already been free from whoever was holding me in place.

This isn't normal me.

This new me is weak as I watch Poppy and her boyfriend get into the same café I was watching minutes ago.

"Christian!" my voice is muffled against the man who has his hand covering my mouth.

No. No. Don't take him away. Don't take him away from me.

"Calm down and come with me, Alexia. I'm not going to hurt you."

"Christian!"

"I can't let you talk to him. I can explain things but not here."

You are seeing him too?

You can see him?

You can see him?

“He is Christian but he doesn’t know that. He doesn’t know you neither does he remember anyone. Any attempt of trying to contact him messes up his mind. I’m an ally, Alexia. We have met at the funeral but allow me to re-introduce myself. My name is Kai Davenport, a friend of your um husband.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 80

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

“Start talking.”

“I hardly think we need the use of firearms to threaten-.”

I don’t drop the gun.

I don’t drop my guard.

Yan doesn’t either.

And honestly speaking this gun is the only tether holding me from collapsing on the floor, throwing up and teetering over the chasm of sanity and insanity.

“Talk. Now!”

“The man you saw is Christian Vitello Volkov. Your husband.” Kai Davenport merely says while seated on his freaking swivel chair.

Not knowing his words unnerve me.

Not knowing the gun in my hand now feels like jelly.

I have seen Chri—HIM in my dreams. I have begged him in my dreams to stay.

But he never stays and I wake up to my babies, holding onto them for support.

Holding onto them because they remind me of him.

They have his eyes. His hair. His face. Everything.

So, to hear the impossible miraculously happen takes me back to that bloody funeral.

Yeah, I met Kai at the funeral.

Like the rest of the people who didn't know my husband as well as I did, Kai offered me his pitiful sorry and condolences.

I never saw the man again until today.

"Impossible", Yan spits, his firearm still locked in his hands, finger on the trigger ready to shoot.

Kai's eyes land on me and he's unfazed by everything.

"Deaths can be faked. You know the fucker; you know he's survived worse. You know the probability of him being alive is high."

Don't call my husband a fucker.

Don't speak all that bullshit to me.

It's been...it's been two years! If he was...if he was alive, he would have showed up.

He would have come to me.

I would be the first person he ran to. Me! Me!

"I thought so too till I leaned over his body and found no heartbeat."

"Do you believe-."

"I saw him. In that hospital, in that room, he was dead! Who was that man earlier? Why does he look like...why does he look like..."

"You were his nurse, weren't you?" He provokes.

Whatever calmness I have, I throw it out his fancy office window and I eat the distance between me and his desk.

It takes a minute to get on top of his desk, another minute to point the gun's muzzle at his forehead.

"I don't care whether you rule New York. I don't give a shit about your metaphors and your what-ifs. I will kill you where you sit."

"As a nurse, I believe you are familiar with opioid overdose."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

Kai holds my eyes and his expression softens. “An opioid overdose cuts off breathing, cuts off heartbeat, a person looks – no, a person is practically half-dead until-”

“Naloxone is administered in time to reverse the effects”, I finish his statement, my heart racing, every single thought in my mind mangled.

“Bingo. How long were you in the room with him when he was announced to be dead?”

I pull my gun away from Kai.

I come down from his desk.

I plop in one of the seats opposite his desk, lowering my gun.

I was in there for four minutes? I remember some doctor going back to his room the minute I was dragged out bleeding.

“It’s impossible”, I whisper.

My heart tugs painfully. My legs give out.

“He looked dead. He just wasn’t dead. A genius master plan if I must say so myself but nonetheless it had everyone fooled.”

“We—we buried a body. We buried him.”

“Did you? Did you look at the body before you all buried him?”

“N-No, our men handled the...it was too painful for me, his sister, Max, Demetri...his death affected each one of us. No one could have handled seeing him dead again and...”

Emotions choke me.

I sniff back the tears.

Don’t cry. Don’t cry. Don’t...

“This is hard, I understand.”

“How do I know you are telling the truth? How do you know it’s... it’s insane, it’s... why did you not tell anyone? Does Kat know, does... why just why?”

“For the same exact reason in front of me. Christian came back but he couldn’t walk for a year, a year of physiotherapy and doctors prying him open and he managed to get his feet back. Then from my sources, came the news of his amnesia, the amnesia he’s still battling up to date.

If Maximo found out he was alive, you would all barge into his life and expect him to know you and according to the doctors, if he receives that kind of pressure, he lapses into a coma or you bury him for real this time Alexia.”

“Who?”

How?

Who did this?

The same person who shot him?

Who took him?

Who lied to him?

Kai clears his throat and his next words boggle my mind.

“His mother. I would rather think she has been lying to him to protect him but that’s fucking too much.”

“They...his mother is dead.”

Christian sure as hell insinuated, she was dead.

“She’s alive and kicking. She has been alive since she let Christian and Catelina move to America by themselves. When Moretti died, she disappeared. No one gave a fuck afterward.”

“Was she the one who shot him?”

“No.”

“How do you know?”

“Because she went to great lengths to hide Christian from the world and to protect him from us. She’s a mother albeit a cynical one but she’s a mother trying to protect her son.”

“Protect her son? What about my sons? What about me? Who is protecting us from all the pain? She stole him from us.

Jesus Christ, she should be... dead. She should...”

“Are you prepared to kill her? You kill her and the man you love sees you as an enemy.”

“He loves me. He would never... never harm or hate me!”

“He loves another woman. He believes his name is Aleksander Volkov, he believes he had a near-death car accident that nearly took his life. He is a different man with no recollection of who you are or who you meant to him.”

Him being alive shattered me. Had me swimming to the surface and throwing all thoughts of drowning to the gutter.

Suddenly I could breathe.

Him not remembering me though?

That cuts and decimates me on the spot.

Sex i mere end 3 timer og uden Viagra! Skriv opskriften!

“He loves me. He is the same man who wanted to meet his children, Christian is still in there. I can get to him. I can remind him. I was his nurse first before I became his woman and my job was to heal him. I will heal him.”

“Alessandra, we do not know if this is true”, Yan speaks.

I look at Yan and I can barely see him because my eyes are two kaleidoscopes of tears.

“I saw him. It’s him. He-he listened; he came back to me. I cannot let him go. I won’t.”

“What about his killer?” Yan asks.

“I’ll take care of it”, Kai says casually but that doesn’t stop Yan from throwing me a concerned look.

“Why are you doing this? You are friends but I know you weren’t that close if I never saw you around him.”

“Your husband brought me a woman before he fake died. That woman has been plaguing my mind since I first saw her so this is me repaying the debt. Christian brought me Jessica; I will bring you to him.”

“Alessandra”, Yan warns.

Kai looks at Yan from head to toe.

“You could fit in as a maid but your bodyguard here can’t. Does he have any gardening skills?”

“A maid?” I ask.

Kai interlocks his hands together before he says,” Lucia Volkov has connections over the city, that’s the reason why I have only seen Christian from afar. If she notices you trying to approach his son, she will run away with him and since he’s a mama’s boy in nowadays, he will gladly run too.

You have to approach Christian in a way Lucia Volkov will not notice. A maid and a gardener won’t raise any suspicion.

No one could suspect that a maid is trying to seduce the boss.”

“I’m bringing him back home where he belongs not seduce him.”

Kai chuckles.

“Semantics. Bringing him home. Seduce. They all sound the same really. Are we doing this Alessandra Vitello Volkov?”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 81

ALEKSANDER ‘CHRISTIAN’ VOLKOV.

TWO YEARS LATER.

When I was five, I lost my first tooth because I was chasing after a fucking butterfly. Whether the butterfly was pretty, I have no clue.

When I was ten, my mother gifted me a Spider-Man figurine.

When I was twenty, I delved into drugs, inhaling every shit New York had to offer up my nose.

In my late twenties, I became a junkie. I got tattoos. I rebelled against my mother.

Two years ago, I had a close call with death.

And every minute up to now, I have relied on my mother to remind me of every tidbit of information about myself.

What I like.

What I was like.

What my personality was like.

The dos and don'ts I lived by.

The first time I woke up in a hospital, I couldn't remember my own fucking name let alone move or breathe without the assistance of tubes.

A year later and I beat physio. I could walk.

Right now?

"I didn't know they would corner us like this, promise. Kevin recommended this café and I thought it was like a small-ish not crowded place you know?"

Small-ish?

Yeah, and I'm Donald Trump then.

Poppy doesn't do small. Poppy doesn't do anything less extravagant. Poppy is the type of Richie Rich that spits on beggars by the streets and strays from burger joints because a, the burgers are too greasy and full of 'calories' or burger joints are known to carry ninety percent of diseases from NYC.

Her fucking words not mine.

I gaze at her and every day I ask myself the same question.

Of all the women I grew up around, I fell in love with Poppy Woodcock?

She's pretty, sure. If you count the lip fillers, the facelifts, the BOTOX and the Ozempic body then yeah, she's every guy's wet dream.

Add in the fact that she's daddy's little girl. Million-dollar yachts and what not and any guy would kill to be in my position.

The bonus of it all is that Poppy Woodcock is head over heels in love with me.

No man wouldn't want that. No sane man wouldn't want Poppy.

Yet...

I care about this woman like I care about my secretary. The spoiler being I can barely remember my secretary's face let alone her name.

Apparently, I proposed to Poppy before my accident.

An even bigger 'apparently' is that I've been swooning and piping over this woman for more than a decade.

Childhood sweethearts, they call it.

“Ready to order?”

I offer but my words are as bland as the look on my face.

I tolerate Poppy because my mother wants me to try to get back to my normal self.

I entertain Poppy because again, she tried to help me when I spiraled into a life of drugs and alcohol.

“Order here? God, no!”

There she is.

Arrogant. Classy. Sophisticated.

My fiancé.

“Poppy, you dragged me all the way here because you had something important you wanted to talk to me about.”

Her manicured hands shimmer their way to mine and her touch does nothing to a single bone inside me.

Being in love doesn’t sound like me but being in love with Poppy? Yeah that accident messed me up pretty badly.

“You are always working and I-.”

“Because that’s what normal people do. Work.”

She doesn’t work.

She has an aunt who squeezes her in for shoots and modeling gigs once in a while. That isn’t work, she does it for fame.

For charity, if we are being honest here.

“But all you do is work, Alek! You have no time for me and when I do ask for time, all we do is hang around in your office.”

“I’m who I am, Poppy. If you don’t like it, we might as well call it quits. Like I’ve said countless times.”

And fuck whatever my mother has to say about merging Volkov Industries and Woodcock Enterprises.

She lets go of my hand, the paparazzi by the window outside the café flash their cameras in our direction.

The minute we arrived, most people inside this buzzing café had to leave.

That's what being a Volkov means.

That's what being with a Woodcock in NYC means too.

Her caked eyelids twitch then her brown eyes smart with unshed tears.

I have seen this little play so many times and every time I fall for it.

"Why do you always do this, huh? I try... I have been patient; I have been trying to understand that you are a little unwell

but the Alek I knew..."

A little unwell? If losing all your memories and trying to learn how to walk again was a little then the great World War might as well have been another carnival in Disneyworld.

"The Alek you knew has been dead for two years, Poppy."

A tear escapes one of her eyes and she wipes it quickly.

I have been trying to get her to call off the engagement without involving our parents but she won't let go.

"No, he's not. What you just said right now sounds like what my Alek would usually do. The Alek I know and the one that still exists tries to push people away every chance he gets but deep down that's not what he wants. You always said that I was the best thing to ever happen to you. I will remain to be the best thing for you because I love you."

Christ.

"Poppy-."

"You don't have to say it back because you already did in the past like a gazillion times but I still trust you'll love me, Aleksander. We are meant for each other."

What can I say to that?

Nothing.

So, I sit like a good fiancé listening to stories about glam and fashion, letting her touch me like we are couple of the year.

Because really that's what the media has dubbed us.

'Couple of the year'.

"Sir, your mother is in your office."

I glare at my secretary, a sigh escaping my lips.

"Did you tell her I would be gone for hours?"

"No, sir. Was I supposed to? No... I mean... I would but she didn't seem like she would leave any moment soon.

Apologies, Sir. I should have..."

"Emily?"

She readjusts her wide-rimmed glasses.

"It's Avaline, Sir."

Same thing.

"Take a breath, Avaline. Next time my mother shows up, make up something that will deter her from waiting. Got it?"

"Yes, Sir. Got it."

I push the glass doors to my office and my mother's perfume hits me before I even spot her in my swivel chair.

"Mother", I say dryly.

"Is that any way to greet your dearest mother?"

"If she disrupts my work, then yes."

"But you weren't at work when I got here, were you?"

Lucia Volkov has always been controlling.

I don't know if she was like this before but all I do know is that my accident changed her.

I changed her and not a moment goes by without me feeling guilty for causing pain to this woman.

"I was with Poppy but you knew that, didn't you?"

She and Poppy are joined by the hip. The reason why I can't break up with Poppy and cause my mother any more pain.

"Everything going on smoothly between you two?"

"I don't love her, mother. Never think I will."

"You loved her before you can love her again-."

"Why does everyone keep forcing me to be the old me? Huh?"

Her eyes go wide, the wrinkles being clear beneath her makeup and suddenly I feel like I've reverted back to the monster I've been trying to hide since the accident.

The monster who dreams of killing people and enjoying it.

"Alek, I'm sorry I didn't mean to-"

"Don't do that. Don't... feel guilty, please. Poppy and I are good, I'm trying to make it work. I'll try to make it work."

For you.

"Good. All I want is for you to be happy."

"To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"Just checking up on things since you are too busy to pick up my calls.. Maria told me you almost fell down the stairs the other day?"

Maria and her big mouth.

"I tripped, things like that happen on the regular."

"I think you should move back in with me."

"Absolutely not."

I can't subject myself to that again. Being in her house, pretending to be fine, having to lock my demons in around her.

"One maid and one housekeeper won't help you if something goes wrong."

Having Maria and that one maid is already a bigger headache.

"I'm not moving back with you, mother."

"Then at least let me hire more help in case...in case..."

"Will that make you happy?"

"Yes."

Another blurred memory of Poppy travels to my broken brain.

'Will that make you happy?'

'Yes.'

Yet her voice, her voice does something to me.

Then like always, the memory becomes a blur and it's back to square one.

XxX

I didn't go home for two days.

Having more maids to watch my every move rubbed me the wrong way.

Two days later, I'm in my own home, underneath my own shower gazing at the tattoos that cover my torso and I can't make a sense about any of them.

Then there are always the scars.

One on the side of my neck that looks like a cut.

Two on my shoulders.

A few knife wounds on my torso.

Before I had the accident, I wasn't a CEO, I wasn't a perfect son.

On the contrary, I joined in with the wrong crowd, got stabbed a few times hurting my mother over and over before I got the accident that might have eaten half of my brain.

Some call me lucky.

I call myself cursed. Cursed to roam the world while trying to be one man and trying to hide the new me.

The cold water trickles down my hair, down my scars, down a body that feels like more of a shell than my own body.

I watch the water swirl down the drainage, both my hands fisted against the wall as I try to breathe.

Just breathe, Alek.

Breathe.

Breathing doesn't come easy and not because I'm not trying but because my heightened senses spot her before she can even say a word.

I'm well aware I'm naked.

I'm well aware it might be one of those nosy maids my mother brought in the other day.

And it pisses me the hell off.

I push my hair off my forehead.

Then I turn around.

Pretty blue eyes gaze at me from the bathroom door.

Her eyes go wide, a deer caught in headlights, but she doesn't run.

Not at first, no.

Her eyes glide down my naked chest, down my torso and they shoot straight to my cock.

But this chick?

This nosy maid?

She licks her pink lips nervously—lips with no lip fillers, lips not like Poppy's... and then when common sense knocks into her head, the little minx runs out of sight.

It takes a minute for me to try to grip what just happened.

It takes another minute to decide I don't care.

I value privacy. Controlling mother or not.

And this new maid is fired alright.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 82

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

“This is a bad idea”, Yan whispers, gardening shears in hand, a growl marring his usual grumpy face.

“You can leave, I’ve got this under control.”

Two days we have been here and I have scoured every inch of this place, counting the cameras, looking into the background of the other maids Lucia hired and tolerating the fake pictures of Christian when he was young and a teen hanging around the house.

“I am not a gardener; they will notice that soon. And you are clearly not a maid. Alessandra I’m here for your safety but-.”

“He’s coming in today.”

“That does not change anything.”

“Kai went to great lengths to put us in this mansion, I’ll ensure Christian remembers me and we can put this whole mission behind us in no time.”

“Your mother will kill me if she finds out what we have been doing.”

“I stopped being my mother’s concern a long time ago, Yan. Shoo, they might see us talking and put two in two together. Go uhm do your gardening stuff and I’ll take care of the rest.”

The fact that no one questioned how a bulky six-foot-two man fell into the category of being a gardener still baffled me.

I straighten my maid’s uniform, a cliched white and black uniform with a white lace collar and run back into the house.

Lucia Volkov has gone to extreme lengths to ensure her son is caged in this mansion.

These maid uniforms are to ensure Christian doesn’t have time to check us out or notice that we exist.

Not that he would anyway because apparently, he is madly in love with his fiancé, Poppy Woodcock.

The thought of it crumples my heart and makes my chest ache but I still push on.

I have been pretending to wipe the photo frames for half an hour while I stand at the foyer looking at the main door.

The woman in charge of us, a sweet sixty-something old woman but sadly a spy for Lucia Volkov, said Christian would be coming home tonight.

So, I have waited.

Two years. Five months. Two weeks and two days later. I'm waiting.

Yet excitement and exhilaration stab my chest with so many needles when I hear the sound of a car pulling up in the driveway.

He's here.

Christian, he's here.

I hear the car lock.

I can practically and almost hear his footsteps.

The main door opens, that aura he has always carried with him since we met walks in with him.

Suddenly I'm looking at the man I fell in love with and thought I lost and it still... I can't help choking on that feeling.

Because this is love.

Love fills you up to the brim before it bites you in the ass, you never see it coming.

To love is to hurt.

I'm hurting now as I watch all six feet of Christian Vitello Volkov walk in lengthy strides towards me.

But I'm more than in love when I look at that face and see him breathing. He's breathing. He's not pale. He's not dead. He's not bleeding.

The suit covers his arm tattoos, but his chest tattoos still peek underneath his shirt.

Tattoos I ran my hands over in the past.

He passes by me and I raise my hand like a fool waving at him.

In point two seconds, my husband passes me like he doesn't see me. Like he doesn't even notice we exist in the same mortal plane.

My high-five is still in mid-air, my smile wobbly.

"I know we are new and all but keep dreaming, sugar tits. The big boss barely acknowledges any woman that isn't Poppy and I'm sorry to burst your bubble or whatever crush you have going on here but you and him will never be a thing", my new co-worker stands before me.

Luna, yeah that's her name and soon as I saw her, I knew she was going to be a bitch.

I could dignify her with an answer but I'm still shamelessly sniffing Christian's cologne.

He might have changed colognes but his musky scent is still in there.

"Maria needs new sheets so be a darling and get some in the guest room."

I could ask her why she is not going for them herself but the guest room also happens to be next to Christian's room which is an added advantage.

I turn around and walk up the stairs.

Two minutes later I'm looking at the brown door. The only thing separating me and him. The only thing after all these years of grief and self-blame is keeping me away from my husband.

I grab the doorknob.

I could walk in and claim that I was sent here to change his sheets.

I could walk in and say I'm there to clean or to take his laundry.

In all honesty, I walk in just to see him up close, just to see his eyes recognize mine, just to hear his voice or touch him or hug him. Anything. I'll take crumbs at this point.

His room is bland. As expected. He never was a 'bright color' type of person anyway.

Black and grey colors.

A few Wall Street magazines by the nightstand. His clothes on the bed. And not even a single picture of himself.

His mother's picture is on the nightstand though. I want to smash it into pieces but I restrain myself from doing so.

Lucia Volkov will get what's coming to her soon enough.

The sound behind me of the shower running calls to me like a beacon. My legs move before I can even think.

My hands push the door open just slightly enough to get my head in.

My breath catches when I meet Christian's naked back.

Muscles over more muscles rippling on his back as water mars his skin, falling to the floor.

His dark hair is spiky and kissing the back of his neck. A neck that has the same bullet graze wound I gave him in Russia.

I smile. My eyes water.

If my children could see this now. Not the naked part but him, I could tell them, 'I found your father, babies. He's here. He's alive.'

My eyes glide even south. To his solid butt, down those muscular thighs and the sight itself ignites a buzz that sends euphoria all the way down to my core.

It's him. Only one man can get me this bothered. Only one man can get my pussy whimpering like this.

I'm dazed and I ogle him. Hard.

Like I've summoned him, like I've called him with my stare alone, he turns around.

I have nowhere to run.

I have nowhere to hide as our eyes meet.

And my eyes... well he can't blame my eyes for wandering.

I shamelessly peak at the V lines that lead to his length and lick my lips, swallowing the saliva that burns my throat.

He doesn't move. Always the cynical bastard.

He challenges me. I look at him.

He looks at me and those eyes don't have love, they are as bland as ever with a smidgen of curiosity.

So, with one last look at what's mine, I close the door.

Oh God. Oh my God.

This is torture. Cruel unbelievable torture.

My heart beats erratically so much so that my feet paralyze with fear.

I have to get out.

I have to get out now.

With whatever fight I still have in me, my shaking hand grabs the cold metallic doorknob, ready to bolt out of here and find a corner to happy-cry in this vast mansion about him.

The door doesn't open.

No, that would be wishful thinking.

A veiny muscular hand appears on the right side of my head, caging me in, giving me no room to breathe.

My backbone crumbles, my sharp tongue dulls and the shields I've kept up for so many years crumble.

I smell his cologne and my body goes wild; I hear his breathing patting my brown hair.

Not blonde, baby.

I had to dye my blonde hair brown to blend in here in case your mother decides to visit. I'm sorry I don't have that blonde hair you liked so much, Christian.

Sorry.

His warmth mixes with my warmth.

"Turn around."

His voice is a low, dark, whisper that makes my heart pound.

I can't turn around.

I'll bawl my eyes out like a little baby if I do.

“Turn around, you nosy stalker.”

It’s a warning now.

A warning I don’t heed to.

“No.” My voice shakes.

“What’s your name?”

His voice comes even harder.

I blab out the name Kai fabricated for me and Yan.

“Melissa.” I whisper.

He goes silent just to torture me. He lets me suffocate in his scent.

“You make it a habit of spying on naked men while you are doing your job, Melissa?”

Alexia. It’s Alexia. Or Sunshine. Or baby. Or little nurse.

“No, sir.”

Silence again.

“Pack your things, Melissa. As of today, you are fired.”

I turn around too quickly, my hands landing on his naked chest, the feel of his skin like a shot of dopamine right through my veins.

“Sir, please don’t!” I shout.

Brown eyes collide with mine; grumpy features meet my startled ones.

He peers at me like an insect he stepped on and wants to rub it off his shoe.

“Give me one good reason why I should let one of my mother’s spies linger around enough that I can’t get a moment of peace inside my own damn house.”

“It won’t happen again.”

“That’s not a reason, Melissa. Try again. Make it good.”

I love you. I love you so much.

“I have a sick grandfather, my mom’s a drunkard and my two dogs also depend on me.”

I’ve always been a bad liar. To him most especially.

“Dogs?”

“Sir, I need this job.”

“Because of your dogs?”

“And my sick grandfather.”

He stares. I’m practically melting.

I swallow saliva, his eyes linger on my neck and I want those lips so badly like I need air.

“Get the fuck out of my sight, Melissa. This room is off-limits to you and everyone else.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.”

“And Melissa?”

“Mmh?”

“Stay away from me. I don’t give a shit how much you are paid to spy on me but do it far from me, you got that?”

I nod.

His hand grips my chin forcing me to face him a little better.

“I’m gonna need words, you little stalker.”

Little? My heart races.

“Yes.”

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, Sir.”

I lie.

I’m not staying away, baby. Not after two years.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 83

ALEKSANDER 'CHRISTIAN' VOLKOV.

Blue eyes.

Five feet three height.

Brown hair.

All three of them a combination that has been racking my brain since she sneaked into my room, talked back and left her damn scent all around in my room.

Maybe it's the fact that I haven't fucked anyone including Poppy since my accident.

Or maybe it's the fact that she lied through her teeth straight to my face without an ounce of remorse.

All I know is, Melissa What's-her-name pisses me off more than anyone I've ever encountered.

Including the moron seated in front of me enjoying my food, my juice and my personal space.

"God, Alek, I'm telling you Maria is a gem I would steal from you any day. I might be coming for breakfast at your place every day", Weston yaps, stuffing his face with another piece of pizza toast.

"I'll repeat it again in case you failed to get it the first time. You are not welcome here, West", I grunt going through the morning newspaper.

Sunlight peers through the patio, Weston Marasigan scoffs like he always does every time I threaten him with losing the privileges he has to my house.

I've threatened him plenty and the guy stays like gum on a shoe.

He calls himself my best friend.

I see a tacky trust fund baby who has no business being in my mess of a life.

"If this is how you treat your best friend then I'm wounded, Volkov. Come on, smile a little, live a little."

He slurps his mango juice. Too loud for my liking.

“You mean sink into every hole that presents itself?”

He chuckles. Though it’s true. He’s New York’s famed playboy for a reason.

“If sinking into holes makes me less uptight like you are then call me an A-hole because I will choose that life over your miserable one. Speaking of holes and all things related, shit who’s the new help? She’s smoking hot.”

My eyes glide up.

Blue eyes, luscious lips, brown hair and that figure that can’t be hidden by that awful black and white maid uniform comes to sight.

Melissa. Owner of ‘two dogs’ and has a sick grandfather. If I cared I could have milled my private investigator to look into her dose of bullshit lies, but I don’t.

Melissa What’s-her-name is my mother’s problem not mine.

And as long as she stays out of my way, she can continue doing her snooping elsewhere.

“Don’t even think about it.”

I warn.

“What?”

West raises his hands up but I know him. I know that look. I’ve seen that look when he sets his sights on something.

“You are not fucking one of my employees under my own roof.”

Technically she’s my mother’s spy.

“Who said anything about fucking, Alek? I wanna know her better.”

Good luck with that. I want to say.

But the woman in question appears in front of us like Satan’s little helper cutting my words off.

Her dark-brown hair is up in a ponytail.

With the sun’s light hitting her at all angles, the soft pretty features of her heart-shaped face come into sight even better than when I cornered her in my room.

“More juice?”

Her voice flogs between me and West and I find myself swallowing a lump of whatever shit that holds itself up in my throat.

This woman, this spy has that raspy bedroom voice most women lack.

The type that draws you in, the type that...

“Thank you uuhh... I didn’t get your name?” West holds out his glass, smirking, flirting.

Melissa refills his glass hitting him back with, “Melissa. It’s Melissa.”

“Melissa, such a pretty name for an even prettier woman. I’m Wes and thank you for the juice.”

My eyes are on the newspaper ignoring this awful attempt at flirting.

Yet...

The little stalker tucks loose hair behind her ear, smiling, and is she? Blushing?

Her eyes are on West.

Yeah, I noticed because she hasn’t looked my way since our encounter yesterday.

I haven’t seen her till this morning.

She’s taking my words seriously but why...why do I...

“You are welcome, Wes. Can I get you anything else?”

I hate mango and all things juice but suddenly I want to ask her to fill my glass too.

See if she’ll give me the same eyes, she’s giving West as if he’s one interesting fellow when he really isn’t.

“Other than your number, no.”

My breathing comes out clipped when she tells him, “I’m working at the moment but maybe when I’m not working I can-.”

“Go back to the kitchen, Melissa. Now.”

I sound like an ass. My tone comes out hard but the woman obeys me like she was born to.

The real kicker is she doesn't look at me even as she offers a small smile to West and walks back into the house.

I turn to my best friend, the feeling of knocking his teeth out being more intense than usual.

"Get out of my house, West. Don't ever come back."

"Always the spoilsport, Aleksander. Always the spoilsport but not this time around. Me and Melissa clicked just now so best believe I'll be coming around a lot more", the fucker winks at me.

The second he leaves; my hand tightens around the newspaper.

The second I walk back into the kitchen to find West speaking to Melissa, the more the incessant headache bites my brain and fury courses through my veins.

It's that scent I shouldn't have smelled.

It's those witching eyes I shouldn't have looked at.

Because as soon as West leaves, I'm in my kitchen facing those witchy blue eyes that gaze at me startled.

She isn't smiling. No. That's for West.

She isn't excited. No. That's for West.

She isn't asking to refill my glass. No again that's for fucking West.

I eat the distance between me and her in one gulp, towering over her, looking over her.

Little minx gazes at the floor rather than at me.

"Look at me."

I bark with bile.

"No."

She bites back with more vitriol.

I should be amazed by this defiant streak in her. I am not.

My hand reaches out and touches her chin, making sure she gives me those eyes whether she likes it or not.

“What happened to staying away from me?”

Her lips move, my eyes move with them.

“I’ve kept my distance from you Si-.”

I have never hated the word ‘sir’ like I hate when this woman says it.

“Was that what it was back there?”

“What? Sir, I don’t understand-.”

“Stay away from West.”

Her eyes go wide for a second then her brows furrow like I’ve said something I shouldn’t have.

“With all due respect, Sir, I’m allowed to see whoever I want outside work.”

Curse her defiant mouth.

“Does he know you go snooping in other men’s bathrooms?”

“Sir-.”

Her scent leaks into my headspace swirling everything. I take another step forward, eating every distance between us completely, my chest heaves, my eyes get lost in the red haze blurring everything.

“Don’t test me right now, little stalker. You have no interest in West, your main goal is to watch my every move so do your job and quit playing other antics.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about.”

Her back hits the fridge.

This time there’s nowhere for her to run.

It’s me versus her. Again. In my house.

My hand reaches out to her cheek, the minute I touch her, she shudders, melts into my hold, and gets too comfortable being touched by a monster who’s too broken to be anything else.

“Liar. This is what I’m talking about, little stalker. You may give the fucker your eyes, give him your smile and offer him juice but he is not the one you’ve been paid to spy on, is he?”

He is not the one you wish to see naked, is he? He is not the one who has you soaking wet right now, is he? How did I know? Because you smell the way you did yesterday. Like your cunt's begging to be put out of its misery."

I step away from her.

So far away.

Her eyes are closed, the pulse in her throat throbs as her puckered nipples stretch through the material.

She's predictable.

Just like any other woman enamored by Aleksander Volkov. Pathetic.

"Stay away from West."

I turn around and leave.

Half an hour later while driving, I'm still nursing a boner from a pathetic maid who's enamored by me.

Who's pathetic now, I wonder.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 84

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

"You've never been gone this long and to sound like a complaining and concerned sister, I'm worried Ale. The kids have been asking for you", I hear the pain in her voice of having to repeat the same conversation with me and I try to be gentle with my next words.

"I know. I know but this is the last trip, I promise. This is the last thing I've gotta do before I see my babies again."

The pain in my throat throbs as the cool air from the night assaults my shoulders and arms.

"How long?"

Another lump grows in my throat.

"I don't know. I really don't know Athena."

“You wanna tell me what you are up to this time around?”

“I can’t.”

I can’t call Kat and tell her. Or her husbands.

I can’t shout to the world that he is alive either.

“I had a feeling you’d say that. As long as Yan is with you, that’s all that matters. He is with you, right?”

You mean butchering the bushes while he’s been giving me frustrated looks during the few days we’ve been here? Then yes. Yan is here. And he is not happy.

“Yeah. Can I see them?”

“Sure, one minute.”

She cuts the call.

I would have settled for a video call but that would risk her seeing the place I’m at or nosing around together with our mother to find out where exactly I am in New York.

It takes another minute before Athena sends like five videos and picture after picture to my phone.

I open the first video.

‘Liam had a bit of a rough day after Ethan stole his Captain America doll, he made a fuss so I ordered an even cooler toy for him. Isn’t that right buddy?’

Athena whispers in the video because it’s four am in Sicily while it’s ten pm where I am.

My heart gets stuck in my throat as a few hot tears run down my cheeks.

‘Don’t worry, Ale. Of course, I’ll give him a kiss for you.’

And she does and my baby who is in a cute moo cow onesie I bought for him a few months ago stirs in his sleep but he doesn’t wake up.

She moves to Ethan who’s holding Millie.

‘And here are the babies who took after you instead of taking over my awesomeness. Millie taught her brothers to finger paint this week and they might have colored Brenda’s white new blouse. You should have seen them, Ale, they are even cheekier than you are. That’s it for tonight. Same time tomorrow or next week?’

I nod even though they can't see me or hear me.

"Mommy misses you so much, babies. So, so much", I coo and then I pause the video kissing the screen like I'm right there with them, sleeping next to them and listening to their voices.

I miss you all so much, my little angels.

More tears flow down my cheeks and I allow them to. My babies have always been my weakness no matter every fucking challenge the universe has thrown my way.

I'm in the middle of hugging my babies through the screen when my phone pings with a new text.

West: My ego's a little bruised that you didn't text first, beautiful.

I almost want to choke on saliva than the tears rolling down my cheeks.

Weston Marasigan, the playboy who happens to be Christian's friend, was only a means to an end.

If there is anything Christian Volkov, my Christian; hated was to see me getting cozy with another man.

When I eloped with Rhett...

He got jealous, he got violent and I'm afraid that's the only thing that will bring his memories and his love for me.

So?

I flirted with Weston.

I pretended to be interested in the guy.

All in front of my husband.

And you know what my husband did? He brimmed with jealousy, cornered me in his kitchen, before he made my pussy wet and disappeared.

Was I angry that he left me needy, hot, bothered and a mess? Yes, I was. But am I happy this shows a breakthrough in Christian coming back to me? Yes, I am.

I press on the message.

I'm about to reply to the text with something flirty when the phone gets yanked from my hands.

Thunder quakes outside with the promise of a heavy downpour.

I turn around, my back touching the rail of the balcony through the flimsy night gown I have on which is more of a camisole than a night dress.

This library is the only place I've been able to hide in. More importantly, it has no security cameras and no one ever comes here not even Maria.

Imagine my surprise when dark-brown eyes so dark they are almost frightening stare back at me, his hair is messy in that sort of 'I just rolled out of bed' look, his jaw that's covered with a well-trimmed gruff, tics as his eyes flick through my phone and then they land on me.

He's got a white tank top. One that shows his muscles and tattoos that get heightened with the dark.

His sweatpants hang low giving me a look at the Calvin Klein band around his waist.

The real reason I'm hanging on his eyes is because they display only one emotion and one emotion only.

Anger. Red. Hot. Blazing.

My phone in his hand, he takes brisk steps toward me and I take two back landing in the same position we were in earlier.

My back hits the cold metallic rail of the balcony. His whole figure clouds me and everything around me.

I don't even register it's started drizzling or that the rain is being pushed by the wind toward my back, my shoulders and the back of my hair.

'Christian.' I want to whisper. I'd go to any lengths to call him that but that's not who he is. Not yet.

"Sir."

I hate that three-letter word. Despise it. Resent it.

"You don't get it, do you, little stalker? You are not going to be the woman who changes him. He views you as another easy hole he can get access to. And if you are making it this easy for me, is that what you plan to do when he asks you to spread his legs for him? And

all for what? A few dollars? A good ‘I went from rags to riches because of my millionaire boyfriend’ type of story?”

He’s jealous.

This is how he shows it.

But damn do his words sneak all the way into my heart cutting me into pieces.

They feel like I’m being forced to chug acid down my throat.

He takes another step towards me, his chest bumping with mine, my hard nipples poking through my nightdress to his chest because I know he can feel it.

He can hear my teeth rattle from the cold. He can see the goosebumps litter my skin. He can see the rain drench me.

I think he’ll care.

He doesn’t.

On the contrary, he holds my phone to the side of my face dangling it outside of the balcony.

I know what he wants to do.

And this time? I beg like I mean it.

“Please don’t.”

That phone has our children, Christian.

That phone will help me sleep better tonight because it has videos of our angels, Christian.

One of his hands reaches out to my cheek, his thumb touching the tears streaking down my cheeks with the intensifying rain that roars and growls harder.

His eyes on me. No mercy. No remorse.

He drops my phone.

The phone makes a crashing sound with the pavement outside.

“No!” I shout, turning around to see it.

I can't see it. Not with the darkness. Not with the rain. I can't see... them. My babies. My hope. My only...

I have to get it.

I turn around but both his hands cage me against the balcony.

"Let me go", I sob. He doesn't budge.

"Let the phone go. Let West go."

No. I can't.

"Let me go!" I thrash and the minute that hand that touched my cheek earlier reaches out to touch me, I snap.

Pulling my elbow back, furious at what he just did, my fist collides with his cheek. Hard.

Surprise hits me for a few seconds. I might have heard him groan, "Motherfucker."

But the few seconds I have, I use them to get away from him, out of the library, down the stairs and outside one of the doors that lead to the patio.

The rain conspires against me, just like how the universe has always done.

My heart aches, my bare feet are cold as I step around the glass, frankly all of me is cold but I still look around.

"W-where is it?"

I cry.

My hair sticks to both sides of my face.

The grass only camouflages my phone the more.

I can't find it. I can't find it at all.

To make matters worse, Christian's voice growls louder than the thunder behind me.

"You shouldn't have done that."

I swivel around.

Christian is standing in front of me getting drenched in the rain too.

Yet the blood dripping from his nose catches my attention. I did that? I hurt him?

He walks to me.

I lift my hand to touch his cheek only for his hand, punishing and with intent to maim on the spot wraps itself against my neck.

“Christian? Ch—chri-christi...”

He can’t hear me.

I know.

I know he hurts people when he’s hurt. I know because I helped him get through that.

His hand squeezes my neck. Hard. Harder.

My eyes water. My nostrils burn trying to get as much air as I can.

Rain pours heavily between us as my vision turns blurry.

“Chri-”

It’s me. Your distraction. It’s me.

He’s not going to hurt me.

Christian would never hurt me intentionally.

“Alessandra!”

I hear Yan’s voice somewhere in the night.

‘Don’t hurt him, Yan. Please don’t hurt him. He’s not going to hurt me. Christian’s not going to hurt me.’

If he’s not going to hurt me, why do my eyes burn, why does my neck feel like it’s getting snapped into two, why is he not letting go and more importantly why do I give in to the darkness?

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

ALEKSANDER ‘CHRISTIAN’ VOLKOV.

I choked her.

I choked her.

I...

“C—cold”, she stutters, her limbs falling on her sides, her body falling to my chest.

“I know but you have to keep your eyes open for me, little one. Can you do that?”

I strangled her.

No easier way to even say this but I strangled my maid. Cut off her air. Went for her a neck like a sick motherfucker raging in a bullring.

Were it not for the bulky man in the rain snapping me out of it, I would have killed the woman in front of me.

And that?

That eats me alive so much that I can't breathe properly myself.

But I force myself to, anyway.

The situation calls for it.

My asshole-ness put her in this predicament and said predicament injects a copious amount of pain into my body it physically hurts.

She stands on the tiles on wobbly legs only for her brows to furrow in pain.

“Feet... hurt”, she mumbles.

My eyes rake over the tiles lining the bathroom and sure enough, there's blood near her feet.

Fuck, she was barefoot.

She might have stepped on something.

I'd look at her feet were it not for the fact that once I let her go, she'll fall because she's running a high fever that has her delirious and out of it.

“Here's what we are going to do, Melissa. I need you to hold on while we get rid of this, okay?”

“Mmmhmm.”

She nods, eyes still closed.

I grab the edge of her nightdress.

Same night dress that led to this mess. I saw her in my library and instead of minding my own business, I watched her kiss her phone, I yanked her phone away only to find out she was kissing West's text.

Then I snapped.

Jealousy consumed and ate me raw.

And here we are minutes later.

I pull the nightdress up her body as gently as I can.

I can't hurt her. Not again.

"Arms up, little one."

I want to say her name but saying her name right now feels more brutal of me.

She raises her hands; I pull the nightgown out of her body before said hands can fall.

Her tits kiss my chest and my hands glide down to her panties sliding them down her legs.

An act that feels like I've done it so many times.

Melissa doesn't flinch. She gets comfortable in the skin of the same wolf that bit her. That choked her. That gave her red angry marks around her neck.

My hands grip her thighs and I pull her off the ground making sure her legs entwine around my waist.

Her feet are hurt. She can't stand.

I'll have to carry her and hold her while we both get rid of that fever with a cold shower.

I turn the shower on and cold water strikes us both from above with no mercy.

"C-Christian...too cold...too..."

"We gotta stop the fever. I know it's too cold, baby but hold on."

She's been calling me 'Christian' since she opened her eyes when I sprinted up the stairs to get her to my room.

I'm not thrilled by the name or whatever thoughts she has inside her head about another guy but I'm not in the position to be...jealous.

I'm the boss who choked her.

As soon as she gets better, she should sprint the other way and leave. That's what a woman with scruples should do.

Yet...

"S-stay."

Her hands choke my neck.

I push her wet hair behind her shoulder and because I still can't see her neck, I grip her hair in my fist lightly, grabbing it in some sort of messy ponytail.

"I'm here, little stalker. Right here and I'm fucking sorry for this."

My fingers...

My fingers... all of them line around her neck in red-purplish marks.

Her pale milky skin looks like it was assaulted by some brute.

I am that brute.

Same brute she's touching, same brute that sinks his face into the crook of her neck getting engulfed in her lavender scent.

As soon as my lips touch her neck, obsession takes over and my need to protect her, protect her from myself even becomes as detrimental as breathing itself.

I lick the first red mark I see on her neck.

She shivers.

"Good." Her voice cracks.

I chuckle enough to assure her I'm not going to do anything bad to her.

I'm never doing anything bad to her again.

"You like that?" I ask.

She giggles while her fingers grip the hair at the back of my head pulling it.

“It ...tickles.”

She chuckles faintly.

And that faint chuckle does something to me.

Thunder quakes outside and every time it does so, her hips jump against my torso and I hold her close.

I lick every mark I put on her like it will erase what I have done.

I kiss what I think is the pain away when she holds me close mumbling the word ‘stay’ over and over again.

When her body temperature drops and her fever seems to have subsided, I walk out with her in my arms taking a towel and wrapping it around her.

Then I place her on the bed.

And I wipe every inch of her skin making sure not to touch her in ways my fucked-up brain would want to, because this woman, fever or not trusted me enough to let me bathe her, to let me touch her after what I did.

I put one of my shirts on her.

Once she’s out. Completely asleep, I kneel near the footboard examining her feet.

There’s a small cut on her right foot so I do what any man like me does when I have a cut, I take out a first aid kit, wrapping bandage around her foot.

She snores harder when I cover her and the urge to jump in that bed has never felt so great as it does right now.

I don’t let any woman in my bed. Poppy has never been in my bed.

Yet I want to keep the nosy little maid chained to my bed for a few days. Or more.

Even if it means hurting her in the process.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

“Christian.”

I touch his tats, I scour his chest letting every ridge of muscle, every scar of his imbue itself in me and remind me he's alive.

"You... alive."

My tongue feels heavy, like I'm carrying fifty pounds on it.

The rasp in my voice scratches my throat as I swallow saliva to make the parching stop.

He gives me his eyes. Brown in the middle with darkness wrapped around them.

He's always been like that. All dark on the exterior but a big brown teddy on the inside at least for me.

I smile, running my hand over his stubble, over his nose, over his lips.

"Lick..."

I want to lick your lips. I want to kiss you.

"Where does it hurt?" he asks.

Tears well in my eyes as I open my lips.

I want to say 'heart'. It hurts right there in the chest.

His breath skitters over my neck and my breath catches in my throat.

His lips touch my skin and I hold onto his bicep for sweet oh sweet relief.

"Christian."

I slur. I moan. I keen. I need more. More, please.

"More."

I beg and he doesn't give me more.

He holds me like a baby while words tumble out of my mouth and my head burns with whatever I'm assuming to be fever.

When I close my eyes, I hear his voice, "Sorry."

Sorry for what, Christian?

My eyelids twitch at first then daylight strikes my face and I yawn getting a little comfortable in the sheets that feel like heaven.

Opening my eyes turns out to be a bad move because as soon as I do the headache that rushes in feels like I chugged a whole bottle of Jack Daniels in one night.

I hiss.

Darkness settles in front of me before light and everything comes into sight.

My eyes linger on the man seated in front of me on a metallic chair opposite the bed that kinda looks like it will give in at any moment.

Memories of last night come to my mind and the first thing I do is retreat back to the headboard of the bed.

“Easy, easy, Melissa, I’m not gonna hurt you”, he assures.

That less baritone more vibrational voice elicited bitterness and sadness from me.

No but you did hurt me.

Memories or not, trauma on your part or not, you hurt me, Christian. You... you became Rhett and hurt me.

“Y-You strangled me”, I murmur and my voice comes out with more vitriol than necessary.

He looks at me like he’s wounded but I look at him and the pain and torture of this man not being my man hits me like a freight train.

Christian would never hurt me not in a million years. My Christian would never...

My Christian might be dead. Beyond reach now and whatever I’m doing is futile.

“I never meant to-”

“You broke my phone!”

You took my kids away. That phone had our texts, that phone had you in it too. That phone had my family. You gifted me that phone!

“Melissa-.”

I push the covers away, crawling to the footboard of the bed, before my legs step on the burgundy carpet and I stand in front of him.

“I punched you because you deserved it. I begged you not to drop that phone and you-.”

“I bought you four more. All of them the latest iPhones.”

My head throbs even more.

“I don’t want your phones. I don’t want those.”

My right foot hurts, why does my foot hurt?

The bastard in front of me notices it because his hands land on the back of my thighs and he pulls me to him so much so that I’m trapped between his muscular thighs.

“What can I do then? I made a mistake, Melissa. How do I correct that mistake?”

Remember me.

“You can’t because I’m handing in my resignation right now. I’m done working for you, sir.”

Tell me to stay.

Beg me to stay.

If you are in there, give me a sign. Tell me I’m not gambling away the time I should spend with my children with you.

I get my answer when Christian’s bedroom door opens and I turn around.

Dark blue eyes meet mine and a sloppy smile meets me.

Weston Marasigan looks over at me and eats the distance between us in seconds.

In a flick of a minute, his hand cups my cheek and he swipes my hair from my neck.

“Jesus Christ, Alek. You weren’t kidding when you said you did a number on her. How are you doing, beautiful? Anything hurt?”

Christian called another man for me?

Christian called another man to console me?

“I want to leave”, I mutter, my back to the man who’s far too hopeless to remember anything.

Weston stares behind me at his best friend.

I want to punch his best friend again.

“That’s what I’m here for, beautiful. My friend can be an asshole sometimes but he realized he fucked up so I’m here to clean up his mess.”

“I want to leave now. I’ll work for you, I’ll... take me out of here.”

Take me out of here, because I can’t make myself move.

I can’t make myself leave him even when I know it’s the right thing to do.

“Right away, beautiful. Right away.”

Wes stretches his hand out for me, I raise my hand ready to interlock it with his and be done with this miracle that has turned out to be a nightmare.

My hand never gets to touch Wes because Christian’s hands wrap around my tummy, pulling my back into him.

“Get out.”

The growl is loud and clear and by the look on Wes’ face, he knows he’s the one being spoken to.

“Alek, you choked her. You called me today because you lost control of a maid you’ve known for a week. This is for the best.”

“Get the fuck out of my house, Weston.”

“Alek...”

Wes slips his eyes to me, his smile impassive, his expression murderous.

Then back to Christian.

“This isn’t over.”

A minute later, I watch as Weston’s leather brown jacket disappears from sight and the harsh bang of the door hits my ears.

The asshole caging my legs with his and pinning my waist with his large hands turns me around.

My brain is still processing what just happened.

Our eyes meet. I’m angry, he’s fucking fuming as if he has the right to.

“No to your resignation. You are not working for Weston; you are not working for anyone else either.”

“Lucky for me, everyone’s got free will and I’m telling you right now, Sir, I’m done working for you.”

“Well, I’m not done with you little stalker. Not after a little game anyway. You up for one?”

“Sir-.”

“I’m even going to be a little generous and strike a deal with you. If you win, you get to walk away with Wes or whoever the fuck you want but I win? I win and you stay.”

My hands sweat; my throat constricts, the blood in my ears roars for me to stop this.

I don’t like the smirk on him right now.

I nod.

A yes? A no? I have no clue.

He pushes the chair he was seated on back, freeing me.

Then he stands up, walking to the door and locking it.

I watch with anxiety and dread as he walks to the windows drawing the blinds, keeping out the sunshine, keeping the world out.

I stand on wobbly legs as my eyes ricochet his every movement. He walks to the nightstand, opening a drawer and taking something out.

The minute my eyes catch on the silver revolver in his hand, fear and a lot more than dread rid me of air.

‘Christian.’

Instead, I say, “No.”

He goes back to the chair behind me, sits on it and pats his lap with the gun in hand.

I know what game he wants us to play. And there’s no way I’m playing Russian Roulette with him.

“You nodded, little one. Where I’m from that counts as consent. Either you sit on my fucking lap or I tape you on my lap.

Your choice.”

“Don’t do this.”

“On my lap. Now.”

My unsteady feet lead me to his lap and I sit on top of his thighs, my back to him, my body trembling.

“Russian roulette with a little twist. There’s one bullet inside the revolver and every time I roll it and point it at my head, there’s a chance that bullet hits me and I die first which makes you the winner. And if not, I’m the winner.

So, let’s change the rules a bit. I ask the questions with the gun to my head, if you lie to me little stalker, I pull the trigger.

You are free to do the same.”

I tilt my head to the side, my eyes filling with tears.

“Please don’t...”

He rolls the revolver and in a split second, he places the nozzle on the side of his head, smirking.

The bastard.

“I’ve choked you before. Yes, or no?”

What? I let out a shaky breath, my eyes widening.

“Sir...”

He presses on the trigger the sound of it almost stopping my heart.

The sound of it elicits tears and a wail from my lips. Like déjà vu at the church again.

“Stop this!”

“That’s not a yes or no answer.”

“Yes! Okay? Yes, yes you have! Stop this!” my hands grip the gun trying to rip it off from his head but he doesn’t let it go.

He doesn’t let it go.

“The game’s barely begun, little stalker.”

“We’ve met before, haven’t we?”

I’m your wife!

“Y-yes.”

I sob.

He doesn’t pull the trigger as his thumb reaches out to my cheek, lapping my tear and sucking it into his mouth.

“You don’t work for my mother. Yes or no?”

“Y-yes.”

“Who’s Christian?”

“Please”, I stiffen, I shake, my pulse accelerating at the seriousness in his voice and the threat that looms in his eyes.

“Anything. A—ask me anything else.”

I can’t tell you because I don’t know what effect it will have on you or your health.

“I don’t make the rules, sweetheart.”

He pulls the trigger; I flinch closing my eyes.

There are six slots in that gun. Five blank slots and one slot lodged with a bullet. He has shot twice which means there are four remaining.

And any of those four slots could have the bullet that will kill him.

“I’ll stay! I’m staying, I won’t leave. I’m staying so stop this madness... please stop this...”

“Who’s Christian, little stalker?”

His teeth grind in his mouth, his lips forming a harsh thin line.

He’s not bluffing even as his trigger finger touches the metal that could take him away from me any second.

He has me trapped. I can’t... I can’t... lose him.

“The man I love.”

“Good girl. One last question before we stop this. Am I or am I not Christian?”

“What?”

My chest rises and falls as I search his eyes.

Then in one lucid moment, he pulls the trigger again not caring whether he’s breaking my heart every time he does so, not caring whether he’s killing me too with this fucked-up torture.

Three slots remain.

My defenses crumble, my will to fight goes with the wind as I sniff back tears and murmur, “Yes.”

You are him.

His deadpan expression still remains locked but I’m grateful when he removes that gun from his head.

I don’t even realize I was on the verge of a meltdown until I slap him.

Until I slap his chest, until the sobs ball in my throat and my anger pushes me to hurt him like he just hurt me.

“You asshole. You fucking asshole! I hate you. I hate you...I hate you...I hate you so much!”

I fall limp into his chest, sobbing, smearing his shirt with snot. He holds me but that lasts for seconds before I feel his hand gripping my hair.

I’m straddling him right now. My knees bent on either side of his thighs, my face to his, my eyes on his, my breath fanning him. Us on a metallic chair.

He fists my hair with one hand pulling me away from his chest.

And it’s then that I notice fresh blood smarting his lips. He’s hurt, is he going to choke me again?

“Ask me, little stalker. Whatever questions you have for me, ask me before I take what’s mine.”

“H—how?”

Do you have your memories? Do you remember me?

“Simple, your pussy weeps for me the way my dick does when you are near and it has barely gotten hard for anyone in the last two years. Yesternight, you were begging to be fucked and these... these pretty tears you have for me right now confirm what we already know. You. Are. Mine.”

I don't get a word out because his hand and that gun I loathe appears in front of my face and right in front of my mouth.

I look at him and he barks an order.

“Open up.”

And I shamelessly open my mouth, letting the cold barrel of the gun hit my tongue and the tangy taste of silver accost my taste buds.

“Suck.”

I suck. Greedily. Hastily. Wishing it was him instead.

He pushes the gun even deeper and my pussy clenches wishing for the real thing, knowing it has been too long since she got any action.

I buck my hips against his pants and every time the fabric of his pants hits my clit, I moan around the gun and Christian smirks encouraging me.

I should be asking myself where my bra and panties are and why I have his shirt on.

I should be asking a lot of questions right now but desire and the need I have for this man for two whole freaking years engulfs and takes my sanity away.

I should be ashamed. I'm not.

He doesn't make me feel ashamed.

I should be frustrated when he takes away the gun from my mouth leaving me yearning for more.

But I am not.

Not when we hold eyes and the gun disappears between us.

Not when I feel the cold metallic exterior of the gun touching my throbbing clit and rocking every nerve ending in me.

Not when I hold his shoulders as he teases the gun near my entrance making sure he reads every tiny expression that creeps up my face.

“One week with you and all I ever want to do is sink into this tight heat and remember what nirvana tastes like. A single glance at these eyes and I knew they were going to be the death of me. Fucking blue. I hate blue but gotta admit it’s my favorite color since you came here, little stalker. Those eyes, that mole on your jaw, that ant-shaped birthmark on the base of your spine, these lips, that ass, this cunt. They are mine. We are going to fuck. No, to put it mildly, my dick is going to take what I’ve been waiting for for two years without knowing and afterward, we can talk about why I know things about you that I shouldn’t be able to. I know you yap when you are nervous, I know you don’t like cussing in front of toddlers and I know... I know just how much seeing me hurt hurts you.”

He pushes the barrel of the gun inside me in one single thrust then leaning in to bite my earlobe, he orders, “Cry for me, sunshine.”

Then he goes ahead and pulls the trigger.

I don’t cry.

I scream for him instead.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

ALEKSANDER ‘CHRISTIAN’ VOLKOV.

Instinct.

Primal, depraving instinct.

I might not know what the me in two years ago looked or behaved like but I’d never relied on instinct like I did with this woman.

And this instinct?

It ticked my brain all night, pushed me to edges no man would tolerate and drawled out every little obsession, every dirty thought crossing my mind and everything society would shun upon.

And this defective brain?

Right at the last second when I had decided enough was enough. That I’d let the maid walk out of here with Wes for a few days, this defective brain had pulled up a memory.

Sunshine blonde hair in my fist.

Ass in the air for me.

An ant-shaped birthmark on her back.

Pretty tits cupped by my own hands.

My own dick sinks into the warmest and tightest hole I'd ever come across.

And blue eyes gazing back at me from a mirror moaning the words 'Christian' over and over.

Moaning for me. Crying for me.

Yet that wasn't the real stunner in the tidbit memory.

The real stunner was how it felt at that moment.

How it felt like touching her, listening to those cries of hers, feeling her pussy draw me in deeper and suck every ounce of restraint from me.

That's what it feels like right now.

Like my heart is soaring over cloudless skies.

Like every thought process in my mind revolves around her.

I have questions. So many fucking of them.

But instinct and staying celibate for two years makes me as giddy as a kid who's tasted that first cone of ice cream.

I need more.

I'm taking more.

I want to relive that memory again.

Her bent for me, her crying for me and my whole body out of sorts like I just ran a marathon and won.

My fist in her brown hair, same hair we are dyeing back to blonde as soon as my dick grows tired, I hold her the way Da Vinci must have had when he realized the Mona Lisa painting was going to be his best seller.

No, not a painting.

Da Vinci sure as hell didn't think of claiming every hole in his painting. Not that it had any.

But that's what's running in my mind. Claiming each one of her holes.

Her baby blue eyes are on me, angry, scared but most of all she's thrilled.

Thrilled that she's still alive while I fired a gun inside her?

No.

That's not it.

My little stalker is stunned that she's still riding my gun like a whore while I thrust it into her.

My little stalker is a bit shy that her pussy is swallowing something so dangerous, something that could end everything in seconds.

I pull out only to push back in as her nails dig into my shoulder right through the fabric that's my shirt and into my skin.

"That's it. Come for me, baby girl. Come for me."

Her pussy weeps, the sound enough to make me a happy fucking man.

"Fuck... you", she writhes, her hips bucking against me.

I dig my face into the crook of her neck, letting that lavender baptize me again before I latch onto that tender skin that still has my marks.

Her whimpers, her scent, the claws she's digging into my skin, it all feels like muscle memory.

I have fucked her before. Knowing me, knowing that feeling from my memory, I must have fucked her a lot if she faked being a maid to get close to me.

"Soon, sunshine. We are fucking soon."

The whole day or more, pretty. The whole day or more.

When her breathing catches and I feel her juices leaking out of her cunt to my hand, I know what happens next. Like I've seen it a million times.

Her nose scrunches, her bottom lip trembles and those goddamn eyes turn an even brighter hue of blue.

Then like my cute little slut, her cunt pulls the gun's nozzle in and my pretty maid comes for me.

The thought of Wes or any other man getting to see this makes me homicidal.

Those thoughts of me enjoying spilling blood flog my mind and I embrace them like one decisive fucker.

There's a reason I bought that revolver against my mother's knowledge.

My mother abhors violence.

My nightmares teach me that violence is as trivial as breathing.

Right now, right here, I'd absolutely kill a man for her.

I pull out the gun from her pussy and I suck her juices off of it while she watches.

"Don't... you are insane. That thing is loaded it could go off at any..."

"It's not loaded, sunshine", I growl licking the last of her juices from the metal and discarding the gun somewhere across the room.

"You taste like goddamn honey. So, fucking sweet. So fucking addicting, little stalker."

I savor her taste and my left hand still holding her in place, my right hand reaches out to her cheek.

To those plump lips.

"I'm gonna take your ass, cunt and this pretty little mouth. Not necessarily in that order. The only courtesy I owe you is to make you choose. What do I claim first, sunshine? My ass? My cunt? My mouth?"

She thinks for a minute.

I want to make the decision for her but she has to think she has some say in this.

She has to think she has some power in this.

But the truth of the matter is, once I start, I won't stop for anything, not even her pleas.

Sunshine looks at me and her breathless tone of voice umps the boner I'm stacking, "Mouth."

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

Manic eyes the color of heavy nimbus clouds lock on me but I'm too gone, too obsessed, too enflamed to get scared or back down.

The Alessandra that killed a man a few weeks ago and spent the night crying in the shower for months for this man cheers deep from inside me.

I kneel on the floor, wet, debauched, needy, ready to be ruined, excited.

Slowly and nervously like this is my first rodeo, my eyes look up to him and the methodical way he gets rid of his shirt.

His tats greet me and I want to lick every scar and remind him more that I own him.

My eyes scour down that tanned skin, down to the ridges of his carefully sculptured abs, all the way to the V lines that disappear in his pants.

I know how big he is.

I've felt how big he is so many times than I can count yet nothing prepares me for the sight that hails me the minute he unbuckles his pants and his length, hard, steely, huge in girth and width springs free.

Two years. Is it possible for things to change? Is it possible for a man to grow in...

His hand slides from the top of my head to the hollow of my cheek and then down to my lips.

"Open."

It's not an order.

It's a threat. You either open your mouth or I open it for you.

Swallowing saliva to tone down the hard beating of my heart does nothing to counter the fear that paralyzes me.

I haven't sucked a dick for too long. Hell, the only dick I've ever sucked is his and I wasn't exactly pro at it.

"It's bigger... than last time", I utter and it comes out as a whine.

The words fly right through him as he taps his dick on my lips ignoring everything I just said.

"I've fucked this mouth so many times too and I know you can take it, sunshine. Open up for me."

My pussy clenches, my clit throbs and my mouth waters.

Nervous at first, my hands reach out to touch him but he stops me.

“You’ll get your fill of me later, little stalker. The only thing ticking my brain right now is those lips around my cock and my come filling your throat”, his voice deflects to a darkened whisper.

I open my mouth, my eyes on it and slowly, teasingly, I wrap my lips around the crown, licking the pre-come and relishing his taste inside my mouth.

One lick and greediness sinks its fangs deep into my skin.

I suck the tip, bobbing my head forward to take another inch that’s hard and throbbing with detailed veins.

Christian groans and I smile. Or at least try to smile around his dick at the fact that after all these years, I’m the only one who gets to draw out such a reaction from him.

He said it and I heard him loud and clear. For two years his dick hasn’t been inside or near a woman not even his fiancé and the truth of that makes me hum.

“Keep teasing like that and you’ll be on your knees longer than we both intend to. Hollow your cheeks and loosen that jaw. Suck, sunshine. Suck or I’ll remind you how to do so.”

I swallow another inch of him but I don’t suck.

I’ve always thrived on ticking his every single button.

My eyes gaze up at him and he smirks knowing what I want.

I’m not going to suck. I want you to use me. Remind me how good it feels to be Mrs. Vitello Volkov.

The grip he has on my hair tells me he’s already caught up to what I’m laying down.

And this man?

My man?

He doesn’t take it easy. He doesn’t hold me gently.

He thrusts into my mouth in one go, pulling out and not giving me a moment to take in a sliver of breath before he pushes in again.

I gag, I moan, the lapping sounds of my mouth taking him in are the only thing echoing around the room. That and his endearing words which have a sharp contrast to the monstrous tinge his eyes have now taken.

My jaw starts to hurt but my core? Yeah, she's practically wailing a 'fuck yeah'.

Tears sting my eyes and in seconds, they are falling down my cheeks as Christian comes down my throat and dares me to swallow it.

Despite the tears and the rugged breathing coming out of me in shallow pants, that doesn't deter him from stopping.

Not by a long fucking shot.

Five minutes later, my back is on the bed and my head is hanging by the footboard as I take him again in my mouth.

He takes and takes and takes. And leaves nothing in me.

He meant it like he said it.

He was going to take every hole I owned and use it thoroughly.

And I have no protest when it comes to that.

I have no protest when he places me on the center of the bed, takes my legs on top of his shoulders and instructs me not to move them from there unless he tells me so.

I have no protest when he says, "I thought I'd fuck this cunt first but the way it's leaking for me? Sunshine, my cunt is begging to be devoured."

I'm a mess when he single-handedly pulls me up from the bed with my thighs practically sitting on his shoulders, my upper body in mid-air and his face buried between my legs.

I run my hands in his hair and it's just as silky as I remember, just as soft, just as familiar.

He takes my throbbing clit in his mouth, sucking, licking till the building pleasure presses my body for release. Till it pulls out incorrigible slurs from my lips.

When he chuckles calling my pussy pretty, his breath alone is enough to send rivulets of pleasure coursing through my nerves like meth.

Then he skates down the slit between my folds, biting my folds because he can, because everything is his and he understands that.

I'm his buffet and the way he looks at me? He'll eat this buffet till he's full.

A few minutes with his tongue teasing my entrance and his teeth doing unimaginable things to me has me coming and seeing the Milky Way all the way from where I am. Whether or not there's an opaque ceiling on top of us.

He licks down every inch of me before he drops me on the bed.

I'm beat. Done. Deflated.

I try to remove my legs from where they are hooked behind his neck and on top of his shoulders and Christian bites my right triceps.

"Don't even think about it."

"Tired...", I shudder, full words escaping me.

"But we've barely begun, little stalker. I've barely torn through this pretty cunt."

My cheeks heat at the word 'pretty'. I've heard the word 'pretty' so many times but coming from his lips.

Yeah, this man makes every word in the Oxford Dictionary look sexy. Hawt! And definitely sexy.

"You like that?" he teases, his crown rubbing through my folds and I squirm, my back arching from the bed.

"Mmmhmm...please...please."

"Please what, sweetheart?"

"I want it... I want it so much, Christian."

"Say it again. Say whose cock you want inside you? Say whose pussy this is?"

"Y-yours. Yours. Christian." I whimper trying to move forward and end this torture.

"Damn straight you are. Damn straight she is."

That's the only warning I get before he thrusts inside me, tearing through muscle, filling me to the brim, stealing my breath.

"Your tight little cunt is swallowing me whole like she knows who she belongs to. I bet she wants to be fucked so good till you are screaming for me to stop in that sexy raspy voice of yours."

Thrust.

I'm screaming in pleasure.

Thrust.

I'm crying with happiness.

Thrust.

I'm coming and leaking like a broken pipe.

Thrust.

I'm pulling him inside reveling in the feel of him hitting that spot that only he has a map too.

Thrust.

He moves rough and fast, matching the incessant sound of my pussy screaming how much she likes him.

Thrust.

The pleasure weaves through me like a Category-5 hurricane quite literally and figuratively.

I come enough to drench us and the bed.

That makes Christian animalistic growls vibrate even harder into the room as his fingers dig into both sides of my hips.

"A squirter?"

The same look he has on his face is the same face he had when he repeated the same words years ago.

When he made me squirt for the first time.

"You are killing me, sunshine. You are fucking gutting me with the surprises."

"Surprises?" I manage to moan out, "W-what surprises?"

"This body that I want to mark all over. Which is a huge surprise because I've never been this hungry to brand a woman's skin before. This cunt that wraps itself around me taking me home like it knows who her daddy is. And those tits? But the best of all? I know those whimpering lips will be the final nail to my coffin."

Another thrust and I feel myself getting horny again. Another plunge into me and I feel another wave of orgasm about to take me away.

And it does.

As soon as sweet oh sweet euphoria seeps up my spine and makes my toes curl, my eyes start to dim as a smile dusts my lips.

Take me now, Lord and I will still die a happy satisfied woman.

XxX

I'm sore.

My muscles are weary.

I feel weird.

Yet my only concern is the empty room I'm standing in.

No Christian. No scent of his. No sight of him.

Everything from yesterday feels like a dream and it shatters me.

I've tolerated being without him for two years but waking to an empty bed again aggravates and brings out depressing emotions from that chamber of my heart that I locked for my children's sake.

That chamber of the heart that gave me thoughts of jumping with my husband to the other side of hell the day he died.

Fleeting hopes have me moving out of his room and running downstairs.

I'm almost to the kitchen when...

"Slut much?"

I don't have to turn around to know who's talking.

Yet I turn around and Luna eyes me with disgust as she peruses my outfit... or over the shirt I'm wearing that clearly belongs to my boss.

"Excuse me?" I heard her. I'm daring her to say the same thing again and she'll be missing a few of her teeth in the next few minutes.

“I mean I know you had a crush on the boss but opening your legs for him like some common whore off the street? Damn, Melissa you are working overtime to watch and make the boss satisfied, aren’t you? But I’m wondering what our real boss will say when she finds out you’ve been seducing her son.

Do you think Lucia Volkov will promote you to super spy or... make you fall off the face of the planet”, she cackles, I’m about to lunge for her when an elderly woman appears from the study beneath the staircase.

“Stop it, Luna.” Maria says but she also gives me a once-over.

“Stop what, Maria? I’m saying it like it is. She thinks she’s won the jackpot walking around in the boss’ shirt like she owns the place.”

Maria looks at me and her words dig a pit in my heart. ”Madam Lucia Volkov hired us for a reason, Melissa. To report everything her son does and not to sleep with the boss any time the boss has a small argument with his girlfriend. Because you know that’s what you are, right? A means for him to distract himself when things go sour in his relationship.”

I open my mouth and words get stuck in my throat.

Luckily, the ringing of the phone coming from the front of Luna’s maids’ uniform saves me from trying to defend myself.

Luna takes the phone call fast, her eyes on me.

“Y—Yes... I understand. R-right away, S-sir.”

With trembling hands and the confidence she had earlier, disappearing like vapor into thin air, Luna hands the phone to Maria and the same happens to Maria.

She goes pale. Her eyes go wide. Both she and Luna look at me. Then like robots, they walk down the opposite way – which is funny because the opposite way leads to the foyer and down to the main door.

“Melissa.”

I turn around so fast with my hand on my chest.

“Jesus Christ, you scared me!”

Yan’s scowling expression doesn’t change as he tips his head signaling, we have to talk.

I follow him right past the living room, out the kitchen and all the way to the garden.

The garden is the only spot outside the house that acts as a blind spot.

Yan turns around, pissed as always.

“This is not going to end well.”

“Yan-.”

“He choked you, Alessandra. And if I wasn’t there-.”

“Why didn’t you kill him?”

Yan runs a hand in his hair, pacing in front of me before he glares at me with flaring nostrils, “My job is to protect you. If that man dies, you get hurt and I fail to do my job.”

“Thank you.”

“I did it for you. God knows, I hate that bastard for shooting me two years ago and I hate him even more because we are here and you are-.”

“He’s starting to remember.”

He remembered me and I know it wasn’t a dream.

Yan scoffs, “Is that the sex talking or the real Alessandra talking? I say we walk away from this, Alessandra, his mother is a threat if she’s willing to...”

Yan’s lecture is interrupted by the ringing of his cellphone.

What is it with phones ringing today?

Yan takes it out and mutters a bored ‘hello’. Then that ‘hello’ turns to a scowl when he hands me the phone to speak to whoever it is at the end of the line.

I hold Yan’s phone to my ear.

“I expected you to be in bed not fucking barefoot in my garden and your thighs exposed to my gardener, little stalker.”

Christian?

“You left. You don’t get to order me around after you left me high and dry.”

His deep chuckle bids from the other side and makes my tummy tingle.

“That’s such high talk for a woman I knelt for today while pumping saline water up her ass and plugging a butt plug up said ass.”

My throat constricts and the weirdness from my stomach is back and sure enough when I clench... I can feel the rubber or whatever it is shoved up my ass.

“You didn’t.”

I gasp. Oh, he did.

“I meant it when I said I was taking every hole you owned, sweetheart. You passed out before I could claim your ass but tonight? It’s me and you in the sheets again, baby.

Now I’m a patient man but not when it comes to you apparently. Go back to the house, rest and stay the fuck away from the gardener or I’ll have to castrate him with those fake shears he’s been carrying around. He’s not fooling anyone that he’s a gardener.”

“If I don’t?”

“That motherfucker eyeing you like you are his next meal dies whether he saved you or not.”

He has cameras here too?

Where?

I look at Yan.

The man on the phone speaks, “I’ll be home later.”

“And I’m expected to sit and wait?”

Home? He hasn’t said ‘home’ in so many years. Right now it sounds like... like a dream.

“Yes.”

“I’m not your whore. You are not going to fuck me and then prance around the city with your posh girlfriend when you are done with me.”

“You think I prance?”

“I think you are an asshole for leaving without saying a word to me.”

“What words did Christian say to you the first time you fucked?”

My heart collapses as I take in a fistful of air.

“I told you... I said I had unleashed a monster and y—you said ‘not a monster, baby but a madman who found his favorite brand of crazy. T-that’s how it feels when you clamp down on me and suck everything off my body.’ You said that.”

“See you tonight. Wipe those tears because I’m coming back for you, baby girl. Stay the fuck away from the gardener.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 89

ALEKSANDER ‘CHRISTIAN’ VOLKOV.

“To sound like a cliché Liam Neeson movie, I will find your family, I will hunt them down, I will gut them like pigs and tape you at the front seat to watch the whole thing. Whatever contract you have with my mother is over. Do we have an understanding? Now get out of my house and give Maria the phone.”

I recite the same thing to the old maid and not a shred of pity strikes me at the thought of giving the woman a heart attack on the spot.

I’d be lucky if she fell on the spot and I got to see her lifeless body on the floor through my camera feeds but that is pushing my luck.

So instead, I watch Maria and her colleague exit my house, leaving the Blondie stranded and dumbfounded at what just happened.

That is until the man who is too big and dumb to be a gardener pulls her away to the garden and lucky for me and unlucky for the bastard, the old soundless CCTVs by the maple tree work just fine enough to see what is going on in my garden.

Two maids gone.

And now? Now I’m dealing with a gardener that I can’t fire because the Blondie seems to know the guy very well.

And if the gardener knows the Blondie, then he knows me and my past.

For my sanity, I’m praying to the Big Man above that the gardener and I weren’t friends in my pre-amnesia life.

I can’t be friends with men I intend to kill soon.

My head pounds slightly but I keep it under control.

My neurosurgeon and his PhD brain warned me of one thing when it came to memories.

I can't push myself to remember.

Pushing leads to chances of my brain shutting down. Pushing leads to chances of my brain losing the last ounce of control it has and bouncing off its rails.

So?

Like a kid, I'm sipping back my memories into my head with a sippy cup.

Bit by bit.

I'm Christian. I'm her Christian. Same Christian who called her 'his brand of crazy.'

My fingers twitch, the smirk playing on my lips hiding the anarchy roaring from the back of my head.

Two years without memories only for my maid to wreck everything I know.

My right foot taps on the metallic floor beneath me, my eyes looking at my reflection as one of Taylor Swift's snazzy music flogs the elevator, I'm currently in.

Every now and then, I check my phone.

I check the camera feeds that have my Blondie moving around the kitchen looking for something to eat.

The thought of me eating my favorite meal located between her legs sends a rush all the way down to my cock. I'm still so hard for her. I'm still too mesmerized by her pussy.

The elevator doors part and I walk into the vibrant penthouse like I own it when in reality I don't.

Only a fool would invest in this side of town.

The penthouse is nice. Not bad for a million dollars. Yet come the next few months, this side of town is scheduled to be demolished but the man who owns this building doesn't know that.

He wouldn't know a bad investment if it slapped him in the face.

"Ben... Ben, no! S-stop... stop!"

The feminine shrill hits me from the living room just in time.

“Stop playing hard to get, Cass! You want this. Y-You want this, little girl”, the man I’m looking for speaks.

I make my way to the sleeping quarters, the moans and the screams from the bedroom like a cooling balm to my soul.

I step right into the room and the image I find is enough to wish I had bleach to wipe my eyes.

The fat fuck is on top of a shrieking brunette. Butt-naked.

The brunette shrieks, alerting the man on top of her that I’m in the room with him.

Benedict Woodcock, Poppy’s darling father, turns around and gets off the girl quickly covering himself as if what he’s stacking down there is magazine-worthy and not an eye sour.

“Shit! Alek... Aleksander? This isn’t what it...”, Benedict goes to defend himself.

I cut him off,” This isn’t what it looks like? This isn’t the infamous Benedict Woodcock taking advantage of an underage girl while his wife and daughter think he is in Tokyo?”

His face pales at once. He knows the severity of my statement.

“She’s twenty-one. Cassie’s twenty-one. Tell him, Cass.”

The sweat smearing his body, the chest hair starting to stick to the rest of that greasy chest, Benedict knows something’s up.

I turn to Cass with a smirk, “You have the tape?”

The woman I hired to be here, to act this out, to lure this bastard into this trap, covers her body with the white covers and jumps from the bed.

She’s four feet three, petite and in anyone’s eye, she looks sixteen rather than twenty-three years old.

“I recorded everything like you instructed, boss.”

I turn to Ben. Dear ole Ben.

“What’s going on here?! What the fuck is-.”

“How about you give us some privacy, Janine? And send me the tape asap, darling.”

She winks, turning around and walking to the living room.

I turn to the man gazing at me like I'm about to crush his favorite Porsche.

"Whatever the hell has gotten into you. Snap out of it, boy! You don't treat family like this. I'm your father-in-law for God's sake."

I pace the room, thrilled at this game they've been playing around me for two years.

Can't believe this idiot tricked me too.

"Right, right. Father-in-law. Same bastard who's been whispering down my ear about how I'm mistreating your daughter for two years. Same bastard who's been calling me crippled at every board meeting Volkov Industries holds."

He chuckles, his potbelly moving like I'm the comedian who's entertaining him for pennies at one of those shitty bars downtown.

"You are threatening me because I point out a few flaws you need to change? Everyone knows you became damaged after your accident Aleksander. It's not new to anyone. I'm like a father to you, it's my duty to want what's best for you."

What's best for me?

I almost chuckle.

"You know I thought long and hard about who I wanted to start with first. The spoilt Madonna you have for a daughter, the backstabbing best friend, the conniving mother or dear ole Benny?

You wanna know who I chose first?"

"Aleksander-."

He murmurs.

That's right, old man. Let what's happening sink into that thick head of yours.

I pull out my gun from the back of my waist.

"Aleksander, you are sick, you need help, you are not thinking..."

"I've been thinking straight since I sunk into a certain woman roaming my house", I pull apart the gun, reassembling it in seconds.

"Funny enough I remembered bits about her in a week. And I've stayed with you fuckers for two years and I can't remember shit. I know how to pull apart this gun and assemble it

in a matter of seconds, matter of fact I remember how to use every gun available to man and yet not a shit about you.

I know where to shoot you, enough to make you bleed and suffer but not enough to kill you. And if I do kill you, I know how to handle your dead body without leaving any prints in my wake.

And yet? I don't remember a single thing about you Benny. You, your daughter...none of you ring a single memory from me. Care to tell me why that is?"

"You are—are sick. T-the doctor, you can call-."

"The doctor's on the list too but that's not what I'm here for, Ben. We are here for you, the man of the show."

I lift my arm, my gun aimed at him on the bed.

The thrill of watching him die ticks like an addiction inside my body.

"I'll—I'll tell you everything. I-I'll... anything you want to know... anything."

He's desperate. He'd tell me everything.

But I can't handle everything at once. My brain can't.

And every information about myself is seated in my house, in my shirt and she'll tell me everything slowly by slowly.

"Then tell me Benny, what's my name?"

"W—what... alright... you are Christian... Christian V-."

That's the confirmation I needed.

To know the maid is the real deal. To know the maid wasn't lying.

The rest of Benedict's words die when I fire my gun where he is seated and his screams fill the air.

The white covers turn red in an instant.

"Fuck! Bloody... you—you shot me! You... help me! Someone please..."

"My personal doctors are on their way to patch you up, Ben but I can't guarantee your leg will make it."

You'll be crippled for life, you prick.

"F—fuck you! Fuck... you..."

"I'm not the one who's getting fucked, Ben because you speak a word about this to anyone? I release your rape tape to the world. You know how these things work, whether the allegations are true or not, your Woodcock name will come crumbling down like a house of cards.

I'm watching you, you fat fuck, you step out of line and I'll take both of your legs next time we have a chat."

My phone pings and I know I already have that tape in my phone.

Three more people to go.

XxX

I shower in my own room. My little stalker isn't in said room but that doesn't matter. She'll be in it soon.

When I'm dressed, I make my way downstairs, heading to the now empty maids' quarters that only have her sleeping form occupying one of the rooms.

I pick her up from the bed effortlessly and her cheek plasters itself on my chest before she stirs awake.

"Christian?"

"I'm right here, baby. Go to sleep."

Her eyes smart with sleep but she squirms in my hold looking at me with those baby blues that glint with the lighting.

"I was waiting for you."

"Because you missed me?"

"No, because I need you to remove whatever the fuck you put inside me, out of me! I would have told Yan to remove it but-."

"Who the fuck is Yan?"

"Ooh the gardener. His real name is Yan."

I despise this Yan guy already.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 90

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

“You know I couldn’t do it without any help and since Maria and Luna just disappeared-.”

“Maria and Luna aren’t permitted to step anywhere near you without them losing their heads.”

He says it so casually I almost feel pity for the two ladies but that pity eviscerates when I remember they have been lying to my husband and working for Lucia Volkov all this time.

I’m glad they are fired.

“Ass up for me, baby.”

My eyes slither their way to his chest because this man knows how much of a piece of art he is and how his chest calls me to like how the sea calls to Moana.

“Were you with Poppy?”

“No.”

“Then where were you?”

“Taking care of things.”

I don’t like it when he says ‘things’. What things? Things that could take him away from me?

Dangerous stuff?

“Can we have that talk right now? Christian, your life has been turned over in a night and I know that kind of thing isn’t easy on your brain, on your health and I... do you... do you remember everything?”

His chest heaves but otherwise that cool expression is still marring his face.

“No.”

Ouch.

“W-what do you remember then?”

“You. I remember you, sunshine. I know you matter. That’s all I fucking remember.”

I smile.

Just a small smile that evokes tears of happiness from my eyes.

“That’s... that’s okay too. It’s a start.”

It’s the beginning of a new dawn and the fulfillment of that hope I doubted when I saw him.

He remembers me.

He’s going to get better and I’m going to get him home.

“Yeah? Is it okay if I get what’s mine right now too?”

My ass clenches around the toy inside me.

It’s all I’ve done.

Squirmed and roamed the house all day waiting for him to get home. To end this debaucherously aggravating need.

“Take it out then we can negotiate on what happens next after this.”

“I’m ready when you are, little one.”

I roll my eyes, turning around.

My hands cover the glass wall of the shower room we are standing in as I jut out my ass to him.

I hear a grunt from behind me, before I feel the warmth of his erection covering my arse.

Spreading my arse cheeks apart, his hands dust over the toy, the mere contact he makes with it robbing me of breath.

“T-take it out”, I breathe.

Just take it out once and for all.

“You sure? Baby, you are already drenching at the thought of me filling this ass.”

“Christian!”

I huff. He mumbles something that has me slapping the glass all the more.

His fingers dig around the plug shoved up my ass and in one soft tug he pulls it out as the saline water inside me pours out and drips down my thighs.

My stomach deflates and the sensation that had dug around my ass from being filled fades and fills me with

disappointment.

I'm about to move my legs, take my hands off the transparent glass shower wall and stand straight intending to call this a night when Christian's muscular thighs touch the back of mine and I hiss through my teeth at how instant my nerves stir haphazardly when we touch.

His leg pushes my legs further apart.

Any words about to spill out of me are hushed by his chest covering my back, his hand coming to my front and sneaking between my legs and his voice accosting my ear.

"I lied, sunshine. I'm not in the mood to negotiate over what we've established is mine already."

He bites my shoulder before he pushes one finger inside my ass, stretching me and making me feel the burn in an instant.

The burn eventually mounts to invigorating pleasure when he adds another finger stretching me wide, preparing me for what's about to fill me to the brim and I can't complain.

I can't complain at the bloodthirsty way his dick plunges into my ass all at once, nearly killing me and reviving me at the same time.

I can't complain when he goes in hard, I can almost feel him pressing my pussy and the rush of emotions about to drown me.

The sounds of him slapping my ass, groaning and moaning echo around us like a cacophony of twisted musical notes.

He ravages my ass with long, harsh strokes that my face bumps with the glass at every movement. At every in and out. In and out.

Oh Sweet Jesus.

His speed picks up and I clench around him tight with pleasure and an exasperating orgasm about to hit me down like a tsunami.

My heart nearly spills at my feet at how hard it's pounding, my pussy nearly sings in soprano at how good it is and my ass?

I'm rewarded for being a good girl, when he empties his load inside me.

He pulls out just for a second and his come drips out of me trickling down my thighs.

As if he's been calculating this all day, I feel his fingers on my inner thighs, gathering his come before he pushes it back into my ass.

The snarl he lets out tells me he's enjoying this sticky hot mess more than I am because again, he pushes back inside and we both get off from the beastly insatiable need coursing in our systems.

"Christian?"

"Yeah, sunshine?"

He barely looks at me as I stare at his reflection.

"This is not what normal people do on a normal Tuesday evening."

He ignores the statement and my heart leaps at the half-naked man who's standing behind me working his hands in my hair like it's his first time in kindergarten learning how to finger paint.

"Normal is overrated, little stalker. You know that and perhaps I would have settled for another round but my baby says she's sore and we've gotta respect that."

"We? You and who?"

He smirks, I catch the smirk from the mirror as he holds my hair in a ponytail.

"Me and the dick that gets hard every time you look at us the way you are doing right now."

I raise my hands in mid-air slightly huffing, "There's nowhere to look! Your chest is on display, your veiny hands are distracting me, I can't take a shower because you don't want me to—and you are currently dyeing my hair. Everything right now is as weird as it gets."

He ties a rubber band around my hair before he takes another slab of that dye smearing it over my hair with the dexterity of a tailor cutting through precious fabric.

"Were we not weird in the past?"

I laugh.

We were. You were.

“Most times, we were.”

“And other times?”

“You were driving me insane”, and just because I can see how important it is for him to dye my hair, I clear my throat saying, “I dyed my hair brown so that I wouldn’t be recognized by-.”

Your bitch of a mother.

“I know.”

And he’s calm about it.

“You know your name. At least you half-believe what I’m telling you is the truth. Why haven’t you searched about yourself? About me? About your accident?”

“I don’t need to because you are here.”

“Christian it’s not that...”

“Teach me.”

“What?”

He pauses and our eyes meet in the vanity mirror above the sink.

“Teach me to remember. A few sentences I said, a few things I liked, all that shit. But most of all? Teach me to remember how I fell for you, how I controlled it, how I loved you without feeling the urge to cage you in my house and wanting to kill fake gardeners. Teach me to remember our first kiss and what it meant to you. Me fucking you right now is not based on the feelings I had for you. I don’t feel love for you, sunshine. And I know that’s what we had but what’s digging in my chest? I need you; I physically cannot think for a second without wanting an in to you, I’m obsessed with you like I’ve known you for eternity and that might explain the pictures I have of you naked in my phone. I might have not fucked you slowly and gently like we used to but I don’t want to ruin the first kiss you get from me after so many years, so teach me. I’m a fucking terrible student but I’ll learn.”

My heart rattles. Too overwhelmed and stunned.

“You never said you loved me. In the past I mean. You expressed it a bit vaguely, something between the lines of ‘I fuck you like it’s my last time to do so’ and ‘I kiss you like a prepubescent learning how good, lips feel like’. That’s the first lesson, Christian.”

“And the second?”

“You fuck me like you did two years ago. You fuck me just like how I like it. Fast and rough. And wait, when did you take pictures of me?”

XXX

Fucking is fun.

Especially when the tattooed Goliath of a man makes you come hard you end up drenching the sheets twice.

We did it in the bedroom, in the shower after he washed me from head to toe, at the foot of the stairs when I woke up early and he caught me.

In the kitchen when I... point is I can't stay in his mansion fucking him forever.

And he agreed to that too, albeit grumpily.

So today, I chose his favorite thing to do hoping it will jog a few memories of his.

“Twirl for me”, he barks.

I giggle.

Christian Volkov, my husband, loved shopping.

Being dragged from store to store, no.

But telling me to wear different clothes so he could compliment my ass and boobs? Now that was his favorite thing to do.

Even when I was pregnant... he wanted me to try everything that showed my bump. Everything that reminded him he was going to be a dad.

And you are a dad, baby. To two boys who resemble you, no matter what Thena says.

I pull the neckline of the dress up hoping that my big boobs won't spill out of the dress.

Not that there's anyone here to witness it because AGAIN he rented a whole store for us.

My eyes fling to him.

He's seated on a couch in front of me. Dominant and in a suit that's rippled by his muscles.

“Ask nicely and I’ll think about it”, I challenge.

He runs a hand over his jaw, his eyes on my chest for a deadbeat before he sighs.

“Turn around and show me that heart-shaped ass. Please.”

In heels, I turn around and just to tease him, I bend down like a stripper on a pole before standing upright again.

“Damn.”

“You like the view?” I tease.

“You know I do.”

“Want me to try another dress?”

“You can try all the dresses in here if they’ll bring your ass out like that.”

One last look and I pick the mini dark dress hang by my right.

I walk down the runway to the dressing room giving my hips a little sway to rile him up because I can.

Once I’m in the dressing room, my hands reach out for the zipper at the back of my dress but the door behind me creaks.

I smile, turning around.

“I knew you couldn’t help yourself fro-.”

It’s not Christian.

Christian didn’t look at me like he was piecing the missing pieces to his Jigsaw puzzle.

Because that’s how the woman with the sunken eyes looks at me.

“And I knew my Aleksander wouldn’t hurt my father unless some bitch was corrupting him.”

Poppy fucking Woodcock. In the flesh.

“Aleksander?” I grimace,” Your Aleksander? Is that what you say to console yourself that my man loves you?”

Poppy doesn't back down from her bullshit, "I don't have to console myself; I'm wearing his fucking ring."

"A ring you bought yourself and fabricated a whole fake story about your engagement? I have his name and his children and we sure as hell know he is not your fucking Aleksander."

"Is that so? And you think he is yours? If he was yours, you wouldn't sneak your way into his life as a maid. If you thought he was yours, you would have told him about his children. They might call you the Cosa Nostra leader but I see a weakling. You think I don't know? It's funny how money can get you everything including a few maids' testaments on what's going on in Aleksander's house. From what I gather, you are scared of Lucia, aren't you? You know she'll crush you, you know that man will choose his mother over you come any day. If she finds out you are back in her son's life, she will..."

"And you are here to threaten me before you tell her? That's unoriginal babe."

"Get out of the way, Alessandra. Go back to your gangster life and leave things as they are."

"Leave my husband to you, is that what you are saying?"

"I'm asking nicely. Because if I wasn't nice, I would be threatening to end your little guarded family back in Sicily. What were their names again? Ian? Lan? Aah, Liam, Ethan, Millicent. Adorable chubby kids who are lucky enough to have a mother. Some kids don't have mothers. Hey, some kids don't even make it to..."

I swing my elbow back and I punch Poppy Woodcock's botox'ed face.

She staggers back to the door, her nose bleeding before she slides to the floor blacking out.

She is not going to ruin this for me. She is not going to threaten my kids.

I take my purse and pull out the phone that Christian bought for me a few days ago.

"I knocked out, Poppy Woodcock. We might need to get rid of her sooner than I expected."

Yan doesn't speak and when he speaks, my day gets worse.

"Catelina grew suspicious over you not being in Italy for weeks so she sent her husband."

Shit.

"Which one of her husbands?"

“Maximo and you know he is an Italian and a Russian enforcer for a reason. Maximo knows something’s up; Athena also called a minute ago. Alessandra, Maximo is coming to New York to figure out what’s going on with you.”

No.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 91

ALEKSANDER ‘CHRISTIAN’ VOLKOV.

She’s become an addiction I can’t shake off. And she knows it.

My hands strangle the steering wheel as I make a turn to the shady side of New York where burglars and mass murderers hang out like old buddies from the army.

My eyes linger on the phone as I step on the brakes and park my car in a dark alley.

Another glance at Alexia and the gardener walking and talking in my backyard and I eat down all that bitter bile rearing its head up my throat because she needs someone to keep her company in my mansion while I’m away.

Whether or not that someone is a six-foot fucker who hates me and secretly loves her.

My eyes zero in on her face and I zoom in just to see how that blonde hair looks as perfect as I remember in my memory.

I dyed every inch of that brown hair she had back to blonde. My blonde.

I know she’ll be happy when she hears me call her ‘Alexia’. Her name. I remembered it in the morning when I ate her out for breakfast but I couldn’t really tell her that seeing as to how my mouth was otherwise occupied.

Sighing, I switch my phone off, pocket it into my pants and take my car keys out before opening the door and getting out of the vehicle.

Dirty pothole water splashes my shoes.

The little shindig in the form of a stripper’s club I visited a while back, seats across the road just as majestically as it did a year ago when Weston and I came to visit.

I know the fucking weasel is here.

He didn't come to visit me at work like he always does. And trust me, I was waiting for him.

Part of me figures that maybe Benedict yapped about me slowly getting my memories to Weston but the other part of me knows Benedict is scared and scared pigs tend to stay out of the limelight till things cool down.

The bar across the street flickers in a green-blue neon light.

The word 'Hooker', an unoriginal title in naming a stripper club might I add, illuminates the night the more my feet walk towards it.

I tip my nose at the bouncers, walking inside and they don't say a word because they know me. They know I would get them fired in an instant if I wanted.

'Taste of You' by Rezz and Dove Cameron echoes from the speakers as men, both young and old, sit in opulent couches, watching the naked strippers in six-inch heels dance along the metallic poles that run from the ceiling to the floor.

The last time I was here, West brought me to have a 'good time' and not a pint of my blood rushed to my dick.

I ended up leaving a bit earlier because the free asses being handed out like free candy on Halloween weren't doing a single thing in making me aroused.

"Hey, handsome. Wanna take a lap?"

I don't spare the broad with the sultry voice and huge silicone tits a glance as I weave through the naked waitresses, my eyes and goal at the grandiose spiraling staircase leading to the VIP section.

On the outside, this place looks like it's owned by a couple of junkies but on the inside, it's a maze of a well-constructed interior design.

Two steps and I take in a lungful of air.

Three stairs in and my hands fist.

Two years I have been trusting the wrong crowd.

Hell, I wouldn't even trust my own cat if I had one because everywhere I fucking look, betrayal lurks.

When I reach the VIP room, I don't knock.

Shrill screams and ‘what-the-fucks’ flood the room as the naked bitch who was just sucking West’s cock pulls away and the other well—bitch riding his face jumps to the next couch and picks some flimsy g-string covering herself.

The irony being she’s self-conscious about being seen naked while she works in a quote-on-quote stripper club.

I step aside letting the ladies scurry their way out of the room.

Weston Marasigan... best buddy... best friend... supposed man who’d give his life for me... man who sat on my dining table enjoying my fucking breakfast and dinner... he is a Judas, is what he is.

A traitor I never saw coming. My mother is on the list too and she was the least surprising.

Because Weston? Weston is...

“You are a spoilsport; you know that right?”

He tucks his cock back to his pants, his shirt ripped to expose his chest.

“I barely know anything about myself, Wes”, I joke.

And he smiles. Smile while you still have teeth, Wes.

Because yeah, it’s funny I’ve been the idiot. Bet that’s what’s running in his mind right about now.

He takes a bottle of Macallan from the table, slurping at least a quarter of it before he stands up.

He walks around the coffee table, full of all kinds of booze and drugs, finally standing in front of me.

Cocky, eyes brewing, he guzzles down another pint from his bottle asking the question, “To what do I owe the pleasure, Alek? You back to ask for forgiveness after you kicked me out of your house? No... no. Let me guess, you just realized the maid isn’t worth it and that no woman can come between our friendship?”

He baits me.

A single second to rile me up and make me drop my guard.

All it takes is that window of a single tiny second for him to smash the bottle of whiskey against my head.

By the time I try shielding away from the impact and the sudden brutality, the damage is already done.

My head pounds, my hearing grows loud and static, I stumble to the floor and kiss it in mere seconds as shards of glass, the stinging alcohol and blood... fuck my blood pool around my head.

I can hear it.

I can feel it.

I can predict what the next few seconds of me going under will look like.

It starts with a headache and I try to move... fuck, fuck, I try to move my legs, my body.

Damn it, Christian.

You are not going out like this. You are not...

I see his shoes on the floor and then slowly he crouches to be at a level with me.

His hand digs into my hair and the bleeding cut on my head together with my fucked-up brain scream in agonizing pain.

“You are one tough fucker, Christian”, Wes chuckles.

Any attempt to talk to him has my head singing in a twisted lullaby.

Can’t fight.

Can’t get this pathetic body to move.

“And the bane of my fucking existence. You remember, don’t you? I know you do, I knew Lu and I had a problem when I first saw the maid. Ooh where are my manners?

When I first saw your wife. I recognized her the first time I saw her in your house. Whether she had brown hair or blonde or orange. It’s not hard for me to forget a face.

Especially a face that belongs to someone I was supposed to kill two years ago. I tried flirting, tried to get rid of her from your house but you are one obsessed man when it comes to that woman. Memories or not”, he cackles.

The word ‘wife’ rings louder in my ears.

Wife? My wife. She is my...

“Look at you, so pathetic, so idiotic, so... Lucia always praised you, loved you more than she did me. My son this...my son that. What if she could see you now? What if she could see her mighty Christian Vitello Volkov kissing my feet right now?”

Another cackle.

Another burning question filtering my mind. Wife? The pain bites. And it's not just my head it's biting.

“You are probably too out of it to understand me but I see your eyes, Christian, I know you can hear me and I don't think your weak brain can handle what I'm about to say.

I saved your mother when she was on the run. Volkov industries? The company you run with pride? I gave your mother the investment! She started everything from scratch with my help! My help!

Sure, they said I was fucking mad for loving an older woman but me and Lu? Yeah, your mother understood me in a way no woman did. But see she got greedy. Like my fucking family, never enjoying the much they already had, Lucia wanted her children by her side.

Carissa was dead. Catelina had the Bratva and that enforcer protecting her all day and night, so there was no way of Lu getting her daughter back but you?

Lucia wanted you most. After everything I did for her, she wanted you. Her son. Her pride and joy.

She threatened to leave me if her precious Christian wasn't by her side. And voila, an opportunity presented itself.

Your woman. If Lucia took your woman away from you, she would find a way to get back into your life by pretending she was there to comfort you and help you get over your grief.

A simple 'mother-son' reunion. The perfect place to do it was at the wedding, too much chaos, too much cover, no one would know we hired a hitman to take out Alessandra Pallis.

Wait... wait this is the funny part. Your mother ordered your bride to be murdered right in front of you while said bride was five months pregnant.”

“P—pregnant”, I slur.

A ball of guilt constricts my throat and my brain adopts a painful pulse of its own.

“You got that right, Christian. She was pregnant. With your kids. You should be thanking me. I betrayed the love of my life for you. Because let's be honest here, your bride wasn't the problem, you were the problem. You were the reason why Lucia thought of leaving

me. So, I gave the hitman different orders. Don't kill the bride. Kill the groom. Shoot him in the head. A bullet to the head would kill him for sure. But I underestimated you, didn't I? Normal people die from getting shot in the head, but not you. Not the Cosa Nostra top dog. Not even a dog in the literal sense because you are a cat with nine lives. I've tolerated your grumpy shit for two years because of Lucia but with the cat out of the bag, your nine lives just ran out buddy. I'll kill you, dispose of you, lie to Lucia again that something went wrong like it did two years ago and you died. Afterwards? I'm going to fuck my woman, Christian. I'm going after your bitch and those two boys of yours so there'll be no trace of you to ruin my life."

Pregnant.

Bride.

They all come in a red haze as my mind spins trying to grip one memory after another.

I see the blood... I remember the blood on her white dress. The pale look on her makeup face... I see my hands on a big bump. Rubbing it, feeling the life inside...

Pregnant. Little nurse swollen with my kid inside her. Church... bride... wife...

The bastard stands to his feet, the pain pokes my brain with a hot spike as I will myself to breathe.

Weston swings his right leg back about to kick me in the ribs like a dog on the floor when I hold his foot.

Resilience shooting in my blood with lethal doses, I pull his leg in one powerful tug that sweeps and sends him falling on the floor like a log.

The bastard falls on the glass, a few sinking into his back, not enough to kill him but enough to wound him while my lower body starts to work.

I'm on my knees.

'My type's a stubborn blondie I know who's pregnant with my kid, the only woman I'll let touch me when I'm hurt, the only woman who has me riding economy class so that I can get here on time and grovel if that means she forgives me for any type of shit I've done to her.

Her name's Alessandra by the way but that fucking name is a mouthful, I'd rather call her mine. She has an ant-shaped birthmark at the base of her spine too.'

'No, I don't.'

'I've held you in ways no man has, believe me I know all the birthmarks peppering my little nurse's skin.'

Another memory assaults me and I groan out loud keeping the pain in.

Weston is almost to his feet, I grab the rest of that half-broken Macallan bottle pinning it to his neck, holding him down.

She was pregnant.

I left... and she was... I left her alone. I left my kid alone.

"Where is she?" I bark, "Where is my kid!"

Sadness and guilt compete in my weary body.

Wes coughs, "You are losing your shit, aren't you? You are going crazy. You are dying and nothing makes me-."

I stab him in the neck, watching his eyes dim, watching his shaking hands trying to stop his jugular vein from leaking his fucking useless blood.

'What did we say about making fun of your body?'

'That I shouldn't do that.'

'Why?'

'Because I'm the prettiest pregnant woman to walk the earth. Whether I have stretch marks or not.'

'And?'

'Whether I weigh and look like a baby hippo, it won't matter because I'll be your baby hippo.'

'Damn right you are. Fucking sexy is what you are.'

I stab his chest. For the pain I'm feeling right now.

I stab him again and again and nothing is erasing the fact that I gave up on her, on my little nurse when she needed me.

My kid... she didn't have a child, she didn't mention a child. Did our baby make it? Did he-.

The door creaks open behind me and I stand up from the mess turning around with a bloody broken bottle in my hand and a throbbing headache summoned from hell.

“It’s about fucking time, Christian. Put the bloody thing down for God’s sake.”

“W-Who?” Are you?

“Kai Davenport. Your savior. Alessandra is not going to like this at...”

I eat the distance between us in seconds, situating the bottle near this Kai guy’s neck.

“I get that you are handling your trauma in your own fucked up way but touch me like this again and I won’t care about past friendships and all that jazz”, Kai grits.

“Wife. Take me to...my wife.”

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 92

ALEKSANDER ‘CHRISTIAN’ VOLKOV

Give up.

“You don’t look too good, buddy. A quick stop at the hospital should-.”

My heart squeezes and breathing becomes near impossible as the tap, tap, tap of my brain continues.

“Drive.”

Annoyance breaks through my voice and I have to swallow down the waves of nausea and guilt swerving through me like an umbrella left to the cold winds of the desert.

I’m bleeding. I’m aware.

I’m dimming. I’m aware.

I killed a man tonight and I’m covered in said man’s blood. I’m fucking aware.

Yet my eyes squint at the road ahead.

Gotta make it to her.

Gotta make it... and ask about our kid.

Gotta ask for her forgiveness.

“Still the same prick I see.”

The Kai guy attempts conversation.

I don't speak a word.

Speaking means losing energy, losing energy means giving in to that creepy voice telling me to close my eyes for a second.

And closing my eyes for a second? Yeah, I got this nagging feeling, I won't wake up again from that nap. It will be game over and I can't do that to her.

I can't let that pale look ever linger on her face again. She can't... she can't lose me again.

Kai Davenport drives like a maniac. Unhinged, carefully composed within a well-tailored suit that costs more than mine, the man reeks of that subtle madness that serial killers have.

He saw me kill. I enjoyed killing because the bastard deserved it. But Kai? Kai didn't flinch at the scene or at the blood. To him it was a normal day in the office and I wondered are these the kind of friends I had?

Give up.

Another wave of migraine hits me but I grind my teeth in my mouth locking that shit up.

We are almost there.

I know these roads too well to know soon enough we'll be pulling up in my mansion and I'll be seeing my Tesoro.

That's all that matters.

Don't let that brain eat you, don't let that brain shackle you to your death.

Open your eyes, Christian. Goddamnit, stay alive!

Kai pulls up to my estate, driving up the rocky driveway to the mansion up above like he's been here two times or more.

The only thing humming in my mind is survival.

That survival however turns to an animalistic growl as we both stare at the Range in front of us.

The Range has the headlights on and three figures in the night that look like they are in the middle of an argument.

I recognize my blondie and a surge of relief cools my raging blood.

What has me seeing red though?

The two men by her side.

I know the gardener. The lizard fuck follows her everywhere.

But the other man? I don't know him and I don't appreciate kindly to how he has his hand on my woman's wrist trying to pull her inside his vehicle.

Kai scoffs with mischief uttering something between the lines of, "Of course there had to be another type of shit drama" and "You've gotta be kidding me".

The rest I don't quite hear.

Why?

I'm out of the car garnering as much strength as I can to walk.

The first three steps have me hissing "fuck my life".

Everything hurts.

From head to toe. From muscle to muscle...

"Blo..."

Blondie.

I slur. I think I shouted it loud enough because I saw her eyes on me and they brimmed with tears in an instant.

The other two men eye me as well.

And the scowling one gapes at me like I'm the Great library of Alexandria itself being reconstructed to what it was centuries ago.

"Motherfucker", this new guy hollers.

But my attention shifts to the woman running to me in the dead of the night.

“Christian? Oh God. Oh my God, what... what happened? You are...bleeding. We need to take you to the hospital. We need... Maximo, Yan, help me! Help me now.”

My woman holds my cheeks, wiping the blood with her fisted palms.

“You are okay... you are...”

“Pregnant.”

I mumble. Those tears, those eyes... I never meant to...

In a split second, Alexia is taken away from my sight by Yan who holds her waist and cages her with his arms.

How dare this bastard think...

“Let me go! Let... me go, Yan! I command you to let me... Maximo? Maximo? Please? No. He doesn’t remember, he’s hurt, he’s...”

Yan holds Alexia as she fights in his grip.

I take one step to stop him but this Maximo guy shoots up like a bulky tree from the Amazon right in front of me, blocking my way.

He’s bulky sure but I’m at least a pound bulkier than him.

I’ve killed Weston.

Pretty sure my own mother is dying in my hands too once this headache stops and my thoughts are aligned.

Hence, I’m not above slaying this Maximo guy. Not after everything I’ve gone through tonight.

“You Volkovs have deals with the devil, don’t you? First my wife and then... fuck.”

Maximo’s words come accompanied by his fist.

Unlike earlier when I couldn’t predict Wes’ attack the fist that connects with my face right now is something I see coming but with my mind still processing things at nanoseconds, I can’t dodge it.

It stings over my jaw, over my head in particular and I fall with one knee to the ground, hands fisted.

“No! Y-You stop this! He’s hurt! He’s bleeding! He’s... please, stop this Maximo! Yan? Let me go! Let me the fuck go right now. He’s going to kill him... Max is going to-”

Maximo circles me like a fuming predator on prey, he kicks my ribs and I should kiss the ground.

I should fall to the ground and admit defeat.

But she is crying. Like she must have cried when I died on her at that altar. Pregnant. Alone. With child. Our child.

“You either kiss the ground or stand up, Volkov! There’s no in between. You either fall back to being the scared fucking ten-year-old boy locked up in the basement by dearest daddy or you pull yourself together”, Maximo snarls still circling me.

One knee to the ground, the other knee hoisting me up, I can’t fall. I can’t leap into nothingness when I have a woman crying for me.

Maximo flings his foot again.

Same spot. Same ribs.

I don’t move.

My eyes are on the blondie sobbing and thrashing in Yan’s arms. Her lips quiver as tears mar her cheeks.

She mouths the words ‘Get up’ but they feel so distant.

I can’t hear her over the roar of my own blood in my ears.

“Fall down, man. Don’t make me beat the shit out of you. Fall down, like you fell down when everyone needed you. Fall down and embrace this little life you’ve built yourself because this is how cowards do it. They hide, they retreat. Fall. Down. Like. You. Have. For two years.”

Another kick, I cough out blood.

I don’t fall.

“Yeah you want to play tough guy, Volkov? You want to play tough guy right now instead of when she needed you the most? Because that’s the worst thing a coward can do. Get a woman pregnant, disappear and pretend you don’t remember. You look at her and look at her good. Give up because you gave up on her. That woman needed you to hold her hand when she went into the maternity ward with labor pains. That woman needed you when two rowdy boys, your own spawns might I add, came to her life and made her life a hell

lot tougher. They are cute but they needed you. They needed their father. And where were you, buddy? Here? Playing what? A rich kid in a suburban mansion and a mentally ill mother? You either give up or you choose to stand Christian. I'm not patient enough to wait for any of those choices whether my wife will hate me or not."

Nurse.

Rhett Kingston. Rhett killing my sister. Me seeking vengeance and kidnapping Alexia?

It all comes in one blur after another. Blurs and tidbits of my memories flood my brain with no direction.

"And when you are back to this life you've created for yourself, I'm taking Alessandra from all this mess. She doesn't deserve this kind of torture. Hell, I'm going to match her up with one of Demetri's annoying brothers. They might be little pieces of shit but they'll-."

Demetri Sokolov.

"I hate that... fucker", I spit out the blood, wiping my nose with the back of my palm.

"I know."

Maximo says and the more he speaks the more his face becomes recognizable, the more the images start to form in my head one by one, the more the bitterness crawls up my spine.

I raise my knee from the ground and with every part of me hurting, I stand up.

Maximo DiMarco smirks at me.

I flick my eyes to the woman in Yan's arms who's stopped thrashing and is looking at me with a slight gasp.

Raucous and searing pain hangs a noose around my neck as I look at Yan.

He's the only guy I want to forget right now.

"Sicily", I utter.

Take my wife back home.

"Christian?" Alexia calls. My little nurse. My woman. Love of my life. The woman I dared to forget.

Her teary eyes search for mine and I avoid them completely as I order, "Now."

Yan nods.

“Christian? B-baby is that... is that you? Christian? Yan, let me go... just... I want to... I want to touch him, please just Christian? Please don't... do this.”

Her pleas fall on deaf ears when Yan covers her mouth with a cloth.

I don't think I'll ever forget the eyes she gives me when she passes out.

Cold. Detached. Angry.

Yan opens the car door and places her body in the back seat. A minute later, Yan drives the Range out of my estate.

I watch the car leave till it disappears.

I turn to Maximo, my whole body bruised because of his 'tough love' speech that has the stick shoved up my brain slowly clearing.

Memory after memory flows inside my brain like water to a creek.

My emotions constrict my throat as I gulp saliva and ask, "M-my... boys?"

"I'm glad to have you back from the dead, you prick. I knew a little roughing up would do."

Bastard broke two of my ribs or something more but the physical pain is nothing.

The real pain is repeating the words that I...

"My boys."

"Ethan and Liam Volkov. Both carbon copies of you."

I swallow hard. Ethan and Liam?

"A-And Millie?"

"She's all grown up. Kid almost reaches my knee and that's saying something."

Another lump lodges in my throat.

Fuck me.

"How much blood did she spill?"

Blood, she spilled for me.

I know a killer when I see one and my little nurse...shit, it's my fault. My fault.

"She was grieving, Volkov. Everyone dealt with it in their own way."

"How much?"

I grit.

"As about as much blood as the Cosa Nostra leader would. She's been the head since you died."

"No."

"It was all she could do to suppress the-."

"No", my voice comes out hard, "I never wanted this for her. I spill... I spill the blood, I get my h—hands dirty! Not her. Not my nurse. I never wanted her to take lives... I'll fucking take lives for her! I'll kill... she restores lives! She... she is not me."

Curse the headache.

Curse my slurring speech.

Everything in me breaks down like acid churning my organs one by one.

"If you ladies are done with the reunion, one, I suggest you get medical assistance and two? What are you going to do Volkov?" Kai's voice snarls behind me.

Too broken, both in and out, to think straight. The only thought ticking in my brain is...

End this.

Kill my mother. No prison is going to hold her for the crimes she committed against me.

Not when she messed with my woman and babies I never got to meet, never got to hold, never got to see how they came in this world, never got to hold their mom's hand and tell her she was doing great and she was a hell a brave mom.

All that time...

They say blood is thicker than water but they forgot to add the part where said 'thick blood' lies to you for two years and keeps you from what is yours.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 93

CHRISTIAN VITELLO VOLKOV

I'm looking at Maximo drag the dead doctor's body across the floor to dispose of it when my cell rings.

Blood smears the white tiles and it does nothing to dent my armor of a conscience.

I came for the doctor who lied to my face that I had an accident two years ago. Same doctor who works for my mother and has been giving me bullshit pills and another crap load of medical advice.

Did I make him stitch me up tonight and lie I would spare his life?

Yes, I did.

Did I shoot him at the same spot in the head I was shot at in that cathedral? I did and I ensured the doctor wasn't coming back from the pits of hell he was going to rot in.

The number reads 'unknown' caller but I know who it is.

My whole gut tells me it's her and I pick the call anyway because the need to hear her voice controls me like a puppet on a string.

I pick the call.

"You are back. I know you; I saw you and I knew you were back, Christian. Yet you pushed me away... Y-You let them take me away from you.

You know how it hurt losing you and you let Yan take me away from you. I don't care about what you are going to do back in New York but I was there. You could have... could have said something to me. You could have... could have...

It's wishful thinking though. I spent all my years focusing on you, breathing for you, telling myself I wasn't Alessandra without Christian.

The world wasn't complete without you. That's what I believed. Why? Because my Christian fought my demons, my Christian led me to my family, my Christian gave me what no man had.

Love. Comfort. Ha- Happiness. C—Children. But today? Tonight?

Maybe it's time I become a little selfish. I'm going to live for me, going to live for the babies I have abandoned for so long because of you.

They deserve my love. They need my love.

Not... not you. Because I fought for you, for two years I have fought for you, I have stayed strong for you, I have grieved for you and the first thing you get your memory, you push me away? You push me? Me of all people?

I'm tired. So tired. I want to be fought for too. I just want", a sob erupts from the other end of the line and I grip the phone hard as she continues, "I'm done. We are over, Christian. For good this time."

She hangs up.

A second later, a message litters my screen.

-345 warehouse, South Street Seaport.

'Your fiancé is waiting for you to rescue her.'

I should call back.

I should tell her that I won't let her dirty those pretty hands. I'm here. I'm back. I get to exterminate the monsters. And she does what she's always done, patch things up.

I should tell her 'We are not over. Not in this lifetime or the next, baby' but I grin at her message.

Still as feisty as ever. Still mine and I'll fight for you Tesoro.

Sending you home is fighting for you. I need you away while I get this shit done and dusted.

I need you, our boys and my girl safe from my mother.

Scrolling through my phone, I land on my gallery sifting through her pictures.

Her pictures will have to do for now.

Next time I'll see her, I'll be having her in my arms, making up for the nine hundred and thirty-seven days I've locked her away from my mind.

Maximo wraps the polythene around the dead body before he tapes it up.

We have so many things to talk about but I don't have time.

Not if I want to kill my mother, make it to see Catelina in Moscow and be home in Italy in two days begging for forgiveness.

“Kai’s men are keeping an eye on your mother. How are we doing this? Bomb? Ambush? I’ll even offer myself to kill the bitch if it comes to it.”

Two years later and he still speaks of murder like we are talking about lemon tea in a café in good ole London.

That’s Maximo and I should be concerned considering he’s now married to my sister but we are cut from the same damn cloth and I like the way his crooked mind operates.

“Too easy.”

“Slice and dice?”

“Too merciful.”

“Don’t tell me you are growing a heart for her right now.”

A heart?

The only heart I have is for Alessandra Vitello Volkov. And she’s currently dumped me so let’s say that heart is hollow at the moment.

“I am doing this face to face. Famiglia in famiglia.”

XxX

Tied to a chair in the middle of a rat-infested warehouse. Poppy’s snores echo around us as I crouch to the ground examining her dirty face.

I’m guessing my wife told Yan to do this.

Little nurse wouldn’t have had time to bring Poppy here let alone tie her because for the past one week I’ve been eating her cunt for breakfast, lunch and supper.

The fact that I fucked my wife without having my memories eats me the wrong way but we move on regardless. I’ll fuck her cunt for the rest of my years after this is done.

Ignoring the smell of urine, rust and something dead-probably a rat- I tap my hand against her cheek.

“Poppy.”

“Poppy.”

She stirs then takes a deep breath before her eyes widen as she stares at me horrifically. Brown eyes. She has bland brown eyes. And they are an eye-sore to look at.

I've tolerated those eyes for two years?

"Alek!" she wiggles, the ropes she has around her wrists and ankles dig into her skin the more.

"That... that bitch she... she punched me... she did this!"

That would explain the dried blood around Poppy's mouth.

"Your..."

Wife? My fucking wife, Poppy?

"Your... new maid. She... she is insane! You have to fire-."

I cradle her cheek. Play the role handed to me by people who took the right time and opportunity to control me.

"Take a breath for me, Poppy. I'm here to save you."

Hand them the lies they told me.

Poppy shakes her head with a smile. A smile of relief.

Because prince charming is here to slay her dragons. Little does she know the dragon is in the room with her ready to scathe her to the depths of eternal sulfur fire.

"I w-was so... so scared."

"I've got you, love."

The endearment has Poppy sobbing. Soon as I cut the ropes around her ankles and wrists, her whole body collapses into me.

"Please...please don't let me go. Get me out of here."

She sobs and her tears smudge my shirt, she pushes her body so close to mine I want to purge her out but I can't. Not yet.

When her sob fest stops and her self-obnoxiousness evaporates from her body, Poppy's hand reaches over to my face.

“What happened to your face?”

“Slight accident.”

“Because of m...me?”

“I would do anything to save you, Poppy.”

“I’m sorry. Sorry.”

Five minutes later, Poppy’s hand is still latched on my arm as I drive around Manhattan above the usual speed.

Patience. Control.

It’s all about that.

Buy Poppy’s tears, feed into her victim complex until we reach my house. Patience and control.

Twenty-five minutes later, I’m driving my car up the driveway.

“The doc is on his way to check your wounds out. The cops are also on their way to get your-.”

“No cops!”

Poppy screams and I cock my head to face her.

“This... is nothing. Celebrities have psychos who do this all the time. Stalkers, fanatics... Alek, I know you are worried but-.”

I’m anything but worried.

“Where I’m from this is labeled as kidnapping, Poppy. If I hadn’t found you, figured out you were missing, you would have been left rotting in that warehouse for days.”

Her fingers skim my arm even more desperately.

“But I wasn’t... baby, you found me. And the maid, is she... is she still working for you?”

“She left.”

“Then, see? She got scared, she ran, I’m not in danger anymore. Can we please forget about this?”

Are these the same lies I bought for two years? Maximo was right, I was a freaking pushover.

I grin. Assure her it's all good.

In return she smiles.

Then she unbuckles her seat belt, moves past the center console to kiss me and I dodge it by opening my side of the door and walking out.

She gets the message.

A second later, she's opening her side of the door and stepping out as I catch sight of the black Audi parked by the right.

Mother is here.

"Let's get you inside."

The ever-compliant Poppy Woodcock follows me inside not questioning a thing.

How did I find her? Why is her family not with me if she was declared missing?

But her daddy dearest probably has bigger fish to fry at the moment.

We make it past the foyer all before the sound of sharp heels cuts us off.

Formal, always formal.

Sophisticated, gotta be sophisticated.

That same hair she shares with Catelina, Lucia Volkov stares at the me and the woman behind me and gasps.

"Aleksander? W-What happened? P-Poppy?"

Aleksander? She looks me in the eyes and calls me a name she forged in all my documents for two years knowing she took my life away.

"Slight accident."

I give her the same answer I gave Poppy.

Mother dearest doesn't buy my lies and I gaze at her and dare her to question it.

Our eyes lock, her dark eyes, the same shade as mine, expanding to a horrific realization.

I can hear her body jumping into a frenzy of emotions.

See her hand drop the Prada bag on the floor as her chest rises with an inhale.

My birth name is at the tip of my tongue.

Christian.

Call me by my name, mother.

“Anyone want a drink?”

I don’t wait for their answers.

I head to my kitchen, take the champagne Maximo left for me on the kitchen counter and with the other three glasses in my hands I make my way to the dining room.

My mother walks in with her heart in her mouth.

Poppy well... she’s always been oblivious in reading the room.

The tension is almost flammable as I sit down. I uncork the champagne bottle with a pop pouring the bubbling liquid into the three glasses.

“Christian...”

My mother says it in a whisper.

Poppy gazes at her with a frightened look before she peers at me.

“I think I should have a shower before-.”

“Sit down.”

I bark.

Mother’s face falls as tears well in her eyes. And that’s about as human as she gets.

Because humans tend to do this, play the sympathy card when they are caught at their own game.

Shed a few tears, put on a sad face, ooze regret like you didn’t know what you did in the past was bad.

“Christian I-.”

“You sit down or I tie you both down in chains. Don’t even think of running, love because I’ll chase you and tear you to fucking pieces.”

My message is clear. If they run well...

Poppy walks to where I’m seated and pushes her chair out to my right seating down.

My mother shakes and plops to the seat on my left.

I take my champagne glass by the flute raising it in mid-air.

“Here’s a toast ladies. To the greatest heist in history. Stealing a man from his own life deserves its own type of recognition, don’t you think?”

I drink my champagne and it tastes like piss. I was never a champagne guy to begin with.

“I never meant to-.”

“More drinking less talking, love.”

Poppy drinks all of it. Spending the whole day and a few hours in a warehouse would cause dehydration.

Mother dearest drinks three quarter of the champagne putting her glass down.

“L-let me explain, please. What I did? I would do it more than twice if it meant you being alive. That is what a mother does, she loves her children, she protects her-.”

“Did you give Carissa up before we even met her because you loved her? Because you wanted to protect her?”

“Your father would have killed her!”

“Moretti killed me and Cat while you watched! Don’t give me bullshit about protection because you watched as your husband lay his hands on me every Wednesday in that basement and you did nothing.

You are not a mother, Lucia. That title was stripped from you when you left your kids to your husband’s brutality, when you let your kids move away from Italy while you went in hiding.”

“Christian...”

I turn to Poppy. She looks like she needs another glass to wash away the guilty and wary expression on her face.

“What about you, love? What was in it for you? Money? A little bit of fun in duping a man that he loved you?”

“No. It started like that. My father and your mother wanted to merge their companies and our marriage would ensure that. I did what I was told but I fell for you Ale... Christian. I—I loved you. I love you.”

A muscle clenches in my jaw.

“Love? All I hear is love so how about we put that undying love you feel for me up to test?”

I take the small flask from my pocket placing it on the table. It’s clear and the yellow liquid in it can be seen by everyone who’s seated.

“One of the three glasses was lined with poison before I poured the champagne. Cutting the long story short one of us has poison flowing in his veins. Poison that kills in five minutes unless the small vial of the antidote sitting in front of us stops the poison and the dying altogether.

The poison could be in me or it could be in one of you. Question is, will any of you take the antidote for yourselves or will the undying love you have for me push you to letting me have the antidote instead?”

Greedy hands latch on the antidote and I gaze at my mother.

It didn’t take a second for her to take the bottle.

“I was giving it to you”, she mumbles.

This woman has always looked out for herself and no undying love is changing that.

I don’t feel a morsel of remorse knowing she has poison in her veins and that the bottle she is holding with dear life has more poison instead of an antidote.

My work here is done.

Poppy screams, hauling herself over the table as she tries to fight my mother over the small flask.

All I know is, it ends in three ways.

My mother dying in her house of lies.

Poppy dying if she drinks the content of that bottle.

Or her surviving if mother decides to keep the bottle to herself.

I'm too tired of New York altogether.

Time to go home and face the wrath of a woman scorned. My feisty blonde.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 94

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV

A week. It's been a tornado of a week.

Yet at least I can breathe. Ethan and Liam have been smothering me with their company or more like hovering over me to make sure I don't leave them again.

Millie's been obsessing with everything Moana and today we all took a family trip to Centro Sicilia shopping mall buying everything Moana and everything Paw Patrol.

The kids fell asleep hours ago and right now well...

"Are you sure you are okay?" Brenda asks as 'Killing Me Slowly' by Bad Wolves rumbles through the speakers.

I take my tumbler and down that liquor like I need it, because yeah, I need it on a girls' night out.

"Don't do that. This is supposed to be fun. It's the whole point of being here."

"Having fun is not drowning in alcohol, Lex. It's okay to breakdown over everything that's-."

I raise my hand in mid-air stopping her.

"I'm not breaking down again. I've done so for two years and enough is enough. I'm okay, okay? I'm fine."

I'm completely aware saying okay twice shows how un-okay I am but who cares.

Thena and Brenda exchange looks of concern but by the time one of them says anything to me, I take a shot of tequila,

hands in the air, my feet leading me to the dance floor where 'Everybody Gets High' by MISSIO has taken over the speakers.

The news of Weston Marasigan going missing hit the tabloids last week.

A little info from Yan and I found out Lucia Volkov was burned to ashes in He-who-shall-not-be-named's mansion.

Poppy Woodcock was alive and breathing but with her father spending all the legal money he had on multiple leg surgeries, the Woodcocks ended up being bankrupt. A story of 'fallen from grace' and 'from riches to rags' all in a week.

I know He-who-shall-not-be-named was responsible for that.

I also know Catelina Di Marco Sokolov has been calling for days because she wants to convince me to talk to her brother.

And I've dodged all calls from her and from anyone associated with him because he is the one in the wrong. Not me.

He kicked me out like a dog.

I would have helped. I would even have killed Poppy but he just...

And that's not even the worst part. He didn't come for me.

He went to Russia; I know because Cat texted me about it. Cat is his family; I know but what about... I just thought me and our kids would be the first priority and he just...

Placing my empty glass on a tray from a passing waitress, I close my eyes, dropping my hands and running them along my hips as my head tilts side to side to the music.

The thumping of the music, the loud bass of the speakers and the blinking fluorescent lights send a neurotic shiver up my spine as I start jumping in heels.

My hair slaps my face and that increases the crazy need for me to smile and roar like an uncaged bird finally learning it has wings to soar.

My head throbs with euphoria and my body has a mind of its own as I jut my breasts out, swaying my hips from side to side.

The euphoric feeling slightly wavers when warm hands latch on my waist and rough denim tickles the skin on my tummy.

The dress I'm wearing is midnight black, barely reaching my thighs and if I squat or God forbid, bend over, my ass will be out.

The cutout of the dress on the waist was the sole reason I chose this dress. Slutty and the definition of 'living life on fast lane'.

Which is why I don't blame the dude in front of me gazing at me like I'm his next bounty on this wild night.

"You like party, bambina?"

He's a cutie, sure.

But his English is almost as bad as the sloppy smile he's giving me.

Yet I don't push him away. I nod. I encourage him. I move my hips against his lean hands and they feel awful.

Why? Because even with the alcohol all I crave is that musky and spicy scent that makes me delirious. All I want is huge, callous and rough hands that dig their fingers into my skin enough to remind me who belongs to who.

Hands that don't touch me like I'm a delicate china cup.

"You come a lot here?"

I could dignify the blonde man with an answer. Probably tell him to do more dancing and less talking but my words are cut short when my whole body becomes hyperaware of what's going on.

My body starts dancing in an act of chaos and rebellion.

I can feel HIS eyes. I know he is here. His presence has always been enough to wring me out of breath and right now that presence sears me hot like butter on a skillet.

Is he watching me dance with another man? I hope he can see it. I hope he can see my dress and understand what he lost.

Because you lost me, husband and you'll never...

The skinny blonde man rips his hands away from me as the lights hit my face with warmth the minute he ups and runs somewhere in the throng of people on the dance floor.

"W—what the heck?"

I slur. Did he just... leave me hanging?

Someone comes up behind me, and another rougher set of denim scratches my ass, I almost moan. Warm and huge set of hands fall on my waist before they slowly and punishingly trek to my hips holding me captive.

Hyperawareness digs its way up my legs, up my spine and travels down to my core shamelessly.

“That’s enough for the night, little nurse.”

His breath skates over my cheeks before his fingers tickle the column of my neck sending goosebumps and jolting electricity everywhere on my skin.

“Don’t. Touch. Me”, I grit but I’m not pulling away.

The thought of pulling away sends a gust of sadness my way.

“You lost the privilege of demanding things when you wore this and fucking let another man touch you”, he growls.

How dare he?

I take a step forward only to be hauled back to his huge warm chest in a thud.

“Let me go. Let me go like you let me go in Newyork.”

“Is that what you are telling yourself? It doesn’t matter now. I could give a shit less about what you think after your little display tonight, wife.”

“I’m not your wife. I’m not your damn anything.”

“Yeah? Want to test that theory?”

“I- I want a divorce”, the words feel like I’m sucking on a sour lime. The ones Liam hates with passion.

Because he did this... two years ago before we got to say our vows, this man had secretly signed the marriage certificate.

When he supposedly died, I put my signature on the other end of the dotted line becoming Mrs. Vitello Volkov.

“That’s cute. I also want to fuck you on this very dance floor to warn everyone who you belong to but I can’t do that, can I? Seems like we are both not getting what we want tonight baby.”

“Vicious-.”

Whatever he was doing to my neck halts altogether. The thick tension between us rises from zero to a hundred in minutes.

“What the fuck did you just call me? I haven’t been Vicious to you in a long time. Husband, baby, Christian, love of your life, owner of this delectable body, father to our kids not Vicious, never Vicious. My patience is running thin here, Tesoro, you come with me or we stay here and I eviscerate any man looking at you the wrong way, it’s your pick.”

“Fuck you.”

He pushed my hair behind my shoulder, his lips taking over where his fingers left.

He breathes on my neck, traveling up, up, up to my ear lobe. Sucking my lobe before licking the sensitive spot behind my ear, he whispers, “I don’t bluff Tesoro you know that. And the first guy who dies will be the blonde Peter Pan touching what wasn’t his a minute ago.”

“I hate you”, I grit when all my resolve disappears into thin air.

“I know. Luckily, my love for you is enough for both of us.”

That’s the only statement that has me blindly allowing him to walk me out of the club.

He walks behind me. Covering my ass so no one gets to see it? Maybe but I’m too mad to see it as a warm sentiment.

When we get out of the club and I can almost see Brenda’s car by the parking lot, Christian pulls me by my waist in a rush.

By the time I blink my eyes open, my back is against the wall and my front is cornered by his chest.

God, he looks handsome tonight. He makes everything look good especially and most especially leather.

He moves his hand to cup my face and I jerk away like his touch will scald me.

“W—what are you doing?”

“Pacifying my wife so she’ll let go of whatever bitterness she has for me.”

“You deserve said bitterness!”

He smiles. Don’t smile at me. Don’t weaponize that smile that does something to my insides.

“Why? Talk to me, why?”

The alley we are in might be dark but some of the light from the club shimmers down to us as the bass of the music vibrates the wall behind me.

We are covered though. No one can see us and he knows it. He might have planned this all along.

“Why? You are seriously asking me that after you...”

My words fall back down my throat with a thud when his palm, cold and eerily hot touches my inner thigh.

If he moves an inch upper, he’ll find my panties. Find my wetness that is subject from my body reacting to him and the whole situation altogether.

“I what, Tesoro?”

“Y—You left me! Y- you allowed me to leave. You let me go!”

His fingers draw close to my panties, pulling them to the side before he thrusts two of his fingers inside me without any mercy robbing me of air.

“Ch... Christian, please...”

“I left you once because the choice of staying was taken from me. In New York, I couldn’t have you fighting this war again not after you dirtied your hands for two years because of me. Your Christian slays your demons, that’s the job you handed to me and I take it seriously, Tesoro. I fight for you. I breathe for you. I love you and those kids more than I do myself.”

He pushes deeper, my hands fling to his neck, my pussy weeping in shallow pants.

Maybe it’s the alcohol or his words because the ball of emotions wobbling in my throat threatens to choke me as I spill out, “W- why did you not come to us? You went to Russia. You didn’t want to see our kids first.”

A hot tear cascades down my cheek but his forehead links with mine giving me warmth as another thrust stretches me wide and hits my pleasure point.

“Who held your hand when you gave birth to Ethan and Liam?”

“C-Cat”, I whisper. She insisted on doing it then I passed out before they could get Liam out and I thought my baby wouldn’t making it.

“That’s right. Maximo told me everything and I had to thank her first before I came to you, to our boys. Cat also happened to have videos of you in and out of the maternity ward. I wasn’t there when you gave me those two miracles but those videos sure as hell

made me feel like I was there. Like I was there, wiping those tears away as you kissed Liam on his forehead. Like I was there when you held Ethan and Liam for the first time. Like I was there, in those birthday videos that showed you being the best mother those boys could ask for. I was in Russia, learning every tidbit of information about our kids before I came to ask for forgiveness for not being present like a husband should have. I'm sorry, little nurse. Sorry."

"No", my hands now grip his shoulders as my pussy clenches around his fingers.

"No, you won't forgive me? Or no you want me to pull out?"

My fingers dig into his shoulders.

"Don't you dare... pull out. Don't. Please."

His fingers curl inside me as he rubs my g-spot an action that has me screaming his name and bucking my hips to him.

"I love you, Tesoro mio. Always have. Always will. You feel that?"

My toes curl.

His lips latch on my skin, kissing me lightly.

I completely lose myself on his fingers. The same fingers that are knuckle deep while drenched and soaked with my juices.

"I love that. Knowing I'm the only man who can make her sing like this fills my heart with joy. Makes me so fucking proud to call you mine. Mine, Tesoro. Mio."

"Yours", I moan, my body arching from the wall.

"Are we still getting that divorce?" he teases, I ride his hands while he grips my right hip to his thigh.

Pleasure hits and whips me till I can do nothing but heave.

"That's right, baby. Come for me. Show me whose good girl you are."

And I show him.

I kiss him. I get lost in his taste, scent and hands.

Divorce is too far from my mind right now. I'll never divorce him whether it's the alcohol talking or not.

XxX

Soon as we reached home. In his old room. The room I have occupied for two years.

He bathed me, held me as I sobbed for all the years I came to this room and found no comfort in it.

He got me water, made me sober up a bit before he spent almost an hour between my legs, eating me out till I fell asleep.

Right now, as I wake up, no migraine haunting me, my heart swells when I open my eyes and see him.

It almost feels too surreal.

“Morning”, I mumble sleepily.

“Morning, sunshine. Headache?”

“No.”

“You sore?”

“No.”

And that’s when I realize my legs are on both sides of his hips, his dick too close to my entrance.

“Good because I’ve been dying since last night to feed you my cock.”

I chuckle.

“God it’s you, isn’t it? Only Christian Volkov would say words like that unashamed.”

“You are ashamed of my cock filling your tight cunt?”

“No. I want to...”

He teases his cock between my folds and my clit throbs.

“Want to what, wife? I need words.”

“Want you to stretch my cunt till it’s sore.”

He pushes the head inside and I clench around him hard.

“Can I see them after this?”

“What?”

“The children, baby. I want to see them. Is that okay?”

“You want to talk about the children while you are half way inside me?”

“Yeah, if we are going to make more, I want to-.”

“You are their father, Christian. You can see and talk to them anytime you want.”

“Is that a yes to making more babies?”

I chuckle and he takes that as invitation because he ruts into me in one go and it feels like it's the first time, I'm having sex with him.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 95

CHRISTIAN VITELLO VOLKOV

“She had a fling with a rich boy. Rich boy helped her stand on her own two feet in New York after she moved out of Italy before guilt told her she needed me. To cut the long story short, she was behind everything, Cat. The assassination, my disappearance, everything and now she's dead. Everyone involved is dead or worse off.”

“Thank you.”

“Cat-.”

“Not about our mother, God no. She deserved death and more for abandoning us. Thank you because you came back, Christian. When you... when we...”

“I know.”

“I love you. You are my family. The only family who stuck by me and protected me and I don't want to ever feel what I felt when I watched your body on that cold, disgusting table. You hear me? You do not get to leave me, Christian. It's always me and you.”

“I won't leave you, sorella. Not when you are still married to that Russian fuck. Jesus Christ, hearing his name alone was enough to trigger my memories back. That's how much the guy bothers me. Are you sure you can't reconsider getting another partner? I can relocate you to a warmer country.”

“Stop. I’m married to Dee and Maximo and that will never change. I can’t believe you’d even suggest raising your niece or nephew without his father.”

“I can raise him as one of my own, Catelina. Say the word.”

“No. Never. Besides you have three kids to watch out for. You already have your hands full and I’m guessing you didn’t come all the way to Russia to tell your sister you are alive, did you?”

“No. Maximo told me you were there. C-Can you tell me how... how my wife handled everything? Any tiny detail, Cat. I’ll appreciate it.”

“How about I show you?”

“Show me?”

“I took videos for you, big brother. A lot of them.”

“Thank you.”

XxX

Sweat beads her forehead, my fingers part her folds watching my cum spill out of her and just because I can and I’ll be doing this with her forever, I gather every drop of it pushing it back deep inside her.

Her breathing picks up, her smell so richly spritzed in the air I could get high off it alone.

I push her blonde hair from her cheek, leaning in for another mind-blowing kiss.

“When do they wake up?”

I can’t wait to hold them for real this time.

No screen. No country separating us. But for real this time.

“A lot earlier than you think. I’m almost scared they’ll run in and find us like this”, my wife smiles and that smile damn near impales me on the spot.

One last kiss, one last dig at her hips, I kiss her again.

“Then let’s get us cleaned up before they show up.”

Before she lets out any protest, I’m already up the bed, pulling her up bridal style in my arms and four minutes later, I’m lathering soap under the shower, washing every inch of her appetizing skin.

“Christian? Don’t...”

“No? Not even a taste?”

“You had more than a taste a few hours ago and I want to but...”

“It burns? I can suck it better.”

“Your definition of ‘lick and suck it better’ always ends with you asking for more rounds in bed, Christian. Two years or not, you are not a very hard man to read.”

The pang of guilt that dips to my stomach every time I remember the two years of my life, I wasted not being there for her hits me harder than the sadness in her eyes.

“Words aren’t enough but what I lack in words I’ll compensate with my actions. I’ll make up for lost time, Tesoro. I’ll wash every part of you I tainted with grief. My father sure as hell wouldn’t have won any daddy awards back in the day but I’ll strive to be the best for our kids. For you. For our family.”

Her eyes brim with tears. Tears that are colored through her blue sapphire eyes as water skids down between us.

I wipe the first tear, kissing her cheek.

“The only tears you’ll be shedding for me will be when I take your cunt and ass giving you the pleasure a queen like you deserves.”

Our foreheads touch, her hands travel up my abs and I let her explore every inch of me because I know what’s going on.

Alessandra Vitello Volkov needs to know I’m real.

Alessandra Vitello Volkov needs to confirm that I’m not the same dream she has conjured up for two years.

“Christian?”

“Yes beautiful?”

“I love you. So... so much... the thought of ever losing you again hurts right here. Right here at the center. Right here where this beating organ took a liking to you since day one. Fuck me? Please?”

“You’ll never have to beg for it, sweetheart. I’m yours and you are mine. These pretty boobs, that cunt, that ass? All mine.”

An hour later, my hand grips the door knob. Fear? Anxiety? Crappy emotions run in my veins when the sounds of children laughing, bid from the other side of the door.

My wife kisses my shoulders, her hands under my pits giving me warmth and comfort that I didn't think I'll need but at the moment I do.

I need her to be with me.

I turn the knob, the door slides open, three pairs of eyes gaze at me and suddenly my heart stops.

Millie is... God, she's bigger. Bigger than the last time I held her, bigger than the last time I held her bottle of milk for her to feed from.

The boys who each have their own toy gaze at me like I'm a burglar intruding their home.

Liam has a Chase Paw Patrol figurine in his hands and Ethan has a... is that? Thanos from Avengers?

Overwhelming pride pounding my chest, my wife pulls away from me as I kneel on the floor stretching my hand out.

"Babygirl", I whisper. My voice weak.

Millie who is in a pink Peppa pig onesie looks at me and furrows her brows.

The next words that come out of me razor cut my throat. I missed her first walk? I missed their first walks?

"It's daddy, babygirl."

She looks behind me. At her mother I'm assuming, before she slowly starts walking in my direction.

The minute she starts walking, my fists clench.

That's my girl. That's my baby. All grown up and looking like Alexia with blonde hair and the signature blue eyes.

Millie stands in front of me, a second later, her hands touch my huge right hand and I let her.

She runs her fingers across the ink on my palm and I smile.

She always did like tattoos.

Then with big blue and unsure eyes, she gapes at me, “Daddy.”

“Yeah baby, daddy is back. Lee? Ethan? Want to meet daddy?” Alexia tries to nudge the kids.

Millie settles herself between my legs and I cage her in to me. I’m back and I’m not leaving any of you.

Liam drops his toy and reading how Millie’s comfortable in my arms, he runs to me and happiness peppers my vision.

“You look like your mama, little man.”

I ruffle his hair with my left hand. He’s a bit apprehensive and I get that. I’ll win him over.

“Ethan?” Alexia calls our other son who hasn’t made a move to show that he even acknowledges me.

I look at Ethan Volkov and the kid gives me the same look I gave my father when I was a kid.

A look that says, ‘You sure as hell ain’t my father.’

It doesn’t matter though, the kid giving me the stink eye wouldn’t be mine if he liked every douche who showed up at his mother’s doorstep and claimed to be his father.

And yeah, Ethan?

He doesn’t run to me.

He stares at me coldly as he runs to his mother hugging her right leg.

I’ll have a hard time winning him over and an even harder time keeping him in check when he grows up.

I can feel it in my fucking bones. Because he reminds me of a younger me.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

CHAPTER 96 – EPILOGUE

CHRISTIAN VITELLO VOLKOV.

“Christ, why do things like these happen to me?”

Nico snickers before I even reach the fucking door and if he thinks I'm walking the other way because of his little pity party then he's got another thing coming.

I just shoved a chloroform-soaked handkerchief over Yan's mouth, I'm not above doing the same to Nico if it comes to it.

No use lying but taking out Yan even for a few hours makes my already heated blood tingle.

I hate Yan. Every time I see him, he's near what's mine and I can't kill him.

Why? Because my kids like him.

An even upsetting why? Because my woman would kick me out of the house if I killed Yan.

Tightening my cuff links, reaching to the room that's being guarded by Nico, I shoot him a glare and Nico stands tall undeterred.

"I can't let you in boss", Nico warns, his voice adopting a wary edge that knows I will and – emphasis on the 'will' part – knock his teeth out if it means going through that door.

I grin.

"Step out of the way, Nico, or I move you."

This time I'm not smiling. The gun holstered behind my back sure as fuck isn't either.

"Nothing personal, boss but I have strict orders not to let you in."

"Strict orders? Who's your boss?"

"You."

"Who pays for each one of your screwups every day of the week?"

"You."

"Who paid for your mother's colonoscopy?"

"Boss, you've gotta understand. They have reasons for not wanting you inside."

"Since when have you ever listened to reason, Nico?"

He never does.

Whether I get lost on an island for decades and come back, Nico remains Nico.

A headache who's relentless in not following the rules.

"Alright. I give up. I'm done. The door is yours. Frankly speaking, I don't even know why they chose me to do this gig."

Nico steps away from the door but not before I adjust his bowtie and smack his cheek lightly.

"Check on Yan and when he wakes up, I want you both to guard this door for one hour or so once I'm alone with Alessandra. You understand me?"

"Yes boss", Nico grits.

I don't waste a second in opening the door before splotchy pink hogs my eyesight, women's perfumes hit my nostrils and almost eight pairs of eyes gaze at me like I just poured acid over their faces.

My eyes are on one woman and woman only.

"No! No! You have strict orders not to show your face here before the wedding! Get out, Christian!" Cat, who's dressed in a satin pastel pink dress, walks over to me angrily.

I close the door behind me, locking myself in a room that smells like cotton candy or some shit with a spritz of lavender.

I know who smells of lavender though and she looks ravishing right now.

"I told Jett, Nico and Yan were weak. You owe me a hundred bucks, Thena", Brenda scoffs.

The ball of fury in the form of my five-foot-something sister grabs my right arm but she is hopeless in dragging me away.

No one is dragging me away from this room.

"Seeing the bride before the actual wedding is considered bad luck", Athena speaks, like I give a shit about luck and voodoo nonsense.

"No seriously boss, you have to leave. We can't have you here while we do the finishing touches on the bride."

I look at Alessandra Vitello Volkov and feel my heart in my fucking throat.

Finishing touches?

Chris, she's pretty.

Her blonde hair is styled in some sort of way that looks like a ponytail but classier, a few flowers are used as pins to hold said hair in place but her dress, her face, that slit that's showing the expanse of her right thigh?

She's killing me here.

"Nooo. Don't even think about it, Christian. You are walking out of here and pretending you didn't see anything. You are going back to the church you came from and standing at the end of the aisle like how a good groom should behave. Waiting for your bride like a normal—."

"Normal is overrated", I cut Cat's words off and the glare she throws me feels like a clean blade slicing my neck at one go.

"Okay since this isn't working. Lex? Tell him to leave. I know he'll listen to you at least."

My eyes lock with the Blondie in the most gorgeous wedding dress I have seen for a while.

She looks like a goddess out to seduce the gods and the men alike.

She looks divine I almost pity that creamy milky skin because tonight? I'll fill every inch of it with my marks and hickeys.

I dare her.

I dare her to listen to Catelina.

I dare her to kick me out.

Blondie bites her bottom lip, the one coated with shiny and bloody red lipstick.

"Can you give us a minute?"

There's my girl.

"What?" Thena exclaims.

"You owe me an additional fifty bucks, Thena", Brenda adds.

Cat is on the verge of pulling her hair out when she says, "Lex, we talked about this!"

"He's here and I... we need a minute, Cat. Just a minute."

It will be more than a minute. I know that. My wife knows that. The whole room might know that too.

Cat walks to the bed, takes her purse before she turns to me, "That makeup took almost three hours. Don't you dare ruin it."

Then she and her pink-clad groupie walk out of the room.

I don't waste a minute in crossing the distance between me and my wife and taking her lips in mine.

She reacts to me in instant, her body becoming pliable in my arms, her lips parting for me to devour and I devour them alright.

I devour them like a hungry man.

"You... said you would stay away", she moans.

I bite her lip, smudging that red lipstick like a maniac.

"You knew I wouldn't."

"I still expected you to behave."

"This is me behaving after you left without giving me your cunt for breakfast."

"Christian...", her palms hold my cheeks as our lips part and our eyes meet.

I take one of her hands kissing it.

"Yes, baby?"

"We can't ruin this dress."

"Is that an invitation to ruin you?"

"I'm serious, Christian."

"And I'm serious about fucking you and letting you walk down that aisle with my come dripping out of your cunt."

She chuckles, her cleavage moving along with the action.

I want to suck those boobs so bad it almost physically pains me not to.

"You're a menace you know that?"

"If that means I get to eat out my cunt then a menace I am. What do you say, tesoro?"

My thumb runs along her bottom lip and she takes it into her hot mouth watching me while she sucks.

When she's had her fill and my dick is straining against my pants, Sunshine levels me with a sultry gaze.

"I'm blaming the pregnancy hormones if we arrive late at our own wedding."

"Sure."

The truth of the matter is, a pregnant Alessandra Volkov craves sex the way humans crave air.

I came here because I knew she wouldn't last long before she started feeling that cunt throbbing for her husband.

I'll fuck her to get her through the wedding.

As soon as the wedding is done, I'm sure as hell not waiting for the reception part.

I'm taking my wife, driving her to our honeymoon and spending the next month sinking in all her holes.

I'm a menace. But I'm a bloody menace when it comes to her only.

Claimed by the Sicilian Mafia

ALESSANDRA VITELLO VOLKOV.

It's a surprise I'm still standing, given the way my pussy is throbbing at the sight of my handsome hubby. Or the way I can literally feel his come sliding slickly between my legs.

Maximo and Demetri stand behind my husband in well-tailored groomsmen suits. Both men looking at the woman in the front row I'm assuming to be Cat.

"A black dress? It's a nice choice", my mother coos.

I would tell her that I've been planning this wedding the opposite way the first wedding was planned so that nothing bad happens to me, Christian, our kids or anyone else here but I fear that might come out a little superstitious on my part.

“It represents me and him. In a way, we stand out in a crowd. The trauma, our past, our love itself. And I just realized standing out is not a bad thing. In fact standing out is what makes me and him, Mom and I wouldn’t trade that for the world.”

“I have a feeling he won’t either”, mom chuckles.

We both gaze at the man standing impatiently while his eyes linger on me with every step and every single expression on my face.

He looks so handsome.

I want to chuckle when Ethan and Liam wrap themselves around his legs and my man doesn’t fall let alone falter in watching me.

By the time I reach the end of the aisle, Christian’s hand interlocks with mine as he pulls me up the few steps so I can stand beside him.

“Mommy is pretty”, Liam claps. The whole church bursts into laughter.

A second later, Athena walks to the altar to take away Liam and Ethan.

Liam agrees but Ethan...

“I want to stay with Mommy.”

Christian looks down at Ethan with humored brows.

“What did we say about today, kid?”

“Mommy is yours today and Lee and I will have her for the rest of our lives.”

“That’s it. Anything else?”

“We can all play after mommy goes on vacation.”

“Good boy. Now go to Aunt Thena.”

“Yes, daddy.”

I see a surge of pride litter his eyes while he watches our boys run back to their sister who’s seated at the front row with the rest of the family.

By the time the priest asks the million dollar question, my heart is already singing a ‘yes, yes, a million times yes.’

Christian doesn’t give me a yes instead.

He gives me...

“Soon as I saw her, I knew I was going to have to make her mine, ladies and gentlemen. You’d be crazy not to marry a woman who shoots you in the neck while also trying to protect you.

The Padre here would attest to what we already know about love. That love is patient, love is kind, love endures...

I have never been patient with this woman, a single day of my life. She threatens to leave me and I turn into a madman chasing after her like a rabid motherfuck–

Most times, she threatens to leave because I forgot the carton of milk she likes from an even specific mart but we’ll overlook that.

Love is kind. Forgive me, Father, I do not take it kindly to any man looking at her let alone breathing near her. As for the kinder thoughts? My wife is a firecracker. Any kind of thoughts fly out of my brain as soon as those big blue eyes of hers gaze at me.

But the enduring part? I think our love has done that. It began on a slippery slope, four years later I’m marrying the woman I thought would only exist in my dreams and she’s given me three miracles and more miracles to come.

I do, Mrs Volkov. I do love you. I do promise to cherish, to hold and to give you as many kids as you want. I want ten more but I think we’ll negotiate this a bit more in bed?”

The congregation goes berserk with laughter.

I jump into his arms and seal the deal with a kiss.