

The Devil's Fire by Mariam El-Hafi Chapter 241 - 250

Damiano

I slowly started to gain consciousness when I heard faint voices around me. The burning sensation was still present, spreading all over my abdomen. I felt someone tapping my cheek and I opened my eyes. My sight was unfocused and I saw shadows above me, seeing their mouths move as they talked to me, but I couldn't make out what they were saying. I tried to move but clenched my jaw and grunted out in pain instead.

"I got you. You will be fine." My sight finally focused when Antonio came into view, talking to me.

"Althaia... I need to get to Althaia." I felt hands trying to stop me from moving but I shoved them away, clenching my jaw hard as I pushed through the pain to get up.

"We need to get you fixed first. You've lost a lot of blood." Antonio prevented me from moving.

"I... don't care... She needs me." I growled out and tried to push them away.

"You can't help her if you're fucking dead!" He shouted in anger.

"I have to get the bullet out of you. Bite down on this." He put a piece of cloth into my mouth, and I had to take a deep breath to prepare myself for what was about to happen. Arms held my body down to the ground while Antonio took out his knife. My entire body tensed and I bit down hard on the cloth

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as I endured the pain. My voice was muffled as he carved into me, and I could feel beads of sweat covering my face.

"Almost there. Hang on." It felt like I was giving one extremely powerful punch with a knife, giving a blow after another without having a single break and leaving all the air out of my lungs.

I closed my eyes to let my mind focus on anything but the excruciating pain I was feeling.

And then I stopped feeling anything, mesmerized by something else.

Soft, long brown curls entered my view, swaying in the wind as the ends kissed my face. They belonged to the most beautiful pair of sparkling green eyes I had ever seen in my life. Her rosy, plump lips were in a dazzling smile, laughing as I watched her run so carefree on the beach. Warmth spread inside of me, feeling my heart beating faster as a smile found its way to my lips.

What have I done in this life to deserve heaven sending me the most beautiful angel to stay by my side?

I lost my breath when she turned around to look at me, looking more beautiful than I could ever fathom with the colors of the sunset washing over her face.

An angel, so bright with fiery colors.

“Can The Devil find me?” She chuckled lightly with that teasing look in her eyes.

“Always. I will always find you, my love.”

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An Angel

“Don’t you fucking die on us!” My head was violently slapped to the side, and I finally opened my eyes, gasping for air. My chest was rapidly moving up and down as I took in my surroundings.

“Shit, that was a close call.” Giovanni sighed in relief.

“I got it out but we need to get you to the hospital -” Antonio got cut off.

“We found explosives! Get away from here, now!” They wasted no time in pulling my arms over their shoulder as they hoisted me up to my feet. I clenched my jaw through the pain, grunting as they hurried away from the castle with me.

“That bastard really wants to wipe us all out once and for all.” Luca sneered.

“Did everyone get out?” My voice was strained as my breathing came out fast.

“Save your strength. We got it under control.” There was nothing I could do but take their words on it. It pained me to see the fall of my men. Their lost lives were in my hands as I failed to protect them as their leader.

And I promised I would avenge every single life that was lost.

We neared the car when the sudden thunderous sound boomed behind us, the blasting wave hitting our backs and having us stumble to our knees. Shards of rocks were flying everywhere and I glanced over to see the castle collapsing with bright flames.

“Make sure everyone is okay and gets treated.” I ordered them as I got laid in the backseat of the car. Antonio got inside with

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me, making sure to keep pressure on the wound at all times.

“You worry about yourself now. We need you to get better and get your woman back.” He firmly ordered me and for once, I listened to him.

My wife needed me.

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I got rushed to the clinic where Ellie tried to convince me to get surgery but I kept shutting her down while she gave me a blood transfusion and an IV for the pain.

“Give me a temporary solution and whatever meds to keep the pain away.”

“That’s not how it works! You can die if you don’t get it treated!”

“If you can’t fix it without putting me under anesthesia then I don’t want it. I don’t have time for this.” The longer I was

sitting here, the more stressed out I became as I had no idea where Althaia was taken to.

“Sometimes, I hate working for you.” Ellie sighed but still said there might be something she could do.

I lay still on the hospital bed while Ellie gave me something to numb as much as possible before stitching whatever she could to stop the majority of the bleeding.

“You’re lucky you work out as much as you do. Thicker muscles make you slightly more bullet resistant, and thank God it didn’t hit any vital organs.” She grumbled while she fixed me.

“Ellie?” I felt her gaze on me but I kept staring at the ceiling.

“If Althaia were to be pregnant... What are the chances of the fetus surviving?” I felt her still and she went quiet. I closed my eyes, already knowing the answer to my question.

“The fetus is most vulnerable the first twelve weeks. Stress and trauma inflicted on the body... It would be a miracle if it survived.”

“I see.” I answered curtly.

“Is.. there a chance she is right now?”

“No. I was wondering.” As much as I longed for a child with her, everything in me was praying there was no possible way she was pregnant now. The pain after losing the first one... It would kill her to go through it again. And there was no way in fucking hell I would ever let that happen to her.

Ever again.

“What’s the status?” I looked at Luca who appeared by the doorway. He frowned slightly before he spoke.

“No signs of Lorenzo yet, and Arianna... was stabbed. She’s in a critical state.” I jolted up to my feet and pushed past Luca.

barged into the room she was in, my eyes landing on her sleeping form on the bed with tubes and needles attached to her. My mother was by her side, her eyes red from crying and my father was present as well, a dark look on his face. I stepped closer to her, my hand shaking in anger as I touched her face. The more I looked at her, the more my anger was fueled.

I leaned down and placed a kiss on her forehead.

“You can do it, Arianna. You’re a fighter. Don’t forget that.” I whispered to her.

“She’ll be all right.” I told my mother who was holding Arianna’s hand. She didn’t say anything and just nodded. I turned to look at my father.

“It’s time to make them pay.”

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“How’s your head?” I asked Rafaelle who had gotten a bandage wrapped around his head. Ellie followed me and finally had me sit still to finish the stitching. I had gathered Antonio, Giovanni, and Luca to Rafaelle’s room to get an update on everything. They had minimal injuries, nothing that would affect them which was good as I needed my best men in the game.

I had lost men and even though Gaetano took us by surprise by being one step ahead, we still managed to overpower the ones in the castle as we had prepared for war.

“They knocked the shit out of me before I could warn you.” He groaned and winced as he touched the back of his head. Ava was next to him, looking more pissed than ever.

“What happened?” I asked.

“I got hacked. The entire system was hacked and gave them access to the cameras, controlling the power, and even picking up the mics we were using. Before I could even gain back control and block them, I got knocked out.” Rafaelle had a sullen look as he explained.

“Before that, I got the trademark of who it was. It’s Ghost.” I rubbed my jaw at the information.

Now it made sense why we were having difficulty tracking the phone calls in the beginning. No one had ever seen Ghost before but he was reputed to carry out any scheme without being traceable in the least. Hence, the name Ghost. The interesting part was that Ghost didn’t work for anybody and only performed a one-time task. This meant Gaetano was paying him millions to keep him around for longer.

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“I should have known but given that this is unusual for Ghost to do, it didn’t cross my mind. My pride is hurt and I’m going to show him who he’s fucking

with.” If there was one thing about Rafaelle, it was he took pride in what he did. And the look on his face right now told me he was ready to get into war with Ghost.

“Good, because I need you to find out where Althaia and Cara are.”

“You will have to find someone else do to it. Rafaelle needs to rest.” Ellie commented when she finished bandaging me.

“I don’t need to rest. Just give me some pain meds and I’ll be good.”

“You have a concussion! You can’t be in front of screens for at least 48 hours.” She scolded him.

“That’s not going to happen. Sorry to disappoint you, love.” He barely got to finish his sentence before he yelled out in pain when Ava smacked his head.

“Sorry, love. Your head was in the way.” She gave him a fake smile, having Rafaelle grin at her.

“Shit, you’re hot when you’re jealous.”

“Focus.” I glared at him, not having time for them to flirt.

“Your symptoms will only get worse. You need to rest. Why do I even bother fixing you if you’re only going to hurt yourself even more?!”

“Ellie.” Antonio pulled her into him, holding her tightly as she became distressed.

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“I can help.” Ava offered.

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“Rafaelle can guide me, that way he doesn’t have to be exposed to any screens for too long.”

“Love the enthusiasm, babe, but that’s not how it works. It’s about coding.” He chuckled and she crossed her arms, looking at him with a light scowl.

“I know how to code. I studied it.”

“What, really?!” He gaped.

“Yes.” He wasted no time and stood up in front of her, looking at her seriously.

“Listen to me Ava, the minute this shitstorm is over, I’m marrying you.” I raised a brow, having never seen him look this serious before. She leaned into him with a slight smirk.

“Then you better get me a nice ring.”

“Are you done now?” I glanced at them, letting them know we had more important matters to focus on.

I got my shirt back on and carefully stood up for the sake of Ellie. She took a deep breath, fighting against the tears while Antonio talked to her softly.

“Thank you, Ellie, for everything you do. Now, I need you to go home and focus on your health and baby.” I ordered her softly and she sighed.

She wasn’t supposed to be here but she was too passionate about her job to not step in to help. Ellie was the best doctor around here, but I couldn’t risk anything happening to her, especially since she became emotional due to the pregnancy. I knew Antonio was only happy about the decision and left

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with her to take her home.

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“Althaia is wearing her ring, you should be able to track her.” I told Rafaele and Ava.

“About that.” Giovanni said and held out her engagement ring.

“We found it tossed away along with other jewelry.” Luca informed. I took the engagement ring, holding it in my hand as I stared at it.

“Any news about Lorenzo?”

“Not yet.” The more they talked, the more pissed I was getting. Nothing was working in our favor, and now it would take us even longer to figure out where the fuck Gaetano took them. Lorenzo missing wasn’t easing me in the slightest. There was no way he was still in the castle when it blew up. I knew for a fact he made it outside but the question was where the fuck did he go.

“I want the premises completely searched -” I stopped when I heard a commotion coming from the hall, and quickly stepped out to see what was going on.

Lorenzo was making his way toward me, out of breath and sweat covering him as he angrily ripped his shirt open. He looked like a bull, ready to attack at any moment and everyone stepped out of his way to not trigger his anger.

“Get him some water.” I had him sit down to catch his breath. Luca handed him a bottle of water, and Lorenzo poured it

over his head to cool down.

“Where were you?”

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“I tried to follow them. I ran for as long as I could.” He said Luca handed him another bottle. I waited for him to tell me something useful.

“Hold on, were you able to get the tail number, or anything to identify the helicopter?” Raffaella asked.

“I did. They were headed Southwest.” Raffaella raised a clenched hand in victory.

“Okay, good, awesome! I will be able to track down the transponder by the air control and radar system. We will be able to narrow it down to what helicopters are, or have been flying to the Southwest.”

“Just a thought, wouldn’t Ghost already have covered for them?” Giovanni commented.

“No. It will bring attention if he removes the tracking from the flight radar. It will be marked as missing and a whole damn search party will be sent out. He wouldn’t risk it.” Raffaella explained.

“Get at it as soon as possible and have everyone gathered at the manor.” I ordered them, feeling more at ease now there was a chance we would get to them sooner rather than later. My hands wanted to twitch so badly, eager to get hold of them all and have them suffer as much as possible.

They went on their way to get everyone gathered to plan our next move while I updated Lorenzo.

“Arianna was stabbed.” Lorenzo got up on his feet, looking at me with fury written all over his face.

“What?!” He sneered.

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“Where is she?”

“Down the hall to your left.” He ran a hand over his head before stepping closer to me.

“I swear to God, if she dies, or my wife dies... Hell, even Althaia, I am going to rip that woman into pieces.” Lorenzo said lowly, his voice laced with threat and promise.

“I will let you.” I reassured him. If it were to happen, even though I was praying with everything in me it wouldn't, there was no way I would stop him. He nodded and went going to Arianna's room but I placed a hand on his shoulder to stop him.

“She'll be okay. There is no way she is leaving us when she lives to annoy the shit out of us.” I reassured him. I patted his shoulder and made my way out.

There was still one person I had to talk to.

I got out of the car with Antonio and made my way inside the house I had heavily guarded with armed me. I walked down the hall to the living room and saw her sitting on the couch with a mug in her hands. She stood up when saw me but I gestured for her to sit back down again. I sat in front of her, and her eyes followed my movements when I pulled out my gun and placed it on the table.

“You’re going to tell me everything or I promise you, I will be the one ending your life. Speak.” I gave her a cold stare. She looked down at the mug she was holding, let out a sigh, and nodded before looking at me with eyes of a color that reminded me too much of my wife’s.

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“I will tell you everything.”

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Damiano

“This is what we have found so far.” Ava rolled out a map on the table. Everyone had been gathered to the manor once Ava and Rafaele had something useful for us to be able to lay out a new plan.

“Based on the information given, they can’t be more than two hours away in fly time. We have narrowed it down to this.” She drew a circle around the area and I frowned. It was still a large area and it would take us too much time to pin down exactly where Gaetano was hiding.

“But our theory is they have to be closer to this area.” She drew another circle within the circle, but this time it was

smaller.

“Your reason?” I asked.

“The type of helicopter they’re using can’t fly more than five hours at a time, and since this is not a helicopter that can refuel midair, they have to go to the fuel station. Which is two and a half hours away. But we don’t want to rule out the area completely.” Rafaele explained.

“They could already have a truck ready to fill up.” Luca pointed out.

“It’s possible to have a truck ready to refuel, but I doubt Gaetano would take the chances of having one there because it’s one large truck. In case we managed to follow him, the helicopter flying away and the truck being on its way would

everything carefully and assessed every possibility.

We couldn't afford to have our plans fail and I needed it to be bulletproof. Time was ticking and we had no idea if Althaia and Cara were okay. The thought of them being hurt triggered my anger even more, but I had to stay calm.

I was saving my wrath for Gaetano.

"How confident are you about it?" I needed them all to be entirely sure. I couldn't risk them being wrong and wasting time on it, and we definitely couldn't afford to underestimate Gaetano once again.

"It's the only explanation. Plus, the radar system did show they flew around this area. Now, we just need to find where exactly. It will be easy enough since we have managed to narrow it down." Rafaelle said.

"Good." I nodded.

The discussions went on as we laid out a plan. While we could be prepared for the worst, Gaetano would still have the advantage as we still didn't know where he was and he definitely had traps set up around the area. I had the manpower and weapons to take him down, but the lack of information about the building was a great disadvantage for us as we couldn't plan how to navigate around and find Althaia and Cara. He would be able to take us by surprise again if we weren't careful.

"We will do our best to find it by satellite but it will take some time." Ava replied.

"In the meantime, everyone, go get some rest and prepare

yourselves." I told them. Everyone stopped moving when the landline phone on my desk began to ring. I stared at it and let it ring a few times before hitting the speaker.

"Speak."

"I see you made it alive. What a shame." The tension in the room raised at the sound of Gaetano's voice. My hands clenched into fists on the table at the sound of his laughter. I closed my eyes for a second, forcing my body into a Cold Zero. I couldn't let my emotions control me and I needed my head to be

clear. He had my wife at his mercy. The one person that truly mattered to me. But I had to shove every single one of those thoughts away and deal with him the way I knew best.

Painting the city fucking red with his blood.

“Let’s cut the crap and name your demands.” I leaned on the desk, facing my men. They all listened intently, staring daggers at the phone.

“Watch your tone with me, boy. I am after all the one who can determine the fate of your wife.” Gaetano chuckled. A slight frown appeared on my face. He knew we got married. He must have picked it up either from hacking her phone or from the mics we wore at the wedding.

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“I don’t like wasting time, Gaetano.” My voice was cold and steady. I knew he was playing games, dragging out time to get a reaction out of me. I wasn’t going to make the same mistakes as before, and give him the pleasure of me reacting to his bullshit. He knew what she meant to me, but I knew how to play games as well.

And I always fucking win.

“I guess we shouldn’t waste time. Time is precious after all.” Gaetano heaved a sigh before laughing.

“Hand over all of your weaponry and shipments.” Now, it was my turn to let out a dark chuckle.

“Quite a big demand, Gaetano.”

“In the trade of your wives.”

“Hmm, I see.” I said. He went silent, not expecting my response. I let him sit in silence for a while before I decided to speak again.

“And how do I know they’re alive?” My voice was void of any emotion, showing him I wasn’t bothered at all.

“You will have to take my word for it.” I let out a laugh at his answer.

“They could be dead as we speak. My wife is of no value to me if she’s dead. I’m rejecting your demands.” I hung up the phone. I met Lorenzo’s gaze but he didn’t say anything. He trusted me and knew what I was doing.

“I will get your wife back.” I reassured him. A smirk formed on his lips when the phone rang again. I mirrored his expression and let it ring a few times.

“Gaetano.”

“You dare to hang up on me?!” He was furious. Just the reaction I wanted.

“Yes.” I retorted. Luca and Giovanni bit back a laugh. They knew it was Althaia’s personality talking. Gaetano was left stunned once again, not expecting this was how the call was going to be.

“You should be careful. Disrespect me again, and a bullet will find its way between her brows.” He hissed out.

“I don’t like repeating myself, Gaetano. If you want me to meet your demands, I need proof they’re still alive.” I retorted.

“Fine. A picture will be sent to prove they’re still alive.”

“Not good enough. I need live footage.”

“No.”

“Unfortunately, I will not be able to meet your demands.” I hung up once again. I was going to make this bastard go crazy.

“Damiano...” My father called with a warning tone.

“He’s not going to kill them. He’s desperate.” I told him.

“He can still hurt them.” He frowned.

“I know.” I crossed my arms and waited for him to call again. This was a risk I had to take but I knew Gaetano wasn’t going to do anything. He showed his desperation immediately when

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it didn’t go after his plan.

Ten minutes passed and he still hadn’t called back.

“Patience.” I told them all when they stared impatiently at the phone. I knew they were just as desperate to get their hands on him and make him pay. Especially now that he had their Donna. I wasn’t a patient man in the slightest, but in this very situation, I had to be. This was going to end once and for all, and I couldn’t be reckless.

More time passed by, and a few of my men paced the floor. I popped a few painkillers in my mouth to keep the pain minimal. I was annoyed about the fact I wasn’t in top form and I was significantly slower than usual because of the pain.

Everyone came to a halt and turned to face me the moment my phone rang. It was a video call.

“Connect it to the screen.” I tossed the phone to Rafaelle, and he immediately connected the phone to the large screen hanging on the wall in my office.

And there they were.

Gaetano was standing at a doorway, filming them as Althaia and Cara looked to be in a basement.

“You piece of shit!” Althaia screamed and threw a heel at Gaetano. He managed to close the door before it could hit it.

“Get back in here!” I heard her shout at him and banged on the door. Then the camera switched to him.

“Now, it’s your turn to deliver. You have 24 hours. I will be tracking you and send you the direction once you’re on the

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move. Come alone. If not, your Russian whore is going to be hanged.” And the line went dead.

As I continued to stare at the black screen, the whispering escalated into a loud discussion behind me.

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“Russian?! Did he say Russian?!” My father erupted furiously. I slowly turned around and faced them all. The only ones who weren’t surprised were my closest men who had been investigating this with me.

“He did.” I shoved my hands into my pockets and looked at them all.

“You’re saying we swore to protect a filthy Russian?!” One of my men shouted out. My head snapped in his direction, a dark look taking over my face. The sound of a gun firing filled the room, and he dropped dead with a bullet in his head.

“That’s my brother’s wife you’re talking about.” Lorenzo sneered.

“Anyone else?” I cocked a brow at them, waiting to see who else dared to disrespect my wife. Their eyes flickered around between me and the gun in Lorenzo’s hand. Antonio, Luca, and Giovanni drew out their guns as well, challenging them to utter something disrespectful.

“Did you know about this?” My father’s cold gaze landed on me, showing me just how livid he was about it.

“I had a hunch. I wasn’t completely sure and I wanted it to be confirmed before I broke the news. Gaetano managed to do us dirty before we could gather a DNA test.” I admitted.

“Did you know before you married her?”

“I did.” I said, not fazed by his disappointed look.

“You have fooled us all.” My father spat out. I slowly walked up to him, stopping until I was completely up in his face,

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“I didn’t fool anyone.” I told him in a firm, low voice. I gave him one harsh look before I faced my men.

“I didn’t keep anyone in the dark. Althaia doesn’t even know about this. She believes her father is Gaetano. New

information surfaced and we took time to investigate different possibilities. We found out her mother had an affair during her marriage to Gaetano.”

“Who’s the father then?” One asked.

“It doesn’t matter who the father is. What’s important here is, hasn’t she been treating you well? Has she ever been vile against you? Has she not shown kindness to you, and shown how much she cares about you?” I asked them all as I looked at each one. They shared a look with each other and a few nodded.

“Althaia has no idea. She’s innocent. Don’t let her heritage cloud your judgment when she has been nothing but caring for you all. Her heart is big and pure, and she wouldn’t hesitate to take a bullet for you all. I am not going to force you to stay and fight. But you all know the consequences if you decide to leave. It’s blood in, blood out. Make your decision.” I stated, waiting for their response.

One stepped out from the group and stopped in front of me. Enzo looked at me with a serious expression before placing his fist on his heart.

“I swore my loyalty to you. You helped me and my family back on our feet. I am yet to be honored to have a conversation with your wife, but she always had a bright smile and waved when she passed us. I am with you all the way. Viva Don Damiano e Donna Althaia.” I gave him a firm nod and faced

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the others. They followed Enzo’s lead and they all chanted at the same time.

I can always count on my men.

“Father?” I glanced at him.

“Either fight with me or against me. Your choice.” My father heaved a sigh and slightly shook his head.

“What’s the plan, son?” The corner of my mouth tilted upwards.

“I will give him what he wants.” I smirked.

Time flew by as I explained what I had in mind and what I expected from them. Everyone listened carefully and gave their thoughts on it all. This plan had to be foolproof because it was all or nothing.

Once everyone was confident with the plan, we started to move.

Just as I was about to slide inside the car, I turned my attention to the gate. A car sped through the gate and crashed right into the fountain in the middle of the driveway. I held my hand up to signal my men to hold their fire and went to the car. I stopped when the door opened and a body slumped out to the ground.

It was Michael.

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Damiano

My brows pinched together as I looked at his unmoving body on the ground. I stopped in front of him, nudging him with my foot before a groan came out of him. I watched him struggle to stand up, seeing just how badly he was beaten up. His face was covered in cuts, bruises, and blood. His arm was wrapped around his ribs. It was most likely broken just seeing the

condition he was in.

Michael winced as he slumped against the car, breathing heavily before he met my gaze.

“What are you doing here?” I stared at him blankly, waiting for him to speak.

“I... Shit – Althaia.”

“You’re too late.” I scoffed.

“I tried... to warn...” He kept groaning out in pain, on the verge of passing out.

“You’re wasting my time. Get the fuck off my property.” Michael slumped to the ground again and I signaled for my men to get moving.

“I know where they are.” Now, that got my attention and I turned to look back at him. He was struggling to keep his eyes open.

“Do you believe he knows something?” Antonio came to stand next to me as he looked at Michael suspiciously.

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“He called Althaia in Italy but she hung up before he could tell her what he wanted. He never called back, and now I know why.”

“He’s Gaetano’s right-hand man. It could be one of Gaetano’s games to throw us off.”

“I know.” I replied as we stared at him. Gaetano was power-hungry and desperate, and he had already shown us the lengths he would go to get what he wanted. Michael could be a setup; to give us information to let us think we have an advantage only for Gaetano to wipe us out entirely when we arrive.

“Get him some medical attention.” I ordered, and Antonio glanced at me.

“If what he has to say matches with what we have found out already, it will help us prepare logistics. If not, put a bullet in his head.” I said. Time was ticking, and I was going to take advantage of whatever valuable information I could get my hands on.

Luca and Giovanni went over and grabbed Michael’s arms, lifting him, and not bothering to be gentle. A grim expression set on my face, my jaw clenching at

the sound of multiple screeching sounds coming in our direction. I grabbed Michael by the collar, slamming him against the car and making him wince.

“Who the fuck did you bring?” I sneered at him. He was in too much pain to answer. I let go of him and he fell to the ground.

Every single one of my men was ready, aiming and waiting in the direction of where the intruders would come from.

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Against Time(1)

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“Fire!” Bullets went flying ahead, hitting the cars that were coming in and trying to form a circle around us to cage us. But I wouldn’t let them get the chance, and the firing increased until they had to come to a stop. The cars were bulletproof but we could still hold them back by not giving them a chance to shoot at us.

But something was wrong.

I held my hand up to signal them to stop firing. No movements were attempted from the cars, having me narrow my eyes at them.

“Take cover!” I ordered and drew out my gun. The cars formed a shield, blocking our bullets for more cars to arrive behind them. Men came out from the cars, taking cover and aiming their guns at us. But they were still not firing.

Rage filled my body when I saw who it was. He made his way to me with a dark look on his face.

“Where the fuck is she?!” He shouted furiously and my jaw clenched. I saw red and went to stop right before his face with a sinister look. He aimed his gun right at my head and I did the same to him.

“You’re in my fucking territory. That’s a death penalty.” I growled, my finger ready on the trigger.

“Where the fuck is she, Bellavia?!”

“Leave while I can still spare your life, Vasiliev.” I sneered. In any other circumstances, I would have shot him right before he could even step a foot out of the car. But I did not have the fucking time to start a fucking war in the middle of my

driveway when I had more pressing matters.

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Vasiliev stepped closer, and red dots from the laser sights appeared on him. I knew some of my men had taken over the roof to get control of the situation. But Vasiliev was unfazed by how many were aiming at him.

“Pull the trigger, and you’re all good as dead. And you will never be able to find her.” I promised him. One of his men I recognized as Nestor came to stand behind Vasiliev. His gaze was sharp on me with his gun in front of him.

“I will ask one more time before I create a blood bath. Her body is not in the casket. Where. Is. She?!” He roared out.

Of course, he dug up the fucking casket.

“Leave my territory. I don’t have fucking time to deal with you.” My patience was running thin. I would have to deal with him another time.

“A blood bath it is then.” The rack slides of their weapons could be heard the minute he said it.

“Antonio! Order the kill on Jacinta!” I shouted. Vasiliev gritted his teeth in anger at my order.

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“Are you really going to kill the mother of your woman?”

“Yes. I have the place packed and guarded with men. One call and she is good as dead.” I threatened with a smirk. Vasiliev let out a laugh, not believing I would do it.

“Let’s see what Althaia has to say about you threatening to kill her mother.”

“She won’t believe you. She thinks her mother is dead.” He squinted his eyes.

“Tell me why you faked her death, Bellavia.”

“That’s none of your business.”

“Oh, but she is my fucking business. I am not leaving before I get what I want.” My jaw clenched. Out of any day, he decided to show up today and be a pain in my ass.

“To protect her. From Gaetano.” I decided to tell him. Fury showed in his eyes as a dark look took over his face at the mention of him. The sound of groaning and shuffling caught his attention. His eyes snapped to Michael who managed to get on his feet.

“Gaetano’s dog. Hand him over.

“No.” I scoffed. If Michael knew something, I wasn’t going to let him go.

“Althaia.. Cara.. We need to go. He’s going to kill them.” Michael grunted. Vasiliev looked at me with questionable

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eyes. I let out a frustrated sigh and pinched the bridge of my nose at Michael’s unawareness at the moment. Vasiliev’s eyes scanned the area, a crease appearing between his brows.

“Gaetano has taken Althaia hostage. Why?” My hand gripped the gun in frustration before lowering it. He shouted something in Russian and his men lowered their guns.

“Get him some medical attention before he passes out.” I gestured my men to lower their guns and the red dots disappeared from Vasiliev. I looked at him blankly while he waited for an answer.

“Follow me.” I turned around to get back inside. I didn’t wait for a reply because I knew he would follow me. He was curious to know what was going on and he wasn’t going to leave me the fuck alone. He had already wasted too much of my time by showing up.

Now I know where her curiosity trait comes from.

Vasiliev was smart enough to only bring Nestor and two other men with him inside my office. My father was quiet the entire time, observing. I knew he had already connected the dots on who Althaia's father was, and it probably left him stunned.

Hell, this whole situation was a fucking shit show.

"I'm waiting. Why is Gaetano holding his own daughter hostage?" Vasiliev asked. I crossed my arms and leaned against my desk.

"He's been using her to blackmail Jacinta into laundering money for him. Once he was done, he ordered a kill on them. Jacinta was stabbed and on the verge of dying if it wasn't for

Antonio who managed to keep her alive. I faked her death

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and placed her somewhere safe to figure out who was after her. I didn't know it was Gaetano at the time. Now, he has Althaia and my brother's wife. And you're here, wasting my time."

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His expression went cold as he took in the information. There was no doubt he still cared for Jacinta. Or else he wouldn't have been this reckless and stepped into my territories.

"What does he want from you?"

"Weaponry and shipments."

"Of course." He scoffed.

"For what reasons other than being a greedy dog?"

"To take you down." Everyone turned their attention to Michael who had appeared at the doorway. He held onto the wall for support as he managed to step closer.

“He’s been recruiting and training men to create an army to take you down. But he doesn’t have access to weapons like Damiano to do so.” Michael continued.

“How cute.” Vasiliev shoved his hands into his pockets.

“Other than existing and being more well-off than he is, what else have I done to piss him off?” Vasiliev looked at Michael.

“You took his woman.” Michael pointed out. Vasiliev threw his head back and let out a loud laugh.

“He’s the one who got married to her. Not me.”

“True. But you still slept with her while she was married to him.” I commented.

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“Not my fault he couldn’t please her and she had to come to me.” He said smugly and I gave him a blank look.

“So, now, he’s holding his daughter hostage to blackmail you because of your relationship.” He stated, linking everything together.

“Althaia is not his daughter.” Michael continued, and he raised a brow at the information.

“Vasiliev, when was the last time you saw Jacinta?” I asked him.

“Over twenty-five... years ago...” He suddenly trailed off as he got deep in thought. Nestor suddenly started to rapidly speak to him in Russian and his men looked at him with a slight frown. Vasiliev’s eyes snapped to mine as his frown deepened.

“You’re telling me...”

“Althaia is the byproduct of your affair, and Gaetano knows. Congratulations, you have a daughter.” If he was surprised, he didn’t show it but continued to be silent.

“That damned woman!” He raged out, his hands turning into fists.

“Where the fuck is that damned woman?!”

“Safe. Now, be on your fucking way.” I told him

“She’s.... she’s alive?” Michael looked at me with wide eyes.

“I thought I killed her...?” He was confused, not believing what he just heard.

“You’re the one who tried to kill her?” Vasiliev grabbed

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Michael in a rage and pulled out his gun.

“Let him go.” I ordered calmly and went up to him. I couldn’t risk him shooting Michael when he was our best chance to tell us where Althaia and Cara were.

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“I didn’t know!” Michael erupted.

“You want me to believe that?” Vasiliev sneered.

“You know how it works. I don’t fucking ask questions and get the job done. I had no idea I was recruiting men for Gaetano to make a hit on her! I have been trying to find out who was after them, and I did, which lead me to this condition. Gaetano found me snooping around and tried to get rid of me when I found out.” Michael finished and Vasiliev stared at him with cold eyes before finally letting him go.

“I’m an orphan. Jacinta took me in as her own when my parents didn’t care enough about me and left me to fend for myself as a kid. I know the importance of family. Althaia, Cara, and Jacinta, they’re my only family. If I knew, I would have done everything I could to stop him..” He looked pained as he explained.

“What’s the plan, I want in. I want my hands on that filthy dog.” Vasiliev looked at me, and I scoffed.

“I don’t need your help.”

“You owe me a favor.” He retorted and I frowned.

“I don’t owe you shit.” He smirked.

“But you do. I delivered Althaia safely to you at the

Luxe Palace, didn’t I?” My frown deepened, and I was about to tell him to fuck off when Michael spoke.

“Gaetano wouldn’t see it coming. We’ll be able to catch him off guard and get them out of there sooner.”

flash drive.

you know? I asked. Michael pulled out a

“Everything you need to know is here. I knew I would get caught and managed to download everything. It’s the location, blueprint of the building, and whatever traps he has set up in the area.” I ripped the flash drive out of his hand and tossed it to Rafaelle.

“You better be telling the truth.”

“I am.” I stared him down while I waited for Rafaelle to check everything.

“Everything is clear. It matches what we already have found out. One problem though.”

“What?” I gritted my teeth. My patience had already run up and I was one second away from shooting the entire place up in frustration.

“Cameras are everywhere and Ghost is most likely the one controlling them.” My entire body tensed. It meant it would take too much time for Rafaelle and Ava to figure out how to get control over the cameras. And we didn’t have the fucking time.

“Ah, Ghost. He is very good. Even I couldn’t get my hands on him.” Vasiliev commented.

“Wait, I can help with that. I know Ghost.” Michael spoke

“You know him?” I raised a brow.

“I know her. We go way back and I was the one who managed to get Gaetano a deal. I didn’t know she was still working with

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him.”

“Wait, Ghost is a fucking woman?!” Rafaelle erupted in shock and Michael nodded.

“Yes. Can you get me a secure line? I will get in touch with her and see what I can do. She owes me a few favors.”

“Listen up, this is what we’re going to do now.” I said, coming up with an idea.

After looking through what Michael had managed to get on his flash drive, it gave me the perfect advantage of preparing logistics and we would be getting Althaia and Cara out there faster than planned in the first place. Time was ticking away, and I didn’t have time to argue with Vasiliev about it. We were able to prepare everything and inform everyone about what was going to happen.

For the first time in history, Italians and Russians were working together. And it was all because of the women in our lives.

With the trucks ready with Gaetano’s demands, I arrived at the destination. I stepped out of the car, lighting a cigarette as I took in the surroundings. It was a cargo warehouse by the port he bought and built underground passages with basements.

“Look what we have here. Good boy, Bellavia.” Gaetano appeared from the warehouse with armed men. I looked at him calmly, ignoring the insults he sent my way.

“You have everything you demanded in the trucks. Hand over

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the girls.”

“Easy there. I need to check if everything matches.” I said and signaled his men. Shots were fired, shooting the drivers before gesturing for his men to check the trucks. I wasn’t surprised. I knew he was going to do that.

And I also knew how to fake deaths for a show.

I had in total five trucks and they checked every single one of them. They took a few of the tall wooden crates out to show him I held my end of the bargain.

“Excellent!” Gaetano erupted excitedly.

“The girls.” I told him once more. He pretended to sigh in sadness.

“I would hand them over, but you see, you were 5 seconds late and I told you not to be late. They’re currently somewhere, hanging around with a robe around their necks.” He let out a booming laugh. I let myself fall deep into my zone with red in my sight.

“Gaetano, do you understand why they say never make a deal with The Devil?” I interrupted his laugh. He looked at me with narrowed eyes as I blew out the cigarette smoke into the night sky. I flicked the bud away and met his gaze, giving him a devilish smirk.

“I’m about to show you why.” I drew my guns out at the same time men jumped out from the wooden crates.

And a war with fire began.

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Chapter 250

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Althaia

I felt like I was losing my sanity the longer we were locked up in this shit hole. My heart ached continually at the thought of Damiano not being alive. The image of him being shot was playing over and over in my head, and no matter how hard I tried, tears threatened to fall.

I wrapped my arms around my knees, somehow trying to calm down my racing heart. Guilt was eating me alive. Maybe... if I had gone away, he would still be alive and he wouldn't have had to deal with all those problems I carried along with me. He wanted to make life easier for me. To make me happy. And he did. But in return, I placed all the burden on his shoulders, causing his death.

Was this how it really was going to end for us?

For him?

For me?

To lose the people I loved so dearly in a blink of an eye?

If he wasn't here with me, then I wouldn't want to live anymore. And maybe, just maybe, with a glimpse of hope still in my heart, I would be able to see him again in the next life.

"We have to do something..." My voice was barely audible. I sniffed and wiped the tears that had managed to escape. I stood up, my legs trembling a bit from being physically and mentally exhausted. The sedation left my body all messed up and my mind wasn't giving me a break with anything with thoughts running like crazy.

"I know, but what can we do?" Cara sighed and got up as well. I could see she was drained as well, but we had to shove it all to the side and focus on getting out of here.

I looked around in the basement room we were in. There wasn't anything we could use to try and break out. And the door was being guarded from the other side.

"Wait, I have an idea." Cara whispered and stepped closer to

"Maso is by the door. Maybe I can convince him to let us out to the bathroom?" She suggested, and I thought about it, assessing the possibilities.

"What makes you think you can convince him?" She drew her lower lip between her teeth before, hesitating a little before she spoke.

“He... kind of took care of me.” I gave her a questionable look, waiting for her to elaborate.

“He was the only one who was kind to me and took me to get treated whenever I was beaten to the point I couldn’t walk. I think, at some point, we may have had something going on but he stopped before it could turn into something more. Or maybe I read too much into it and confused his kindness for something more.” Cara sighed.

“I don’t think so.” I told her. Carlos was close to hitting her, but Maso didn’t allow it and stopped him before he could.

“He still has a soft spot for how, but how big, I wouldn’t know. Whatever it is, we have to take advantage of it and at least try

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Cara(1)

to do something.” I said.

“It’s worth a try.”

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“Just one problem... We don’t know how many are out there with Maso.” If it was only Maso, we had a better chance of taking him down. But if there were more men guarding the door, our chances were slim. Even more so as we had nothing to defend ourselves with.

I let out a small gasp when I realized we were still wearing our hair accessories. It was not much but at least they were still somewhat sharp enough to stab someone if put enough force to it.

“Okay, this is what we’re going to do.” I lowered my voice to make sure no one would be able to hear me. I carefully explained what I had in mind to get out of here while mentally preparing myself actually to fight. This was not out in the training field with Luca and Giovanni. This was the real deal, and it had my stomach churning and my heart beating in

nervousness.

Our lives were on the line.

We both took a deep breath, preparing ourselves for what we were about to do. We only had one shot and we couldn't fuck it up.

"Maso?" Cara knocked on the door while I stayed behind. She continued to call after him and knock until the hatch in the door opened, Maso didn't say anything and just looked at her, waiting for her to speak.

"We need to use the restroom."

Cara(1)

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"I will get you a bucket."

"What?!" She shrieked in disgust.

"If you think I will be willing to pee in a disgusting bucket, then you're wrong!" Cara frowned.

"I can't help you." Maso replied blankly.

"Wait, Maso!" She called after him before he could close the hatch.

"Maso, please... I really need to go and I'm on my period. Do you know how dangerous it is to leave a tampon in for so long? I could get TSS. Do you know what TSS is? It's Toxic Shock Syndrome, and if you don't want me to die from bacteria getting into my body, I suggest you let me use a normal toilet so that I can take care of my business." Cara continued to plead her case in a passive-aggressive tone, holding her ground and continued to stare him dead in the

eyes.

"If you're going to fucking hold women hostages, at least be a bit more considerate about our anatomy." I looked back and forth between them as they continued to stare at each other for a while. My body was tense, hoping it would get us out of here.

Then Maso shut the hatch, and my heart dropped.

We fucked up.

“Bring tampons!” Cara yelled before turning to me with a small grin.

“It worked.” She whispered when she neared me and I looked

Cara(1)

at her confused.

“It didn’t look like that...”

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“That’s how he works. He doesn’t say anything but will get the job done. Now, we just have to wait until he returns.”

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