

## Chapter 11 – By Fate I Conquer Cora Reilly

“Down!” he hissed and the dogs in all the kennels laid down obediently. He stopped beside me but only had eyes for the girl inside the cage.

“Marcella Vitiello, finally we meet.”

“Am I supposed to know who you are?” she said haughtily.

I had a feeling she knew very well who we were. Her reaction to seeing the cut had been too strong. She couldn't be that oblivious. Though I was sure Vitiello did his best to turn her life into a fucking fairy tale. Yet even her shopping-fixated princess brain had to know the stories about our club and the Famiglia.

“Maybe you don't,” Earl said with a shrug. He turned, showing her the logo of the hellhound with our script. “I'm the president of the Tartarus MC, and we have to settle a score with your father. Unfortunately for you, we intend to settle it with your help.”

Marcella crossed her arms. “I won't help you settle anything. Your plan is doomed. My father will butcher all of you like he should have done a long time ago.”

Not blind to what had happened obviously. Suddenly seeing her in the cage didn't bother me quite as much anymore. Maybe it would do her good to sleep with the dogs for a while.

“Let's see how long you can keep up that arrogance. Enjoy our hospitality,” he said with a throaty chuckle. With a nod at me, he turned and headed back to the building.

Marcella didn't move. She still brandished that one shoe in her hand. Her feet were bare, so she must have lost one shoe along the way.

“You won't need fancy shoes around here, trust me,” I said, leaning against the bars.

She glanced at her high heel then back at me. “I don't trust you, or any of the other hillbillies.”

“Hillbillies?” I smirked and calmly took a cigarette from the package in my jeans. “Not a very clever thing to insult the people responsible for your safety.” I lit up the cigarette, never taking my eyes off the girl.

Even her feet were immaculate. Her toes were painted red, probably by some fancy beauty salon in Manhattan. Girls like her didn't do their own nails, or hair, or anything else. They were used to having people do everything for them. Spoiled to the very core.

I finally tore my eyes away from her feet, not wanting to look like some pervert who was into sucking toes. Marcella was watching me like I had been watching her. Her face was a mask of control, but her eyes couldn't hide her fear. It didn't give me the amount of satisfaction I'd hoped for. Her father was who I wanted in my hands.

"I don't even know your name," Marcella said as if formal introductions could be expected.

"Maddox—Mad Dog—White."

I watched her reaction to my name, especially my nickname, closely. If she recognized the name, she didn't show it, but my middle name definitely caught her attention.

"Mad Dog," she said, shaking her head with a bitter smile. She flicked her manicured fingers in the direction of the dogs. "So they are yours?"

I scoffed. "You think they call me Mad Dog because I'm mad about dogs?"

"How would I know about biker etiquette, if there even exists any kind of etiquette among your kind."

I gritted my teeth. "Mad Dog because I know no fear, like a mad dog."

"Then you've never met my father."

I laughed quietly, shaking my head as I shoved the toe of my black boots into the dirt. If only she knew. She tilted her head in curiosity but I had no intention of telling her more right now.

"Why am I here?" she asked almost haughtily.

I had to admit she surprised me. I'd have thought she'd be begging and crying by now, but so far she kept up the cold mask she was notorious for. Maybe Marcella had more of her father in her than my uncle and I thought. "Like my uncle said, because of your father and the score we want to settle."

She shook her head. "Whatever you want from him, you won't get it."

"We want his life, and I'm sure we'll get it considering we have his precious daughter."

Marcella glanced over to the kennel on her left where Satan, Earl's favorite dog, sat behind the bars and watched her like her next treat. I'd never understood why he'd called a female dog Satan but understanding Earl's reasoning was wasted time anyway.

She swallowed and dragged her eyes back to me. "My father is the cruelest man you'll ever have the misfortune of meeting. The only thing he cares about is the Famiglia."

I chuckled. "You really think I believe that? Your father is good at keeping up his cold-bastard face in public but you and your mother look at him with love. If he was an asshole to you behind closed doors, you wouldn't look at him like that."

I'd spent hours looking at photos of Luca with his family in the last few weeks. The internet was full of official portraits, few of which conveyed any honest emotion, but a few unwanted paparazzi photos had revealed Marcella's and Aria's feelings toward the man I hated more than anything. By some miracle, they seemed to adore him, and while he always kept his cold-bastard façade up in public, I had a feeling he was at the very least protective and possessive of his daughter and wife. He would act now that we had her.

Marcella shrugged, trying to appear blasé, but she dug her red-painted nails into her upper arms. "If you say so. Many victims love and admire their abusers."

I took a drag from my cigarette. "Some do. But it is always mixed with fear, fear of displeasing their abuser and being at the receiving end of their wrath."

"How would you know?" she said sharply. "Did you major in psychology?"

I gave her a tight smile. She didn't need to know more about my past than the story about my father's death. "Nah, unlike you, I wasn't given the privilege of going to college."

"It can't be about money. I bet your club makes plenty of money with drugs and guns. It's a lucrative business."

"I'm surprised you know more about money than the price tag on your fancy shoes."

"I never look at price tags," she said dryly, giving a delicate one-shoulder shrug.

I actually laughed. She had bite. I liked that. I'd expected something else. "So your daddy shares his business stories with you?"

Maybe Marcella could actually be useful as more than bargaining material. Earl was keen on expanding our business but the Famiglia had a tight grip on drugs and guns.

"No, he doesn't. That's something everyone with a bit of brain knows."

I couldn't tell if she was lying. She had a good poker face. And she was definitely too confident for her own good.

As the silence between us extended, she looked around her cell cautiously.

"In case you're looking for the toilet, it's over there." I pointed at the rusty bucket in the corner.

"I won't use a bucket," she said in disgust.

"Then you can just let it go on the floor like the dogs do."

She looked over to the cage on her left again where Satan was now lying in her kennel, keeping a close eye on Marcella.

The roar of several bikes told me the celebrations of a successful kidnapping would soon begin. With cheers and hoots, several of my club brothers made their way over to the kennels. They clapped my shoulders and checked out the captive with leery eyes and dirty comments. After a few minutes, in which Marcella seemed to have tried to disappear into the wall, they left for the clubhouse.

Marcella gripped her forearms even tighter, glimpsing at me. "So what now?"

I tossed my cigarette on the ground. "You stay here and get comfortable, and I'll go to my brothers."

Loud country music blasted through the open windows and a few guys were singing along out of tune. They must have found the moonshine already. The door of the clubhouse burst open and Gunnar stumbled out, his shirt half unbuttoned and a bottle of moonshine in his hands.

"Maddox, you're missing the party," he shouted.

"I'm coming!"

"I suppose you're celebrating my kidnapping?" Marcella asked, tugging a strand of hair behind her ear. Today was the first time I saw her hair not perfectly straightened.

"That, and your father's upcoming painful death once he hands himself over for you."

Marcella surprised me when she pushed away from the wall and came closer. I narrowed my eyes and straightened from the bars. She was a petite woman, a head shorter than me, but sometimes appearances were deceiving. The smile she sent me was ice cold. "Enjoy the party while it lasts, but don't make a mistake, the only death you're celebrating is your own."

Gray arrived on his bike at that moment.

"Finally, Gray, move your ass over here. Your old man has been looking for you all day," Gunnar shouted.

Gray gave me a nod as he got off his bike. I shook my head, wondering what he'd been up to again. His eyes settled on Marcella and he grimaced. His sentiments toward the

kidnapping hadn't changed. Mine hadn't really either but sacrifices had to be made if we wanted our well-deserved revenge.

Gunnar slung an arm around his shoulders and steered him toward the clubhouse, even if Gray looked as if he'd rather spend the evening at the kennels with me.

Marcella's gaze darted from them to me. "Your brother?"

I tilted my head, realizing she was watching everything closely. I wasn't sure how she knew we were related. We both had blonde hair but Gray had our mom's gray eyes and his face was softer than mine. "Half-brother," I said.

She nodded, as if she was filing away the information for later use.

I lit another cigarette and tipped an imaginary hat before I strode over to the clubhouse. "Enjoy the fresh air."

She didn't say anything but I could almost feel her furious eyes on my neck.

Inside the clubhouse, the party was in full swing. Word about the success of the mission had spread quickly.

Everyone wanted to clap my shoulder and congratulate me on my success. I only shook my head with a grin. Earl came toward me and handed me a Budweiser. "Why aren't you celebrating?"

"It's too soon," I shouted into his ear. "We've won a battle but not the war."

"It's an important battle, son. Let our men celebrate and give them the feeling we're close to winning the fucking war."

I nodded, then took a swig from the beer before I allowed Cherry, one of the newer club girls, to rub herself against me in a very explicit dance. My mind was elsewhere. I couldn't stop thinking about the girl locked in the kennel outside. She had been a figment of my imagination for so long that having her this close was a shock to my system.

The moment I'd finished the beer, Gray shoved a bottle of moonshine into my hand. I took a small sip then put it down on the bar.

I preferred to stay sober with Marcella in our hands. I wouldn't underestimate Luca Vitiello. The man was a homicidal maniac with an army of loyal soldiers at his hands, and he was deadly protective of his family. Kidnapping his daughter could be the nail in all of our coffins if we didn't play this right. Earl should have postponed the celebrations, even if our brothers wouldn't have liked it. Alcohol and pussy could wait until Vitiello was dead.

Cherry pressed up to me. "You look bored. Let's go up to your room. I know how to entertain you."

I let her pull me up the stairs and into my small room. The only piece of furniture was a bed and an armchair that I used to throw my clothes over.

She shoved me on the bed and began to strip. I'd always been satisfied with the girls in the club, but now I couldn't stop comparing them to Marcella fucking Vitiello. And fuck me, Snow White played in a league of her own. Cherry dropped her bra but that wasn't why my cock erected a tent in my jeans. An image of cold blue eyes, black hair, and plump red lips lingered in my head.

I needed to stop fantasizing about Snow White, especially now that she was in reach.

I watched Maddox disappear inside the shabby farm building, a confident swagger to his gait. His biker buddies probably hailed him like a king after he kidnapped me. I moved toward the cage, trying to ignore the disapproving snarling of the dog in the cage beside mine, and my quickening pulse in response. It must have rained not too long ago because the stench of wet fur and pee made my stomach churn violently. The humidity and lingering heat only made things worse. I tried not to think of all the things my bare feet came into contact with on the dirty ground. I climbed on the hut, wincing as splinters from the rough wood speared my palms, and pressed against the rough stone of the back wall. It was growing dark around me, only making my situation seem more desperate. Out of habit, I reached into my back pocket for my phone, but of course they'd disposed of it.

Dad had always warned me about the dangers of our life, but neither he nor I had ever thought it would really come to this. That I'd actually be kidnapped.

I shuddered. It still seemed like a nightmare.

I didn't know what time it was. I must have lost my watch like one of my shoes in my struggle, but hours must have passed since I'd been kidnapped. The idea that I had been passed out for hours perhaps sent an icy shiver down my back, wondering what these animals had done in the meantime.

By now, Dad would know. I wondered if he'd told Mom yet. He preferred to keep certain dark topics from her and me, but we weren't stupid and knew more than he thought. Still, I wished there was a way to keep this news from Mom. She'd break down if she found out. Mom had never been built for this world.

And Amo? He'd probably do something absolutely stupid, even more stupid than his usual actions. I smiled, but soon tears filled my eyes. I blinked fast to push them back. I wouldn't cry. Instead, I stared stubbornly ahead into the forest that surrounded the area, listening for sounds of a nearby road or human life. But apart from the occasional bird

saying farewell to the sinking sun and the rustling of trees, I didn't catch anything—except for the ruckus from the clubhouse.

Night fell and the bird song died away. The howls from the biker party increased in volume and were joined by the sound of breaking glass on occasion. Exhaustion, more emotional than psychological but just as potent, took hold of me. Yet, I wouldn't fall asleep until my body couldn't take anymore. Not with these animals—dogs and bikers alike—so close.

Pebbles crunched. I tensed and sat up as a man in his twenties stumbled in my direction. He was drunk and couldn't even walk straight but had his gaze fixed on me. He collided with the bars then clung to them, his forehead pressing into the gap as if he wanted to squeeze through the metal. My eyes darted to the door, which was locked, but what if he had the keys?

He gave me a wide grin. "There she is." He sounded as if he was trying to be a snake, dragging the s grotesquely. "Pretty princess." He undressed me with greedy, hooded eyes.

My hands shook even worse and so I clung to my knees. His eyes darted to the cage door. I prayed he didn't have the keys. Maybe he was drunk enough so I could overwhelm him and get away, but maybe he wasn't, and he was definitely stronger than me. He stumbled toward the door, and rattled it, lightly at first, then harder. I breathed a sigh of relief when his angry shaking at the door didn't do anything.

"Pity. Maybe later," he said with a stupid cackle. Then he began to unbuckle his belt. It took him two tries to get the fly down, and I jerked my head away in disgust. Was he going to jack off right in front of me?

But soon the sound of liquid hitting the the side of the hut inside the cage echoed through the silence. A few warm drops hit my hands and I let out a disgusted scream, pressing even closer to the wall. "You animal!"

Steps rang out. "Denver, you asshole!" Maddox roared and shoved the other man's chest so hard he just toppled over and laughed drunkenly, then fell silent.

Maddox was in his baggy jeans, but without a shirt, and his boot laces dragged over the ground. In the soft glow from the porch, I could see that he had several tattoos on his chest, one of them, over his sternum, a skull spitting fire. The shadows accentuated the ridges of his muscled stomach right down to the V of his hips.

"Fuck," Maddox growled and kicked an unmoving Denver whose head lolled to the side. "The asshole passed out and pissed all over himself." He turned to me, eyes crinkling. "Are you all right?"



"What do you care? You locked me in a dog cage." My voice had become nasal as I fought tears. I held my hand away from me, wondering how I could get rid of the pee. My stomach lurched just thinking about it.

"I don't," he said coldly and turned to go. "Good night."

"He peed against the cage and I got some of it on my hands," I rushed to say, hating the desperate note to my voice. I was never desperate, at least not in front of strangers.

"Stupid asshole," Maddox growled in the direction of his biker buddy, who definitely didn't hear him before he said to me, "I'll get you a towel."

He turned and stalked up the pebbled way leading to the clubhouse.

I eyed the passed-out man on the ground but he didn't stir. A couple of minutes later, Maddox returned with a towel. He held it out to me through the bars. I hopped off the hut, making sure not to land in the pee, and grabbed the towel. It was cold and wet. I smelled it, not trusting anyone around here, but I only caught the barest hint of detergent.

"It's water and soap, or did you expect me to give you a towel with more piss?" Maddox said. He actually sounded offended. What right did he have to be offended? Was he the one in the kennel?

I wiped my hands, muttering. "How should I know? That guy wanted to pee on me, and you probably think that's what I deserve for being my father's daughter."

Dad evoked hatred in many people, and by merely sharing his blood, I reaped the same emotions. Dad's power had protected me from the force of people's viciousness, their fear always greater than their dislike. Now I was left unprotected.

"No. Just because you're a captive doesn't mean you should be treated like dirt. I want your father, not you."

I kept rubbing my hand with the towel, but the stink of pee from the kennel floor clogged my nose, so I still felt dirty. "So a dog cage is your version of not treating me like dirt?"

"That was a club decision."