

Chapter 8 – By Fate I Conquer Cora Reilly

Not surprisingly, the Vitiellos had a company of guardians encompassing them. Mixing in wasn't their style.

The guardian on the flight of stairs paving the way to the gallery gave me a speedy once finished, yet his face showed no acknowledgment.

With the solid dress shirt and slicked-back hair, I seemed as though one of those Money Road expedites that regularly visited Vitiello's clubs to explode cocaine their noses.

I hit the dance floor with Mary-Lu however my look continued to dash up to the celebrity overhang. Tragically, the point wasn't awesome, so I could scarcely make out Marcella Vitiello. The principal motivation behind why I realized she was up there were the numerous inquisitive gazes from individuals on the dance floor.

"How about we go to the bar," I yelled, becoming worn out on moving.

"I'm going to the bathroom,"

Mary-Lu said, and I gestured missing minded on the grounds that Marcella was making a beeline for the flight of stairs driving down to the principal floor.

A few group extended their heads to watch the ruined princess of New York as she coasted down the steps in a boo prompting dress. My eyes were stuck to her as she set out toward the dance floor through the splitting group. She wore heels that had my mind whirling.

High and sharp, however she moved in them as though they were shoes. Each move, each throw of her hair, even every bat of her lashes was in wonderful sync with the music, as though she'd went through months consummating a movement. Marcella Vitiello was unadulterated flawlessness.

She knew it, and everybody around her better recognize it.

Also, I loathed her for it. She carried on with a ruined life, exposed of difficulties. She'd never experienced the manner in which I had. Her dad had placed her on a privileged position, made her a princess with no accomplishments of her own.

Difficult work, torment, penance made very little difference to the princess of New York. Her fall would be steep. Fuck. I'd make her crash and burn on her presumptuous nose.

I let my look meander around the jam-packed club. Aside from her sibling, a youngster whose similarity to his dad made me need to cut his throat. She had three protectors with her. For probably the first time, her lapdog of a life partner wasn't next to her. Inconvenience in heaven?

I grinned against my lager bottle and took another drink. It would be ideal for I to leave. Indeed, even in mask, the gamble of being perceived by one of the Famiglia troopers was excessively high. It would demolish everything, except tearing myself away was hard.

I remained where I was for a couple more minutes and watched her dance. That young lady didn't require guardians or her goliath of a sibling to avoid everybody as much as possible. Her look with those spirit suckingly cold blue eyes assembled higher walls than the Chinese heads.

One more throw of those dark braids and out of nowhere those blue circles locked on mine, for under a second, yet my heartbeat accelerated. To hell with it. The main time I'd felt this captured by a look had been her dad's nevertheless in a totally different manner.

The tables would before long turn. I grinned. Her temples puckered and I tore my look away. Subsequent to leaving the container and money on the bar, I tracked down Mary-Lu and left the club with her.

"What has happened to you, Distraught? You look as though Satan's after you," Mary-Lu said as she staggered after me in her heels, showing none of the elegance that Marcella flaunted effortlessly.

I got into the fucking Prius Baron had constrained on me once more and trusted that Mary-Lu will get in also before I raised a ruckus around town. "How about we return to the clubhouse. I've had enough."

She gave me an inquisitive look yet I zeroed in the city and periodically the rearview reflect as we hurried away. Marcella Vitiello had eyes that could freeze the blood in anybody's veins while the remainder of her body made the contrary difference.

That evening was the second time I longed for her, and from that day on, she'd torment my evenings.

Generally moving consistently made all the difference for my mind-set. It was my own cheerful spot, the medication of my decision when I felt blue, yet today it didn't make the planned difference.

I favored things to turn out well for me, to follow the plans I'd spread out fastidiously for my future. Up until this point every one of my arrangements had worked out.

I'd completed secondary school top tier, and had come to my preferred college. At the point when I began something, I generally completed it and when I completed it then I did it as quite possibly of the best.

Saying a final farewell to Giovanni, regardless of whether it was the ideal decision, felt like a disappointment, such as conceding rout on my part. I'd surrendered.

"For what reason would you say you are pulling such a face? I thought we were here to have a good time," Amo yelled over the music.

My eyes looked for the club for something to grab my eye and divert me from my meandering contemplations. And afterward I recognized the person who appeared to be all the way awkward in this extravagant Manhattan club, in spite of the standard outfit of dress shirt and dim pants.

Something in his eyes let me know he scorned everything about being here, as though he needed to imagine he was another person.

I knew that inclination, however nobody could at any point think anything. I had consummated my cover throughout the long term. Perhaps he would as well, in the long run, or quit doing what he abhorred.

He rested up against the bar, a container of brew in one hand. My intuition let me know he could have done without anybody's endorsement, which pursued his decision of outfit much more odd. He presumably wouldn't care a whole lot on the off chance that my dad flew off the handle.

I wanted to be that way, not caring a lot about individuals' thought process of me, however that was an extravagance I was unable to manage, basically the one to focus on. The person met my look and his grin around the container edge turned out to be practically priggish.

My skin started to shiver in a tricky manner, an indication of looming risk, however my guardians looked unperturbed thus I disregarded my body's response to the person, yet I was unable to quit investigating his eyes.

Something in them raised goose pimples all around my body. Many individuals loathed me, however his inclinations toward me appeared to be hazier and more profound.

He transformed unexpectedly and vanished into the moving group like a phantom. At times I wanted to do likewise, simply evaporate into the shadows, into secrecy for a brief period.

I looked at my guardians again, yet they hadn't even focused on the person. Also, Amo? He was hitting the dance floor with two young ladies no less than five years more established than him who looked prepared to detach his garments.

I feigned exacerbation at him as I continued to move all alone, the typical boycott mile around me. Men didn't move toward me inspired by a paranoid fear of my dad and young ladies stayed away so they could sass me.

Amo waved at the two young ladies and moved his direction over to me.

"You don't need to stay with me like I'm some failure," I murmured yet I was happy for his presence, which said a great deal regarding my day and my life overall. Depending on your more youthful sibling to hit the dance floor with you was miserable in each respect.

Amo shrugged. "You are the main individual I can act naturally with, washout or not."

I feigned exacerbation once more, however my throat stopped up with feelings. "Quiet down and dance!"

It was very nearly two AM when Amo and I hauled our drained asses back home. Notwithstanding the three champagne mixed drinks I'd had all through the night, I felt disappointedly sober once I got comfortable my bed. Every one of the considerations of Giovanni and my now frustratingly spontaneous future returned full power.

I recollected the person who'd vanished into the shadows and how at that time I'd wished to do likewise, yet I wasn't somebody who ran off. Regardless of whether this life frequently sucked, I was excessively appreciative to my folks for how they'd helped me.

Notwithstanding my demand to Amo that I wasn't apprehensive about conversing with Mother and Father, my stomach fixed as I advanced down the stairs in the first part of the day. I could as of now hear Mother and Father talking, and a periodic clunking of cutlery.

At the point when I ventured into the kitchen, the two of them turned upward. Mother grinned brilliantly, looking as though she and Father were new off their special first night. "How was night out on the town?" I asked pointlessly.

"Brilliant as usual," Mother said, giving Father one of those cryptic grins.

His face generally loaded up with such an excess of delicacy that I understood the reason why it might have never worked out with Giovanni.

I was taking a stab at what Mother and Father had, however while Giovanni adored me maybe too much in light of what my identity was, of who my dad was, he never viewed at me as though he'd stroll through fire for me.

Father could not have possibly allowed anybody to let him know how to cherish Mother. He most certainly could not have possibly been frightened of her dad.

"Marcella?" Father asked, stress tingeing his voice and his dim foreheads arranging.

Steps sounded behind me and Amo walked in, in running pants and that's it, appearing as though demise warmed over and squinting against the daylight. The five o'clock shadow on his cheeks jaw actually lost me despite the fact that his beard had been developing for some time.

In the event that Mother and Father hadn't realized about our dance party yet, they would now. Amo gave the barest sprinkle of a gesture as he thudded down on a seat with a moan.

Father's appearance became harsh. "What did I educate you regarding becoming inebriated?"

"I anticipate that you should read up for your numerical tests regardless of whether you have a migraine," Mother added.

"It was my shortcoming," I said on the grounds that Amo didn't look as though he was in a state to shield himself and it was unreasonable that he'd cause problems as a result of me.

Father reclined in his seat with an eager look.

"I said a final farewell to Giovanni," I squeezed out.

Mother's eyes augmented and she bounced up without a moment's delay and rushed over to me. "Gracious, Marci, Please accept my apologies.

What occurred?" She contacted my cheek. I was about an inch taller than Mother yet she actually figured out how to cause me to feel encompassed by her solace.

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Dad, however, looked as if he was about ready to hunt Giovanni down. "What happened?" His words, even if they were the same as Mom's, held a very different meaning. I could see that he was already imagining all the horrible things Giovanni might have done to upset me, and how to make him pay tenfold for his transgression. "What did he do?"

"Nothing," I said firmly. That was the problem. I couldn't tell Dad the exact reasons why I had broken up with Giovanni, especially because they were the reasons why Dad probably would have chosen him. They were most definitely the reasons why Dad had allowed me to date Giovanni in the first place. Dad could read people and he'd probably smelled from a mile away that Giovanni was too cowardly to ever touch me.

Dad looked at Amo as if he hoped my brother would prove my words wrong, but Amo only shrugged as if he didn't have the slightest clue and would rather die than suffer another moment of his hangover.

Mom's eyes softened further. "Maybe you and Giovanni can fix it?"

"No," I said immediately. If I returned to Giovanni, that would only happen out of habit and because I hated the prospect of an uncertain future, but those weren't good enough reasons to continue a relationship. "I just realized I don't love him. I don't want to settle for less than what you have."

Mom smiled softly. "Sometimes love takes time. Your father and I weren't in love when we married."

"I know. You didn't even choose to marry but it didn't take you years to love each other. Giovanni and I have been together for more than two years, but I don't love him, and I never have."

Dad finally rose from the chair as well. "There must have been an event that made you realize this."

"There wasn't, Dad. Honestly. I've realized it a while ago but I didn't want to give up too quickly, especially knowing that it might reflect badly on you and Mom if I break off the relationship and worse, our engagement. The Famiglia is still stuck in the Middle Ages in some regards."

Mom nodded but Dad still eyed me as if he expected me to give him a more satisfying answer to his question. "I'm going to have a word with Giovanni."

My eyes widened in alarm, and Mom warned, "Luca, that's Marcella's decision."

"It is her decision but I should still talk to Giovanni and see what he has to say."

"In his defense, you mean," I added angrily. I loved my dad and his protectiveness, but sometimes it went too far.

"It's my job to make sure you don't get harmed."

I lost it. "But you are the reason why it didn't work out in the first place! So if you want to find an answer to your question then you have to look in the mirror."

"Watch your tone," Dad said firmly, then he frowned. "Now explain. I supported your relationship with Giovanni. Didn't I?" he asked, turning to Mom.

"After your initial resentments, you were in favor of the relationship, yes," Mom said neutrally.

Amo stifled a grin, but I was far from being amused.

"You were in favor of Giovanni because of how easily you could control him. He was always eager for your approval. You could be sure he'd never do anything you didn't want."

"I don't see a problem."

"Of course, you don't. But what I want should matter in a relationship and not your wishes!"

"I am who I am, Marcella. My reputation carries even beyond our circles. Few men have the bravery to disregard my wishes. That's something you'll have to accept. I'm giving you more freedoms than most girls have, far more freedoms than your mother ever had, but you'll always be bound by certain rules."

"I guess then I'll just have to find someone who has the balls to stand up to you," I gritted out.

"Language," Mom said.

I shook my head and stalked off.

"Breakfast isn't finished," Dad reminded me, but I ignored him.

I headed straight for my room and flung myself on my bed, letting out a frustrated cry. Who would have the guts to go against Dad's wishes? Giovanni and all the other Famiglia soldiers even tried to anticipate Dad's unvoiced wishes.

A man like that would never make me happy. But the normal guys I met in college were even worse. They barely glanced my way because they worried Dad would chase them Al Capone style. They didn't know any real facts about the Famiglia but even their imagination was bad enough to keep them at arms' length. If they really knew what Dad was capable of, they'd run away crying. No, I could never respect a man like that.

I stared up at the ceiling blankly. Maybe someone from another mob family. But I had absolutely no intention to move to the West Coast, nor to become a part of the Camorra. They were too crazy for my taste. And someone from the Outfit? I might as well just put a bullet in Dad's heart.

I guess I'd have to stay single indefinitely.

A soft knock sounded, and Mom came in. "Can I talk to you?"

I nodded and sat up. I didn't want to mope around on the bed like a five-year-old. Mom perched on the mattress beside me and gave me an understanding smile. She was always understanding. I supposed she'd learned that behavior in her marriage with Dad.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes," I said. I wasn't sad about losing Giovanni, not really. "I'm just sad I didn't end things sooner."

Mom tilted her head. "Is there anything you want to tell me that you couldn't say in front of your dad?"

I laughed. "Giovanni didn't do anything so I don't have to protect him. Dad would probably give him accolades for being such a perfect gentleman."

Mom bit her lip, obviously fighting amusement.

"Go ahead, laugh. I feel like a laughingstock anyway," I muttered. "Is it so wrong to want it all? Love, passion, and someone that Dad likes... or at least tolerates?"

"Maybe things would improve after your wedding."

I shook my head. "Giovanni will always try to please Dad with everything he does."

"I suppose that's true."

"You were so lucky that you got Dad. He is the one everyone fears. He'd never try to please anyone. He takes what he wants."

"I didn't see it that way at first. I was terrified of your father. Love and passion required some work on both parts."

"No matter how hard I try I can't imagine you being scared of Dad. You are like yin and yang, you complement each other."

"Someday, you'll find that special someone."

"Where?"

"Where you least expect it."

Gunnar and I waited in the van, smoke filling the inside. Since we'd left the clubhouse, I had smoked pretty much non-stop. Today was the day. I had to admit I was nervous like a virgin before her cherry got popped. We'd been trailing Marcella for weeks now, waiting for the perfect moment to abduct her.

Unfortunately, the safety measures Vitiello had put in place for her were almost impenetrable. Earl was losing patience, but a risky maneuver would only alert Vitiello and not get us anywhere. Maybe this was our only chance. I wouldn't mess up.

"Maybe she left through another door," Gunnar said. His shoulder-length gray hair had fallen almost completely out of his ponytail because of his constant fretting. I'd never seen him so nervous.

"Nah," I said. "The cars are still here. Let me check the area."

I hopped out of the van and squashed my cigarette under my boot before I strolled along the pavement. I felt naked without my cut, but wearing anything that linked me to Tartarus would have been stupid and pretty much suicide. Even in civilian clothes, the risk of being spotted by one of Marcella's bodyguards was still high, but I could feel it in my blood that today was the day.

Eventually, I spotted the spoiled princess. She talked to an older man in loafers and a mustard-yellow suit coat, probably a professor. I hadn't even finished high school so I didn't have much experience with these things but he looked like someone who spent too much time with his nose in books.

Her bodyguards kept a respectful distance but were still too close for us to grab her. We had enough ammo and guns to conquer the entire college, but we wanted to keep things as low-key as possible. We didn't want the police on our backs. Having Vitiello and the Famiglia lighting fire under our asses was more than enough. Not to mention that Vitiello paid half the cops, so they'd probably hand us right over to him and then we'd be pulp.

I trailed Marcella at a safe distance on campus. I'd even grabbed a couple of books in the library to look my part. She studied business and marketing or pretended to do so. I bet her daddy bought her degree for her. Not that she needed a college education, she'd marry that sappy fiancé and become a trophy wife like all the mob women.

I hadn't seen Marcella and her boy toy together in over a week, which was unusual, but today he trailed her again like a lost puppy. He didn't know much about women if he couldn't see how annoyed she was by his simpering begging. But his whining eventually worked and she followed him to his car for a conversation. Of course, the posh boy had a fancy Mercedes Cabriolet. The Famiglia just swam in money.

She ordered her bodyguards away and they stayed back at the stairs to the main building.

I straightened and grabbed my phone to send Gunnar a text. Keeping an eye on Marcella and her boy toy, I jogged over to the old van and got into the passenger seat where I dropped the books on the floorboard. Slowly, Gunnar steered the car toward the parking lot where Marcella and her fiancé seemed caught in an argument in front of his sleek car.

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Nothing was better to drive bodyguards away than an embarrassing fight between love birds. Her bodyguards pretended not to pay attention to the fight, obviously embarrassed by the scene. Well-trained dogs, all of them. I slid my silver knuckleduster on in case Marcella's fiancé put up more of a fight than he looked.

"Closer," I said to Gunnar who steered the car toward Marcella.

She looked furious. Cheeks flushed, looking absolutely striking against her porcelain skin.

"Fucking Snow White," I muttered. The Marcella from my dreams had a remarkable similarity to the angry Marcella of the present, only that her flushed cheeks had a very different reason then.

Gunnar gave me a curious look but I ignored him. Marcella shoved her fiancé's shoulder and turned on her heel, so her hair hit him smack in the face. After a gob-smacked expression, he grabbed her arm and her bodyguards were all eyes now. We only had one chance. Soon they'd be swarming around the princess again and we'd have no chance to get near her. I shoved the door open before Gunnar had come to a stop and jumped out of the car.

I stormed toward Marcella with complete tunnel vision. Her eyes hit me and her face transformed from confusion to realization then shock. Those plump lips parted for a cry. Her bodyguards began running, pulling their guns.

Gunnar jumped out of the car, raised his pump gun and fired. The sound transformed the peaceful campus into a hellhole. Screams sounded and people scattered, running for their lives.

Their panic was to our advantage. They stumbled into Marcella's bodyguards who tried to reach us, slowing them down. I reached Marcella and her fiancé. He grabbed his gun, but I was faster and slammed my fist with the knuckleduster into his face. Blood shot out of his nose and mouth and he toppled to the ground. I didn't have time to off him, not with all hell breaking loose.

It was only a matter of minutes before dozens of Famiglia soldiers would enter the scene to protect their princess. I knew what would happen if they got their hands on me. They'd deliver me to Vitiello and what he'd done to my father would look like kid's play in comparison to what he'd do to me for attacking his precious offspring. Not going to happen.

Nothing mattered as I finally grabbed Marcella's arm and jerked her toward me. Her wide, shocked blue eyes hit me like a sledgehammer. Her eyes locked on mine, not afraid, only surprised. The blue of her irises were accentuated by a darker outer ring. The momentum had thrust her against my chest. A cloud of her exotic perfume, something subtly sweet but also spicy, hit me. She was even shorter than I'd thought. Even with high heels, she only reached my nose. Before she could react, I pressed the chloroform-drenched tissue over her mouth.

Her eyelids drooped and she sagged against me. I hoisted her over my shoulder and ran toward the van. Gunnar was still firing at the bodyguards who didn't have a choice but to seek cover, even if their fear of Vitiello's wrath made them reckless. I put Marcella down on the loading area of the van before I closed the door and slid into the passenger seat. After a signal from me, Gunnar jumped in and hit the gas.

"I got one of them."

He held out the pump gun and I took it in case I'd have to deal with pursuers. Soon the campus disappeared in the distance and Gunnar steered the car into a parking garage where we switched cars for the first time. The new van with the laundry logo belonged to a family member of one of the old ladies. I doubted Earl had told them what we'd use it for. He didn't care if Vitiello got their hands on them, as long as our plan worked out. Unimportant collateral damage.

Marcella didn't stir when I carried her from one car to the other.

After thirty more minutes, when I was fairly sure that we weren't being followed, I set the pump gun down onto the floorboard. Snow White was slowly coming to, groaning and moaning in a way that reminded me of last night's dream. I twisted around in the seat to watch her. The dose I'd hit her with hadn't been very potent. Her black lashes fluttered against her pale skin.

I'd been almost one-hundred percent sure that her photos had been photoshopped heavily, but now from close up, I realized Marcella Vitiello was every bit as immaculately gorgeous as her Instagram and press photos had suggested. I had to resist the urge to move even closer, to touch her and find out if her skin felt as smooth as it looked. The short moment I'd grabbed her had been over in a flash and I hadn't had time to pay attention.

Her eyelids shot up and she looked at me, piercing and unafraid. I froze, stunned by the intensity of her gaze, by the way it grabbed hold of me and wouldn't let go. Luckily, the moment was over quickly. Her eyes rolled back and closed, and I stifled a sigh of relief to be freed of her penetrating stare. Fuck.

We changed cars two more times before we reached our new clubhouse out in the woods northeast of Morristown. My heart rate began to slow when we drove through the wire-netting fence gates. I'd half expected Vitiello and his soldiers to launch an attack on us. By now, Marcella was wiggling, still out of it, but growing increasingly more alert. This time I didn't make the mistake of looking at her again.

Earl waited on the porch of the old farmhouse, arms crossed. He'd received my message about our successful abduction. I jumped out of the van with a thumbs up in Earl's direction and opened the door of the loading area. Marcella sat up, supporting herself with one arm. She tossed her head back to glare at me when I towered over her.

"Time to move into your temporary home, Miss Vitiello."

I bent down to pick her up but she scurried backward. "Don't touch me with your dirty hands."

She aimed a kick at my crotch, but I grabbed her ankle before she could do real damage and jerked her in my direction. She didn't have any fight experience, so I had no trouble hoisting her out of the transporter. My attempt to set her down on the ground so she could walk by herself was thwarted when she aimed another kick at my shin.

"Fuck it, bitch."

Her indignant blue eyes hit me. Nobody had probably ever called her bitch before, and it wasn't usually a term I threw around, but she really pissed me off.

"Walk or I'll carry you over my shoulder so my brothers can see your perky ass."

She stiffened which gave me the chance to actually put her down on her feet and grab her arm to drag her along. Marcella struggled against my hold but I only tightened my fingers around her upper arm, snarling.

"Stop it."

She flinched before her mouth set in a thin, stubborn line, but at least she finally followed me without a fight.

Earl came down the three steps of the porch and met us halfway.

“Nobody followed you?” Earl asked, scanning Marcella from head to toe.

She shuddered. I wasn’t sure if it was because of Earl or because she finally knew who we were. Unlike Gunnar and me, Earl wore his cut with the big Tartarus MC script on the back and smaller on the front.

“Nobody, don’t worry. We were careful,” I said. I moved toward the house but Earl raised his hand to stop me.

“The kennels,” Earl ordered with a sharp nod in the direction of the line of cages down the slope from the house.

I hesitated, my brows pulling together.

Earl’s eyes sharpened in warning. “Show the whore her rightful place.”

Marcella tensed, but when I started dragging her toward the kennels, fight returned to her body. Eventually, I had enough and hoisted her up on my shoulder as I’d promised. She was a lightweight but what she lacked in weight, she made up with liveness and bite. She tried to scratch my neck and arms, every inch of skin that wasn’t covered by clothes.

“You’re going to regret this! My father will kill you.”

Bearing the sting of her nails stoically, I muttered, “I’m sure he’d love to dismember me, but I won’t give him a chance.”

Barking welcomed us as we reached the kennels. They were one of the new additions to the property. Earl never went anywhere without a few of his fight dogs.

“Oh God,” Marcella whispered. Maybe she thought I hadn’t heard her. It certainly hadn’t been meant for my ears, but for the first time, I sensed her fear and felt it in the tremor of her body.

It was strange, but I didn’t feel any satisfaction at her distress.

I carried her into the only vacant kennel despite her struggling. Rottweilers filled the other cages, beasts that my uncle had turned into vicious fighting machines that only obeyed him, and sometimes me. Their barks and snarls rose in volume at the sight of a stranger.

I dropped her unceremoniously on her feet then turned and threw the cage door shut. The dogs sandwiching her kennel jumped against the bars, snarling and spit flying, as their vicious eyes fixated on Marcella, eager to tear into her. Earl earned good money with dog fights but rumor had it that he'd disposed of traitors that way in the past too, but that had been before my time.

Marcella flinched and backed against the wall of the dog kennel, clutching one of her expensive-looking black high heels. Earl watched everything with a satisfied smile before he strolled over to me. For some reason, seeing her in a cage gave me the same uncomfortable sensation I'd experienced whenever I'd seen a tiger in the zoo. She didn't belong in there, but this wasn't about my unreasonable feelings but about revenge. Her discomfort would be short-lived and nothing in comparison to the hell I'd lived after her father had butchered mine.

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