

THE MAFIA'S OBSESSION

16

Ayla

“Fucking piece of shit!” my father screams, apoplectic. I don’t know if I’ve ever seen him this enraged before. He seethes for a moment, gripping his phone, then throws it against the wall.

My mother rushes into the room. “Anthony , what is it?”

“The nightclub,” he breathes, looking around as though for something else to throw. “Alessio just smashed it to pieces and killed Rocco.” He finds a glass and spikes it into the ground. “Fuck!”

“So we deal with it,” says my mother, approaching him cautiously. She’s the only one who can talk him out of a rage. “Let’s take this step-by-step.”

He grimaces, but his breathing calms. “Okay. Step-by-step, you’re right.”

My mom nods approvingly. “Good. If Nazio is dead and the grandson isn’t, that means Alessio is in charge of the Razone family now. That’s not ideal, but it’s an improvement in circumstances, wouldn’t you say?”

“Wait,” I break in, “did you just say Nazio Razone is dead? What the fuck? What does that mean for me?”

She gives me a withering look. “Ayla, the adults are talking.”

My dad rubs his forehead. “Okay, step one, we take out Alessio.”

“What?” My mouth hangs open in shock and rage. “Yesterday I’m supposed to marry the guy, now you’re going to fucking kill him?”

“Ayla-”

At this point, I’m pretty sure I’m angrier than my dad was when he threw the phone. I stomp toward him, radiating fury. “You just got me unaccepted from college so you could force me to marry Alessio Razone, and now you are literally planning to murder him? Do you have any idea how insane you are?”

“Out!” my father shouts, pointing a quivering finger to the stairs that lead to my bedroom. “Get out! And pack your suitcase. It won’t be safe for us at home for a while.”

“I know you killed Nazio Razone,” I grumble from the backseat. “You can stop talking around it.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” says my dad, driving.

My mom tutts. “Your father did no such thing.”

I know it’s only going to piss them off, but I can’t resist needling. It’s all I have. “Yeah, like I would believe you. Let’s see, want to run through the list of things I’ve caught you lying about?”

My dad slams his fist on the steering wheel. “Ayla, that’s enough.”

“Of course, I’m sure it was just a coincidence that they got attacked on the way to meet with us. How silly of me.”

“Ayla, I swear to god...”

I let it drop at this point, disappearing into my phone. Next to me, my father’s henchman shifts awkwardly in his seat, holding a sawed-off shotgun.

“You should have let Marco drive,” chides my mom.

“It’s fine,” my dad grumbles, stretching his back. “I would have been going nuts staring out the window.”

We’re at our family’s safe house-sorry, “vacation” house. We’ve had to come here a few times throughout my life, and it’s only as I got older that I realized what it meant.

Right now, it means Alessio Razone is out for my dad’s head.

I wheel my suitcase inside as a second car pulls up, and two more armed Gonzalez soldiers join us. As I go up the stairs, I’m past feeling defeated.

I’m angry.

All of my plans, ruined. No more college. No more dorm room. No more being classmates with Belle-Ann. My future, everything I wanted, gone. And now I’ve been whisked away to a fucking safe house for god knows how long, all because my dad is suddenly at war with the guy I was supposed to marry.

I haven’t had control over any of it. I’m completely at my father’s mercy. And unlike most children of awful parents, I can’t just move out, go no contact, start a new life. My dad is a fucking mob boss. He canceled my college application with a snap of his fingers. Anywhere I go, he’ll be able to find me. Any decisions I make, he can unmake.

The only power that matters is the kind of powerheads. The kind of power I don’t have at all. I’ll never have any control over my own life without it.

I punch my pillow, thinking. I need to gain some kind of status in this world. Independent of him.

As I go downstairs, I do my best to seem contrite. “Dad? Can I borrow your phone for a second? Mine’s not working and I just want to check something.”

Alessio

I stare grimly at the road ahead as I drive the winding path to Gonzalez's safe house. Dominguez is sitting next to me, Sal and one of his men in the backseat. I could have brought more, but I didn't want to risk word getting back to Gonzalez.

After the assassination attempt, I don't know who I can trust.

"Remember, no shooting unless I give the word," I order, pulling the car to a stop on the side of the road just around the corner from our destination, "or unless they shoot first."

"Got it," says Sal, tapping the gun in his belt. "Don't shoot unless you say."

We approach the house. There's a locked gate, and I'm pretty sure whoever is guarding the front door will shoot us if we try to climb it.

I tap the gate with my foot, then turn to Dominguez. "You want to do me a favor and open this thing with the car?"

He grins. "I would be happy to."

Ayla

My mother's scream fills the living room as an SUV smashes straight through the gate protecting our driveway. Through the window, I watch the man standing guard at our door jump up, then immediately get shot down, blood spattering the side of the house.

Upstairs, my father roars. "What the fuck is going on?"

"He's here," my mom whimpers, cowering behind the couch. "Anthony , he's here!"

Armed men appear in our driveway, stepping past the smashed gate. In the lead is Alessio. When my eyes land on the object in his hand, I'm hit by so much fear and regret I want to puke.

Alessio

I flick the lighter, igniting the gasoline-soaked cloth I just shoved into the neck of my Molotov cocktail. Dominguez nods at me. "Get 'em."

Hatred coursing through my veins, I heave the burning bottle at the house. It shatters, the fuel catching flame and spreading brilliantly across the side of the building.

"Here you go," says Sal, handing me another.

I throw the second Molotov. This one shatters against the window, not breaking through like I'd hoped. No matter. I'll keep throwing until I get what I want.

By the third bottle, the house is in flames.

As Sal hands me bottle number four, the front door opens. Out comes Maria Gonzalez, followed by her husband, Ayla, and two Gonzalez soldiers. I signal to Sal and Dominguez, and they shoot the soldiers dead.

"Down," I ordered. "On the ground. Dominguez, search them."

Dominguez pats them all down, disarming the dead henchmen, then taking a pistol from Anthony Gonzalez and a small revolver from Maria.

I pace in front of them as they lie on their stomachs. "It's a good thing this game is over," I hiss to Anthony, stopping in front of him. "I was about to become a bad sport."

"Fuck you," the mob boss spits.

"No," I chuckle, "that's what your daughter is going to do. Ayla, why don't you stand up and come to me."

"Leave my daughter alone!" he growls.

I just laugh. "Oh, you mean the daughter you were going to marry off to me? I don't think so. The marriage is still on, and so is the deal. Only difference is, you retire now. And your organization falls to me."

It's easy to ignore his furious response as I watch Ayla pick herself up from the ground. She doesn't look at me as she approaches, keeping her eyes downcast.

"Please," Maria sniffles, kicking her feet. "Please, don't kill us."

A smile spreads across my face. "Oh, I won't kill you. Your daughter made sure of that. It was one of her conditions."

Next to me, Ayla twitches. I watch her parents as the realization dawns.

Ayla

My father stares at me in disbelief from his position on the ground. "You? Ayla? You gave away our safe house? To him?"

I glare back at him, filled with contempt. "I did what I had to do to make sure you'll never control me again. If you gave even the littlest shit what I wanted, maybe this could have been different."

"You ungrateful bitch," he sneers, absolutely shaking with rage. "After everything I did for-"

"Careful," Alessio says dangerously. "That's my fiance you're talking about. I would be quiet if I were you."

"You'll regret it if you marry him," seethes my father, "I swear-"

“Ayla and I will be married,” Alessio announces, and my stomach tingles as he puts a possessive arm around me, drawing me close to him. “Tomorrow.”

Behind us, my family’s “vacation” house burns to the ground, the smell of gasoline thick in the air.

Three hours earlier

I sit with my back against the wall in the closet of my safe house bedroom, the door closed. I’m holding my cell phone, trying to convince myself to take the plunge.

Am I really about to do this?

It’s already decided, I tell myself. I already got the number from my dad’s phone.

I can sit here, or I can act.

Fingers trembling, I press the green button on my phone to make the call.

It rings four times. Finally, I hear the click of somebody picking up. Several seconds tick by before Alessio speaks.

“Hello,” he says in a rough tone. Almost like he knows it’s me.

“I’ll tell you where my father is hiding,” I blurted out without a preamble. “And support you taking over the Gonzalez family. But you have to follow my conditions.”

A long pause. “That’s very generous of you, Ayla. What are your conditions?”

“You don’t kill my family. Or hurt me, obviously.”

“And what exactly would be the point of knowing where your father is if I’m not allowed to kill him?”

“You can capture him. Make him surrender to you. Win the mob war. He doesn’t have to know you won’t kill him.”

“That’s a high price, Ayla. I just watched my grandfather die. Blood demands blood.”

“Well, that’s the price. You can end this today. Or you can keep doing your little gangster thing and not getting what you want.”

Silence. When Alessio speaks again, his voice is cold. “I accept your price. But I have a price of my own.”

“Yes?”

“The marriage is still on,” he grunts.

“Fuck that.”

“Then no deal.”

My heart starts to beat faster. “You can’t be serious.”

“You said you would support me taking over the Gonzalez family. You will support me. As my wife. There’s no other way your father’s captains will take orders from an outsider.”

Somehow, I already imagined him insisting on this. And for some fucked up reason, it brings me a thrill almost as much as it brings me dread.

This man wants me. Badly.

My stupid brain flashes to that morning in the hotel room, when I basically begged him to fuck me. He’s seen me naked, needy, desperate, and all he wants is more.

Not just that. He took a special pleasure in dominating me, in being the one in control while I had no choice but to submit. And when I submitted to him, he

looked at me with so much need in his eyes that it makes me shiver to think about.

Even right now.

I clench my hips, knowing that I've already made up my mind.

It still feels like a deal with the devil.

At least the devil will be more powerful than my father.

"Okay," I say softly.

I can hear the satisfaction in his voice. "Okay, what?"

"Okay, I'll marry you."

"When you become my wife, Ayla, I own you. Do you understand that?"

Butterflies dance in my stomach. The thought of being owned by this man...

The house creaks, and I startle. I freeze, afraid of being overheard.

"Ayla?" Alessio's expectant voice crackles through the phone.

"I understand."

"Say it."

My heart is beating so fast, it's all I can do to get the words out. "When I become your wife, you own me."

A sound comes through the speaker that I'm pretty sure is a growl. "Good girl. Send me the address."

He hangs up the phone.

The next day

A deal with the devil. That's what I made.

Now I'm marrying the devil.

I can't help but wonder how many wedding planners died to make this event happen on 24 hours' notice. For some reason, that's the only thing I can think about as Salomon Marco, one of the Razone family captains, walks me down the aisle. He's standing in for my father, who is at home under guard by Alessio's men.

The thought brings me a vicious sort of satisfaction: my father trapped in his own living room, furious and unable to prevent me from marrying the man who will soon take over his entire organization. There's a victory for me in that. I beat him.

But when I reach the altar and see Alessio standing there, dangerously handsome in his suit, my mouth goes dry. He's looking at me with a singular intention in his eyes, like he's a predator and I'm something he wants to eat.

Something he's going to eat.

The priest says his part, and I don't hear a word of it. All of Alessio's attention is on me, and I feel naked under his gaze. Completely naked. The whole ceremony happens in a blur. I don't even remember saying our vows, just Alessio's dark eyes.

I made a deal with the devil, and tonight, he's going to claim what's his.

"I present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Razone," says the priest, and the whole crowd in front of us cheers. It's a smaller group than I'm used to, but still full of the same Mafia figures I've been seeing at events my entire life. As much as I've always hated these gatherings in the past, right now, I find the familiarity comforting. At least I know this world.

“You may now seal your vows with a kiss.”

Now I’m forced to look at the man next to me. Myhusband. The man I didn’t choose to marry, neverwantedto marry, but am now married to all the same. He grins at me, and to my surprise, the smile does reach his eyes. He looks joyous, and as he leans in to kiss me, it’s like one of those fireworks moments from a movie. I melt into him, feeling his warmth. For a split second, it’s like everything around us fades away. There’s just us, and the heat of our lips pressed together.

This is the first time we’ve kissed, I realize. He’s tied me up, made mecome, but he’s never kissed me.

Alessio is a good kisser.

As we walk around the reception together, playing the happy couple, people come up to greet us. Everyone asks where myparents are, and every time, we repeat the lie we’ve practiced: they both woke up sick with the flu, and are devastated they couldn’t come to the wedding. But they send their regards, and thank you so much for being here on short notice.

Everyone seems happy for us. The higher-ups in both families all already knew about our arranged marriage, so it’s only the short notice that raises eyebrows, not the fact that we’re doing it at all. I don’t doubt there will be some muttering when my father announces his “retirement” in the near future, but by that point, it will be too late.

I won. We Won. My father’s power is gone, and the man who took it is parading me around on his arm, beaming at me with affection.

So much affection, it almost seems real.

And so as the reception continues, I allow myself to feel a glimmer of hope. It’s so easy to forget this isn’t a love marriage, that Alessio isn’t marrying me because he wants me, but because he wants the power of my last name.

It feels like he wants me.

All the little touches. His hand on my waist, on the small of my back, on my shoulder. Little kisses on my cheek. I've never been treated like this before, by anyone. It's something I've always wanted, always craved, never had.

If it's a performance, it's a good one. It's convincing me.

Ayla

The hair on the back of my neck prickles as Alessio and I ride the elevator up to the honeymoon suite. There's a tension between us that's been building the entire night, and now it's ready to burst.

I know what tonight means. And I haven't told him I'm a virgin.

His hand tightens around my waist as the elevator reaches our floor. His body language has been growing increasingly possessive this entire night, to the point that now, he's practically dragging me down the hall with a sense of urgency to his actions. I exhale as his hand slides lower to my hip, cupping me in an extremely intimate way.

All of his actions signal one thing very clearly: I'm his now. And he's going to do what he wants with me.

I want to say something, to break the tension, but my mouth is dry. I'm nervous and excited and overwhelmed all at the same time.

Unlocking the honeymoon suite and opening the door for me, he finally speaks:

"You liked it when I tied you up in that hotel room, didn't you?"

My mind goes blank. That's not what I expected him to say. Immediately, I'm brought back to all the intense emotions of that night. The helplessness, the anticipation, the fear.

Theneed.

Numbly, I nod.

“Good girl,” Alessio whispers, and he steps into my space, pressing me against the wall. I shiver at his words, and to my surprise, his praise gives me a thrill. “And do you remember the condition you accepted when you agreed to become my wife?”

This makes my face grow hot. Of course I remember. How could I not? I’ve been replaying it in my head every quiet moment since it happened.

“You own me,” I whisper, looking down.

“That’s right,” he replies, trailing his fingers down my neck, over my breasts. They slide down my dress until they find my waist. I feel so small and feminine as he holds me like that, his big, muscular form towering over me. “I own you.”

Finally, I force myself to meet his eyes. He looks down at me, a smirk curling his lips, and I feel more vulnerable than I’ve ever felt.

I’ve attached myself to this man. I’m at his mercy. Any power I have from now on will be throughhim.

I should be terrified, and I am. But there’s another part of me thatcravesthat release. Thatwantsto lose myself in the blissful surrender of his rough hands.

That’s messed up, right? That’s definitely messed up.

At least losing my virginity won’t be a situation where I have to worry about doing the right thing. I’m pretty sure Alessio will take me exactly how he wants, in whatever way he chooses.

It feels so fucking wrong that Ilikethat.

“I’m going to take you tonight,” he growls, hands sliding lower to grip my ass, “and I’m not going to hold back like I did before. You’re going to feel all of me, and then you’re going to feel me leaking out of you.”

I whimper as he spins me around, pressing me face-first against the wall. He holds me by the back of my neck, keeping me in place, while his other hand flips up my dress, exposing my lower body.

“These are pretty,” he murmurs, fingers stroking over the lacy white bridal lingerie covering my ass. “Did you wear this just for me?”

“You’re my husband,” I say, the words almost catching in my throat. “Who else would it be for?”

Alessio’s breath tickles my neck as he releases a satisfied sigh. “No one. No one at all. All. Fucking. Mine.”

He starts to unzip my dress. I hesitate for only a moment, then lift my arms, allowing him to remove it entirely. When I try to turn around, he stops me, keeping me pressed to the wall with my back to him.

“Seeing as you’re all mine, we should have a conversation about what I expect from you.”

I stay where I am, breathing. I feel very, very dominated.

“You obey me,” Alessio growls, lips right next to my ear. “Always. I set the rules, and you follow them. What do you think happens if you break a rule?”

My pussy twitches. I can anticipate his answer, but I don’t want to say it out loud.

“Ayla?” He gives my ass a little slap.

“Ow!” I yelp, more surprised than in pain.

“Do you want to guess, or should I tell you?”

I can't bring myself to say it. I stare at the wall, quivering.

"You get punished," Alessio whispers. "Repeat that back to me."

"I... get punished," I echo, cheeks burning.

"That's right." He releases me, and I'm left panting. "Fuck," he grunts.

I face him, trying to keep myself composed. "Fuck? What was that about?"

He eyes me up and down, and the look on his face is a ravenous snarl.

There's so much desire in his gaze that I feel consumed by it. He's practically shaking. "The fucking effect you have on me."

Jesus Christ. Now I'm shaking, too. I'm standing in front of him wearing nothing but see-through underwear and a garter belt, feeling totally naked, and the realization washes over me that I have power over him.

He wants me so badly he's struggling to control himself.

I don't want him to control himself.

Moaning, I press my body against him. Our lips meet again, for the first time since the wedding ceremony. This time, the kiss isn't just hungry, it's devouring. He corners me against the wall, tongue invading my mouth. As his hands explore my almost-naked body, I can feel the hard bulge in his pants, barely contained by the thin fabric of his tuxedo.

"Fuck," he groans, fingers digging into the soft flesh of my ass. "Fuck, I need you so bad."

I whimper, lost in the moment. I'm ready for this. I'm ready to have him inside me. My body is screaming for it, and as his hand slips down the front of my panties, I know he can feel how wet I am for him.

“Perfect,” Alessio growls, pulling out his glistening fingers. He licks them clean, making eye contact. “You taste as sweet as I thought you would.”

I just kiss him, trying to remove any pressure for me to reply. I don’t think I can talk right now, not sensibly. I’m lost in the moment, ready for him to have his way.

My breathing gets faster as he slides his fingers into the back of my hair, squeezing a handful to control my head.

“This way,” he orders, his other hand gripping my upper arm possessively. He guides me through the lavish honeymoon suite and to the bedroom. The moment we’re inside, he bends me roughly over the side of the bed, spanking my ass hard.

“Mine,” he growls, pinning my wrists behind my back. I gasp as his fingers hook under my panties and pull them down to the floor.

“Fuck,” I breathe, the cold air tickling my wet pussy. Wow, do I feel exposed.

“Now I get what I want.” Alessio’s voice is husky as he pops the buckle, dropping his pants. “Now I get to claim what fucking belongs to me.”

Each breath I take is a desperate gasp as something big and thick slaps against my ass. It slides lower, searching for my opening. When it seats itself between my aching, swollen lips, I hear myself moaning with each exhalation without even meaning to.

“Mine,” Alessio growls again. “Fuck, oh my god...”

Pain and pleasure both explode through me as he pushes himself inside. I’m easily wet enough, but still not prepared for the intensity of him stretching me open. My vision shakes as I feel my inner walls straining to accommodate his size.

“Yesss... I needed this...” comes his voice from behind me.

He pulls back for another thrust, and I move my arms to grip the sheet in front of me. Alessio stops me, pinning my hands where they were and giving my ass a spank. "Keep them there."

I quiver, instinctively trying to move them again, and earn myself another spank. He doesn't say anything, just keeps thrusting, holding my wrists in place.

My throaty sound of defiance turns into a moan as his cock hits a special spot. Oh, fuck, that felt good. He keeps hitting it again and again as he thrusts faster. From the guttural sounds he's making, it sounds like he's losing himself.

So am I.

There's nothing I can do but bend over and take his cock as he rails me, the sound of his growling getting more intense. He keeps pinning my arms, and doesn't let go as he starts to go over the edge.

"Oh fuck, oh my god..." His words trail off into animal grunting, and his cock twitches inside me. I feel a warmth spreading, and I realize that with every twitch, he's pumping more of his cum into my pussy.

So much for safe sex.

All I can hear is his labored breathing as he lets go of my wrists. He stays inside me, cock still twitching.

There it is. Virginity gone. To my husband, like the good girl I never wanted to be.

I whimper as he pulls out, hot cum leaking out of my pussy, onto my clit. "On your back," he orders, patting the bed.

My legs are shaky as I stand back up and face him. "You aren't... done with me?"

He smirks. “You think I’m not going to make my wife come on our wedding night? Oh no, baby. That’s not how it works. I won’t be done with you until you’re squirming and begging and moaning my name.”

Ayla

Alessio’s words send a shiver through me. Wife. I’m his wife. Somehow, with my innocence taken and his cum all over my pussy, it feels real now.

This is who I am. What I’ve agreed to. I can’t fight it. All I can do is accept.

“On your back,” Alessio repeats, patting the mattress again. “Right here.”

Hesitantly, I do as he says. Despite what we’ve already done together, I feel shy. This is all so new.

“Good girl,” he whispers, and just like before, it brings me a wave of satisfaction to know that I’ve pleased him. “Spread your legs for me now, baby.”

I must have waited too long to obey, because a second later, he pulls my thighs apart with his hands.

“You have nothing to hide from your husband,” says Alessio, looking down at me. He’s still wearing most of his tuxedo, while all I’ve got on is my bridal lingerie with my panties on the floor. I’m embarrassed as he pries my legs open, revealing my cum-covered pussy.

“You don’t have to-”

“Shut up,” he whispers, smirking. “I do what I want.”

I fall silent as his hand makes its way between my legs, my breaths coming fast and heavy now.

“Fuck, I love seeing your pussy all messy with my cum,” he rasps. “Really makes it feel like mine, doesn’t it?”

I nod, all of my attention on his fingers. They stroke over my inner lips, glazed with white, coating themselves in his seed.

When they reach my clit, it feels almost like an electric shock.

“Yes,” I whimper, squirming against his hand. “That feels so good.”

Lifting my head, I watch as he makes circles around my little nub. His fingers move easily, slick with cum. He does it until I’m panting and my thighs are starting to clench.

“Oh my god,” I moan, the pleasure mounting. “Alessio, I’m going to-”

“Not yet,” he says with a smirk, and stops fingering me.

“What? Whyyyy?” I whimper, squirming my hips. I was so close. God fucking dammit, I was so close.

“I want you to beg for it,” he purrs.

20

I glare absolute daggers at him. “Asshole!”

Immediately, his hand goes to my throat. He doesn’t squeeze, but it’s very, very clear what the message is. “Try that again. I would start with ‘please, sir, can I come?’”

I pout, looking away. He just chuckles and resumes fingering me. Having his hand on my neck like that is a major, major turn on. Soon I’m squirming again, and can feel an orgasm mounting.

“What do you say?” Alessio growls, slowing his movement. “I’m waiting to hear some magic words.”

No. I'm not going to give him the satisfaction. I buck my hips, chasing the pleasure of his fingers...

He brings me right to the edge again and then stops, smirking as I squirm in frustration. "I want to see you come tonight, Ayla. Are you really going to deny me?"

"You're the only one denying anything," I pant.

"We'll see."

Fuck. I might hate him for it, but this kind of play really turns me on. His casual dominance, the level of intimate control he expects to have over me... It's checking a lot of boxes, including some I didn't even know I had.

By the time he brings me to the edge a third time, I'm ready to explode.

"Please," I whimper, my voice barely more than a breath. It's hard to say it, but I need to come so badly.

A satisfied grin spreads across his face. "What's that? I couldn't quite hear you."

"Please!" I beg, my pussy aching. Dignity be damned, I need this. "Please, make me come."

My husband brings his mouth next to my ear. "Good girl, Ayla. You can come for me now."

His fingers circle again, and a moment later, I tumble over the cliff.

Alessio keeps his hand on my neck as I thrash around on the bed. It feels like I'm having three orgasms at once, like the first two climaxes got saved up instead of wasted.

"That's right," he purrs, voice filled with satisfaction. "That's a good girl. All you need to do is come for me now. You earned it."

It takes a moment after my pussy stops twitching for me to spiral back to reality. When my eyes focus, I see Alessio in front of me, taking off his shirt. It isn't exactly a chore to look at his rippling muscles or the neatly trimmed hair on his chest, so I stay where I am until he makes eye contact in the mirror.

"We're going to take a shower," he says, taking off his pants.

Even though he's already fucked me, this is the first time I've gotten a good look at his cock. My eyes linger without me meaning them to.

Alessio raises his eyebrows. "See something you like?"

"It's... big. I can't believe that was just inside me."

"You did such a good job taking all of it."

My cheeks flush. "I did?"

"Yes, you did. You took my whole cock inside you, even though it was tight and I had to stretch you open. I'm impressed."

I try to deflect with sarcasm, but even still, I can't bring myself to meet his eyes. "Aw, shucks, you really know what to say to a girl."

His gaze doesn't falter. "You like being praised, don't you?"

"Doesn't everybody?"

"Most people. But you especially like it."

"What makes you say that?"

He takes a step forward, grinning. "Because your eyes lit up when I told you what a good job you did of taking my cock."

I sit up on the bed, taking a deep breath. "Wow, okay. I won't deny that's a turn-on."

Alessio moves to take off my bra, and I allow him to lift it over my head. "Let's get you undressed now. It's shower time."

He peels off the rest of my lingerie and carries me into the master bathroom. I feel awkward at first as the shower starts, and then a strange sense of comfort as we go together under the hot water. He holds me from behind, running his soapy hands up and down my body, cleaning me. There's something incredibly intimate about it, and as I see the ring on his finger, it becomes more real to me than it ever has:

For better or for worse, Alessio is now my husband, and I am his wife.