

Undressed By The Mafia God #Chapter 41: I Am Calm - Read Undressed By The Mafia God Chapter 41: I Am Calm

Chapter 41: I Am Calm

Both officers startled, instinctively tightening their grips. One of them, younger, lowered his weapon a few inches. The other hesitated longer.

"Sir," the older one said carefully, "we're here on official business."

Nonnina scoffed loudly. "Vergogna," she muttered. Shame.

"We got a report of a disturbance and we just came to check, Mr. Genovese," one of the officers said.

"A disturbance," Luca repeated. "You pull guns on an old woman over a disturbance? I am going to sue your asses to hell and back for that alone."

The younger cop glanced at his partner, then straightened. "We just need to talk to a Veronica Scalese and we will be on our way."

Luca turned to Nonnina and placed his hands gently on her shoulders. Her eyes were alert, entirely unafraid. She had survived men far worse than these.

"Stai calma, Nonni," he murmured.

"I am calm. And offended." She glared the last part at the officers.

He led the officers down the side corridor toward the smaller flat behind the mansion.

They stopped in front of the door.

Luca knocked.

No answer.

He knocked again. "Veronica," he called, keeping his voice even. Nothing.

His hand went to the handle, ready to open it, but one of the officers stepped forward and stopped him with an upraised palm.

"We would like to check on her ourselves."

Luca turned slowly, eyes darkening. "I'm not letting you in there until she is presentable."

"She may be in danger," the officer pressed. "I'm sorry Mr Genovese..."

Luca grabbed the arm of one of the officers before either of them could take another step forward. His grip was firm enough to remind the man exactly whose house he was standing in.

"Do you know me? Do you know who I am?" Luca asked through clenched teeth.

"Of course."

"Then you know what people believe I am capable of."

The second officer shifted his weight, fingers tightening around the holster of his gun.

The first officer swallowed. Hard.

"Then listen to me very clearly," Luca continued, leaning in just enough for it to feel personal. "If you go in there and you find her in a state of undress, I will pluck out your eyes. Do you read me, officer?"

The officer stepped back.

Luca turned, unlocked the door himself, and stepped inside the flat.

Veronica was still asleep.

She lay curled on the bed, dark hair fanned across the pillow, one leg tangled in the sheets. Luca just stood there. Watched her breathe. Watched the rise and fall of her chest, the faint crease between her brows that never quite left even in rest.

He exhaled, ran a hand over his face, then stepped closer.

"Vee," he said softly, reaching out to shake her shoulder. "Vee?"

She stirred, a low sound leaving her throat as she turned her face toward him. Her lashes fluttered open slowly, confusion swimming in her eyes.

"Luca? What time is it?"

"You gotta wake up," he said, gentler. "The police want to talk to you."

"The police? Why?"

"I think your boyfriend has refused to listen," Luca said dryly.

"Jesus..." She pushed herself up, rubbing her face. "Cassidy. What are you doing?"

Luca turned away before she could see the flicker of jealousy that burned with the way she said his name so lovingly. He moved to the closet, opened it, and scanned the contents. He pulled out a robe.

He returned to the bed and held it out to her. "Put this on."

Vee accepted it, slipping her arms into the sleeves as he helped guide it over her shoulders.

They walked back toward the front together.

At the door, the officers straightened when they saw her. Veronica Scalese, alive, dressed, and very much not broken.

Luca stood beside her.

Whatever storm Cassidy thought he was capable of hiding behind the men in blue, Luca Genovese was ready to meet it head-on.

"Officers!" Vee said brightly, pouring sunshine into her voice. If she was terrified, she hid it well.

"Miss Scalese?" one of the men asked, eyes flicking between her and Luca, clearly trying to reconcile the stories he'd been fed with the scene in front of him.

"Yes, of course. May I help you?" She tilted her head, polite, cooperative, the picture of an unbothered woman who had not spent the night tangled in dangerous ecstasy.

"We got a report that you were being held against your will in this house. Is that true?"

She looked up at Luca, catching his eye.

Then she laughed. A ridiculous, airy chuckle that sounded musical.

"Against my will?" she repeated. "Officers, I think someone is yanking your chain."

She turned fully then, slipped her arm around Luca's waist with exaggerated affection. His body tensed instantly under her touch. She felt it, the way a wire hums when electricity runs through it.

"I'm merely spending a few days with my boyfriend here," she said lightly.

To sell it, she reached back and gave Luca's ass a playful smack.

Luca jerked, his spine going rigid, breath hitching.

"Well," one of the officers said slowly, clearly reassessing the situation, "it looks like everything is okay. But if you need help—"

"I'll just dial 911," Vee finished for him.

The officers nodded, satisfied enough to retreat. They turned their attention to Luca, suddenly all business, all deference.

"Apologies, Mr Genovese."

"Get the fuck out of my house," he said coldly, "and the next time you come here, it better be with a warrant, or I am going to fuck you up."

The officers left quickly.

The door shut. Silence rushed in.

Vee let her arm fall from Luca's waist, suddenly aware of how close they were. She glanced up at him, trying to read his face.

"Well," she said lightly, "that was fun."

Luca stared down at her, jaw tight, eyes dark with a thousand things he wasn't saying. "You think that was funny?"

"I think," she said carefully, "that it worked."

"It clearly isn't funny," Luca snapped, the last shred of restraint snapping loose. "They had their guns drawn in my house. At Nonnina." He turned, hands raking through his hair. "I'm giving you a proper heads-up now," he said, stopping abruptly, eyes blazing. "I'm going to kill Cassidy."

(Happy weekend people. I will get to responding to comments this weekend. I have been loving your thoughts and ideas and borrowing them as I write. Lol. So dont be shocked when you find I stole your idea.)

Chapter 42: I'm Not Jealous

Vee crossed her arms, heart hammering. "I just need to talk to him," she said, forcing her voice to stay steady. "By myself this time. Last night I couldn't get my point across because it was a battle of wills and testosterone. Let me go alone and convince him."

Luca let out a short, humorless laugh. "Convince him?" He turned slowly, a smile curling at his lips that didn't touch his eyes. "Or do you want to resume your little fuck fest?"

Her brows shot up. "What? What do you—oh." Realization dawned. She stared at him, incredulous. "Luca?"

"What," he challenged.

"You're jealous."

"I'm not jealous," he snapped immediately. "I'm furious. Did you not hear me? This is my sanctuary."

"Why are you yelling at me? If you didn't want problems, then you shouldn't have brought me here!"

"You are impossible to talk to," Luca said, exhaling hard. "Absolutely impossible." He ran a hand down his face. "You are not meeting him anywhere private. You better get your point across this time because any more bullshit like this and the police will need a microscope to find the only remaining part of his body."

"This is not my fault, Luca," Vee said, and this time she didn't raise her voice.

"No!" Luca barked, then stopped short, his hands clenching at his sides. He dragged in a sharp, unsteady breath. "I'm... I'm not... fuck!" He turned away, pacing again. "I'm not blaming you. This business with your father was supposed to be a simple business deal. Deals I have done hundreds of times. I grant a favour, I collect the debt. Clean. Predictable. But none. None has ever been this complicated. So, no. I don't blame you." He stopped, shoulders tight. "I blame me."

Vee saw it then, the war behind his eyes. She stepped closer, slowly.

"You didn't buy me at that auction because you wanted me indebted to you," Vee said.

Luca turned sharply. "What are you talking about?" His dark and searching gaze bored into hers.

"You bought me because you didn't want anyone else to have me. You didn't want anyone else to look at me." She swallowed, then kept going. "You bought me because you wanted me. You're obsessed with me. Aren't you, Luca?"

"Obsessed?" Luca repeated slowly. "That's a big leap."

"Then prove to me that you are not," she said, stepping into his space now. "Let me meet with Cassidy. On our own turf. On our own terms."

Luca exhaled slowly, eyes dropping to her mouth.

"I'm asking you to trust me."

Luca reached out, stopping just short of touching her. "If I let you do this," he said, low, intense, "and he so much as breathes wrong—"

"I know... I know... you'll chop off his balls and feed it to him," Vee teased.

"Go with your phone," he said.

"You still have my phone."

"It's up in my bedroom. If I call you once and you do not pick up, I am sending an army."

She snorted. "Coming from the man who claims not to be obsessed."

That earned her a small chuckle.

"Luca?" she called.

He stopped but didn't turn immediately. He closed his eyes once, steadying himself, then faced her with a knowing smile. "You are about to ask me something you know I will say no to."

"What?" she asked, playing innocent.

"The sudden calm in your voice," he said. "You do it every time you want to ask for something difficult."

"Oh." She hesitated, then exhaled. "Well, I was thinking... can I talk to my sister? On the phone, or something. Maybe a video call."

"No."

He turned to leave again.

He had to. He knew that. If he lingered, if he let the silence stretch, he would start explaining, or he would change his mind.

Meanwhile, across town, Marco was living through a personal apocalypse disguised as babysitting.

Valentina Scalese was a force of nature. Eighteen, caffeinated by existence alone, and powered by a curiosity that refused to nap. She moved through the house like a spark looking for something flammable, and unfortunately, she had decided Marco was it.

This was not how his life was supposed to go.

He had planned a quiet morning. Coffee. Silence. Maybe a cigarette. Instead, he was calculating escape routes.

He knew better. He absolutely knew better.

The breakfast room was the shortest path to the kitchen, but it was also Scalese territory. Valentina liked to camp either there or the living room. He should have taken the long way around. He should have slipped out through the back corridor.

But hunger had made him careless.

He had barely stepped into the breakfast room when it happened.

"Marco?" Valentina called.

His shoulders sagged just a little before he turned, already exhausted. "What?!"

She grinned, entirely unbothered. "Well, since we had so much fun yesterday watching movies, I was thinking we could do something else even more fun today."

Fun.

Fun was popcorn exploding across his scalp because a fictional monster had jumped out of a fictional closet. Fun was her shrieking and slapping his bald head repeatedly. Fun was pretending he enjoyed romantic comedies where everyone talked too much and nobody carried a gun.

His mother had hit him less in his entire childhood.

None of this escaped his mouth.

"No!" Marco barked, already turning away as he headed into the kitchen.

"Marco?" Valentina scraped her chair back and followed, bare feet slapping softly against the tiled floor. "Why?"

"I'm busy today," he said, opening cabinets with more force than necessary.

"Doing what?" she pressed, leaning against the counter. "You're just as trapped here as I am."

Marco snorted. "I still have things to do. I'd rather pick the hairs in my nose."

"Ew!" Valentina recoiled dramatically. "I did not need to know that."

"And I do not need to do anything else today except read the newspapers," Marco shot back, pulling eggs from the pantry and setting them on the counter.

"You know you can do that on your phone, right?" she said.

Chapter 43: We Can Play Scrabble

"Nothing beats the feel of paper," Marco replied. He reached for a pan.

"Come on!" Valentina groaned, spinning on her heel. "We can play Scrabble. Monopoly. Something. I'm bored!"

"Not my problem."

She gasped, offended. "Wow. You're cold."

She circled him. "You know," she said casually, "I can put in a good word for you with my sister. She already kinda likes you. You might win points." Her brows wiggled with wicked enthusiasm.

"Trust me," he said slowly, forcing his hands to keep moving, cracking eggs with unnecessary care, "I am not interested in your sister."

He absolutely could not be interested in her sister. Thinking about Veronica Scalese was a shortcut to a shallow grave. Marco liked his head attached where it was.

"You're terrible company."

"Good."

"Why do you hate fun?" she demanded.

Marco grunted. "If I say yes, will you leave me alone?"

"That doesn't make any sense. The point is spending time with me."

He pinched the bridge of his nose, already regretting every life decision that had brought him into a house owned by Luca Genovese and occupied by a bored Scalese teenager. "Fine! You win! I'll play fucking Monopoly with you!"

Her reaction was immediate and explosive.

"Ah!" Valentina screamed, launching herself at him and wrapping her arms around his middle with the strength of a girl who had too much sugar and nowhere to spend it. "Thank you! Thank you! You're the best!"

"I am absolutely not," Marco muttered, stiff as a lamppost while she hugged him. Physical affection was not his language.

She pulled back, eyes sparkling with triumph. "You have to run to the store and get some board games!"

He stared at her. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me!" She was already halfway out of the kitchen, voice trailing behind her. "We can't play Monopoly if we don't have Monopoly!"

"Great! Just great!" Marco groaned to the empty room. "Fucking Scalsese girls!"

His phone vibrated in his pocket.

For a split second, his heart lifted.

Lord please, let it be another fucking mission.

Anything. A pickup. A warning. A mess to clean.

He pulled the phone out and checked the message.

Bastardi: Coming tonight. Need to check the merchandise.

Marco stared at the screen longer than necessary.

His jaw tightened. His shoulders followed.

"Fuck," he breathed.

He glanced in the direction Valentina had disappeared, her laughter still faintly echoing down the corridor. A kid. Loud. Curious. Annoying as hell.

He turned back to the stove and flipped the eggs in the pan.

Merchandise.

The word tasted like bile now. It hadn't before. He'd used it a thousand times. Packages. Cargo. Goods. Clean words for dirty realities.

Marco shut the stove off.

"Fuck this," he muttered

Vito Scalese locked his door behind him and adjusted his jacket. It was late morning, the good hour before lunch rush.

That was when a voice came from behind him.

"Mr Scalese!"

Vito stopped.

Slowly, he turned.

A man stood at the bottom of his steps, badge visible, posture alert.

"Who's asking?" Vito said evenly.

"Detective Voss. NYPD. Mind if I have a word?"

"God fucking Christ! That boy does not listen."

"If by that boy, you mean, Cassidy Grant then yes. Apparently, he has the balls to do what you cannot do."

Vito snorted. "Which is what?"

"Take down Luciano Genovese, the man who has both your daughters."

Vito looked up, eyes sharp, jaw set. "They are wherever they are of their own freewill."

"And yet," Voss continued calmly, "we have not been able to locate your younger daughter, Valentina Scalese."

"She's on a trip." Vito said.

"Can you have her call me then?" Voss reached into his jacket and gave him his card.

"My daughters are okay. Cassidy should mind his own fucking business."

"Do you know Paul Marino? The owner of Marino pizza, his store is right opposite yours."

Vito's hands stilled. "Of course. Died three months ago. Mob hit."

"Luciano killed him."

"It's the rumour." Vito shrugged, but his shoulders were tight now, defensive.

Voss tilted his head. "What do you think he is capable of doing to your daughters?"

"Like I said," Vito replied, slower now, "my daughters are okay and fine. Veronica is currently at his house, she moves about of her own free will, she still works at the pizza parlour and Valentina is quite fine."

"I don't believe you."

Vito scoffed. "You cops always think you know better."

"Like I said, have her call me. Or I will send out an amber alert." Voss said again.

"I didn't report her missing." Vito snapped, arms folded tight across his chest.

"Someone did," Voss replied, "and I think they may be right."

Vito followed him a step, anger flaring hot and useless. "You will believe Cassidy over me? Over their father?"

Voss stopped and turned back. "Have her call me," he said quietly, "and I will believe you."

Then he left.

When Cassidy opened the door and found Veronica standing there, his stomach did flips.

"Vee!" He pulled her into his arms, the hug almost crushing.

She stiffened, then melted into him anyway, her arms coming around his back. Human reflex. Muscle memory. Home, even when home was complicated.

"Where is your shadow?" he asked.

"I'm here by myself."

Cas pulled her inside and closed the door.

"Cas," Vee said, stepping back, putting space between them. "You need to stop this madness. What you're doing is putting us at risk. Luca knows every move you make. Who do you think suffers for it?"

Her eyes were fierce now, protective. She wasn't scared for herself. She was scared for him. For her sister.

"Vee—"

"I told you to trust me," she continued. "I told you I have this handled."

"I know," he said quickly. His hands raked through his hair, frustration radiating off him. "I know. I just—"

He turned away, pacing once, then twice, before spinning back to face her. "Fuck it! I feel like a weakling. I was there! I was right there when he took you. And I could do nothing about it."

Chapter 44: My Father Made This Mess

"Cas...you cannot blame yourself for anything. My father made this mess. Please, let me handle this." Vee begged.

"How?" he asked.

"I don't..." Vee started, then stopped. Her eyes drifted to the window. "...I don't know yet."

Cassidy exhaled slowly. He already knew where this was going. He had known since Luca Genovese first stepped into his living room.

"Are you going to let him sleep with you to let Valentina go?" he asked quietly.

"I..." Her throat worked. "...I'll do whatever it takes, Cas. I'm not going to stand here and lie to you or sugar coat anything."

His lips thinned as he nodded once.

"I get it. I get it." A bitter huff escaped him. "I guess he was right then. He really does own the NYPD. Everyone is afraid to touch him."

"Cas..." Vee stepped closer, her hands curling into fists at her sides. "I am so sorry. You really are a sweet man."

He smiled, crooked and sad.

"Did you mean what you said last night?" he asked.

"What's that?" Vee said.

"You said you love me."

"Uh...yes." The pause before the word was small. Too small to call hesitation, too big to ignore.

"You sound unsure all of a sudden," Cassidy said gently. "Has he gotten into your head?"

Vee crossed the remaining distance between them. She didn't touch him at first, just stood close enough that he could feel her warmth.

"I do care about you, Cas. A lot."

He caught it instantly. The shift. Love to care. A downgrade. His jaw clenched, but he said nothing.

"I would hate to see anything happen to you," she continued. "But if I do get out of this, and if you will still have me..."

She trailed off, the sentence unfinished. If she survived this. If she came back in one piece. If she wasn't changed beyond recognition.

Cassidy reached out then, taking her hands. His thumbs brushed over her knuckles.

Then he held her cheeks in his palms and kissed her.

It was a sad kiss at first, lips pressing together. Cassidy deepened it anyway.

Vee's breath caught, a soft sound against his mouth. Her hands rose to his chest by instinct.

He pulled back just enough to kiss her neck.

"Cas..." Vee whispered.

"I'm going crazy, Vee," he murmured against her skin. His hands slid up to her chest. "I can't stand that you're with him."

He popped open one button.

Her heart stuttered. "Cas, wait..."

He popped open the second, fingers clumsy, shaking slightly. And then his hand snagged on something that definitely was not a button.

Cassidy stepped back.

"What is it?" Vee asked, confusion flickering across her face.

"I think... I think he planted a bug on you."

He pulled her shirt wider apart, and plucked a tiny black device from the seam near her bra strap.

Cassidy held it up between his fingers.

"What?" Of course. Of course Luca wouldn't trust her. The realization landed with a bitter thud in her chest. She laughed weakly. "I don't know why I expected anything different."

Cassidy's jaw tightened. He turned the bug over, examining it.

Vee folded her arms around herself, suddenly cold. It wasn't the device that hurt the most. It was what it represented. Control. Possession.

"Is this the kind of man," Cassidy said, "you want me to just lie back like a puppy and watch while you trust that things will work out?"

She flinched at the edge in his tone.

"Cas—"

"No," he cut in, pacing now, running a hand through his hair.

She stepped toward him.

He dropped the bug to the floor and crushed it with his foot, grinding until the tiny shell gave up with a brittle snap.

"If the police cannot get him, Vee," Cassidy said quietly, dangerously, "I will kill him myself."

"Don't say things like that."

"Then you have no idea just how..." He broke off and pulled her into him again, hard enough that she felt his heartbeat slam against her ribs. His mouth found hers, not gentle this time, not sad. This kiss was feral.

His hands trembled against her back. He was losing control and he knew it.

Then her phone vibrated in her pocket.

Cassidy pulled back.

Slowly, she reached into her pocket and brought the phone out. The number was hidden.

She swallowed and answered. "Hello..."

"You have three seconds to get out of there." Luca's voice was calm. Bored.

The call ended.

Vee stared at the screen then looked up at Cassidy.

"I have to go."

Cassidy nodded once. His jaw tightened. "That was him, wasn't it?"

She nodded. There was no point pretending.

"Do you promise to stop?" she asked quickly, stepping closer again. "I will handle this. I promise."

He exhaled. "Yes."

"For real, this time." She searched his face, her hands gripping his shirt.

"Yes," he repeated, slower. "For real."

She leaned up and pressed a light kiss to his cheek.

Then she turned and hurried out of the house.

Cassidy stood there long after the door closed behind her. The silence rushed in. He looked down at the crushed bug on the floor, its tiny pieces scattered.

"So this is how you play it," he muttered to the empty room.

He scrubbed a hand over his face. "You really do think you're untouchable."

Cassidy crouched and picked up the remains of the bug, then let them fall through his fingers.

"I'm going to kill you, Luciano Genovese," he said softly. "I will kill you."

Bastardi arrived at the meeting point ahead of schedule. Marco had chosen the location carefully, a forgotten supermarket parking lot wedged between a shuttered laundromat and a warehouse with broken windows. Marco was not about to lead Bastardi anywhere near the safe house.

Marco sat in the driver's seat, one hand on the wheel, the other resting loosely on his thigh. Valentina sat beside him, knees drawn together, arms folded tight. He glanced at her, then out through the windshield.

Bastardi leaned against his car, jacket open, gold chain catching the light. His men formed a loose half circle behind him, pretending to look casual while scanning every shadow.

(This is to 100 powerstones. I'm sorry it came late. Its Saturday and well. I spent my time relaxing in my bath tub with a strong bottle of alcohol and music. Don't blame me, I am single.)

Chapter 45: He Is Getting Impatient

"Are you ready?" Marco asked quietly.

"Can one ever be ready to be sold?"

His jaw tightened. "You are not getting sold tonight. And don't say it like that."

"Okay," she sighed, tipping her head back against the seat. "Being paraded like cattle then. Oh look at her teeth. Oh let's see if she is healthy enough for all the fun things we have planned for her." She winced. "Do you think he checks expiration dates?"

"Come on," he muttered. "He is getting impatient."

"God forbid the big bad dog waits a few more minutes." She pushed the door open and stepped out just as Marco did.

Valentina shivered. He resisted the urge to drape his jacket over her shoulders. Bastardi would read that as weakness or possession. Either could cost them.

They walked toward Bastardi together. Marco kept his posture relaxed, shoulders loose, face neutral.

"There is the star girl," Bastardi said enthusiastically, pushing off his car. His smile was wide and hungry.

"I like her," Bastardi continued, eyes roaming without shame.

Marco stepped subtly closer.

Bastardi raised his hands. "Relax. I am a gentleman. Tonight is just a look. A conversation." His gaze flicked back to Valentina. "We get to know each other."

Valentina stood stiffly beside Marco, her chin lifted. Her hands were clenched at her sides, nails biting into her palms.

She didn't bother giving Bastardi a response.

Marco noticed everything. The way Bastardi's men spread out just enough to be threatening. The way Bastardi's eyes lingered too long, measuring, calculating, stripping value into numbers and leverage.

"When did you start checking out merchandise, Bastardi?" Marco asked.

Bastardi smirked.

"Since the last pick up didn't go so smoothly."

Marco arched a brow in a silent touché.

"So she is a virgin uhn?" Bastardi asked.

Valentina's jaw locked. She stared straight ahead, refusing to give him the satisfaction of flinching.

Bastardi stepped closer.

Too close.

His finger slid down Valentina's cheek. Her disgust was immediate and unfiltered. She recoiled, letting out a scoff.

The move earned Bastardi a chuckle.

Then he circled behind her.

Marco saw it coming and still didn't move fast enough.

Bastardi's hand grabbed her ass.

"Hey!" Marco snapped.

One of Bastardi's men shifted, hand brushing his jacket.

"Just checking if everything is still perky," Bastardi said, smiling.

Marco stepped in immediately, placing himself half a step in front of Valentina. His heart was pounding now, from a very real urge to break Bastardi's face open on the pavement.

"Until she is in your custody, you will not do anything she doesn't consent to. Are we clear, Bastardi?" Marco said. "You don't want to know what Luca would do if he hears about this."

That name did what it always did. Bastardi's smile tightened, changing shape.

"No need to get your panties in a bunch, Marco," Bastardi replied. "In a few days, I will get the most out of the virgin slut."

Marco didn't give him time to enjoy his victory.

"Let's go, Valentina." He grabbed her wrist.

"I'm not done!"

"Yes! Yes, you are," Marco said firmly, guiding Valentina back toward the car waiting a few paces away.

"Are you...okay?" Marco asked, glancing at her.

Valentina nodded. "I... I think so. Are you going to get in trouble for this?" she asked.

Marco shrugged, running a hand through his bald head. "I don't know. My boss... he's unpredictable."

The car door closed. Valentina allowed herself to sink into the leather seat, her mind a maelstrom of what-ifs. Every scenario played out in vivid color: her sister, her own helplessness, the gnawing fear of what she would experience after the auction. But one thought swirled above the rest: Would she ever see her sister again?

Luca's footsteps hit the floor with the force of a tempest contained. Even Nonnina, normally unflappable, retreated to the kitchen.

He stormed through the living room, his jaw tight, fists clenched at his sides. His composure was shredded.

She asked me to trust her, Luca thought, the memory of Valentina's trembling voice and desperate eyes replaying. She begged me. Thank God he hadn't. Thank God he had eavesdropped, silently observing, as the truth unraveled in front of him.

If he hadn't listened, if he hadn't known, what would she have done? His stomach turned at the thought. Of course—of course she would have given in. To Cassidy. To the man she craved, the man she believed held her desire in his hands.

And him? What was he to her? A man who rescued her from sacrifices that would have been meaningless. Nothing more. And yet... she is mine, he thought, darkly. She was his, whether she realized it or not. She would remain his, a tether to his control, until he decided otherwise.

Luca sank into the chair in his bedroom, tugging his shirt sleeves down over his forearms.

"Do you have any idea what you've done to me?"

This dance they were always on—the push and pull, the edge of control, the fine line between punishment and possession. And he would make her pay, in ways that were his alone to decree. She needed to understand what it meant to belong. To him.

No one touches you but me. Not ever. And I will remind you of that every single day until you remember it too.

He got to his feet and walked toward the bed where a small bag sat. He pulled out the outfit he had gotten her for tonight's... lesson. The sheer white dress rested in his hands, delicate and audacious all at once.

Though he had chosen it as a punishment, a small, sharp thrill ran through him as he held it. He was beginning to wonder who would truly be punished tonight—her, for stepping close to danger, or him, for the storm of feelings she always ignited in him. The dress was tiny, barely enough to veil her in modesty.

Its sheerness promised vulnerability, surrender, and unspoken tension. He moved to the closet to pick up his signature black box. He carefully folded the dress inside.

Chapter 46: You Can Prepare The Table

A wry thought tugged at him. I might need a whole room for her punishments, he mused. He'd never kept a woman before. Women had come and gone. But Vee was different. Vee was a storm. She rooted herself in his life whether she meant to or not, and he couldn't decide if he hated it or loved it more.

He carried the box downstairs to Nonnina, who was quietly humming as she moved about the kitchen. "Have her ready and in my room in thirty minutes," he said.

Nonnina tilted her head, ever the wise observer. "How about your dinner, Diavolino?" There was a teasing note in her voice.

"I will have it. You can prepare the table," he replied, already heading back up the stairs, the tension in his chest buzzing.

In his room, he took a quick shower, letting the warm water wash away the last traces of fury and leave only the raw, electric anticipation of the evening ahead. He dried himself, dressed in comfortable shorts and a soft t-shirt. He finally sank into the chair farthest from the door, he wanted to see her walk in.

A soft knock came at the door. His heart gave a lurch when she stepped in. She was wrapped in a robe, yet the way she hesitated at the doorway told him everything he needed to know: the nerves, the fear. Her hair fell in gentle waves around her shoulders, a small cascade.

His anger spiked the moment he looked at her body, remembering that another man had been touching her again. Breaking his trust.

His eyes were furious, dark and storm-heavy.

She swallowed. I've done it again. Poked the bear. Again.

"Hi," she said.

"For the duration of your punishment," Luca said, "you will not speak unless I ask you a question. You will not so much as make a sound. Are we clear?"

"Yes," she answered quickly.

"And you will answer me with sir. Try that again."

Her jaw tightened.

"Yes... sir," Vee ground out.

"Take off the robe."

He got to his feet as he said it, turning away immediately and moving toward the dresser.

Do not look, he told himself. If you look, this ends too fast.

Behind him, Veronica stood frozen for a beat, then obeyed. The robe slid from her shoulders, pooling quietly at her feet.

"Take off your underwear."

She spun a fraction toward him, disbelief cutting through her nerves. "What?"

He didn't turn.

"I may not have a flogger around here," Luca said calmly, far too calmly, "but I still have my hands. Disobey my instructions one more time, Vee."

She closed her eyes, exhaled through her nose.

Silently, she complied.

Luca's hands curled against the dresser. He could hear her behind him. Every instinct in him screamed to turn around, to pull her close, to reassure her that this was about trust. About boundaries. About the terrible fear that one day she would choose someone else because loving him was too hard.

He forced himself to breathe.

This was punishment for him too for caring too much, wanting too deeply.

He pulled the box from the shopping bag. The contents spilled across the polished surface of the dresser: a charger, a piece of delicate underwear, and a small, sleek remote. They looked innocent enough, but in Luca's hands, they were instruments of control.

He picked up the underwear, the fabric almost weightless between his fingers. Pressing the small button hidden in the seam, he activated it. Then, he turned to face her.

Vee was standing there, eyes sharp and wary, and her chest rising and falling too fast for comfort. Her hair, fell partially over her shoulder.

He approached her. Then he knelt before her, holding the underwear out. "Your feet," he said.

She hesitated for a heartbeat before sliding her feet into the soft material. Luca guided the fabric up her legs, savoring the silky touch against her warm skin, the way it seemed to respond to every curve and dip of her body. When he reached her thighs, Vee's hands shot up, her fingers pressing against his wrist in a silent, pleading protest.

Her eyes were wide, glossy with emotion, silently begging him to stop, to let her have some semblance of control.

He pulled back just enough to meet her gaze, letting the tension linger, letting her heart race, letting her feel what it meant to yield. Slowly, reluctantly, she slid the material the

rest of the way up herself, the small act of autonomy a sharp contrast to the surrender of the moment.

Of course, he thought bitterly, rising to his feet, it's not my touch she craves. That knowledge hit him harder than he cared to admit, twisting his stomach into knots. The ache of wanting someone who didn't need him the way he needed her was a new kind of pain.

He returned to the dresser, picking up the remote this time, feeling its smooth, cold surface in his palm. With a casual flick of his wrist, he dropped back onto the couch: "On your knees."

Vee's eyes flashed. She dropped slowly to the floor, her dark eyes locked on his, silently challenging him even as she obeyed.

She was frustrating. She was infuriating. She was utterly captivating. The way her jaw set, the subtle trembling of her fingers, the steady rise and fall of her chest.

"Good," he murmured. "Eyes on me."

She obeyed.

"Tell me what he did to you," Luca demanded.

"Nothing," she muttered.

Luca's thumb clicked the tiny button on the remote. The underwear buzzed to life, a sudden, insistent vibration that sent a jolt straight through her core. Vee gasped, a soft moan escaping her lips before she could swallow it back, and her palms shot to the ground to steady herself. The sensation was maddening, frustrating, infuriating.

"You do not want to lie to me," he warned. Then, he turned the vibration off. "Try again."

"He said..." she began, hesitating as her words tangled in nerves.

"I don't want to fucking know what he said. I know what he said. I heard what he said," Luca snapped. "I want to know what he fucking touched!" His blue eyes bore into hers, merciless, unrelenting.

Chapter 47: He Kissed Me

Vee swallowed hard, her throat dry and raw. "He kissed... he kissed me," she admitted. Her pulse was hammering in her ears, her body simultaneously on fire and frozen, knowing she had crossed a line in his eyes.

"What else?"

"Nothing," she whispered.

Luca clicked the remote again. The vibration returned with a vengeance, insistent and impossible to ignore. Vee's thighs tightened reflexively, a futile attempt to regain control. She dropped her forehead to her palms, letting out a frustrated gasp, feeling the fire ripple through her body in ways she couldn't tame.

Why did he have to make his punishment feel like this? Why was pleasure the weapon he chose? She was helpless.

"I swear... nothing!" she gasped. Her breath came in sharp bursts, each inhale a little victory over the sensation that seemed to consume her entirely. Her core was throbbing in a way that made her fingers curl against the floor instinctively.

He clicked the remote off again. "Then how," he asked, "did he find the bug in your shirt?"

She closed her eyes, biting the inside of her cheek. "He... unbuttoned my shirt."

Luca's jaw tightened.

"You were going to let him fuck you," Luca asserted.

"No! No!" she cried, desperation lacing her voice.

"Don't fucking lie to me!" Luca roared, his face tilting dangerously close to hers.

"I swear! I swear!" Vee gasped. "I was just trying to convince him to stop going to the police!"

"By letting him touch you?" he snarled. "I told you, you are mine. Did I not? I keep Cassidy alive because you begged me to. But that ends. My generosity towards you—and your boyfriend—ends tonight."

"Luca, please! Please don't hurt him," she pleaded.

"You want to feel pleasure so badly?" he said suddenly. "You will feel it. All night."

He straightened, his broad shoulders flexing beneath his shirt. "Put on your robe," he commanded, "and come down for dinner."

She moved mechanically, letting the silk slip over her shoulders, feeling both shielded and exposed in the same breath.

Luca didn't look at her as she adjusted the robe. He moved past her, still holding the remote in his hand, a constant reminder of the power he wielded and the tension between them. He exited the room, down the stairs.

Downstairs, the table was immaculately set. Nonnina moved quietly.

"Julian's here to see you," Nonnina informed him.

"Nonni," Luca said as he leaned slightly over the edge of the table. "Send him away. Now is not the time."

"Yeah, like I have ever been able to tell your brother what to do," Nonnina said, exhaling sharply. "He's waiting in the living room."

"He can wait all night. I'm having dinner."

"Diavolino," she said. "Go see what he wants so he can leave. I don't like it when he hangs around here, especially with your... guest upstairs."

Luca's jaw tightened, a subtle flicker of irritation crossing his face. He lowered himself into the chair at the head of the table. He placed the remote deliberately in front of him.

Vee descended the stairs just then, moving gracefully despite the lingering tension that seemed to wrap her every step in vulnerability. She was still flushed from the earlier punishment, the robe draping loosely over her shoulders. Even Nonnina gasped softly.

"Eish! Zuccherino. Why are you so red?" the older woman exclaimed, stepping forward with instinctive care.

"I'm fine, Nonnina. Just a bit hot," Vee said. Her eyes flicked to Luca, and she clenched the edges of her robe.

Luca exhaled audibly. Did she really think her punishment was over? he mused, thumb flicking the remote. A subtle vibration hummed to life, and Vee's gasp was instant, her body stiffening, her hands gripping Nonnina's arms.

"Mio Dio! Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. I'm fine," Vee stammered, biting back a sharp intake of breath even as she clung to Nonnina, her pulse hammering and her cheeks burning hotter than ever. Her core throbbed, betraying her despite every attempt to maintain composure.

"You're not fine. Diavolino! How can you just sit there?" Nonnina demanded, eyes narrowing.

"She's fine, Nonni," he said smoothly. Then, without breaking eye contact with Vee, he added: "Sit down."

Vee's legs shook as she moved toward the table, every fiber of her body taut with anticipation, embarrassment, and the unspoken desire that had been building since earlier.

Vee lowered herself into her chair. Her hands rested on her lap.

Luca's gaze softened fractionally, but only for a heartbeat. He leaned back slightly, fingers flexing against the table as he watched her. Every inhale, every blink, every tremor was a language he read fluently.

The remote sat on the table between them, a quiet reminder that tonight, her punishment—and her surrender—were far from over. And Vee, cheeks still flushed, body still humming from the earlier tease, realized with a shiver that she had never felt more seen, more claimed, or more alive.

"You're sweating!" Nonnina exclaimed, her hands hovering near Vee's shoulders.

Vee tried to swallow, her throat dry, cheeks flushing hotter. She felt trapped in her own body.

"What is the ruckus in here?" Julian's voice sliced through the tension as he strolled into the dining room, all casual confidence, tall frame relaxed but polished in the sharp suit that made him look effortlessly dominant.

Luca's dark eyes narrowed, the storm inside him gathering. He rolled his eyes, irritation curling in his chest. "I'm beginning to think you do not have your own home. Why are you visiting me so frequently?"

"Don't flatter yourself," Julian replied smoothly, oblivious—or unwilling to acknowledge—the tension radiating from Luca. "Father asked me to discuss something with you. He doesn't want to discuss it over the phone. So I spent the last two days flying back and forth from Italy."

"I don't talk business at home." There was no room for negotiation, for argument. This was his sanctuary, and he would not have it invaded.

"Well, then," Julian said smoothly, ignoring the tension entirely, "Nonnina? Be a dear and give me a plate. I am famished."

Chapter 48: None Of Your Business

"Of course," Nonnina replied, casting Vee another worried glance before patting her shoulder gently. Then she left to get Julian's plate, leaving the room charged with an almost unbearable tension.

Julian's gaze landed on Vee, curiosity flickering through his eyes. "Who is this lovely lady?" he asked.

"None of your business," Luca snapped, dark eyes cutting Julian down without a flicker of hesitation.

Meanwhile, Vee sat frozen, fingers gripping the chair's edge, cheeks flaming and sweat forming tiny beads along her brow. The vibrating underwear continued its relentless assault, pulses sending electric shocks through her body. Every breath was stolen, every heartbeat pounding in sync with the secret storm she endured quietly.

"I thought you didn't bring your sluts home, Luca," Julian said casually.

Everything in the room happened in a heartbeat, faster than thought, faster than fear could catch up. One second Luca was seated, the next, a silver knife gleamed in his fingers, flipped once with practiced ease, and Julian's head was jerked back by the thick, dark sweep of hair with unrelenting strength.

The knife hovered at Julian's throat, its tip mere centimeters from skin. Vee screamed.

"Luciano!!!" Nonnina gasped as she froze in the doorway, the plate nearly slipping from her hands. She had returned just as the chaos erupted, eyes wide, heart thudding in her chest.

Vee leapt from her chair, as she stumbled backward. Her eyes were wide with shock, heart hammering.

The knife stopped, hovering midair as if frozen in time. Luca's eyes darkened ridiculously, blue pools of storm and intent, burning into Julian's with an intensity that left no room for doubt that he was willing to stab Julian right there, right then. He breathed slowly.

"Luciano..." Nonnina's voice was softer this time. "You don't hurt family." Her hands trembled slightly as she stepped forward.

"Father would *love* to hear this," Julian said. His hands remained splayed across the table, and his gaze locked on Luca's.

Then, that wicked smile appeared. The smile the family knew all too well: the calm before the storm, the prelude to chaos.

With a flick of his wrist, Luca pulled the knife back, flipped it again in a controlled arc, and landed the tip into the table. Julian's fingers were splayed just centimeters from the point. The knife trembled slightly and yet Luca's eyes never left his brother's.

Time seemed to stretch.

He straightened slightly, the knife now embedded in the table. "Nonni, do not bother with the plate. Julian was just leaving. Schedule an appointment with my office in the morning to discuss business. Have a good night, brother."

Julian's jaw tightened. He rose slowly, carefully withdrawing and shot Vee a glance.

Vee exhaled in a shaky rush. She realized, with a shiver that traveled straight down her spine, that he had not just defended her, against his own family, even though it was in his weird, twisted way.

Nonnina exhaled, shaking her head slightly then moved back to the table to continue serving their meals..

Luca leaned back slightly, fingers resting on the table as he tapped the remote lightly. He thought Vee had earned a small reprieve—a brief moment to breathe without his relentless attention turning every nerve in her body into an electric wire.

Vee walked back to her seat. And noticed that he was still angry. His hands were fisted, his jaw locked, his eyes staring into space.

She reached over and placed her hand over his. Luca's eyes flicked down, taking in the small curve of her fingers against his hand, the way her wrist trembled slightly.

He looked at her, startled. She offered him a small smile. These tiny gestures were the things that tugged at his heart.

And this... this was the first physical contact she had initiated since discovering he was indeed the devil, the depth of his darkness, since seeing him for what he truly was.

Nonnina hovered nearby, eyes narrowing in concern as she watched Vee's flushed cheeks and the faint tremor in her shoulders. "You feel better?" she asked softly.

Vee yanked her hand back as if she had been caught doing something forbidden. "Yes, yes, of course, Nonni," she said quickly.

"Good. I'll make you some tea after dinner," she said.

Vee exhaled. Luca's gaze lingered on her.

Vee retreated to Luca's bedroom.

She sat on the edge of the bed, hands folded in her lap, posture straight. She told herself to breathe. She told herself not to think about his brother's careless mouth and Luca's knife flashing.

Downstairs, Luca shut the door to his office and lifted the phone.

"Do you have him?"

"Yes, boss."

"Send me a picture. Secure line."

He didn't sit while he waited. He stood by the window, looking out over the grounds. A few minutes later, his phone vibrated. The image filled the screen.

Cassidy. Bloodied. Swollen lip. One eye already darkening but still alive and breathing. Not for long.

Luca exhaled slowly, satisfaction uncoiling in his chest. He slipped the phone back into his pocket and headed upstairs.

When he entered the bedroom, he found her sitting at the edge of the bed. Spine straight. Chin lifted. Her hair had loosened, soft around her shoulders.

He dipped his hands into his pockets.

"You're right," he said.

Vee looked up, brows knitting.

"This morning," he continued. "You said I was obsessed."

She scoffed softly.

The corner of his mouth twitched despite himself. He stepped closer, stopping just far enough away that she had to look up at him. "I've never lied to myself," he said quietly. "I don't intend to start now."

He paused, eyes dark, searching her face.

"I am obsessed with you," he said. "It's like I want you to feel something for me that you are incapable of feeling. Or unwilling to."

"I cannot force you to feel anything for me," he said. "But what I will not allow is disrespect."

He turned, gesturing toward the desk near the window.

"You will sit there," he said, "and you will write me a letter. You will detail exactly what you were thinking at the time of your offense."

(Two additional Chapters proudly sponsored by: Jennifer Willard. Enjoy)

Chapter 49: Use Your Words

She stared at the desk, then back at him.

Vee rose from the chair slowly, her thoughts tangled and loud. She lifted both hands in a small, ceremonial gesture, palms up, asking permission without saying a word.

Luca watched her with narrowed eyes. "Use your words," he said.

"Who punishes you when you mess up?" she asked.

The question landed wrong. Just... wrong in the way truth often was. Luca straightened, brows drawing together.

"Excuse me?"

She stepped closer. "I don't know what this is," she said, gesturing vaguely between them. "I don't know how this works. But I'm guessing I'm not your slave, right?"

"So," she continued, "when you do something wrong, do I get to punish you?"

Luca smiled. She was truly a fiery queen. If things were different, he would crown her a Genovese immediately.

"If you ask me to behave, Bambola," he said, stepping closer, "I will. Gladly. Immediately. Without argument."

He reached out, touching her hair, his hand on her waist. "You punish me every day," he continued. "Every time you shy away from my touch. Every time you look at me like I'm a nightmare. Every time you choose another man over me."

That last one was unfair.

"I cannot love you, Luca," she said quietly. Not cruelly. Just honestly. "You know that. So why don't I save us both the time of writing a letter and just explain it to you?"

He tilted his head, considering. "Because it's supposed to be a punishment," he said. "The point isn't the writing. It's how difficult it will be to write."

Her gaze dropped to his hand as he lifted the remote, its presence suddenly loud without making a sound. "Because this," he added evenly, "will be on."

Vee lifted her chin. "Then put it on while I tell you," she said.

For a moment, Luca simply studied her. Then he nodded once. His thumb pressed the button.

Vee sucked in a breath. She clenched her jaw, fingers digging into his skin as she reached for his arms to steady herself.

"Start talking," Luca said quietly.

She swallowed. "Love, Luca, is supposed to be a choice," she said. "You've given me none."

"You took my freedom," she continued. "Yes, I know you won the auction. I know I walked into a fire and acted surprised when it burned. But tell me this... if someone else had bought me, would they have demanded my heart too? Would they have asked me to care?"

She bit her lip hard. "How do you expect me to love you," she said, eyes shining, "when you're holding my sister?"

Luca exhaled slowly, running a hand over his face. "That," he said, weary now, "was never my intention. Your father offered Valentina."

"You accepted," she shot back.

"Yes," he said. "I did. Because I needed something from Bastardi. I don't trade in women," he said firmly. "Bastardi is in the market for something rare. Valentina is... a rare find. The deal was sanctioned. Even my father signed off on it. If this deal collapses, people die. If it had not been made, I could stop it. Its done, Vee."

"What makes her a rare find?" Vee asked.

"Young, and a virgin," he said. "That's what Bastardi uses to reel in his pervert clients."

"I was right," she said. "There is some good in you after all."

"There isn't, Vee. If you're looking for a good man, a man like Cassidy? That's not me." He met her eyes again. "I'm called the devil for a reason, Bambola."

A low sound slipped from her throat, her thighs tightening reflexively. "God," she breathed.

"If it's a rare find you want," she continued, "let me take her place. Luca..."

"You heard me say young and a virgin," he said.

Her head snapped up. "Are you saying I'm old?"

"No," he said immediately. "No, that's not what I meant. You're—" He stopped, cursed under his breath, his mind finally catching up with what she was offering. "No."

"When I say young," he continued, "I mean young, young. Even younger than your sister."

"Luca... help me save her and I will owe you my life," Vee said. "You want me to love you? I will try. I'll try my hardest and damndest. Just... don't let her disappear into that world."

Then he lifted the remote.

"See," he said calmly, "I would believe you if I didn't know that since this thing was on...you've been faking."

"What?" Vee blurted, instinctively stepping back. Her heart slammed into her ribs. This was it. The moment. The one kids of nowadays blabbed about. There was a catch.

"Sweetheart," Luca continued, "my entire profession is built on knowing when people lie."

"I've fucked enough women," he went on, lips curving faintly, "that I'm fairly certain there's a very warm seat in hell with my name etched into it. And you think I wouldn't recognize when a woman is faking?"

"I... what... I—Fuck."

"You're a very good actress," he said. "The bitten lip. The nails in my arm. The timing. You made it convincing. Almost admirable."

"Your duplicity," he added, "is impressive."

"Thank you," Vee said quietly, rubbing her arms, "but I'm guessing I just put myself in further trouble."

"Did it hurt?" he asked suddenly.

She blinked. "What?"

"When you had the underwear on," he clarified. "Was it hurting you?"

"No." She shook her head. "It wasn't pain. It was just... too much for me."

A corner of his mouth lifted. "That's the point."

"It is too much for me, Luca. I would have asked you to fuck me right then and there. And you know that's not what I want. Please."

"What do you want?" he asked.

She dragged in a breath. "I want to cum," she blurted. "Badly. This torture is beyond me." Her eyes burned. "I'm sorry."

Before she could say another word, Luca lifted her effortlessly, setting her on the edge of the dresser.

"I'll help you," he said. "But you need to tell me exactly what to do."

Chapter 50: I'm Not Taking Control

"I'm not taking control," he continued, eyes locked on hers, "unless you give me all of it."

"I... I can't," she whispered.

"Then the underwear goes back on."

Her response was immediate, visceral. "Fuck. No."

His fingers slid to the tie of her robe, loosening it, letting the fabric fall from her shoulders. His touch traced up her thighs, whisper-light.

"Tell me what to do," he said again.

"You don't make this fair," she said hoarsely.

"I never promised fair," Luca replied.

"Touch me," she said finally.

"I can't hear you," Luca said.

"Touch me."

"Where?" Luca asked, one brow lifting.

She lifted a hand, then hesitated. Finally, she gestured toward her chest, her fingers trembling.

"Use your words, bambola."

"I want you to touch my breasts," she said.

Luca exhaled slowly. He stepped closer.

He slid the strap of her underwear down her shoulder with agonizing slowness, not rushing, not even fully touching her skin at first. Just the whisper of fabric moving, just the promise of his hands. Her breath stuttered. The pause was torture, cruel in the way only Luca ever managed.

When the fabric finally gave way, he stopped again.

Vee felt the heat rush to her face.

She folded in on herself instinctively, arms crossing. "I—"

"I hate it when you do that," Luca said firmly. "When you make yourself small. You are not weak. So why do you pretend you are?"

"Have you ever met a self-conscious woman? We come in bulk."

He reached for her wrists and gently pulled her arms away. "Look at me."

She did.

"What do you have to be self-conscious about?" he said quietly. "You are beautiful even when you don't try. Your skin, your body...you destroy me. And the way you smell? Dio. You have no idea what you do to me."

His hands wrapped around her breast. The contact made her breath catch. He squeezed gently.

"Beautiful," he murmured. He took the nipple between his fingers. "Perfect."

"More, Luca..." Vee gasped. She couldn't stop herself. Her body arched instinctively toward him, seeking more, demanding more, even as her mind screamed for control.

He rolled the now taut nipple between his fingers, watching the tiny flicker of reaction that passed across her face. His other hand moved to her other breast, pinching and kneading, gauging her breath, her pulse. His eyes weren't on her body, though—no, he

was studying her expression, every twitch of her mouth, every flush in her cheeks, every rapid inhale that betrayed her need.

He had never been one for subtlety in life, yet here, in the quiet of his house, he relished the tension, the delicate push and pull of desire and restraint.

"It's not enough, Luca," she whispered, lips trembling, tears threatening to spill.

"You have to tell me what to do, Bambola," he murmured against her ear, his breath warm, teasing, leaving goosebumps in its wake. "If you don't give me control, I cannot take it."

She shut her eyes, frustration welling up. He claimed to be giving her power, letting her choose, letting her speak, letting her guide—but everything was still in his hands. The real control, the edge she couldn't touch, was his. He had something she could not ask for, something she couldn't summon with words, something that existed beyond permission: the ability to utterly consume her, and she wanted it so badly it scared her.

"Use your mouth," she whispered.

Luca's lips curved into a slow, victorious smile. He reached up, fingers brushing against her neck, tilting her head back. He took one nipple into his mouth, sucking, teasing, sending shocks through her body she hadn't known could exist, ignition sparking along nerves she couldn't name.

Vee dragged her nails up his back, desperate, frustrated, craving more skin-to-skin contact. The fine weave of his shirt felt like sandpaper against her burning need; she wanted the heat of him, the raw friction of body against body.

His tongue grew frantic, mirrored by the tremor in her own body. His mouth, his hands, the way he seemed to understand her body before she did—it drove her wild, and she could feel the pulse of her need radiating from deep inside her. Every nerve was alight, every breath a struggle, every heartbeat a drum in her chest.

Unable to bear the teasing of his control any longer, she gripped his hand and pressed it between her thighs. "Make me cum, Luca."

That was the power he held—the terrifying, magnificent ability to make her feel undone, even as he gave her the illusion of choice.

He quickly found her clit, pressing against her, then his fingers slid into her wetness, exploring, teasing, learning the landscape of her body. Her breath hitched, chest rising and falling rapidly as he drew out her reactions. She buckled, hips tilting in ways that defied gravity.

"Luca...Luca...God! Fuck!" she gasped, nails digging into his back, eyes squeezed shut as the heat built, overwhelming her.

Luca's mind teetered on the edge of chaos. The power she had surrendered in her own way, and the thought of bending her over the dresser, his cock tearing past untouched hymen made his blood run hot. His mouth still captured her nipple, lips and tongue teasing the sensitive peak, every flick and suck sending waves through both of them.

He was addicted to it, to her, to the way her body shivered, her mouth gasped and moaned.

The vibrating underwear had already undone her, leaving her incredibly wet. His fingers found the spots that made her arch higher, quiver harder.

Her hands tangled in his hair, pulling him closer. "Yes! Right there, Luca! Ah! Don't stop...please..."

He lifted his head just enough to look at her, and the sight stole his breath. The intensity in her eyes, the flushed cheeks, the parted lips. Every emotion played across her face: desire, surrender, frustration, longing.

And then the thought of Cassidy hit him. Had he made her feel like this? A shadow of jealousy flared. Cassidy was irrelevant now. By the time dawn came, there would be only him.