

Cora Reilly

By Sin I Rise

(Part One)

BY SIN I

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BOOK

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DARK ROMANCE
VAJONA

For Elke.

When friends become family.

A saying that I only really understood through you.



Some things run in your blood. They can't be shaken, can't be changed, can't be lost, but they can be forgotten. From an early age, I had a foolproof instinct when it came to danger or sniffing out a person who couldn't be trusted. And I listened, always paused before I acted to glimpse deep inside of me for that gut feeling, to double-check.

Until I stopped listening, until I got used to others taking care of my safety, until I trusted their judgment over mine. I handed over my life to others, to capable bodyguards, to men who were so much more equipped to protect me than I—a mere girl, and later woman—was. If I had listened to my gut feeling, to the tingling at the back of my neck that first night, and later when they took me, I would have been safe. But I'd learned to be deaf to my inner voice, to an instinct inherited by my father, because I was meant to be oblivious to the dangers of our life.

Little children quickly learn that closing your eyes from evil doesn't protect you. It took me far too long to grasp that lesson.



Maddox

From the very first moment I spotted Snow White, she'd burned herself into my brain. Every fucking night, the image of her naked body tortured me in maddening detail.

Sometimes I woke with the remnants of her taste in my mouth, half convinced I'd actually buried my tongue in her undoubtedly pretty pussy. Fuck, I hadn't seen an inch of that legendary body yet, much less touched her. Oh, but I would, even if it took a poisoned apple.

A guy like me would never be allowed near Snow White. I wasn't a fuckin' loser, far from it. I was going to become the president of the Tartarus MC, following in my uncle's footsteps, the current prez. Of course, that made me the lowest scum on earth if you asked Snow White and her fuckin' father, Luca Vitiello, the Capo of the Italian mob on the East Coast. I was a little boy, barely five years old, when the life I knew was ripped from me. As the son of the president of the New Jersey chapter of the Tartarus motorcycle club, I had watched many disturbing things at my young age. Club brothers getting it on with whores in the middle of the clubhouse in broad daylight, brutal fights, shootings... but nothing had left quite a mark like the night the Capo of the Famiglia brutally killed my father and his men.

The murderous bastard had slaughtered an entire chapter of our club—alone.

Strike that.

Not alone—with a fuckin' ax and a skinning knife. The screams of my dying club family still haunted my nights, an echo of a memory I couldn't shake unless I drank enough booze to kill an elephant. Those images were the fuel for my hunger for revenge.

And revenge I would finally get, with the help of the spoiled princess of New York: Marcella Vitiello.



CHAPTER 1

Maddox

Five years old

I huddled on the floor of the clubhouse and spun an empty beer bottle around. My palms were sticky from it. When I brought my fingers to my mouth for a taste, my lips pulled into a grimace. A bitter, rotten flavor exploded on my tongue, clinging to my gums and throat. I spit it out, but the foul taste didn't disappear.

The room was filled with smoke from the cigars and cigarettes, making my nose itch a little and sometimes my snot even had dots of black in it.

I kept spinning the bottle. I didn't have any other toys here. My toys were all with Mom, but Dad had picked me up there yesterday and they had screamed at each other like they always did. Dad had slapped Mom, creating a red handprint on her cheek, and he'd been in a foul mood ever since. I always stayed out of his way when he was like that. Right now, he was yelling at someone on the phone.

Pop, his second in command, usually played games with me, but he sat at the bar with a blonde woman and was kissing her. The other bikers huddled around the table and played cards. They didn't really want me to annoy them. One of them had pushed me away, so I fell on my bum when I'd asked if I could watch them. My tailbone still ached where it hit the floor.

Steps thundered closer. The door to the clubhouse swung open

and one of the prospects stumbled inside, eyes wide. “Black limousine!”

Everyone jumped up as if the words were a secret code. My head swiveled to Dad who barked out orders, spittle flying from his mouth. I didn’t understand what was so bad about a black car. A cry sounded, high-pitched, then gurgling. I looked back to the door and the prospect fell forward, an ax in the back of his head, parted like a ripe watermelon. I dropped the bottle, my eyes going wide. The body fell to the ground and blood splattered everywhere as the ax toppled out of his head, leaving a deep gash in his skull so I could see bits and pieces of his brain. Just like a watermelon, I thought again.

Dad rushed over to me and grabbed my arm in a painful grip. “Hide under the couch and don’t come out! You hear me?”

“Yes, sir.”

He shoved me toward the old gray couch and I dropped to my knees and crawled under it. It had been a while since I’d tried to squeeze under the couch and I barely fit anymore, but eventually I lay on my belly, facing the entrance door and the room.

A huge man with wild eyes stormed inside, a knife and an ax in his hand. I held my breath as he came in with a roar like a mad bear. He hurtled his knife at Dad’s treasurer, who’d reached for his gun. Too late. He fell forward, right before the sofa. His huge eyes stared at me as blood pooled under his head.

I scooted back a few inches but froze abruptly, worried my feet would stick out. The screaming got louder and louder until I pressed my palms over my ears, trying to block them out. But I couldn’t look away from what was going on. The madman had grabbed his knife and threw it at Pop. He hit him square in the chest and Pop toppled backward as if he’d had one too many drinks. Dad dashed behind the bar with two prospects. I wanted to hide there with him, wanted him to console me even if that wasn’t something he did. The madman shot another club brother in the hand when he reached for a dropped gun. I could hear

shots even through the palms over my ears, dulled bangs that had me flinch every time.

The madman kept shooting at the bar, but eventually everything turned silent. Had Dad and the prospects run out of ammunition?

My eyes moved to the armory at the end of the corridor. One of the prospects jumped out from behind the bar, but the man chased him and swung the ax at his back. I squeezed my eyes shut, taking a few shuddering breaths, before I dared to open them again. The blood of the treasurer slowly spread closer and began to soak my sleeves, but this time, I didn't dare move. Not even when it soaked my clothes and covered my small fingers. Two more of Dad's men came in, trying to help. But this madman was like an angry bear. I was motionless as I listened to screams of agony and rage as I watched one dead body after the other drop to the ground. There was so much blood everywhere.

Dad cried out as the man dragged him out from behind the bar. I lurched forward, wanting to help him, but his eyes cut to me and warned me to stay where I was. The bad man's eyes followed Dad's gaze. His face was like that of a monster, covered in blood and twisted with rage. I ducked my head, terrified that he'd seen me. But he kept dragging Dad toward a chair.

I knew better than to disobey my father's orders and so I remained motionless for what felt like days, but were probably only minutes. The bad man began hurting Dad and the prospect who was still alive. I couldn't watch anymore and so I closed my eyes so tightly my temples throbbed. I pressed my forehead to my arms. My chest and arms were warm with blood and my pants were warm where I'd peed myself. Everything stank of pee and blood, and I held my breath, but my chest hurt and so I had to suck in a breath. I started counting the seconds, tried to think of ice cream and fried bacon and Mom's Key Lime Pie, but the screams were too loud. They pushed all the memories out of my head.

Eventually silence settled around me, and I dared lifting my

head. My eyes watered as I looked around. There was red pooled and splattered everywhere with pieces of flesh. I shuddered and threw up, bile making my throat feel all raw, then froze, terrified the bad man was around to kill me as well. I didn't want to die. I began to cry but quickly wiped the tears away. Dad hated tears. For a while, I listened to the pounding of my heart that rang in my ears and vibrated in my bones until I felt calmer and my vision became clear.

Finally, I looked around for the man, but he was nowhere. The front door was open, yet I still waited a long time before I finally crawled out from under the sofa. Despite my clothes being dirtied with pee and blood, and my body screaming for food and water, I didn't leave. I stood in the middle of the torn-apart bodies of men I'd known all my life, men who had been the closest thing to a normal family I'd ever had. I hardly recognized any of them. They were too disfigured.

Dad's body was the worst. I didn't recognize his face. Only his tattoo on his neck—a skull spitting fire—told me it was him. I wanted to say goodbye to him, but I didn't dare go closer to what was left of his body. He looked terrifying. I finally stormed outside and didn't stop running until I reached the house of an Old Lady. She was the treasurer's property. I had visited her a few times before when she'd baked cookies for me. When she saw me covered in blood, she immediately knew something was horribly wrong.

“They are dead,” I whispered. “All dead.”

She tried to call the phone of her old man, then that of Dad and other brothers from the club but no one answered. Eventually, she called my mother for me and cleaned me while I waited to be picked up.

When Mom finally arrived, she looked white as a sheet. “Come on, we have to leave.”

She took my hand.

“What about Dad?”

“We can’t do anything for him anymore. New York isn’t safe for us anymore. We have to leave, Maddox, and we can’t ever come back.” She dragged me toward our old Ford Mustang and sat me down in the passenger seat. The car was stuffed so high with bags that I couldn’t look through the rear window.

“Are we leaving?” I asked, confused.

She turned the key in the ignition. “Didn’t you listen? We have to leave forever. This isn’t Tartarus territory anymore. We’re going to live with your uncle in Texas now. It’ll be your new home.”



My mother immediately called my Uncle Earl, asking for help. She didn’t have any money, which Dad had always given her even though they always fought and didn’t live together anymore. Earl took us in and so we moved to Texas, and eventually Mom became Earl’s old lady and they had my brother Gray.

Texas became my temporary home, but my heart always called to return to my birthplace, to claim my birthright and seek revenge.

I didn’t return to New Jersey for many years, but when I finally did, it was with one purpose in mind: kill Luca Vitiello.



Marcella

Five years old

I perched on the edge of my bed, my legs bouncing up and down. My gaze was glued to the door, waiting for it to open. It was already seven. Mom always woke me at that time. The clock turned to 7:01, and I began to slide off the bed. Would Mom be late *today*?

I couldn't wait anymore.

The door handle moved down and I froze, sitting back on the mattress and watched as Mom poked her head in. Upon spotting me, her face lit up and she laughed. "How long have you been awake?"

I shrugged and hopped off the bed.

Mom met me halfway and hugged me tightly. "Happy birthday, honey."

I squirmed in her hold, desperate to go downstairs. Pulling away, I asked, "Can we go down now? Is there a party?"

Mom laughed again. "Not yet, Marci. The party is later today. Right now, it's only us. Come now, let's look at your presents."

After a brief moment of disappointment, I took Mom's hand and followed her downstairs. I wore my favorite frilly, pink nightgown which made me feel like a princess. Dad waited in the foyer when we walked down the stairs and picked me up before I reached the last step and kissed my cheek. "Happy birthday, princess." He lifted me up over his head and carried me into the living room. It was decorated with pink and blush colored balloons, a garland that said happy birthday, and a golden crown sat on the table beside a huge pink cake with a unicorn. On another table, a big pile of presents waited, all wrapped in pink and golden wrapping paper. I rushed toward it.

"Happy birthday!" Amo screamed as he raced around the table, trying to steal the show.

“They are from us, and your aunts and uncle,” Mom said, but I only half listened as I began unwrapping everything eagerly.

I got almost everything I asked for. Almost.

Dad stroked my head. “You’ll get more presents at the party today.”

I nodded and smiled. “I’ll be the princess.”

“You always are.”

Mom gave Dad a look I didn’t understand.



A few hours later, the house was filled with friends and family, and men who worked for Dad. Everyone had come to celebrate with me. I wore a princess dress and a crown, loving how everyone brought me presents and congratulated me and sang happy birthday for me. The present tower was three times my size. Late that night, when my eyes kept falling shut, Dad carried me up into my room.

“We need to put on your nightgown,” he murmured as he put me down on my bed.

I held on to his neck and shook my head vigorously. “No, I want to wear my princess dress. And my crown,” I added after a yawn.

Dad chuckled. “You can wear the gown but the crown is too uncomfortable.” He gently took it off and put it down on my nightstand.

“Am I still a princess without a crown?”

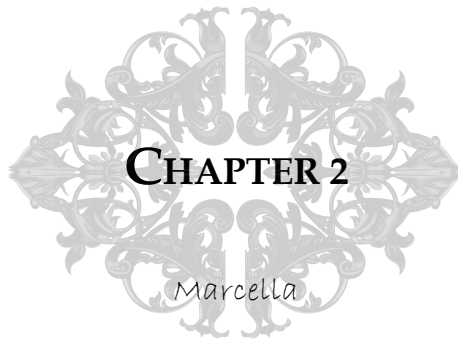
“You’ll always be my princess, Marci.”

I smiled. “Cuddle me to sleep?”

Dad nodded and awkwardly stretched out beside me, his legs dangling off the too-short bed. He wrapped an arm around me and I leaned my cheek against his chest, closing my eyes. My dad was the best dad in the world.

“I love you, Dad. I won’t ever leave you. I’ll live with you and Mom forever.”

Dad kissed my temple. “And I love you, princess.”



The soft swinging of the hammock lulled me into a half-slumber as I watched the frothy waves lap at our jetty and beach. The hammock in our mansion in the Hamptons was my favorite place on a sunny day, and there had been weeks of sunny, hot summer days since the beginning of June, but I hadn't had much time for leisure.

I wiggled my toes, releasing a sigh. The last few days had been tiring and so a few days to relax were sorely needed. The organization of my nineteenth birthday party had meant weeks of intense preparation with cake and menu tasting, clothes shopping, guest list corrections, and many more tasks. Even an event planner had hardly reduced my workload. Everything needed to be perfect. My birthdays were always one of the most important social events of the year.

After the big party two days ago, Mom had taken me, and my younger brothers, Amo and Valerio, to the Hamptons for a week of much needed relaxation. Of course, Valerio didn't understand the meaning of relaxation. He was out on the waves, water-skiing while one of our bodyguards steered the boat in risky maneuvers to satisfy him. I doubt I ever had as much energy as that kid, not even at eight.

Mom read a book on a lounge chair in the shade, her blonde hair framing her face in messy beach waves. My hair was always straight, even a day at the beach didn't change that. Of course, my hair was coal-black and not angelic blonde like Mom's.

Black as your soul, Amo tended to joke. My eyes cut to him. He had set up a CrossFit parkour in a less needed part of our property and was doing the Workout of the Day. It looked like self-inflicted torture judging from his expression. I preferred Aunt Gianna's Pilates courses. Of course, Amo's dedication let him look like Hulk at age fifteen.

The sliding door opened and our maid, Lora, stepped out with a tray. I swung my legs out of the hammock and smiled when I saw she had prepared our favorite strawberry fresca. That drink cooled me down even on the hottest summer days. She poured me a glass and handed it to me.

"Thanks," I said, shivering in satisfaction as I sipped at it.

She put down a bowl with iced pineapple pieces on the side table.

"The pineapple isn't as good as last time."

I popped a piece into my mouth. It was a bit too tart. I sighed. "It's so difficult to get good produce."

Amo jogged over to us, sweat flying everywhere from his glistening upper body.

"Don't get sweat on my food," I warned.

He made a show out of shaking himself like a wet dog and I jumped up from the hammock, taking a few steps back to save my fresca. Sibling love only went so far...

He ate a few of my pineapple pieces, not even apologetic about it.

"Why don't you get your own?"

I motioned at Lora who was currently serving Mom her fresca and fruit.

He nodded at the book of Marketing Analytics on the side table. "It's summer. Do you really have to take homework with you? You're best in class anyway."

"I'm best in class because I take my homework with me," I muttered. "Everyone's waiting for me to slip. I won't give them the satisfaction."

Amo shrugged. “I don’t get why you care. You can’t always be perfect, Marci. They’ll always find something they don’t like about you. Even if you organize the birthday party of the century, someone’s still going to complain that the scallops weren’t glassy.”

I tensed. “I told the chef several times to take extra care with the scallops because...” I trailed off when I saw Amo’s grin. He was pulling my leg. “Idiot.”

“Just chill for God’s sake.”

“I am chill,” I said.

Amo gave me a look that said I was most definitely not a chilled person.

“So were the scallops glassy or not?”

Amo groaned. “They were perfect, don’t get your panties in a bunch. And you know what? Most people will still not like you even if the scallops were out of this world.”

“I don’t want them to like me,” I said firmly. “I want them to respect me.”

Amo shrugged. “They do. You’re a Vitiello.” He jogged after Lora to get his hands on more pineapple and fresca. For him, the discussion was over. Amo was going to be Capo, and yet he didn’t feel the pressure as I did. As the oldest Vitiello and a girl, expectations were sky high. I could only fail. I had to be beautiful and morally impeccable, pure as the snow but at the same time progressive enough to represent the new generation of the Famiglia. Amo got bad grades, slept around, and went out in sweats, and everyone just said he was a boy and would grow out of it. If I ever did either of those things, I’d be socially dead.

My phone beeped with a message from Giovanni.

I miss you. If I didn’t have so much work, I’d come over.

My fingers hovered over my screen but then I pulled back. I was glad that his internship in the law firm of our Famiglia lawyer, Francesco, kept him busy. I needed a few days away from him after our almost argument on my birthday. If I didn’t manage to

get rid of my annoyance before our official engagement party, I'd have trouble keeping up a puppy-love expression.

I turned the sound off and put my phone screen down on the table and grabbed my book. I was immersed in a particularly dragging part when a shadow fell over me.

I looked up to find Dad towering over me. He had stayed in New York for urgent business—with the Bratva.

“Hard-working as always, my princess,” he said and bent down to kiss the crown of my head.

“How was business?” I asked curiously, putting the book down.

Dad smiled tightly. “Nothing for you to worry about. We have everything under control.”

I gritted my teeth against the desire to question him. His gaze sought Amo who immediately stopped his workout and came over to us. Dad had wanted him to be present for whatever went down with the Bratva but Mom had talked him out of it. She couldn't stop protecting him.

“Hey Dad,” Amo said. “Did you have fun smashing Bratva heads in?”

“Amo,” Dad's voice swung with warning.

“Marcie isn't blind. She knows what's going on.” I sometimes thought that I understood the brutality of Dad's job better than Amo did. He still considered it great fun and didn't really see the danger. Mom was probably right to keep him away from the big fights. He'd only get himself killed.

“I need to talk to you. Come down on the boat with me,” Dad told Amo.

Amo nodded. “Let me grab a sandwich. I'm starving.” He jogged back to the house, probably to pester Lora to make him a grilled cheese sandwich.

Dad's face was tight with anger. He obviously wanted to talk right away.

“He thinks the conflicts with Tartarus and the Bratva are great

fun, like another level in one of his computer games. He needs to grow up,” Dad said. His eyes snapped to me, as if he’d forgotten I was there.

I shrugged. “He’s fifteen. He’ll eventually grow up and realize the responsibility.”

“I wish he was as responsible and sensible as you are.”

“Being a girl helps with that,” I said with a smile. But it also meant my responsibility and sensibility would never be of use to me. I could never be a part of the business.

Dad nodded, his face becoming protective. “Don’t worry about any of this, princess. You have enough on your plate with college and your engagement and wedding party planning...” He trailed off as if he was at a loss what else I did in my free time. Dad and I didn’t have many common interests, not because I wasn’t interested in *Famiglia* business, but because he didn’t want me involved. He tried to show interest in the things he thought I liked instead, and I pretended to like them.

“The engagement party is already planned. And there’s still plenty of time until the wedding.” Our engagement party was scheduled in two weeks, even though we had been engaged for almost two years, but the wedding was still another two years away. A meticulously planned future lay ahead of me.

“I know you love it if things are perfect.” He touched my cheek. “Will Giovanni come over?”

“No,” I said. “He’s too busy.”

Dad’s brows pulled tight. “I can call Francesco and tell him to give Giovanni a couple of days off if you want—”

“No.”

Dad’s eyes tightened with suspicion. “Did he—”

“He didn’t do anything, Dad,” I said firmly. “I just want a bit of me time to study and think about the color scheme for the party,” I lied and smiled broadly as if I couldn’t think of a better way to spend the afternoon than to mull over the difference between cream and eggshell. I hadn’t even begun to plan anything for the

wedding and didn't feel compelled in the slightest to do so right now. After a few days of relaxation after the birthday party planning, I'd probably feel more enthusiastic.

Amo came out of the house with a plate stacked with three sandwiches while already stuffing his face with a fourth. If I ate like that, I could kiss my thigh gap goodbye. Dad kissed the top of my head again before he and Amo headed down to the jetty to discuss Famiglia business. I sighed and picked up my book, immersing myself in the pages. Dad wanted to protect me from our world, and I had to accept it.



Maddox

“Do you know what this is about?” Gunnar asked as he pulled up beside my Harley. I swung off and ran a hand through my tangled hair. It was the shortest I'd ever worn it, only long on top so I could brush it back, but the helmet still made a mess out of it.

“Earl didn't say anything to me.”

Gunnar got off his bike, an older model with plenty of chrome. My bike was an all-black Fat Boy, even the spokes were matte black. The only dash of color was the small Tartarus MC script stitched into the leather seat in blood red and the hellhound beside it.

Gunnar looked around. “Where's the kid?”

“Probably lost in pussy somewhere,” I said with a grin as we headed toward the clubhouse. It was the fourth home base we'd had in the last two years. Vitiello and his men kept sniffing them out, so we had to abandon them frequently. There wouldn't be another massacre.

We settled around the oak table where Earl was already waiting,

lounging in his fucking massage chair. We had to lug the heavy thing from one clubhouse to the next. Earl had an expression as if he'd won the fucking Nobel Prize. More and more brothers settled around the table until every member with a vote had gathered, except for one. Earl shook his head, got up and removed the vacant chair from the table, and moved it into a corner of the room. Then he settled back into his own chair, ready to begin the meeting.

The door flung open and Gray staggered in, his fly open and his cut put on the wrong way. His long blond hair was in complete disarray. I stifled a smile. This boy had a lot of growing up to do.

Earl's face darkened, accentuating the many scars even more. Even though he shared Gray's and my hair color, his had turned gray over the years. "You're late."

Gray seemed to grow smaller as he stumbled toward his usual spot at the table, freezing when he realized his chair was gone. He looked around, finally spotting it in the corner. He went to pick up the chair.

"You can sit in the corner until you learn to be on time, boy," Earl barked.

Gray gave him a disbelieving look but Earl sure as fuck wasn't joking judging by the pissed-off gleam in his eyes.

"Sit down or leave," he ordered. "And put your fucking cut on right, you idiot, or fuck off from this meeting."

Gray glanced down at himself, his eyes widening. He awkwardly pulled his cut off and turned it inside out then put it back on before he sat down in the corner.

"Done? I don't have all day. We have matters to discuss."

Gray nodded then sunk deeper into his chair.

I gave him a wink and relaxed against the upholstered headrest of my chair. Earl had a carpenter make the heavy mahogany chairs with the red padding to give our meeting table a royal look. Even his massage chair was upholstered with the red satin. Of course,

after Earl himself had managed to get the first burn mark from his cigarette into the expensive satin, things had only gone downhill.

Gray still hunched in his chair like a drowned dog. He always took Earl's reprimands to heart. Maybe it was his age, but I hadn't been this eager for Earl's approval when I was seventeen. Yet, Earl had always given it to me more freely than to his son. But even I had hardly ever received a warm word. I'd learned at an early age to find warm words with women and not my club brothers, much less my uncle.

"So what's going on, Prez?" Cody asked.

Earl's disapproval was replaced by a sly smile. "I've come up with the perfect plan to kick Vitiello's ass."

"Hear, hear," I said. "What did your pretty head come up with?"

"We're going to kidnap Marcella Vitiello."

"His daughter?" Gray quipped. His open shock reflected my own feelings—only I had learned to keep them to myself. I'd later talk to Earl in private about my concerns.

Earl sent him a harsh look. "Who else? Or do you know anyone else with that fucking name? You'd think God didn't grace you with more than two brain cells the way you sometimes act."

Gray's neck turned red, a clear sign of his embarrassment.

"You think Luca Vitiello gives a rat's ass if we kidnap his spawn? She's not his heir. Maybe we should kidnap that giant boy of his," Cody said. He was Earl's sergeant at arms, and royally pissed because I was the second in command and not him.

"He'd eat the hair right off our fucking heads," I muttered, which earned me laughter from everyone around, except for Cody, and Gray who was still nursing his hurt pride.

"I want you to vet her, Maddox. You're going to lead the operation," Earl said.

I nodded. This was personal. I would have insisted on being part of the job even if my uncle hadn't asked me to do it. The spoiled Vitiello princess would be mine.

Earl shoved a newspaper article over to me. The headline announced the engagement of Marcella Vitiello with some slick asshole. My eyes were drawn to the image below.

“Fuck,” I muttered. “That’s her?”

Several men let out low whistles. Earl leered. “The whore who’ll cost Vitiello his fortune and life.”

“They must have used some kind of filter. Nobody’s this goddamn gorgeous,” Gunnar said. “I think my dick would fall off in awe if it ever got near that pussy.”

“Don’t worry, it won’t,” I said with a wink. “Your Old Lady would probably chop it off before you got close.”

Gunnar touched his heart. He’d been the treasurer of our club for a decade now and often acted more like a father figure than Earl.

“The photo is manipulated, no doubt,” another brother said.

I could only agree. Vitiello had probably paid extra so the photographers retouched his daughter’s image until she looked like an apparition. Long black hair, pale skin, sky-blue eyes, and full red lips. The asshole beside her in his button-down shirt and carefully combed dark hair looked like her tax consultant and not the one who made her cream.

“Like Snow White,” I whispered.

“What?” Earl asked.

I shook my head, dragging my eyes away from the photo. “Nothing.” Sounding like a fucking imbecile wouldn’t do me any favors. “I assume she’s heavily guarded?”

“Of course. Vitiello keeps his wife and daughter in a golden cage. It’s your job to find the loophole, Mad. If anyone can do it, then it’s you.”

I nodded distractedly as I scanned the photos on the table once more. Risky maneuvers were my specialty, but I had grown more cautious over the years. I wasn’t a teen anymore. At twenty-five, I realized that getting killed before I got my revenge wouldn’t do the trick.

My eyes drifted back to the photo as if pulled by an invisible string. Too fucking gorgeous to be true.

Vitiello had been the center of my attention, never his family, and definitely not his children. For some reason, it annoyed the fuck out of me that he'd managed to father such a stunning daughter. I really hoped the photos were heavily retouched and Marcella fucking Vitiello was butt ugly in real life.



I wore civil when I followed Marcella the first time. Her bodyguards would only get suspicious if a guy on a bike showed up repeatedly. Vitiello had certainly given out the headshots of every known member of our club to his soldiers so they could kill us on sight. Luckily, I'd laid low in the last few years and lost the boyish features and shoulder-length hair of my teenage years. Those wild years that had almost cost me my life and gotten me the nickname Mad. Right after returning to New York, I'd run one attack after the other on Famiglia establishments until a bullet grazed my head and almost ended my life. I'd die once Vitiello got what he deserved, not a day sooner.

Today, I even wore a goddamn long-sleeved turtleneck to cover up my tattoos and scars. I looked like a fucking mother-in-law's delight. But even looking like that, I made sure to keep my distance. Marcella's bodyguards were as cautious as could be expected from soldiers who'd have to answer to Luca Vitiello if something happened to his precious offspring. Worse than my choice of clothes was the Toyota Prius that Earl had organized for me to pursue our target. I missed my bike, the vibrations between my thighs, the sound, the wind. Riding in this car, I felt like an idiot. But my camouflage gave me the chance to trail Marcella's car closely, and when they finally came to a stop in front of a fancy bou-

tique, I parked a few cars away. I got out of my Prius just when one of the bodyguards held open the back door for Marcella. The first thing I saw of her was a long, lean leg in red high heels. Even the goddamn sole was red.

When she straightened, I had to suppress a curse. This girl didn't need a filter. She wore a red summer dress that accentuated her narrow waist and round butt and made her legs look miles-long, even though she was a petite woman. I forced myself to keep checking the shop displays because I'd frozen in my tracks upon spotting the Vitiello princess. Her gait spoke of unwavering confidence. She never once swayed despite her ridiculously high heels. She walked the streets as if she owned them—her head held high, her expression cold and painfully beautiful. There were girls that were pretty, there were girls that were beautiful, and there were girls that had men and women alike stop in their tracks to admire them slack-jawed. Marcella was the latter.

When she disappeared in the boutique, I shook my head as if I was trying to wake from her spell. I needed to focus. Marcella's looks were completely irrelevant to our mission. The only thing that mattered was Vitiello's insane protectiveness. If we had her in our hands, we owned him, and then the bastard would pay.



I breathed a sigh of relief when I peeled out of the fucking turtleneck after returning to the clubhouse that night. Only in boxers, I went down to the bar area and grabbed myself a beer. Mary-Lu came out of Gray's room when I opened my door. She wore hot pants and a tank without a bra.

Her face lit up when she spotted me. "You look like you need company."

I took a swig from my beer. I needed a female body to distract

me from Marcella Vitiello. “And I suppose you want to be that company?”

She sauntered over to me and raked her nails down my bare chest, tugging at my nipple piercing as she did so. She leaned up as if to kiss me.

“Did you just give Gray a blowy with that mouth?” I asked with a smirk.

She flushed. “He passed out drunk before he—”

“I don’t want to know if my brother shot his load down your throat, Lu,” I muttered then I opened my door wide. “No kissing, but I’m in the mood for a blowy and I promise not to pass out before shooting my cum down that pretty throat of yours.”

She giggled when I clapped her ass and closed the door after us. Lu was one of our pass-around girls but she had every ambition to become an old lady. Not mine, that was for sure, though.



I woke in the middle of the night from a dream—or maybe nightmare, depending on the viewpoint. The last remnants of it still whirled around in my head. Blue eyes peering down at me, red lips parted for a cry of ecstasy and a pussy over my mouth.

My eyes opened wide. Fuck. I could almost taste it. Dreaming of eating out Marcella Vitiello was the fucking last thing I should do. A warm body stirred beside mine, and for a fucking heartbeat I wondered if I’d somehow managed to forget kidnapping Marcella and took her into my bed.

“Mad?” came Lu’s drowsy voice, and my heartbeat slowed again.

“Go back to sleep,” I said gruffly. My cock pulsed with excess blood. The last time I woke with a raging hard-on like that I had been a teenager.

Lu curled toward me, her hand brushing my dick. “Want me to suck you off?”

Yes, shit, but I’d only imagine it was Marcella.

That would take things down a very dangerous road.

“No, go back to sleep.”

Her breathing evened out within minutes and I kept staring at the ceiling, ignoring my throbbing dick.

I should have known Luca Vitiello’s spawn would make my life hell even before she was in our hands. Her father had haunted my nightmares for years. It was only fitting that now his daughter took over.