



His Little Spitfire

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Category: Erotic, Romance, Adult, Crime And Mafia, Dark

Description: I came to save my sister from the man who claimed her as his. Now I'm the one trapped.

Stealing her back was the plan. Instead, I've been captured by the enemy, thrown into a world of violence and power plays, and sentenced to a fate worse than death—marriage. To him. The Don's younger brother.

Urzo Bertelli is cold, ruthless, and unwilling. Just as furious about this forced union as I am. He doesn't believe in love and doesn't know what romance is if it slapped him across the face. All he cares about is loyalty, control, and keeping his family safe.

If putting a ring on my finger prevents a war, he'll do it. No hesitation. No emotion.

He communicates through his fists, and I'm the first challenge to test his approach.

I push. He pulls. I fight. He punishes. Every time his patience snaps, I find myself craving the way he takes back control.

This was never supposed to feel real, feelings weren't supposed to form.

But the longer we play pretend, the more I wonder if I'm still fighting against him... or against myself and what I really crave.

To be desired by the man who has bound me with his last name.

Total Pages (Source): 35

Page 1

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

1

Urzo

The moment she came crashing into my home, curses and threats flying from her lips, I knew she was going to be a problem. Down to where she was going to be the cause of every migraine.

Eliza Parada. Sister of Rocco Parada. The man who has been giving my family one hell of a hard time the last few years. From selling to our clients to killing our men and stealing both our products and our guns.

She came to rescue her sister from my brother. For whatever reason, Santino claimed the woman as his own. I don't get it.

All my life, Santino has been cold-hearted and ruthless. One special woman comes into his life, and now he's trying his best to do whatever he can to keep her on our side without a war brewing.

Now I'm involved, given an order I'm expected to follow. Even if it goes against everything I know, I have to follow along because it's what helps my family.

So, I'm going to marry Eliza Parada. She'll become a Bertelli, and Rocco can't marry her off to strengthen his own forces. That's my brother's big plan. An arranged marriage.

I'll sign a document, that's not impossible. Santino wants me to wear a ring? I can

ignore a bland band. To make my brother happy, I'll become the husband to our enemy. Having her as my wife by title isn't the problem here.

If I don't start getting some kind of patience here, I'm going to end up killing this woman with my bare hands.

We're approaching the decision with contrasting attitudes. With a door separating us, her shrills and curses make my temple pulsate. Once she started yelling, she hasn't stopped.

Every second that passes, I feel like I'm growing crazier.

As the thought of sewing her mouth shut crossed my mind, I'm distracted by the sudden sound of wood splitting with a heavy thump against my back, accompanied by a pained curse.

Eliza isn't taking the news too well, either. She's a fighter, kicking the door separating us. Like my patience, it's becoming thinner and thinner with every time she hits it. I'd hoped some time to herself would've calmed her down by now.

"I will not marry you, you sonofabitch!" Through the closed door, her words come through crystal clear, leaving no room for misunderstanding. She promises my death, one that will be painful and slow.

My arms cross tighter against my chest, my brows furrow lower with a frustrated sigh. Normally, I've got better control over myself. Hell, I've mastered a poker face. Something about this woman completely unravels everything I've worked towards.

Is it the heat behind her dark gaze and the lack of fear that makes me feel this way? Even more impressive, she's not afraid to swing on those who can easily snap her neck. If it weren't for her sister, Santino would've broken her wrists for landing a

punch against his jaw. A lucky swing, I'm sure.

Another thump brings a growl from the pit of my chest. Turning around, I unlock the door and shove it open before she can do even more damage. At this point, the door is going to need to be replaced.

The woman stumbles back in surprise as I appear. Going as far as falling onto her ass, she glares up at me with a scowl.

This room serves as one of the extras used by guests who aren't to be fully trusted. So, a broken lamp and window aren't much to worry about, either. Even on the second floor, she can't do much. However, I know whoever is going to have to clean up this room will not be too pleased. She's even torn the paintings off of the wall, her destruction a result of her rage..

"Hoped to calm you down a little before letting you settle down." Thirty minutes of solitude didn't seem to do much. "Guess I wasted both of our time."

Just as I take a step toward her, she's smart enough to look around for some kind of weapon. Running isn't an option, not unless she wants to get caught that much easier. If she wants to get the upper hand, then she'll need something sharp. Something that can draw blood.

She spots a shard of the broken lamp as quickly as I do. There's a half of a second of pure silence before she launches her body toward it. At the same time, I move toward her.

My hand finds her ankle, and I touch skin that is smooth and warm. As soon as I've got a grip, I easily yank her back. However, I'm not as quick as she is.

Gripping a different shard instead, Eliza swings her hand and almost makes contact

with my jaw with it, attempting to extend the scar already engraved against my lips.

Growling, my other hand catches her wrist when she tries to cut me again.

Given our breathing, it feels more like we've run a marathon than fought over a piece of ceramic.

Instead of snapping her wrist, the easier thing to do, I'm thumping it against the space of the carpet above her head hard enough to make her release the piece, allowing it to bounce away. Releasing her ankle, I'm quick to do the same with the other wrist before pressing my knee against her hip to keep her from thrashing.

"Stop!" Growling, heat scorches my throat as I bark the order. My lungs burn as each breath comes out heavier than the last. "Enough."

The frustrations this woman brings me are endless. Enough to make me roar out my anger to release even a hint of the pressure that is leaving me feeling suffocating.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I've always solved all of my issues with my hands. I've beaten men until they were left gurgling and choking on their blood. My knuckles have been ruined over something as trivial as a disagreement amongst the men I take care of. I've pulled triggers on brothers who have become traitors to our family.

What in the fuck am I supposed to do about this woman? Santino thinks I can handle myself, and I can. However, how in the hell am I supposed to handle someone who isn't afraid of me? I can't hurt her. I can't silence her.

Eliza's eyes narrow on me, and for ten peaceful seconds of silence, we stare at each other. Then her jaw shifts as her teeth grind together.

Neither of us wants this. She's too angry to see that I'm suffering as well.

Getting up, I use my grip on her wrists to pull her up. Already knowing where I'm going with this, she tries to tug herself free before I throw her over my shoulder. As of late, it's been her way of transportation.

She's smart, searching my waistband for my gun. Unfortunately for her, I'm smart too. Left it tucked away in my room, far away from her. However, I'm going to need to pick a new spot to hide it.

Weighing nothing, I'm hit with a wave of cinnamon as she tries to knee me in the chest. It leaves me dizzy, and I'm breathing in, much to my dismay.

It's the same as the first time I threw her over my shoulder to get her here. The same wave that overcame me the first time she got in my face, demanding to know where

Camellia was. The same scent that has everything I know flipped over.

When my cock stirs to life, I know something is wrong with me. I don't know what in the hell this woman is doing to me, but I don't like it. She's stirring emotions in me like no one else ever has. There's nothing to compare this feeling to so I can solve the issue and squash it down..

If she had a clue of what she was doing to me, I know she'd use her beauty against me. From fluttering her long eyelashes to touching me with her hands, I'm willing to bet she has an entire routine to getting her way.

That's not to say I'd fall for her attempt to escape me, but I'm not willing to take a risk.

"Where are you taking me?" Demanding an answer, her body stills as she pants. Wearing herself out from constant movement, she's now lying over my shoulder like a dead body.

"My-Our room," I correct. "Might as well let you get comfortable. It's where you're going to be staying from this point on."

"I am not sharing a room with you." She spits the words like they're an insult. "I'd rather get put in your torture chamber down below."

Now there's an idea. I wouldn't mind strapping her down to a chair. First, I'd tape her mouth shut. Then, I'd happily wrap her body with ropes and tie them tight enough to make her see the truth. She's not going anywhere.

Unfortunately, my mind does too good of a job of making my imagination come alive. I can picture the marks left on her skin and hear her muffled whimpers as she changes her mind.

I grunt, trying to clear my head before my cock risks engraving a zig-zag pattern along my entire shaft from how much it is pressing against the front of my slacks.

“If you want to keep seeing your sister, you will do as you’re told.” Hearing the way she sucks in a breath at the mention of her shared blood, I know this is a weakness for her. She may not like it, but we do have the upper hand in this. Camellia is nothing but a leash to this reckless woman. The only thing making her stay.

Thankfully, she doesn’t realize that Santino wouldn’t dare allow anything to happen to the woman he’s enamored with. He’s too fucking smitten.

“Be good, and you can keep seeing her. Once we’re married, you’ll be free to do as you please.” She can run for all I care. As long as Rocco can’t use her, that’s all I’m concerned with. Without his consent, he’s not getting much out of this. She must understand that much.

For once, she’s quiet. It’s an unsettling silence, but I’ll take it. Going back and forth with her is overly frustrating.

When we reach my room, I shove open the door and drop her onto the bed. Watching her bounce against the rumpled blankets, I notice the way the silk licks at her tanned skin. Blinking, I tear my eyes away.

My hands curl into fists as I move toward the desk against the wall. The wood groans beneath my weight as I get comfortable. Resting my back against the wall, my arms cross over my chest as I stare at her.

She sits up, glaring at me with dark eyes similar to my own. They seem darker when she’s in a foul mood. “You’re just going to sit there and watch me?”

“You think I’ll let you destroy my belongings?” I lift a brow. “Until I know you’ll be

good, I'm going to do what is necessary. Thanks to you, my brother isn't giving me any tasks. So, what'll it be, princess? Are you going to calm down?"

From the way she prickles up, I know I've only stabbed the knife deeper into this wound of hers. Without a door separating us, I get to watch first-hand as the lack of fear forms behind her glare. Her anger outweighs everything else.

This is going to take far too long. My patience will continue to be pushed to its limits.

Might as well help her get everything out of her system so we can finally move on and get over this hump.

The sooner things can go back to normal, the better.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Eliza

One way or another, I plan on escaping this hellhole. I don't care how I've got to do it.

This bastard Bertelli feels comfortable enough to sleep next to me. Even through the darkness, the moonlight gives him away. Each slow rise of his chest is constant. I hope he's having a nightmare.

I don't know how he can sleep. Even with all my efforts of fighting this man, I'm feelingwired. Like a constant shot of adrenaline is coursing through my veins, I'm feeling another itch to get out of here.

There's a door not too far away. From the occasional pass of a shadow, I can tell they don't have too many people keeping guard on the second floor.

They must have more on the first. Otherwise, why wouldn't my baby sister have succeeded at her own escape?

I recall trying to persuade her before this marriage mess came to be. She looked hesitant, even at the thought of us getting away and surviving on our own. Despite my promise of not needing Rocco or anyone, it wasn't enough.

She wants to stay here. I don't understand why, or how Santino got into her head, but she wants to stay.

If I leave this place tonight, I'll end up leaving alone. I can't abandon her, not like

Rocco had. At the same time, I can't wait around for him to gather enough forces to rescue us in a more violent way.

Something tells me he'd rather see me dead after slipping out without a word. Who knows if he even is coming? I don't want to imagine the punishment I have coming for me. I really fucked him over by coming here.

Rocco wanted to marry me off to a guy with an eye patch. No thanks. He's just as bad as the brute sleeping next to me.

That's what all these men are. Brutes. Rough, and angry, and...ugh.

I need to get out of here. If not off of this estate, away from this beast.

Ever so carefully, I slide off the bed. Taking my sweet time to leave the surface undisturbed, I move to my feet and look down at his frame.

I could try to kill him. Grab something sharp and sink it into his throat. However, how far will that leave me? He's Bertelli blood, related to the don of this family. If I kill him, I'm promising my very own death.

Can't save Camellia if I'm dead.

For now, he's safe to keep sleeping. Even if he deserves to be stabbed twenty times over, I'm going to turn the other cheek.

Moving toward the large glass windows, my steps are mute against the carpet. There's a door that leads outside, so I make my way over. Before I reach my destination, I catch a view of what is on the other side of the glass.

For a moment, I'm surprised by the view. A sky full of stars is not the first thing I

expect to see out here. Compared to the cloudy skies in the city, this is like a whole new world.

Catching myself getting distracted, I tear my eyes away and look around. There are two chairs resting on what looks like a patio. Ever so carefully, my fingers graze the handle on the glass door. Throwing a look over my shoulder to make sure my captor is still resting peacefully, I open the door and shiver at the cool air nipping at my skin.

Stepping outside, my hair whips against my cheeks. The days may be warm, but the nights are far cooler.

Moving past the chairs, I head over to the rail. Looking down, my head swims at the height from here to the ground. Down below, there's a thick strip of concrete promising one hell of a painful drop. A broken leg is a guarantee.

A gated lattice separates attached patios to my left and right. No one else is out here to enjoy the incredible view.

Leaning over the rail, I hope to at least figure out how many people are patrolling, but I'm distracted by the sight of a trellis covered in greenery.

Oh, hell yes. Anescape.

How many times have I climbed down one of these to escape my very room each time Rocco decided he wanted to keep me locked up? Way too many times to count. Sure, this trellis is longer with the difference in height, but if I ignore the weight forming in my stomach, I'm sure I can get the fuck out of here.

If I alert anyone, I can just drop on them and make a run for it.

There are only a few walls of muscle here; I'm sure whoever I run into won't be as much of a force to reckon with as Urzo.

Moving swiftly toward the trellis, I give it a good shake to see how secure it is. My smile is immediate when it doesn't move at all. Perfect.

Freedom is all but fifteen feet away. Maybe twenty. I don't want to think about it being any more than that.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I'm eager, swinging my leg over. One foot over the rail, my other foot doesn't get the chance to lift before a thick arm wraps around my torso, tugging me right back.

For such a brute, this sonofabitch has steps as light as a feather.

"Release me!" Crying out as my soon-to-be husband shuts the door with his other hand, I wiggle and jerk against his hold. "Right now!"

He grunts when I elbow his chin. It's enough to free me from his prison, but hardly for long. Just as I'm let go, I'm pressed against the wall right next to my near escape.

I fight, because that's all I can do. When I try to scratch, Urzo easily captures my wrists and shoves them above my head.

"You need to calm down." His eyes narrow when I continue to squirm. Sleep laces his voice, and he's acting like he's cranky that I've woken him up from not getting enough sleep.

"You clearly don't know a thing about women." I kick him in the leg when his iron grip doesn't loosen. "Don't tell one to calm down."

He growls low, and that scarred lip curls in distaste. Looking at me with eyes as dark as the night, he doesn't blink. He looks pissed.

Like he wants to kill me. His patience is already so thin, I'm surprised he hasn't already.

Yeah, we're a match made in heaven, alright. Two people meant to be together.

I didn't agree to this arranged marriage, and I think he only did because he's got a kink for pleasing his family.

I try to headbutt him, and he bares his teeth like a wild animal. Hell, more like a predator. The way he stares at me... I tremble involuntarily. I refuse to be afraid of this man, my body be damned.

"I will not stop," I hiss between my teeth. "Once I undo the brainwashing of my sister, I'm going to rescue her and leave this entire madness behind."

His eyes narrow, his brows coming together. His jaw flexes as I can see the thoughts spiraling in his head. Finally, he makes up his mind. Instead of letting me in on what is going on in that brutish head of his, he takes my wrists and pulls me away from the wall and toward the bed.

"All the men in your life have clearly spoiled you. Sorry to say, but I'm not going to do such a thing. Bad behavior gets punished around here, and you've been fucking terrible since the moment you showed up. A goddamn headache for everyone."

What happens next is a blur. He's sitting on the edge of the bed, and I'm staring at the carpet because he's yanked me over his lap.

Oh no. Fuck this. This man is not going to punish me.

Before I can think of trying to free my hands from his iron grip, I suddenly feel a warmth against my back. My shirt is so thin, I feel the entire trail down to my ass.

A similar heat swarms my face as this man squeezes my ass hard enough to bring a groan to my lips. What the fuck.

A man has never touched me like this. Hell, I've barely touched myself down there. I'll be damned if I let this man spank me. What does he think I am, a child?

If he thinks this will be what solves all of his problems, then he has another thing coming.

I can feel his cock swelling against my stomach. He's enjoying himself, the bastard. He's fucked up in the head. All of these Bertelli men are. They think they can get whatever they want if they use violence. My brother is the same way. I can't take any of them anymore.

Gritting my teeth, I look back at him. "I'll slit your throat, I swear to—"

Crying out as his palm strikes my ass, I hiss as the pain sizzles out. Even though he's spanking me through my pants, I can feel the heat from my skin radiating. Even more when he suddenly squeezes my sore cheek again, this time spreading the pain.

"You want to finish that sentence, princess?" He still sounds so angry, but there's something there. A tingle I don't think I'm too fond of. Now that he's starting to touch my ass, I feel the tingles from his fingers making contact. He's stroking the curve of my ass, purposely putting pressure where it hurts.

He's using that nickname again. Princess. Like he truly believes I'm a spoiled brat. He doesn't have a clue. I haven't had a single thing handed to me.

"Fuck you." Spitting the words out, I flinch when his hand comes back down. It makes it worse and I'm left whimpering.

My thighs squirm against his lap as he squeezes the aching muscle again. Like he's waiting for me to retaliate, like he knows me better than I know myself, I fight to speak or grit my teeth.

I should've stabbed him while he was sleeping. Biggest regret of my life.

I've never been the type to swallow down my words. Never been the type to back down like some frightened animal.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Scowling, I glare at him. My eyes are a little watery, much to my dismay. I can only imagine how red my cheeks are, both sets.

He sighs, his frustration pouring out of him. Without warning, he strikes my ass again, this time, his thumb grazing the outside of my pussy. “Your thoughts are written all over that face of yours, Parada.”

The bastard cracks a smirk, the corners of his eyes crinkling. Yeah, he’s enjoying himself alright.

My toes curl as I try not to focus on the stroking motion of his fingers. He’s making my pussy tingle, and I don’t know why. Everything about this is screaming wrong. I shouldn’t be bent over this man’s lap. He shouldn’t be touching me.

I can feel the slickness of my panties after two more smacks. Even as I’m left squirming against his lap, it’s the touch I’m given after that keeps me from cursing him. I grit my teeth to keep silent. I don’t want him to know my body is trying to turn this into something other than a ‘punishment’.

“Are we done?” His fingers ghost over once more, the heat of my wounds seeping through the fabric of my jeans. “Are you going to be good and let me fucking sleep?”

My hands ball up in fists tight enough to carve crescent shapes into my palms. So hard, I’m surprised I don’t draw blood. When I take too long to answer him, I whine when he squeezes one of my cheeks hard.

“Yes!” Barking out the word, I glare at the ground. I can’t look him in the eye. Not

after he's done this.

Finally, he releases me. I all but tumble to the ground, too shameful to pick myself up right away.

"Try to pull another stunt like this, and I'll punish you the very same." There's promise in his voice, and I believe him. "Next time, it'll be skin-to-skin contact, understand?"

I try to imagine those scarred hands rubbing my bare cheeks. His fingers would be so close to my pussy, he'd notice the moisture collecting from this confusing experience.

Trying to pick myself up, I realize how much my limbs feel like jello. It's like I've completely forgotten how to use them.

Rage licks at my veins from embarrassment. Finally, lifting my gaze to look at him, seeing his blank expression pisses me off more than his erection does. He hasn't brought attention to it, but there's no denying his arousal.

Urzo Bertelli is a fucked up human being.

"I mean it. Piss me off anywhere, and I won't think twice to punish you whether we're alone or in a room full of people." He moves to circle the bed and ever so casually goes to lay back down. "Go to sleep, or stay there, I don't care. Just stay in here or else."

I don't need to ask him what or else entails.

Using the bed to stand back up, my legs wobble. Body on fire, I snatch a pillow. Glaring at him, I move toward the attached bathroom and slam the door shut. Hurrying and locking it just in case he gets pissy, I flick on the light and look at my

reflection.

My cheeks are flushed a deep crimson, and my bottom lip is swollen and throbbing from the force of my bite. I don't even want to get started on the mess of my hair.

Turning around, I grimace as I pull down my pants to take in the damage done. I wince as I see marks of red fingers. My skin is hot to the touch, and it aches as I push one fingertip against it. As the pain radiates, my toes curl.

While I'm taking in a sight I've never seen before, I pull my pants down another inch and discover something even more disturbing than the evidence of his punishment.

My underwear is soaked all the way through. Not just the thin fabric, but there's even a spot on my pants.

Urzo spent so much time rubbing his fingers against my ass. There's no way he didn't notice.

The sensation of being spanked didn't excite me. This... is just something I can't explain.

Tearing my eyes away from my reflection, I shove my pants back onto my hips and move to the bathtub. No, he doesn't even have a tub, just a walk-in shower. Damn it all.

Hoping I'd be able to sleep a little bit of comfort, I opt to sleep on the floor instead. Anything is better than sleeping next to that brute.

Just because I can't put up a fight, doesn't mean I have to like the guy. If I keep up my antics, maybe he'll beg Santino to reverse his decision.

I can only hold my breath and hope that'll be the outcome. If not, there's no way I'm going to survive being married to this guy.

I'd prefer to be asphyxiated than to follow through with his intentions for me.

3

Urzo

Page 6

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

When I wake up, the bathroom door is still locked. Knowing she's inside, I twist the handle hard enough to hear *apop*. The lock breaks with ease, and I push open the door. Of course, she's in the way.

She's always in the way.

Curled up with my pillow, she murmurs in her sleep, her lack of survival showing. She barely budes even when I nudge her as I make my way inside.

She's not going to stop me from getting ready for the day.

Starting up the shower, I strip away my clothes and get under the hot stream.

All night, sleep hardly came. Not because I thought she'd be foolish enough to slip out again, but because of the throbbing ache of my cock. Having fought myself all night not to just give in and shove my sweats down to stroke myself long enough to empty my balls, I stayed awake. Even when I dozed off, the dreams that fueled my arousal only made my state worse.

Now that she's my problem, I can't even escape her while I'm resting.

It's not until I'm lathering up my body that I hear her feminine gasp before I realize she's awake.

A tiny, almost inaudible voice in the back of my mind suggests I invite her inside. She could use a shower, and I could make sure she got cleaned thoroughly. I squash the thought immediately.

We don't greet each other with good mornings like future newlyweds do. No, this woman skitters like a wild animal. I don't even have the chance to wash the soap from my body before she's slamming the door shut, leaving me alone.

Yesterday, I wasn't myself. Took a step too far.

Santino said I couldn't hurt her, even if she inflicted pain. Well, last night, I danced along the line.

I didn't hurt her, I know it. Not hurt in the way he was insinuating.

Planting a hand against the cool shower wall, last night plays through my head for the hundredth time. Remembering the curve of her pussy against my fingertips leaves my cock in a similar state as the night before.

Women are a waste of time, a distraction. This one does not differ from the rest.

A pretty face, a sexy body, and a voice that could drive any man mad. That fucking mouth is going to get her, though. She needs to learn how to control it, or else, I won't be able to control myself.

I'm better than this. My cock shouldn't be hard, yet, it's swollen against my thigh. I can't even remember the last time I needed to stroke my cock to seek a little relief.

Sighing through my nose, I cave and wrap my fingers around my pulsating girth. One little squeeze is all it takes to steal a groan from my lips.

I'm in worse shape than I thought.

Trying to keep my mind blank while my hand moves, it's easier said than done. Just wanting to get relief, my cock throbs and leaks precum with each stroke. Dirtying the

water at my feet, my brows come together tighter.

That fucking mouth.

The darkness of my thoughts turns into her lips. I've got the pinkness of her tongue and the plumpness of her mouth down. So much to the point that I can easily imagine them wrapped around the girth of my erection as I silence whatever slurs she wants to call me.

Gritting my teeth, my balls tighten and my hand moves faster. Panting under my breath, it's a miracle my teeth don't crack before I splatter the dark tile in thick ropes of white.

Eyes snapping open, I stare at the evidence with a downward curl of my lips.

Scrubbing a hand down my face, I try to figure out these feelings I'm experiencing as I wait for the water to clear. Once the tile is clean, I get out.

Eliza is no longer in the room. She's left my door open.

Whatever. She can't run, not during the daytime. Too many people know she'll try, and have the order from the top to keep her here. Santino thinks she wants to steal his woman from him, so he definitely won't let her leave.

My job is to sign a certificate, not to babysit. What she does during these times is her own business.

Once I'm dressed and out of the room, I head off to the kitchen to see what is prepared for the morning. There will be multiple pots made ready with coffee, and I'm going to need more than a single cup to start my day.

As soon as I enter, one of the women preparing eggs flinches in my presence. I ignore her as I hunt down a cup.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I suppose Eliza has one good trait about her. She's got a backbone. She doesn't look at me and grimace or flinch in fear. Rather, she looks at me like she could win in a fight. Even though I've proved otherwise multiple times, the woman is still confident.

Pouring my cup full of regular brew, I drink it black. While I try to enjoy the first, I watch as other members of my growing family come in and out.

I swear, every day, there are fresh faces joining us. Santino is all about growth, and he's got a soft spot for those found on the streets. He'll take anyone who is happy to devote themselves to keep our family afloat.

While I think it's silly and unsafe, we are one of the strongest families around.

With each mouthful burning the entire way down, I pour myself a second and grab a handful pieces of toast before leaving.

Normally, I head outside, follow up with whoever is on guard and ask about any activities that happened to take place. If the grounds are quiet, I'm sure there's an update from our men planted throughout the surrounding cities.

Instead of making my way outside, I head to the eating area. Hearing the sound of Camellia, my feet carry me without any command of direction.

Just as I expect, Eliza is there. She's missing that scowl of hers when she's with her sister. In fact, she's smiling. One hell of a contrast in what she's given me.

Can't say I want her to smile at me. No one ever does.

Heading over to the table, I fix my gaze on Eliza. She doesn't notice my arrival as quickly as her sister does.

She's wearing new clothes, her hair wet from a shower. Must've borrowed something from Camellia. Used Santino's shower.

I'm rather amused to find her standing, unlike Camellia. I have a guess of why, but I know I didn't spank her that hard. Then again, I did lose myself for a bit there.

I set my cup down harder than I mean to, and some of the dark liquid splashes onto the table. Ignoring it, I take a seat and notice both women are now looking at me.

"What?" Trying not to snap at Camellia, solely because my brother would strangle me if I hurt her feelings, I glare at her sister instead.

Eliza looks at my basic breakfast and turns up her nose. Opening her mouth, to insult me, I'm sure, she jerks when I toss her one piece of toast. She has eaten little since our marriage was declared. Knowing her, her pride is keeping her from asking for something to eat.

"Not as good as what you're used to, I'm sure." Snatching another piece, I bite into it and try to enjoy the buttery, savory flavor. Nudging the leg of the chair closest to her, I can't help the smirk that curls onto my lips. "Take a seat while you're at it. Might as well be comfortable."

She looks at my offering like I've given her something poisoned. Her scowl is back, quicker than ever. Her jaw jerks as she looks away from it. "I'm perfectly fine standing," she argues. I don't miss the way her cheeks gain a little color to them.

Maybe I did go a bit overboard with the punishment. However, I won't put up with her starving herself to get out of this.

“Eat.” Saying the word once more, my voice lowers. Watching the way her eyes open wide at the order, I lower my gaze to her lips as I wait for her to tell me no.

A growing part of me hopes she does, so I have an excuse to touch her again. Solely for the purpose of keeping my word, of course. Even if it’s right in front of Camellia, I don’t care. I’m itching to get this woman draped over my lap again. Anything to get to touch her again, even if it’s fueling something inside of me I’m painting as a weakness.

If I can’t stop these sensations from clouding my thoughts, I might as well accept them. I already have enough on my plate as it is.

Despite her frown, she takes a bite and huffs under her breath. As much as she wants to act like she’s not hungry, she eats every bite, going as far as licking her fingertips to catch any leftover butter. Every flick of her tongue catches my attention, and it takes the entrance of my brother to tear my gaze away.

Santino strolls in with a smile that is easily covering up the frustration he’s feeling. While he’s in front of these two, he won’t act like the man I know he is. Hell, for all I know, maybe he’s changing, and this is who my brother is now. Less sharp edges and uncontrolled anger, more soft and leashed.

Fuck, that better not be the kind of man I become. I’d rather stay on top and have this woman at my feet.

Eliza is too stubborn ever to agree to such a thing. She’d rather crawl onto my lap and wrap her fingers around my throat.

Grunting from the thought, I wash the toast down with the rest of my coffee. It burns the entire way, but it doesn’t deter the way my cock is solid against my thigh. It’s like I didn’t just spend my morning relieving myself of this problem of mine.

After my brother settles down next to the blue-eyed woman, he steals a piece of fresh fruit from her plate and they share a matching heated look. It makes my stomach clench, and another foreign sensation seeps through my chest. Jealousy.

I shouldn't be imagining what it would be like to have Eliza looking at me in any way other than the hatred burning behind those brown eyes. Yet, I am.

This entire thing has me all over the place. At what point does everything return to normal? Once she has a ring on her finger? If that's the case, this thing needs to get moved along.

"Did you get your hands on the documents?" My impatience is evident as I clear my throat. "Need to move this along before that slimy bastard tries to make his move."

Page 8

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Eliza twitches, her frown growing. Camellia does the same, but for the opposite reasoning. Both siblings have a rocky relationship with their brother. Rocco wouldn't mind abandoning Camellia here, but Eliza... the jewel of their family...

My teeth grind at the thought of him trying to take her away.

I tell myself it's because I don't want a war to break out. However, the stirring happening inside my chest tells me it's something else.

"He won't get the chance," Eliza interrupts. "I'll be on the other side of the country if you just let me take my sister and—"

"No." Santino all but barks the word. He's made it clear. Camellia is his. He goes as far as pulling the woman onto his lap, making a scene as he buries his nose into the crook of her neck to make her grow pink. "She's staying right here where I can make sure she's safe. You, on the other hand, can go—"

"The papers," I interrupt, my knee bouncing as I watch Camellia move her hands to her face, covering her bashful smile. "When are they coming?"

He tears his eyes away from Eliza and sends a frown in my direction. "I've sent Tommy to get what we need. Tonight, you two can take care of the signatures." His brows narrow. "She needs to sign them. No forging signatures. Camellia's request."

Great. She has to be willing.

I can hear Eliza grinding her teeth. She's so against this, I know I'm going to have to

convince her to go into this a little more compliant. However, I don't think spanking her will do the trick. I'll have to persuade her some other way.

A way that doesn't include violence. This will be new for both of us.

4

Eliza

It takes Urzo going to the bathroom to finally make my next attempt at an escape.

Not from the estate, but from his watchful gaze. There's a weight beneath his eyes, and I'm tired of feeling like I'm going to fold every time he looks my way.

Now I'm just a spectacle to everyone else in this place.

I lose count of how many men move throughout the halls. Some lift their brows at me, some send a look of disgust because of who I am.

Can't help that I'm tied to a family with a last name I'd jump at the opportunity to abandon in a heartbeat.

They hate Rocco as much as I do. He's hardly my brother. Maybe a few years ago, I would've expected him to come save both Camellia and myself. The guy he is now... He'd rather marry me off to some guy instead of doing anything himself. Yeah, no thanks.

Though, can't say this is much different from a fate than what Rocco would've brought me. Between marrying some dude with an eye patch, or marrying Urzo, I can't tell which I'd want to do less.

Touring the home by my lonesome, I notice the guns on the passing members of the family. I'm less interested in acquiring one and more concerned with the possibility of one of these men retaliating against me.

One good thing about Urzo becoming my shadow, I felt oddly safe. The Bertelli family needs this marriage. Santino thinks so. Well, what if one of his grunts holds a grudge too deep and takes out the problem altogether?

Rocco can't marry me off and join forces with another family if I'm dead. Santino knows that much. My sister is the only thing keeping me alive.

Hugging myself, I keep my face straight to avoid letting any weaknesses slip.

If any of them realize that there are a few cracks in my brave attitude, they won't hesitate to take advantage.

A sudden hand on my arm sends that thought flying as I gasp. Hand too small to be Urzo, I jerk around with the full intention of fighting.

I've punched Santino Bertelli, I'll punch anyone else.

Turns out, the one behind me is no one other than an older lady.

She's out of breath, her brows pinched together. Despite my days of being here, it's the first time I've seen her. Could she be part of the kitchen staff?

"Finally." She straightens up and sighs as her aged eyes take me in. "Do you know how long I've waited to catch you alone?"

This lady is going to be who kills me, huh? Someone must've known I'd never have the heart to knock out an elder. Especially not with such a gentle expression on her

face. Gives me a black widow, or a praying mantis kind of vibe. Soft on the outside, dangerous on the inside.

Page 9

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I take a step back and bump into a stand with one hell of an expensive vase on it. Not even the rocking sound is enough to make me turn my back to her.

“Can I help you?” Straightening my shoulders, I’ve mastered the appearance of looking tough. She must not agree, because the corners of her eyes crinkle.

“Relax, dear.” Swatting her hand, she takes two steps toward me. “Just wanted to meet my future daughter, that’s all.”

Daughter?

“Bia?” I repeat her name slowly, remembering Camellia telling me about Santino’s mother and how she helped her get comfortable on the day Rocco sent her to this place.

I expected Urzo’s mother to be a little... well, bigger. Someone who could handle a big brute of a son like him. Not some frail lady who looks like all it’ll take is one gust of wind to steal her away.

As she nods, she reaches out to take my hand. She may look weak, but she squeezes my hand hard enough to knock away these fearful thoughts.

“First, Santino makes it impossible to speak with Camellia with the way he’s dragging her everywhere with him. Now, Urzo can’t leave you alone for more than five minutes.” Her thumb brushes my knuckles, and her lips curve into a smile. “How’d you get away from him?”

There's something in her eyes, something that seems like she's familiar with what I've done. Finally, the tension in my shoulders relaxes.

"Left him while he was on the toilet. By now, he must have noticed." I roll my eyes and shake my head. "He's probably pissed. Maybe he doesn't care. I can't tell with the guy."

As she tilts her head back and laughs, I'm wondering if he'll try to punish me again now that I've run.

He wouldn't spank me in front of his mother. Even he's got to have a line he won't cross.

"Come, let's go hide then. I know one place he won't think to check," she muses as she tugs on my hand.

Despite knowing I shouldn't lower my guard, not with any Bertelli, I do.

Like this is some kind of sneaking mission, she checks corners, and doesn't bat an eye when telling the grunts to mind their business.

Alright. Bia Bertelli isn't too bad. She's got a backbone, even if the rest of them are aged with arthritis.

She takes me to a library of all places. To think a place like this even exists is surprising in itself.

"My husband put it in only weeks after our marriage," she explains with a look of confusion on my face. "Though, my boys never use it. This room is where I usually get lost in when I need an escape." She inhales slowly as she takes in the multiple shelves full of books. "Lots of memories here. Are you much of a reader?"

Shaking my head, my ears burn at the thought of telling her I grew up more on watching makeup tutorials, and watching movies over reading what they originated from.

“Camellia’s huge on books. Show her this place, and Santino might threaten to take it away.” I’m joking, kind of. Still, she rolls her eyes. “After the days I’ve had, I’ll take what silence I can.”

It’s strange. With my sister, I haven’t breathed a word about how I’ve felt. Sure, I’ve tried to convince her to escape with me, but that’s all there is to it. She’s been so absorbed in her love life that I haven’t thought to list my complaints about what’s been going on in my life.

Bia takes me over to a leather couch and slowly sinks into the seat. Urging me to follow, I plop down.

The both of us, we sit here for a couple of minutes and soak in the peace. I truly relax for the first time in what feels like ages.

“When I met Leon, I didn’t like him either, you know?” I look over and notice her eyes closed as she remembers. “My mother insisted the Bertelli family would save mine from drowning in our debts. They didn’t even let me meet him before shoving me in some tight, uncomfortable dress. Things were different back then, more violent, more bloody.”

My fingers tangle against my lap, and my brows furrow together.

“My mother and father, their marriage was terrible.” She snorts as she shakes her head. “Got my attitude from her, and she swore my mouth would be my undoing. It would be my husband’s duty to straighten me out.”

“Your mother sounds like a cunt,” I mutter, unable to help myself.

Bia slaps my thigh, nodding her head as she opens her eyes once more. There’s no sadness, no anger, just a light to them. She’s amused, agreeing with me.

“Like you, my dear, my family forced me into an arrangement I wanted nothing to do with. Poor Leon, the man fell in love with me right at the altar. He loved telling me so himself. Me, on the other hand, tried to run as many times as I could. He didn’t treat me like my parents treated each other. When I ran, he was there to hunt me down. Like a game, almost.” She snorts and shakes her head. “That man... he was something.”

“Urzo, too,” I mumble, agreeing with her. All the Bertelli men must be a handful. “So, what, you think I’m looking at this marriage wrong? You think I’ll be happy with your son?” I scoff and shake my head at the very thought.

Page 10

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“I think you shouldn’t cave, that’s all. You’ve got a fight in you I recognize well enough. Urzo has a thick skull, but from what I’ve heard, I’m willing to bet you’ll get through to him. That’s why I think you’re right for him. Even if it’s not what you want to hear, he looks at you in a way that he’s never looked at a woman before.”

So, he doesn’t get hard from throwing any woman over his lap then, huh?

We’ve got our own game going on. This push and pull thing. Unlike Bia, I’m not having a great time. Not enough to admit it to myself out loud.

Sure, it crossed my mind to piss him off on purpose to get a reaction out of him. Not just so he’d touch me, but so he’d feel the same frustrations as me. Both mentally and sexually.

Can’t tell his mom that, though. No way in hell.

“I’m willing to bet that if you run, my son will chase you.” She stops me before I can remind her why he would. “Not because it’s good for the family, but because my son is greedier than he wants to let himself off to be.”

I hate that I’m imagining it, but once my thoughts go off the rail, I don’t try to stop it.

Urzo coming after me like a bull seeing red. Him throwing one of his thick arms around my waist and pinning me to his chest.

Him begging me not to leave.

A shiver wracks my body and I'm quick to shove my knees together. Shaking my head like I can jerk the thoughts right back out, she chuckles again before she moves to stand.

"I'll give you some time to think. Enjoy this hiding place while you can. I'm sure you can get at least an hour to yourself before he flips this place upside down. Check out a book, the romance titles are vast. I look forward to more moments like this. Though something tells me getting you by yourself again will be quite the challenge."

Thanking her for the chat, I watch her make her way toward the door.

"I'll make sure no one says anything about seeing you. Good luck, dear."

My heart aches a little at her motherly advice, and I wonder if I could've gotten something from my own if she was still around. Doubtful, but it's nice to think I could've.

Getting up from the couch, I take the time to look at a few books. If I've got something in my hands when Urzo finds me, maybe he'll cut me some slack. Better to be in here than trying to climb the iron fence wrapped around the estate.

There's a book with a dude's bare chest on the front. The pages are curled like they've been read more than once. Scoffing under my breath, I bring it over to the couch and get comfortable. Laying down, I flip to the back and see it's a highlander romance all about traveling to Scotland.

Camellia tells me a great way to escape is through books. So, until I'm found, I might as well escape for a bit.

* * *

Turns out, reading books is boring. I don't know how many pages a flip before I'm dreaming of Scottish burrs instead of reading about them.

I'll say, a ginger Scotsman doesn't come close to a wall of muscle covered in scars. Not as exciting.

As soon as I wake up, I feel groggy and disoriented. A little confused. Moving to stretch, I kick something hard. It's not the arm of the couch.

Jumping, my heart races as I find Urzo sitting there, flipping through the same book I'd attempted to read. I guess it kept him preoccupied while I slept.

To think he didn't shake me awake after finding me is a surprise in itself.

His eyes flick over to me, his frown growing harsher. Hardly surprising, he doesn't look happy. He never looks happy. Not unless he's making me suffer.

"You didn't do anything to me, did you?" I kick his thigh again like it'll give me a few inches of space. He grabs my ankle, shoving them off the couch altogether.

"Just listened to that hideous snore." He moves his eyes, his brows furrowed together. "Slept like a fucking rock. Anything could've happened to you, and you wouldn't have known the difference."

Is that... concern in his voice? No, I'm hearing things. He's just mad I left him, that's all.

"I met your mother. You don't take much of her beauty, huh?" Swinging my body up to sit, I don't rush to stand. "She thinks you like me more than you're letting on. I think she's crazy."

I expect an instant retort, something that'll piss me off, but just like this library, he brings silence for far too long.

Finally, he grunts. "She's stuck in this place. She likes shoving romance and happy endings down her children's throats, that's all. Said the same thing about Santino. Been on cloud nine since, happy to see one of her kids in love."

Page 11

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Love is a strong word. That guy is obsessed with my sister.

I try to imagine Urzo feeling anything but anger and annoyance for me. Something like what's in that book he's tossing to the side.

Before I can think too deep, he's moving to stand. "We've got our hands on the papers. It's time to sign."

"Can't even say please." Rolling my eyes, I look at the door and chew on my lip.

Bia's put ideas in my head now. She's making me want to know what'll happen if I run away from this man.

He'd try to make an example out of my actions, I'm sure. He wouldn't chase me.

Fisting my hands tight enough to dig my nails into my palms, I don't allow myself to think otherwise. Moving to stand, I straighten my shoulders.

I'm still in control. I don't want to marry this man. Even if he barks out the order, no matter what, I won't do it.

I won't sign those papers.

5

Urzo

Finding her in the library had to be my testing point. I don't know what I thought I'd do, but I knew I had to do something to teach her not to leave my side when I directly told her to stay put.

I'm too on edge, unable to make up my mind when it comes to her. Just when I think I'm fine with her leaving my side, I'm demanding she stay close.

Her disobedience is a trigger; it's only natural that I react when she doesn't listen.

The sensation that gripped my heart after finding her missing had left a need to rip the weakness straight out of my chest.

I wanted her to apologize, and promise me she wouldn't do it again. In my mind, I pictured her on her knees, pleading with me to forgive her. Sure, my cock may have been involved, but that's not important.

Instead, once I found her sleeping on that leather couch, my anger sizzled out like a candle blown out.

Sleeping so easily shows that she must have been exhausted.

I bet she needed her nap more than she cared to admit. So, I let her sleep. Let her murmur her soft words and watched her face morph into a peace I could never recreate.

This woman is intoxicating, and it's driving me mad.

With Tommy's success, I waited as patiently as one can to make her my wife.

So foolish, I thought I didn't care that she wouldn't want me even after she signed her name. She'd be mine.

Now that I've got her in this cramped room, one used for visiting families and family meetings, I'm growing more and more impatient as she stares at the same papers.

This woman makes me want to rip my hair out.

Finally, she parts those lips, and I catch myself holding my breath, waiting for what she has to say.

"I won't sign it." She frowns harsher at the table, ignoring my matching curve.

Goddamn it.

She didn't wear a bra on purpose. Fucking minx. She can't hide the way the two pinpoints as she crosses her arms over her chest like a brat about to make a scene.

Once I look, I stare. Knowing I won't be able to think with this view, I circle the table and notice the way she tenses up as I hover behind her. As much as she'd love to spin around and fight me, she stays where she is, where I can't see her face and what expressions she's trying to hide.

Is it fear for the unknown future? Is it hatred for the man she's forced to marry? Or... is there a third option?

Page 12

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“You can’t make me,” she adds, her voice wavering. “Your brother said so himself.”

“I’m not going to make you do anything. You’re going to willingly put your name here.” I tap on the sheet. “Your sister has my brother wrapped around her finger. He won’t force this union to happen if she convinces him otherwise. However, I’ve put up with your shit for too long. You’re not leaving this room until you’ve agreed to this marriage.”

I won’t have her fighting me after I’m forced to pick out a ring for her.

“Hope you’re ready to wait this out, then.” She jerks her head away from me and tries to find something more interesting to look at.

I growl, and she doesn’t cower. However, I can’t miss the way her arms prickle up with goosebumps.

“I don’t have the patience for this,” I warn, the words clipped and sharp as I inch closer. What little space was once between us is now nonexistent.

Whenever I’m left alone with this woman, I become someone I don’t know.

“T-Then I guess you better learn.” She stumbles on her word before cursing at the first sign of weakness.

We both know I’m going to get what I want.

Breathing in, I can smell the sweet smell of body wash on her skin. Whatever her

sister gave her to use is almost as mouth watering as her own scent.

Closing my eyes, my cock stirs as I steal one more inhale. My head spins and I open my eyes.

This woman drives me crazy.

“Sign the document,” I order, my voice hardly my own. I don’t recognize the throaty demand, or the need to see her name along the line.

Eliza’s groan echoes in the room as I press her against the table and my body. With the fire within her still burning hot, she tries to shoot a glare at me. “Or else what, you’ll humiliate me again?”

She doesn’t want to say it outright. Bending her over my knee was a punishment we both enjoyed.

And now, it feels like she’s seeking another punishment because she doesn’t want to do as I say.

This woman infuriates me. The way she makes keeping control impossible pisses me off.

“You are going to be my wife. There is nothing else to it. If it’s not me, it’s going to be to another man, you understand that?” Anger is seeping into my words. Something else lingers there, something from the thought of another man trying to claim her as his own. “Santino chose me because he knows I can make sure another man won’t dare lay his finger on what is mine.”

The words leave my throat feeling hot as something else drips out like venom.

Jealousy.

Growling at the realization, I cup her face and stare at her mouth as I turn her jaw to face me.

I hate her mouth.

Hate the way she uses it to anger me. Hate the way she uses it to make me want things I haven't before.

"Fuck you." Seething from the harsh truth I've given her, she looks like she'll spit on me if I let her. Maybe she wants to say worse. I don't give her the opportunity to do either. Instead, I cave to the inner demand to silence her by pressing our mouths together.

It's not a kiss of lust, or romance, or whatever the fuck the purpose of kissing is.

Yet, it causes the tension in my chest to snap, leaving an open hole, forcing me to acknowledge that I've discovered a reason to like her mouth. However, she's not feeling the same thing as I am.

She bites my lip hard, nearly enough to draw blood. However, a little pain isn't enough to deter me. The rumble of a growl makes her shiver.

"Open up," I order without realizing. Foreign desperation consumes me; I ignore the need to hide my hunger. No longer using my head, I cup her jaw and pinch, causing her mouth to open before invading the space with my tongue.

For a big bundle of a sour personality, she tastes too fucking sweet. Only one word fills my head as I lean into her.

More.

Page 13

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Eliza makes this throaty gasp sound before I feel her fingers on my throat. She's not digging her nails into my flesh, or trying to cut off my oxygen. No, she's using my neck as something to cling onto.

The brat wants this as much as I do. She's just too stubborn to admit it out loud, opting to let me be the bad guy here. Fine. I won't just be bad, I'll be the worst man she'll ever come to hate.

Anything to get more of whatever this frustrating thing is I feel for her.

I don't go around kissing women, so I'm no master. However, the way Eliza groans around my tongue, I can't help but feel like a pro.

I want to kiss her again, and again.

Fuck, who am I?

Releasing her, I leave her panting. Hell, I'm out of breath too.

Not wanting to let her see just how much she's affected me, I push her down against the table. Using my hand to keep her there, I use my other hand to try and wipe off the look on my face. I don't think it works like I want it to.

"Sign the paper." The order comes out thick, catching in my throat. Keeping my hand pressed against her back, I thrust against her ass. Fucking clothes are in the way, but I can feel the heat from her pussy. "If you want my cock, then sign."

What's more startling than the words coming from my lips is the need I feel to get inside. Fuck, I want in. This morning was just foreshadowing. Now I'm drowning in need.

The more friction I feel from grinding against her, the hungrier I am.

She doesn't do as I say. Even worse, she tries to brush the pen to the side. Damn her for being so fucking stubborn.

Once she's where I am, she'll feel the desperation. The need to have me the way I need her.

I'm dropping to my knees before my thoughts can catch up with my actions. Smelling her arousal through her clothes, my mouth floods at the thought of her pussy glistening from nothing more than a kiss.

"You're a brat," I remind her as I yank her pants down. Panties be damned, they go right with them. "A goddamn princess who needs too much attention."

She tries to insult me with a curse, but it morphs into the beautiful sound of a raw cry of pleasure as soon as my tongue makes contact with her slick lips.

All I can focus on is the moans that leave her lips as I suck her clit into my mouth.

"Urzo!" My name leaves her lips, and it's the first time she's said it without a string of curses or threats following suit. It's like music to my ears, a melody I want to drown in.

She's panting, a moaning mess with her quivering thighs and her soaking wet pussy.

I can't stop. No longer in control of myself, I grip her hips hard enough to make her

hiss as I bury my tongue deeper into her sweet cunt. Spreading her walls apart, I press against her sensitive nerves and lap up at the juices I'm rewarded with from my efforts.

My cock aches as it digs into my zipper, pleading with me to cave into this hunger. To shove my way in and fuck her until she's begging me for more. I'm hovering over the line of control, and it's a losing battle.

As her body arches and her walls clamp around my invading tongue, I can feel her approaching orgasm. She's close, I'm sure of it. So close to tasting her sweet release on my tongue, I use what little restraint I have left to pull away.

Leaving her teetering on the edge of her orgasm, she wails as cool air nips at her hot slickness.

"No!" Whimpering, she shakes her head. Her pussy looks so swollen, so needy, I'm tempted to dive right back in, but I barely keep distance despite these delicious sounds leaving her lips. "Please!"

Fuck me, two words have never sounded so addicting. I'm already imagining her begging me for what her body needs. Pleading for me to give her what she wants.

My balls clench, demanding I find a hole to empty my seed into. Demanding Eliza to be the one to take every fucking drop. I'm already soaking the fabric of my boxers, I can feel it with every shift. A reminder that my body is the one in control this time around. My sanity is shattered to pieces.

At this point, I'm ready to fuck her whether or not she signs. I need inside. I need to feel those velvet walls squeezing around my cock.

Eliza still has some brain power here, yet, she doesn't realize how much desperation

is rolling off of me. Desperate in her own way, she slaps her hand around for the pen.

Right. The paper. Two birds, one stone. Whatever the fuck the saying is.

Through a haze of arousal, I watch her lift long enough to do as she was told. Standing up, the leather of my belt licks my wrist as I free the hard length of my throbbing erection.

Page 14

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Her fingers tremble as she signs. Her name is barely legible, but it's enough. The moment she drops the pen, it all but sounds like a plea for what her body needs.

“Good girl.” Growling the praise, I don't miss the way a shiver rolls through her body.

Unable to fight myself for a single second longer, I part her lips with the tip of my weeping head and thrust fully into her suffocating, tight pussy.

One sharp gasp from her lungs morphing into a low groan is the only sound I need to hear to make me realize something I didn't even think to cross my mind.

She could be a fucking virgin.

6

Eliza

It hurts, of course it does. However, everything that comes with Urzo Bertelli does. He gives pain every time he touches me, and this is no different.

Yet, my body screams with need, and I can't even grit my teeth to contain my moans.

It's fucked up. I should be fighting him, begging him to pull out. Instead, the low throb of pain is only making me clench around his cock as I ache for friction.

This isn't going how I wanted at all. My first time was supposed to be full of sweet

kisses, gentle words and light touches that make my body sing a pretty tune. Deep down, I wanted a sweet happy ending with the love of my life.

Yet, here I am, being split apart by a cock bigger than my fucking arm. I'm sure of it. Otherwise, how would he be making this feel so good by touching every single nerve inside of my body?

It shouldn't feel good. I shouldn't want this as much as I do. Later, I'll blame this on it being in the heat of the moment. We're both bound tight, the tension enough to make us both snap. We don't want each other. Not romantically, anyway. This is just us caving to our need for sexual pleasure. It happens to the best of us.

The way my nipples tingle against the table and my pussy clenches around him, my body is all on board to move this along. To seek the release he just teased me with.

My hips move when he doesn't thrust. He's stilled long enough to threaten to clear the fog. Well, I don't want it to be clear. Not now. I need him to finish what he's started.

Cursing under his breath, he gives me what I want. Drawing himself out, I feel every inch he has to take away. "Fucking tight. You're going to make my dick snap in half, princess."

He's hard enough that I believe him. Thankfully, he's not as worried as he's making himself seem. Why else would his hips move? Slowly at first, I cling to the pull and push of our bodies meeting.

"Please." There it is again, that word. The one filled with need. I'm begging this man, something I'd never do if he hadn't cornered me.

"Pleasewhat?" He sinks his thick fingers into my hair and tugs my head back. The

stinging pain earns him a gasp from my lips, but my pebbling nipples pressing against the front of my shirt reveals my secrets. “Stop? Is that what you want me to do? Your pussy is begging for me, Eliza.”

He purrs my name in a way that makes me arch. Not filled with disdain or disgust.

The problem is that “stop” isn’t even in my vocabulary. Right now, it’s the last thing I want.

Fuck, what do I want? I don’t even know.

This pleasure he’s making me feel by the simple snap of his hips, that’s it. That’s what I want.

I tell him, not because I want to, but because his teeth find my neck. He bites me, returning the favor of what I did to his lip. Not hard enough to draw blood, but enough to leave a mark. He’s giving me a memento, something to remind me of what we’ve done. A reminder of my submission and the reward that comes with it.

Releasing me, his hand finds the middle of my back once more. Shoving me back to the table, he keeps my body from chasing the pleasure. Keeping me where he needs my body to be to set his own pace, his cock continues sliding in and out, using my juices to his advantage.

My body welcomes the invasion, clenching each time he thrusts. Nerves standing on edge, every shift, every movement, leaves me feeling on fire. His tongue was nothing compared to this weapon he’s pushing inside of me.

I can’t control my voice, or the moans that come with it. Filling the room with each slap of his hips against mine, all the noises flood together like a symphony.

We lose ourselves to the motion. Everything outside of the room doesn't exist, not now. Not while we're chasing... whatever this is.

Urzo touches more than just my back. Like he's allowed himself to freely roam, he leaves goosebumps in his wake. Finally settling at my hips, I feel his fingers against my skin.

He curses under his breath, squeezing my hips hard enough to bruise. Groaning under his breath, the noises he's making are doing the opposite effect of what I want.

Page 15

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Instead of turning me off, he's adding more fuel to the fire burning in the pit of my stomach.

One look over my shoulders, and I immediately regret it. Seeing his normally stoic expression replaced by a hint of flush and a dazed stare at where our bodies are connecting is enough to make my pussy tighten.

He looks like he isn't even in control of what he's doing. He looks like he may... want me. More than just my pussy, but my entire being.

That can't be it. I'm imagining things. I have to look away before I get ahead of myself and think something so stupid can actually be a thing.

The tension in my stomach is going tighter by the thrust. He's pushing against spots I've never known to exist. Aiming at them with purpose, it doesn't take much before I'm crying out, my orgasm hitting me hard enough to leave my head spinning.

"Fuck, you're going to milk every drop, aren't you?" He growls low in his throat, and I swear I can feel the vibration run all the way straight to my clit.

I don't have time to absorb his words or figure out what he means. He rocks faster, thrusting harder until he buries himself deep.

My fingers curl into fists as I feel his cock pulsate against my fluttery walls and the heat of his release fills the tight space.

I'm so dizzy. My throat hurts from the noises that have forced their way out.

My body feels good, but I'm so confused as to why.

This man should not make me feel as good as he had. It's him, after all. I'm meant to loathe him.

We stay like this, fighting to catch our breaths. Seconds turn into a minute, and with that, the heat starts to seep through the cracks, replaced by an unsettling coolness.

I just gave this man my virginity and didn't even try to put up a fight. I let him chase his pleasure while giving me my own.

I gave myself to this man. To the one I'm forced to call my soon-to-be husband.

I signed the paper. He didn't force me to pick up the pen, I signed it. Willingly.

A chill rolls up my spine, and a groan falls from my lips as he pulls out, leaving nothing behind but the wet sensation of his release.

Even worse, we did this without protection. I can already picture the consequences of our actions.

I close my eyes tight to stop from looking at him. I bite my lip hard enough to cause pain, because I should be feeling something here.

Something that isn't the tingling fluttering around in the pit of my stomach.

He's going to rub my face in his victory here. He got what he wanted. We're going to be married now. Good for him.

Instead of mocking me like I expect, I'm surprised when he helps me back into my pants. Then, even more, he picks me up like a newlywed bride.

How embarrassing. Even more so that I don't fight him. Rather, I tuck my face into the crook of his neck to hide my flushed cheeks.

I was loud, I know. Others will know what we've done, and what I've lost. I'm humiliated, and sticky, and...

I don't want to think about it.

"I hope you're happy," I mumble against his skin, hoping he'll say something that will piss me off. Something that will calm my racing heart.

Instead, his throat vibrates with a grunt. Giving me absolutely nothing to go off of, he carries me to his room and drops me off in the bathroom.

Before I can even think about telling him to pretend this never happened, or to ask why he did what he did in the first place, he's leaving the bathroom, shutting the door with more force that is needed. From another matching thump, I realize he's left his room too.

Now alone, I don't dare look at my reflection. I already know I won't recognize the woman looking back.

A married woman. Maybe not officially, not yet. However, it won't be long. The way Santino wanted to make this happen the day he put down the order, I'm sure they'll have someone notarize it before the sun lowers.

Shaking my head, I step toward the shower, and my legs shake. My pussy is throbbing, aching, and warm from our shared release.

Page 16

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I feel sick. I feel horny. I feel so many things I don't understand.

Hoping a shower will do the trick and wash away all the confusion I feel, I strip away my clothes and hop inside.

7

Urzo

The crunch of bone against my knuckles does nothing to numb the chaos brewing inside of me.

Matteo stumbles back, barely catching himself from my punch. He might be smaller in size, but he's one of my best men. He can handle a blow or two to the chin without caving. With Tommy busy with taking the marriage document to where it needs to be, I can't take advantage of a two versus one.

Tommy doesn't mind causing pain. He's exactly what I need to knock some sense into me. A real shame not to have him when I need him.

Few of my other brothers will face me when I look this disturbed. Matteo doesn't mind a bit of back and forth. He's a crazy bastard for it, and I'll thank him later for it when I'm with a clearer head.

Sweat clings to us, and we're both left panting. He doesn't blink, his focus trained on me. His taped-up hands, unlike mine, offer him some protection. Guarding his face, he sweeps to my side and swings.

Needing to feel something to distract me from the overflowing thoughts flooding my brain, I don't bother dodging. As his knuckles crash into my cheek, I all but grunt. As his hand barely scrapes my nose, I avoid a bloody stream.

My next swing is met with a quick duck before he catches me by the ribs. Fuck. That one wasn't on purpose.

"All it takes is a pretty girl, and you're suddenly growing dull?" Sneering at me, Matteo curls his fingers, all but begging me to hit him.

Him calling Eliza pretty is enough to make my ears ring. Jealousy flares thick enough that I could choke on it.

This is the problem. She wasn't supposed to mean anything to me. I wasn't supposed to get my cock near her, but one moment of weakness...

I grunt as I hear the crack before I feel the wetness against my upper lip as his next swing is a hit.

"Come on man, pay attention." He's growling now, frustrated by this one-sided fight. "Stop thinking about the chick. If she's a fucking problem, then—"

I'm swinging without thinking, punching him hard enough to make him stumble. My knuckles ache, stinging from contact.

As Matteo spits out blood, he smiles. Not caring that his teeth are dotted in red, he shakes his head. "Don't like me talking about her, huh?"

No, can't say I do. Now I've got to add that to my list of weaknesses. Losing myself because another man is simply thinking about her is something that could get me killed.

“Just shut the fuck up and call it.” Knowing I’ve hit him hard enough to leave his jaw swelling, he doesn’t take my advice. No, he continues to swing, and I have to focus long enough to hit him in the ribs twice and his face once more before he’s landing on his ass.

I’m panting, beyond frustrated with myself. With everything.

Swiping my lip with my thumb, I flick more blood toward the ground. Sniffing, my nose aches. Good thing I can’t get any uglier, or I’d be a little worried.

Fuck. No, I wouldn’t. Who would I have to impress, mywife?

Shaking the thought out of my head, I offer my hand to him to help him back to his feet. Despite the hits, he’ll be fine after snuggling with an ice pack.

“Are you going to be alright, boss?” That smile of his disappears long enough to reveal a look of concern. “Haven’t seen you like this before.”

Me either. Guess it’s a new look we’re all going to have to get used to.

Grunting, I roll a shoulder. “Just fine. Go clean up, you look like hell.”

He grins, taking my words as a compliment. “You could use a rag yourself. Nose looks a little straighter now, though. You’re welcome.”

Damn kid. I shoo him away, growling at him. Thankfully, he takes the hint.

Moving to snatch my shirt from the ground, I use it to wipe my brow and remove the blood from my skin.

Page 17

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I'm going to have to face Eliza again. She'll be pissed with the way I left her. I'd rather her be mad than horrified because of my state.

Despite the throb of my nose, I swipe it hard enough to leave my shirt stained red. Not broken, but it'll be sore.

Sighing under my breath, I linger for as long as I can before I'm forced to face my lingering problem.

* * *

When I return to the room, Eliza is curled up on the bed, covered by the blanket. I'm honestly surprised I don't have to go hunt her down. She's run before, I wouldn't put it past her to try again.

In truth, I don't have a reason to keep going after her now. She's signed the paper. It's all but official now. I don't have to watch over her anymore. There's nothing that can stop this from happening.

She doesn't move, even when I close the door with a thud. I'd think she was dead if it weren't for the slow movement of her stomach as she breathes. Not slow enough to be unconscious. No, she's awake.

Blinking, I turn away and make my way toward my bathroom. Smelling like blood, I need to scrub my skin clean before I consider crawling into my bed.

I don't look at my appearance in the mirror, not wanting to see the man looking back.

A weak man with flaws will be there waiting for me.

After twisting knobs and making the water a punishing heat, I jump in the shower long enough to clean my body. I don't touch my cock, not wanting to risk letting it grow hard. I lost myself before because I had led with my cock. Not this time.

Once I'm out of the shower, I stare at the bed and listen to the whispered lure of joining her.

Silly thoughts of pulling her to my chest and waking her up to my cock cross my mind like I'm an in-love fool aching to get another taste. Guess I can't avoid the thoughts after all.

No. I don't need this. Don't need her.

So, why am I moving toward the bed then, like she's tugging me forward, like I'm on a goddamn leash? She wouldn't even have to yank. No, I'd be as obedient as a German Shepard.

Shaking my head at the thought, I move to my side of the bed and yank the covers back. Ignoring her as best as one can, I lay down and beg my body to relax. Despite getting my ass kicked, and taking a hot shower, my muscles are tight. I shut off the lamp, hoping the night will take me away from all my problems.

The gap between us is large and empty. Laying on my back, my eyes close, but the exhaustion I feel doesn't let me slip away into a restful sleep. Instead, I'm opening my eyes once more and staring into the darkness.

I hear her breathing; it's uneven and fast. She's still not sleeping.

Neither of us speaks, not once while the seconds pass by. What is there even to say?

I love you? As if.

Suddenly, I catch the softest sound of a sniffle that makes my exhaustion dissolve into a sudden alertness. I hold my breath long enough to make my lungs burn to see if I'd misheard. But no, I hear it again. A wet sniffle.

Eliza is crying. My stubborn woman, the one who has been all threats and confidence, reduced to tears.

Even worse, I'm the one who caused them. I know it deep inside my core, and the heat that burns at my chest is immediate.

Like warning alarms are ringing in my ears, I'm left turning my head to look at her.

For once, I don't have a fucking clue of what to say. With Eliza, that's no surprise. I don't know what to do most of the time when it comes to her.

"Stop staring at me," she snaps after a minute, just feeling my eyes on her. Even with her back to me, she just knows.

"You're upset." I know I sound as stupid as I feel. "Why?"

"You left after stealing something kind of important," she hisses under her breath, "any woman would be upset. This means nothing. I'm fine."

Her virginity. Something she could've been saving for a better man. I swept in like a tornado and took it without permission. All this time I've spent away from her, I left her in this state.

I was so caught up with all these new feelings that I didn't think about how she felt.

I'm a grade-A bastard. Fuck, and now she's crying. Tears have been spilled because she feels like I abandoned her.

Page 18

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Ididabandon her. Left to try to forget about everything. Left her all alone to deal with her cherry popped and my cum coating her thighs.

She pulls the blankets tighter to her body like it can hide the short-lived waves of trembles that rock through her.

“I’m sorry.” The words sound foreign as they roll off my tongue without thought, and I can’t stuff them back in. No, I mean them. When was the last time I apologized for anything?

During those times when I was younger, worrying my mother over bullet wounds and stabbings I’ve received from being reckless. That one time I killed a member of our family for being a rat, though that wasn’t a genuine one.

That’s it. Now I’m adding another one to my list. For making my wife cry.

Eliza doesn’t say anything, she just sniffs again. The sound is already beginning to haunt me. Everything inside of my head is demanding I fix this. I’ll take her hatred happily, but she’s not allowed to be sad. I’m not allowed to make her feel this way.

I erase the distance between our bodies. Rolling onto my side, I join her on her half before wrapping an arm around her. She’s so small in comparison, easily sliding over to me with one tug.

Rather than fight me, she just shakes her head like she’ll never forgive me. She has to.

“What can I do to fix this?” My words ghost over the crown of her head. Lifting my hand, I swipe at her wet cheeks. Who knows how long she’s been like this. How long I left her alone to wither in sadness.

Fuck, I want her to say she wants to stab me. I’d let her. Anything to make her feel better.

“I want to sleep and forget this happened,” she huffs under her breath. “I’ll find a room closer to Camellia, and you can do whatever you want.”

Her voice wobbles, and I realize I’ve given her too much time to get lost in her head.

I should agree. That’s the easiest and most peaceful route.

However, my chest seizes up as the thought alone makes me forget to breathe.

Just minutes ago, I thought I could give her up. Now, I’m starting to realize this is far more complicated than I thought it would be. I have to accept that my heart isn’t a boulder in my chest. I’m feeling things. Calling her a weakness is an understatement. I have to accept the truth.

I feel better having her within my reach.

As my fingers leave her cheeks, I trail them down her throat, her collarbones, and down the curve of her breast. The tip of her nipple pressing through the fabric is enough to make a groan form in the back of my throat.

I enjoy touching her. Not just for my pleasure, but I want to bring her the same thing.

When I had her draped over my lap, feeling her juices soaking through her clothing as I rubbed her through each hit should’ve been my realization point. It’s why I kept

doing it. It's why my cock was hard as steel, the reaction instant.

"This room is on the opposite side of the estate," I tell her as I circle the small bud. "What will you do when your body gets all worked up when I'm not there? Walk through the halls, all flushed and wet for any man to see while you try to find me?"

She doesn't bat my hand away, much to my approval.

I'm talking hypothetically here. However, we both know the hunger will remain between the both of us. I can't go five seconds near her without my cock coming to life. I don't know about her, but I'm sure her pussy is getting wet just from a light touch.

We've ruined each other. Even if we don't want to admit it, we're a match. Two stubborn individuals that keep wanting to fight the truth.

"Camellia says I can get stuff delivered out here. I'll—" She sucks in a breath as I pinch her nipple before squeezing her entire breast. "—get a vibrator. Had one back at home. Thanks to you, I can get something bigger now."

A silicone toy? She thinks that'll be enough to satisfy her? I'm tempted by the thought of picking one out myself, and watching her attempt to try.

She'd get so frustrated and impatient, she'd beg for my cock by parting her thighs, inviting me inside.

Fuck, she really has ruined me.

"That won't be enough," I promise her, my voice growing thicker as I picture the whole scene playing out.

Her stomach flexes as my hand runs lower. Reaching the waistband of sweatpants I'm confident are mine, I dip between her thighs. My knuckles ache in pain as I scrape against the inner side of the blanket, but the sting is not anywhere on my mind. Hearing her groan under her breath, I pause. "Are you in pain?"

She doesn't answer for the longest time. Pain is a weakness, admitting it out loud to someone you hate is an impossible task.

Page 19

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“A little. We both lost ourselves a bit. For once, I can’t blame you for it.” She blows out a sigh before sucking in a breath when my hand cups her clothed sex. Her body shivers against mine. Instead of telling me to stop, her thighs part to give me enough room.

I can’t help myself. Even if I tell myself I don’t care, I do.

I want her to want me like I want her. Just because she’s willing doesn’t mean we’re on the same page.

Shifting our bodies, I shove the blanket away as I push her to her back. Through the darkness, I can see she’s stolen my pants and my shirt.

Cursing under my breath, I lean over to turn on the lamp. I need a better view before I snap. As light floods the room, I’m blinded. Not by the lamp, but by the sight I’m given.

Eliza’s eyes are reddened, but her cheeks are dry. Flushed with color, her lips are swollen from her biting it so hard.

This is the view I missed by having her against the table. It feels like I’ve committed a crime.

My eyes continue to trail lower. Her breasts are rising with each breath, and my shirt is pushed up, showing an inch of her stomach.

I’ve yet to see what this woman looks like beneath all these clothes. She’s gorgeous,

and we both know it. I bet the rest of her is just as pretty. My mouth waters at just the thought of it.

When I look down at the loop of the drawstrings keeping the sweats up, I lick my lips.

“Eliza.” Dragging her name out, I feel the knot in my chest grow tighter. “I’m going to tie you up to my bed if that’s what it’s going to take you to stay. However, it would be far easier if you are willing to stay on your own. So tell me, what’s it going to take to convince you to change your mind?”

She blinks her eyes, staring up at me. She tortures me, not giving an answer quickly enough. Soon, her brows narrow. “You’re giving me a choice?”

I’m trying to, but my patience is wearing thinner by the second. The longer I look at her, the more I’m wanting to get my hands and mouth on her.

“Yes.” The word comes out like gravel, catching in my throat. “What will it take?”

When her mouth slowly curves into a hint of a smile, I start to question if those waterworks were actually crocodile tears.

If she fucking thinks to ask to reverse what has already been done, then I’m going to roar like a beast and wake up this whole fucking estate with my frustration.

Instead, she parts her plump lips. “Show me how sorry you really are.”

I might struggle with my words when it comes to her, but show, I can do.

Eliza

I want this man to grovel.

I'll admit, his apology did catch me off guard. After leaving me to fend for myself, leaving me to dab at my wounds by lonesome, I knew I needed something.

Something as simple as I'm sorry shouldn't be enough, but it sure helped.

I hate that I want this man. The time we spent apart felt like torture. I assumed he hated what we did, like he felt I wasn't good enough.

Now, I'm not so sure. He's looking at me like he's fighting his control.

Now that the light is on, I can see the bruise on his jaw and see that he's bloodied the sweatpants I'm wearing from his light touches. For a moment, I'm distracted by the destruction happening to his handsome face.

"Pause, actually. What happened?" Reaching for him, I cradle his jaw, surprising us both that I care. "Did Rocco come?"

I really don't expect him to, but there's the smallest chance he'd snap out of this bastard phase of his and be the old loving brother I remember.

Urzo clicks his tongue, shaking his head. "Needed to release some steam, that's all. It's what I do." He pulls his raw knuckles away when I try to touch them next. Capturing my wrist, his teeth graze my racing pulse. "Shouldn't I be apologizing right now? We can talk about anything else another time."

He's right, but it's not enough. Much to his dismay, I'm wiggling out of his hold. Instead of running, I shift so I'm sitting on my heels. Looking down at him, I take in

every inch.

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“I should get revenge,” I murmur as I take in the outline of his cock pressing against the fabric of his pants. So hard, all for me.

I’ve never wanted to hurt someone in the way I want to hurt Urzo. I don’t want to cause him physical pain. No, I want this man to know what it feels like to no longer be in control. To have someone be demanding and take control. To feel... powerless.

All the while feeling an indescribable pleasure.

He starts to stop me, insistent on letting me have all the attention. Well, I’ve gotten plenty out of this. I want to be a little curious about this guy while he’s too distracted to mock me for it.

“For once, let me be in control,” I huff out of frustration.

Urzo freezes, staring at me in surprise. Maybe it’s the demand in my voice, or the heat in my gaze, but I swear the tented erection grows in size. His throat bobs when I reach out and barely graze my fingernails against the bulge. His cock all but jumps at the contact.

“You want to touch me, princess? Torture me with your fingers, possibly that persistent mouth?” His brows furrow deep enough to match his curled scowl. Reaching down, he isn’t even hesitant with freeing his cock. No, he hisses as his flushed erection bobs, freed for me to see.

Something tells me Urzo wouldn’t enjoy suffering under my control. It wouldn’t be a punishment or anything of the sort. No, it would be more of a reward for us both.

Licking my lips, my mouth waters at the sight of precum seeping from his slit.

I didn't really get to see it beforehand. Now I'm in absolute awe. He's got a weapon, alright. Thick is an understatement, and that flushed tip looks as angry as he does. The vein running along his length pulsates, inviting me to get closer for a better view.

Reaching forward, the heat of his arousal sears my fingertips as I wrap my fingers around him.

For once, I'm curious. Not just of cocks in general, but of this man's in particular. To think this thing was once inside of me. No wonder why I was so sore. One little squeeze is all it takes to draw a growl from his lips.

His teeth look like they could crack at how tight his jaw is. Still, he fights the urge to take over.

"You can just keep going, huh?" Murmuring the words, I squeeze him tighter and watch as a bead of precum rolls down his slit. Spreading it with my thumb, the blush on my cheeks burn hotter. "Is this something normal for you?"

"No." Hissing through his teeth, he pinches his eyes closed to concentrate as I slowly start to stroke him. "Only started once you appeared. It's like a fucking curse. My cock isn't even my own anymore."

Biting my lip, I watch his throat bob as my hand moves in a blur. I'm probably slow and showing my inexperience, but he doesn't care. Not when I feel his thighs flexing against my arm, his cock jumping against my fingers, and the gutted moan that's manifesting in his throat.

"Fuck, tighten your fist," he orders, his voice wavering.

Instead of snapping at him for trying to take over, I'm too busy doing as I'm told. Panting right alongside him, my hand moves with no struggle as more precum continues to spill. His knees lift before his hips jerk.

Now this... this is a sight worth seeing. I'm staring hard enough to make my eyes burn. I'm tempted to tuck a hand between my thighs and match his pleasure.

Suddenly, his eyes snap open. His movement is quick, his palm moving to cover the head of his cock as I continue stroking. He moans and curses as his hand catches his release, but I feel his release running and dripping along my fingers as I slow down.

We're left staring at each other, and he's fighting to catch his breath.

Without warning, he's burying his other hand into my hair and dragging me to his mouth. His kiss is as harsh as the last one, but something's changed. A shift has happened. The obvious sign that there is no reversing this.

He knows it. I know it. Tomorrow, who knows how we'll be seeing each other? However, right now, I don't want this to end.

He's awoken something in me. Something that demands more of this.

Pulling away, I'm kissing the bruise on his jaw. "How long until you can go again?"

Urzo makes this choking sound, a mix of a laugh and a groan. "Fuck, princess. You've squeezed me dry twice in a day. You think I can survive a third?"

Resting my weight on my knees, I move my cum-covered fingers to my clit, stuffing my hand straight into my pants. "You have to."

He can't see what I'm doing, but I know he can hear the wetness of my pussy against

my fingers.

Now that he's opened up Pandora's box, he's responsible for dealing with the consequences.

"If you can't handle me now, then how do you plan to deal with me once I'm at my best?" When I'm not lost in a path of confusing feelings and worries over my siblings. Leaning against him, I let out a breathy moan against his ear as I circle my clit with his release. "Maybe I'm going to have to get that vibrator after all."

Page 21

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

That makes him growl, causing a shiver to rack through my body. Suddenly, his hand is against my ass with a slap hard enough to cause a light sting.

The darkness is back in his eyes, fueled by untamed hunger. I guess this little moment of control is over.

When my back hits the mattress, and he's collected my wrists, pressing them above my head, I know I've said the right words.

Curling under his gaze, my smile grows as his scowl does the same.

Aren't honeymoons supposed to follow weddings? Seeing as I'm not going to have a big wedding or anything of the sort, I might as well try to skirt along the line of tradition.

Even if it takes all night, we're going to both accept this union one way or another.

As scary as the realization is, I can't lie. I'm more than halfway there.

He doesn't shove my thighs apart and split me open with his cock like I expect him to. Rather, he pulls away. Still within my reach, his eyes travel across my front. Taking me in one inch at a time, I can see the hunger dancing around in his eyes.

"You need rest. Time to heal and adjust," he murmurs as he brushes my kneecap with his fingertips. Turns out, he can have a gentle touch if he tries hard enough.

I don't want to sleep. What happens if I wake up and all this is some kind of heated

fantasy? What happens then?

“Stay here.” Giving the order, he lifts off of the bed and heads over in the direction of the bathroom. Returning with a cloth, he cleans my hands and wrists. Erasing all evidence from this, he hovers once he’s finished.

We’re both hovering over strange territory. I think he’s feeling just as lost as I am. Does he feel as vulnerable?

Where in the world do we go from here? Am I meant to act like the wife I am and stay by his side? Will each day get any easier than the last?

This guy is all about power and control, and I know tonight is just a slip of weakness. What kind of man will I wake up to in the morning?

Will he be an asshole who demands I listen to his words like they’re the law, or will he touch me as gently as he does with the washcloth?

Catching himself getting lost in his stare, he turns and disappears long enough to ditch the cloth. Once he returns, he slides back onto the bed. At first, he keeps his distance. As if he doesn’t know what to do with himself, he turns off the light, leaving us in darkness.

What do I want him to do? Do I want distance?

With conflict clashing around in my chest, I shift close to him to soak in his warmth. Settling my cheek against his chest, I hear the rhythmic thump of his heart. Guess he has one, after all.

Just tonight, I’ll be a little weak with him. When tomorrow comes, we can figure out how we both want to act when the time comes.

From the way his arm securely wraps around my back, keeping me in place, I can see he silently agrees.

* * *

When I wake up, I expect it to be because of Urzo snoring in my ear. Instead, it's a light knock against the door. Too light to be from any of these brutes.

The sun is already high in the sky, and I squint at his alarm clock. It's way into the afternoon at this point.

"Ignore them." Sleep laced around his voice, Urzo doesn't loosen his hold. In fact, I think he tightens his arm. When I dig my nails into his arm, he growls.

If it weren't for another knock, my pussy might be happy to accept his tone.

"It's Camellia," I tell him, huffing. "Release me before I shove an elbow into your face."

I won't actually, not with the swelling of his nose. But still, my threat works and he sighs as he rolls onto his side.

He looks... good. I haven't bothered myself to get a better look at him. Now that the opportunity has come, my sister is getting in the way.

I love my sister, I do. I won't let her persistence annoy me.

Instead of taking in his scarred golden skin, or his restful expression, I crawl off the bed and make my way over to the door.

Page 22

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Camellia's frowning when I find her on the other side. Not in a 'you're a traitor for letting the enemy between your legs' kind of way, but a 'something bad happened'. Did she and Santino get into a fight?

We're a little late for any reversed decisions. However, if he hurt her, then I swear I'll kill Urzo's brother.

"Can we talk?" She chews on her lip, relief on her expression when she sees Urzo isn't in any rush to join me. "Somewhere alone."

We've been apart these last few days for most of the time. While she's been absorbed with the don of this family, I've had the brute in bed to deal with.

"Yeah, for sure." Glancing behind me, I'm quick to see Urzo is awake now, clearly hearing us. He's got good ears, and he's used to needing to know everything. "Stay. Don't even think about it."

I expect him to ignore me and get up, anyway. However, all he does is frown harsher. Whatever, I'll take it.

Once my sister pulls me into the hall, she tangles her fingers together as we walk. "How are you?"

Sighing softly, I shrug my shoulders. "As good as I can be."

"I heard you signed the papers." Her blue eyes meet mine, and it's a crashing wave of doubt behind them. "He didn't force you, I hope."

If I think about what happened in that room for even a second, my face is going to give everything away.

“No.” I squint ahead. “He didn’t.”

Her sigh of relief is soft and melodic. Reaching to grab my hand, she gives it a squeeze. “Santino wants marriage too, but I’ve talked him into throwing me a wedding. Something big enough to invite others.”

I don’t know who she’d want to invite. There’s only one person that comes to my mind, and even the thought of my brother makes my jaw tighten. She must hear my teeth grinding, because she gives my hand another squeeze. It’s supposed to reassure me, but it doesn’t.

I’ll never forgive him. Not only did he send Camellia on her own, unprotected and the fend for herself to get information he could’ve received with anyone else, he tried to speed up the marriage between me and the eye patch guy instead of gathering a team to go rescue her.

If I hadn’t run, I would’ve ended up with a ring around my finger quicker than Urzo got me to sign my name.

For some reason, my baby sister doesn’t own a single mean bone in her body. She forgives too easily. Luckily for her, I’m willing to cling onto a grudge double the size of one person.

Even now, she’s got a light in her eyes as she looks at me pleadingly. Whatever she has to say, she wants me to hear her out.

For her, I’m willing to at least listen.

“We saw him, Eliza. Santino... he wanted to kill him. But Rocco... he looked so lost. Like he’s given up. He looked the same way when our father...” She squints ahead like she can’t finish the sentence. Finally, she slowly inhales. “He looked lost,” she repeats. “And I think he needs help.”

Yeah. So did she, and look how that ended up.

“Does Santino have a sister? Might as well marry her off to him then. Since everyone thinks marriage saves everything around here.” I roll my eyes and shake my head. “Otherwise, he can find someone else to help him.”

“Eliza.” The way she drags my name out using that tone that makes me weak, she knows she’ll get her way. I know looking her way will only cause me trouble, so I try not to until she says my name again.

“God, okay.” Slipping my hand from hers, I hug myself as we walk. “You know these brothers won’t let us out of their sight.”

Her brows lift in surprise. “Even now, after everything is done?”

Chewing on the inside of my cheek, I shrug a shoulder. In truth, I don’t know how Urzo is going to act from this point forward.

I’ve got a feeling in my gut that he’ll still try to stick around. Even if Santino orders him to do anything, he’ll still find time to find me.

“I don’t think I’ll be able to slip out. So, how can we help Rocco out if we’re stuck here?” Hating that I’m actually trying to plan here, I scoff under my breath. “Invite him here, and I’m sure someone else with a gun will pull their trigger without the order.”

Camellia shivers at the thought. “If I could just sit down and talk to him...” She sighs and shakes her head. “I know I’m not getting the full picture here.”

She’s right. Neither of us are. Our brother is a mystery, and I know a conversation or two won’t give us the answers we need. He’s too stubborn, keeping all his burdens to himself.

I’ve been asking him why he isolated Camellia for years and every time, I’ve spoken to a brick wall.

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“The wedding,” she starts back up, “I’ll invite him. If he comes, then maybe we can figure out how to live in peace.”

She’s hopeful. Always has been, wanting to be the positive one even during the shittest situations. If it weren’t for this attitude, maybe I would’ve tried to slip her out and run away on our own before everything played out to where we are today.

“What did Santino think of this plan?”

Her mouth curves instantly. “He doesn’t like it. Then again, he really hates Rocco. But, funnily enough, he’s willing to do things he doesn’t like if it makes me happy.”

So, she really does have him wrapped around her finger. In the back of my mind, I thought Santino just saw her as a toy or plaything, eventually growing tired of her. But, if they’re talking about marriage, I guess he’s actually in love with her.

A tiny ache squeezes at my chest, and I know it’s jealousy gripping my heart.

I won’t be jealous of my baby sister. No, I’ll be happy for her.

We reach doors that lead out toward the back of the home. From the glass, it looks like a garden.

All this time here, and I haven’t been outside once.

Just as she casually grabs the handle of the door, I expect grunts to appear from all angles to stop us. Instead, she opens the door without hesitation, like she’s done it

before.

Just like that, I'm thinking about my freedom once more.

Sure, I'm tied to this family now, but I don't need to be tied to this estate.

I could leave. Even if there are iron bars wrapped around the land, I could climb them. Even if I got sliced up by barbed wire, if I really wanted out, I could leave.

"Eliza?" Camellia's looking at me now, worry written all over her face. "Are you alright?"

No. I don't think I am.

"I... don't think I want to leave."

She blinks at me, and steps back inside, completely misunderstanding. "We can go see what they have to eat, then. I'm sure they will have lunch ready by now."

As the realization settles that Urzo has done more damage than I originally thought, I nod my head without thinking.

Camellia, ignorant to the dilemma happening in my head, wraps her arm around mine and guides me forward. Thanks to her, I barely avoid letting my legs give out.

9

Urzo

I feel like a dog on a leash.

Eliza tells me to stay, and I listen. What do I expect, a treat for being obedient?

Despite rolling onto my stomach and weakly pressing my face into her pillow, sleep didn't come. Instead, I counted the seconds she stayed away. They didn't linger on the other side of the door to talk, no, Santino's woman stole mine away.

Mine. What a hell of a word to describe Eliza.

Sighing heavily, I move to sit up. Squinting at the door, a part of me expects for it to swing back open.

I am like a fucking dog.

Eliza would have a good laugh at that. Seeing me in this state, she would laugh if she found me waiting.

Throwing the blanket away, I get up. Telling myself that I don't wait for anyone, I get ready for the day. Fresh clothes, a quick shave, and a long hard stare at my reflection are all I need before I'm slipping out of our room.

I don't hunt her down. Even if I want to see her, I don't dare.

Page 24

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Knocking on the door belonging to Santino's office, I open the door and scowl when seeing the room is empty.

Seems like we're both distracted by the women in our lives. Hell, I haven't asked for a report in what feels like days. I don't even know where we're standing with any of the opposing forces.

Has Rocco Parada stolen any other clients from us? The last I checked, they were caught dealing on our land, stealing our profits. What about the Marino family? They were the ones trying to pair up with the Parada assholes.

Shutting the door, I keep moving.

I need to find Tommy. He'll have the answers I need.

Turns out, he's beneath the house. I should've guessed. Down below is his domain. His playground when he isn't too busy getting dragged around by my mother as her current favorite member of the family.

When I find him, he's got his four fingers wrapped around someone's throat, squeezing tight enough that I'm surprised the guy tied down is still conscious.

The smell of blood clings to the walls, and the concrete floor is stained from years of questioning people we find suspicious.

"Am I interrupting?"

Tommy looks my way, not even bothering to stop what he's doing. No, we've both seen enough death and torture in our days that I'm sure he'd be happy to have a full conversation with me.

Thankfully, he releases his grip at the fleeting sound that leaves his target before slumping forward, left passed out for a few minutes. Enough time to ask a question or two.

He curls his upper lip at me, surprised by my state. It's not usual for me to take more than a hit to the face. Instead of asking about what happened, he tears his eyes away.

"If you're here to ask about the documents, they're taken care of." He's coasting across the room, leaning down to scoop up a bottle of water. Knocking back a mouthful, he wipes his chin with the back of his wrist, spreading the specs of blood on his skin. "Santino has me running across the state. Now I can return to my work."

"I don't care about that." A lie. "Haven't seen Santino. Figured you'd know what's going on around here."

His frown seems to grow. "He had us running around Parada territory to go on a shopping spree. Fun, isn't it?" His brows lower deep and I can see the agitation rolling off of him in waves. "While you two are playing house, someone has to keep things going."

Hence, the guy in the chair. Right.

Tommy is a Bertelli, but not by blood. He joined our family under my father's reign. Back then, he was a quiet kid. Kept to himself mostly, watched over my sister, and he didn't bother no one.

Now look at him, happy to do whatever to repay his debts to the family.

Despite all the years in passing, I feel like he's still trying to make up for what happened to my sister. Then again, back then, Valeria had planned on running for months. As her personal bodyguard, he knew one day she'd bolt. Can't help it he let her slip under his nose..

There won't be any number of jobs, or however much information he can torture out of people to make him forgive himself.

"I'm back," I reassure him, knowing I can't keep hovering in Eliza's shadow. "So, do me a favor and fill me in with what I've missed out in the last week."

He nods and throws a thumb over his shoulder. "Found him snooping around the docks. Don't know if he was trying to plant something or meet someone he shouldn't. Either way, I'll figure out who he's with once he's finished with his nap."

I don't need to ask what'll happen to the guy once Tommy's finished with him. If I have to guess, he'll end up back at the docks, except he'll have a cinder block attached to his ankle.

Assuming watching this scene play out is better than sitting around and waiting for my wife to return, I grab one of the metal chairs by the door and spin it around. Taking a seat, I motion for him to continue.

"Please, pretend I'm not here." Knowing that it won't be long before he's coming back to, I watch Tommy move over to his tray of tools and hope I get something out of this.

* * *

By the time I'm above ground, it's heading into dinner time. I've already skipped one meal, I shouldn't skip another.

Tommy doesn't follow me, busying himself with something else work related. That's fine. I don't need company.

Except, maybe I do. There's something about finding Eliza sitting all by her lonesome that makes the tension in my shoulders melt, and my cock firm up all at once.

She's wearing a summer dress. Must've been from that shopping trip Tommy mentioned. It's a little big on her, so she probably borrowed it from her sister.

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I should take her out sometime. Do the very same. What kind of wardrobe does she wear when she gets to pick out her clothes? She's got the body of a fucking model, I'm sure anything she puts on must look good.

If we go out in public, anyone who looks our way will know something is wrong. Beautiful women like her aren't found with scarred up men like me. They'll call the cops and try to take her away from me.

"Are you going to stand there staring at me, or come sit?" She doesn't bother looking my way, jerking her chin toward the empty seat across from her.

"You're alone." I feel stupid pointing it out, but I feel like with all this space I've given her, she'd be far up her sister's ass. That, or my mother would try to steal her away.

She shrugs, eating a bite of her food. She's got a bowl of fruit at her side, and her attention is on a book. Looks like another one of the ones I found her with in the library.

"Not like I've got friends here. Until Camellia gets out of this honeymoon phase of hers, I might as well get used to it."

Honeymoon.

Without a wedding, are we expected to go on one? Does she want to go somewhere for a week, no distractions or disruptions?

One little thought is all it takes to push me right back into dog mode. Back to wanting to please her. What in the hell is happening to me?

Grunting in agreement, I move across from her and sit. I've got chicken on my plate and some vegetables. Nothing too appetizing. Not more than the woman across from me.

Fuck.

"You stink," she murmurs before sinking her teeth into another sliced fruit. Its juices coat her lips, and my eyes linger.

"I was working."

Or, rather, I hid down below until the stale air sunk into the weaves of fabric of my clothes. I haven't let a single drop of blood get on my skin.

Beneath the table, my knee bounces as her nose crinkles. "Better get used to it. It's normal."

"It's making me lose my appetite." To prove herself, she doesn't bother taking another bite. Rather, she lets her fork hit her bowl, and she glares at her book.

What in the hell is her problem now? I hoped both of us would appreciate the space I provided.

Instead of asking her what is wrong, I shove a bite of chicken into my mouth. God knows the last thing I want to talk about is feelings. If I start asking about hers, then that's going to force me to talk about mine.

That's the last thing I want to do.

Hell, I'd be better off just eating elsewhere. Though, not even that would be enough to bring a smile to her face. No, Eliza is impossible to please.

Last night was a fluke, that's all. Having her pressed to my chest and getting the best sleep a man can get, all by chance. It's something that won't happen twice, I'm sure of it.

She flips a page to her book, sighing softly under her breath. I chew harder.

Her eyes flick up, meet mine for all but a second before flickering back.

I can't tell if the crunch against my teeth is a piece of cartilage in the chicken, or my teeth cracking. Once more, this woman is testing my patience.

"Say what's on your mind." The words come out harsh, an order with a mix of frustration and demand behind it.

Finally, she snaps her book shut.

"You stink," she repeats. Instead of coming out like an insult, there's some hesitance. She's chewing on her damn lip and showing me something I've never seen before. Nerves.

Who is this woman and what has she done with my bull-headed wife?

"I do," I agree slowly, trying to understand where she's going with this.

She taps her fingers against the cover of the book, her eyes finally meeting mine. "You should shower."

Page 26

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

This doesn't feel like an invitation for an argument. No, she's leading somewhere with this. While I might not have the slightest clue of where, I bite my tongue to avoid interrupting her.

Eliza moves to stand, happy to abandon both her book and her fruit. As she meets my gaze, she teases me with that pink tongue, carefully swiping it against her bottom lip.

“We can kill two birds with one stone and clean up together. I've seen your shower, so I know it can fit two. If not, then you'll just have to wait until I'm finished.”

Not giving even a second to let her words settle, she's turning on her heel, drifting away from the table.

She wants me to join her...?

I straighten in my seat, staring at her. My cock, it's jumping in joy with what she's suggesting. I'll admit that I don't understand women, so maybe I'm misunderstanding.

Just as she reaches the entrance, she pauses to look back at me. Her cheeks are pink. She's blushing... for me.

The legs of my chair scrape harshly against the tile below as I move to stand. Completely forgetting all about my meal, about all the convincing I did to tell myself that I'm not a dog to this woman, I follow behind her like I'm in a trance.

She's memorized the path to our room, not stopping once. Keeping ten feet between

us, I'm walking faster, slowly cutting the space between us with each step. By the time she reaches the door, I'm right behind her.

I feel the entire shiver that rolls through her as I reach out to ghost my fingertips over her knuckles to be the one to open the door instead. As my excuse to touch her and move this along, I fight the craving to use my other hand to touch her as well.

I'd squeeze her hip, maybe drag up the hem of the dress up her stomach and tuck my hand between her thighs to see if she's wet.

She has to be. Every time I touch her, her body confesses everything to me. She loves my touch, even if she doesn't love me.

There's that word again. Love. It's bothering me more and more the longer I think about it. It's like I want Eliza to love me.

Giving me her body willingly is one thing, but deep down, I want her to give me her heart, too.

I want the happiness Santino has. Hell, even Lazaro, my other brother has a wife. I want what they both have.

Instead of stepping inside immediately, she looks back at me. Up this close, her beauty is like another punch to the face. While thoughts of weakness try to slip in, the hunger I feel for her drowns it all out.

When my fingers find her face, she doesn't flinch away. No, she leans into my touch. Her flushed cheek burns my palm and the unfamiliar thump in my chest is very telling.

This beauty coaxed me here for a reason. She either plans on distracting me to the

point of killing me, or she wants me.

Tilting her chin up, I lift my gaze from her lips and linger on her eyes. If there was any murderous intent, I'd be able to see it. Many people have tried to kill me in the past, I'm familiar with it.

"Are you going to kiss me, or stare at me?" she asks, her voice low and sultry, just the way my cock loves it.

Fuck me. I'm walking into a grave. I must be. However, I can't help myself.

Swooping down, my mouth is on hers. Opening up with no demand, her tongue meets mine and I swallow down the sigh rolling out of her. One that is full of relief, like she needs this kiss as much as I do, she melts against the door frame as I press her against it.

At this point, I'm ready to fuck her in the hallway. Any witnesses be damned.

Thankfully, the smell of death clinging to my body helps ground me from just doing that. I don't want to ruin this perfect dress by rubbing myself against her. My cock is already digging into her thigh, and I can bet I'm leaking enough to soak through the layers of fabric containing my arousal.

Pulling away and leaving her panting, I jerk my chin in the direction of the bedroom.

Thankfully, she catches the hint. However, the sly smile that forms on her lips is going to haunt me. She looks so happy, so pleased with herself. She's got me crazy for her, just the way she wants.

I bet she thinks she can order me around now. Hell, maybe she can. If she wants to test out her control, her first order better involve getting her off or else I'm going to

go mad.

Entering the room behind her, I've got blinders on. All I can focus on is Eliza. Fuck everything else.

Just like that, I'm realizing that she's got me hooked. Like cocaine to an addict, I need my fix.

I want this woman. I want my wife. No point in lying to myself anymore.

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

Hardly waiting for the door to shut behind me, I almost cave and flatten her on the bed. Ready to get my hands on her, I force myself to remain still. This is a first for us, and I know she'll spook if I don't let her be the one to come to me. Even if she's feeling victorious now, all that can change if I come at her too quickly.

Turning toward me, she curls her fingers at her side. Slowly, she lifts her hands toward her shoulders. Dragging those thick straps down, my lungs burn as I've completely forgotten how to breathe.

I've never seen her fully naked before, now that I think about it. And now, here she is, willingly letting me watch.

"What changed?" While I still have some sense to myself, I take a step toward her. "Is this some trick?"

Staring at the middle of my chest, she shakes her head. That damn blush of hers is growing darker, teasing me. "You became my husband, and now, everything is different. You've ruined me."

One push, and that's all it takes for the fabric to hit her ankles. One push and I'm gone.

10

Eliza

Thanks to those silly romance books Bia promises are the best thing in the world, I've

realized that the reason I don't want to leave this place is because I care about my captor. My husband.

From the way he's looking at me now, it might as well settle my suspicions I have about him. He wants me too. That weight behind his stare, the hunger filling his eyes, it's all coming together.

This man looks like he wants to devour me whole. How can one look from a man be my undoing?

My underwear feels slick against my pussy, soaked with my arousal.

The whole time I sat by my lonesome, waiting for Urzo to find me, I tried to figure out a way to invite him to do something that wasn't just sex.

I didn't expect to see him with the smell of blood and death clinging to him. Whatever work he was doing before finding me is pretty obvious. A little part of me hoped remembering who he was would help scare me straight. Instead, I figured out what I wanted to do.

I wanted to help him get rid of all of it. Sure, a shower is only going to end up one way, but it's an excuse to let me touch him. To get a bit of control back.

Getting this man to drop to his knees isn't my goal here. However, I want to get my hands on him.

Once Urzo is happy with taking me in from afar, he steps closer. I expect him to throw me over his shoulder and just head to the bathroom. But no, this man isn't done staring just yet. He's taking in my body up close.

In my family, I've always been the pretty one. I watched what I ate, bought the best

brands of makeup, and put a lot of work on my appearance. Rocco never encouraged my behaviors, but he knew the men he invited into our home for business noticed. I'm sure they've even asked for my hand, but Rocco was smart.

He wouldn't dare marry me off unless it benefited him.

Unfortunately, my beauty only gave them the impression that I was a good girl. Obedient and hell, probably the perfect woman to expand their family. All it took was opening my mouth to ruin the image all of them painted.

I've opened my mouth plenty around this man, and he still looks at me the same. Well, maybe not the same as he did the first time he found me threatening his men as I charged head-on to save Camellia. The annoyance and disdain aren't there anymore. Rather, it's melted away. Now every time I look into his eyes, it's always a heat melting in the pool of darkness.

My breath catches when he reaches out. His thumb brushes the space between my breasts. They're not huge or anything, but without a bra giving them a little boost, they're smaller than I like. I prepare myself for a remark from him, but he doesn't speak.

No, this man's brows are furrowed like he's trying to figure out a difficult puzzle here.

As he moves to cup one of my breasts, my nipples tighten into peaks beneath his gaze. I shiver as he squeezes my breast.

Toes curling into the carpet, my blush spreads lower as I try to figure out what he's thinking. I hate that I can't tell from his unreadable expression. Finally, I huff. "What?"

His eyes flick from my rosy buds up to the growing frustration on my face. “You’re beautiful.”

Just like that, I have to fight not to double over. He might as well have punched me in the gut with the way my lungs feel like the air has been stolen right out of them.

I’ve been called beautiful, pretty, and gorgeous all my life by men I wanted nothing to do with.

Urzo says it, and it’s like the compliment has a whole new meaning. He says it in a way that doesn’t make me feel like a doll or a side piece.

“I got my looks from my father. He passed on good genes,” I murmur as I feel every inch of his fingers dragging down my stomach. Soon, he’s hooking a finger against the waistband of my underwear.

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“Can’t say the same.” Grunting, he soon groans under his breath when he has to peel the fabric off of me. “You’re soaked, Eliza.”

I’m starting to really like it when this man says my name. Everything that is coming out of his mouth are all the right words. He’s running a streak now.

As my underwear hit my ankles, I kick them away and lift my arms. Wrapping them around his neck, he easily scoops me up. My fingers twitch, itching to get his clothes off of him as well. It’s only fair. I can’t be the only one naked here.

Taking me to the bathroom, the coolness of the sink counter stings my flushed sex as he sets me down long enough to turn on the shower to let it heat. Once he moves back, I’m reaching out to coax him to return between my knees.

“You all wear these shirts,” I murmur as I run my fingers along the buttons. “I bet you have to constantly buy replacements. The buttons pop too easily.”

I could prove my point, yanking the shirt open to reveal what he’s hiding beneath. Though there’s something about the way his chest swells when I touch him. Like he can’t get enough of having my hands on him. So, I unbutton one at a time until the entire row is open and left as flaps of fabric.

He doesn’t blink. Not once. When I push at his shirt, he helps shrug it off. Hearing the shirt hit the ground, I’m too distracted to move straight toward his slacks.

Urzo’s chest bears many marks. Scars both old and new welcome my gaze, each telling its own story.

I know what bullet wounds and stabbings look like, even after they've healed. I might not have been on the front line, but I've seen members of my family bloody up carpets.

He makes this low-throaty groan when I ghost the indent against his ribs. A past bullet wound that had to have shattered the rib right beneath it. Must've been painful.

"You look like you've thrown yourself into the face of danger," I murmur with a slow shake of my head. "You... can't do that anymore."

Sure, my word means nothing, but I'm opening myself up here. I can't say I want Urzo to get himself killed. I know he was willing to marry me for his family, and I'm sure he had done anything else in the past for them as well. But now, things have changed.

He's got me now, someone who expects him to live. Plus, what if kids become a thing in the future? The last handful of years without my parents were chaotic. I wouldn't want to put my son or daughter through that.

"No more front lining. Be a general or something." I don't know how it works, but he's got to make safer choices. He can play his role from the background and give orders. Something like his brother does.

I guess I really don't want him to die.

He grunts again, and I struggle to take in what the meaning is.

"Urzo. Seriously, promise me. Tell me you won't put yourself in danger on purpose." It's a big ask, I get it. Even stranger coming from me, I'm sure it's crazy to think he'd listen to what I have to say.

He's always done whatever his brother wanted. Whatever he needed. If Santino asked him to jump off a bridge and I asked him to walk across, which would he do?

Am I being silly for hoping he'd pick me over the rest?

"I won't do anything unnecessary," he finally agrees, sighing softly as he pinches my hair between his fingers. "I promise I'll come back every night."

"Unharmful, I hope?" My throat feels a little tight, and I'm not a fan of the foreign feeling of being worried about someone that isn't Camellia.

"Alive. I can promise that I'll be breathing." His thumb tickles the spot behind my ear. "You know I can't promise anything more than that unless I leave this life altogether. I was born to keep everyone safe. Now, you're included in that bunch. Sorry to say, but if anyone wanted to take you away from me..."

He doesn't need to finish the sentence. I can hear the threat in his voice, the promise to cause others pain if they dared to touch something that is his.

He'll end up with more scars on his body; I'm sure of it. More stories will be there to tell.

Lifting my gaze, I take in the first scar I ever saw on this guy. The one decorating his mouth. Starting right below his bottom lip, it drags along both lips and traces up to his cheekbone. Through the beard hair decorating his jaw, hair doesn't grow on the line.

The first time I looked at him and saw it, I couldn't help but feel slightly intimidated. However, now that I've spent so much time with him, I hardly even notice it.

He notices my stare, and it's like I've hosed down the fire between us. His frown is

back, but thankfully, he doesn't pull away. He doesn't flinch when I touch the line with my thumb, but he doesn't lean into my touch either.

"How did it happen?" I ask, taking in the gash against his mouth. It's harsh-looking despite being healed. It isn't new, but it's not as white as the others. Still a little pink, I wonder if it still hurts.

Then again, no one has ever cut me with a knife before.

"One of yours did it. Parada got me by surprise," he answers without taking a moment to think. No, he remembers well enough to hold a grudge for it. "Tried to slit my throat, but failed. He missed, if you can't tell."

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

His humor is dry, and he doesn't even bother trying to force out a laugh.

I suppose looking at himself in the mirror every day would give him a constant reminder.

"Bend down," I order as I pull on his shoulders. Surprisingly, he doesn't argue. "It won't mean much, but I'm sorry it happened. If it means anything, it adds to your rugged appeal." Leaning in, I kiss the mark and sigh softly. "I don't mind it."

"Everyone minds it," he rasps as he pulls back to look at me. "Compared to you, I look like a monster."

Moving to cradle his cheeks, I shake my head. "Fuck everyone else. I like how you look. Even if your nose is a little crooked, or you're a big brute, I don't mind one bit."

I shouldn't have to convince him. Not when my body is giving all the telltale signs.

He doesn't call me a liar or ask for any proof. No, this man rumbles from deep inside. My words must be what set him off because he's shoving his fingers into my hair and pulling my head back to kiss me again.

For a minute, I forget what I'm supposed to be doing. Urzo knows how to make my thoughts disappear whenever he's near. However, all it takes is feeling his erection digging into my leg to remember.

Fumbling down, I yank at his belt and grunt when his buckle hits my wrist. The pain doesn't last, not when he's pulling at my lips with his teeth and licking where it

stings.

Huffing out of frustration and impatience, I'm finally yanking down his zipper.

"Help me," I hiss against his mouth. "I want you, damn it."

A chuckle comes from him, a deep rumble that sounds so foreign, I can't help but wonder if I've imagined it.

He doesn't pull away, but he moves his hands away to help shove off his pants and boxers. Losing count of our kisses, I gasp as he scoops me up.

"If you drop me, I will kill you," I threaten him as I cling onto his broad shoulders. We both know he won't, but no amount of strength can save us from stepping on something slippery.

"Keep sweet talking to me. I'm starting to love it." Carrying me right beneath the stream, his body absorbs the heat as he presses me to the wall. Still not satisfied, he kisses my lips until they feel swollen before moving his mouth to my jaw, then my ear.

My body sings for each scrape of his teeth, and I groan as he slowly lets me down. Once I'm standing on solid footing, he cups my breast once more and pinches my nipple.

Fuck, aren't we supposed to be cleaning up? We're going to use up all the hot water if I keep letting him go at it. At the same time, it feels too good to tell him to stop.

"You drive me insane," he groans as he presses my breasts together and soaks up the view. "Can't get you out of my head. Even when I try to distract myself, you're always there, even when you're not."

“We must be the same, then.” Shivering as he moves his touch to my sides next, I arch against the tile. “Couldn’t have worded it better myself.”

Just to tease him and drive him even crazier, I brush his hands away. Reaching out to grab his bar of soap, I press it to the middle of his chest. “Time to clean up.”

Watching his nostrils flare and his brows come together, he doesn’t move. Rather than not wanting to clean up, he lets me glide the bar against his skin.

He wants me to wash him.

Knowing how badly I’ve wanted to touch him, I don’t complain. Once I’ve got enough suds gathered against his skin, I abandon the bar and rub the suds into his skin.

“Will you wash my hair?” Wanting his hands on me too, I know there’s nothing more sensual than washing each other.

He nods and lures me beneath the stream to soak my hair. When it’s not braided, it’s long enough to brush the middle of my back. From the way he touches the dark strands, I’m willing to bet Urzo’s a fan.

Though, I bet he’d be more of a fan when it’s wrapped around his fist. The thought alone is enough to make me shiver.

Maneuvering around so he can grab his shampoo and coat my hair in its scent, I groan in the back of his throat as his thick fingers scrub at my scalp.

“Are you trying to torture me?” He sighs as he shakes his head. “All those little sounds add up.”

Biting back my smile, I shake my head. I'm not trying to make him suffer. Not this time. However, all I have to do is lower my gaze to see the way his cock thickens, bobbing between his thick thighs. Every time I look at him, it's a reminder of how big he is. Big everywhere.

It's insane.

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

He curses under his breath when I drag one of my hands down his stomach. Following the dark patch of hair below his belly button, I spread suds toward his cock. Watching him through my eyelashes, I wrap my fingers around his erection and give him a squeeze.

The way he thrusts into my grip is enough to make us both groan. My pussy clenches in jealousy, and I can't stop the next smile from slipping through.

“Needs washed if you want it anywhere near me,” I murmur as I begin to stroke him. Feeling his racing pulse against my fingers encourages me to grow bolder.

Urzo groans softly before planting his hand on the wall to support his weight. Forgetting all about my hair, his face pinches in concentration. Between us, he watches as my hand moves. His jaw flexes as he tries to hold back any moans.

I want to make this man feel good. I want to watch him unfold and fall apart. Like a brick wall craving in.

With my other hand, I cup his balls and give them a light squeeze hoping to do something.

His eyes flash, and the growl that leaves his lips makes my knees wobble. Just when I think I've done something wrong, he groans my name before spurts of white hit my stomach. I watch in pure fascination as I milk his cock of every drop of release.

Against my tanned skin, the white practically glows. Unfortunately as it is, the shower stream doesn't take long to wash it away.

Before I can even feel victorious, he's dragging me back to the water to wash the shampoo out of my hair.

I've never seen this man desperate before, but he's in a rush to get out of the shower.

With what he looks like he wants to do to me, I'm just as impatient to do the same.

11

Urzo

I'm insane for this woman.

I can't think until I've left a trail of water leading from the bathroom through the bedroom. The carpet is wet, and so is our bed, as I all but throw her on the blankets.

When I can think, the only thing happening in my head is the need to claim her. Despite already being mine, I need a reminder. I need it as much as I need another taste of her.

Eliza's smiling, knowing damn well what she's done by giving me her touch. Now I'm left crazed, starving for her.

As soon as she's on the bed, I'm right with her. Spreading her thighs apart, I'm lapping at the drops of water on her skin. Finally making it to her pussy, I'm drinking in the layer of slick collecting her on folds.

"Urzo..." Moaning my name, her hips lift and she grinds her pussy against my mouth. Her salty tang is just what I need for my cock to come back to life.

If she thought making me come would be enough to leave me satisfied, then she's got

another thing coming. The only thing to leave me sated is leaving her cunt filled with my release. Until then, she's got more coming her way.

As she pulls at my wet strands so let up a little, I can't. Like a starved man, I lick deeper until my tongue can't possibly reach further in. So fucking sweet and salty.

Once I've got her panting, my tongue swipes along her slit, reaching her swollen bud. A little annoyed that I found release before her, I press the bud between my lips and suck hard enough to make her cry out.

So bundled up and sensitive, I can't even get my fingers inside of her before she's clenching up.

Cursing between gritted teeth, a whimper follows next as she arches against the bed.

I'm a bastard, pushing two fingers into her fluttering walls. The slickness makes it easy to thrust them in, feeling each squeeze in waves. Having already memorized what spots make her fold, I curl my fingers and don't let up.

Hearing her choke on her breath, her thighs jerk with her hips, and right after one powerful orgasm thrashes through her, a second follows.

"You can't... do that." Panting as I lift, she shakes her head as she blinks.

Crawling up her body, I leave a trail of wet kisses. Memorizing what every dip, every curve, feels like beneath my lips, I soon find hers.

"I will always return the favor," I tell her before my hips grind against hers. "Even if it means keeping you on this bed all day, I'll do it."

She's so sensitive, twitching as I grind against her and coat her release all over my

cock. Instead of shying away, she takes my words as a challenge. With shaky legs, she lifts them before wrapping them both around my hips. Doing the same with her arms, she tugs me down and tastes herself on my tongue.

“Is that a threat?”

I press my cock firmly against her clit and listen to a whine catch in the back of her throat. “A promise.”

Giving her sensitive nerves a minute to calm down, I get lost staring at her. She does the same, and her eyes search mine. Slowly, she parts those swollen lips.

“I think... I may care for you. More than when it comes to this.” Her eyes break away from mine and she stares at my chest instead. “In ways that are more emotional.”

The hesitation in her voice helps sober me up for a moment. I know what she’s trying to confess to me, but it’s the waiver in her voice, the worry that I won’t want to hear what she’s trying to tell me that makes me frown.

“Stop beating around the bush,” I demand, far too rough.

It’s not because I don’t want to hear those three words, but it’s because I do. It’s pathetic how badly I do.

She returns my frown and digs her nails into my shoulders. “I might not have heart-eyes like my sister, but I think...” Her brows knit together. “I think I might love you. Or, I’m pretty close to it.”

Breathing suddenly feels like an impossible task. “You don’t sound confident.”

Her lips press together before she sighs. “You’re not in any rush to say the same.

Hard to put myself out there when you tolerate me.”

Tolerate her?

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Sinking down against her, sandwiching her body between mine and the mattress, she can’t even squirm. “You have been a headache for me the moment you came into my life. Between driving me crazy, and torturing me every minute you’re near, the last thing I do is tolerate you.”

Burying my nose into the crook of her neck, I breathe in my soap clinging to her skin.

“I don’t even recognize myself anymore, thanks to you and your antics. Can’t stay away without thinking about you. When you’re near, you drive me just as crazy. Do I really need to spell out how badly I want you?” Lifting, I expect her to scowl at me.

Instead, her eyes are welling up with emotions. She’s trying not to smile. Damn it. Even now, she’s breathtaking.

It’s all the truth. Our time in the bathroom, her seeing me for what I am, and accepting it? Fuck, if I wasn’t sure I loved her before, she made me sure of it.

“So, while you might be unsure, I’m not. You’re not my wife because of a document or because of this arrangement. No, you’re my wife because you’re mine. I’m not keeping you because I have to, but because I can’t imagine going back to being the lonesome, grouchy bastard I was before you fought your way into my life.” As soon as the words are out, it feels like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders, and I can finally breathe again.

As she nods her head, her smile grows. A smile meant all for me feels good.

“Okay, yeah. I didn’t want to be the only one feeling things here.” Shaking her head,

she blows out a laugh. “I won’t make a competition out of it or anything, but I’m sure of it. I love you, Urzo.”

I’m going to need to hear her say it again to make sure my ears aren’t playing tricks on me. Hell, I’ll need her to tell me every night and every morning as well.

I’m gone for her, and I don’t even care anymore. I can’t deny these new feelings anymore; fighting it is pointless, a losing battle against the tide.

Stuffing a hand between us, I guide my cock into her wet, soft heat and slide in with a single thrust. “Again.”

She moans as her hold on my body tightens. “I love you.”

My hips start to move, and I’m tempted to demand her to say it over and over, but her moans take over, tangling with my very own.

Burying myself deeper with each thrust, with one goal in mind, I move faster. As our bodies meet in a crashing blur, both torn from our previous orgasms, it takes no time before she’s digging her heels into the curve of my ass and demanding every drop of my release.

I’m happy to provide.

Left panting against her brow, it takes minutes before we’ve settled. Slowly pulling out, we groan in unison. Moving next to her, I’m left a wreck.

“We’re going to need another shower.” Murmuring the wise choice, she gasps when I pull her to my chest.

“No point if we’re going to make another mess,” I murmur into her hair.

Sure, I'm not going to fuck her all night long. That's crazy, even for me. However, if I give myself an hour to soak up her warmth, I'll be ready to go again.

Page 32

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“Do you think you’ll be able to keep up?” With a challenge in my voice, my mouth curves into a smile.

Eliza stares at me in surprise and goes as far as touching my mouth to see if her eyes are playing tricks on her. Finally, she slowly nods. Her smile matches mine. “Worry about yourself, old man. I’ve got energy for days.”

She’d better be prepared to back up her words with proof. I’m going to need a lot of convincing.

* * *

Streaks of daylight creep past the large glass door and pick the worst angle to aim at. Groaning in the back of my throat, I try to turn to block out the light, but the body curled up to my chest makes it impossible.

Cracking my eyes open, I stare at Eliza’s peaceful, sleeping expression. When her eyebrows aren’t knitted together, I’ve got to say, she’s not bad on the eyes.

Hell, who am I kidding? She’s the most gorgeous woman I’ve ever laid my eyes on, be it while she’s pissed or not.

There are a few strands of dark hair caught on her eyelashes and cheek. Ever so carefully, I brush them out of the way.

Eliza Bertelli. Sounds too good to be true. This whole situation has gone from a terrible ordeal to something surreal, and I’m finding it hard to process.

Maybe it's the exhaustion catching up to me. Sure, staying up all night with her didn't help anyone, but I can't help myself. Now that I've decided not to hold myself back anymore, and to be honest with how I feel, I'm not going to be able to keep my hands to myself any time she's within my reach.

Even now, listening to her sighs and watching her snuggle closer, her body covered by nothing but our blanket... I want to touch her. Even if she tested my endurance and completely wore me out, today is a new day.

She groans softly under her breath when I move. After moving her arm off of my stomach, she sighs as I roll her onto her back.

Despite her eyes remaining closed, a smile slowly forms on her lips as my mouth trails down her chest toward her stomach. "That tickles, you know?"

She's so warm beneath the blanket, but her skin immediately prickles up as I uncover her.

In the daylight, she's even prettier.

Are we even going to be able to leave our room? Hell, we should at least eat something to regain a little energy.

Trying to persuade myself into pulling away from the meal this woman offers between her thighs, I make it even harder for myself by breathing in her arousal. She doesn't have to put effort behind making my mouth water.

Three heavy bangs on our door make me pause, and there's only one person I know who'd want to disturb me during a time like this.

"Fucking hell..." Scowling, I start to lift as my door is being pushed open. I don't

have to look back to know who has the balls to enter my room.

Eliza immediately covers her breasts, glaring daggers at my brother. He and I are the same, not giving a damn about personal boundaries.

I don't even have enough time to tell him to get the fuck out. No, Santino gets straight to the point.

"Meeting in ten minutes. Whole family needs to be there." His nose scrunches as he tears his eyes away. "So, both of you get dressed. I want to get this over with."

Even if it's no longer the crack of dawn, he couldn't have waited until dinner or lunch? Fucking hell. What time even is it?

This is payback, I bet. I interrupted him with Eliza's sister, and now he's returning the favor.

"Get out," I growl.

"Ten minutes," he repeats before leaving.

Sighing beneath me, Eliza moves to crawl away. Not even turning pink for another man, she saves her blush for me. She cradles my cheek, shyly kissing me before trying to abandon me on the bed.

Despite being on a time limit, there's no way I can be satisfied with a brush. Instead, I grab her chin and kiss her again. All it takes is the invitational swipe of my tongue to make her melt.

When we part, her eyes look cloudy. "Can we get lost on the way there?"

If we could, I'd take her out to the garden and see how she looks with her back against the grass.

Page 33

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

“Can’t skip out,” I groan with a shake of my head. “Family meetings are important and affect everyone.”

Moving to get dressed, I offer her up one of my shirts.

“We should really go shopping.” Throwing my shirt over her shoulders, I watch the hem brush her thighs.

I enjoy seeing her in my clothes. Then again, I really liked how that dress looked on her, too.

“Later. I’ll get a car.” Agreeing with ease, I imagine running from my duties and responsibilities for one more day to spend the day watching her try on different outfits. I’ll have to get more hangers. Maybe another dresser. Hell, who knows what all I’ll need. We’ll get some fresh air, and plenty of it.

Visibly lighting up, I’m distracted by that smile of hers. Silently setting a goal to see one a day, I quickly snap out of my daze and get dressed.

While his relationship might have made Santino more forgiving, I don’t want to push his limits by being late.

Thankfully, Eliza doesn’t waste any time either. Once she’s got a pair of shorts knotted at her hips, she wraps an arm around mine and lets me guide her to the very same room she signed her marriage certificate in.

If she’s thinking the same thing I am, remembering what happened, it explains the

flush on her cheeks.

Thankfully, there aren't any cameras inside. No one knows but us, and I'm happy to keep it that way.

Camellia is settled next to Santino. She's scooped over to his side and playing with the chains dragged across his vest piece.

My mother is next to Tommy, and if I have to guess, she's been talking the poor bastard's ear off. These last couple of weeks, he's been her favorite target to chat with. Even though he's not blood-related, he might as well be with his devotion to Santino.

If it were a few months ago, Lazaro would also be settled here, but his seat remains empty. Has been ever since he decided to leave and welcome the suburban life.

The chair next to mine was meant to be Valeria's when she became an adult, but now, it'll be Eliza's. I lead her over and take a seat.

Now that everyone is here, right on time, Santino pulls his attention away from Camellia long enough to acknowledge everyone else in the room.

"If you haven't heard already, we will be hosting a wedding in the upcoming weeks. However long it takes to throw one of these together." He looks at our mother, already knowing that she won't turn down the opportunity to manage this. "I'll assume you have contacts you'll want to get involved with."

Her smile is instant as she nods. "I'll have to see if Susie is still in the dress-making business. Oh, she is wonderful, Camellia. You'll love her."

Just as I expect her to, my mother talks about her experience with this Susie person.

She boasts her up, so I already know we'll be meeting her.

"Urzo, you'll deal with security. I don't want any issues, understand?" My brother doesn't hesitate with his seriousness, but he does save me a whole speech about my recent distractions.

Nodding my head with his orders, I force my lips not to curve. It's almost funny. Before Eliza came storming into my life, I would've taken this job way too seriously and completely absorbed myself with making sure I did as I was told.

"I'll make sure the wedding goes on without a hitch."

He nods and his gaze softens on Camellia. "We have a little planning ourselves, but I'm hoping to have this wedding before autumn rolls around. As long as everyone does as they're told, we won't have any issues. Now, onto the next pressing matter—"

"Rocco." Eliza sighs and shakes her head. "I take it you agree with Camellia on the matter?"

He nods. "I'll be inviting him. She wants him there, I won't stand in her way."

As her face pinches, she bites her tongue. If I have to guess, it's purely for her sister's sake.

I don't know the whole picture and what they went through, but both sisters have opposite feelings for their brother. If Eliza dislikes him, then I'm on board. Fuck the guy.

"Other than that, we finally don't have any headaches happening in the background. So, the wedding needs to be in full focus. Understand?"

We all nod, getting his point. When the boss wants something, that's all there is to it. In this case, he wants a wife.

Looking like he's ready to call this meeting over, I clear my throat.

"Before we dismiss this—" I catch Santino's attention, "—I've got something else to ask."

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

He motions for me to continue.

Looking over at Eliza, I can see the confusion written on her face. “In between now and the wedding, I want to take a vacation with Eliza. A honeymoon for our marriage.”

She doesn’t care about the lack of a wedding, and neither do I. However, I’d love to have her for a week or two without any chance of someone walking in on us again.

Her brows lift, and her eyes look like caramel as they melt. Her smile feels really fucking good. Glad to see she’s on board.

“Where would you want to go?” Santino’s not shutting down the idea, willing to hear me out. I have to say, that’s a big change for him. He’s not being self-absorbed, all worried about losing someone for a handful of days.

“Wherever she wants,” I answer with a shrug.

Bia collects her hands together, sighing. “Hawaii is quite the trip. Beautiful beaches and surrounding islands...”

“Maybe we should take her with us,” Eliza whispers with her curve softening. “She’d ditch us and give us all the space we need. She can plan a wedding on a beach, can’t she?”

She’s right. As much of a handful as my mother can be, she wouldn’t be a problem at all. If we pick somewhere far away enough, I doubt Santino would say no. No

dangers out on a beach but the risk of sunburn.

“We’ll see.” Reaching beneath the table, I give her leg a squeeze. We’ll get her a fitting wardrobe and slip away for a while. We can enjoy ourselves, and then try to convince ourselves to return.

I can already see all of it playing out.

“Figure out the small details and get back to me about it.” Santino nods, and I thank him. With one issue taken care of, he turns his attention to Tommy. “You’ll deliver an invitation directly to Rocco Parada. Don’t cause trouble unless it finds you first.”

“But don’t hurt him, please,” Camellia adds on. “Tell him we come in peace.”

Peace with the other family sounds all but impossible. However, if the young woman has hope that he won’t try to shoot Tommy on sight, then maybe there is a chance for it.

Even if Rocco hates us, he technically has two in-laws waiting for him. Sure, we all won’t be the best of friends, but we’ll have to be close enough to it.

Tommy groans at the order, shaking his head. “Why does it feel like I’ve become the errand boy?” He sighs and nods. “I’ll try not to shoot anyone.”

As her sister’s shoulders relax, Eliza’s stiffen up. “This is not a good idea. You’re inviting trouble by letting him in.”

Camellia nods her head. She’s far too forgiving, in my opinion, but that’s her business.

All I know is that if her brother thinks he can take Eliza back, I’ll be the one to put a

bullet between his eyes. So, if he wants to come in peace, whatever. Any ulterior motives, I'll handle it myself.

"We'll take the precautions needed, so don't worry." Santino pulls out his phone. "We'll also be inviting important figures. He'll know better than to cause issues. Anything he does can influence his business as well."

Those two aren't worried about it, neither will we.

If Eliza needs a distraction in the meantime, then I'm happy to volunteer. I squeeze her thigh once more and she sinks into her seat.

"Honeymoon," I promise her softly, "then we'll deal with your shitty brother."

As her mouth twitches, she soon nods, giving in. "Honeymoon. Yeah. Beaches."

"Okay." Santino brings his hands together and moves to stand. "Let's get this wedding planning going. I wanted this woman to be my wife yesterday."

With this meeting finally dismissed, I'm more than happy to steal my wife back.

Rather than finishing what we started in the bedroom, I take her hand and lead her toward the front.

"I'm going to look so silly wearing this," she mutters as she looks down at my clothes.

"If anyone has anything to say, I'll take care of it." If I have to knock someone on their ass, then so be it.

She tilts her head back and laughs, and I swear the noise is like music to my ears.

Page 35

Source Creation Date: May 22, 2025, 8:50 am

I love this woman. No doubt about it. She's got me wrapped around her finger, and I don't even care if she burns a hole through my wallet, if it means pleasing her.

Even better, I don't feel like a weak bastard for it. No, I feel like a good husband. Even if I don't have to go and prove myself, I'm going to make sure to show her just how well I can take care of her from this day forward.

12

Eliza

Epilogue

With the rush of wind flowing through my hair, whipping behind us, my arms hug tighter around Urzo's bulky frame.

Hitting a bend in the road, we both lean together. Finally, I can ride on this death machine without panicking. Now, I'm just taking advantage of hugging my husband.

He's had this motorcycle for over a year now, but last summer, I refused to get near it. This summer, I promised I'd at least try. Not too bad once I put all my trust in him to get us home in one piece.

"Not bad," he calls out over the rumble, complimenting me.

Last time, I leaned the wrong way and definitely almost caused an accident. Definitely learned my lesson.

Reaching the road that leads up toward the estate, the bike revs as we pass the front gate. Feeling a bit disappointed that our time away is already reaching its end, I don't rush to hop off once we come to a stop, and he plants his feet against what is now gravel.

"Doing alright?" He throws a glance over his shoulder. "Won't complain, but you were clinging on the whole time."

I snort. "My legs feel a little weak, so who knows if I'll be able to walk all the way inside."

His mouth curves at the invitation to help me out. This man, even after all these years, has yet to tire of finding opportunities to touch me.

Before he can make the suggestion, there's a shrillish screech that catches both of our attention, followed by a string of curses and threats.

Leaning over, we both see the scene play out.

Tommy, looking furious, dragging a woman I've never seen against gravel. He's got an iron-grip on her arm, and she's kicking up rocks trying to free herself.

"Uh... Unwanted guest?" I attempt to guess.

If she weren't welcome, I'd think Tommy would be dragging her toward the front gate, not toward our home.

Urzo sighs softly under his breath and shakes his head. "If that's who I think it is, I should find Santino before Tommy actually gets his hands on her. It won't end up being good."

"Who is it? Girlfriend that ended with a broken heart?" I tip my chin, trying to get a

better view. Knowing Tommy, I can't imagine him feeling anything for a woman. The man doesn't have a heart.

"My sister, who ran away right under his nose." He taps his fingers against the handles. "Though, from here, it's kind of hard to tell. If it isn't Val, I'd be wasting my time."

I hum in contemplation. "Another option, we can pretend we saw nothing and wait until someone tells us."

The chuckle that vibrates his back makes me grin. The roar of the motorcycle coming back to life is all the answer I need.

Surely, the woman will be just fine. These guys are a little crazy when it comes to the women in their lives, and Tommy might be one of the roughest ones here, but I'm sure we've got nothing to worry about.

"Three miles around the estate, and then we'll deal with it."

Hugging his frame once more, I nod my head before we're off once more.