







# Blood Moon (La Famiglia De Luca)

**Author:** Kristine Allen

**Category:** Fantasy

**Description:** Once upon a time, there was this guy who took his lavish lifestyle for granted. At least until he suffered a loss like no other. He grew to be cynical, reckless, full of anger, and bad decisions.

And now those bad decisions run my life.

As the youngest brother to the Chicago La Cosa Nostra don, his enemies are mine. Not that it's ever been different. My brothers and I were born with targets on our backs.

It's what killed my twin.

All I want to do is lose myself in whatever makes me forget for five damn minutes. If it kills me in the process, so be it.

At least until a woman I thought long gone crosses my path. For years, I'd obsessed over her, but like smoke, she'd disappeared. Now she's the key to getting everything I want. I'm going to use her to my advantage, even if it comes at the expense of the feelings blossoming between us.

The dark abyss I exist in eclipses all good sense. I'm intent on my goal, and nothing will stop me. She's going to be collateral damage, and it's going to destroy us both, but it comes down to blood—and that trumps all.

By stealing her, I've gained a dangerous enemy and angered my family.

I'll find a way to get what I want and keep her. Because I. Never. Quit.

Dive into the dark world of the Sicilian Mafia and the men that keep it alive and well. It all starts with blood...

**Total Pages (Source):** 8

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:49 am*

Leo

“I ’ll wait for you guys outside,” I told my friends. They were in line at Walgreens with snacks and shit for tonight, but I was starting to feel restless. I needed to get out in the fresh air.

Nose stuck in my phone as I texted Francesco, my twin, I exited the building and promptly turned right. As I neared the end of the building, I slammed into a body, and my phone went flying. All I saw was blonde hair and hot pink, then my phone flipping end to end as I tried desperately to grab it.

“Oh my god! I’m so sorry!” she apologized just as my phone took a fateful and deadly dive into the street and down the grates of the gutter.

On my knees, I stared into the dark abyss of nastiness that I knew I’d never breach—not even for my phone. It didn’t stop me from willing it back, though.

With a sigh, I glanced up and almost swallowed my tongue. The bright pink encased a bombshell body and full lips parted. She dropped her attention to her watch, and her golden blonde hair tumbled free of the loose bun to fall in waves around her shoulders. “I don’t have time to fix this,” she muttered to herself. “I’ll have to do it later.”

At first, all I could do was ogle because she was gorgeous. Too old for me, but damn, was she stunning.

“I’m not that worried about it. I’ll swing by the store and get another one,” I finally

spit out.

“Are you sure?” She reached into her small black purse and pulled out several bills.

“Here, at least let me help with it.”

“No way. My dad has insurance on it. It’s no biggie,” I assured her as I waved her offer away and tried not to drool.

“Please,” she insisted as she pushed the money into my palm. Her big blue eyes flared.

The contact of her skin was like a jolt of electricity, and I pulled my hand back in shock. Still on my knees by the grate, I watched as she quickly raised up from the crouch she’d been in. Her legs seemed to go on forever before her thighs disappeared under the skirt of her Barbie-like suit. Actually, it looked like a cross between that and something Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis would’ve worn. Classy yet hot. I’d had a crush on JFK’s wife since I was a little kid and saw a picture of her. At thirteen, it hadn’t changed.

“Take care, kid,” she said with a parting wave before she hurried off, her black heels clicking on the sidewalk.

I watched her quickly walk down the street until she turned the corner.

“Who was that?” my friend Joel asked, and I jumped because I hadn’t heard them join me.

“No clue,” I replied with a shrug, trying not to give away how shaken I was by the interaction. Slowly, I got to my feet and shoved the blonde’s money into my pocket.

“I gotta run by the cell phone store,” I told my friends.

“Huh?” Will asked as he tilted his head and wrinkled his nose.

“Dropped my phone down into the sewer.” I sighed.

“Oh shit,” Joel drawled out as he glanced down between the grates, as if he’d be able to see it down there.

“Literally,” Will added as he snickered.

“Gross,” Joel said as he curled his lip in disgust.

“Yeah,” I muttered.

As a group, we made our way to the nearest cell phone store, where I replaced my phone.

I thought about that woman in pink for years, but I never saw her again.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:49 am*

### Chapter 1

Leo

“Showbiz” — Palaye Royale

No one in my family understood what it's like to lose half of yourself. They didn't know what it's like to wake up one day and feel like something is missing. The hollowness in your chest. The constant pressure that builds from within, and every time that it feels like I'll finally combust and get relief... nothing. Instead, it's the same emptiness.

As I rolled over, I pushed the slender arm off my body. I crawled over the other curved form under the sheet and then out of the bed. Honestly, I had no idea who they were. Not that I cared either.

Unabashedly naked, I stumbled to the bathroom. There were several pills scattered across the counter. Unconcerned about what they were, I grabbed a couple, popped them in my mouth, and washed them down with the last of the whiskey in the glass beside them. I wasn't sure which ones I took, but I'd brought them, so they were one of two things.

When I lifted my gaze to the mirror, I almost winced. Red claw marks were scattered over my chest and shoulders. Fuck, were those teeth marks? I dropped my gaze to my chest where, sure enough, there were two curved marks with the perfect indents of teeth. Then I studied my reflection.

My inky hair stuck up in several directions.

There were dark circles under my bloodshot eyes.

My cheeks were a bit more sunken than they had been a week ago.

Francesco would be disgusted with me. Pushing away that tiny kernel of guilt, I leaned over and splashed cold water on my face. Then I wet my hair so I could smooth it down a bit, silently dressed, and left the room.

“Where the hell were you last night?” Vittorio demanded when I entered the little cabin we’d stayed in at the resort for the book signing. Specifically, it was called Motorcycles, Mobsters, and Mayhem—which I found ironically hilarious that my mom was so dead set on going.

“Out,” I replied.

“No shit. You were supposed to tell me if you weren’t staying in the cabin,” he snapped back.

“Fuck off, Vittorio. Last time I checked, I was a grown-ass man.”

“You might be, but you are still the brother of the La Cosa Nostra don. You need to be careful,” he countered. He ran a hand through his hair in frustration.

“Yeah, well, I didn’t ask for that,” I grumbled as I pushed past him to pack. “Any more than we asked to be the sons of the mafioso. Maybe if we hadn’t been...”

“Leo,” Vittorio spoke my name in both warning and pain. Trust me, I understood that pain better than anyone.

I ripped my shirt from last night over my head, then pulled out clean clothes that I set to the side. Before anything, I needed a quick shower. I smelled like pussy. Not that it was a bad thing in the moment, but the next day? My lip curled in disgust.

Five minutes later, I was out of the bathroom with a towel around my waist. I quickly dressed and threw my shit in my suitcase. Once I was done, I zipped it up and dropped it to the floor with a thunk. By the familiar numbness that started to seep into my bones, I knew it was oxy kicking in—thank fuck.

Knowing I'd soon be floating, I rolled the small suitcase past my scowling brother. My feet were getting heavier, and my body seemed buoyant as I approached the SUV. Pietro took it from me and loaded it, so I climbed in the back seat, laid my head back, and immediately dropped off into oblivion.

I barely remembered arriving back at my parents' place. When we arrived, I went straight to my room and took a nap. Then I woke up, drank by the pool until I crashed again. If my parents didn't live in the middle of bumfuck nowhere, I would've gone into town for some entertainment. I would've taken an Uber into Austin, but none would drive out to get me.

After waking up to the obnoxious and insane sound of my alarm in the wee hours of the morning, I went downstairs. I needed fucking coffee. My ass was dragging, and I was supposed to leave soon with my brothers. We had an early morning return flight to Chicago—not that I was crazy about the thought of going back to Chicago today. I'd rather be hopping a plane to Vegas. Or better yet, Greece or Dubai.

Big brother had dictated that I go back with him and Vittorio. Alessio had left last night because he was a dick. He told them he had a job to get back to, but I'm pretty sure he was full of shit.

I stopped by the kitchen and grabbed one of my mom's giant mugs and filled it from

the gourmet coffee maker.

“Good morning, son,” my mom announced as she entered the room.

“Morning,” I mumbled before lifting my cup to my lips.

Mom poured her own cup and added her cream and sugar. The entire time, she side-eyed me, and I pretended not to see her doing it.

“Leo...” she began but paused.

The tone of her voice stirred my anxiety, and my skin went prickly. I could tell a lot of people to fuck off, but my mom wasn’t one of them. She was about to say something that was going to make me uncomfortable, and I didn’t want to hear it. I dropped my gaze to my mug and didn’t make eye contact.

“We all miss him... but you can’t keep killing yourself trying to forget.”

“Mom,” I started in an almost pleading tone as I closed my eyes against the burning behind my lids.

“Leo, I don’t want to lose another son,” she whispered, and I could hear the tears in her voice.

My heart fractured.

Because I couldn’t promise her that.

“I know.” It was the best I could do.

“Better suck that coffee down. We need to leave in fifteen,” Gabriel clipped as he

entered the room with Vittorio on his heels.

“Are you sure you can’t stay?” Mom asked Gabriel.

“I wish we could,” Gabriel lied. I knew he was lying because he hated Texas.

None of us could figure out why they moved to Texas of all places. They were happy, so I guess that’s all that mattered. I didn’t mind visiting them, but never in a million years would I want to live there.

Now it was time to go back to Chicago, play the good brother long enough to get Gabriel and Vittorio off my back.

\* \* \*

Approximately one year later...

I was fed the fuck up. Gabe and Vittorio thought that if they kept me on a leash, I would “straighten up.” Alessio got me more than the other two, but he wasn’t around a lot. I knew damn well what he did for a living, and between that and his new family, I rarely saw him.

Not that I held that against him. I was glad my brothers had found love and happiness despite the dark world we were born into. They simply didn’t understand the hollowness that existed in my chest since the day Francesco died. They had no idea.

It was like this angry bitterness was eating away at my insides, and that hollowness was growing with each passing day. No matter how many times I saw my counselor, I couldn’t seem to move on. I was stuck and stagnant—the rage chipping away at my sanity.

None of the stupid “coping skills” the therapist tried to get me to use seemed to work. Not that I’d tried very hard.

The drugs, booze, and women were the only things that had kept me numb. Now, with the help of my brothers and their henchmen, aka my babysitters, I could rarely lose myself in my vices.

Fuckers.

At just shy of twenty-six, I shouldn’t have to answer to a single motherfucker.

I’d contemplated ending it all so many times, I’d lost count. Each time, I couldn’t go through with it. Not because I’d been afraid or chickened out. It was seriously like there were invisible forces that stopped me or sabotaged each attempt. I’d been left with a tingly, almost eerie chill.

They say time heals all wounds, but it didn’t seem like that was true for me.

Each day seemed to get harder and harder.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:49 am*

### Chapter 2

Tinsley

“Outside” — Hollywood Undead

My brother kissed my cheek before shooting me a smirk. “Happy birthday, kiddo.”

I blinked rapidly to get the two images of my brother to combine again. “Thanks. Happy birthday to you too, oh wise older brother,” I told him before I busted out laughing.

He never liked to let me forget that he was older than me by mere minutes.

“Happy birthday, you two,” my father called out one last time from his office as we passed by and prepared to go upstairs to crash after our first night of drinking—legally.

“Thanks, Dad!” I replied with a cheeky grin.

My brother and I hooked arms as we wobbled up the stairs in our parents’ home. Each time we almost tumbled back down the elegant staircase, we chuckled and attempted to act sober.

While neither of us had planned to celebrate our twenty-first birthday in our childhood home, we had agreed to go home because our dad said it was important to our mom, and we’d never been able to deny her a thing.

“Good night, Tink,” my brother said with a yawn as he left me at the door to my old room.

Once inside, I started to get ready for bed—or I tried, anyway. I’m pretty sure I spent more time giggling and trying to be quiet.

A knock on my door had me spinning to face the sound. I shot a hand out to grab the post of the footboard.

“Yeah?” I assumed it was my brother coming back to hang out.

“Tinsley? Can I come in?” Mom asked from the other side.

As I swayed on my feet, I eyed the distance between me and the door. The odds of me making it there without falling over weren’t good. The mattress was so much closer. So I cautiously made my way up toward the pillows and fell back into the cushy mattress. “Yep!”

My mom entered my room and sat on the edge of the bed. “Tink, are you sober enough to listen to me?”

“Of course!” I assured her as I struggled to get back up. Once I was upright, I tucked my legs up to sit cross-legged. That’s when I noticed that my mother carried a small box about the size of a paving brick.

She had one brow cocked in disbelief as she eyed me.

“I’m goood,” I promised, and she gave a soft snort of laughter but nodded.

“I have one last gift for you today,” she began. “This box has been passed down in a matrilineal progression for centuries. The difference this time is that it ’ s specifically

yours,” she explained with a soft smile.

“What do you mean, it ’ s specifically mine? If it’s been passed down through the generations, then it was yours too,” I shot back with a giggle because my mom sounded a bit looney tunes. Also, I was still a bit tipsy.

“No, Tink, I was merely holding it in safe keeping for you. I’m giving it to you, knowing you ’ re the one who will open it,” she replied with a humored shake of her head. “This box belongs to the first female child born in our family every one hundred years. Before you, it was your great-great-grandmother’s.”

“Umm, okay? Well, what if someone had five girls?” I joked.

My mother gave me a stern glance. “ It would still go to the first one born on that hundredth year—but that doesn’t happen. For as long as our family history has been documented, there is always one girl born to each female—and only one girl.”

“Umm, okay?”

She set the ornately detailed box into my lap.

“What’s in it?” I asked, eying it suspiciously.

“I honestly don’t know. I can’t open it.”

“Huh?”

“According to the tale, only the intended is able to open it, and not until her twenty-first birthday.”

Realizing I had quickly sobered, I stared at the black wood. The woman intricately

carved onto the top wore what appeared to be a diaphanous gown that hinted at her delicate form beneath it, and she was surrounded by flowers and vines. Without realizing, I had been tracing it with my fingertip. That's when I saw that the tips of her ears drew up into points.

I reached for the clasp, but my mother gently rested her hand over mine to still its movement. "Wait. Let me leave first."

My brow pinched in the center as I stared at the box, then at my mom. "You don't want to see what's inside?" I asked.

"If I was meant to see, I would've been able to open it," she replied with a shrug and a smirk. She got to her feet and kissed my head. "What I do know about that box is that it was stressed to me that it was a tightly kept secret that shouldn't be shared outside our family. Do you understand?"

I nodded my understanding.

"The legend says that besides your family, only your 'fated mate' is allowed to know about it. They are the only one who will kill to protect you and what's in there. He is one you will be able to trust implicitly," my mother sagely explained, then left my room.

This time, when my fingertips touched the clasp, there was a tingling sensation that started where I made contact. There was a soft click as the latch popped. Cautiously, I opened the lid to reveal the contents. Inside, there was an embroidered black velvet bag. Beneath it, a small leather-bound book.

Nothing could've prepared me for what was on those pages.

\* \* \*

After opening that box, my life was never the same again.

Of course, I'd shared what had happened with my twin. We had come up with the idea of me going back in time to retrieve highly sought-after collectibles from a time when they were common, everyday items. What started as a small online selling opportunity had quickly become Neverland Acquisitions.

That had eventually morphed into the black market, thanks to my brother and his shrewd thinking.

There were very few rules to my time-traveling abilities, and the ones that existed didn't really matter for our purposes. The limitations I had were that I could only go back in time, with the exception of returning to my time. According to what I believed to be a legend written in the book, my male ancestors had the gift of traveling to the future. It hadn't said what the determining criteria were for that, and I had no idea who those descendants would be after all the centuries. There wasn't a lot of documentation on that in the little journal. All it mentioned was that my supposed ancestor and her brother were children of Chronos.

It wasn't a "gift" for noble causes with a bunch of moral stipulations. In a way, there was a darkness to it. Each time I traveled in time, I had to keep myself focused and exercise self-control like I'd never had to in my life. Traveling through time had a strange effect on me. It essentially acted like an extremely powerful aphrodisiac, and when I got back, I wanted to fuck.

Badly.

My brother and I had tested a ton of things. The only thing we hadn't done was significantly change history and try to see if I could bring him with me. The way traveling seemed to nearly rip me apart at times, I didn't want to chance it. Though we considered it once when we were both smashed, I'm glad we didn't. I could never

live with myself if anything happened to my brother because of me or my “magic fairy dust,” as he called it.

Could I travel from the privacy of my balcony? No. Though our building had been around for many years before we took possession, it hadn’t been there forever. Also, I couldn’t imagine landing on some poor unsuspecting soul’s balcony in the past and having to find my way down or explain why I was over one hundred stories up and needed to go through their home.

Awkward.

Unfortunately, it was more than that. In order to create a portal that I could be sure to return through, I needed to be grounded to the earth.

As it was, I’d ended up in some very precarious situations in the past. Before I learned more about what I could do, I’d been impulsive and reckless—and had to fight wanting to have sex with some questionable people. It was what ultimately led to my education in history, art history, and historical architecture. It not only helped to know where and when to find things, but it was imperative that I had some inkling of where structures were located in the places I was going.

“The sculpture will be on display this evening, in nineteen twenty-three, from seven this evening until midnight. After tonight, in nineteen twenty-three, it disappeared,” Peter explained as we leaned over to look at the images scattered on the desk in front of us.

The corners of my lips lifted mischievously as I glanced over at him. “Perhaps because I got to it.”

Peter chuckled. “Perhaps. Either way, if we can acquire this item, there will be more business from this client.”

“It’s kind of ugly,” I mused with a curl of my lip.

He snorted. “That it is, but I don’t really give two shits what it looks like, or what this Mr. X does with it once we get paid.”

Peter acted like it was about the money. We had more money than we could spend in two lifetimes. Like me, it was more about the thrill and the challenge when it came to objects like this one. Comic books and random objects were easy. One-of-a-kind pieces were another thing altogether.

Not that I didn’t thoroughly enjoy my standard of living. I was fully aware that I was high maintenance. There were few men who could accept that I didn’t need their money, but nor was I trying to be their sugar mama.

“Why haven’t you started dating again?” he quietly asked.

My shoulders fell a little. It was like he could read my mind. Then again, maybe as my twin, he could.

“Please. How would I explain disappearing? How would I know that they loved me for me and not what I can give them?”

“They aren’t all like Mar?—”

I slapped my hand over his mouth. “Don’t even say his name.”

He effortlessly peeled my fingers away. “Are you sure you don’t want me to have him taken care of? It’s not too late.”

A boisterous laugh escaped me before I could stop it. I threw my arms around my brother and hugged him. “I’m fine, and he’s not worth it.”

He dropped his head to kiss the top of my head. “Tink, there isn’t a single thing I wouldn’t do for you. You’re the only family I have now, and you’re my baby sister.”

He was right. After our parents disappeared shortly after our twenty-second birthday, it was just us. Yes, we had some distant family, but none we were close with. We’d searched for years. I’m pretty sure Peter still did.

My forehead rested on his sternum, then I looked up at his towering six-foot-three height. “By less than three minutes, Petya,” I argued with a grin, using the childhood nickname our Russian nanny had used for him.

The fondness in his gaze was reserved solely for me—most people only saw the serious or scary side of my brother. I wasn’t a fool; I knew my brother was into way more than just acquisitions, but he kept me far away from his other dark dealings.

“I still entered this world before you, making me the older brother. Besides, I’m twice your size.” He shot me a smug smile that had me shaking my head. He wasn’t lying. I was tiny, and I always had been. “Besides, if you don’t start dating, how will you find your ‘fated mate?’”

He made little quote motions with one hand, and I rolled my eyes. That was one part of this whole magical mess that I didn’t believe.

“I need to go,” I announced as I pushed at his chest and stepped back.

Again, he snorted. “It’s not like you have a bus to catch. You literally control every moment.”

“Piss off and mind ya business,” I airily replied as I waved with a wiggle of my fingers and breezed out the door.

“You look beautiful, Tink!” he shouted after me with his tone full of laughter.

My lips twitched as I held my smile back.

I took the elevators down to the ground floor. My kitten heels clicked sharply on the marble floor in the foyer of our high-rise. Neverland Acquisitions owned the entire building, but we leased out a lot of it for office space, with apartments on the top three floors. The penthouse was Peter’s. I wasn’t as pretentious as he was. I had one of the two residences on the floor below.

As I approached the front doors, my attention was pulled to one of the seating areas in the lobby. A dark-haired man looked up from his phone and toward the desk as Thomas, one of our agents, approached him. They shook hands as my steps faltered for a split second. There was something incredibly familiar about those cheekbones and that smile. Yet, I was sure I’d never seen the man before. I’d certainly have remembered.

Shaking off the bizarre feeling, I wrapped the decadent fur stole around my shoulders and stepped out into the brisk Chicago afternoon. Two blocks down, I entered Millennium Park, then slipped into a copse of trees.

Not once did anyone in the crowd look twice at a small, blonde woman dressed in a long, shimmering gown disappearing into the shadows and stepping out of her shoes. Not even when I reached into my small black velvet bag for a pinch of fairy dust, flicked it into the air, and stepped through it. A myriad of sparkling colors swirled around me as an unseen force seemed to pull me in a million different directions at once. I concentrated on where I wanted to be, and eventually, the colors dimmed and muted. Then, I calmly walked through the dark hole that appeared before me.

The sounds of a party floated through the air, coming from the mansion ahead. All the windows were lit with a golden glow, and laughter rang out, followed by the

tinkling of crystal.

Squaring my shoulders, my lips curved into a coy smile before I sauntered across the manicured lawn, pausing only long enough to slide my shoes back on before I entered through the back door.

\* \* \*

“You got it?” Peter asked in way of greeting, to which I rolled my eyes.

“Hello to you too,” I muttered. I didn’t even bother telling him about the fact that I almost got caught this time. He’d freak out, and it would become a thing. What I needed to do was pull my head out of my ass and be more alert when I was traveling.

My brother sighed. “Sorry, my client is breathing down my neck. I don’t like feeling like I’m making promises I can’t keep.”

“Then don’t. Stop telling your clients you can acquire things until you have them in hand,” I huffed as I crossed my arms and cocked a hip.

“Now why would I do that? I have the ultimate procurer on my payroll,” he drawled as he leaned back in his chair and gave me the dashing grin that had always gotten him his way. Too bad it didn’t work on me—for the most part.

Growing up, my brother got me in more trouble than I could remember. He was always the adventurous one, and he dragged me along as his partner in crime. Usually, I was an unwitting partner to those crimes. Until my twenty-first birthday, that is.

With a flourish, I set the velvet-wrapped bundle on his desk.

He carefully folded back the top of the fabric, and a broad grin spread from cheek to cheek. “That’s my Tink. You never let me down,” he crooned as he unwrapped it to pull the small gold dog statue from the bag.

He set it on his desk, and the light from the floor-to-ceiling window caught the gems embedded in its collar. Little dots of light sparkled around the room.

“I still think that’s the ugliest thing I’ve seen in ages,” I grumbled as I curled my lip at the offensive little thing.

It looked like a five-year-old carved it and some dumbass used it as a mold. “You’re sure that thing is solid gold?” I skeptically questioned, eying the weird pattern etched into its coat.

“Oh yes. The details of the statue itself were well documented for years, but without any specific location ever mentioned, it was hard to track it down. At least until I found out about that party showcasing it.”

“You said it was in a random letter that turned up in a desk we auctioned?” I leaned back, resting my ass on the edge of his credenza as I studied the odd little thing.

“Yep. Crazy, huh?”

“Pretty much.”

“What are you doing tonight?” he asked me as he rewrapped the gold dog.

“Sitting in my hot bath with bubbles up to my ears,” I replied before kicking off my shoes and wiggling my toes in the plush carpet.

“You should go to a dinner party with me,” he said in a tone that seemed a bit too

innocent.

My gaze narrowed as I studied him. “Why?”

He lifted one shoulder in a careless shrug. “I thought you might like to get out.”

“I just went out,” I drily replied. “To a dinner party, as a matter of fact.”

He rolled his eyes. “That’s not the same. That was work.”

“And this wouldn’t be?” I huffed. “I know you, Peter. Any social event you go to is an opportunity.”

Though he tried not to, the corner of his mouth twitched before it lifted. He didn’t say anything; he simply stared at me. Refusing to rise to the bait, I remained silent—so did he.

As usual, I caved first.

“Fine. I’ll go,” I huffed.

My shithead brother grinned.

This was likely going to be a disaster. My inner thighs had been wet since the second I hurriedly re-entered the portal with the small statue. I was practically throbbing with need—which was why I’d intended to lock myself up in my condo for the night.

Alone.

I’d never told him about the reaction I had to time traveling. It was a slightly embarrassing topic to have with one’s twin brother. It would also make him ten times

as protective.

Maybe I needed to invest in a chastity belt.

On the way, I was doing some online shopping.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:49 am*

### Chapter 3

Leo

“The Ghost” (Acoustic) — Bayside

“W hy, thank you,” Vittorio murmured as he took the drink from my hand.

“Hey,” I grumbled. “The least you could do is let me have a fucking drink if I have to endure this stupid party.”

Gabriel was having an intimate gathering at his penthouse that I was instructed to attend. I did not want to go. When I tried to sneak out, I was detained by my asshole brother. They were making me feel like I was thirteen years old again.

Between Vittorio and Gabriel, they were still keeping me on that damn tight leash, and my collar was starting to chafe. I was getting pissed. Unfortunately, there wasn’t much I could do about it because Gabriel threatened to cut off my money if I didn’t do as he said.

“Ah, ah, ah,” he chastised before he upended my drink into his big, fat mouth. “This is all part of the Get-Leo-To-Pull-His-Head-Out-Of-His-Ass project.”

Kendall, Vittorio’s woman, had her hand looped inside his bent arm. As she stood by his side, she gave me a sympathetic smile. “Sorry,” she mouthed.

I huffed in disgust as I looked away from my pain-in-the-fucking-ass brother. Long,

loose curls of blonde hair caught my attention from across the room. They trailed down a slender back and lightly caressed the gentle curve of her hips. The shimmering green dress hugged those slight curves like a glove.

She turned her head slightly to the side, and as if she was bored, slowly lifted her champagne flute to her plush lips. In silhouette, I could see her throat as she swallowed, and I had this insane urge to run my tongue over it. The end of her nose tipped up slightly, and a soft pink hue appeared airbrushed over her cheek. Under the crystal chandeliers, she almost seemed to have a fine glitter dusted over her that reflected as she moved.

As if she could feel the weight of my stare, she turned to face me. Her crystal blue eyes locked with mine. She tilted her head as she narrowed her gaze and swept those gorgeous eyes over me from the floor up.

Something about her seemed so familiar, but I couldn't place her. I lifted my chin, and the corner of my mouth quirked up. She boldly held my gaze as one of her dark brows arched.

"Leo," Vittorio said in an irritated tone, telling me he'd likely spoken it more than once.

"I'll be back," I absently responded as I further ignored him to approach the pixie-like beauty.

When I was a mere six to eight feet from her, the man I hadn't noticed standing next to her put his hand on her back in a possessive manner, and I stopped in my tracks. A burning fury swept through me.

She broke our stare and gave her attention to the man who was talking to Gabriel and his wife, Alia. Funny, I hadn't noticed any of them prior to that moment, as they had

all been eclipsed by her beauty.

Alas, I wasn't about to start a fight under my brother's penthouse roof, so I turned to walk away.

"Leo," I heard Gabriel call out and inwardly cursed. The last thing I wanted to do was have a little group chat with my brother, his wife, the pixie, and her date. It left me feeling irrationally angry. "There's someone I'd like you to meet."

Fuck, fuck, fuck .

Schooling my features, I sighed, then slowly spun back around.

Trying my damndest to appear pleasant when I inexplicably wanted to wrap my hands around the neck of the man touching her, I approached the group.

"Hey, you," Alia greeted as she gave me a side hug and a reassuring smile. My brothers' wives almost made me feel guilty for being so sour all the time.

I returned the gesture, then straightened my jacket as I waited for introductions.

"Leo, I'd like you to meet Peter Romanov. Peter and his—" Gabriel introduced, but I interrupted.

"Neverland Acquisitions," I inserted. Though I'd never met him, I knew exactly who he was by name. "I was there today, as a matter of fact. I spoke with one of your agents today about a painting I'm hoping to acquire—a certain Richard Dadd painting."

"Is that right?" Peter asked with a cunning smile and an interested tilt of his head. In a way, he reminded me of a shark. If he was running in the same circles as my family,

he likely was.

Good thing I'd learned from the best.

"It is," I smoothly replied.

A small throat clearing followed my statement. "And I'm Tinsley. My brother and I both own Neverland Acquisitions," the soft but incredibly sensual voice announced. My eyes immediately went to the diminutive woman at Peter's side. She was holding out her hand as if I would shake it as well.

That's when what she said sunk in. "Brother."

Instead of shaking her proffered hand, I gently took her fingers in mine and leaned forward as I lifted it to my lips. At the moment of contact, something jolted through me as if I'd been shocked by a defibrillator. It momentarily took my breath away.

When I looked up, it was to find her staring at me with wide blue eyes full of surprise. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Tinsley."

Those becoming pink cheeks darkened to a rosy hue, and I had a feeling the insane attraction might actually be mutual. As I continued to stare into her eyes, I realized I was still holding her hand a hairsbreadth from my lips. As calmly and casually as I could, I released her hand.

"Leo is my youngest brother," Gabe announced, and the reminder that it should've been announced that Francesco and I were his youngest brothers stabbed through my head.

Suddenly, I was ready to go. The evening had barely started, but already I was done. Alessio and I had shared one of the condos below until he moved in with his new

wife. Maybe if I searched again, I'd find some alcohol or pills stashed somewhere I'd missed. I just needed enough to settle my nerves so I could sleep.

"Well, it was nice meeting you," I assured them. "But I think I'm going to call it a night. I'll be waiting to see what your agent can procure for me."

"Leo, wait," Gabriel said as he followed me.

"Gabe, I can't, okay? You've all made sure the condo was scoured clean. I'm not drinking, I'm not popping pills; just leave me alone for one fucking night." At least I wasn't at that given moment.

"I wanted you to meet Peter's sister. She seems like a nice girl, and I thought maybe you two might hit it off," he continued. He seemed sincere, but I didn't trust myself with her. My needs were... demanding. She was tiny, and I was emotional and hanging on by a thread.

Bad idea.

"I'm sure she is, which is exactly why she should stay away from me," I shot back with a self-deprecating laugh.

He stepped closer. "Leo... I need your help with this."

I had no idea what he was talking about, but there was nothing I could do for him. "I'm not the one you need if you need help. Talk to Vittorio. Or Alessio."

Before he could say anything else, I walked away. Thankfully, he didn't follow. Though as I pushed the button for my floor, someone else did because they stopped the doors from closing. Glancing up, I was shocked to see it was Tinsley.

“You’re leaving?”

“No,” she replied as the door slid shut and she spun to face me. There was a wildness in her eyes as she shoved me against the wall with a strength that I wasn’t prepared for. Heat blazed between us as she reached up and pulled my head down.

Neither of us said a word as my hands instantly found her ass, and I lifted her off her feet until our lips met. The kiss was desperate and animalistic. She tasted like champagne and bad decisions.

Somehow, in the wave of desire that was drowning us, her dress ended up around her hips, and her smooth legs were wrapped around my waist. The silky-soft globes of her ass were clutched in my palms with my fingers digging into her flesh, and I didn’t even remember doing it.

The elevator pinged when it stopped on my floor, and I didn’t even break the kiss. Her hands were in my hair and tugging at my clothes. If I were any other man, I might’ve questioned where this was coming from. We didn’t know each other. This instant and overwhelming lust was unreal. Yet, I could not stop.

Like the blind leading the blind, I stumbled toward my door. We didn’t break as I shoved her against the wall and fumbled for the code on my door. By some miracle, I got it right without looking and shoved the door wide. It slammed closed after we cleared the threshold, but I barely paid attention.

Yeah, I should’ve at least taken her to my bed, but when I set her down on her feet and she dropped to her knees, my brain shut down. At some point, she’d unbuttoned my shirt, and my tie was undone. She unfastened my belt and slacks, then took my already hard length in her hands. My jaw dropped when she licked it from base to tip before swirling her tongue around the tip and sucking on it. “Jesus fucking Christ,” I muttered when she began to swallow it inch by inch.

As my lids closed, my eyes rolled back, and I gripped her golden waves in my fists. If she'd been anyone else, I likely would've just rammed my cock down their throat and fucked their mouth until I came. For some reason, with her, I couldn't. I wanted to fuck her, yes, but I also wanted to worship her like a goddess.

Treat her like a princess.

Yet fuck her like I owned her.

There was this steady vibration thrumming through my veins. Every second that ticked by, these invisible vines grew and wrapped around me, tying me to her.

In record time, she had me on the verge of exploding. Without warning, I jerked out of her hot, wet mouth and barked, "On your feet. Turn around."

She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and did as I said. What I didn't need to tell her was to bend over the back of the couch and put that ass in the air because she already had. The skirt of her green dress was wadded up over her back, baring her ass to me.

No panties.

"Fuck," I breathed as I reached between her legs, and my middle finger grew immediately slippery because she was that soaked. Though I wanted nothing more than to shove my cock into her as hard as I could, when I brought my finger to my mouth and got a taste, I needed more.

It was my turn to go to my knees. Grabbing her ass cheeks, I separated them and lifted her up as I pushed my tongue inside her. Her moan was fuel to my fire, and I ate that pussy like a man starving. By the time she screamed and liquid gushed down my chin and over my shirt, I was throbbing almost painfully.

Unlike her, I didn't wipe my face. I stood up, took her head by the hair, and turned her to kiss me. She shamelessly returned the kiss and swallowed her own juices that remained on my tongue. Only then did I stop and grab my dick to line it up and drive it inside her.

She was so tiny, a small voice told me to be careful, but then she ground out, "Yes! Like that!"

My chin dropped to my chest, and I shrugged my shirt off, allowing it to fall carelessly to the floor. Then I held her hips and slowly withdrew. I watched in fascination as my glistening cock was revealed before I thrust it deep again.

"Yes, Daddy! Harder. Fuck me harder!" she begged, and I lost my goddamn mind.

Without conscious thought, I drove in and out of her hot, tight cunt. "Like that, baby?" I asked her as I did exactly as she asked. When she didn't answer me but instead just whimpered, I smacked her ass. Hard.

Satisfaction bloomed in my chest as a dark-pink handprint formed on her creamy skin.

"Fuck yes!" she cried out, so I did it again. "Yes, Daddy. Spank me because I've been so very bad."

This fucking girl, I thought to myself. Placing my splayed hand in the middle of her back to keep her pinned to the couch, I spanked her like she needed.

Then, I pulled out, and she cried out in distress. Grabbing her, I spun her like a doll, loving the way her pretty blue eyes stared up at me like I was her god. I grabbed her by the front of the throat and squeezed slightly. "How bad have you been?"

“So bad,” she gasped, and I felt her throat bob against my palm as she swallowed.

Power and desire bloomed inside me. I lifted her, and she understood the assignment. Those slender legs went around me, and she held herself up as I worked my way back inside her. Once I was fully seated, I walked us over to the wall until her back was pressed against it.

“What if Daddy likes it when his good girl is bad?” I whispered as I slowly dragged the tip of my nose along her jaw until I reached her ear. I sucked her lobe, earring and all, into my mouth as I held her by the throat.

She whimpered, and I grinned into her neck.

“Does Daddy’s baby girl like it fast or slow?” I murmured.

“Fast,” she whispered, and my smile went downright evil as I slowly moved in and out of her dripping wet sheath.

“Well, because you were a bad girl, you get it slow,” I explained, though each time I was almost in, I pounded the last inch in as hard as I could. The swells of her breasts jiggled enticingly above the deep V of her gown.

Her nails dug into my arms, and I wanted to rip her dress off and cast it to the side like trash. Instead, I grabbed her with it trailing over my hands and walked down the hall to my bedroom. With each step, I took my time lifting her on and off of my cock.

When we reached the bed, I lifted her off, and her dissatisfied whine matched the one in my head. She didn’t have time to say or do anything else because I turned her to face the bed, gently brushed her hair out of the way, and unzipped the gown like I should’ve before. With a feather-light touch, I pushed it off her shoulders and let it slide to the floor in a pool of shimmering green.

She stood with her arms at her side, unashamed that she was standing completely naked in a stranger's bedroom. She turned her head slightly as if she were thinking of turning around but instead remained steadfast. The backs of my fingers trailed down her spine to the curve of her hip, and she gave an involuntary shiver.

"What made you follow me?" I asked her, wondering if my brother had set this up.

"I-I don't know," she murmured, her thick lashes fanning the tops of her flushed cheeks.

It was as if she were a pint-sized magnet because my lips were drawn to her in a way I couldn't stop. It took me leaning down to reach the slope of her shoulder, where I dropped kisses in a path up to the crook of her neck.

With a satisfied sigh, she tilted her head to accommodate me.

Before I was aware, I was cupping her pert tits and pinching her nipples.

When she moved slightly to allow her ass to rub my cock, I groaned. "I need you," she insisted.

"On the bed. Ass in the air," I instructed, and she immediately complied. It didn't take me long to follow. Using my knees, I spread hers and took a sharp breath as I saw that the insides of both thighs were wet. "Daddy is gonna fuck you so good now," I told her as I notched the tip of my cock and slid it inside her tight sheath with a groan that she duplicated.

"Yes," she whispered excitedly. "Fuck me, Daddy. Fuck me hard."

Never before had I truly worried about the women I fucked. I was an asshole. A selfish prick who used women and took my pleasure. They only got theirs because it

gave me a twisted sense of power to make them lose control. Yet with this delicate-looking woman, I paused. “I don’t want to hurt you,” I admitted, shocking myself with that confession.

“You won’t. And if you do, it will be worth it. Now fuck me.”

“Demanding little pixie,” I muttered with a grin. This was going to be so good. I pulled my hips back, then drove them forward, reveling in the gasp that escaped her lips as much as in how good she felt wrapped around my shaft.

I watched as she dropped her head and clutched the bedding.

“Fuck yes,” she breathlessly chanted as I began to give her exactly what she asked for.

As sweat started to run down my temples and back, I shoved her chest to the bed, then relentlessly slammed into her welcoming body. It was unlike anything I’d experienced before, and I wasn’t sure what to make of that.

My lips tingled, and the vibration I experienced earlier grew in strength until it was a hum in my veins. I wanted to talk dirty to her, but I couldn’t form words. The air around us practically crackled with the energy that we created. Panting and grunts echoed in my ears, though I wasn’t sure if they came from her or me. The wet slapping of flesh mixed with soft grunts had me moving faster—harder.

“Yes, Daddy, yes, Daddy, yes, Daddy,” she crooned, and I experienced the familiar tingle in my spine that went to my balls as my cock thickened.

“Fuck yeah, you’re gonna make Daddy come. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck,” I muttered as I trembled at the building explosion.

“Oh God,” she moaned as her pussy went unbelievably tight, then pulsed around me as she buried her face in the pillow and screamed to all that was holy.

It wasn't long before I was groaning and emptied myself into her.

The aftermath of that fuck session found us sweaty, breathless, and with most of the pillows strewn about the floor. “Jesus,” I muttered. Reluctantly, I withdrew and fell to the bed next to her.

Belatedly, I thought about what I'd done. I palmed my face. She was Peter Romanov's sister—a powerful but private man who, at times, I believed might rival my brother when it came to questionable—okay, downright dirty—business. He was my brother's acquaintance and a notoriously dark figure in our world. Yeah, her brother owned a very profitable auction and acquisitions business. And I'd fucked his sister like she was some chick I picked up in a random bar.

Bare.

No fucking condom.

Christ, I had her call me “Daddy.” That hadn't ever been a kink of mine before, but it sure as hell was now. In my defense, she started it.

As I pressed on my eyes and tried to figure out how the fuck I was going to handle this, I heard her roll over. The bed shifted slightly as she got up.

“I'll be right back,” she announced in a soft and husky voice.

She came back a few minutes later, and like the reckless fool I'd become, I did it all over again.

Twice.

We fell into an exhausted slumber sometime in the middle of the night. When I woke up the next morning, she was gone.

### Chapter 4

#### Tinsley

#### “Going To Hell” — The Pretty Reckless

“Where did you run off to the other night?” Peter asked me a week later over breakfast.

I’d been avoiding him ever since. I needed time to perfect my innocent face because he could read me like a book. He always had.

“My stomach wasn’t feeling well,” I lied. “You know how sometimes traveling does that to me.”

That was the excuse I gave my brother. Better for him to think that it upset my stomach than for him to know it just made me horny as hell.

Also, I intentionally left out the “time” part of my “travels.” Peter’s bodyguard, or bulldog as I liked to refer to Liam, was sitting in a chair on his phone. He may have appeared busy, but I knew the man heard everything. No one but Peter and my mother ever knew that I time-traveled. My father had been in the dark until the day he died.

Peter grunted in reply, but the stare he gave me told me he didn’t one hundred percent believe me. I continued eating my food like I didn’t have a care in the world. Though that was a lie of epic proportions.

I hadn't been able to get Gabriel De Luca's brother out of my head since that night. Something happened when we fucked because when that orgasm hit me, it was like none I'd had before. As I screamed my utter ecstasy into the pillow, I could've sworn a lightning bolt went through my back to my chest. It had been more powerful than the energy that whipped around me as I jumped from my time to another and back.

It had left me shaken so much that after he finally fell asleep, I snuck out of his bed and ran out of that condo like my ass was on fire. Sure, I used the excuse to myself that I just wanted to get my rocks off after time traveling. I went so far as to tell myself it was nothing special, it was just fucking, yet I couldn't convince myself that was true.

Which was why, a week later, I hadn't mentioned him to my brother or tried to get his number. How would I explain to Leo that I needed to "travel" for my work and he couldn't ever go with me? That was how my last relationship went to shit. He couldn't accept that he wouldn't be able to go with me and started accusing me of cheating on him when, in actuality, it turned out he was the one cheating on me.

"Gabriel and I were talking at his place that night." I glanced up at my brother as he sipped his coffee and gazed at me—the picture of innocence. False innocence, maybe. My guard instantly came up.

"Mmm?" I hummed in a noncommittal reply before I took a bite of my omelet.

"We were thinking that maybe you and his brother Leo might get along," he continued, and I choked on my food.

"What?" I croaked as I reached for my drink. My eyes were watering, and Liam had gotten to his feet, I'm assuming prepared to jump in to assist if I was choking. After waving him off, I coughed a few more times, then took a drink to clear my throat.

Liam's phone rang, and he gestured to my brother, who nodded; then Liam left the room, speaking in low tones.

"I just thought that, well, you're single... and his brother Leo is single. You're around the same age and all," he added as I tapped the corners of my mouth with my napkin. "And he's not bad-looking."

"Don't," I calmly warned before I got to my feet and smoothed my skirt down. "I don't need your matchmaking. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go back thirteen years to get some stupid uncirculated coin for a client who has more money than brains."

Ignoring my brother as he called out my name, I left the room and the building. I made my way down to Millennium Park, muttering to myself the entire time. No way was I going to date Leo De Luca. In fact, I had no intention of ever seeing him again. I didn't like the way my body and mind still craved him a week later.

I'd vowed to never get involved with a man again. They were nothing but trouble. One and done—that was my motto. No ties, no repeats, no relationships. Period.

Stepping into my favorite little copse of trees, I removed my shoes and held them in one arm, withdrew my velvet drawstring bag from my purse, grabbed a pinch of fairy dust, and tossed it in the air. Without pause, I stepped into it and disappeared into the wild vortex of the portal.

\* \* \*

"Fuck," I muttered. My brother had me so flustered when I left earlier that I had allowed myself to be preoccupied. It caused me to be careless. Now I was out a hundred bucks for that poor kid's phone—all for a coin that at best was worth six to seven hundred dollars.

When I'd handed that kid the money and he'd looked at me with those chocolate brown eyes, I had paused. A sense of déjà vu had sparked through me, and I'd wracked my brain trying to remember if I'd seen him in my travels.

Taking a deep breath, I tried to smooth my hair. My bun was completely demolished, so I took the band out and shook it out. There was an aching throb between my legs that begged to be relieved with Leo in between them. "Get yourself together, girl," I whispered to myself.

Deep down, I knew it wasn't my brother that had me flustered. It was this preoccupation with Leo De Luca that was bordering on obsession. Maybe, possibly, I might have accidentally done an internet search on him. He was four years younger than me, but he certainly hadn't looked like it. Nor had he acted like it.

Leo might be the youngest of the De Lucas, but there was a hardness in his gaze that came with deep pain and loss. He carried the kind of pain that aged a person exponentially. I'd read about his twin being murdered and how it was speculated that his death had been a warning to their father, the head of the Sicilian mafia here in Chicago at the time. Now his oldest brother was the don.

They were all left extremely wealthy after their grandmother died and left billions of dollars to her beloved grandsons. None of them likely needed to actually work. Though neither did Peter and I now. Funny enough, other than that kind of thing, there wasn't a lot that came up in a search for any of the De Lucas—just gossip-type shit.

As a notorious playboy, Leo had a lot of that.

People labeled him as a careless playboy more interested in partying and women than in doing anything productive with his life. The media had splashed his exploits all over the place without sharing anything of substance about him. None of them

addressed that look in his eyes. None of them speculated how hard it must've been to lose his identical twin. None of them mentioned that it wasn't until his brother died that his behaviors became wild.

I couldn't imagine losing Peter—especially not like that.

I'd probably go off the rails too.

My heart broke for Leo at the same time that it fluttered at the thought of him. I'd had to stop myself from taking a little trip back in time to see the Leo that I'd found a single picture of—the studiously quiet intellectual. Someone had captured a candid photo of him when he was in college. He'd been in the library, with his study materials spread out around him. Wearing black-framed glasses, his expression had been focused and serious.

Maybe it wouldn't hurt to see if he was up for a second go. A friends-with-benefits type relationship. Scratch an itch for both of us. He could be my outlet after I traveled. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted him. The fact that I'd just returned set aside, I wanted him. My entire body began to tingle with awareness as my nipples peaked as if it were the middle of winter.

Debating hard on the subject, I decided I would go to the high-rise that the De Lucas owned. I'd use my wiles to try to get up to his condo. If he was there, then I would fuck the hell out of him and be gone. If he wasn't, I'd go home to my vibrator and a bottle of wine.

Mind made up, I slipped my shoes back on, straightened my jacket, and picked my way through the bushes and trees. Two steps from the clearing, a hand covered my mouth before I was immediately tugged back into the foliage. My arms were trapped under the steel band of my captor's hold, leaving me helpless to fight him off. I tried to scream behind the hand, but it was so large it covered my nose too.

“Shhh... not a word,” the man’s voice whispered into my ear.

Unable to breathe, I was panicking. Tiny black dots spotted my vision before they spread and everything went dark.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:49 am*

### Chapter 5

Leo

“The Ending” — Papa Roach

As I smugly sipped my shaken espresso, I watched the people pass by the coffee shop window. I'd become a pro at giving my babysitters the slip. Gabriel would be pissed—again—but I didn't care.

My cup barely touched my lips when a woman in a hot pink suit passed by. I blinked slowly for a second, then shot to my feet and raced out the door. The bright color was hard to miss as she moved through the early morning crowd.

She crossed the street, and I followed. It didn't matter how many times I told myself it was impossible, there was no shaking the feeling that it was her. It had to have been a good twelve or thirteen years since I'd seen her, yet her outfit, the messy blonde bun, and the curve of her slender neck were things I'd obsessed over—you didn't forget something like that.

But... how?

When she entered the prestigious Neverland Auction House, I waited outside the doors. I'd made a few purchases there over the past year or two, which is how I knew that you had to have an appointment to make it past the impressive marble reception counter in the lobby. Armed guards stood strategically around the first floor in case someone thought they were going to sneak in. If my brain had been working better, I

might've tried to get up to see Peter.

The problem was, they owned the entire building, just like we owned ours. Like us, they leased out several floors to prestigious corporate businesses and legal firms. I had no idea where she was heading, and I didn't want to miss her somehow.

I didn't care if I had to stand there all fucking day. I was going to be waiting when she came out. If I could see her face again, I'd be able to confirm my suspicions. It was crazy and so impossible that my heart hammered against my ribs.

About an hour later, she exited the building, and my knees almost buckled trying to make sense of what I was seeing. There was no question, it was her. She had the same small black bag, the exact same suit, and those black heels that clicked on the pavement in an eerily familiar way.

Her bright blue eyes were exactly as I'd remembered, and I couldn't believe that I hadn't recognized them when they'd been looking up at me a week ago. It had taken seeing her in that suit. My brain actually hurt trying to reconcile what I was seeing with what I remembered from when I was maybe thirteen.

It completely defied logic.

Blinking hard, I continued following her down to Millennium Park. We skirted around the tourists in front of the big silver sculpture people had dubbed the "Chicago Bean." I trailed her as she made her way around the pavilion until we passed the BP Pedestrian Bridge.

That's where she stopped.

When she glanced around as if she were trying to see if anyone was paying attention to her, I ducked behind a group of people speaking French and arguing about where

to have lunch that day. Yes, I understood them—I spoke five languages fluently.

For a second, I lost her, then I caught a flash of hot pink between the leaves of the copse of trees and tall bushes. What the fuck was she doing in there?

I quickly followed and caught up to her in the shadows just as she literally disappeared in what seemed like a cloud of glitter .

My jaw dropped, and I stood there dumbstruck. Using the heels of my hands, I rubbed at my eyes. My head spun as I tried to remember if I'd taken anything, because nothing else explained everything I'd seen that morning.

“I’m either high as fuck or I’m still in bed and this is a dream. Gotta be,” I reasoned as I leaned on a tree trunk, ignoring how the rough bark caught on the back of my shirt. There was no telling how long I stayed there, stupefied.

Yet the longer I was there, the more I pieced together. It probably seemed like something from a movie or a book, but it was the only thing that made sense in any possible way. Somehow, she had traveled back in time.

Jesus, if I tried to tell someone that, they’d likely lock me up in an asylum or, at the very least, rehab. Hell, it sounded crazy to me. Yet, it was the only explanation for what I’d witnessed and experienced years ago.

The more the reality of that settled in, the crazier my thoughts became. A plan began to form. It was unhinged and probably diabolical enough that I would likely go to hell. Fuck it. With everything I’d done, I was probably heading there anyway.

The ground beneath my feet trembled slightly, and the air around me crackled. Unsure if I was truly losing it this time, my gaze darted around. From where she’d disappeared, the air seemed to ripple and distort. A little cloud of sparkling smoke

swirled and expanded.

When the tiny, barefoot woman in pink stepped out of the glittering haze, I made a decision that was likely insane. I crouched behind a bush. Through a gap in the leaves, I watched as she let her hair down, then I could see her appearing to talk to herself as she put her shoes on. With a calculating stare, I waited quietly until she started to walk out of the trees. Then I did what was probably my dumbest move ever.

I kidnapped Peter Romanov's sister.

\* \* \*

Needing backup, I called one of my babysitters. That was probably shitty to call Domenico that. He'd been assigned to me when I left for college. He was barely older than me, and he fit in on campus as just another student. We'd become friends, which also worked into the facade of him being on campus all the time. He'd been put on other assignments after I graduated, but we'd stayed in touch.

"Leo, you've done some dumb shit, but this takes the cake," Domenico grumbled from the front seat.

He'd arrived quickly and brought exactly what I'd asked without question. That was before he knew who I needed to drug.

"I don't want to hear it," I snapped. My gaze dropped to the blonde head that rested in my lap. I gently felt for a pulse for the fiftieth time since Dom had arrived and we injected her. She was so tiny, and I questioned how much he'd given her, but he'd given me an insulted scoff.

"If Gabriel finds out I helped you with this, I'm a dead man walking. You realize that, right?" He was pissed, and rightfully so. I'd used my friendship with him to pull

him into my mess and, by doing so, put him in a precarious position.

The crazy thing was, I was dead-ass sober.

“I’ll take full responsibility. You didn’t know. You came to help me when I needed you, and I didn’t tell you why. You’ll be fine,” I assured him, unable to take my eyes off the beautiful pixie that was curled up on the back seat of the SUV with me.

We turned into the underground parking garage, and then Dom pulled up far enough for me to use my fingerprint to get us through the security gate that separated the family’s private parking section. The heavy iron gate rolled open, and we drove through, waiting on the other side to ensure the gate closed behind us without anyone slipping through.

He drove around the corner and parked in one of my empty spots.

“Now how do you plan to get her up to your condo without getting busted?” he asked as he tipped his head toward one of the many cameras mounted in our garage.

“I have an idea,” I told him with a wicked grin. “I just need your jacket.”

“Fucking hell,” he muttered as he got out and came around to my door. He had his jacket off by the time he opened my door. He helped me get the jacket on her, and I bit back the irritation of seeing her small frame encased in another man’s clothing. It completely covered her vibrant pink clothes, and that’s what I needed. We got her out and on her feet, though she was still pretty much out of it.

He kept her upright, and I lifted her into my arms. I adjusted my hold until her face was tucked into my shoulder and her thick blonde hair covered the rest. We made our way to the private elevators and up to my condo. I handed my keys to Dom so he could unlock the door to my “playroom.”

“I’ve got it from here,” I told him, not letting him open the door further. “I’ll meet you in the living room in a few minutes.”

“Fine,” he huffed and spun on his heel.

I shouldered open the door and then closed it. Once inside, the lights came on over the corner. I had them on a motion sensor that only lit up that area, leaving the rest of the room in the dark. The recessed lights glinted off the gold-colored bars.

Dipping my head, I stepped up and through the open door, then carefully laid her on the black satin linens of the bed. Before I left, I removed Dom’s jacket and ignored the way that satisfied me. I’d been tense and irritable since we’d put it on her.

As I stared at her for a moment, I couldn’t shake the voice that chanted in my head in time with my heartbeat.

Mine .

Mine .

Mine .

Mine .

“I’ll be back for you, my little sprite,” I whispered, then closed the barred door with a soft click.

I’d officially lost my mind, but I was calmer than I’d been in years.

Leaving her to sleep off the sedatives, I went out to my living room, where Domenico sat deep in thought with his elbows on his knees, one hand rubbing his jaw. He

looked up at my approach.

“Leo... you and I have been friends for a long time, and you know my loyalty to you knows no bounds.”

“I’m aware,” I replied when he paused. By the look on his face, I knew what was coming.

“But I answer to Gabriel. I won’t say a word about this unless I get questioned. If that happens, you know I cannot lie.”

“Again, I’m aware.”

He took a deep breath and let it out in a rush. “Okay then. I just wanted to make sure we were on the same page. Between me and you? I hope you know what you’re doing.”

I didn’t.

But I was desperate enough to try anything.

“I can hold my own,” I assured him.

“I hope so.” He got to his feet and walked out of my condo.

I went to my office and sat at my desk. Then I logged into my computer and pulled up the camera feed. In the night vision of the expensive system, I could see her small form curled up on the bed.

Now all I had to do was wait.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 7:50 am*

### Chapter 6

Tinsley

“ Play With Fire”—Sam Tinnesz (feat. Yacht Money)

My head was pounding, and my mouth felt like I'd been eating cotton balls. As I rolled to my side, my cheek slid on the satin pillowcase.

Wait.

Satin?

My eyes popped open, and I lifted my head to see where the hell I was. The last thing I remembered was stepping into the portal to come home with that coin. Except it was dark as pitch in the room.

Dammit. Had I arrived back here horny as fuck and gone to bed with some stranger?

Feeling down my chest and body, I found I was still dressed in my vintage hot pink Christian Dior suit. My shoes were missing, but I was dressed. Though the insides of my thighs were soaked, I breathed a sigh of relief. The needy ache that was there told me I hadn't slept with anyone. Not yet, anyway.

But where am I?

When I sat up, bright lights snapped on, and I squeezed my eyes shut at the almost

painful invasion of my poor eyes. After they adjusted to the lights seeping through my lids, I cautiously opened them.

My jaw dropped.

Because surely I was seeing things.

Rubbing them and blinking rapidly didn't change my view.

I was behind bars.

In a giant... gold... cage .

Like an actual giant, golden fucking birdcage! I got to my feet and straightened my clothes as I slowly padded to the bars. In disbelief, I reached out and touched the cold metal. If I thought they would dissolve as figments of my imagination, I was dead wrong.

As panic seeped in, I rushed around to the door. It didn't budge when I pushed on it, nor when I shook it. My heart hammered, and as my lips and face started to tingle, I knew I was starting to hyperventilate. "Calm down," I told myself as I took a slow, deep breath, held it as long as I could, and slowly let it out. I did those box-breaths several more times before I trusted myself not to pass out.

There was enough room that I could slide my arm out, but there wasn't a handle. Of course, there wasn't. I could feel the old-fashioned opening for a key, but no lever or knob. Pushing the panic down, I dug deep and grabbed onto my fury that someone dared to lock me up in a fucking cage like an animal.

My gaze swept the interior of the cage, looking for something that I could use to escape. I tried under the bed, but it was on a platform that was bolted to the floor.

“Ugh!” I groaned in frustration. In my temper, I jerked the sheets from the bed and threw them.

Of course, my phone was nowhere to be found. Nor was my purse. That was the part that had me almost slipping into panic again. My fairy dust was in there.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Supposedly, no one else could use it—but still. I couldn’t just lose it. I’d discovered that it wasn’t so much the fairy dust; it was the black velvet bag. Call it magic, call it whatever, that bag simply replenished itself.

I had no idea how long I’d been there. I couldn’t see more than a few feet outside the cage.

“Argh! Let me out of here, you fucker!” I shouted as I gripped the bars and tried to shake them. There was no response, not that I expected one, nor did the bars budge.

My bottom lip trembled, but I refused to cry. Holding the bars, I slid down, sitting with my legs folded to the side. My shoulders dropped, and I stared blankly out into the darkness.

I thought I heard a faint sound, and my eyes strained to see where it was coming from. With the lights overhead and pitch black around me, it was hard to tell. There was also the very real possibility that I’d imagined it.

“I want to start by saying I’m sorry,” a familiar voice said, startling me.

“Then let me go!” I shouted.

“I can’t,” it sounded almost... forlorn. I was trying to place the voice, but it was

eluding me.

“What do you want? Money? My brother will pay. Hell, let me go and I’ll pay my damn self.”

“If only it was that easy,” he murmured. Warning bells were going off in my head, and my body seemed to tingle because I knew I should recognize the voice.

Something strange was happening as well. It was as if there was a strong pull toward that voice. Like a string was attached to the inside of my chest, tugging me toward the man who spoke. Before I realized it, I was on my feet. Like I was a piece of metal and he was a powerful magnet, I was drawn to the other side of the cage.

“Why isn’t it?” I softly asked. Because though instinct would have me screaming and yelling to be set free, this ball of heat in my chest grew. Something deep within my soul wanted to take away that sad tone from his voice. My heart thudded, and my pussy throbbed. My body seemed to be highly in tune with whoever he was.

“I need you to do something for me.”

“Anything,” I blurted out before I could think twice. Shit, that was dumb.

“Take me back in time.”

My jaw dropped, and I took a literal step back. “What?”

“Today... you went back in time approximately thirteen years, didn’t you?”

A chill skated over my skin, radiating to my extremities. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Oh, I think you do. I think you saw a middle school boy today—bumped into him even. His phone went down the sewer grate. You gave him a hundred dollars,” he dropped each word like they were an atomic bomb.

My stomach lurched, and I swallowed the lump that had suddenly formed in my throat. How could he possibly know that?

“I was that boy,” he answered in a tone that screamed “checkmate.”

“What?” I gasped.

“I remembered you for years. I’d go so far as to say I developed an instant crush on you that day. I looked for you every single time a blonde woman crossed my path. It didn’t matter to me at the time that you were a grown woman and I was an adolescent schoolboy. It’s utter insanity, but I think I knew then that you were always supposed to be mine.” There was a muted rustle before the lights slowly brightened the room.

A quick glance around scared me more than anything. The room appeared to be some kind of sex room. I wasn’t an idiot, and I recognized some of the things. It wasn’t like in that book that became a movie. It didn’t seem to be a torture chamber or anything; it was, however, very sensual with lots of sexually entertaining items.

The lump in my throat grew, and I fought down the panic at the thought that I’d possibly been sex trafficked.

That’s when I noticed him.

I sucked in a startled breath at the broad-shouldered man dressed in a black, long-sleeved compression shirt and black cargo pants. He wore a ski mask with a skull printed on it. His eyes were the only thing visible, and I couldn’t look away. I wanted nothing more than to melt into their warm brown depths.

He reached through the bar and brushed the backs of his tanned fingers over my cheek.

Like a cat, I practically purred as I leaned into his touch. A small voice in my head screamed at me to stop—told me this was craziness. I wasn't in some dark romance book. Nor had I been his captive long enough to be suffering from Stockholm Syndrome. Yet, I was helpless to stop him.

Instead, I wrapped my fingers around his wrist, holding him close to me.

“You feel it too, don't you?” he whispered.

There was no explanation for the way I ached to be close to him.

He kidnapped me.

Put me in a cage.

Demanded I take him back in time. That shook me out of my stupor.

“I can't take you back in time.”

“I'm sure you'll find a way,” he firmly insisted.

“You don't understand... I've never done that. I have no idea what could happen. What if we get separated in the in-between and you end up somewhere else? No. I'm not doing it,” I stubbornly refused as I crossed my arms and scowled at him.

A chunk of hair fell over my eyes, and I blew it out of the way.

“You're cute when you're acting all huffy,” he observed, amusement coloring his

tone.

For some reason, that only aggravated me further. “You know what? I should take you back. Maybe you’ll get jerked away from me and disappear somewhere in time,” I snapped.

It didn’t matter that I couldn’t see the rest of his face. His eyes spoke volumes, and I could tell his humor vanished like a puff of smoke before he softly said, “Maybe that would be for the best then.”

I refused to feel sorry for him, no matter how much my heart seemed to shatter with his solemn reply.

“I’m not taking you back anywhere or to any time,” I childishly vowed. Then I spun on my bare feet and stomped back to the bed. My lip curled at the thought of what might’ve taken place on that mattress. I’d already been sleeping on it, though, so I grabbed the sheet and tossed it back on the bed. The slippery black satin slid off at first, and I growled in frustration. I snatched it up, threw it back on there, and spread it out. Then I took one of the pillows and slammed it down. It was highly unsatisfying. Hitting him upside the head with it would’ve made me happier.

For some inexplicable reason, I wasn’t afraid of him.

After curling up on the bed, I grumbled, “I’m hungry!”

He didn’t reply, but a little bit later, I smelled something that had my stomach growling. On principle, I didn’t want to turn to see what it was. Except the rumbling coming from me was a powerful motivator. Reluctantly, I looked over my shoulder to see that a tray sat over by the door. Evidently, there was a big enough gap under the door for him to slide it in. A bottle of water was on its side and there were two covered plates.

How I hadn't heard him sneak it in, I wasn't sure. There was also something black folded up next to the tray.

"Hello?" I called out, but there was no reply. The room around the cage was dark again, with the only lights in the room lit being the ones directly above my little prison.

Hunger got the better of me, and I went over to get the tray. Whatever it was, it smelled delicious. The folded pile turned out to be a pair of long-sleeve pajamas. I picked it all up and carried it back to the bed. When I lifted the chrome cover, I sighed at the delicious aroma coming from the plate of steaming pasta with a side of seasoned asparagus. A quick peek under the other lid revealed a slice of coconut cake that looked to die for.

"This better not be poisoned!" I shouted. Against my better judgment, I dug in. The first bite was an explosion of flavor, and I wondered where he'd gotten the food from. I actually caught myself moaning as I took the next bite. As I continued to eat the delectable meal, I inwardly plotted all the diabolical ways I could deal with my captor.

I imagined leaving him in the twelve hundreds. Then I imagined dropping him off on a pirate ship. Each scenario had me gloating with glee. When I imagined him separating into a cloud of molecules during the jump, I paused with the last bite of asparagus halfway to my mouth. That thought made my heart ache and my stomach turn. I set the fork back on the plate.

How was it possible that I had the slightest bit of empathy for my jailer's well-being? There shouldn't be a scrap of compassion in me for him. Yet, he hadn't actually hurt me. Nor had he sexually taken advantage of my unconscious state.

I came to the conclusion that if the only way to be set free was to attempt to take him

back in time, then I would do it. Hell, it may not work, and I'd have to act fast to escape. If it did work, I could simply leave him there. He wouldn't get hurt, but he would need to be quick on his feet to figure out how to fit in and survive without a birth certificate or identification. A wicked grin lifted the corners of my mouth.

Appetite renewed, I lifted the cover off the cake with a flourish and proceeded to consume every crumb.

Then I hid under the flat sheet to change into the luxuriously soft sleeping clothes. I didn't even give two shits that he hadn't included a change of underwear. I simply went commando like I did every night.

With a full belly, I searched the area for a way to go to the bathroom. Of course, there wasn't a secret trapdoor or anything that opened to reveal such a luxury.

"Dammit, you prick! I have to pee!"

Laughter echoed from overhead, and I looked up, startled.

"The door to your cage is open, my pretty little pixie. The bathroom is in the far right corner. You can't miss it. There's also a blanket folded on the couch. You can sleep there or on the bed—your choice."

I jumped up and pushed on the door of my gilded cage, and it effortlessly swung wide.

"You fucker!" I shouted as the lights came on and I rushed toward where he said the bathroom was.

Once I was done, I immediately went to the room's door. Of course, it was locked from the outside. Still, I banged on it before I flipped the room off, knowing he had

cameras somewhere. There was a little scanner that I tried to use, knowing it wouldn't work. I growled in frustration. Then I stormed to the couch, flopped down, and angrily covered myself. With one last scowl around the room, I covered my head with the blanket.

Surprisingly, I fell asleep easily... and dreamed I was a tiny fairy, trapped in a little cage on a pirate's ship.

### Chapter 7

Leo

#### “ Burning Out”—Bad Omens

I was transfixed by the vision on the screen. It pleased me that she enjoyed my cooking. Not many people outside my family knew I loved to cook. It was one of the few things that brought me true peace.

As I sat in my dark office, with nothing but the monitors illuminating the area, I watched her. She huffed and puffed as she stormed around before finally flopping on the couch and covering her head.

She had several choice words for me, which I deserved. I loved that in a situation that would have most women pissing themselves, she was still a fireball. What I hated was that she was going to despise me after this. It was only a matter of time before she figured out who I was. Once that happened, there would be no coming back from this.

The thought of never seeing her again sent a painful stab through my chest. One so excruciating, I gritted my teeth and grabbed the edge of the desk. Eventually, I breathed through it, and it subsided. I told myself that if I was successful, it would be worth it.

My phone rang.

I saw my oldest brother's name on the screen and rolled my eyes. Yeah, I loved him, but he was a real pain in the ass sometimes.

"Yes?" I answered.

"Leo, have you seen Tinsley Romanov?" he asked, cutting straight to why he'd called.

My gaze narrowed as I leaned back in my chair, ignoring the monitors. "Why the hell are you asking me?"

"Because Peter called me asking for my help looking for her. She was supposed to deliver an item to his office, and she never showed up. He said she's not answering her phone, and her location is off," he explained.

"Again, this has what to do with me?" I did my best to sound bored.

"I know you fucked her, Leo. Pietro saw her follow you out of my penthouse and caught quite an eyeful before the elevator doors closed," he began, but I cut in.

"That doesn't mean I fucked her," I countered.

"Look, I don't care if you did or didn't. Quite frankly, I wanted you to because I've been wanting to buy into Peter and Tinsley's company. I was hoping that if we could get a match between you and Tinsley, that would be our way in. Except now she's missing, and I wanted to know if you've seen her or talked to her," he explained.

Irritation simmered that he thought he could pull my strings like I was one of his fucking puppets. "So my brothers all got to choose their wives, but I get the arranged marriage for profit?"

"Oh, come on, Leo. She's not bad to look at, and you're obviously attracted to her, so

don't make it sound like you'd be throwing yourself on a sword," he snapped. "Besides, that's a moot point if she's missing or, worse, dead. Peter has made some enemies over the years. He's worried that one of them got to her."

"I can't help you. We didn't exactly exchange numbers." It wasn't a lie. We hadn't.

"Fuck," he muttered. "Well, if you see her, I need to know. Hopefully, she just got held up, and he's being paranoid. My men are all on the lookout for her, but I have Pietro working his magic."

Shit. Pietro wasn't just a simple thug. He was a genius, and I knew he used some high-tech facial recognition software to find people who were trying to hide. If my decision hadn't been maniacally impulsive, maybe I'd have thought of that.

"I will," I lied and ended the call.

This complicated things. I'd need to push my timeline up. There would be no wearing her down. I needed to get her to take me back as soon as possible.

Because once Gabriel or Peter found out I'd abducted her, I was as good as disowned or dead. Gabriel would be furious—possibly bad enough that it wouldn't matter that I was his brother. After all, I'd been nothing but trouble since Francesco's death, and I knew it.

I needed this to work. If it did, none of this would matter and everything would be fixed. I picked up the small velvet bag. It had a considerable weight to it for something so small. The glittery substance inside seemed to be nothing more than a fine gold dust. Except I now knew it was so much more than that.

\* \* \*

I'd been up all night, dozing fitfully off and on.

After donning the black camo pants and long-sleeve shirt, I laced up my boots and grabbed the mask. My next stop was my office, where I pocketed the velvet pouch. I ignored how it made my fingertips tingle. Then I hit the box of clothing I'd had delivered. Once I was outside the playroom, I pulled the mask over my head.

I entered and strode to the couch, where long blonde hair was cascading over the edge and practically touching the floor. Though I wanted nothing more than to grab that hair and kiss her, I pushed that need to the wayside. My possessiveness over her was getting out of control for a woman I'd slept with only once. Perhaps it was the fact that she'd been the secret obsession I'd had for years that drove my feelings. Who knew?

"Tinsley, wake up," I said, hardening my heart the best I could. I intentionally disguised my voice—at least until we got to where we were going.

"Go away," she grumbled sleepily before she covered her head again.

"It's time to go," I told her.

At that, she shot straight up. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were wide and hopeful.

"You need to get dressed," I told her, setting the clothing and shoes in her lap. "We need to leave."

"You're taking me home?" she eagerly asked.

"After you help me go back a few years, then when we get back, yes, I'll take you home," I promised. Though if we were successful, this moment might never happen, and I might never meet her. I had no idea how that worked. Would my going back in time alter everything today? It would have to.

For a moment, she glared at me. Then she got up and regally walked to the bathroom with the armful of clothes. Once she was inside, she slammed the door.

I couldn't help but chuckle.

It wasn't long before she stalked out wearing the outfit I'd selected for her. She marched to the door and grabbed the knob, but it didn't budge. "You still have it locked?" she snidely asked.

"Can't be too cautious. I wasn't sure if you'd agree," I shrugged carelessly.

Placing my thumb on the biometric lock, I listened as the lock slid open. When she reached for it, I slammed my hand against it. "Not yet."

She blew out a heavy breath. "Now what?" she barked.

That's when I hurriedly jerked the black hood over her head and pulled the string. When she tried to pull it off, I grabbed her wrist. "Don't take it off, or you won't see your little bag of glitter again."

She cursed at me, and I grinned.

Then I crouched down far enough to chuck her over my shoulder. If she saw my condo, it would be a dead giveaway. I don't know why it mattered to me that I keep my identity a secret as long as I could, but it did.

She was kicking and shouting so I swatted her ass—hard. Her back stiffened, and she actually tried to bite my back through the hood and my clothes. I swatted her again, and she stopped.

I took the small service elevator that went down to the restaurant on the fifth floor. Each of our condos had a secret elevator for escape. Mine conveniently came out in

the pantry of the restaurant kitchen. I found it extremely convenient when I wanted to cook something in the middle of the night.

“Where are we going?” she asked, but I didn’t reply. “Fucking dick,” she muttered, and I grinned at her feistiness.

At this time of the morning, no one should be there yet. I grabbed the keys to one of their catering vans as I passed the office.

Then I took the restaurant’s delivery elevator to the dock at the back of the building. I unlocked the van and opened the back, where I gently set her inside. “Be a good girl,” I crooned and quickly closed the door.

Thankfully, it was still dark, and no one seemed to be up and moving back here. I hurried around and climbed in. Since she had used that little treed area at the park, I figured we’d go back there—in case it was that specific area.

Sticking to the shadows, I took us back to where I’d taken her from.

After telling her the time and place I wanted to go to, I removed her hood and watched as she glanced around in surprise.

“Let’s go,” I instructed and motioned for her to proceed with the little bag held out to her.

She cocked a blonde brow. “You need to take off your shoes.”

“What?”

“Your shoes. They need to come off,” she drawled out as if I was a toddler.

“Why?” I asked, confused.

“Because we have to be grounded, or it won’t work right,” she explained with an eye roll.

Once we both had our shoes and socks off, she tucked her shoes under her arm and held out her hand. “I’ve never done this. So if you die, I can’t be held responsible.”

With that proclamation, she grabbed my hand, tossed a pinch of that glitter into the air, and jerked me forward and into the yawning black hole that was suddenly before us.

I had no words to describe what we’d stepped into. It was dark, and the very air seemed to pull at me like invisible hands trying to shred my skin from my body. The ground had disappeared from beneath my feet, and the mask was ripped from my head.

When I was sure we were going to die—that whatever we’d entered sensed my intrusion and was furious—we were suddenly spit out, where we stumbled and fell to our hands and knees, our shoes tossed around us.

“Leo?” she asked, disbelief heavy in her tone. “What?”

“I’m sorry. If there had been any other way,” I began, meaning each word.

“Why are we here? What do you want from here?”

“I need you to help me save my brother before he dies,” I finally explained.

Horror seemed to make her eyes twice their normal size. Then regret and sorrow replaced it.

“Leo...”

To be continued...