



Hot Blooded (Marchesi Loan Sharks)

Author: *Silvia Violet*

Category: LGBT+

Description: I thought I'd be spending a long, boring summer as the virtual prisoner of my mafioso father.

Instead, a series of bad choices left me staring down Tony Marchesi, the man who'd given me the best night of my life.

He was the only man I'd ever wanted to keep until I'd learned he was one of my father's enemies. Utterly forbidden.

And now here he was, back in my life when I was at my lowest.

He looked ready to kill me—or ravage me.

Which would it be?

Would I survive the night? Would my heart?

Total Pages (Source): 10

1

TONY

I hit the gas, zipping in and out between cars that had slowed to a crawl. Despite the August heat radiating off the pavement, I was glad to be on a motorcycle so I could actually make progress in this damn Boston traffic,. Of course Vinnie had chosen me to send across town. He needed to extract money from some asshole who thought he could just ignore his debts. Putting the guy in his place was my assignment.

I never meant to end up working for the Trevisani family business. It just happened. Or rather I had ended up with no other options.

After I quit school, I lost a series of jobs because I was too much of an idiot to even try and get my life together. I ended up with two options: get kicked out of my apartment and try to make it on the streets or let the cousin I'd stayed friends with since we'd beaten each other up on the elementary school playground find me a job.

Micky Trevisani appeared to be a good guy as long as you didn't check his rap sheet or look too closely at what he did for the family. He was always smiling, and he was a hell of a wingman when we went out drinking, but his older brother Vinnie—the current head of the family—scared the shit out of me. And now he was my boss.

I'd had the good fortune to reach 6'4", and the one thing I'd managed to be consistent about since high school was going to the gym. Micky and I had gone from sparring on the playground to sparring in the ring at our gym. He hated to admit it, but these days, I won every time. I was strong as fuck, and since I'd failed at any other job I'd

tried, I was working as muscle for the family.

I finally arrived at my destination. The house belonged to the deceased parents of Billy Dunn, known by his associates as a petty thief, gambler, and drunk.

There weren't any lights on, but as late as it was, that didn't mean no one was home. I checked my weapon and studied the house to make sure I didn't see anyone watching from the windows—thankfully there weren't any neighbors close enough to keep watch. Satisfied I was alone, I wiped the sweat from my face and made my way to the front door.

I didn't expect Billy to answer my knock, but I gave it a try anyway. With an IQ like his, he might think his childhood home was actually a decent hiding place. When I didn't get a response, I walked across the porch and looked in the windows. Nothing. No sign that anyone was home.

I circled around to the back door. No one was visible in the kitchen, and no one answered my knock. I tried again, increasing my force, and pounding on the door with my fist. The impact rattled the kitchen window but still no one appeared.

I pulled out my lock picking kit and let myself in. No alarm sounded, and my flashlight beam didn't reveal a keypad for a silent system that would summon the police. I didn't see or hear anything to indicate that Billy had a security system. Did the fucker really think he was that safe?

I stepped inside, weapon out, and began to move through the house room by room. Once I cleared the kitchen, I headed into the living room.

“Billy!” I yelled. “Come on out and talk to me. We’ve got business to settle.”

No response.

I started toward the hall when I heard a sound. I turned quickly and saw a man opening the back door. I didn't know who he was, but he sure as hell wasn't Billy. He was at least six inches shorter, a lot thinner, and when he turned to close the door, I could tell he had a fucking perfect ass.

"Freeze," I yelled. The man had the good sense to obey me. There was something about him that tickled my memory. Had I met him before? "Turn around."

He hit the light switch as he obeyed, and I sucked in my breath. I sure as hell did know him. Intimately. Biblically. We'd starting hooking up months ago, meeting every week, sometimes spending the whole weekend together, but never exchanging names or taking things any further—no matter how much I wanted to. It had been the best sex of my life, and I'd grown more and more certain he was meant to be mine.

I hadn't seen him since the start of the summer, but I'd thought about him every day since he'd failed to show up for our weekly meeting. I'd tried to track him down. I might not know his name, but I had a lot of resources to help me find people who wanted to hide. He'd managed to elude me anyway. It was like he'd disappeared. I'd started to wonder if I'd dreamed our encounters.

Apparently, I hadn't. The gorgeous man was very real and standing right in front of me. "I'm looking for Billy. Don't tell me you're with that son of a bitch."

His nose wrinkled. "I made a fucking mistake, okay?"

"So why are you here?"

"He took something from me, and I came to get it while he's gone."

"Where is he?" I was only supposed to scare Billy, rough him up a bit, but when I thought of his hands on this beautiful man I wanted back in my bed, I longed to put a

bullet in Billy's brain. The idea of that scum thinking he was worthy of my man made my blood boil.

"I don't know where he is, and I don't care, I just need to get out of here."

I shook my head. "You're not going anywhere. Your boyfriend's gotten himself in trouble with my family, and you're going to help me find him."

"He's not my boyfriend. I told you that. Don't insult me, and I don't know your family. I don't even know you."

"Yes, you do."

He scowled. "I can't help you."

"Maybe that's true, and maybe it isn't, but I've got unfinished business with you too."

"No, you don't."

"Are you so sure about that?" He reached for the doorknob, and I shook my head. "Why are you running now? You sure as hell didn't want to run away when you were underneath me."

"When I didn't show up, you were supposed to get the hint that I wasn't interested anymore."

"You're lying, but even if that was true, you still know me very well. You know what it feels like for me to pound your ass until you can't stand up. You know what it's like to beg me for more."

“It...It was temporary. I never meant things to last as long as they did.”

“But you haven’t stopped thinking about it since, have you?”

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 5:37 am

2

ELIO

“ I ...” Fuck why couldn’t I just deny it. A normal person could, but I’d never been able to hide my feelings. That’s why I was useless to my criminal family. Why wouldn’t they just let me go?

I’d tried running, but my brothers had dragged me right back. I thought I’d found the perfect way out. Blackmail. Then Billy stole the zip drive full of family secrets from me. He’d just wanted to use me like most men, but I didn’t care. He was hot, and I’d craved a man to hook up with. I thought I was using him, but he’d hurt me, then drugged me and slipped out with all my cash and the drive.

I been certain the drive would help me win my freedom, but even though I’d found it again, I was starting to doubt myself. Billy had taken it from me easily, and now I’d been caught by the one man who made me weakest, the man I’d almost confessed everything to and begged for help. But I’d found out he was a Trevisani, one of my father’s sworn enemies. I’d panicked and run, but I’d thought of him every single day.

Now, I had to find the will to walk away from him again. I had the zip drive, but not my cash, which was going to make running a hell of a lot harder. How much of a risk was I willing to take?

Tony Trevisani might be pointing a gun at me now, but he was the one man who’d focused on me and my pleasure rather than his own when we were together. Would

he help me?

No. Trusting people had never gotten me anywhere. He might have been different in bed, but I couldn't allow myself to believe he'd be any different when it came to helping me.

He spoke, interrupting my panicked thinking. "My name's Tony. Now you know that about me."

"I'd already figured out who you were. I'm Elio."

We stared at each other. I considered making a run for it. Would he really try to stop me?

The sound of a car pulling into the driveway had me frozen.

"Is that your fucking boyfriend?" Tony asked.

"I don't know, and he's not my boyfriend. He's an asshole. A mistake."

A bullet whizzed through the kitchen window. With the light on, we were on full display. I ducked behind the kitchen island, and Tony did the same.

"He'll have seen my bike," Tony said. "Call him off. Tell him it's you."

"He's not going to listen to me. I told you, I snuck in while he was out so I could get the shit he took from me. He'll be just as likely to shoot me as you."

"Then why the fuck did you come here? What was so important?"

"Nothing you need to know about." I wasn't about to tell him my most important

secret.

Tony rose up to try and see Billy, and another shot rang out. He ducked back down, covering me with his body.

I might not trust him, but I wasn't going to reject the protection.

Something wet hit my neck. Fuck. Blood was running from a nasty gash on Tony's arm.

"Oh my God. He shot you."

"The bullet just grazed me. I'm fine."

"No. That's not fine." Before I could try to help him, he peeked over the counter again. This time I tried to look too.

"Jesus! Get down," he yelled.

Billy had moved close enough that I could see him and terror raced through me.

Tony fired but didn't hit him. "That's a warning shot," he yelled. "Next time I'll do damage. Vinnie wants his money."

"Fuck you, Trevisani. I don't owe him shit."

Billy stalked closer and fear shot through me. "Please. I...I don't want him near me." I hated how terrified I sounded, but I knew I couldn't defend myself. I had a gun in the messenger bag I'd slung over my shoulder, but I was shit at using it, and Billy would have me dead or worse long before I could even get to it.

Tony glanced at me. “Do you want me to kill him?”

Did I? Yes, but I’d sworn I wouldn’t be a killer like everyone else in my family.

“I...um....”

“Elio? What did he do to you? Did he hurt you?”

“He was rough, and he wouldn’t stop. Then he drugged me, and I think he?—”

The words were barely out of my mouth before a bullet penetrated Billy’s brain. He was thrown back from the force of the shot. His body twitched once, then it was still.

“He’s dead, right?” I asked.

“Yes. Very dead.”

I knew no one could survive a hit like that, but I needed the reassurance. I looked at Tony. His sleeve was soaked with blood.

“Your arm. We’ve got to fix it, and then...what are we going to do?”

I couldn’t be found with a dead man. My family name was enough to land me in jail. And if I were found with a Trevisani, things would get even more complicated.

The cops would drag Tony away, and I’d be guilty by association. He’d saved me. I wasn’t going to let him go down for that.

“How long do you think we have before the cops get here?”

Tony frowned. “There aren’t any close neighbors. It’s possible no one heard the shots.”

“Okay. Hang on.”

“Where the fuck are you going?”

I ran into the bedroom that had clearly been occupied by the now-very-dead Billy and grabbed one of his T-shirts to use as a bandage. I found a bottle of peroxide from the adjoining bathroom and raced back to Tony.

He frowned at me. “We need to get out of here now. I’ve got to call a cleanup crew.”

“Sit down. This won’t take long.” I pulled out a chair from the tiny kitchen table and pointed to it.

With a groan, Tony lowered himself into it. He had to be in a lot of pain. “You’re going to need stitches, but I’ll clean it so you’re okay for now.”

Before he could respond, I poured peroxide on the ragged skin showing through the rip in his shirt. He gritted his teeth as the wound foamed. I kept pouring until the bottle was empty, then I tied the shirt around him, adding pressure to try and stop the bleeding. By then sweat was running down his pale face. “I’ll get you some water.”

“No, we need to get out of here, and I need to make a call.”

“You need to not pass out. I can’t shoot worth a damn. I’m counting on you to save me.”

He grabbed my arm and pulled me closer, then caressed the side of my face.

A shiver ran through me as I felt the heat of his skin.

“I will save you.”

My lips parted as he held my gaze. Fuck, this was not the time to start fantasizing about kissing him, about climbing onto his lap. We were in serious trouble—more than he even knew.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 5:37 am

3

TONY

I forced myself to break eye contact with Elio. I wanted to kiss him so fucking bad. And after that I wanted to push him up against the wall and claim him over and over. I wanted him to be mine.

I glanced out the window at a very dead Billy Dunn.

Vinnie was going to explode.

I wasn't supposed to kill Billy. You can't get money out of a dead man . I'd had that lesson literally pounded into me, but after what Elio told me, there wasn't any way I was going to let Billy live. I'd have to convince Vinnie I'd done the right thing.

I could buy myself a little time by calling Micky.

Elio stepped back when I awkwardly tried to extract my phone from my left pocket using my right arm. He pushed my hand away, and my dick twitched when he slid his hand into my pocket and pulled out the phone for me. Jesus, what was it about his man?

His eyes widened, and he looked away. At least I wasn't the only one affected.

He's made for you.

I was in trouble from too many angles. The story of my fucking life.

Micky answered on the first ring. “I need a cleanup crew at my location.”

“This wasn’t supposed to be a hit.”

“I know, things went south. I’ll explain later. There was another party here. I’m bringing them with me.”

Micky sighed. “Vinnie’s going to go fucking ballistic.”

“I know.”

“Don’t fuck this up, Tony.”

“I’ll try. Just give me a chance to explain.”

Elio was shaking his head. “I can’t?—”

I held up a hand, and he scowled at me while I finished talking.

When I ended the call, he said, “What do you mean I’m coming with you?”

“You just watched me kill Billy.” Like that was the real reason.

“Jesus, did you kill him just for me?”

I wished I could kill him a second time. “Fuck yes, I did. The bastard hurt you.”

“But I’m nothing to you.”

“You’re wrong about that.”

“Tony, I can’t leave with you.”

“I didn’t say you had a choice.”

Elio blew out a long breath. “You don’t understand.”

“I understand that you’re a witness to my criminal activities. I’ve got to bring you in and put you under my protection, or you could end up the next target.”

“If you take me in, you’re going to be a fucking target.”

“For taking you from this asshole? If he had had better friends, he wouldn’t be lying there dead.”

“No.” Elio laid a hand on my good arm. “From my family.”

“Your family?”

“You don’t know my name.”

I really didn’t like where this was going. “Are you telling me your name isn’t really Elio?”

“It is Elio. Elio Barruchi.”

A knot formed in my stomach. “Fuck.”

“Yeah. You can’t take me with you.”

“Who’s your father?”

“Giacomo.”

The head of the family. Damn, I really knew how to step in it. “You’re still coming with me.” I’d already fucked up. I might as well bring one of our enemies home.

“You’re crazy, Tony. I mean, maybe you’ll get lucky and my father will decide I’m not worth the trouble, but he likes to defend what’s his, even if you did capture his most worthless son.”

I growled and took hold of Elio’s chin, forcing him to look at me. “You are not worthless. Your father is a fucking fool if he thinks that.”

“I’m not like the rest of my family. I never wanted to be involved in all of this shit.”

“I didn’t either, but here we both are.”

“But you,”—he gestured toward the dead body on the lawn—“you’re good at this.”

“I’m a good shot, and I’m willing to do the work. Especially when the asshole has hurt someone I care about.”

“I think you’re confusing good sex with caring about somebody.”

“What if there could be both? I’ve been trying to find you ever since you didn’t show up that night.”

His eyes went huge, and he pulled away from me. “What? You actually thought about me again after....”

“I thought about you every fucking day. But you were like a ghost. I couldn’t find a trace of you.”

“I thought about you too.” He sucked in a breath and put his hand over his mouth like he hadn’t meant to say that.

“Good. Why did you stop showing up?”

“I figured out who you were, and I knew it was safer for you if I stayed away.”

“I don’t give a fuck about safe.”

He sighed. “You know this can’t work, right? You can’t take me with you, and we can’t be together.”

“Maybe you don’t have a choice. I’m taking you with me. I’m not going to let anyone else hurt you.”

Elio pushed his hair off his forehead. “You’re fucking crazy. Do you know what’s going to happen when my father finds out the Trevisanis have me?”

“I’ll figure things out.”

“You’re not invincible. Do you really understand what you’re fucking with?”

“Do you really understand how much I want you?”

“Enough to start a war? Enough to have your family and mine thinking everyone is better off if they eliminate us?”

I smiled at him. “Taking your ass is fucking heaven.”

“Oh my God. You did not just say that.”

I grinned. “It’s true. I must have made an impression on you too.”

“You did, but that is not going to help us against our families.”

I held out my hand. “Come with me, and let’s see what we can figure out.”

“This is insane.”

“And what just happened here—you sneaking back in, me killing the man I was supposed to get money from—isn’t?”

“Of course it is, but...” He glanced outside at Billy’s corpse. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I don’t defy my orders for just anyone.”

“I hope not.”

“Come on. The cleanup crew is on the way. Let’s get out of here.”

When we circled the house, Elio eyed my bike with suspicion. “I’m supposed to ride on that?”

“You’ve never been on a motorcycle?”

“No, I usually get chauffeured.”

“So how did you get here?” I hadn’t seen any cars.

“I took the bus, then walked.”

“I wish I could kill Billy all over again, and I’m thinking your father should be next on my hit list.”

The color drained from Elio’s face. “No. That would...you’d be dead in seconds, even if you pulled it off.”

“I want you free and safe.”

“And yet you’re forcing me to come with you.”

Because he belonged with me. “That’s different.”

“Is it?”

“Yes, and I didn’t force you, you agreed.”

“Under coercion.”

“Come on.” I swung my leg over the bike, and Elio awkwardly climbed on behind me. It was the sexiest thing I’d ever seen.

“Hold on tight,” I ordered before I cranked the engine.

Elio clung to my waist, and my dick got way too excited about it to make the ride comfortable.

ELIO

I adjusted my messenger bag so it lay against my back and wrapped my arms around Tony's waist, scooting myself as close to him as I could get. I was terrified of his rumbling death machine. The road was right there, and cars were so big and so close. This really wasn't how I wanted to die.

Fear wasn't the only reason I clung so tightly to him. The feel of his hard muscles had me practically humping him as I pressed even closer. I wanted him badly.

Memories of the nights we'd spent together flooded my mind. We'd both been insatiable. The first night, I'd intended to slip away after round one, but I couldn't make myself leave. Not only had I desperately wanted more, but I'd never felt so thoroughly wrung out in my life. He'd exhausted me in the best way.

Without warning, Tony veered off the road onto a trail that led into the woods.

"What are we doing?" I yelled, but the words were lost between the sound of the engine and the rush of the wind. He was driving insanely fast, dodging rocks and branches that hung low, ready to slap us in the face. Finally he slowed, then stopped by a large oak. When he cut the engine. I let go and sat up straight. "What the fuck?"

He didn't say a word. He just dismounted and dragged me with him until I was pressed against a tree.

“Tony, seriously, what are you doing?”

“Once we’re back, I don’t know what will happen. I’m going to have a hell of a fight on my hands.”

“You could just let me go.”

“No.” There was just enough moonlight to let me see how he was staring into my eyes, straight to my soul. “Is that what you really want?”

I shook my head, unable to make my voice work.

“I need you, Elio. Right here. Right now. I need you to know you’re mine, that what we had before was as good as I remember. I never wanted it to be temporary.”

“Fuck.”

“Yes.” He lifted my bag over my head and dropped it onto the ground beside us before leaning forward and pressing me into the bark. It scraped where my shirt had ridden up, but I didn’t care because I felt the hard ridge of his cock against my abdomen. I knew I had to have him, I had to do this. “One more time. Then you’ll let me go?”

“No, this is to brand you, to claim you, not to say goodbye.”

“God, Tony, we can’t.”

“Yes, we can. Tell me you don’t want it.”

“I...I want you. Need you. But this is crazy.”

“I don’t fucking care.”

He ground against me, and my protest turned into a moan.

He cupped my face and kissed me. His tongue drove into my mouth like he was fucking me with it, and I let my head drop back, opening to him, knowing I wasn’t going to deny him anything. I slid my arms around his neck, and he cupped my ass, lifting me so I could wrap my legs around him as well. He winced and I knew the position had to hurt his arm, but before I could protest, he pushed me back into the tree, rocking his hips against mine. The night was so hot we were already dripping sweat. This was going to be messy as fuck, but I didn’t care. I had to have him.

I groaned as he shifted position and pressed his cock against mine. If he kept that up, I might come in my pants like a teenager. I needed this so much. “Tony, please.”

“What? Tell me what you need.”

“You.”

“What do you need from me?”

“Everything.”

“That’s right, but now you’re going to get my cock. I’m going to fuck you so you remember how good it is.”

“I do. I remember it every fucking day.”

“That’s right. Because we were meant for each other.”

“You’re killing me.”

“Oh, it’s going to get much worse.”

His words only made me needier. “Why is this happening? How did you know you wanted?—”

“It doesn’t matter. Stand up.” He released my ass, and I reluctantly lowered my legs and set both feet on the ground.

He looked me up and down. “You’re so fucking beautiful.”

“I...”

“Hush.” He laid a finger over my mouth “Now, turn around.”

“Tony....”

“There’s no one around, and even if there were, I don’t fucking care. You’re mine, and I’m not waiting another second to have you again.”

This couldn’t be real. I had to be dreaming. I was still in bed back at my family’s compound, essentially their prisoner.

I hadn’t actually been stupid enough to go to Billy’s house. I hadn’t actually seen Tony kill Billy. I wasn’t here in the woods in the middle of the night, pressed against a tree by the one man I’d been longing for every day since I’d forced myself to walk away from him.

“Elio, do what I said.” Tony used his good arm to spin me around so I could place my hands on the tree.

“I...”

“No more protests. I need you, and you need this too.”

I nodded. I didn't know how else to respond. He was right. Whether this was a dream or reality, I didn't want it to stop. I pressed my hands against the tree, bracing myself and sticking out my ass. He slapped it hard, and I gasped.

Tony unfastened my pants and dragged them down my legs faster than I would've thought possible. He wrapped a hand around my ankle and encouraged me to lift my foot so he could yank off my shoe and pull my leg out of my pants before nudging my legs farther apart.

“That's better.” He ran his hands over my naked ass. “Fuck, it's just as round and gorgeous as I remembered.” He knelt behind me, dug his fingers into my ass cheeks, and pulled them apart, exposing me fully.

“Tony.” My voice shook.

“No talking,” he ordered. “Just feel.”

When his tongue flicked over my hole, I bit my lip to keep from crying out. It felt so good. I couldn't believe he was here, on his knees, eating my ass. I never thought I'd see him again, and I never imagined myself doing anything like this. I wasn't wild. I was quiet. I liked to hide. I didn't spread my legs in the woods for some savage man to have at me.

Except, apparently, I did.

I braced myself on one hand and reached around so I could slide my fingers into his hair and hold him against my ass.

“Fuck, you need this, don't you?” His breath was warm on my sensitive flesh.

“Yes. God, yes. Tony, please.”

He chuckled as he licked me again, pressing the flat of his tongue along the seam of my ass, then shoving it in me, fucking me with it, opening me up.

“Need more. Please.”

He wrapped his hand around my shaft and began to work me.

I knew I wouldn't last long like this. I was going to come any second if he didn't stop. “Can't. Can't hold on. Need to come. Please.”

He dropped his hand from my dick, and I whimpered. “I don't want you to come until I'm deep inside you. I'm going to fuck you until you forget everything but me. You're not going to think about any other man ever again. You're mine. Do you understand that?”

I whimpered again.

“Answer me, Elio.”

“Can't,” I said.

He spanked my ass hard, making it sting. “Elio, do you understand you belong to me now?”

“Please Tony, I....”

Another slap. The other cheek this time. Now they both burned, but my ass felt so needy. I wanted more, his tongue, his cock, his fingers. I didn't care. I just needed him inside me. “This is crazy.”

“Yeah. People say that about me a lot, but I know what I want.”

“I want you, too.”

“This isn’t for one day or one weekend.” He flicked his finger across my hole, then pressed in just enough to tease.

“Tony. Need more.”

“You get what you want when I get what I want.”

“I can’t promise you that. I can’t let you start a war over me.”

“Elio, look at me.”

I drew in a shaky breath, then gazed at him over my shoulder.

He was fucking gorgeous. It would be easy to let myself believe he could protect me, that he really could give me anything I needed.

“I’m yours.” The words just slipped out, but somehow I knew I meant them. His crazy was getting to me, but I’d been fantasizing about this man ever since I’d hidden and watched for him to show up and realized I wasn’t at our meeting spot. Billy had been a tool to get off, but Tony was my obsession.

“That’s better.”

He pushed two fingers into me, working them deep and brushing against my sweet spot.

I cried out and pushed my hips back, trying to get him even deeper. “Please, Tony.

Don't make me wait anymore."

I heard the sound of his belt being undone, then his zipper lowered. "Fuck."

"What's wrong?"

"I don't have anything with me. I wasn't planning on finding a man I wanted to fuck when I left town today."

"My bag. There's lube in my bag."

"Condoms too?"

"Oh fuck it. You can take me bare. I've always used a condom with everyone. I'm fine. It's safe."

"Damn, I love hearing how much you need this. I wouldn't do this if I had any doubt I wasn't negative. You're safe with me." I heard him rifling through the bag, then he laughed. "You buy the good stuff, don't you?"

"That's why I wasn't leaving it for Billy."

"He stole your lube?"

"I told you he was a fucking piece of shit."

I heard the sound of Tony slicking up his cock, then he was there, teasing me with his cock head before pressing hard, breaching through the ring of muscle.

I sucked in my breath. "I forgot how big you are."

“You can take it.”

“I...oh God.” He pushed deeper, and it felt like he would split me in two.

“So fucking tight.”

“You’re just fucking massive.”

“I’ve got exactly what you need. You love this.”

“I do. I love how you open me up.”

“That’s right. You’re going to take every inch.”

I whimpered. “Please.”

5

TONY

I squeezed Elio's hips so tight I knew the imprint of my fingers would still be there tomorrow. I would regret using my arm so much later, but for now I'd ceased to feel pain. I needed a good hold on him as our sweat-slick bodies slid together. Elio pushed back, meeting every one of my rough strokes.

Fucking him was even better than I remembered. His ass fit my cock like a glove, and going bare inside him was heaven—the heat, the slick walls that squeezed my cock so hard it hurt until I'd loosened him up with long, deep thrusts.

“Tony. Need you. Need this.”

“I know, baby. Can you take it harder?”

“Yes. I can take anything you want to give me.”

“Fuck. Don't say things like that.”

He laughed, and I drove into him so hard I pushed him flat against the tree.

“More,” he demanded.

“Fuck, yes.” I totally let myself go. It was reckless. Anyone could walk up. Any number of animals could come across us, but I didn't stop. I couldn't.

“Come for me, baby,” I said as I gripped his cock and worked him.

Seconds later, his ass squeezed me hard enough to make me gasp as his cum shot over my hand. The sensation and the needy noises he made were enough to force me over the edge. I drove in one last time and filled his ass again and again with my seed.

Elio sagged against the tree, and I kissed the back of his neck. “Are you okay?”

“I have no idea. Am I even alive? Are we in heaven?”

I smiled against his warm skin. “Maybe.”

“That was....”

“I know. And as soon as I deal with Vinnie, I’m going to take you to my apartment and do it again and again.”

“Fuck. I’m not sure I’ll survive.”

“I’ll bring you back to life.”

Elio leaned back into me. “What is happening here?”

No way could I handle a deep discussion now. “I’m taking you to meet my boss.”

“You know that’s not what I mean, but that’s a terrible idea. This is all a terrible idea.”

“I don’t have a choice.”

“You do, but you’re too stubborn to admit it.”

“No, I need you too much.”

“Fuck, Tony.” He turned around in my arms. When his eyes met mine, I swear my heart stopped for a moment.

“You’re telling me you want to walk away?”

He looked down at himself, his chest splattered with cum and his pants around one ankle. “Not like this.”

I chuckled. “No way in hell would I let anyone else see you like this.”

“What if I wanted them to?”

I seized his hips and yanked him against me. “You don’t.”

“How do you know?”

“Because you’re mine.”

“Tony.”

I didn’t like the annoyance in his voice. “Don’t do this.”

“I don’t belong to you just like I don’t belong to my father. I’m my own person.”

“Then what the fuck were you doing creeping around that bastard’s house?”

“I needed the things he’d taken from me.”

“What could be that important? He hurt you. You know he’d hurt you again.”

“But now he’s dead.”

I stroked his jaw. “Elio, what did he take that mattered so much?”

He looked away. “Let’s get dressed. We shouldn’t be out here like this.”

I stepped back. I’d ask him again later. I couldn’t delay going to Vinnie’s any longer. The more I made him wait, the angrier he’d get.

“Are you trying to start a fucking war bringing Giacomo’s son here?” Vinnie asked. As if that wasn’t bad enough, I’d gotten him out of bed in the middle of the night to reveal my latest sin.

I glanced at Elio. He was trying to tell me something with his eyes, probably I told you so. “No, sir. I didn’t know who he was.”

“That’s your own fucking fault. I ought to hand you over to Lucien and let him?—”

“No, sir. I’ll fix this.” Lucien was the scary-as-fuck head of the Marchesi family. Ultimately, we worked for them.

“You won’t do a fucking thing until I give you orders, then you’ll obey them to the letter, or you won’t be around long enough to fuck up anything else.” I wanted to argue, but I kept my mouth shut while Vinnie paced his living room for several moments. “Right now, the best thing for you to do is go home. I’ll send someone to see to your arm.” He gestured toward my makeshift bandage.

I nodded. Giving Vinnie time to cool off wasn’t a bad idea. I took Elio’s arm.

“No, he stays. I need to talk to him.”

“Elio is with me.”

“You really want to die today, don’t you?”

I refused to let him see how scared I was. “I promised him protection. I won’t go back on that promise.”

“You don’t make the rules here, I do, and you better remember that if you aren’t choosing this as your death day.”

I was in danger, but I wouldn’t leave Elio. Vinnie’s bark was worse than his bite when it came to family. “I won’t say anything while you talk to Elio, and I’ll take him home with me and keep him safe.”

Vinnie’s glare should have set me on fire. “So I’m supposed to trust you to keep him secure and to fight off anyone who comes for him?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re going to be the one thing standing between me and a war that will drag in the Marchesis. You do realize Lucien will kill us all for this, right?”

I didn’t want to think about that confrontation anymore than I wanted to think about losing Elio now that I’d found him again.

Elio took a step forward. “I could just disappear.”

“No!” Vinnie and I shouted at the same time.

He tilted his head and frowned at Vinnie. “So, which is it? Am I an asset or a liability?”

Vinnie snarled. “You’re a man who needs to learn to keep his mouth shut.”

“Take it easy on him, Vinnie. He’s been through a lot today.” Until he spoke, I’d barely registered Vinnie’s boyfriend, Tom, who’d been hanging back in the kitchen.

Vinnie turned to him, scowling. “Don’t.”

Tom held up a hand and gave him an icy look.

Vinnie’s anger seemed to deflate. “Fine.” He turned back to Elio. “Your value to us remains to be seen. For right now, you’re to do as Tony says if you want to be in good shape for a reunion with your family.”

Elio didn’t back down. I’d never seen this side of him, but I liked it. “I don’t want to be reunited with them.”

“He’s staying with me,” I said.

Vinnie slammed a hand down on the counter. “I give the orders here.”

I had to keep pushing. “His family doesn’t value him. We could do them a favor and take him off their hands.”

“No way in hell are they going to allow that without promises being made that Lucien would never agree to.”

“I’m not expecting we’d make a fucking alliance with them. I want to keep him.”

“Finders keepers?”

I looked down, realizing how stupid that sounded. “Something like that.”

“Try suggesting that. After they blow your head off, I’ll have less to worry about.”

“Just let me go,” Elio said. “Then neither of you need to worry about it.”

“No.” Again Vinnie and I spoke at the same time.

6

ELIO

I was so fucking sick of people arguing over me. When was I going to get to make a decision about my own life? “I wanted Billy dead.”

Vinnie glared at me. “I didn’t give you permission to speak.”

I took a step toward him. “I’m the son of Giacomo Barruchi. I don’t need your permission.”

“I don’t need to listen to anything an enemy has to say.”

“You need to listen to me if you don’t want a war.”

The young man I assumed was Vinnie’s boyfriend moved closer and laid a hand on Vinnie’s shoulder. “Give him a chance. He deserves to be treated like a person.”

I smiled at him. “Thank you. I’m tired of being everyone’s pawn. I’m a prisoner at home, and now I’m one here. I don’t want to be part of this game.”

Tony growled “This is not a game to me. You are not a game. I’m doing this to protect you. If I could do that by building you a remote cabin and keeping you there with me, blocking out all this fucking shit, I would.”

Vinnie and his boyfriend stared at Tony.

“Is that what you want?” the boyfriend asked. “I’m Tom, by the way. Nice to meet you.”

“I’m Elio, and....” I studied Tony for a moment. His look said I damn well better not contradict him, and dammit it turned me on instead of pissing me off. “Against my better judgment, yes, but not if it means starting a war or risking Tony’s life.”

“I’m willing to risk?—”

“Enough.” Vinnie yelled.

Tom placed a hand on Vinnie’s arm. “Remember when we met? Remember how hard it was for me to admit I wanted to stay with you?”

Vinnie scowled at Tom for a moment, but it looked like he was fighting a smile.

“I need a laptop,” I said.

“You need to learn when to keep your mouth shut,” Vinnie snapped.

“Do you want to solve this problem, or do you want my father breaking down your door?”

“If your father starts something with me, he’s starting it with Lucien Marchesi. I hope he’s not that foolish.”

“I can promise you if my father is challenged, he’ll accept it, and he’d fight God himself if the family honor was at stake.”

“Why do you need a laptop?” Tony asked.

“I’m the one asking questions,” Vinnie said.

I rolled my eyes. “I need to make sure Billy didn’t wipe the contents of this drive.” I pulled it from my pocket. “If he didn’t, then I have some proof of a secret my father desperately wants to keep. I can use it to get what I want.”

Vinnie focused on me again. I could see the calculations going on in his mind. “And what exactly is that?”

“To be free of my family and able to choose my own path.”

“Unless that path involves swearing allegiance to my family, you’re out of luck.”

I refused to back down. “Unless you want a war with the Barruchis, you’ll let me live my own life.”

“Why don’t we see what he’s got on the drive?” Tony asked.

I scowled at him. “No, this is for my eyes only.”

Vinnie took a step toward me, and Tony moved to block him.

“Enough,” Tom said. “Come on, Elio. You can use my laptop.”

“No,” Vinnie growled. “Not until he tells us what kind of information he has that will make Giacomo roll over for him.”

“There’s no point in trying to use this for blackmail if he knows I already told you and you can use it against him. This only works if I keep the secret.”

Tom looked at Vinnie. “He has a point.”

“So I’m supposed to let him put a drive into our computer that could be doing no telling what to our system, pulling any amount of our data, and then I’m supposed to not look at what he uploads and let him communicate with his father without knowing what they’re talking about. You think I’m stupid?”

I sighed. “All I know is that I have a peaceful solution, but you’re going to have to trust me.”

“Why should I do that? There’s absolutely no reason for me to think you want anything but the worst for my family.”

“What I want is to get free of my father’s control. I don’t hold loyalty to him, I don’t want to be part of his organization. I don’t want to be part of yours. I want to be a free person who directs my own life.”

“That’s not how things work in our world,” Vinnie said.

Tony laid a hand on my shoulder. “He’s right. You’re with us now. You’re going to have to trust me.”

I shook my head. “You want to control me just like they do.”

I expected him to deny it, but he didn’t. “That’s because you’re mine now, mine to protect.”

I wanted to shout that I could protect myself, but unless I got very far away, I really couldn’t do that. Even if I ran to the other side of the globe, how long would it take before my father tracked me down? Was he really going to let me go when I knew his secrets. Was I being naïve? Would my own father put out a hit on me?

Tony looked at Vinnie. “Can Elio and I please have some time? If you’ll let me talk

to him, I think we can work this out.”

Vinnie narrowed his eyes. “How do I know you’re not just going to run?”

“Because if we were going to run, we would’ve done that after I killed Billy. I never would have brought him here. Maybe that’s what I should’ve done.”

Vinnie’s face contorted with fury. “You don’t run out on your family. We’d find you and make sure you regretted the betrayal.”

Tony tensed. I wanted to reach for him. I wanted to be able to comfort him the way he had me. This was all so insane. What was I doing here? How had I ended up getting myself even more trapped? If I ran, Tony would be blamed for it. I wouldn’t let that happen.

I wished I had the power to protect us both, but despite being Giacomo Baruchi’s son, I didn’t have any power of my own. In my family, power had to be earned, and all I’d wanted to do was get out. Maybe I should’ve learned all the lethal skills my brothers had, maybe I should have turned myself into a cold-blooded killer. Because now it seemed like I was destined to work for one criminal family or another.

That thought made me wonder about Tom. He didn’t bow down to Vinnie, but I also had a very hard time imagining him taking part in the worst aspects of the family business. He seemed like a natural peacemaker, and he clearly wanted all of us to stay calm. He’d defended me against Vinnie when he didn’t even know me. How did a man like that survive in this world?

“I’d like to talk to Tom on my own,” I said.

“Fuck no,” Vinnie snarled. “If you think I’m leaving you alone with my man for one moment?—”

“Vinnie,” Tom said. “What do you think is going to happen? Elio and I are just going to sit and talk.”

“For all I know he’s going to try to turn you against us.”

“Vincent Trevisani, do you think I care so little about you that a person I just met could turn me against you and your family? If that’s what you think of me, I’m walking out the door right now.”

“You’re not going anywhere.” Vinnie grabbed Tom’s arm and yanked him close so they were nearly nose to nose. Tom didn’t even flinch.

“That’s right, I’m not, because I love you. I thought you trusted me.”

“Fuck, Tom. You know I do.”

“Then you and Tony need to walk away and let me talk to Elio.”

Tony looked at me. I could tell he didn’t like the idea. “I’m the one you need to be talking to.”

“I need some perspective.”

He frowned. “What you need is for me to remind you why you’re mine and why you’re staying here.”

That was the last thing I needed. Tony touching me would cloud my mind to the point of insanity. Fuck, it already had. That’s how I ended up here in the first place. “I need to do this. I chose to come here with you, but I need to understand what I’m getting into before I can reveal any of my family’s secrets to people I was taught to hate, taught to see as my worst enemies.”

Tony captured my chin in his hand. “I’m not your enemy. I’m going to be your savior.”

“I may want you. I may be willing to take terrible risks to be with you. But you’re not God. You want to save me, but I want to save myself.”

Vinnie chuckled. “Damn, Tony, you’ve really gotten yourself in trouble, haven’t you?”

Tony snarled at me. “As soon as you’re done here, it’s my turn to talk.”

He was fuming, but he’d get over it. If I let him think he could direct every move I made, I really wouldn’t be any better off here than I had been with my family.

7

TONY

“Wait in my office,” Vinnie ordered me.

I didn’t want to obey. I didn’t want to leave Elio’s side. What if he ran? What if Tom let him go? Would he challenge Vinnie like that? Surely not. He wasn’t afraid of Vinnie, but there had to be a line he wouldn’t cross. I was going to have to trust in that.

I gave Elio one last glance. He smiled at me, the bastard. I was going to do whatever it took to make sure he understood he was mine and that he was going to stay right here. There weren’t going to be any more games. Elio was out of options other than staying with me.

I walked away, every step slow and methodical. I tried to hear what Vinnie was saying to them, but I couldn’t make out the words, so I stepped into Vinnie’s office and closed the door behind me, sinking into a chair and dropping my head into my hands.

What the fuck was I doing? Anger and fear warred inside me. Had I made a huge mistake bringing Elio here? Had there truly been another option? When I saw Elio in Billy’s kitchen, I knew I was never letting him go. He’d cast a spell on me, and there was no way I could deny my need for him. But what if I’d made the wrong move? What if we should’ve run? Would Vinnie have really chased us down? Would Giacomo or, God forbid, Lucien?

I was playing with fire here, and I was putting Elio right in the middle. I had to get myself together. I had to stop letting my anger and my fear dictate what I did. I had been on thin ice with Vinnie before this happened. Too soon, I heard his footsteps approaching the door. I sat up straight, making sure my full height was on display. When he opened the door, he didn't say a word. He sat down in the leather chair behind his desk and glared at me.

“Tell me why I shouldn't eliminate you.”

“Micky would be sad.”

Vinnie didn't smile like I'd hoped. “That asshole would get over it. He needs to be punished for saddling me with you. Convince me not to turn you over to the Barruchis.”

I took a deep breath. I'd refused to follow orders. I'd stood up to Vinnie and pushed back. I'd killed Billy, insuring we'd never get our payout from him, and yet, this was the hardest thing I'd ever said to my boss. “I'm in love with Elio.”

For a minute I thought Vinnie was going to remain cold and impassive, that despite the way being with Tom had softened him personally—though not as a businessman—he might not give a damn what I felt. Then he smiled. Well, it was more like a smirk, but the anger had left his eyes. “You're telling me you showed up at Billy's house, saw this guy, and just decided you loved him.”

I shook my head. “Earlier in the year, we...spent time together. Regularly. Then he disappeared in early June. I've been looking for him ever since.”

“And you had no idea he was Giacomo's son?”

“Not a clue. But now I know why he stopped meeting me and how he was able to

hide so well.”

“No shit.” Vinnie looked out the window for a moment, and I didn’t even dare to breathe. “I saw the way he looks at you.”

“Like he’s angry? Like he wants to get away?”

Vinnie laughed. “Like he wants to climb you like a tree and devour you. If I left the two of you alone, there wouldn’t be any talking.”

“That was my plan. Easiest way to get him to agree.”

Vinnie rolled his eyes. “You’ve got so much to learn.”

“Are you saying that doesn’t work with Tom?”

His eyes went cold again. “Don’t ever question how I handle Tom.”

“No, sir. I didn’t mean to do that.”

“Damn right you didn’t.”

“We’re going to go back in there in a few minutes, and you’re going to convince him to show us the information he’s got on his father. You are going to use any means necessary to get what we need. Do you understand me?”

It was all I could do to focus as I imagined how I could extract the information. “Yes, sir.”

“I won’t agree to any deal unless I understand every single detail. If I fuck this up, my life is on the line. You get that, right? I won’t go down alone. I’ll kill you, and I’ll

take out Elio too.”

I gripped the edge of my chair and started to rise.

“Sit the fuck down. You’ve brought me nothing but trouble, and you’re an inch away from me putting a bullet through you. If it wouldn’t upset Tom, I’d finish you right now.”

My heart pounded. I’d really fucked up, but if I got Elio out of this, I might have actually made the best move of my life.

“I want full control of this operation,” Vinnie said. “I’m in charge, not Elio. He’s the son of our enemy.”

I was trying so hard to forget that’s who Elio was. “Yes, sir.” I wasn’t going to push any harder. I had a chance. I just had to make Elio bend to my will.

“If you fuck this up, Lucien will come for my head, and he won’t stop there. He’ll take us all out. Do you understand the position you’ve put me in? Do you think your life’s really worth that?”

This was a trap. I couldn’t answer either way, so I said nothing.

“You owe me. You owe me your life. Whatever I say after this is what you’ll do.”

“Yes, sir.” If I was relegated to scraping up pieces of the men we eliminated off of the streets, I’d do it. If I had to put myself in front of a bullet every fucking day, I would do it. For Elio.

“How bad is your arm?”

I smiled. “Worried about me?”

“You’re more useful to me if you can use it in a fight.”

“It hurts like hell, but it will be fine. Elio cleaned it out. He thinks I need stitches, but?—”

“Then you’ll get stitches.”

I hated doctors, but I wasn’t going to argue. I’d pushed Vinnie far enough.

8

ELIO

“How can I help?” Tom asked.

“How do you do it? How do you live with...?” I gestured toward the door where Vinnie and Tony had made their exit.

Tom smiled. “It took me a while to get used to it. Vinnie is a force to be reckoned with, and it was a matter of days from meeting him to him telling me he was taking me with him and there weren’t any other options. In the end, he did give me a choice, but I followed him. I’d seen things I shouldn’t have, so my other option was essentially mob-run witness protection. I wouldn’t have been free either way, and being with Vinnie is...nice.”

His smile told me exactly what was nicest about it. “There are definitely some benefits to being with Tony, but I feel like I’m going from one prison to another.”

“Realistically, what are your other options?”

“I saved up some money, but Billy took it, the son of a bitch. I should never have hooked up with him. That was a huge mistake.”

Tom’s eyes widened. “You slept with him? No wonder Vinnie killed him.”

I rolled my eyes. “Trevisani men sure as hell are possessive, aren’t they?”

“They are. It’s hot though.”

“Yeah, it is. I was planning on running. I was going to use that money, but now when I really think about it, how far would I have made it? I’d always be looking over my shoulder.”

“At least with us, you know someone has your back. Does Tony make you happy?”

I took a moment to consider the question instead of immediately saying yes. Tony satisfied me like no other man, and that certainly made me happy. But I’d also enjoyed the days we’d lingered in bed after fucking, neither of us wanting to leave. Before Tony, I tried to keep all my relationships purely sexual, but with him, I had trouble drawing those lines. Something just felt right with him.

I’d never let a man make me breakfast, but talking with Tony over coffee and eggs was nearly as heavenly as being in bed. Earlier I’d told him I didn’t know him, but that was a lie. I knew him as well as I knew my brothers and they’d been there every day of my life—not that they’d ever made much of an effort to get to know me.

“Yes.”

“Then stay. Give Tony a chance.”

I huffed. “Like he’d let me leave.”

“If he thought you would be happier without him, he might.”

“But it’s not really his choice, is it? It’s Vinnie’s or the Marchesis.”

Tom smiled. “I’ve met Lucien, you know. He isn’t as bad as people say, as long as you’re an ally.”

“But I’m the enemy—or at least his son.”

“True, but like Vinnie, Lucien’s in love. It changes a man.”

In love. Was I in love with Tony? Was that the feeling that had me thinking of him every fucking day, longing to go back, to find him? “I don’t know if I can do this.”

Tom smiled. “You can. It’s not easy to love them, but I’ve been with Vinnie for a while now, and it gets more comfortable, even when they’re being assholes.”

His grin made me laugh. “I can only hope.”

“They’re also really good at apologizing.”

I thought of what happened in the woods with Tony and imagined apology sex. “I bet.”

“I’m sure you’ll be finding out sooner than you know.” As if on cue, I heard a door open and footsteps approaching. “Like I said....”

We were both laughing when Tony and Vinnie entered the room.

Vinnie frowned. “What’s going on here?”

“We’re having a civilized conversation instead of posturing at each other,” Tom said.

Vinnie looked him up and down. “You’re really asking for it.”

“Maybe.”

The affection in both their glances told me that whatever happened between them

after this, they would both enjoy it.

“Come with me.” Tony’s voice was gruff. I wanted to protest being spoken to like that, but Vinnie was watching us closely. I could tell Tony off in private.

We headed down the hall. Tony motioned to a room, and I stepped inside expecting to see Vinnie’s office. Instead, we were in what I assumed was a guest room. It was illuminated only by an antique hurricane lamp, but I could tell there was king-sized bed with a white comforter, a dark green sofa, and a large, old-fashioned wardrobe. “What are we doing in here?”

“Talking,” Tony said.

“And Vinnie doesn’t mind us ‘talking’ in here?” I looked pointedly at the bed.

“All he cares about is getting his way.”

“So you’re planning to seduce the information out of me, right?”

Tony scowled. “You have to know we can’t go through with a plan when we don’t actually know what information you have. It’s like stepping into a fight not knowing if my gun is loaded.”

“The gun is loaded. I can promise you that.”

Tony frowned. “It’s stuffy in here.” He crossed the room, then unlocked and opened a window. A light breeze floated in along with the sound of music coming from a neighboring courtyard.

When he faced me again, he said, “Even if I were willing to accept your word, Vinnie’s not, and he will only tolerate a minimum of defiance from me. I can’t do

more than I've done, not and keep you safe, which is my number one mission."

"Of course it is." The words came out more bitter than I meant. I was just getting tired of protection and confinement being the same thing.

"Do you doubt me?" Tony asked "Do you doubt how much I care? Do you understand what I'm risking?"

I knelt in front of him, and he sucked in his breath. "Are you saving me the trouble of seducing you?"

"Maybe. Or maybe I want to say thank you for eliminating Billy, for defending me, for taking all these risks."

"Are you going to turn the zip drive over to Vinnie?"

I shook my head. "I can't do that."

"You have to. It's the only way you'll be safe."

"These are my secrets to use, not Vinnie's."

Tony brushed the hair from my forehead, and I shivered. "You're here now. You're part of us."

"No, I'm here with you, not your family."

"There's no way to separate me from them."

He was right, but I wasn't ready to admit that. "If I solve my own problem, then it has nothing to do with your family, it's just me freeing myself."

“Do you really think that when your father realizes where you are he won’t come for us anyway? That he won’t think we forced you to betray him?”

“He won’t take that risk. He knows I hate him. He knows I don’t want to be part of his organization.”

“Being part of his organization and sleeping with the enemy are two different things.”

I hated how right he was. I hated realizing that the plan I’d believed in would never have worked. Could I really turn over everything and give up my last chance at escape? Was I going to join the enemy? Was it worth it for Tony?

Yes, it was, but I couldn’t give in without a fight.

I clasped my hands behind my back, licked my lips and looked up at him. His eyes were wide. I had him off balance, which was exactly what I was going for. I might let him win in the end, but he was going to know I was playing him too. I might let him do whatever he wanted to me in bed, but I wasn’t going to be his servant. “Are you planning to torture me until I give in?”

“Elio, I....” A car honked and the screech of owl startled me. Tony brushed his fingers over my cheek. “Owls are my favorite birds. It’s a good omen.”

I smiled. “Don’t you want to get started torturing me then? I won’t fight you, not much anyway.”

He held my gaze as he undid his pants and pulled out his cock. “Open up.”

I did, and he slid his dick over my tongue, giving me only a little at first, just a tease. I sucked hard, and he groaned. When I leaned in to take him deeper, his restraint broke.

He gripped the sides of my head and thrust deep, choking me. I clasped my hands tightly and let him do what he wanted. I needed this, and so did he. I couldn't explain it, but I needed him to force me to surrender to him, to make me believe I had no choice.

He pushed all the way in until my face was pressed to his abdomen. I couldn't breathe. I tried to stay still, to let this happen, but I started to fight, to push at his thighs. I needed air. I?—

He let me go, and I sat back on my heels gasping as he stared down at my dick. It was hard as fuck, jutting out from my body, dripping precum.

“You fucking love this.”

I did, but I wasn't going to admit it. I dropped my gaze on the floor, not saying a word.

“Tell me what I need to hear.”

I shook my head, not yet ready to give in. I had fight left in me. I still couldn't overcome the years of being taught to protect my family, no matter how they treated me.

“I won't stop. I'll keep fucking your mouth, cutting off your air. You can breathe when you're ready to admit you belong with me.”

“With you? Not to you?” The words came out raspy and barely audible.

He grabbed the side of my head and pulled me to him again. “Swallow me.”

I did as he said. He fucked my mouth savagely, then forced every inch down my

throat again. “Will you turn over your evidence?”

I shook my head as I tried desperately to get some air in through my nose. He pinched it shut, and I thrashed against him, fighting his hold. He was so fucking strong.

“Give in to me.”

I fought him desperately, tears running down my face. With a growl, he pushed me away, then grabbed my arm and dragged me to the bed.

TONY

I was out of control. I knew it. I should stop. I should release Elio and figure out some other way to solve this, but there wasn't one. Whatever he planned to use for blackmail was all we had. I wasn't giving him up, and Vinnie wasn't going to agree to let me keep him if he didn't reveal all the details of his plan.

"On your back," I demanded. "Head here." I pointed to the side of the mattress.

Elio positioned himself like I said, and I gripped his shoulders, pulling him toward me until his head hung off the bed. I stood behind him, caressing his throat as I stared down at him.

"Are you really going to choke me until I agree to turn over my evidence?"

I loved how hoarse he was, loved knowing my cock had done that. "Is that what you want? Do you want me to torture it out of you?"

"Fuck. I don't know."

I thrust back into his mouth, and he gagged around me. I pinned his arms to his sides as I fucked his mouth, sliding all the way in on each stroke. He swallowed around me and used his tongue to tease my shaft. I realized he wasn't going to give in. He was just going to take whatever I gave him.

I drove in and held still. When I laid a hand over his throat to feel my cock there, I almost came. “Give in. Give me what I want. Swear your loyalty to me.”

He shook his head.

I kept still for a few more seconds then pulled out. “What’s it going to take, Elio?”

Tears poured from his eyes, and his mouth was a sloppy mess. “I don’t know.” He barely choked out the words.

He opened his mouth and stuck out his tongue, ready for more. He was still rock hard for me. I undid his pants so I could work his cock as I fucked his mouth. He writhed, desperate for more. His hips pumped up, driving his shaft through my hand.

When I was sure he was about to come, I let go and gripped the base of his cock, squeezing hard, making sure he wouldn’t be able to get relief.

I pulled out of his mouth and seized his hair forcing him to look up at me. “Do you want to walk back out there to Vinnie with your dick still hard and aching? Do you want him to know I wouldn’t let you come?”

“You’d never let him see me like that.” He gasped the words out.

“I’m not letting you go.”

“I don’t want you to.”

His words made my heart stutter. “Fuck, baby, you really don’t have a choice.”

“I do, and I choose you.”

Had I heard him right? “What?”

“I choose you.”

“Wait. How?—”

“I’ll do what I have to for this, for you.”

“Jesus, you’re incredible.”

“Yes, now finish me off.”

I wrapped my hand around his cock and worked him with long, rough strokes while I thrust into his mouth. His body tensed as he swallowed around me. “Come for me. Right fucking now.”

He made a strangled sound then let go. Cum shot from his cock over and over. He still wasn’t finished when I gave him one final thrust and poured my seed down his throat.

He swallowed every drop.

I pulled out as soon as I was done, gathered him into my arms, and sat on the bed, cradling him against me as he shivered from the breeze coming through the window.

“I love you, Elio. I love you so much.”

“Love...you...too. Want to do it again.”

I smiled down at him. He was fucking perfect. “I’ll do it any time you want. That and lots more. But first we’ve got to make sure you’re safe from your father.”

I helped Elio clean up, wiping his abdomen and bathing his face gently. There wasn't anything I could do about his swollen lips or his hoarse voice, but I was sure Vinnie had put Tom in the same position. At least we only had to see the two of them. Wishing we had more time alone, I closed the window and secured it, then took Elio's hand and led him down the hall.

When we found Vinnie in his office a few moments later, Vinnie looked Elio up and down and smiled. "Are you ready to hand over the evidence?"

"I'm ready to share it with you and explain what it means."

Vinnie glared at him.

"That's the best you're going to get."

Vinnie held out his hand. "I want the drive."

Elio glanced at me, and I mouthed Please .

He pulled the zip drive from his pocket and handed it over. Vinnie loaded it up on a laptop that I knew was a spare he used when he wanted to be sure nothing corrupted his real machine.

When he opened the files, he frowned. "Tell me what I'm seeing." He turned the computer so Elio and I could also see it.

"These are bank statements from my father's personal account. They show payments going to this bank account number." He pointed to the screen, and Vinnie nodded. "That account belongs to Senator Thompson."

Vinnie frowned "Why would he support Thompson? If he pushes his latest bill

through, the terms will be a nightmare for your father's business interests."

"True," Elio said.

"So, what's the deal?"

"The senator caught my father in bed with his fifteen-year-old daughter."

It took a lot to get a reaction out of Vinnie, but his eyes went wide. "Fuck."

"If my father doesn't keep up his 'donations' that information and the video the senator took gets turned over to the authorities."

"That sick fuck took a video of his own daughter instead of stopping Giacomo?"

Elio nodded.

"And the daughter? I assume she has no say in it?"

"She's not been seen since the incident. Rumors spread that she ran away, but I don't think that's what happened. I think her father sent her some place where she won't be able to talk and ruin his blackmail scheme."

"Gross," I said. "Vinnie, we?—"

He nodded. "I'm on it. I've got some contacts. If she's alive, we'll find her."

"And do what?" Elio asked.

"We don't hurt innocent young women," Vinnie answered.

Elio looked at me, and I nodded. “Okay. That’s the secret I found. It’s enough to get him off my back.”

“Let’s hope so.”

“If not, I will go public with it,” Elio said. “I think he’ll know that.”

“We’ll handle him,” Vinnie said.

“I need to handle it. He needs to know I brought this to your attention.”

Vinnie raised his brows. “How well has it worked in the past when you’ve tried to negotiate with him?”

“I can do this.”

“But you don’t have to,” I said. “We’re here for you now.”

Vinnie nodded. “This is big. I’m going to bring the Marchesis in. You two are going to sit tight at Tony’s house and wait for further instructions.”

“No, I need to be part of this.”

“Look at me.” When Elio did, I continued. “Do you really? Does it matter as long as you’re free? As long as we’re together?”

Page 10

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 5:37 am

Did it matter? I clearly saw care and concern in Tony's eyes. Relief filled me. He cared about me, he'd brought me to the one safe haven he knew, and now his family was behind me. They might be criminals, but I could already tell they were nothing like my father. "No, it doesn't matter. Not at all."

Now I just had to trust Vinnie and the Marchesis to take care of my father.

A woman stopped by to stitch up Tony's arm. I hoped she was actually a licensed medical professional, but I didn't ask questions. I just held Tony's hand while she did her work.

We tried to sleep, but neither of us had much success. Tony's window units couldn't keep up with the heat. Between that and my nerves, I didn't want to eat breakfast despite being hungry. I was tired and stressed, and I kept snapping at Tony for being gruff and demanding. We paced the apartment, on edge, as we waited for any word from Vinnie.

Just after dark, the doorbell rang, making us both jump.

"Stay there," Tony ordered. He pulled out his gun and moved slowly toward the door.

We'd been expecting a phone call, not a visitor. My instincts told me to flee, but I held my ground. I wasn't going anywhere without Tony. I was in this with him all the way, so instead of running, I moved closer.

Tony motioned for me to back up, but I ignored him. When he looked through the peephole, color drained from his face. He took a step back and looked at me with

terror in his eyes.

“Who is it?”

“Lucien.” He glanced back and forth between me and the door.

“He knows we’re here,” I said.

Lucien knocked again.

“You can’t keep him waiting.”

“I love you,” Tony said. My heart nearly stopped. I’d known how he felt, but I hadn’t realized how badly I needed to hear the words again. He turned back to the door, undid the locks, and opened it.

Without a word, Lucien stepped inside, followed by Vinnie and a man I recognized from photos on the wall in Tony’s house. He had to be one of the Trevisanis.

“Hello, sir.” Tony addressed Lucien. “I’m honored by your visit. How can I help you?”

Lucien glared at him for several seconds before he spoke. “I’ve just spent a very unpleasant evening with Giacomo Barruchi. I understand I have you to thank for that.”

I stepped up beside Tony. “I’m the one to blame. I refused to return to my family. Did my father accept that I had him trapped?”

Tony’s eyes were wide as he stared at me. He was clearly stunned I had dared to speak.

“We’ve not been introduced,” Lucien said.

Tony seemed to wake from a trance. “Mr. Marchesi, this is Elio Barruchi. Elio, this is Mr. Lucien Marchesi.”

I bowed my head briefly, then found the courage to meet Lucien’s gaze. “I provided excellent blackmail material in exchange for being allowed to stay here.”

“Yes, you did, and if all you wanted was some time away from your family, perhaps it would’ve been enough.”

“I will expose him if he comes for me. I hope he knows that.”

“No, you will not,” Lucien’s words were like ice. “That is my call. You work for me now.”

Anger flared in me. I wanted to argue, but instead, I lowered my eyes. “Yes, sir.”

I could see Tony’s shoulders relax when I acquiesced.

“The intriguing secret you provided was enough to get your father to back off for now. I assure you, he understood the gravity of the situation, but I wanted more than a temporary reprieve. I wanted his word he would take no revenge for this, make no attempt to come for you if this issue ceased to be relevant.”

I wanted to protest. How could something like that not be relevant? I managed to keep my mouth shut.

“I’ll do whatever is necessary to keep Elio safe, sir,” Tony said.

“You’re right. You’ll do anything I tell you to do,” Lucien said. “And I have many ideas for your future, but for now the matter is settled. I have purchased Elio’s

freedom. He belongs to us.”

“Purchased?” I couldn’t stop the word from exploding out of my mouth. How dare he? Lucien turned to Tony.

“Learn to rein him in. I don’t need another liability on my payroll.”

“Yes, sir,” Tony answered.

“You’re very expensive, but you’re going to make me a hell of a lot of money to make up for it. I’m turning you over to Uncle Dom. He and his men will teach you how to take money from a number of unfortunates who’ve gotten themselves in trouble by borrowing from us.”

Tony stared at Lucien. “Dominic Marchesi? I...I thought he was a myth.”

Lucien laughed, the sound echoing eerily. “Most people wish he was, but he’s very real, and you will follow his every order, or this situation”—he gestured toward me—“won’t be allowed to continue.”

Tony reached back and took my hand. “Elio is under my protection.”

“Not if I say otherwise. I could make millions by selling your boyfriend. Earn your keep, or we’ll see about an auction. Don’t make me regret my choices.”

He was bluffing. He had to be. “You said I was on your payroll too.” Apparently I couldn’t keep my mouth shut for long.

“Your job is to make sure Tony doesn’t screw up. He’s a hothead with no discipline. That’s not how I run things. Make sure he learns how to walk the straight and narrow, and if Dom has need of your other services, he’ll give you orders as well. I hear you’re rather good at finding out people’s secrets.”

I smiled. "I am happy to pay my way, sir."

"Watch it." Lucien turned and left. Vinnie followed him, but the other man stayed.

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I thought he was going to kill you."

"So did I."

"Were you there when he talked to my father?" Elio asked.

"Yes, it was fucking impressive."

"This is my cousin, Micky," Tony said. "He's the one who got me this job."

Micky scowled at him. "Don't go blaming me for anything,"

"I can't believe Lucien paid for me. Why?"

"Because Vinnie told him the two of you were in love. Not many things will make Lucien bend, but that is one of them." I realized then that as badass as Lucien was, he wouldn't really sell me. I also realized Tony had to have told Vinnie he loved me even before he'd told me. He really was ready to do whatever it took to protect me.

"I've got to go," Micky said. "I promised Vinnie I'd take care of something. If I don't, I'll have to listen to him yelling all night. Good luck with Dominic."

Tony snorted. "I'm going to fucking need it."

When Tony had closed the door behind Micky, I sank onto the couch. "I can't believe my father sold me to his enemy. I mean, I shouldn't expect anymore from him, but...."

“You don’t need him. He’s never cared for you, I do. My family might be scary—and crazy—but they take care of each other.”

“Tom told me that.”

“It’s true. You’re one of us now.”

“Because Lucien paid for me. That’s....”

“He paid for your freedom. He doesn’t own you.”

“Would he see it that way?”

“Yes.”

“Call him.”

“What?”

“I want to talk to him.”

“Elio, that’s crazy.” Even as he said the words, he pulled out his phone and sent a message. He watched the screen, and a moment later he made a call and held the phone out to me.

When Lucien answered, he said, “I did not expect to hear from you so soon. What trouble are you causing now?”

“It’s Elio. I have a question.”

Lucien remained silent.

“Do you really believe you own me?”

“I don’t believe in slavery. You make your own choices, but you owe me a debt.”

“Yes, sir. Have a good night.”

“I have a feeling you’re going to be as much trouble as Tony,” Lucien said.

“I never said my father didn’t have a reason to hate me.”

“Fucking hell. Two hot-blooded sons of bitches to deal with. You better not make me regret letting you live.” He ended the call.

“Satisfied?” Tony asked.

“Yes. Now tell me about Uncle Dom.”

Tony sighed. “Dominic Marchesi is a legendary mob assassin. He’s supposedly the youngest of Franco Marchesi’s siblings, making him only ten or so years older than Lucien. Some people say he was raised in Italy and never seen here until he was an adult. Other say he was illegitimate and that’s why no one ever met him. Others think he never existed except in name, and his kills were made by a number of different men. I’ve heard rumors that he’s dead or that he’s gone into hiding. Apparently, he’s alive and well and still working for the family. As far as I knew, a few of Lucien’s cousins ran the loan shark operations, but I guess they are his sons.”

“And now you work for this legend.”

Tony nodded. “I told you I would do anything for you.”

“I don’t think a man like that is going to allow you to get away with what Vinnie does.”

Tony wrinkled his nose. “No, neither do I.”

“You’re going to have to listen, no matter how mad it makes you. You’re going to have to play along, at least for a while. I haven’t gone through all of this to lose you.”

“No way in hell am I leaving you, but if you’re...if you think...we could still run.”

“No. We’re sticking with this life. We’re going to make it together. When you come home pissed off from having to follow Dominic’s rules, you can take it out on me, fuck me good and rough, make me do what you say.”

“Damn. That’s...I don’t deserve you.”

“That’s probably true, but you’ve got me. You had me from the first night you took me home.”

He grinned and shook his head. “I had you from the night we met when I put you up against the wall behind that fucking bar.”

I laughed. “Maybe. I love you, Tony. This isn’t what I planned, but?—”

“Do you regret it?”

“No, it’s so much better.”

“I love you too, baby.”

I kissed him then. Nothing—not even thoughts of our families—could keep me from being the happiest man in the world.