



Inheriting The Mafia (Mafia Mayhem: The Italian Connection #2)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: ~ Anthony ~

They were dead, all dead, an entire mafia family except me. The bastard son of mafia boss Anthony D'Angelo, and that made me the new head of the family. But inheriting the mafia is not all it's cracked up to be. People want me dead. I don't know if it's the same people that killed my family or someone new, and I wasn't sure it mattered. I had no plans to die anytime soon. I just wasn't sure how to prevent it.

~ Vito ~

I was the underboss of a mafia family and when they were all taken out in a bombing, I wanted revenge. Before I could do that, I needed to track down the illegitimate son of my boss, a man I never knew about until now. I wasn't sure what to think of Tony when I found him, but I did know I had to keep him alive. He was the head of the family now and I was duty bound to serve him. I just wished I wasn't so attracted to him.

Warning: Gay erotic romance. The material in this book contains explicit sexual content that is intended for mature audiences only. All characters involved are adults capable of consent, are over the age of eighteen, and are willing participants.

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~ Vittorio ~

"They're all gone?"

"All of them."

I sat down heavily in my chair when my legs gave out. How was it possible? Over fifty members of the same family, all gone?

"Even the children?"

"Everyone, Vito," Carmine replied. "It was supposed to be a celebration, not a slaughter."

The only reason I had not been there—and was probably still alive—was that I had been tasked with picking my Uncle Carmine up from the airport. His flight had been delayed. Otherwise, we both would have been at the wedding when the bomb went off.

It was a last minute thing. No one had known I was leaving the wedding festivities except me, Carmine, and our boss, Mafia Don Anthony D'Angelo. The mafia don we all followed.

"Do we know who did this?" I asked.

"Not yet, but we will. I have some people looking into it." Carmine took a sip of his drink before setting it back on the table, his fingers clenching around the glass. "The

only reason I'm not pointing fingers is because we need to be sure who was behind this before we do anything. If we go after the wrong family—"

"No, I know." I waved a dismissive hand at him. I knew exactly what would happen. No one would hold it against us if we took out the ones who had done this, but if we took revenge on the wrong family the consequences could be dire.

"How many soldiers did we lose?"

"About thirty," Carmine stated. "I told Enzo to call in some more men until we can figure out what we're going to do."

"What are we going to do, Carmine?" I asked. "Someone has to be the head of the family, except they are all dead. The other families will only accept you or me being in power for a little while. Eventually they will want us to have a permanent head of the family or they will want us to turn everything over to them so they can pick it over like vultures."

I shuddered to think who was going to try and take over now that every member of the D'Angelo family was gone. Unlike a lot of mafia families in the states, families here in Italy were based on bloodlines and only someone from the D'Angelo bloodline could head the family.

"That might not be exactly true."

My head snapped up. "What?"

The entire family had been at the wedding and, according to Carmine, they had all died in the explosion when the wedding venue blew up. The police were still investigating, but we knew it had been a bomb. We just didn't know who had placed it. There were a lot of people that wanted our territory. It could have been anyone.

Carmine drew in a heavy breath and then let it out slowly before speaking. "This information doesn't leave this room, Vito. I'm the only one Anthony ever told about this."

"Of course not." I hadn't gotten to where I was in the organization by sharing secrets.

"A couple of decades back, Anthony had to go to the states to deal with a situation there. Him and Maria were arguing at the time and hadn't spoken to each other in weeks. She was even threatening to move home to her parents' house."

That was hard to believe. Anthony and Maria always seem so happy together. That was the one solace I took in this mess. They had died together with their children and grandchildren.

"Anthony met a woman over there and had a one night stand with her. A few months later, he received a letter stating that he was going to become a father. A couple of months after that, the kid was born. DNA tests showed that he was Anthony's son."

My jaw dropped. "He has another kid out there?"

Carmine nodded. "I've never met the kid, but I did arrange for a monthly allowance to be sent to him until he reached the age of twenty-one. Anthony might not have been able to acknowledge the kid, but he was still his kid. He wanted him taken care of."

"If that's true, he can take over the family."

He'd be the only one left alive who could.

"We know nothing about him, Vito. We need to find him and then have him investigated first. We have no idea what kind of man he is. Not everyone is able to handle being the head of a mafia family."

I'd say the percentage was actually pretty low. Life in the mafia was not for the faint of heart.

"Do you know where he is right now?"

"Not exactly," Carmine replied, "but he was born in New York City."

"Do you know his name at least?"

Carmine cracked a smile. "Anthony D'Angelo."

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~ Anthony ~

The small hairs on the back of my neck were standing up and I was getting a chill down my spine cold enough to make me shiver. That was never a good thing. Usually, when I felt that unsettling sensation, something bad was about to happen.

I picked up my pace, deciding that I needed to be somewhere else.

Anywhere else.

The stairs leading up to the elevated train station were just ahead. I hurried up the stairs, taking them two at a time, needing to get to the top as quickly as I could.

Once I reached the top, I scanned the platform on both sides of the track. There were a couple of people, but they seemed lost in their own world, or their cell phones.

Making sure no one was watching me, I jumped up and grabbed the edge of the overhang covering the platform and then swung my body up. I laid flat as I could on the angled metal roof and then held my breath when I heard hurried footsteps coming up the stairs.

A smirk crossed my lips when two men came into view. What was strange about them was not the fact that they were looking for me, but that they were both dressed in dark suits.

Who stalked someone in a suit?

The bigger question here was why they were stalking me? I had no idea who these guys were. I'd noticed them following me about two days ago. At first, I had brushed it off, but after seeing them again and again, I couldn't dismiss the idea that they were watching me anymore.

I just didn't know why.

The two men could easily see that I wasn't anywhere on the platform. The only people there were all staring down at their phones and none of them looked like me. Still, the two guys did search the platform.

Idiots should have looked up.

When they walked under the roof overhang, I couldn't see where they went or if they had left. Looking would have given my position away. Instead, I waited until the train pulled up to the platform and the doors slid open.

People climbed onboard and couple of people climbed off. I waited until the last possible second and then flipped myself down to the ground and darted onto the train. I barely made it inside before the doors closed.

I smiled and waved when I turned and saw the two guys in suits staring at me. Yeah, they hated me. I could see it in the glower on their faces.

Whatever.

I didn't know them so they didn't matter.

I found a seat and waited for the train to reach my station. I was so glad to be going home. It had been another long day in a line of long days, but, that was the life I lived.

Get up, go to work. Finish work, go to my second job. Finish that and go to my third job, and then finally go home and pass out until the next day when I did it all over again.

I had two full time positions and one part time position. It wasn't optimal, but I was saving up for my future. One of these days, I was going to have enough to pay for school and a better place to live, and then the sky was the limit.

Technically, I was away from my little studio apartment more than I was there. If I didn't need a place to store my stuff, wash, or catch a little sleep, I would have given it up a long time ago and lived under a bridge.

When the train finally stopped at my station, I grabbed my backpack and walked off. I made a quick scan of the platform before heading for the stairs that led down to the street level.

If those guys had been following me for a few days, they probably knew what stations I used. That also meant they probably knew where I lived. I needed to be cautious when going home. Maybe I'd take the fire escape up or jump over the rooftops. Wouldn't be the first time.

Life in New York City was an experience.

When I reached my block, I stopped in at the corner market to grab something for dinner. I didn't really feel like cooking tonight, but I also couldn't spend a lot of money.

I lived a sparse life, but I knew it would get better. In the meantime, I needed a loaf of bread to go with the jar of peanut butter I had waiting for me at home. Luckily, tomorrow was payday from one of my jobs and that meant an upgrade in my dining fare. I might splurge and buy some instant ramen.

I carefully fit the loaf of bread into my backpack and then slid the pack onto my back. If these guys were waiting for me outside my apartment, I needed my hands free so I could run.

Yes, yes, people used their legs when they ran. I got that. What I did was something called Parkour , which was the art of moving from one point to another in the fastest and most efficient way possible. It involved a range of movements like running, jumping, climbing, vaulting, and rolling.

I was very good at it.

I left the corner store and walked around to the alley at the back of the building. I had to stand on the edge of the dumpster to reach the metal fire escape stairs.

Being short sucked.

Once I had a hold of the bottom rung of the stairs, I pulled it down and climbed up to the first landing. It was easy to climb up to the rooftop after that. I hurried over to the far side, the one that faced my apartment, and then crouched down so I could scan the street below.

It didn't take me long to spot the people watching my apartment. For one, this was not the best neighborhood in the city. No one with a car that fancy lived around here. And for two, the idiot in the driver's seat was smoking up a storm. There was a small pile of cigarette butts on the pavement right outside his window, telling me that they had been parked there for awhile.

Where did they get these guys? Didn't they know anything about stakeouts? The idea was to hide in plain sight, not stick out like a sore thumb.

They'd never make it on these streets fulltime.

I shook my head as I pushed away from the edge of the roof and made my way back to the fire escape. Unfortunately, my apartment was on the other side of the street. I'd need to go down, walk a couple of blocks so I could cross the street without being seen by my stalkers, and then climb back up to get to my place...or I could just fuck with them.

That sounded more fun.

I climbed down the fire escape and went back to the market. This would dip into my budget, but not that much. I purchased two cups of coffee and then grabbed a handful of sugar and creamer packets.

I kept to the shadows as I made my way down the block to the fancy black car. I could hear the low murmur of voices as I drew closer, but I couldn't quite make out what they were saying.

I scurried up the side of the car to the passenger window and knocked on the glass. The two men inside jumped, their eyes widening when they saw me. The guy in the passenger seat slowly rolled his window down.

"I know stakeouts can suck, so I brought you some coffee," I said as I handed him the coffees and packets. I then bent down so I could look at the driver. "Don't forget to clean up your cigarette butts before you leave. It's rude to leave your garbage for someone else to clean up."

With that, I stood up and made my way across the street to my apartment building. I smirked to myself when the murmuring I had heard earlier grew louder.

I still didn't know why they were watching me. I probably should have asked, but I was too tired. Working three jobs took it out of me after awhile. Luckily, I had the next two days off from two of my jobs, which meant I could sleep in tomorrow

morning.

I was so looking forward to that.

I made my way inside my building and then up the stairs to my fifth floor studio apartment. One of the things about living in a cheap building was that they didn't tend to repair things, like elevators. Damn thing hadn't worked since before I moved in.

Whatever. At least the exercise was good for me.

Just because I'm a paranoid bastard, I approached the door to my apartment with caution. I checked all around the doorframe, smiling with relief when I spotted the hair I'd left caught between the door and the frame. If anyone had opened the door, the hair would have fallen to the floor. Since it was still there, I knew it was safe to go inside.

I took out my key, unlocked the door, and pushed it open before stepping inside. As quickly as I had stepped inside, I shut and locked the door and then grabbed the metal bar next to the door and placed it in the holders attached to the wall on each side of the door. The locks in this place sucked.

You can never be too careful.

I turned and took two steps into the small room before I realized I had made a mistake. The soft tic of a lamp turning on froze me in place.

I stared at the man sitting in the only lounging chair in the room. The lamp cast shadows across his firmly cut jaw and darkened brow, making it nearly impossible to read his expression.

He was a powerful man. I could tell that at least. As muscular as he was, I had no

doubt he could bench press me with ease. His posture was casual, one muscular leg crossed over the other, stretching the seams of his black slacks near to bursting. He seemed as if he didn't have a care in the world, but something told me that could change in a heartbeat.

"Who are you?" I asked. "What do you want?"

"I've been waiting to speak with you, Mr. D'Angelo."

Well, apparently, he knew who I was.

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~ Vittorio ~

"Who are you?"

I took a moment to look the man over before giving him an answer. I had to admit, this Anthony D'Angelo was not what I expected. I could see glimpses of his father in his straight Roman nose and the scruff along the firm cut of his jaw, but he must have gotten his honey-colored eyes from his mother.

I wasn't sure how I felt about the earring.

"My name is Vittorio Antonelli," I finally answered. "I'm here to talk to you about your father."

The man snorted as he pulled his backpack off and dropped it on the floor next to the door. "I have no idea who that is."

My eyebrows lifted. "You don't know who your father is?"

"Well, my mother was a whore, so..."

"Was?"

Had the woman died?

"She took off with one of her customers when I was about twelve. Never saw her again. I figure she's either living the life of her dreams or dead in a ditch somewhere.

Doesn't matter one way or another. As long as she never comes back, she can do whatever she wants."

There was a lot of anger and resentment in that statement.

"Who did you live with if your mother took off?"

Anthony's eyebrow snapped together. "What's it to you?"

"Just a question."

"Fine." Anthony's honeyed eyes rolled. "I was placed in state custody and went through ten different fosters homes over the next two years. When I was fourteen, I met my foster mom and lived with her until I turned eighteen." He crossed his arms and glared, raising one dark eyebrow. "Satisfied?"

"Why so many foster homes?" And why had this not been in any of the reports I'd received?

"None of your damn business," Anthony snapped. "Now, tell me why you are here. What does my father want with me?"

Now came the hard part.

"I'm afraid your father passed away two months ago."

Anthony stared at me for a moment, silent and unmoving. I could tell nothing from his blank expression, and that bothered me. I could usually read people better than this.

"Okay, fine, you told me," Anthony finally said, crossing his arms over his chest. "Is

there anything else?"

I wasn't sure how I felt about him dismissing his father's death so easily, but I had bigger things to deal with right now.

"There is."

Anthony drew in a heavy breath that seemed to move his entire body and then reached up to rub the bridge of his nose between his fingers.

"Look." He planted his hands on his hips and gave me another one of his death glares. "I've been working all day. I'm tired. I still have to eat, shower, and try to get a couple of hours of sleep before I have to get up and go to work again. Unless its life or death, I'm not interested."

"The death part has already happened," I pointed out. "Your father is dead, remember?"

Anthony squinted at me. "Is that supposed to mean something to me? I don't even know this guy's name. My mother never named him, not even on my birth certificate. Why should I care about some stranger that hasn't ever spoken a single word to me?"

Anthony took a quick step back when I suddenly stood up. I realized immediately that I was several inches taller than him.

Strange, he seemed bigger.

"You may not care, but I do. I've spent the last fifteen years of my life serving your father."

"I'm happy for you," Anthony replied. "What does it have to do with me?"

I grit my teeth to not lash out at the guy. He was being very defensive and it was making this conversation a lot harder than it had to be.

"Two months ago, the entire D'Angelo family gathered for the wedding of one of your father's nieces. She was your cousin."

Anthony's brow furrowed. "Was?" he asked just as I had a few minutes ago.

"Someone placed a bomb in the wedding venue. Every member of the D'Angelo family was killed, including your father."

"How...?" Anthony swallowed hard. "How many?"

"Fifty members of the D'Angelo family and another thirty security guards that were there to protect the family." Even after two months, I still reeled with shock every time I thought about how many people had died. "The bomb killed everyone."

"Oh, my god," Anthony whispered. "Who would do something like that?"

I narrowed my eyes at the man. "You really know nothing about your father?"

Anthony shook his head. "My mother refused to discuss him and grew violent any time that I asked." He shrugged as if the comment about violence meant nothing. "I learned not to ask."

"Your father was the head of the D'Angelo family in Italy."

Anthony just stared at me as if he couldn't comprehend what I had just said. "And that means what?"

"The D'Angelo family is mafia."

Anthony seemed to digest that knowledge for a moment before asking, "Was it a rival mafia family then?"

"We suspect so," I answered, "but we're still gathering information."

"Who is we?"

"Carmine Antonelli, my uncle. He was your father's consigliere ."

"I don't know that word."

He didn't know Italian? How was that possible? He was Italian. He lived in a city inundated with Italians, American born and immigrants.

"Carmine was your father's advisor," I finally said.

"What did you do for my father?" Anthony asked.

"In mafia terms, I was the D'Angelo family underboss. I was basically second-in-command, but I took care of most of the day to day operations and made sure your father's orders were carried out."

That was the simple explanation for what I did for Don D'Angelo. The more in-depth answer would take too long to explain, especially when I was here for another reason.

"In my world, only a blood relative can take over the D'Angelo family. You are the last member of the D'Angelo bloodline, which makes you the new head of the family."

Anthony's lips parted and a small gasp of breath came out of his mouth. "You have lost your damn mind."

"While I agree with you in part, that does not change the fact that you are now Don D'Angelo."

I was pretty sure that Anthony's snort was appropriate under the circumstances. I didn't see how this guy could be the new head of the family either. He didn't even speak Italian.

We'd need to change that.

There were a lot of things that we'd need to change. Increasing his protection detail was at the top of the list. Anthony clearly needed the extra security. I doubted he'd ever seen a gun let alone shot one.

"So, what does that mean?" Anthony asked. "Can't I just hand this position over to someone else?"

"No," I said firmly. "Only the direct bloodline can run the family."

"I'm not mafia."

"You are now."

"But, I—"

"Look, just pack your things, grab your passport, and I'll take you back to the family estate in Italy for a couple of weeks. You can take a look around and see how we do things. If you totally hate it, we'll figure something out."

"Why would I have a passport?" Anthony asked. "I can barely afford food. Traveling anywhere outside the six city blocks I live in is like a pipe dream."

"We can get you a passport and you can consider this a vacation or something."

Anthony shook his head. "I really can't. My bosses would never let me have that much time off."

I squinted at the man, beyond confused. "You do realize that you are now a billionaire, right?"

Anthony paled to that of a white sheet. "B-B-Billionaire?"

"Billionaire," I said slowly. "Yes, you are the sole beneficiary of the entire D'Angelo family holdings. That makes you a billionaire. You don't have to work whatever job you've been working anymore."

"Jobs," Anthony answered absently as if he was still reeling from what he'd just learned. "I have three jobs."

Damn.

"Well, you don't have to work any of them anymore."

I was a little shocked that the man was working three jobs when his father had been a billionaire. He should have been living in the lap of luxury, illegitimate son or now.

"What happened to the money your father was sending you?" He might not have lived in the lap of luxury with it, but he should have been better off than he seemed now.

"What money?"

I guess that answered that.

"When your father learned of your birth, he arranged to have money sent to you every month for your care."

"Yeah, I never saw a penny of it."

After learning about his mother, I was not surprised.

"I don't know what happened to it, but I can guess. Don D'Angelo might not have been able to be in your life, but he did do the best he could to support you."

"Can you tell me about him?" Anthony asked.

"What would you like to know?"

He shrugged.

"Well, he was very protective of his family."

"Family?" Anthony asked. "Did I have siblings?"

I tried to hide my wince, but I guess I didn't do a very good job of it. Anthony sighed as he rubbed his forehead.

"You had two brothers and a sister. The oldest was being trained to take over for your father when he retired, but now..." There really wasn't much else to say on that subject. It would never happen. A bomb had seen to that.

"How old was he?" Anthony whispered.

"Antonio? He was twenty-three."

"Are you saying that he was younger than me? I was the oldest out of all of them?"

"Of your half-siblings, yes," I replied. "A few of your cousins were older."

"But you said my brother was taking over," Anthony pointed out. "Why didn't one of them if they were older."

I grimaced before stating, "Don D'Angelo wanted his son to take over the family."

A burst of laughter shot out of Anthony's mouth. "I guess the joke is on him then. The son he ignored will be the one taking over the family."

Yeah, I still wasn't sure how I felt about that. Even if he was illegitimate, Anthony was still Don D'Angelo's son. He should have been taken in and raised in the family, not abandoned and left to grow up in foster care.

"So, I'm rich?"

I blinked in surprise—or maybe shock—before nodding. "There are some papers that need to be signed, but yeah, you're rich."

"Oh, thank god," Anthony groaned as he walked toward the only bed in the place. If you could call it a bed. It didn't look wide enough for a cat let alone a full grown man. "I can sleep in."

I stood there astounded at the direction this conversation had gone in and watched as Anthony took off his jacket, kicked off his boots, and then face planted in the mattress.

"You can see yourself out," he barely got out before he was snoring.

What the hell?

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~ Anthony ~

God hated me.

I was sure of it.

I groaned as I rolled over and sat up. I wanted to yell at whoever was making all that noise, but the sight of several men dressed in black suits packing up my apartment was a little more alarming.

I narrowed my eyes as I pinned them on one specific suit that I remembered very well. "Did you pick up your garbage?"

Everyone in the room froze in place and then they all turned to look at me like some animated horror movie. I refuse to let them know how unnerving it was.

"Well?" I asked in a haughty tone. "This is my neighborhood and I am damn sure not going to clean up your cigarette butts because you're too damn lazy. You shouldn't be smoking in the first place."

"No, sir, Don D'Angelo," the man gave me a quick bow, bending almost in half. "I'll do it right now."

Oh, right. Don D'Angelo. I'd forgotten that part. Well, I hadn't forgotten. I'd thought it was all a dream my crazy ass had conjured up in my sleep. I still wasn't positive I wasn't dreaming.

One of the suits walked up to the side of the bed and gave me a bow just like the other guy, but he didn't bend in half, just bent his head down. "Good afternoon, Don D'Angelo. My name is Mateo. Can I get you some coffee?"

I perked up. "Coffee?"

"How do you take it, sir?"

If I was dreaming, I was going to dream big. "Large iced double mocha, extra shot of espresso, extra sweet with dark chocolate, whip, no drizzle."

Mateo's eyes widened for a moment before he schooled his features. "Of course, sir. I'll get it for you right away."

I almost snorted. Good luck finding a coffee shop in this neighborhood. He'd have to drive at least ten blocks to find the nearest coffee shop, and I do mean drive. Guy like him? He'd be mugged before he reached the end of the block.

I flipped the blankets back, frowning when I saw I was only dressed in my boxers. I don't remember going to bed in boxers. I didn't own any boxers, and even if I did, who the hell wore silk boxers?

Whatever.

I absently scratched my chest, yawning as I stood and started for the bathroom. Room full of suits or not, a guy had needs, and this guy needed to pee.

I quickly took care of business, washed my hands, and then stared at myself in the mirror. I actually looked better than I had in awhile. Must have been all the sleep, which had been sorely lacking as of late.

I jumped when there was a sudden knock on the bathroom door. "Yes?"

"I have clothes and a shower kit for you, sir."

It sounded like Mateo, but I thought he had gone for coffee.

I reached over and pulled the door open.

It was Mateo.

"Your coffee is on the way, sir. It should be here by the time you get out of the shower." He held up a suit bag and a small black shaving bag. "Vito asked me to give these to you."

"Vito?" Who the hell was that?

"My apologies, sir," Mateo replied. "Vittorio Antonelli. I believe you met him last night."

"Oh, right, him." I squinted at suit guy. "He's real?"

Mateo smiled as if my words amused him. "Yes, sir, very real."

Huh.

I had been convinced that he was a figment of my imagination. A really sexy, yet totally scary figment.

I needed more sleep.

I took the suit bag and the shaving kit and then shut the door. I hung the suit on the

back of the door and placed the shaving kit on the counter before opening it up. Razor, shaving cream, toothbrush, toothpaste, and some high end looking cologne I had never heard of, but it smelled nice.

I left it all in the bag and climbing into my itty bitty shower. It kind of reminded me of a Borg maturation chamber. It was so small, if I put my hands on my waist and stuck my elbows out, I would touch both sides of the shower stall. I wasn't about to complain, though. Mine was one of the few apartments in the building that had their own bathroom.

I paid extra for that privilege.

I washed my hair and then did a quick scrub down on my body before turning the shower off and climbing out. The towel was still hanging on the bar so the suits must not have packed this room yet.

I dried off and then wrapped the towel around my waist and tucked the end in so it wouldn't fall off. I grabbed the shaving cream and lathered up the areas I wanted to touch on and began shaving.

There was no way in hell I was touching my mustache or the low cut beard that went along the edge of my jaw line. It took me too long to grow the damn things.

I was pulling the razor along the edge of my jaw when someone knocked on the door. The sudden sound made me jerk, digging the edge of the razor into my skin.

"Fuck!" I dropped the razor onto the counter and grabbed some toilet paper to dab at the small trail of blood trickling down my neck.

"Sir?"

I growled as I reached over and yanked the door open. "What?"

Mateo's eyes rounded as he held up a clear plastic cup with brown liquid and ice in it. "Um, your coffee, sir."

"Hold onto it," I stated. "I'll be out in a few minutes." I closed the door and then jerked it back open just as fast. "And don't knock on the door again."

I slammed the door this time and then went back to dabbing at my neck. Once the bleeding had stopped, I finished shaving and then washed my face and neck.

I refuse to put a piece of toilet paper on my cut.

I wasn't going to be one of those guys.

Once I was all cleaned up, I placed everything back into the bag and closed it. I eyed the suit bag for a moment before reaching over and pulling the zipper down. Considering everyone out there was wearing a dark suit, I couldn't wait to see what they had found for me to wear.

"Okay," I whispered to myself as I looked at the trim cut black suit. "I'm impressed."

One of the jobs I had when I was younger was cleaning a clothing design factory after hours. It was rather high end so I'd seen a lot of different materials during that time and seen what the designers did with them. I knew quality when I saw it. If I had to hazard a guess, I'd say this suit cost more than I made in a year.

God, that was so sad.

I happily pulled the black suit out of the bag and put it on.

I ditched the tie.

Blah!

When I looked at myself in the bathroom mirror, I was stunned. I feathered the collar of the white shirt and then smiled to myself. I didn't know if it was the near perfect cut of the suit or the design, but I looked damn good.

I grabbed the suit bag and the shaving kit and then opened the door and stepped out into relative silence. Granted, the studio wasn't that big, but I still looked around. Except for Mateo, it was empty.

"Where'd everyone go?"

Mateo turned away from the window and looked me up and down. He must have been satisfied with what he saw because he sent me a smile. "They are waiting downstairs, sir."

"Tony."

Sir made me shudder.

Mateo's brow crinkled. "Sir?"

Yep, shudder.

"Call me Tony," I explained. "Don't call me sir. I work for a living."

I think.

Did I still work?

"So, where's my stuff?" It might not be much, and it certainly wasn't worth much, but it was still mine. I'd worked hard for every single item. I wasn't about to give it up just because I was floating around in some weird dream world.

"It has been packed up and is now being driven to the airport so you can take it to Italy with you," Mateo replied. "Vito said you'd want to take everything with you."

"They're not coming back for the furniture, are they?" I asked. "Because none of that is mine. This place came furnished."

"No, sir...I mean, Mr. Tony. We just packed your personal items."

Yeah, Mr. Tony wasn't much better than sir, but I doubted I could get Mateo to change it.

"Where is Vito?"

"He's in a meeting at the moment, but he should be here soon."

"I'm here," Vito said as he walked into the apartment. He stopped for a moment and stared at me. When it just went on and on, I started to grow nervous.

"I'm not wearing the tie."

Vito shook his head. "If that is your choice, sir."

I rolled my eyes.

"We have an appointment in twenty minutes to get your passport," Vito stated. "After that, we have to meet with the head of the Borelli family."

I gulped as a sudden fear slithered down my spine. "Vinnie Borelli?"

"You've heard of him?"

"Anybody that has set foot inside of New York City has heard of Vinnie Borelli. He runs Manhattan."

He was not a man to be messed with. He'd had a huge hand in the downfall of the O'Donnells, the Irish crime family that had run Queens for decades.

"Why do we have to meet with him?" That was one meeting I'd avoid if I could. I liked breathing.

"It's just a courtesy call," Vito said. "While we have different families, it's polite to visit when in the same city."

"I've lived here all of my life and never once have I had to meet with a mob boss." I'd kind of like to keep it that way.

"You are now a mob boss," Vito pointed out. "That means you have to make a courtesy call to keep peace between the families."

" Fiiinne ."

"Don't worry, beyond pleasantries, you won't have to talk to him. We shouldn't even be there for more than thirty minutes."

Thirty minutes was way too long for my comfort.

"Boris!" Vito called out.

My eyes widened when a massive form filled my doorway, blocking out every bit of light. I took a cautious step back. He was all bulging muscle inside of a dark suit that was straining at the seams.

God, did this guy even have a neck?

There was a slight upturn of Vito's lips as he said, "This is Boris. He's your new bodyguard. His sole purpose is to make sure no one hurts you or attempts to kidnap you. Do not go anywhere without him. If someone tries to separate you, ignore them."

I wasn't sure how I felt about having someone whose sole purpose was to keep me safe, even at the detriment of their own life, but if anyone could do it, it was this guy.

Pretty sure he could fight a bus and win.

I sent him what I hoped came across as a friendly smile and not an "I'm terrified out of my mind" smile. Boris nodded once and then clasped his hands together in front of his body and took up a position by the door. He was like a statue.

I wasn't even sure he was breathing.

I watched him for a moment before returning my attention to Vito. "So, what's the plan here? We get my passport and meet with this Borelli guy and then what?"

"Your jet is currently on standby at the executive hangar at the airport. Once we have your passport and we finish meeting with Borelli, we'll board the jet and fly home to Italy."

"I have a jet?"

"You have four jets, sir."

My left eye twitched. "Why would I need four jets?"

One would be more than enough, wouldn't it?

Vito sighed. "One is always on standby for you. One is on standby in case your main airplane needs servicing."

"And the other two?"

"For use by other members of your organization."

Yeah, that eye twitch wasn't going to go away anytime soon. "Just how many members are there in my organization?"

Vito glanced at Mateo.

I had no idea why.

"There are different levels inside the organization, Mr. Tony," Mateo explained. "In the upper level or inner circle are you, your underboss, or Vito, and his uncle, your consigliere . You also have your own security force which is twelve men. They work in teams of four on a rotating schedule."

"Is Boris one of them?"

"No," Vito stated. "Boris is always at your side. He's your personal bodyguard. The other twelve men keep you safe at home and when you are on the road. They are always around, but you won't see much of them. Boris, on the other hand, goes everywhere with you."

"Okay." I glanced back to Mateo. "Go on."

"Directly under the inner circle level you have three caporegimes or capos as you Americans like to say."

"And what do they do?" I asked.

"They report directly to your underboss and he reports to you. They each run a crew of about twenty soldiers. They are considered middle management. At the bottom, are the associates or worker bees. These are people that are not officially part of the organization, but often work with us on different things."

"That still doesn't tell me how many people are in my organization."

"We're still dealing with the fallout from the bombing," Vito said. "Above and beyond the family, we also lost over thirty men, including one of your capos. We're still restructuring the organization and hiring more men."

"We had about two hundred people on our permanent payroll before the bombing," Mateo stated. "We're down to a hundred and seventy at the moment."

That was a lot of people.

"And all these people work for me?"

"Yes, sir."

I let that one slide.

"That number does not include your household staff, sir," Mateo pointed out.

My eyebrows lifted in surprise. "I have a staff?"

Mateo smiled and clasped his hands together in front of him like Boris had. "Your main home in Italy is a twenty-three bedroom villa, sir. You also have a vacation villa on Lake Como, an estate outside of Paris, one in Tahiti, and a penthouse in London. You have to have a staff."

I was never going to get used to being rich.

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~ Vito ~

Meeting with Vinnie Borelli was not the first thing I would have chosen for Anthony to do after accepting that he was the new head of the family, but I had no other choice.

If we didn't play nice, a war between the families could start. Considering Carlos Borelli, the true head of the Borelli family, lived in Italy, keeping things peaceful was a must.

And that meant showing respect.

I wasn't sure Anthony had it in him. He hadn't been disrespectful or anything, but there were some lines that you didn't cross when speaking to a mafia don and I doubted Anthony knew what they were.

"So, we're going to go in and pay our respects to Borelli," I started. "Beyond greeting him, I want you to let me do all the talking. Borelli knows you are new to your position so I doubt he'll ask you any deep questions."

"Define deep."

"Anything pertaining to the family or organization."

"Well," Anthony said, "I don't know much about either so that won't be a problem."

"Anthony—"

Anthony glared at me. "Stop calling me Anthony. That was my father's name. My name is Tony."

"Very well, Tony. You can call me Vito."

He nodded.

"As I was saying, Borelli shouldn't ask you anything too important so try and let me do most of the talking unless he addresses you directly. And remember, be respectful."

"I'm not stupid, Vito," Tony snapped. "I know who Borelli is and I know what it'll mean if I piss him off. I'll be a good little boy."

I doubted he'd been a good boy a single time in his entire life. He had naughty written all over him.

"Once you've gotten your feet wet, things will get easier," I pointed out. "You just need to learn the ropes."

Tony groaned and dropped his head back against the seat. "That sounds boring."

It rankled a little bit that Tony was dismissing my life's work as boring. "Better bored than dead."

Tony snorted. "Says you."

I could feel a headache coming on.

"Please be serious about this, Tony."

Tony's face instantly changed, his jaw firming and his eyebrows pulling down low over his face. "I can be plenty serious when the occasion calls for it, Vito. As much as I need to learn all of this shit, you need to learn about me. At this point, you know nothing beyond the fact that at some point twenty some odd years ago, my father bumped uglies with my mother and I was the result. You know nothing about me."

"My apologies, sir." Yeah, I'd stepped into that one. "My job as your underboss is to ensure your safety and the safety of our family and organization. I did not mean to offend you."

"You didn't offend me," Tony replied. "I've been called a lot of things in my life and very few of them were good. I don't offend easily."

"Yes, sir."

I knew he was right. I knew nothing about him beyond the fact that he was Don D'Angelo's illegitimate son. If we were going to work together, I needed to learn more about him, what his capabilities were, and what I needed to teach him.

It might be the only way we'd survive this transition. The vultures were already circling, hoping to grab a piece of our organization. There was very little time to teach him what he needed to know.

"So, I'm confused about something," Tony stated. "The Borelli family and the D'Angelo family are both based in Italy, right?"

"That is correct."

"How does that work?" he asked. "I mean, do they all get along or fight or what?"

I was glad he was asking questions, but did he really have to start with this one? It

was complicated even for people that had grown up in the mob.

"There are currently four families based in Italy. Each of them govern their own territories. Some of them have branched out into other countries. For example, the Borelli's have a branch of their organization in New York City while we have one in Chicago."

"Huh, I've never been to Chicago."

"There will be plenty of opportunities for you to visit in the coming months," I stated. "Since you are new to your position, it would be good for you to visit all of your territories so people can see who you are."

"Do we have branches anywhere else?"

"We have a small branch in London, which is why you have a place there. We also have satellite offices in several of the Asian countries, some in Europe, and one in Los Angeles, although I would not suggest visiting that one as we are currently in a dispute with a cartel over there."

"A dispute over what?" Tony asked.

"Territory boundaries," I replied. "They want to sell their drugs in our territories. We've allowed it in the past, but they had to pay for the privilege. They no longer want to pay. They just want to take over the territory."

"Are we into drugs?"

"We don't manufacture them, but we do take a cut from those that do. The bulk of our money comes from shipping, which is why we have so many branch offices around the world."

"I know nothing about shipping and I'm horrible at geography."

I let out a small chuckle. "That's alright, Tony. You don't have to be. Most of what you will be doing is approving deals and making sure that the organization runs smoothly. You don't have to know all the ins and outs."

Tony shot me a look I didn't understand. "Do you know?"

"Yes, but I grew up in the organization. My father worked for yours before he passed away. I started at the bottom and worked my way up, learning everything along the way."

"How old were you when you started?"

"Ten," I replied. "Your father had a rule about no one starting in the business until they were at least ten years old. He wanted them to experience being a child before having to grow up."

Tony snorted and crossed his arms, looking out the passenger side window. "Maybe it was just me then."

"You what?" I asked.

"My father seemed so concerned with the welfare of everyone except me." The smile on Tony's face when he turned to look at me sent a shiver down my spine, but the sadness in his eyes made me want to punch his father. "So, maybe it was just me. Maybe I was the only child he wasn't concerned with."

"I told you he sent money every month for your upkeep."

"Did he ever check to see if I was actually receiving that money? Or send one of his

underlings to check? Because I can assure you, I never saw a penny."

I didn't have an answer for that.

"I don't know," I replied honestly. "I can only tell you about the man I grew up around. I can't comment on something that happened before I was there."

"And anyone that could is dead, right?"

"Uhm, that may not be true. My uncle was around during that time."

"Your uncle." Tony squinted for a moment. "He was my father's advisor, right?"

"He was," I admitted. "He's been your father's consigliere for almost forty years, but they were friends before then."

"How is it he didn't die in the explosion? Or you?"

"Uncle Carmine had been away on business. He was on his way home to attend the wedding when his flight got delayed so he chartered a jet. I was sent to pick him up at the airport and get him to the wedding. The bomb went off before we arrived."

I still got sick to my stomach when I remembered the scene we had pulled up to twenty minutes after the bomb exploded. There had been carnage everywhere, blood and bodies and so much burning debris we'd had to dig through it to get to everyone.

"Why didn't he take one of the family jets?"

"They had all been put into use bringing family in for the wedding."

"Let's not celebrate like that again. I like breathing."

"As much as I'd like to tell you that there is no danger, there is. We still don't know who set the bomb. We're looking into it, and we have a few ideas, but no concrete proof."

"It wasn't the Borelli family was it?"

I shook my head. "While I can't promise it wasn't them one hundred percent, I doubt it. The Borelli family has no reason to go after us. Their territory is bigger than ours and we don't deal in the same merchandise."

"Do they really need a reason?" Tony asked. "They are mafia."

I scowled at him before I could stop myself. "Contrary to modern movies and books, the mafia does not do stupid things just to do them. It has to be of use to them before they act."

Tony lifted an eyebrow. "Well, somebody certainly did or I wouldn't be in this position."

"Oh, no, I'm sure whoever placed that bomb was thinking taking out the entire D'Angelo family would benefit them in some manner. There is only one problem with that."

"What?"

"They didn't know about you."

"Somehow, that doesn't reassure me."

"It shouldn't," I warned. "Whoever is behind this wants the entire family gone. When they learn about you, they are going to want to take you out, too. Why do you think

you have such strong security?"

Tony heaved a sigh before stating, "Yeah, I was afraid you were going to say that."

"The plan is to catch them before they can take you out."

Tony let out a snort. "Good plan."

Well, it was the only one I had, so...

"We're here," I said when the car came to a stop.

"Oh, yippee," Tony groaned.

He did not sound enthused.

I just prayed he kept it together while we were visiting Borelli. I'd never personally met the man, but I'd heard horror stories about his grandfather. Carlos Borelli ran a tight ship, which I appreciated, but he didn't take shit off of anyone. Those that betrayed him usually died screaming.

I could only hope we weren't being fit for cement shoes by the end of this meeting.

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~ Anthony ~

I felt as if I was walking to my doom as we headed inside the large apartment building. I could name a hundred other places off the top of my head I'd prefer being right now. A meeting with a mafia boss was not one of them.

I never even considered putting it on the list.

I should have.

My jaw dropped when we entered the lobby. It was done in the style of the roaring twenties, with golds, creams, and blacks mixed in with art deco accents. It was very tastefully done. A little high end for me, but I applauded the designer.

We were met by four guards before we could take more than a few steps. I knew they were guards. They were wearing the same stupid black suits as my guards.

When one of them started walking toward me, I took a hasty step back.

"It's okay, sir," Vito said. "He's just doing his job."

As what? A Mack truck?

I saw one of the other guards start patting Vito down before moving on to the two guards with us. When the guy reached for me, I slapped his hand away.

"Don't touch me." I snapped.

"I have to pat you down before you can see Mr. Borelli."

I snorted very rudely. "Not unless you buy me dinner first."

A little flush filled the man's face before he said, "Sir—"

"No!" No one was touching me without my permission. I unbuttoned my suit jacket and held it up out of the way before turning in a full circle. "See? No gun."

I was not a threat to anyone.

The guy grimaced. "Please follow me."

I rebuttoned my suit jacket as we followed behind the guy, stepping onto the elevator. He pulled out a laminated card, waving it over a sensor built into the panel.

"How far up are we going?"

"The express elevator goes right to the penthouse, sir," the guard replied.

I really needed to stop watching mafia movies because everything I'd seen in the past said mobsters did business in low lit dingy bars and rickety old warehouses. Not fancy glass and cement buildings.

When the elevator stopped, the doors slid open to a small lobby with double doors. The lobby had the same design look as the main lobby on the first floor, but that was where it ended. The penthouse was all modern.

We were met by three more guards in dark suits the moment we stepped off the elevator. It was clear by the bulges under their suits that they felt we were a threat. It didn't help that we had only been allowed to bring Boris and one other guard with us.

I would have felt a lot calmer if we had more security.

Never thought I'd think that.

One of the guards stepped forward and gave me a bow. "Good afternoon, Mr. D'Angelo. My name is Marco. I'm Mr. Borelli's assistant. He's waiting for you in the living room. Please, come this way."

We were led through the double doors to the most astounding room I was pretty sure I had ever been in. The ceilings were twenty feet tall. There was a large entryway in the middle of one wall with a fireplace on either side.

Directly across from that was a wall of windows and large folding doors that led out to a large balcony that overlooked the river. The room was large enough to hold two separate seating areas with a grand piano in the middle.

I was so busy looking around I didn't notice the man standing by one of the couches until he chuckled. I felt a flush heat my cheeks as I schooled my features.

"Good afternoon, Mr. D'Angelo," the tall imposing man said. "I am Vincenzo Borelli, the caporegime of the Borelli family, but please, call me Vinnie."

I knew I had to play nice with this man even if I technically outranked him. I walked over and shook his hand. "Anthony D'Angelo." I turned and gestured to Vito. "This is Vittorio Antonelli, my underboss."

"Vittorio?" Vinnie smiled. "I have a cousin named Vittorio. Do you go by Vito?"

"I do, sir," Vito answered.

"Very good." Vinnie gestured to the couches. "Please, have a seat. Can I get you

anything? A drink? Some coffee?"

"Coffee would be fine," Vito replied. "Thank you."

I'd rather have a drink, but I didn't mention that. I suspected getting tipsy around a rival mafia don was not a good idea.

Vinnie snapped his fingers and one of the guards walked away. Marco, as he had introduced himself, took up a position behind Vinnie. When I glanced back, Boris had done the same thing with me.

All the testosterone in the room was giving me a headache.

"I hope you don't mind," Vito started, "as Mr. D'Angelo is new to this world, I will be speaking on his behalf today."

I swallowed tightly when Vinnie's eyes pinned on me.

"Is this okay with you, Mr. D'Angelo?"

"For now," I answered honestly. "I have a lot to catch up on."

Vinnie sent me a small smile. "My advice? Run as far and as fast as you can."

My eyebrows shot up. "Run?"

"I grew up in the life so I'm used to it," Vinnie explained. "You haven't and there is no learning curve here. If you get it wrong, you die."

Yeah, that was reassuring.

Not.

"I'm afraid it's too late for that, Mr. Borelli."

"Vinnie, please," he corrected me.

"I prefer Tony," I countered. "My understanding is that I am the only one that can take the position as head of the D'Angelo family and it beats working three jobs and living in a studio apartment."

I wasn't sure if my villa in Italy was anything like this place, but it had to be better than my craptastic apartment.

"There's a strong possibility that whoever took out the family will come for me next, so I doubt I'll have the position for long. Still, having a few days off from working three jobs would be worth it."

Getting more than four hours of sleep would be worth it. Pretty sure I'd have a heart attack if I slept through the night, so one way or the other I was probably going to die.

"Vinnie?"

I turned when someone called out from behind me. A slim chestnut haired man was walking into the room, a big smile on his face. A guard walked behind him, several bags in his hands.

I watched him walk right up to Vinnie and then bend down to plant kiss on his lips. My eyebrows shot up. I know I got most of my mafia knowledge from movies, but my understanding was that you couldn't be gay in the mob.

"Did you bankrupt me?" Vinnie asked as he took the black credit card the young man

held out to him.

"Tried to," the man replied. "You have a few dollars left."

It wasn't until he plopped down on the couch next to Vinnie that I got a good look at his face and realized he looked vaguely familiar. I just couldn't place him.

"Tony?" the man asked.

I squinted at him. "Do I know you?"

"Tequila sunrise with a handful of cherries."

When it clicked, I burst out laughing. "You know, no one orders that drink like that except you."

"You two know each other?" Vinnie asked.

"Tony was the bartender at my favorite bar," Nicky replied. "Although, I haven't seen him there for awhile."

"I stopped bartending there a year ago," I stated. "I got another job."

Or two or three.

Nicky frowned for a moment, glancing between me and Vinnie. "What are you doing here?"

Yeah, about that...

"It seems I'm the new head of the D'Angelo family. I'm here to pay my respects to

Vinnie before we fly to Italy."

"When did this happen?" Nicky asked.

"Yesterday."

Nicky's eyes rounded. "Dude!"

I shrugged. "It is what it is."

"But you're the boss," Nicky said. "The big boss. Vinnie isn't even the big boss. His grandfather is."

And I imagined that I'd have to visit and pay my respects to Vinnie's grandfather once we arrived in Italy. I hoped he was as pleasant as Vinnie seemed.

I doubted it.

"Maybe once you get your feet under you," Vinnie began, "we can sit down and discuss a shipping contract. I've recently expanded some of my business to Asia and need a good import and export company that can get my merchandise where it needs to go and on time. The one I was using recently...uh...went out of business."

There was a story there. I could feel it.

I wasn't going to ask.

"Why don't you give me a call once you're settled and we can talk?" Vinnie suggested.

I glanced at Vito, who nodded at me. "I will," I told Vinnie as I looked back at him.

"It'll probably be a couple of weeks, though. I've got a lot to catch up on."

My head was starting to ache already thinking about it. I wasn't sure what all I had to learn, but Vito seemed to think it was important, and even Vinnie had hinted at it, but I knew it was going to drive me insane.

Or drive me to drink.

I really wished I'd asked for a drink instead of coffee.

Vito stood and then gestured to me. "We should probably get going," he said. "We just wanted to touch base with you since we were in town, but we need to head to the airport."

"Yes, of course." Vinnie stood and then shook Vito's hand.

I quickly stood up to join him, shaking the hand Vinnie held out to me. "It was nice meeting you." I also shook Nicky's hand. "And good seeing you again."

"Next time you're in town," Nicky said, "maybe we can get together for drinks."

I chuckled. "As long as we get someone else to make them."

Nicky gestured to the large man standing behind him, the one that had brought in the bags. "Gino makes pretty good drinks."

The bodyguard, Gino, snorted and rolled his eyes. Not sure what that was about, but again, this was another one of those questions I wasn't going to ask.

Vito didn't blow out a relieved breath until we were out of the building and in the limo driving toward the airport. I glanced at him, once again shocked by how

handsome he was and yet so lethal looking. The power and strength that emanated from the man just from him sitting there breathing was as astounding.

It was an intoxicating combination.

When we pulled into the parking lot for the executive hangars, I whistled low under my breath. A guard stopped us at the gate, demanding identification. Only when we provided it did the guard open the gate.

It beat standing in line in the main airport.

When the car came to a stop and I reached for the door handle, Vito grabbed my arm. "What?" I asked as I glanced at him.

"You always let Boris check first."

Oh, right.

I doubted I would ever get used to needing security.

The number of things I doubted I would ever get used to was adding up quick.

Once we had been given the all clear, I climbed out and walked around to the back of the car. When the driver opened the trunk, I reached in and grabbed my bags.

"Tony."

"What?" I asked.

"Let them carry the bags."

"I'm perfectly able to carry my own bags."

Vito arched an eyebrow until I huffed and set my bags down. Once I did, he turned and casually walked into the building.

"I'm never going to get used to this," I whispered as I followed behind him. I could hear the footsteps of Boris following after me. The massive man was never more than a few feet from me.

Kind of creepy.

Inside the building, I stood next to Vito as he checked us in and then followed him to the hangar where we boarded a big white jet. The inside was surprising, ten tan colored leather chairs in two separate rows. There was a small kitchenette at the back with two doors just beyond.

I was curious about the doors, but Vito ushered me into one of the seats, taking the one directly across from me. The bodyguards that accompanied us took up seats behind us.

There was a palatable tension in the room as we waited for the airplane to start moving. I swallowed hard, trying to get even a sliver of liquid in my dry throat.

I'd never flown before, but I didn't think that was what was unsettling me. There was something else bothering me, but damned if I could figure it out what it was.

"How soon until the plane takes off?" I asked.

"Probably about thirty minutes," Vito replied. "Why?"

I jumped up. "I need to stretch my legs."

"Tony."

I ignored Vito and hurried toward the door of the airplane. Luckily, we hadn't even left the hangar yet. I quickly went down the stairs and started walking around the hangar.

"Tony, is everything okay?" Vito asked.

I turned and started walking toward him, noticing that Boris had also gotten off the airplane and stood next to him, his hands clasped together in front of him. One of the other bodyguards had also come off the plane and stood next to him.

"Tony?"

"I don't know." I started rubbing my hands up and down my arms. They didn't ache exactly, but I felt as if someone was sending an electrical current through my veins.

Something was definitely wrong. All my Spidey senses were tingling. Thoughts ran through my head at lightning speed, one after the other as I tried to figure out what was freaking me out.

On one of my treks through the hangar, Vito stepped in front of me, halting my steps. "What's wrong, Tony? Are you worried about flying? I can assure you, it's perfectly safe."

I shook my head. "No, the flying part doesn't bother me, but..."

Vito frowned. "But what?"

"Something isn't right."

I just didn't know what it was.

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~ Vittorio ~

Tony was totally freaking out. I could see it. His pupils were blow wide and he was rubbing his arms like he was seconds away from crawling out of his skin.

The next time Tony walked past me, I grabbed him by the arms. "What's wrong, Tony?"

I needed to get to the bottom of this before we took off. If he freaked out once we were in the air, he could cause the airplane to crash.

Tony shook his head. "I don't know."

"Tell me what you're thinking, what you're feeling," I demanded. "What's freaking you out?"

Was this guy a head case?

"I can't get on that plane."

I wanted to groan. "Why not?"

Tony shook his head. "I don't know."

"Are you afraid of flying?"

"No, I've never flown before, but it actually seems kind of exciting."

"Then what is freaking you out?"

Tony started to shake his head, but his gaze landed on the airplane. "I don't think I can get on that airplane."

This was going to make things messy.

"Tony, we have to get on the plane," I explained. "It's the only way for us to get home."

Tony shook his head frantically this time. "Nope."

I sighed, feeling a major migraine coming on. "Why don't you want to get on the plane, Tony?"

"Because I don't want to die!"

"Okay, okay," I said, trying to calm him down. "Just calm down. We don't have to get on the plane if you really don't want to."

Instead of being relieved, Tony shoved a hand through his hair and started pacing again. "Everyone needs to get off the plane."

My eyebrows shot up. "You want everyone off the plane?"

Tony nodded.

I wasn't sure what was freaking him out so much, but if taking everyone off the plane calmed him down, I'd do it. He was the boss after all.

I ordered Boris to tell everyone to get off the plane, including the pilot. He gave me a

confused frown, but did as I said. When everyone came down the stairs, I gestured for them to go stand in the registration office. I didn't want them to see their boss losing it.

"Okay, Tony, everyone is off the plane. Is that better?"

Tony nodded. "Is there any way we can rent another plane?"

My jaw dropped. "You want to rent a different plane?"

I had honestly thought he was terrified of flying.

"I won't get on that plane," Tony said vehemently. "But we still need to fly to Italy, don't we?"

"Yes, but..." I squinted at him before glancing at the airplane. What I was thinking didn't make any sense, but I couldn't shake the feeling that Tony knew something I didn't.

I snapped my fingers, getting Mateo's attention. "Go get two guards and search the plane, every inch of it. Look for anything out of place."

"Yes, sir."

I grabbed Tony by the arm and pulled him to the far side of the hangar. If there was something about the airplane that I needed to be worried about, protecting Tony was my first priority.

It took about twenty minutes before Mateo came rushing down the steps and then hurried across the hangar toward us.

"Stay here," I told Tony before going to meet the guard.

"Sir," the man said in a low tone, "we found something hidden in the bathroom behind the paper towel rack."

"What?"

"I think it's a bomb, sir."

"A..." My mouth opened and closed several times, but I couldn't seem to form words.

"Sir, what do you want us to do?" Mateo asked.

"Keep everyone off the plane. I need to make a phone call." As I pulled my cell phone out of my pocket, I turned and that's when I spotted Tony watching us.

Instead of making my phone call, I walked over to him. "How did you know?"

Tony frowned at me. "Know what? What did they find?"

"There is a bomb in the bathroom."

Tony paled, turning ashen white.

"How did you know?" I asked again.

Tony shook his head. "I didn't."

He had to have known.

"Tony—"

"Look, I didn't know, okay? I just felt like something was off, but I didn't know what it was. I had no idea you'd find a...a b-b-bomb." Tony suddenly dropped down into a crouch, cradling his head in his hands. "Oh man, someone really is out to kill me."

It certainly looked that way.

I dialed Vinnie Borelli. I certainly wasn't going to call the cops. "Mr. Borelli," I said as soon as he answered. "This is Vito Antonelli. I need your assistance."

"What seems to be the problem?" Vinnie asked.

"We found a bomb on our plane," I replied. "Considering who we are, I wasn't sure calling the police was the right choice. I'm not sure how things are done here in New York City."

"Is the bomb still active?"

"Well, it hasn't gone off yet, but I don't know much more than that. We found it in the bathroom behind the paper towel rack. I decided not to mess with it."

"Good choice," Vinnie stated. "I assume you're at the airport?"

"Yes, the executive hangar."

"All right, I'm sending some men there now. One of them is an expert in explosives. He should be able to disarm it. In the meantime, I'd suggest you get everyone out of there."

"I appreciate this, Mr. Borelli."

"I thought I told you to call me Vinnie."

I smiled. "Yes, sir."

"Okay, my people will be there soon."

"Thank you." I hung up, ordered Mateo to make sure everyone stayed away from the airplane, and then walked over to join Tony. "Vinnie is sending someone to disarm the bomb."

"I gathered from your conversation that we're not calling the cops?"

"Not a good idea," I said. "There would be too many questions."

"Oh, there are still going to be questions." Tony stood up and started pacing again. "How did someone know I was going to be on that plane? And when did they have time to put it in place? Isn't this hangar guarded?"

"Maybe," I said, "but I'm pretty sure they have surveillance. They might have caught something on camera that can give us a clue as to who is after you."

Tony glanced toward the office where everyone was waiting. "Do you trust everyone here?"

"I do," I said without hesitation. "I vetted them and trained them myself."

"Then let's go check out the video surveillance and see if your trust in them was well placed or not."

I nodded and started walking toward the office. I wasn't sure the manager would share the video willingly, but he would share it. I probably just needed to slip him a little money to get him to cooperate.

These guys got paid crap.

When we reached the office, I told Mateo to wait for Vinnie's men and then went to find the manager. Tony was right on my heels as I went to negotiate with the manager.

Surprisingly, it only took a hundred dollars to get the guy to agree to let us watch the video recording. I shoved everyone out of the room except for Tony and Boris and then sat down in the chair in front of the monitor to start watching the video.

"If you see anything, call it out."

I quickly rewound the video to where the jet had entered the hangar and then slowly hit play and watched right up until everyone came off the airplane just a few minutes ago.

I didn't see a damn thing.

I rewound the video, going back to the beginning again and then watched it again. I still didn't see anything. No one went near the plane except the fuel guy, but he never entered the plane. The pilot got off the plane and went into the office, but he was back less than ten minutes later.

Nothing unusual there.

"I didn't see anything." I glanced over my shoulder to Tony and Boris. "Did either of you?"

My heart sank when they both shook their heads.

"Is there any way that someone could have put the bomb on the plane before you all

left Italy?" Tony asked.

I didn't see how, but that actually made sense considering the last bomb had initiated there.

"It's possible I suppose." I'd know more once the bomb was disabled and I could get a look at it. Right now, I didn't want anyone going onto the plane in case it exploded. We'd already lost too many people. I didn't want to lose more.

"Who had access to the plane back in Italy?"

I shook my head. "I'll have to have Carmine look into it. I know there is surveillance there. It's our hangar. If there's something there, he'll find it."

"Can you call him?"

"I'll do that right now," I said as I stood. "Why don't you go out and wait for Vinnie's men?"

Tony nodded and walked out of the room.

I dialed my Uncle Carmine and then waited for him to answer. "Hey, this is Vito. There's a problem here."

"What happened?" Carmine asked.

It didn't feel right to talk about the weird interaction I'd had with Tony about his refusal to get on the airplane, so I just said, "We found a bomb on the airplane before take-off."

"Are you okay?" Carmine asked urgently. "What about Anthony?"

"No, no," I said quickly. "Everyone is fine. We found the bomb before it went off."

" Oh, grazie a Dio ."

"I need you to check the video surveillance at the hangar and see who had access to the plane. We didn't find anything here so the bomb had to be put on the plane before we left Italy."

"Yes, of course," Carmine replied. "I'll look into it right away."

"Vinnie Borelli is sending someone over to disarm it and get it off the plane," I explained. "I'll call you when it's over."

"Borelli, huh? Be careful of him," Uncle Carmine warned. "He's not as easy to deal with as his grandfather. I've also heard some disturbing rumors about him."

"Rumors?" My eyebrows lifted. "What rumors?"

Was this something I needed to be aware of?

"They are just rumors, Vito, and I don't like spreading rumors without proof."

"Just tell me," I insisted.

"The rumor floating around is that not only is Borelli gay, but he married a man. I guess they allow that in America now."

I rolled my eyes and refrained from huffing in disgust. I knew my uncle was old school and believed only a man and a woman could get married. He also wasn't that much in favor of people that were gay, although he mostly ignored it, but this?

"Yes, Borelli did marry a man," I said. "I met with them both earlier."

"You met him?" he asked. "So, it's true?"

"Yeah, it's true."

There was silence for a moment and then Carmine asked, "And his grandfather allowed that?"

"I guess," I replied. "I didn't ask."

It was really none of my business.

"I see," Carmine replied.

I clenched my jaw, trying to hold back my biting words. Carmine was old school. I got that. He was also straight as an arrow. I got that, too. But that didn't mean I agreed with anything he said.

Except for this one little thing, my uncle was a great man and I admired him a lot. I grated on me every time it came up simply because I was gay. I'd never told my uncle because he'd been spouting this garbage since the time I was in diapers.

To give him some due, it had been that way in the mafia for decades, maybe even centuries. It wasn't until the last few years that being gay in the mafia became accepted, and then only by a few.

That was the culture my uncle grew up in.

"Who Vinnie Borelli is married to is none of our business," I stated firmly.

"Well," Carmine said, "I guess nothing can be done about it now anyway. We just need to steer clear of him."

I winced at those words. "I'm afraid that might not be possible."

"Why not?"

"Because Borelli wants to discuss a deal with us," I replied. "He's looking into new shipping to Asia and wants to talk to us about it."

Carmine sighed. "We can't pass up a chance to get into bed with the Borelli family, as much as it galls me to do business with that man."

"I wouldn't mention that if I was you."

"No, no, of course not."

If anything, Carmine's sense of etiquette when it came to business would keep him from saying anything to Borelli. I would have to warn Borelli about my uncle and let him know that bringing his husband to any meetings was probably not a good idea.

Not because he should be ashamed of being married to a man, but because I didn't want Nicky to be exposed to my uncle. Nicky seemed like a good guy and didn't deserve that kind of animosity. I didn't deserve it either, which was why I doubted I would ever tell my uncle that I was gay.

"Let's talk about this later, Uncle. Right now, I need you to look at those surveillance videos. I need to know who put that bomb on the plane."

"You're right, of course. I'll go take a look and get back to you."

I had never been so glad to get off the phone with my uncle as I was in that moment. I really wished he'd get over his hang-ups when it came to gay men. There was nothing wrong with being gay, even in the mafia.

Borelli was proof of that. He was no less lethal than he had been before he came out as gay. If anything, he had become more dangerous since marrying his husband. He had something to protect now.

I stuck my phone back into my pocket and walked out of the security room to see if Borelli's men had arrived yet. I wasn't sure I wanted to mention the conversation I'd had with my uncle to Tony, but I did need to warn him about Carmine's dislike of gay men.

Hell, for all I knew, he could be thinking the same way. Better to not mention I was gay. I preferred my brain without a bullet in it.

"Are Borelli's guys here yet?" I asked when I spotted talking with Mateo near the door.

"Not yet," Tony said as he turned to me. "Were you able to reach your uncle?"

"I did. He said he'd call if he found anything." Carmine had said a lot more than that, but now wasn't the time to bring that up.

"I actually kind of hope he doesn't because that means there is someone in Italy out to kill me."

"We already know there is someone in Italy out to kill you," I reminded him. "It doesn't matter if they are here in America or back in Italy. We'll catch them." I wasn't sure how, but I promised myself to make it happen.

I turned toward the door when I heard a vehicle pull up. When I saw two large black SUVs, I gestured to one of the guards to go out and check on who it was.

I wasn't about to let Tony go out there.

When the guard came back, Vinnie Borelli was with him.

"I didn't expect you, sir."

Vinnie shrugged. "I wanted to come and see what all the noise is all about."

I had no idea what to say to that.

Vinnie gestured to a very large man that stepped into the office behind him. "This is Fred. He works for a friend of mine, but he knows his stuff. Jake loaned him to me with the understanding that I return him in one piece."

I shook Fred's hand. "Thank you for coming."

"Mr. Borelli said that you found an unexploded bomb?" the massive man asked.

"Yeah, we found it in the bathroom paper towel dispenser on Mr. D'Angelo's personal airplane."

"Everyone should stay here for their own safety." Fred nodded once and started walking toward the hangar.

"Hey, are you sure you can disarm it?" I asked. "It's not worth your life."

The man gave me a quick nod. "I was a demolition expert in the service. I've got this."

I hoped so.

I stepped into the hangar, but stayed by the door as I watched Fred walk to the plane and board it. The waiting was excruciating. I expected the plane to explode at any second.

I was shocked as shit when Fred walked out of the stairs and down the stairs twenty minutes later, a small black box looking thing in his hand. When he carried it over to me, I didn't know whether to run or stay and ask questions.

"It's perfectly safe now, sir," Fred said as he held it out. "I'd say whoever made this device barely knew what they were doing. The bomb is rudimentary at best, which is probably why it didn't go off before now."

I eyed the little black box with trepidation. "It can't go off, right?"

"No, sir." Fred held out his hand and showed me two brass cylinders. "It no longer has the parts needed to set it off."

That was a relief.

"So, you don't think it was a professional?"

"Whoever made it did have some skill," Fred explained, "but not on a professional level. He might be just starting out in the business and trying to make a name for himself or something."

That knowledge didn't get me any closer to figuring out who had done this. I was still clueless.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Anthony ~

I could see Vito and Fred talking through the window looking into the hangar. They seemed to be in a heated talk. I assumed it was about the little black box Fred had carried off the airplane.

They could be talking about anything I suppose.

What did mafia men talk about? It was a curious question that I really had no answer for. I knew it was something I'd need to learn about though, just like I needed to learn about everything else.

Still wanted that drink.

I leaned closer to Vinnie. "One mafia don to another, do private jets have alcohol onboard?"

Vinnie snickered. "The good ones do."

Wonder if I had a good one?

"Apparently, I own four. Do you think that means they have alcohol?"

Vinnie smiled at me. "More than likely."

"God," I groaned, "I hope so."

"Long day?" Vinnie asked.

"Oh yeah." The last twenty-four hours had been insane. I wasn't so sure I wanted to know what the next twenty-four hours would bring.

"Can I give you a little advice?"

"Sure." I turned and gave Vinnie my full attention. Considering how long this man had been in the mafia business, I'd take any advice he could give me.

"The mafia life is hard. The older generation tends to be pretty rigid in their belief system, which"—Vinnie let out a chuckle—"was probably established in the dark ages."

"Okay." I was so confused.

"Nicky told me that you are gay." When my eyes rounded, Vinnie quickly shook his hand at me. "Don't worry. He didn't tell anyone except me, but he was concerned about you."

"Concerned why?"

"Mafia isn't gay."

Uh...

"You are." I seriously doubted his marriage with Nicky was platonic.

"I am." The smile on Vinnie's face spread into a wide grin. "I refused to let myself get tied down with a bunch of decrepit old men that are living in the last century and I also refused to give Nicky up."

"Good choice."

"I lost a few family members because I refused to conform to their belief system, but not the important ones. My grandfather even gave us his blessing when we got married."

"So, what is your advice then?" I asked. He had to have some reason for bringing this up.

"While I don't think you should compromise who you are to be the head of the D'Angelo family, be careful. Not everyone is going to understand you being gay. When I spoke to my grandfather earlier, he told me that Vito's Uncle Carmine is one of those decrepit old men with the antiquated belief system. So, be careful."

I pressed my hand to my stomach when it knotted with unease. "Really?"

"Apparently, they've known each other since they were kids. My grandfather said that Carmine wasn't like that when they were kids, but I guess something happened when he was a teenager and it changed him. My grandfather never said what it was, but I gathered that it was pretty bad."

"I refuse to pretend I'm straight," I told Vinnie. "Not even for some decrepit old men."

I shuddered just thinking about it. Me and female squishy bits did not mix. I'd never even seen a woman naked in real life and I had no plans on doing so. Woman could be beautiful in their own way, but naked woman gave me the heebie-jeebies.

"Good for you." Vinnie chuckled. "Just be careful and don't flaunt it. It could get you killed."

"How did you do it?" I asked.

Vinnie shrugged his shoulders. "I think I was lucky. My grandfather knew I was gay from a young age. He just wanted me happily married to someone that loved me. He didn't care if it was a man or a woman."

Wish I had a grandfather.

"Just be careful, Tony. I'm not telling you to stop being gay because we both know it doesn't work that way, but be careful how you express it. Not everyone will accept it."

"Yeah, I'm not sure I can do that," I admitted. "I'm gay and I'm not ashamed of it. If they want me to be the freaking boss of this family, they are going to have to accept me just the way I am."

Vinnie chuckled as he patted me on the shoulder. "Good for you."

Pretty sure it was going to get me killed, but I refused to compromise my morals or myself. If they wanted me to be the head of the D'Angelo family, they were going to have to accept the fact that I was gay because I wasn't changing for anyone.

"I'm not sure how much you know about the families in New York City, but there are five families here. Four of them are the heads of their families, gay, and married to men so we all know about being gay in the mafia. If you have any questions about navigating the narrow paths of this world, give me a call. We might be able to give you some pointers."

"I will," I said, and I meant it. If Vinnie knew of others in the business that were gay and living the life they wanted, then making a connection with them would be in my best interest.

I'd still need to talk to Vito about it, but maybe I wouldn't tell him I was gay, not yet anyway. I still needed to settle in as everyone was telling me.

"Here they come," I said when Vito and Fred started walking toward the door between the office and the hangar. "Hopefully, they have found something that might help us catch whoever is doing all of this."

"I'd be willing to offer whatever help I can to find this person, or persons. Taking out the heads of families is bad enough. Taking out an entire family is reprehensible."

"Thank you."

"Spouses and children of mafia families are off limits in disputes," Vinnie explained. "Granted, not everyone follows that rule, but most do. It also means that there is a high probability if someone violates that rule, the other families would get involved. It's kind of a sacred rule that no one violates because they want their spouses and children to fall into that category as well and if they don't respect it with others then they can't expect others to respect it for them."

This was a good rule. I was certainly in favor of it.

"Since Nicky is my acknowledged and legally wedded husband, he falls under that veil. That means if anyone goes after him, I can take them out and the rest of the families won't sanction me. If you ever do get interested in someone, I'd suggest you marry them quickly so they fall under the family veil. It could save their life."

A little creepy, but nice to know any way.

That didn't mean I planned on getting married anytime soon. My dating life hadn't been horrible, but it hadn't been perfect either. Most guys my age were too busy partying and having a good time to care about real relationships, and I was only

interested in a real relationship.

My Aunt Maggie, the foster mother who had taken me in when I was fourteen, had been a widow. That is why she took in foster kids, so she wouldn't be lonely. She had told me countless stories about her husband, her soul mate, and the love of her life.

That's what I wanted.

Sure, I'd gone out and done my fair share of partying when I was younger, but that had been years ago. I'd come a long way since then and I knew what I wanted out of life.

This wasn't what I imagined.

When Vito and Fred walked in, Vito gestured to the black box in Fred's hand. "Fred was able to disarm the bomb. He said an amateur made it."

"Is that a good thing or not?" I asked.

"Kind of both, actually," Vito said. "If it was a professional, there would be some sort of signature to the bomb that could lead us to whoever made it. Since it was made by a novice, there's no signature so that makes it harder to find the bomb maker."

"So, how is that good?"

"Because the bomb didn't go off."

Yeah, that was good.

"I can have Mr. D'Amato's lab guys take this apart and see if they can find anything that might lead to the maker if you want," Fred suggested.

"Mr. D'Amato?" I asked.

I hadn't heard that name.

"Jake D'Amato," Vinnie said. "He's the one that loaned me Fred."

Okay, now I had a name, but I still didn't know who this guy was.

"If anyone can find something on that bomb, Dr. Teller can."

I squinted at Vinnie. "Dr. Teller?"

Another name I didn't recognize.

"Jake owns a company that invents things like computer components and package trackers," Vinnie explained. "Dr. Teller works in his lab."

"And you think he can pull apart this bomb and tell us who made it?"

"When it comes to Dr. Teller," Fred stated, "anything is possible."

I certainly hoped so.

Vito handed over a business card. "Please have your Dr. Teller call me if he finds anything."

"I will," Fred said as he took the card and tucked it into his pocket. He held up the bomb. "And I'll make sure that this is properly disposed of after Dr. Teller goes over it."

"Thank you."

"And please thank Mr. D'Amato for his assistance and loaning you to us," I added. "I know for a fact I have no idea what to do with that thing and I doubt that anyone else here does, too."

"It's not a problem, sir," Fred replied. "I'm pretty experienced with this type of thing."

My eyebrows lifted. "Handle a lot of bombs, do you?"

Fred smirked. "More than you'd think."

I didn't want to know.

I glanced at Vito, somewhat curious and concerned about where my thought process was going. "Can I ask a really weird question?"

"Of course," Vito replied.

"Is there any way that this could be an unexploded bomb on purpose?"

I grew nervous when Vito's eyes narrowed.

"Explain your thinking," he said.

"Well, it's not really fully formed yet, but the thought process is running at full blast."

"Go on," Vito encouraged.

"Well, it just seemed a little weird to me that someone made a bomb that was good enough to take out my entire family plus thirty guards, but this one was made by an amateur. It also seemed a little too easy to find. What if it's a decoy? What if it was never meant to go off because we were supposed to find it and not find the real

bomb?"

I winced when Vito, Vinnie, and Fred just stared at me. I hated it when people did that. I reached up and rubbed the side of my neck. "It was just a thought."

Vito turned and called for Siro. "Talk to management and get us a different jet. We're not taking this one home until it's been fully gone over."

"I'd be happy to let you use my jet," Vinnie offered. "I can have it here and ready to go in about an hour."

"Actually," Fred started. "I have a better idea."

We all turned to look at him.

"I'd have to talk to my boss, but I think you should use his jet, not Mr. Borelli's."

"Why?" Vito asked.

"Look, if someone really is trying to fool you, which is probably what is happening, then you need be a little more secretive with your movements. Someone is keeping tabs on you and seems to know your every movement."

Yeah, that wasn't creepy at all.

"If you use Mr. Borelli's plane, people are going to know about it before you even take to the airways."

"So, what do you suggest then?" Vito asked.

Fred grimaced before saying, "Take Mr. D'Amato's jet back to Italy. I can arrange for

a vehicle to be waiting for you at the airport, one rented under Mr. D'Amato's name. Don't tell anyone what you are doing. I'd even deactivate your phones."

"That's a little extreme, don't you think?"

"I don't, actually," Fred replied to Vito's question. "If this was Mr. D'Amato, that's what I'd do and I am the head of his security force."

When we all just stared at him, Fred huffed and said, "Look, someone is trying to kill you. You all need to fly under the radar and the only way to do that is to limit the number of people that know your movements. I'd advise you not to share what you are doing with anyone other than those in this room."

"I'm pretty sure my guards would figure it out if we took Mr. D'Amato's jet back to Italy," Vito pointed out. "I don't hire stupid people."

"Honestly, I'd send them home on a commercial flight."

Vito's eyebrows shot up. "You want me to send my guards back to Italy on a commercial airplane without us?"

Yeah, that sounded sketchy to me, too.

"I'm saying that only the six people in this room, plus my boss, should know your movements until you are safely home at your estate. Whoever is doing this seems to be a few steps ahead of you so you need to do something they don't expect."

While it still sounded a little sketchy, Fred did have a point.

"Jake's legit, Vito," Vinnie said. "Between him and his husband, he's brought four of the five families in New York together. We've all signed a peace agreement because

our husbands are friends and we don't want to piss them off."

Fred snorted. "They're menaces and you know it."

Vinnie chuckled. "Could be worse. You could be in charge of Kyue's security."

Fred visibly shuddered. "I'd rather flip burgers for the rest of my life."

"It would certainly be safer."

"Kyue?" Vito asked.

"Kyue Kincaid. He's married to Lucas Kincaid, a businessman. He also owns Seriphap Enterprises, although he hired someone else to run it because he's too busy creating motorcycle prototypes and then racing them."

"I've heard of Lucas Kincaid," Vito stated. "I can't think of many people who haven't. The man's worth billions."

"Means nothing to his husband," Vinnie said. "Lucas gives him shit and he just puts him on the floor."

My jaw dropped. "He abuses his husband?" How could they stand there and make light of something like that?

"Oh, no, he adores his husband," Vinnie said quickly. "He wouldn't hurt a hair on Lucas's head. He just won't take any shit from him."

"You need to understand," Fred started. "Kyue is like five foot nine inches tall. If he weighed a buck fifty, I'd be surprised, and yet, the police chief of our fair city has personally asked him not to put anyone else in the hospital."

"He's that violent?" I asked.

Fred snorted. "Only to people that piss him off."

"Kyue has never started a fight," Vinnie said. "He's morally against them. He'd rather get along with everyone or walk away before a fight starts, but if you mess with his husband, one of his friends, or don't let him walk away, he will put you on the ground or in the hospital."

I winced as my stomach curdled. "He sounds delightful."

"He's a good man to have in your corner, and luckily for me, he's taken my husband and the husband of the others under his wing. He protects them fiercer than a mama bear with a cub."

Still wasn't sure I wanted to meet this guy.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Vittorio ~

I glanced at the man sleeping slouched against my side. If someone had told me two months ago I'd be flying my new boss home on the plane belonging to a millionaire, I probably would have shot them.

And yet, here I was.

I reached over and brushed some of the hair that had fallen off Tony's face. He looked so young when he was sleeping, and innocent, which I knew was false. He had way too much attitude to be innocent.

That was good for him. Being innocent in the mafia could get you killed rather quickly. I just don't think he was as jaded as I was. He might have lived a bit of a rough life, but he hadn't lived a mafia life. I was kind of sorry that he was being dragged into it now. Whatever innocence he might have had would be gone before long.

"We're getting ready to land, sir," Mateo said as he took his eat and put on his seatbelt. "You might want to wake him up."

I nodded and then turned my attention back to Tony. I hated waking him up, but Mateo was right. Waking up in the middle of landing would suck.

"Tony," I murmured. "Time to wake up. We're landing."

"Huh?" Tony's eyelids flickered for a moment and then lifted. "What?"

He blinked sleepily up at me.

God, he was so cute like this.

"We're landing."

His brow furrowed. "Landing?"

"We're in Italy."

Tony snapped up as if just realizing now that he was sleeping on me. He frowned as he glanced around and then huffed, rubbing his eyes. "How long have I been asleep?"

"About four hours." I was pretty sure he needed the sleep, which is why I hadn't woke him up when he started leaning on me. "We'll get you some coffee once we land."

Tony groaned. "Coffee."

I couldn't stop the small smile that crossed my lips. He really was adorable. That could be a problem in so many ways. The first problem I could see was that I didn't think he had the hard streak needed to be a mafia boss. It took a certain hardness and lack of emotion. Tony seemed too sweet for that.

The second more pressing problem was personal. His cuteness was getting to me. I really liked looking at him. I liked listening to him and touching him. I even liked his sarcastic nature.

That did not bode well for me.

Hiding who I was had kept me alive. If word got out that I was gay, I'd be dead for sure. If word got out that I was interested in my boss, I'd be tortured before I was

killed.

At this point, I still didn't know if he was gay or straight, although I was leaning toward gay simply because of the appreciative looks I'd seen him give me a couple of times.

Didn't mean anything could ever happen between us.

There needed to be a clear line between the boss and everyone else. He was the top of pile, so to speak. The king of the hill. He made the rules and ensured that they were enforced.

We were his enforcers. We were dispensable. We followed the rules he laid down. We did not covet the boss or think of what he must look like naked and spread out all over a bed. We certainly did not think about what it would be like if we climbed into that bed with him.

God, I was so screwed.

"Put your seatbelt on," I reminded him as I did the same.

As soon as the plane started to go down, Tony grabbed my hand and squeezed the hell out of it. If he squeezed any harder, bones were going to crack.

"Is it always like this?" Tony asked in a very high tone.

"Pretty much."

"Why do people do this?" His wide eyes framed his face until he snapped them shut and his grip tightened on my hand.

I chuckled at his question. "Millions of people fly every single day. It's perfectly safe."

It was actually safer than driving a car. It was just that a plane crashing made the news, where most car accidents did not, so everyone freaked out about flying.

Tony let out a small whimper when the wheels touched down. He was shaking so hard, I could feel it through the hand he had wrapped around mine.

As soon as all the wheels were on the tarmac, I wrapped an arm around Tony's shoulders and hugged him. "It's over now. We're down."

"Some mafia boss I am."

"Your grandfather was afraid of spiders."

Tony lifted his head and blinked at me. "Spiders?"

"Yep, didn't matter how big or how small. If he saw a spider, he screamed like a little girl. We had to spray for spiders around the villa about once a week."

Tony let out a little snort. "I can handle spiders."

"I'll let the groundskeeper know. He'll be thrilled." I patted his back once and then let him go. "There's nothing to be ashamed of. Everyone is afraid of something."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Water," I answered honestly.

Tony's eyebrows lifted up to his hairline. "Water?"

"Not like water from a faucet or in a pool, but water where you can't see the bottom? You'll never find me in a lake or the ocean unless I'm on a boat, and maybe not even then."

"Why are you afraid of water?"

I sighed. "When I was a kid, I was at the lake with my family and some friends. I was swimming in the designated swimming area, which was surrounded by a big cable attached to buoys."

"How old were you?"

"I must have been about ten years old at the time," I replied. "Anyway, I was swimming with my friends and standing on the cable when I slipped and slid into the water. When I hit bottom, I dislodged a body someone had tossed into the lake and it floated to the surface right in front of me. Haven't been able to swim in deep water since."

Tony shuddered. "Yeah, I'm with you. No deep water."

"You'll get used to flying," I told him. "We travel a lot to visit different business sights and such. It'll be really hard to do business if you don't fly."

Tony groaned. "I'll get used to it, but it may take awhile."

"Well, you have a lot of catching up to do at home, so that shouldn't be too much of a problem." Before he could go out into the business world and wheel and deal, he needed to understand the business.

"God, I might have slept for four hours, but I'm still tired."

"We'll be home soon," I said. "You can rest there."

"How far is home?"

"We're based in Genoa so about two hours by car."

"Genoa doesn't have an airport?" Tony asked.

"It does, but Fred thought it would be better for us to land at a different airport in case anyone was watching the airport in Genoa."

"You know they are going to figure it out eventually, right?"

"Yes," I replied, "but hopefully not until we're behind the walls of your estate." I knew that place was safe. I'd set up the security myself and improved it over the years.

"How sure are you that we'll be safe there?" Tony asked. "I mean, someone did just take out my entire family."

"They did, but they placed the bomb at the wedding venue, not the villa." Nothing was ever perfectly safe, but the villa and its grounds were as safe as I could make them. "Whoever did this had to wait until the family left the villa to kill them."

"Wait." Tony frowned. "Everyone lived at the villa?"

"No, no, the family was spread out all over the place. We even had people fly in from Japan for the wedding. But no one could get a bomb onto villa grounds so they waited until everyone left for the wedding."

Tony's sigh was long and heavy. "I say we nix any large gatherings for the

foreseeable future."

"Probably not a bad idea." I didn't point out the fact that there was no one left to have a large gathering with. There was just him, and I'd do anything to make sure he didn't die like the others.

Yeah, there was a lot of guilt there. I should have seen it coming. Granted, I had warned Don D'Angelo that such a large gathering outside the grounds of the villa was a bad idea, but he had dismissed my concerns.

The ego on that man had been huge. He fully believed that he was so powerful, no one would ever go against him. Unfortunately, he and a lot of innocent people had paid for that mistake with their lives.

I wasn't going to let that happen to Tony.

When the airplane came to a stop inside the hangar, I unbuckled my seatbelt and stood, waiting For Tony.

"Don't we need to check in with immigration or something?"

I shook my head. "No." We probably should, but we were skipping that scene this time. "I'll have that dealt with after we get home."

Getting him back to the safety of the villa was my only concern at the moment. Everything else could wait.

"Ready?" I asked.

"I guess."

We have Mateo and Boris with us so we didn't need a huge vehicle. If we'd had the rest of the guards, we'd have taken one of our SUVs. With just the four of us, the Mercedes sedan Jake had rented for us would do just fine.

As soon as we climbed off the jet, I escorted Tony to the backseat of the car and then climbed in behind him. Boris got the car started while Mateo placed our bags in the trunk and then climbed into the front passenger seat.

"Boris," I started, "Head straight for the villa. Do not stop for anything or anyone."

"Yes, sir."

I had disabled my cell phone just as the others had so I'd have to wait until we got home to call Vinnie and have him send the guards back on a commercial flight. I'd also need to arrange to have the SUVs standing by for them. Luckily, we had more security currently guarding the villa.

We really needed to step up our plans to hire more men.

Once we pulled out of the executive hangar and got on the highway, I kept a close eye on our surroundings. So far, we'd been lucky and no one seemed to know our movements. While I hoped it stayed that way, I wasn't going to hold my breath.

This whole trip had been fucked up from the very beginning and it didn't look like it was ending anytime soon. I was starting to wonder if they were after me or Tony, or maybe both of us.

I racked my brain and tried to connect the dots of the limited evidence we had so far, but I really couldn't connect it to anything or anyone.

Worse of all, because of the magnitude of deaths, the Polizia di Stato were involved.

If Don D'Angelo had been alive, the matter would have been left to us. Since he was one of the dead, the Polizia di Stato would most likely be all up in our faces.

That was going to be a barrel of laughs.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Anthony ~

"It's beautiful here."

Having never left New York, I'd only ever seen places like this in magazines and on TV. The view from every side of the car was simply stunning.

"Wait until we get to Genoa and then you'll really see real beauty," Vito stated. "It's part of the Italian Riviera. Between the sea, the mountains, the valleys, and the lowlands, there's every type of view you could imagine."

I couldn't wait. Just this drive alone was like a dream come true.

"Your villa has beach access to the most beautiful blue water you've ever seen in your life."

I gasped as I turned to look at Vito. "Beach access?"

Vito leaned closer to me and murmured, "Remember that whole deep water thing?"

"Yeah."

"The water is so crystal clear, you can see all the way to the bottom."

Oh, major plus.

"If you ever want to go out on the water, one of your yachts is moored at the marina."

"One of my yachts?" I asked. "How many do I have?"

I really needed to sit down with Vito at some point and try and get the full scope of all my holdings.

"You have two, a smaller one for personal use and a larger one that is more for family use and social functions."

My eye twitched. "I'm not sure I understand the difference."

A yacht was a yacht, wasn't it?

"Your personal yacht fits about fifteen people. The bigger yacht can fit over a hundred."

"Got it."

Maybe.

"Don D'Angelo used the smaller yacht for when he just wanted to get away. He used the bigger one for family or when he wanted to hold some sort of social event out on the water."

That made a little more sense.

"And where is this bigger yacht?" I asked. "Is it moored at the marina, too?"

"No, it's basically in boat storage at the moment. Since Don D'Angelo didn't tend to use it very often, it made more sense to store it. If you ever want to use it, just let me know. It'll take at least a day to get it ready."

"Never been on a boat."

Vito's eyebrows lifted. "Never?"

I shrugged. "While New York City is basically an island, I never had the chance to go out on the water surrounding it."

Besides having no time due to all the jobs I was working, I couldn't think of a single yacht club that would let me in. My only other option was to go down by the docks, and I liked breathing, thank you very much. Cement shoes were not a good look on me.

Vito patted my shoulder. "Once you get settled, I'll take you out on your personal yacht for a couple of days. We can go visit Naples or something."

"Oh, can we go see the Coliseum?"

I'd always wanted to visit that historic sight.

"That's in Rome."

I frowned, somewhat insulted. Just because I was from New York didn't mean I was an idiot. "I know that."

"Then by all means, if you want to see the Coliseum, we'll plan a trip to Rome." Tony smiled at me. "We can plan a trip to wherever you want to go, but we need to get you settled first and brought up to speed on running the organization."

"Hey, Boss?" Boris called out. "I think we're being followed."

I twisted around in my seat so I could see out the back window. They were tinted and

it was nighttime, but I could still see headlights quickly approaching.

"Could it just be someone else on the road?" I asked.

It was a highway after all.

"I've been watching them for awhile," Boris replied. "They left the airport the same time we did. I didn't think anything of it at first, but I've changed lanes several times and they've always done the same, never coming closer than two cars lengths and never falling back."

"Try and lose them," Vito said. "Take a different road if you have to."

I grunted when I was suddenly thrown back in my seat as the car accelerated. I wanted to close my eyes, but I was too terrified of how fast we were going.

Boris was driving like a maniac, weaving in and out of traffic at a rate of speed that should never be taken on any road, let alone one that had winding curves like this one.

I grabbed onto my seatbelt to keep from being thrown around the back of the car. I didn't care if the damn seatbelt was buckled and supposed to do that for me.

I didn't want to die.

"Damn it!" Vito snapped. "They are following us."

"What do you want me to do, Boss?" Boris asked.

Keep your eyes on the road? That would be my order.

"Pull off at Tortona," Vito said. "The streets are pretty narrow and winding. Maybe we can lose them there."

"Yes, Boss."

I started to turn to look out the back window again, but Vito diving past me pushed me back in my seat.

"What the hell are you doing?" he shouted. " Porca troia !" When he dropped back into his seat, he had a cell phone in his hand. He quickly powered it off. "Our phones are supposed to be off."

"Boss," Mateo began, "I didn't—"

" Idiota !"

"Boss—"

"How do you think they found us? Huh?" Vito held up the cell phone before tossing it back at Mateo. "If they kill Don D'Angelo, it'll be your fault."

Wait...kill?

"I was just updating Carmine," Mateo insisted.

"Did I tell you to do that?" Vito asked. "Did Don D'Angelo tell you to do that?"

"No, but..."

"But what?" Vito snarled. "And you'd better have a really good answer or I'm going to put a bullet in your brain. You're obviously not using it so why do you need it?"

"Carmine is the consigliere ."

"Yes, Carmine is the consigliere, " Vito replied. "He is not the boss."

Mateo squinted for a moment, the frown on his face wrinkling the skin between his eyebrows. "I thought this was all for show. I thought Carmine was really in charge."

"You—" Vito rubbed his hand down over his face. " Figlio di Troia !"

I wasn't sure what was going on here, but I was getting more confused by the second. "Didn't you tell me that the consigliere position was an advisory one?"

"It is," Vito stated. "Technically, he'd be third in hierarchy underneath you and me. The consigliere can give advice, but they can't issue orders."

I shot a quick look to the front seat where Mateo was sitting. "Then why would he be in charge?"

"He wouldn't." When Vito glanced toward the front seat, the angry glare on his face clear to see. " Mateo knows that, which is why I am so confused as to why he thinks Carmine is in charge."

"Carmine has been giving orders since Don D'Angelo died," Mateo insisted. "Why would that change now?"

I was going to strangle this guy. I'd be doing the world a service.

"Carmine was never supposed to be giving orders and you know it. Until we found Don D'Angelo, I was in charge. If something happened to both me and Don D'Angelo, then Carmine would be in charge, but not until then. Do you get that? You take orders from Don D'Angelo, then me, and then Carmine. Not the other way

around."

I didn't know if I had this power, but... "From this moment on, you don't take any orders from anyone but me or Vito. Is that understood?"

Mateo shot me wide, rounded eyes, swallowing hard. "Yes, sir."

"Get rid of your phone," I ordered. "Toss it out the window right now or I'll toss you out the window."

His eyes still wide, Mateo rolled the window down and tossed his phone out.

I snorted and sat back in my seat, crossing my arms. "You need to send out a memo to everyone about who is really in charge here."

Vito gave me a curt nod. "I'll take care of it, Don D'Angelo."

Only Vito saw me roll my eyes.

When we pulled off the highway, I glanced out the back window again. "They're still there and they are getting closer." A lot closer. "Boris, you need to go faster."

I was slammed back against the seat as the car shot forward, but our increased speed didn't seem to make any difference. The other car was still catching up with us.

When we rounded a sharp corner, the other vehicle clipped our bumper. I didn't even have time to scream as our car spun around before hitting the edge of a ravine and tumbling down it, coming to rest at the bottom upside down.

I hit my head on something—I think it was the window—and the world around me dimmed. I heard two loud shots and then the door was pulled open.

I tried to fight off whoever grabbed me and yanked my out of the backseat, but they were stronger than me and there were more of them. It was dark out so I couldn't really make out their features, but I did know I'd never seen these men before in my life.

I heard a lot of yelling and the sounds of flesh hitting flesh.

Then everything went dark.

When the world came back to me, it wasn't a gradual thing with me slowly becoming aware of my surroundings. It was instantaneous. One second I was unconscious, the next second I was simply awake.

I was also restrained.

Well, that wouldn't do. I liked being tied up as much as the next guy, but I preferred to do it in bed with someone I liked. Not some strangers in some dark, dank room that smelled of mold and...fish?

Yeah, that was gross.

I wiggled around until I could bring my bound hands down below my feet and then in front of me. Guess all that Parkour was paying off for me. I was limber as shit.

I stared at the ropes tying my hands together. Whoever had tied them obviously didn't know what they were doing. It was an easy knot to undue. I used my teeth to tug at the knot until it loosened enough for me to pull my hands free.

I tossed the rope to the floor and then looked around the room I was. There literally was nothing in here except me. The walls were stained and the paint peeling.

That actually made me feel a little better. If this had been a state-of-the-art facility, I might not have a chance at escaping.

I climbed off the floor and walked over to the door. I wasn't surprised in the least when I found the door locked. I had expected it.

Too bad the people behind this hadn't expected me.

I pulled a small black case out of my boot and squatted down next to the door. I opened the case and pulled two silver tools out. I smirked when I had the door unlocked in less than a minute.

Took a little longer to pick the lock than I was used to, but I blamed the ache in my head for that.

I put my lock pick tools away and then pressed my ear to the door, listening for any noise. When I didn't hear anything, I cautiously opened the door and peeked out.

It was a simple hallway.

Empty, thank god.

I slid out into the hallway, locked the door again, and then started walking. I walked slowly, listening to anything that would either tell me where I was or who had taken me.

When I heard footsteps, I reached for the doorknob of the closest door. When it turned easily in my hand, I opened the door and stepped into the dark room, shutting the door behind me.

I held my breath as the footsteps got louder, passed the door I was hiding behind, and

then headed down the hallway. I really hoped they weren't heading to the room I'd woken up in. Once they saw I was missing, I had no doubt they'd be searching for me.

I didn't have a lot of time to get out of here.

My breath caught in my throat when I heard a low groan behind me. The room was dark, but when I turned I could still see a human form on the floor next to the wall.

I swallowed tightly and slowly, cautiously walked over. It wasn't until I was right in front of the person and squatted down that I realized it was Vito.

At least, I think it was Vito. Whoever this guy was, his face looked like he'd been beat with a meat cleaver.

"Hey," I whispered.

When I didn't get a response, I reached over and pressed a finger to the pulse at the base of his neck. Thankfully, I found one and his was steady.

I wasn't sure how to wake him. I couldn't exactly slap him on the face to wake him up. It looked like he'd been slapped plenty already.

I grabbed his shoulder and gave him a good shake. "Hey, wake up."

The man groaned, his head lifting and flopping about before he steadied it. His eyelids fluttered and lifted.

"Tony?"

So, it was Vito.

"Can you move?" I asked.

"I'm not sure."

"We really need to get out of here." I knew eventually, someone would come. I didn't think we wanted to be here when they did.

"Where are we?"

"I haven't got a clue."

I just knew I didn't want to be here.

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~ Vittorio ~

My teeth hurt.

My hair follicles hurt.

My toenails hurt.

Everything hurt.

I didn't want to move, but I could hear the anxiety and fear in Tony's voice and knew we needed to get out of here. Wherever here was.

"Help me up."

Tony grabbed my arm and started to pull me to my feet, but I grunted when agony ripped through my abdomen. I distinctly remember some guy wailing on me, paying special attention to my stomach and kidney area.

I was going to be pissing blood for a week.

"Slowly," I warned Tony. "Pretty sure I have a few cracked or broken ribs." At least, it felt like it.

That was going to make getting out of here a lot harder.

I grit my teeth and then nodded to Tony. He pulled on my arm and I slowly stood.

Once I was on my feet, I closed my eyes and took a moment to just breathe.

Surprisingly, now that I was standing, my ribs didn't hurt quite as much as they had when I was sitting. They still ached like hell, but I didn't feel like my ribs were going to go through my skin anymore.

"We need to find a way out of here."

Tony nodded. "Do you still have your gun on you?"

I shook my head because I distinctly remember getting patted down and relieved of all my weapons. "They took it."

"We need to find some more," Tony stated. "I doubt we're getting out of here without a fight."

He was probably right.

"Is there anything in here we can use as a weapon?" I asked as I glanced around. The room was pretty bare.

"I haven't seen anything so far that could be used as a weapon, not even a chair." Tony blinked for a moment. "There is a guard out there somewhere."

"There's more than one," I replied, remembering the two guys that had worked me over.

"Yeah, I was afraid of that." Tony glanced me over. "Are you going to be up for a fight if we get into one?"

"Honestly, probably not," I answered. "It would be best if we just found a way to get

out of here without being seen."

"I'll try, but it's highly unlikely that will happen." He gave me a gentle pat on the shoulder. "Just try and stay out of the way if we run into any guards. I'll take care of the rest."

"You can fight?" I asked, surprised. He had some muscle on him, but I didn't know if that had been produced in a gym or if he truly had fighting skill.

"I grew up in New York. Of course I can fight. It's practically a weekly event in my neighborhood."

All the more reason I lived in Italy.

"Let's go."

Tony opened the door just a crack and peeked out. I would have held my breath waiting for him to make sure the coast was clear, but it hurt too damn bad.

I stayed close to him as he stepped out into the hallway, shutting the door behind me. It wouldn't confuse our captors for more than a few seconds, but those few seconds could mean the difference between life and death.

We slowly made our way down the narrow hallway. I had no idea if we were moving closer to an exit, the bad guys, or both.

The paint on the cement walls was old and fading, cracks showing through in many places. The floor, also cement, was unpainted, but it had just as many cracks.

Between the walls and floor, not to mention the peeling paint on the window frames, I was pretty sure we were in some sort of abandoned warehouse or something.

It was the faint scent of fish and the whisper of a salty breeze that concerned me. Tortona was nowhere near the ocean, which made me wonder where in the hell we had been taken.

When Tony suddenly stopped, I almost plowed into his back. "What is it?"

"Sshhh." Tony held his finger up to his lips and then motioned for me to get back against the wall. I had no idea what he was up to until I saw a shadow start growing larger and realized someone was coming up the stairs right around the corner from us.

I stiffened, ready to go to his defense, but I didn't have to. The moment the shadow became a solid figure, Tony struck out, doing some sort of weird karate chop to the back of the man's neck that send him crashing to the floor.

The guy didn't move after that.

Tony squatted down next to him and began rifling through the guy's pockets. He pulled out a gun, knife, wallet, and cell phone, tossing them all at me.

At least we were armed now.

I opened the closest door and then helped Tony drag the guy inside. For good measure, I took his tie off and tied his hands behind his back. If I had another tie, I would have tied his feet together, too, but they had taken mine when they searched me.

"Hand me the knife," Tony said.

I frowned, but handed it over.

"I'm better with a knife than I am a gun," he explained.

I wasn't sure I believed that, but now wasn't the time to argue. It went against all of my principals to let him use the knife because he'd have to be in close quarter combat to use it. With a gun, you could kill from a distance.

Considering how I was injured, I suppose it made sense.

I still didn't like it.

He was the boss. I was supposed to be protecting him, not the other way around. It didn't sit right with me, but I didn't think I had any other option at the moment. It wasn't like I could defend myself let alone Tony.

It was shocking to me how hard it was to get down the stairs. Every step felt as if someone was slamming a hammer against my ribcage. I was positive now that I had a few cracked ribs.

I needed a hospital and soon. I just had to get Tony to safety first and I wasn't sure how to do that at the moment. I didn't even know where we were.

"Come on," Tony said. "We need to move."

I was all in favor of that, and yet I wasn't because moving hurt like a bitch. Staying would no doubt hurt even more which was why I followed Tony when he started moving down a long partially lit hallway.

I wasn't too thrilled with how many shadows this place had, but it at least helped hide us to some extent.

I sucked in a swift breath when a man suddenly stepped out of a room we were passing. Tony moved almost faster than I could track, swiping out with the knife in his hand. The guy was down before he was aware that we were there. Tony grabbed

his arms and dragged him back into the room he'd come out of.

My dumbass followed him.

"Don't worry about tying this guy up," Tony said as he started going through the guy's pockets. "He won't be getting up again."

I was afraid of that.

"Make sure you didn't leave any prints."

It was the best advice I could give him. Since I didn't know where we were, I couldn't exactly have our guys clean up the scene. If the police found a dead body, it could lead back to us if we weren't careful.

I spotted my wallet and cell phone on a table in the middle of the room. I had no idea where my gun was. I grabbed both and put them back in my pocket.

"Hey, keys." Tony grinned as he held them up. "Maybe if we're lucky, they will lead to a car."

I wasn't so sure of that was a good idea. While taking this idiots car would get us out of here, he was dead. If we were caught in a dead man's car, we'd end up behind bars.

On the other hand...

"Someone's coming," I whispered as I flattened myself against the wall next to the door. I prayed it wasn't the police.

Tony grabbed his knife and flattened himself against the other side of the door. We both held our breath as we listened the footsteps growing louder...and then let it out

when they passed our door and grew fainter.

Tony waited until they faded completely and then opened the door a crack, peeking out. After a moment, he gestured with his free hand. "All right, let's go."

I quickly followed Tony out of the small room, shutting the door behind me, and then we hurried down the hallway a bit more. We carefully opened every door we came to until we found one that opened to the outdoors.

Fresh air never smelled so good.

"Are we close to the ocean?" Tony asked. "It smells like it does on the docks back home."

"Yeah, I think so." I was curious how we'd gotten from Tortona to the ocean. That had to have taken a few hours at least. Kind of made me wonder just how long we were out cold.

"Any idea where we are?"

I shook my head. "Not a clue."

"Not real helpful, Vito."

"Until we find a road sign or something, there's not much I can do about that." And that galled me to no end.

"Well, let's see if we can find a car at least. I'd rather be a moving target than a sitting duck."

It took me a moment to figure out exactly what he said and what it meant, but once I

did I whole-heartedly agreed with Tony.

"How many sets of keys did you find?" I asked.

"Two."

"Let me see them." Maybe I could figure out the car by the design of the key.

Once Tony handed over the keys, I looked at each one before glancing up and looking around. "Look for a small car, probably a two door. A Fiat."

I hated Fiats, but at the moment I'd take what I could get.

It wasn't hard to spot considering there were only a few cars parked near the warehouse and two of them were trucks. We climbed in as quickly as we could and when I started up the motor, I made sure to keep the lights off.

"Keep your head down," I told Tony as I put the car in gear and started driving. If anyone saw us escaping, I didn't want him hit by a stray bullet.

This car was a joke. If we were chased, they'd catch us in seconds. It had no go power at all. I was just thankful we weren't trying to go over any mountain ranges. We'd never make it.

I grabbed my cell phone out of my pocket and tossed it at Tony. "Get Vinnie's phone number out of my cell phone, but use the one you picked up to make the call. As soon as you have the number, turn the cell phone back off. I don't know if we're being tracked or not."

"Is turning it on a good idea then?"

"Probably not, but I'm not calling anyone else and we need help." I was quickly losing trust in the people in our organization and that was not a good thing. There was a rat somewhere. We just needed to survive until we found him. "Put it on speaker."

"Who is this?" someone asked in a snappish voice a moment later.

"Vito Antonelli," I replied. "I need to speak with Mr. Borelli. It's urgent."

"One moment, sir."

At least they seem to know who I was.

"Vito?" Vinnie asked several seconds later.

"Mr. Borelli, Mr. D'Angelo and I seem to have found ourselves in a bit of trouble."

Tony snorted.

"What kind of trouble?" Vinnie asked.

"Our car was run off the road and Mr. D'Angelo and I were kidnapped. We managed to escape, but we have no idea where we are or where we can go to get to safety."

"Vito was beat to crap," Tony stated. "He needs medical care."

"We were kidnapped outside of Tortona, but we're by the ocean now."

"Try to figure out where you are," Vinnie said. "I can call my grandfather and have him send some men for you. You'll be safe at his estate until you can recover. I give you my word of honor."

"Well, I just saw a sign for the Pretoria Fountain," Tony said. "Does that help?"

"You're in Palermo?" Vinnie exclaimed.

Maybe?

"Luca is based in Palermo," Vinnie continued. "Let me give him a call and see if he can help you out."

I was fully aware of that fact that Luca Sabatino was based here. I was just a little concerned with the fact that we had been taken to his territory.

"You don't think Luca could be behind this, do you?"

"No," Vinnie replied without hesitation. "While Luca can be ruthless, he's not someone who would do something like this. His only concern in life is the health and safety of his husband. Don't mess with Nico and Luca won't mess with you."

I knew the guy had gotten married. I'd met Nico at the conclave we had awhile back. I just didn't know much about the man, or both men.

"Okay, give him a call."

"Can I reach you at this number?"

"Yes, I don't want to turn my cell phone on if I don't have to. I'm worried that we're being tracked."

"I'm less worried about that and more worried about why someone would dump you in Luca's territory."

Yeah, that was a concern as well.

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~ Anthony ~

Driving to some unknown location that was run by a mob boss I didn't know was not my idea of a fun time. I was especially anxious because Vito seemed so tense.

"Is this a good idea?"

Vito let out a small snort. "Probably not."

Yeah, I didn't think so.

"Couldn't we just drive to Genoa?"

"We could," Vito admitted, "but I think there is something hinky going on there and I don't really feel safe taking you back there. Not until I figure it out."

"You got that, too?" I asked. I'd been thinking along those lines for awhile now. It just seemed a little too easy for all of these things to be happening to us when we'd been so cautious.

"I don't want to, but it's the only explanation. Someone has to be tracking our movements and giving it to whoever is doing this."

"Any ideas who?"

"No, and that aggravates me. I thought I could trust all of our people, or at least the ones close to us. I don't like feeling like I can't."

"It might not be all of them, you know?" I didn't want Vito to distrust every member of the organization, especially since I was just now coming onto the scene. I needed to know there were people beneath me that I could count on.

"No, but until I have concrete proof who is behind this, everyone is on my suspect list."

I turned wide eyes toward Vito. "Am I on that list?"

"You're the reason for that list."

That didn't sound any better.

"I think we're here," Vito said as the car slowed and came to a stop in front of a large metal gate. There were two guards standing outside, one on either side of the gate.

My eyebrows shot up when the gates opened and we were allowed inside without anyone knowing our name. The guards didn't even approach the car.

"Wow," was the only thing I could think of to say when we pulled through the gate and went up the driveway. I'd seen massive villas in magazines and movies, but I'd never seen one in real life before. This place was stunning.

"Your estate in Genoa looks a lot like this," Vito explained. "I think it might be a little bigger." This place could take up a whole city block in New York City. If my villa was bigger, it would be insane.

"We have a stables and this place doesn't."

I blinked. "I have horses?"

Vito chuckled. "Several."

Huh.

Never ridden a horse before.

"Do those horses come with riding lessons?"

I'd need them.

"I can teach you," Vito offered. "I've been riding since I could walk. I even stable my own horse at the villa. There's a large tract of land behind the villa that is good for riding. I try and go out at least once a week just to get away from everything."

That would be so cool.

"I'd like that," I said instead of totally geeking out. "Thank you."

"We're here," Vito said as he stopped the vehicle once again. "Watch what you say in there and don't make any sudden moves towards Luca's husband. The man is insanely possessive of Nico."

Husband?

"I thought you couldn't be gay in the mafia." Despite what Vinnie had told me, I knew things might not be the same here in Italy. Vinnie had warned me about that after all.

"It's is highly frowned upon, especially by the old guard."

I snorted before glancing out the window. "Boy, are they in for a surprise."

Just wait until I dressed up.

Before we could get out of the car, a man came hurrying down the steps. He rapped on the window with his knuckles. I slowly lowered it.

"Mr. D'Angelo, I'm Franco, Mr. Sabatino's assistant. I need you to follow me around to the garage."

When the man started walking, I glanced at Vito. "Did you expect that?"

"No."

"You don't think they are taking us somewhere to off us, do you?"

Vito glanced at me. "How's your gut?"

My gut?

"Fine, but—"

"Nervous? Anxious?" Vito asked.

"Well, I'm a little anxious, but—"

"Anxious like you were back at the airport?"

I frowned. "No."

"Then they are probably not going to off us."

Probably was not reassuring.

We followed Franco around the side of the villa towards the back of the property. A guard was waiting next to the only open garage door. There were ten garage doors, which was totally insane.

Franco gestured for us to drive inside.

Once Vito parked and turned the vehicle off, I climbed out and hurried around to his side of the car and helped him out of the vehicle. The frown I had before deepened when the guard closed the garage door and then walked over to take a picture of the license plate of the Fiat.

Just what was going on here?

"Please, come with me," Franco said. "Mr. Sabatino is waiting for you in his study."

"Vito needs a doctor."

"I'm fine, Tony," Vito stated.

"You're not fine," I countered in a clipped tone. "You've been beat to shit. You're seeing a doctor and that's an order."

Wasn't sure if I could give my underboss an order or not, but I was still going to insist that he saw a doctor.

Vito cracked a smile. "Yes, Boss."

We followed Franco through the garage and into the house. He led us down a hallway to a large oak door. Franco knocked before opening the door and gesturing for us to go inside.

A tall brown haired man with a beard was waiting for us when we walked inside. He stood up as soon as he saw us and walked around the desk.

"Franco, have a doctor come to my study immediately. Also ask Sofia to make a light lunch for Mr. D'Angelo and Vito. Something that won't be too hard on their stomachs."

"Yes, Boss." Franco nodded before walking out of the room, shutting the door behind him.

"I'm sorry that we are meeting under these circumstances, Mr. D'Angelo."

I glanced at Vito when the man held his hand out to me. Once Vito nodded, I smiled and shook his hand. "Thank you for your assistance in this matter, Mr. Sabatino."

"Please, call me Luca."

"Tony."

"Why don't you have a seat?" Luca asked as he gestured to the couch. "My doctor should be here in a moment."

I walked over to the couch with Vito and then helped him slowly sit down before taking the spot beside him.

"Can you tell me what happened?" Luca asked.

I glanced at Vito again.

"Its fine," Vito replied. "Go ahead and tell him."

"I'm not sure how much Vinnie told you, but—"

"He told me some," Luca replied. "Something about a bomb on your plane."

I nodded and then started giving him the rundown of everything that had happened since Vito came into my life. I left out the part about me freaking out at the airport. I didn't think he needed to know that.

By the time I was done, Vito was leaning heavily on my side. "How soon is that doctor going to be here?"

Luca frowned as he reached for his cell phone. Before he could dial, there was a knock at the door. "Come."

Franco opened the door and walked in with a man in a suit, a doctor's medical bag in his hand.

"Ah, Dr. Luis," Luca said. "Thank you for coming on such short notice."

"Of course, sir," the doctor replied.

Luca waved his hand toward me and Vito. "My friends here were involved in a car accident. Can you give them a look?"

I stiffened when the doctor's eyes darted to me and Vito. There was something in them that I didn't like. I didn't know if it was fear or nervousness or what, but I knew I didn't like it.

It made my skin itch.

I slowly stuck my hand in my pocket and grabbed the knife I'd put there earlier. At

the same time, I leaned Vito back against the couch, stood, and then moved to stand in front of him.

I held the knife out in front of me. "Touch him and you die!"

I heard Vito startle behind me. "Tony—"

"This is like the airport, Vito."

Despite his injuries, Vito was up in a flash, pointing his gun at the doctor. "Who are you?"

"Tony, Vito, what is going on here?" Luca asked.

"Do you know this man?" Vito asked.

"Yes," Luca replied. "Granted, he is not my normal physician, but he's been here a couple of times."

"Search him," I snapped. "Search him and his bag."

When Luca just stared at me, Vito said, "Listen to him, Luca. Tony doesn't mess around with stuff like this."

Luca frowned for a moment before slowly turning to look at the doctor. "Franco, search him and his bag."

I was glad he was taking me at my word, especially since I didn't have any evidence to prove there was something wrong here. I wasn't even sure what it was, but something wasn't right.

As soon as Franco reached for the man's bag, the doctor darted for the door. Franco dropped the bag and started to go after him, but I was faster. I leapt over the coffee table and kicked the good doctor in the ass. When he stumbled forward, I grabbed him by the shirt collar and jerked him back.

I forced him to turn around and then go down to his knees, holding the knife to his throat. "If you don't have something satisfactory to say in the next five seconds, I'm going to have to pay to have Mr. Sabatino's rug replaced. Blood stains are a bitch to get out."

When I glanced up, everyone was staring at me with wide eyes and dropped jaws. "What?"

Did I have something on my face?

Vito chuckled as he shook his head. "Nothing, Boss."

These people were weird.

I tightened my grip on the doctor and gave him a good shake. "My patience is wearing thin."

"Please, please, I don't know anything."

"I may be from New York, but I'm not stupid." I shook him again, a little harder. "Speak."

"Please, Mr. Sabatino, you know me. You know I would never harm anyone. I'm a doctor. I save lives, not take them."

While I felt some of what he said was true, not all of it was. There was a lie in there

somewhere. I just had to find it.

I pressed a little harder with the knife until a small trail of blood trickled out. "My patience is even thinner now. Either speak or I buy a new rug."

"Please," the doctor wailed. "They've got my family."

And that was the clue that I needed.

"Who has your family?" I asked.

"I don't know." The doctor slumped. "They forced their way inside my house an hour ago and took my family hostage. They said if I didn't do exactly what they said, they'd kill them."

"And what were you supposed to do?"

The doctor let out a little sob before digging into his pocket and pulling out a syringe. "I was supposed to give this to a man named D'Angelo."

"Me?" I almost dropped the knife as shock rolled through me. I grabbed the syringe and then shoved the doctor away from me. "Man, I'm getting really tired of people trying to kill me."

It seemed to happen just a little too often.

"Luca, can I borrow a few of your men?"

Luca's eyebrows lifted. "Can I ask why?"

I pointed at the doctor. "I need to go rescue that dumbass's family."

"Why don't you and Vito get cleaned up and get some rest," Luca replied. "My men can handle the rescue."

"As much as that man deserves it, I don't want any innocent people involved in this mess. Make sure they don't get hurt."

Luca nodded before grabbing his phone and barking out some orders. After he was done, he glanced at Franco. "I want the good doctor taken to the basement. He can stay there until we get this all figured out."

"Yes, sir," Franco replied.

"Also, make sure a room is prepared for our guests. I'll see about getting another doctor."

"Just get me a first aid kit," I countered. "I can patch Vito up."

It wasn't like I hadn't done something like this before.

"He should really see a doctor," Luca pointed out, "maybe have some tests run for internal injuries."

"Tony can look after me," Vito stated. "The less people that know we're here, the better. If word got out that we were killed in your territory, there's going to be an all out war between the families. Neither Tony or I fall under the family veil."

My eyes widened. "Do you think that's why we were dropped off here? To implicate Luca?"

"That would be my guess," Vito replied. "We were kidnapped outside of Tortona and now we're in Palermo. If they had simply wanted us dead, they would have killed us

there. If they want to implicate Luca, they kill us here."

"But I have no beef with you," Luca said. "While our families haven't always been the best of friends, there have been no major scuffles in over twenty years."

"Actually," Vito started, "I don't think it's you specifically. Tony and I suspect a rat inside our organization. They seem to know pretty much everything we do before we do it. I think they are simply trying to push the blame off on someone else and you drew the short straw."

Luca's dark eyebrows snapped together. "Could it have anything to do with Nico? I know not all the families agree with two gay men being in our business. I'm pretty sure they spit blood when they found out we got married. Gay is not popular in the mafia."

I snorted as I crossed my arms. "They'd better get used to. They can put a bullet in my head before I sleep with a woman."

I refuse to pretend I was something I wasn't, and I was not straight. Never had been, never planned to be. I was gay right down to my toenails and I liked me that way.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Vittorio ~

Tony was gay?

That shouldn't excite me so damn much. Tony was untouchable even for me. He was the boss, the head of the D'Angelo family. I had no business even thinking about waning to take him to bed.

I just couldn't seem to help myself.

Tony narrowed his eyes at me. "Is that going to be a problem for you?"

"No," I said quickly. "Even though no one knows it, I'm gay." If he could be honest with me, I could be honest with him. "I've worked really hard to keep that a secret though."

"Why?"

"Like Luca said, it's hard to be gay in the mafia."

"Yeah." Tony waved a dismissive hand at me. "I don't care about that."

"You should," I countered. "If anyone knew you were gay before this, it might explain why they are trying so hard to kill you."

"Does that mean every member of the D'Angelo family was gay? Even the thirty guards that died? Because it seems to me that someone is trying to wipe the entire

bloodline out. I don't think they care who is fucking who."

Okay, he had a point, but still... "You need to take this more seriously, Tony."

"No!" Tony snapped. "You guys found me. You guys brought me here. You guys told me that I had to be the head of the family. I was perfectly happy living my life back in New York."

"Really?" I snapped right back. "You were happy living in a crappy studio apartment and working three jobs?"

Yeah, I probably shouldn't have raised my voice to him or said what I said. I figured that out just about the time he belted me in the mouth with the back of his hand.

"It might not have been perfect," Tony fumed, "but at least I could fuck whoever I wanted to and no one questioned me about it."

My jaw clenched as anger erupted inside of me. There might have been a bit of jealousy as well, but I'd never admit it. "Is that all you care about? Who you can fuck?"

Tony squinted at me. "Are you an idiot or have you just repressed yourself for so long that you don't know any other way to live?"

Huh?

"It's not a matter of who I fuck," Tony continued. "It's that I refuse to live by antiquated rules set by someone long dead and buried. How is it any of their business who's in my bed? What they need to be concerned with is if I'm a good enough shot to put a bullet in their brains if they piss me off."

I took a quick step back when Tony moved closer. At this point, as angry as he seemed, I wasn't so sure I wouldn't end up with a bullet in my brain.

"If they are so uncomfortable with who I sleep with then they shouldn't put their noses in my bedroom. It's none of their damn business."

As much as I wanted to tell him that I agreed with him, I knew it wouldn't make a difference. Once word got out that he liked men, a lot of people would be after him and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to protect him.

"And if their narrow minded values are bruised enough that they feel the need to kill me, then they can certainly try, but I haven't lived this long by being stupid and every instinct I have tells me that this has nothing to do with me being gay. It's about who my father was."

I couldn't say he was wrong there.

"Besides, the heads of four of the major families in New York, plus Luca here, are all gay and married to men. They seem to be doing alright. Why would it be any different for me?"

"He's right, Vito," Luca said. "Since I married Nico, there's been a little pushback from some of the others, but not as much as you'd think. Times are changing and the old guard is dying out. The new generation coming into power is a lot less concerned with who people are fucking and more with the bottom line."

"Besides," Tony said, "if they want to flaunt their holier-than-thou ideals, maybe they should look in their own backyards first. I'm a perfect example of how these idiots act behind the scenes. I am my father's bastard after all."

Another good point that I couldn't argue with. A lot of the people that held their rigid

rules in place had mistresses and slept around on their wives and husbands. Many had illegitimate children like Tony.

It was a serious case of "people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones".

I wanted to rub my hands over my face, but it still ached like hell. Instead, I dropped my head back on my shoulders and stared up at the ceiling while letting out a long, frustrated groan.

"Let's get the two of you to some guestrooms," Luca said. "We can continue this conversation in the morning after you've had time to rest up."

"One guestroom, please," Tony stated. "Nothing personal, but I'd feel better being placed in the same room as Vito. He's kept me alive this long. I'm betting on him to keep me alive in the future."

My jaw dropped just a little at those words. "You still trust me to keep you alive?" I had been more than positive I'd lost his trust when we started snapping at each other and he belted me in the mouth.

"I'm still breathing, aren't I?"

I wasn't sure if that was a reassurance or not. We'd been lucky. It was as simple as that. There was also the fact that Tony had hidden depths even I was in awe of. On the surface, he was just a punk kid from New York City. Underneath the surface, I think he had the makings of a great mafia boss.

"If you want to follow Franco, I'll arrange for a first aid kit to be delivered to your room. I'm afraid Nico and I have a prior engagement so I'll have dinner delivered to your suite, if that's acceptable."

"Yes, thank you," Tony replied. "And thank you for your assistance in this matter."

"Don't worry about it," Luca replied. "If the heads of the families worked together a little more often and became friends, there'd be a lot less trouble between us."

"You think it's that simple?" I asked.

"You were here at the conclave," Luca said. "You saw how the families from New York behaved. Four of the five families have a peace agreement between them and often work together. In my case, all five families stepped in to help me when Nico was kidnapped. Now, our husbands are all fast friends. I wouldn't dare create trouble for any of them. I like sleeping in my bed with my husband. I do not like the couch."

Tony let out a small chuckle. "You sound rather henpecked there, Luca."

I sucked in a sharp breath, sure we were seconds from dying.

Luca straightened up, stuck his nose in the air, and declared, "And I'm damn proud of it."

My jaw hit my chest.

"I'd like to meet your Nico," Tony said. "He sounds interesting."

"He's perfect," Luca stated. He clearly adored his husband. "He grew up in New York as well so you might have some things in common."

"Then I look forward to it."

Luca waved his hand toward the door. "Why don't we go and get you two settled?"

I picked my jaw up off my chest and then followed behind Luca and Tony. I wasn't sure what exactly was going on here. The two of them seem to be becoming friends.

Not sure how I felt about that.

Granted, having Luca Sabatino as a friend could only help us, just like having Vinnie Borelli as a friend could help us. It was the fallout when my uncle discovered this friendship that worried me. He was already against Vinnie simply because of who he married. He'd go through the roof over Luca and Nico.

I seriously needed to get my head examined. I was pretty sure I was going crazy because having them as friends actually sounded like a good idea to me. If there were more gay friendly people in the mafia, maybe Tony's life wouldn't hang in the balance.

Maybe I could actually have a life.

Once we reached the grand staircase, Luca gave us a small bow, which was odd.

"I'll have my butler see you to your room," he said. "I'm needed in the kitchen."

The kitchen?

He must have seen my perplexed look because he chuckled. "Today is cookie baking day and I never miss it."

Cookie baking day? He was blowing us off to bake cookies?

Was this man insane?

"Can I come out now?" someone called from the other room.

My eyebrows shot up when Luca smiled.

"You can come out, cuore mio. "

A blond haired man just a couple of inches shorter than Tony walked out of the doors to our left and hurried to Luca's side. I recognized him from my previous visit.

Luca pressed a kiss to his forehead and then turned to look at Tony. "Nico, this is Tony D'Angelo, head of the D'Angelo family, and his right hand man Vito. This is my Nico."

Tony must have understood the situation because he didn't offer his hand. Instead, he gave Nico a respectful nod and said, "I'm pleased to meet you, Nico. Your husband said you grew up in New York City?"

Nico nodded.

"I lived there all of my life until about twenty-four hours ago."

Nico's face brightened. "Really?"

Tony nodded. "I had an apartment over in Bushwick."

Nico squinted at him. "I'm not sure where that is."

"If you don't know where it is, you don't want to know. Trust me."

Having been in Tony's neighborhood, I fully supported that. The place wasn't a total dump, but close to it. Even armed, I'd be wary of walking home at night.

"I'm sorry about what happened to your family," Nico stated.

"Thank you," Tony replied. "Even though I never knew any of them, it would have been nice to get the chance."

That was something I hadn't really given any thought. I'd been so concerned with finding out who placed the bomb at the wedding and protecting Tony that I had totally forgotten that he'd lost his entire family. There would be no chance in the future to meet any of them.

He basically had no one.

"Please show our guests to their suite," Luca told his butler. "Sophia is arranging a tray for them."

"Yes, sir," the butler replied.

"Vito, I had you placed in the suite you occupied before so you should know where it is. If you need anything, just ask one of the guards or servants. We can meet up after breakfast to discuss the situation and make some plans. Does that sound all right to you?"

"Yes, thank you," Tony said.

Luca pointed to me. "Keep an eye on that one. If you do decide he needs a doctor, tell one of my guards and they will let me know."

Tony nodded.

Luca and Nico walked off into the room to our left leaving me and Tony standing there with the butler. When the man politely bowed and gestured toward the stairs, Tony stepped over to take my arm.

"Take your time," he said. "We're in no hurry."

I looked at the stairs and groaned.

"Maybe there is a bathtub. A long soak will make you feel better."

I knew for a fact that there was a bathtub. As Luca had said, he was placing me in the same room I had been in before. It was actually a really nice room. I'd been impressed with the accommodations when I was here last time.

Going up the stairs was an exercise in agony. I was pretty sure the adrenaline I'd been running on before was starting to fade. I needed to get cleaned up, treated, fed, and then into bed. I was going to crash soon.

When we finally reached the door to our suite, I was leaning heavily on Tony. I felt as weak as a newborn kitten. Not the impression I wanted to give my boss.

The butler opened the door and Tony and I walked inside. Tony stopped right inside the room. He was looking around the room with his mouth hanging open.

"What's wrong?" I asked. "Tony?"

"Do people really live like this?"

I chuckled lightly. "You should see your villa."

It was just as fancy.

Tony led me over to the couch by the fireplace and helped me sit down. He knelt down on the floor in front of me before glancing at the butler. "Did someone find a first aid kit? And we'll also need a bowl of hot water and some clean rags."

"A clean change of clothes wouldn't hurt either," I pointed out. "Something for tonight and something for tomorrow." I grimaced as I glanced down at my dirty and torn suit. "These have about had it."

"I'll see to it immediately, sir," the butler replied.

"Thank you," Tony called out as the man left, closing the door behind him. "Let's get some of this off of you."

I stared down at Tony as he pulled my shoes off and then my socks. He was being incredibly gentle, which kind of surprised me. Over the last twenty-four hours, I'd seen the strength in this man, the fierceness. I'd even seen him kill a man and threaten another one.

Gentle was at odds with that behavior.

"You handled yourself pretty well out there tonight," I told him. "You've got some skills." I hadn't expected him to be able to handle himself. I had been quite surprised when he had.

"Oh yeah? Are my skills good enough to be a mafia boss?"

"They could, but they could also get you killed."

Tony's frown was instant, curving down the corners of his lips. "Aren't you just a ray of sunshine?"

Would this man ever be serious?

"Look—"

"No, you look," Tony snapped. "I get that the mafia life is not for the faint of heart. Truly I do. But I refuse to pretend to be something I'm not."

"This isn't about the gay thing, Tony." Well, it wasn't all about the gay thing. "You don't seem to be taking any of this seriously."

"I take it plenty seriously," Tony replied. "I also think it's stupid as shit."

Tony continued to help me undress while he talked, still being gentle. He unbuttoned my shirt and carefully slid it down my back and off my arms.

He did leave me in my pants.

Couldn't decide if I was grateful for that or not.

"Thank you."

"For what?" When Tony lifted his head to look at me, our faces were inches apart. I could feel his warm breath blowing across my face.

My breath caught when his gaze lowered to my lips.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Anthony ~

This was a really stupid idea.

Epically stupid.

I never claimed to be smart.

With a roll of my body, I pushed us backward toward the bed, tumbling us both onto the mattress and rolling us until I landed on top of the dark-haired man.

Vito's dark eyes blazed with want and need as he laid there as if waiting to see what I was going to do next.

I didn't want to disappoint him.

I leaned forward, inhaling Vito's scent from collarbone to ear, taking in the raw aroma of man. The scent rushed back into me in a wave of intoxication.

Smelling Vito was hardening my cock to a steel bar. I loved the smell of this man, was addicted to it. It was a scent that made me aroused every time the aroma was near.

My legs shifted as I straddled Vito's waist between my thighs. I leaned forward to nip the man on his jaw. I could feel small pants of Vito's breath tickling my cheek. The man's breath was coming out raggedly, softly, though.

Vito tugged at my cheek until our lips were only an inch apart, and then I moaned as the man captured my lips. My body tightened involuntarily, every bone and muscle in me reaching for Vito's mouth, the hot draw of his lips, and the moist wash of his tongue.

I opened my eyes, gasping when I saw Vito's grimace of pleasure, the raw lust that transformed his handsome face. I hadn't thought the man could get any better looking, but staring down at Vito now I knew I had been wrong.

When Vito ran his hands down my chest, his thumbs playing at my nipples, a course of lust shot through my groin, making my dick throb with my heartbeat. I leaned forward, pushing against Vito's hands. I wanted more.

Vito's fingers tightened on my nipples, squeezing them, rolling them between his fingers. The pleasure of the man's hands racked my body, making me tremble with need. My tongue snaked out, licking a path from one side of Vito's neck to the other.

I slid my hands up Vito's arms, circling around his wrists, applying the lightest of pressure as I pressed my chest harder into Vito's hands. I shifted my weight, pressing my body down until I could nuzzle Vito's neck, and then leaned back, pulling Vito's shirt free from his body. I needed raw, naked skin. I flesh needed flesh.

I swallowed tightly as I glanced down at the tanned and gleaming chest below me. It was thick, strong, and damn near perfect. I loved the sculpted way Vito was formed.

I ran my hands over the bare flesh, my nails scraping lightly, small red marks appearing along the way.

The man was utterly perfect.

Glancing down Vito's body, just above where I was sitting, I saw the outline of his

thick erection. It was full, stretched wide, and left little to the imagination. I released the snap on Vito's pants, pulling the zipper down until I saw the moist head of Vito's cock peeking out.

Vito's tongue licked at my nipple, his lips nibbling sporadically. I gasped, arching my head back as that rough, rasping tongue stroked over my heated flesh.

Oh, that was good. Real good. Hot, with a gentle abrasion that had me panting as Vito moved slowly to the other nipple.

I glanced down at Vito, staring as I snaked my hand into his pants and massaged the heated flesh. It was hard, but felt like liquid silk under my fingers, with the pre-cum leaking over my fingers.

Lifting my hand to my mouth, I sucked my fingers in, the taste of the man rolling over my taste buds like nectar to a bee. I groaned, licking each finger clean before I pulled at the waistband of Vito's pants, chasing the material down Vito's body until I could toss the fabric aside.

Vito lay there stunningly naked now, exposed to my hungry, appreciative gaze. I drank the man in as I pushed Vito's thighs apart. Vito didn't hesitate. He parted his legs, showing off the sexiest thing I'd ever seen. A male's body was such a sculpted piece of art to me, so perfect, so exotic. Vito's was better.

I found myself wanting to rub all over Vito, to touch every inch of him. The urge was strong, compelling me to lean forward until my stomach was touching Vito's erection. I rubbed my body over Vito's length, feeling the pre-cum trailing over my skin.

There was a pull that was almost maddening in my mind. I wanted to sink deep into the man's soul and never come out. It was a need so strong that I let it wash over me and carry me under.

I needed to taste Vito.

I pushed my body down the length of Vito until my head was even with Vito's weeping cock. I licked a path to Vito's cock. I nuzzled in the wiry curls before licking my way up the fully hard shaft and sucking at the engorged head to savor Vito's pre-come.

As I swallowed, I felt a large hand on my head and looked up to see Vito gazing down at me with heated eyes. Vito's fingers caressed my jaw, almost begging me to show him just what I could do with my mouth.

I leaned forward, engulfing Vito's cock. Vito groaned out his pleasure as I swallowed the erection to the root. Using my tongue, I licked the tender depression beneath the swollen crown and then tongue-fucked the tiny slit, licking away the salty taste of Vito's desires.

"So perfect," Vito hissed as he pulled his finger free, placing his hand back onto the bed. I cupped the back of Vito's knees, pushing the man's legs back as I worked my mouth over Vito's cock.

Vito pushed his legs back, wrapping them around my shoulders, pulling me closer as his fingers dug deeper into the sheet. My chin brushed over Vito's sac and felt that it was drawn close to Vito's body.

Reaching around, I played at Vito's hole, pressing my fingers against the throbbing muscle, but not entering. Vito shouted, and his hips bucked, pushing his cock to the back of my mouth as hot seed spilt down my throat. I drank it like a dying man, pulling every last drop from Vito's thick cock.

"Lube? Condom?" Vito asked as he rolled us until he was between my legs.

Instead of saying anything, I lifted my hip and reached into my back pocket, grabbing a single use packet of lube and a condom that I always kept there.

It was stupid not to be prepared.

After handing them to Vito, I shimmied out of my clothes as fast as I could. If they tore a little, it wouldn't matter. They had pretty much been destroyed when I got kidnapped anyway.

Too bad. I liked that suit.

When I lay back, Vito scooted between my legs again.

"You know this is a really bad idea, don't you?" he asked.

"Oh, I am aware." I looped my hand around the nap of Vito's neck and pulled him closer. "Still going to do it."

Vito grinned at me. "Yes, Boss."

I snorted. "Don't call me boss."

It felt weird coming from him.

Vito scooted down between my spread thighs. I breathed in heavily as he stared down at me. "God, you're beautiful."

My legs began to tremble when Vito rubbed some lube on my hole, pushing in gently with one finger. I dug my fingers into Vito's broad chest as a finger pushed past my ring of muscle.

I moaned as Vito zeroed right in on my sweet spot, stroking it several times before adding a second finger.

"You're driving me crazy, Tony," Vito murmured against my neck as he inserted another finger.

I was probably making a huge mistake sleeping with Vito, but I couldn't muster up the emotions to care right now. My libido was in full control, telling my mind to shut the hell up and enjoy this.

"Vito...not...not going to last long," I groaned. My hips snapped, grinding my cock into Vito's stomach. I needed friction desperately as the sexy vampire readied me. I mewled as Vito pulled his hand free, protesting the loss.

"I thought that was the whole idea." Vito's chuckle was deep and teasing before he trapped me under him.

I pulled my legs to my chest, waiting for Vito to rock my world. I bit my bottom lip as Vito pushed his huge cock slowly into my ass. I had to take in tiny gasps of air as the burn blazed through my backside. I had never been with someone this large before.

"Are you okay?" Vito asked as he stilled, running his large and callused hands over my body. "Am I hurting you?"

"No." I shook my head as I tried to breathe past the burn in my backside. "Just give me a moment."

"Take all the time you need." Vito lapped at my neck, his teeth scraping my skin. He pinched my sensitive nipples between his fingers. Pain morphed into pleasure as I moaned.

I wiggled my bottom, telling Vito that I was ready without words. Vito pulled back until only the head remained inside of my ass and then slammed home. I cried out as my legs shot over Vito's shoulder, my ass lifting in the air.

"Again?"

"Yesss," I hissed.

Oh god, please yes!

I grabbed the sheets beside me in a tight grasp as Vito began thrusting into me, each thrust harder and faster until the entire bed shook. The only sounds in the room were our heavy breathing, the occasional groan, and the noise made from our hips slapping together.

Sweat decorated Vito's chest as his dark eyes locked onto me. A curl lifted his lip as he thrust hard and deep. I wasn't sure what that look was about, but I wasn't going to stop to ask questions, not when I was being so thoroughly fucked.

Vito rammed his cock harder and harder into me, rattling my bones with the force of his thrusts and I loved every second of it.

An explosion rocketed through my body, the sensation racing down my arms and then scattered to the four corners. My eyes rolled back into my head, my neck arching and my hands clenching on Vito's arms. I screamed as I came, spurts of white cream shot from my cock to land between us.

Vito tossed back his head and roared as he thrust hard into me, filling me with his own release. Vito's cock pulsed inside of me, each massive shot of seed causing my tight channel to tighten around him.

When Vito slumped against me, I lifted my arms and wrapped them around him, one hand on the nap of his neck, the other stroking down his sweaty back.

This was still an epically bad idea, but god, I had enjoyed every second of it. I wasn't a virgin by any means, but I was pretty selective about who I allowed in my bed. If I had my way, Vito would never get out of it.

"We should probably get you cleaned up," I said in a low tone. "I still need to treat your injuries."

It had been dumb to have sex with him while he was injured. He was probably in a lot of pain right now.

Vito snuggled closer, pressing his face into my neck. "Just let me stay here for a few minutes."

I smiled as I threaded my fingers through his hair. As hard as Vito tried to hide this side of himself, I doubted there had been a lot of tenderness in his life. If he wanted to hug me just a little longer, I could give him that.

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Vittorio ~

The moment I opened my eyes I knew I was in trouble. Memories of the previous evening flooded my brain, overflowing it with images of the most perfect night of my life, and the one that would probably get me killed.

Couldn't really say I regretted it.

I swallowed tightly and then lifted my head to stare down at the man resting on my chest. Asleep, Tony looked like the most innocent man in the world. I knew that was false.

He was dangerous, smart, and had hidden depths I wasn't sure I would ever understand. He certainly wasn't what I expected from a man born and raised on the streets of New York City.

The biggest factor here was that he was my boss. I had crossed a line last night that could never be uncrossed.

"Go back to sleep," Tony murmured without opening his eyes. "You're making my head hurt with all that thinking this early in the morning."

I chuckled lightly. "Yes, Boss."

Tony's snort was cute.

I kept my arms around him as I laid my head back against the pillow and stared up at

the ceiling. Going back to sleep wasn't an option. The thoughts swirling in my head would never allow it.

I tried to place what happened between us last night to one side and concentrate on what I knew about who was trying to kill him, but they hovered at the edges of my mind, taunting me.

Tony huffed and lifted his head. "Are you going to be like this every time we have sex?"

Every time?

I was afraid to ask him what he meant.

I was also afraid not to ask him.

"Every time?"

"Well, I had a pretty good time last night and I'm thinking you did, too. I wouldn't mind doing it again. Would you?"

Way to put me on the spot.

"No," I replied honestly, "but you know this isn't a good idea."

There was that snort again.

"It's an epically stupid idea," Tony stated matter-of-factly. "Doesn't mean I don't want to do it again."

Oh.

"You know this will put a bigger target on your back, right?"

He had to be aware of the dangers.

Tony sighed as he dropped his head back down on my chest. "Yeah, I know, but like I said earlier, I'm not going to hide a part of myself just because some old geezers can't handle the fact that I like dick. It's none of their damn business."

Eloquently put.

"Don't worry," Tony continued. "No one has to know you fucked me. I won't tell anyone." He pushed himself out of my arms, rolled, and scooted to the side of the bed. "If I can get used to being a mafia boss, I can get used to being someone's dirty little secret."

I grabbed Tony's arm before he could climb out of bed and yanked him back down to me. I cupped the side of his face with my hand and raised it until our eyes met.

"You will never be a dirty little secret." I wouldn't do that to him. I respected him too much and not just because he was my boss. "I'm just worried about your safety."

All of the tension seemed to fade from Tony's body as he slumped against me. "So, what do you suggest then?"

"Let's talk to Luca. He's had to navigate this world. He'd probably have some suggestions." It was the only thing I could think of. I had no knowledge of how to navigate in this world for an out and proud gay man. I'd never lived outside of the closet.

Tony pushed himself up until he was sitting next to me. His face was grim, his eyes looked dim with sadness, and the corners of his mouth turned down.

It was not a look I wanted to see on his face.

"Look," Tony began, "we barely know each other and one night of admittedly really great sex is not a sound foundation for anything except a one night stand. I swear I won't hold it against you if you want things to end here."

"Dumping me already?"

Tony's eyebrows shot up to his hairline. "Dumping you?"

"Isn't that what you're doing?" I asked. "Not less than a minute ago you were talking about us starting something together and now you want to end it. Doesn't that mean you're dumping me?"

"No, I—" Tony's eyes flashed with something unidentifiable for a moment before he lowered them. "I just didn't want to put you into a tight spot. I know you've been hiding this side of yourself all of your life. I don't want to put you in a position where you could grow to hate me."

I didn't think that would ever happen.

"I've always known that sooner or later my secret would come out, Tony. It was just a matter of when." I cupped the side of Tony's face again, pulling him down closer to me. "And I don't think I could ever hate you."

I leaned up, pressing our lips together. Kissing Tony was an experience in itself. It wasn't just a kiss. It was an intimate gesture that took me to a different plain of existence.

My heart pounded a little faster as I slid my tongue between his lips and then pressed in to explore. Tony groaned and moved into the kiss, parting his lips even more. The

feathery light touch of his tongue against mine hardened my cock to a steel rod.

I wrapped one arm around his waist and pulled him up against me. I grabbed the nap of his neck with the other, tilting his head to give me better access.

I moved my mouth over Tony's, devouring its softness. The kiss was urgent and exploratory, like the soldering heat that joins metals.

The kiss sent the pit of my stomach into a wild swirl.

By the time I lifted my head, we were both out of breath and panting heavily. I had heard about kisses that made people's toes curl, but I had always been skeptical...until now.

"You keep kissing me like that and I'll dance out of the closet covered in a rainbow colored flag."

Tony snickered. "I don't think you need to be that daring."

"I'd do it if that's what you wanted."

I had no idea where all of this bravado was coming from. I only knew that the way I felt when Tony looked at me with his honey-colored eyes made me feel ten feet tall and bullet proof.

I didn't want to give that up.

"Like I said, I don't think you need to do that. In fact, I don't think we need to do anything. We are under no obligation to inform the world that we're lovers."

My brow wrinkled as I frowned, the beginning of a knot forming in my stomach.

"Does that mean you want to keep us a secret?" Hadn't we already decided that wasn't a good idea?

"No, I think we should just do what feels right for us. Eventually, everyone will get the picture."

My mouth parted in surprise and I just stared at Tony.

"We just continue going on about our business the way we want to and ignore everyone else. They'll eventually get the clue and if they don't like it, they don't have to be involved."

I let out a little chuckle. "So, you're saying—"

"What I am saying is that anything that happens between the two of us is between the two of us. It's nobody's business but ours. We are under no obligation to inform anyone that we've become involved. We should just let nature take its course and eventually, they will get it."

I wasn't sure it was that easy, but I liked what Tony was saying.

"Okay." I gave him a quick peck on the lips. "Consider me out of the closet then because I want to go along for this ride with you."

That was about as close to a commitment I could do right now. This thing between us was brand new. We still needed time to discover if we meshed as well out of bed as we did in it before we moved to the next stage in our relationship.

Tony's smirk made me nervous.

"I think going on a ride is an excellent idea," he said before yanking down the covers

and swinging his leg over mine.

I groaned when his body settled over me, our groins pressed tightly together. If this feeling was what I could get by coming out of the closet, I was ready to jump feet first.

"We're out of condoms," Tony whispered against my lips. "This going to have to be down and dirty."

I had no idea what that meant.

A slight pressure skimmed all the way down my back, cupping my right butt cheek. Callused fingers molded into my skin, trailing over my backside, and then over my left hip.

I shuddered with need.

Spreading my legs further apart, I arched my back, pressing my ass into Tony's hand. He consumed me with one kiss that seemed to go on forever.

I didn't want it to stop,

Tony moved against my skin, sharing in my pleasure. His hands were everywhere, touching me, exploring me, and bringing me to life. I closed my eyes as Tony's fingers slid over my body, caressing me with feathery light touches.

I'd never felt such need and want in my life.

I gasped as Tony's hands continued to brush over my skin. My cock was as hard as granite, straining as Tony's hands explored my aching body.

"Touch me, please," Tony begged in a low voice. Tony's lips pressed into my shoulder as he grabbed my hands, placing them on his hips. There was a burning lust in his eyes that left me speechless.

With a shaky hand, I reached out and brushed my fingers along Tony's hard shaft, the man hissing at the contact.

Tony bent his head, his tongue demanding against my lips. It was a demand that speared through me as Tony gripped my hips and brought us closer.

Releasing Tony's cock, I slid my hands over Tony's biceps, pulling the man closer, biting at Tony's lower lip.

I wanted to be buried inside Tony's tight heat. I wanted Tony to lose himself to the sensations rushing through us both, to come apart under my hands, but now wasn't the time—maybe.

A little brown nipple drew me and I lightly ran my fingertips over the pebbled nub.

Tony caught his breath.

I did it again more firmly, causing Tony to moan and swivel his hips, pressing against my trapped cock. I couldn't stop my own moan when Tony fell forward and began to devour my mouth with urgent heat.

Tony pressed me into the mattress, his thigh insinuating itself between mine. When Tony lifted my hips, I could feel my sac pressing hard against that muscled thigh. My entire body felt like one exposed nerve, sensitive and receptive to Tony's touch.

When Tony lifted his head, he looked at me with blistering heat in his eyes. It was a look that sent shivers all through my body.

Looking into the man's face, I only saw amazement and then bliss as Tony's hand wrapped around our cocks. Gasping with need, I pulled Tony back down for another kiss, a hand cupped to the back of his head

I reached around Tony's body and pressed my fingers between Tony's ass cheeks, my fingertips massaging the puckered entrance before I pressed a single digit slowly into Tony's gripping heat.

The air whooshed out of Tony's lungs, a soft keening followed, words spilling almost incoherently out of the man's mouth. "Oh, Vito... your touch...I need you deeper...don't stop—don't..."

My gaze devoured Tony. The arch of his back, the ecstasy on his face, the sweat dripping off of his ink black hair, the curve of his neck, all of it, all of it was the most spectacular sight I'd ever seen in my life.

And when I actually pressed against the bump inside Tony, the man went wild, his hips thrusting, a keening cry leaving his lips as his entrance clamped down on my finger and Tony thrust erratically against me.

I watched the beauty of Tony coming apart before my testicles drew up and my own thrusts became sharper, my hips snapping until I came too.

Tony collapsed onto me, loose and tension-free. I stroked my hands lightly down his sweaty back, more content than I had ever been in my life.

I didn't want to give this feeling up.

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~ Anthony ~

Things had happened suddenly and I was still reeling from them. I had noticed how attractive Vito was from the moment I laid eyes on him. His power and personality, not to mention how much he worried about me, had turned that attraction into something else.

I just hadn't been expecting it.

Hoping, but not expecting, especially since he had claimed to be fully in the closet. Now, he was walking down the grand staircase with me, his hand placed in the low of my back as if silently letting me know he was there to support me no matter what.

Why would I even consider giving this up?

The butler met us at the bottom of the stairs. "Mr. Luca and Mr. Nico are having breakfast in the dining room. If you'll follow me?"

I glanced at Vito, deferring to him in this situation. I didn't know what mafia etiquette was in a fancy place like this. It wasn't like this was my local burger joint.

Vito gave a barely discernible nod so I followed after the butler. He led us down the large hallway to a set of double doors. When we stepped inside the room, I gasped.

This was not a place I wanted to eat in.

I was afraid to breath let alone consume food.

Several floor to ceiling windows covered two separate walls, letting in a lot of sunshine. Vases filled with roses covered several different side tables. The large wooden table had to fit at least twenty people, if not more. Three crystal chandeliers hung over the table and there was a very ornate Persian-style rug under it.

I knew that from a magazine.

"If you'll follow me, sirs?"

Oh.

I quickly hurried to catch up with the butler. He led us through a doorway on the side of the room to a much smaller area, one that was more my style and not the King of France.

Luca and Nico were seated together, chatting as they ate.

"Good morning," Luca said when he spotted us. "I hope you had a restful night."

I didn't snort, but it was close.

"It was very nice, thank you."

"How are your injuries?" Luca asked as he looked at Tony. "You're looking a little better today."

"I'm still hurting a bit, and suspect I will be for the next week or so, but I definitely feel better." He smiled when he glanced at me. "Tony fixed me up pretty well last night."

I'd done something to him last night alright.

"Grab a plate," Luca insisted. "We can talk more in my study after we eat. As a rule, I don't talk business in front of Nico."

That made sense.

And, considering the appetite I'd worked up with Vito, I was all too happy to grab some food. I fixed a plate for Vito first, even cutting up his sausage links for him, and then plated my own food. When I went to take my first bite, I realized silence had fallen over the room.

I glanced up to find everyone staring at me. "What?" I hadn't eaten anything yet so I knew I didn't have anything on my face.

"Nothing." Vito bumped shoulders with me. "Eat your food before it goes cold."

Luca let out a little chuckle and then gestured to the steel carafe sitting in the middle of the table. "There's coffee if you want it."

These people were weird.

As we ate, Nico and I started talking about New York City and the places we had visited or wished to visit there. Turned out, while we lived in completely different neighborhoods, we'd actually been to a many of the same places.

I liked the man. He was timid and a little clingy with his husband, sitting very close to him and often looking at Luca as if needing his confirmation on his answer to my questions, but he seemed to have a good sense of humor and from the things we talked about, he was obviously smart.

I hated dumb people.

By the time we finished eating, I knew I liked the man and hoped that we could be friends despite being from different families. I didn't know that much about mafia life, but being enemies because of that just seemed stupid.

I wanted to say something about that, but wasn't sure I had the right to. I also wasn't sure if it would get me killed or not. Better to ask when Nico wasn't around. I didn't want to hurt him or make him upset.

That would definitely get me killed.

Luca leaned over and pressed a kiss to Nico's temple. "We've got to go talk business, cuore mio . I'll come find you when we're done. I don't want you leaving the estate today."

"Nonna and I are working in the greenhouse today," Nico stated. "We're getting everything ready for the new seeds we want to plant."

Luca's smile was indulgent as he ruffled the hair at the top of Nic's head. "Okay, you two have fun."

When Nico got up, Luca gestured to the tall silent man that had been standing near the doorway. "Go with him, Stefano. Be on your toes today. There may be trouble."

"Yes, sir." The man quickly turned and followed after Nico.

I waited until the both left before turning to look at Luca. "Nico has his own bodyguard?"

"He has several, but Stefano is his personal bodyguard," Luca replied. "I don't take any chances with Nico's safety. I already lost him twice. I refuse to lose him again."

There was a story there, but it wasn't my place to ask what it was. I liked breathing.

Luca stood and gestured to the doorway. "Why don't we go talk in my study?"

I followed Luca and Vito as they stood and walked out of the room. We headed out of the small dining room, through the massive dining room, and then down the hallway to the room we'd met in before.

Once inside, Luca waved us over to the seating area in front of the fireplace. "If you don't mind, I'm going to get Vinnie Borelli on the line with us. He may have some insight into what is going on."

"We don't mind," I replied. "Vinnie has been very helpful to us so far."

If it wasn't for Vinnie and his friends, we'd probably be dead already.

Luca dialed Vinnie and then put his phone on speaker and laid it on the coffee table between us. "Hey, Vinnie, I've got you here with Vito and Tony D'Angelo."

I smirked, liking the way that sounded.

"I'm glad you found Luca," Vinnie said. "So, can you tell me what is going on?"

"Well, we decided to get kidnapped along the way to Genoa," I quipped. "It sounded like a fun thing to do. I hear it's all the rage nowadays, especially in Italy."

I heard a couple of chuckles and one snort.

"Yes, well, it's not as exciting as it may seem," Vinnie replied. "Trust me on this."

"Oh, I am aware."

"I had my people trace the GPS on the car you guys arrived in and tracked it to a warehouse down by the docks," Luca explained. "We found four men there, one of them dead."

I winced and glanced at Vito.

"I had my men dispose of the body and clean up the scene so there won't be a problem there," Luca continued. "The problem lies in the fact that that warehouse is in my territory and those guys were local thugs, which means this looks like I did it in every way possible. I can assure you, I did not."

"I'm fully aware of the fact that you had nothing to do with this, Luca," I stated firmly. "I'm just trying to figure out why someone is trying to frame you."

"I figure I'm a scapegoat," Luca said. "I think someone wants to put the blame on me so they don't get caught."

"But why you?" I asked. "We were over six hundred miles away when we were kidnapped. Aren't there families closer than that? Why choose to bring us all the way here?"

"I think I can answer that," Vinnie stated. "It's two reasons really. One, Luca is the youngest family head in all of Italy. And two, he's gay. If they put the blame on him, it kills two birds with one stone."

"Boy, are they in for a surprise. Not only am I younger than Luca, but I'm gay. I'd like to see how they deal with that."

"Is there anyone whoever is behind this could know you were gay, Tony?" Luca asked.

I shrugged. "Got me."

"It was in none of the reports I received when I had you investigated," Vito said. "But there seemed to be a lot of stuff that didn't get into those reports."

"Like what?" I asked out of curiosity.

I ignored the part where he said he had me investigated. As much as I disliked it, it made sense to have me checked out before approaching me.

"Where the money went, your mother, and being in foster care."

I frowned. "None of that was in the reports?"

"None of it."

That seemed odd to me.

"Just how good were they guys you sent to investigate me?"

"I thought they were pretty good," Vito replied, "but apparently I was wrong."

"Not necessarily," Vinnie said. "If someone didn't want you to see part of the report, is there any way they could have tampered with it?"

"Who gave you the report and how many people had access to it?" Luca asked.

"My Uncle Carmine gave me the report," Vito said. "I don't know how many people had access to it. I'd call him and ask, but we're trying to stay off the grid at the moment."

"Well," Luca started, "someone obviously knows you're here or we wouldn't have had that incident with the doctor last night."

God, I'd totally forgotten about him.

"Were you able to save his family?"

Luca nodded. "His wife and kids are safe and we've got the guys that were holding them hostage. Low level thugs like the ones that had you detained at the warehouse."

"God, this is all such a fucking mess."

I felt Vito's hand land on my leg, giving me a little squeeze. "We'll figure it out, Tony."

I wasn't sure how. It felt as if we were no closer to discovering who was behind all of this than we had been from the beginning. There were no clues, no trail to follow, no...Wait.

"The money." My head popped up. "I know this is really out there and I've probably seen too many crime movies, but is there a way we can follow the money? Someone has to be footing the bill for all of this, right?"

"Actually, let me make a phone call," Vinnie said. "I know some people that are pretty good with this stuff. Maybe they can find something."

"It would be appreciated, Vinnie," Vito stated. "I feel like we're not even out of the starting gate and the race is almost over."

"I'll call you back just as soon as I find anything out."

"Thank you, Vinnie," I told him. "You and your friends have been a really big help when you didn't need to be."

"Does that mean you'd be interested in a peace treaty between the Borelli and D'Angelo families?"

I glanced at Vito, who nodded at me with his eyes wide and rounded. "Yes, I'd be very interested."

"If I'm not sticking my nose in, I'd be interested in signing one as well," Luca said. "Nico has taken a shine to you and there are not a lot of people he is comfortable around."

This time, my eyes rounded as I nodded. "You get something together and I'll sign it."

Having a peace treaty with two of the four families in Italy could only work in my benefit.

"A peace treaty between the Borelli family, the D'Angelo family, and the Sabatino family." Vinnie let out a small chuckle. "Man, the Romanos are going to shit themselves."

I knew nothing about the Romano family so I couldn't comment.

Luca snorted. "The Romano family can sit and spin for all I care."

"Bad blood?" I asked.

"Snobby assholes," Luca replied. "At the last conclave, which we hosted, one of the nephews tried to bother Nico. Stefano had to put him on the ground. The guy didn't take the rejection very well and tried to raise a stink, but we had video surveillance to

back up Nico's claims of harassment. He went away with egg on his face and a very bad attitude. I've had trouble with them ever since."

"Yeah, let's leave them out." Nico was a nice guy and he didn't deserve that kind of treatment. I also didn't want to have anything to do with assholes. I had enough morons in my life.

"Since we're on the topic," Vinnie said, "I know you have some business dealings here in the states. I could talk to Petrov, King, and Díaz, see if they would be interested in signing a peace treaty as well."

"I can talk to Hu," Luca added in. "If you could get a peace deal with the five families in New York, it would make business dealings there go a little easier."

I glanced at Vito again to see what he thought, but the man was just staring at Luca, his mouth hanging open. "Vito?"

"Yes, please, if they are interested, we would be, too." Vito grabbed my hand as he turned to look at me. "Most of our business is in Europe, Los Angeles, and Chicago, but we do have some dealings in New York City. At the very least, signing an agreement with them would make it easier to go back and visit if you wanted to."

I wasn't sure I did, but it would be nice to have the opportunity if I wanted it. I was pretty partial to Italy at the moment, at least the parts of it I'd seen. I'd like to see a bit more before making a decision, most importantly the place that was supposed to be my new home.

"I'll give them a call and get back to you," Vinnie said before hanging up.

"A peace agreement between all of us could stop a lot of the infighting," Luca stated. "I also think we need to meet up as the heads of the families more than once a year."

Vinnie told me they regularly get together once a month back in New York. Would that be something you'd be interested in?"

"I would," I stated before glancing at Vito to make sure I was saying the correct thing. He smiled as he gave me a nod. "I don't really know how things are done in the mafia, but I think things would go a lot easier if we could all be friends."

Before Luca could say anything, I held up my hand. "I know, that's not the way the mafia thinks. I get that, but I'm not mafia. Or, at least, I wasn't forty-eight hours ago. It's going to take me some time to get that mafia mindset."

"I'm not really sure you should," Luca said. "While there are some things you can't get away from, I've found that most mafia thinking to be from the Dark Ages. Maybe it's time for a new mindset to be established."

While I agreed, I wasn't sure if it was possible.

On the other hand... "That was something else I wanted to talk to you about. I've already spoken briefly with Vinnie about it."

Luca clasped his hands together and rested them on his lap, giving me his full attention. "I'm listening."

"I'm gay."

"Yes, I know. You already said that."

"I'm gay as well," Vito said. "Although, no one knows except the three of us."

"Okay, so what's the problem?" Luca asked. "I won't share your secret."

"It's not going to be a secret much longer." Vito held up our clasped hands. "Tony and I aren't going to make some big announcement or anything, but we're not going to hide it either."

Luca's eyebrows shot up. He pointed a finger between me and Vito. "You two are...?"

"In a relationship," Vito stated firmly.

I beamed at the man. I knew how hard it was for him to step out of his comfort zone like that, and he was doing it for me.

I couldn't be happier.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Vittorio ~

"Congratulations."

I was surprised at how good it felt to be accepted for being gay. Granted, considering Luca was married to a man, I hadn't expected him to try and kill us or anything, but he seemed rather happy for us.

That was new.

It wasn't something I had ever experienced before.

I liked how it made me feel, like I wasn't a defect or something for liking men. I'd felt as if there was something wrong with me my entire life. Now, that thing I'd always been ashamed of was not being praised exactly, but it wasn't being ridiculed either.

"Vito and I discussed it and we decided to just let nature take its course. Like he said, we're not going to make a big announcement that we're both gay and in a relationship, but we're not going to hide it from anyone either. They will either accept us or they won't, but that's on them."

"You know I don't have a problem with it, right?" Luca asked.

"No, I didn't think you would. We just wanted you to be aware of it."

"Well, I think signing this peace agreement is even more important now. All of these men are gay and most of them are married as well. Speaking for myself, I'd actually

prefer to be involved with someone that understands the life I live and accepts Nico as my spouse."

"He falls under the family veil," I stated firmly. "Of course I accept him."

"Vinnie explained to me what that was and I fully support Vito's words. We will respect it when it comes to Nico and the other spouses. I don't care if it's a man or woman."

"I appreciate that," Luca replied. "While I don't think anyone is going to take Nico out, that doesn't mean they haven't been rude to him."

I narrowed my eyes, anger infusing me. "One of our people?"

Luca shook his head. "Members of the Romano family."

Tony snorted rather rudely. "Sounds to me like the Romano family needs to be taken down a peg or two."

"Unfortunately, we have no way of doing that," Luca said. "If we mess with them, they are going to mess with us and I won't put Nico's life in danger like that."

"Can we just stop inviting them to parties?" Tony asked.

"It's not that simple, Tony," I explained. "If we stop inviting them, they would get insulted and an insulted mafia boss is never a good thing."

"Okay, so, if Luca, Vinnie and the others agree, everyone that is signing up for this peace agreement is gay, right?"

I nodded, wondering where he was going with this.

"So, make it gays only party. If the Romanos want to participate, they have to send someone who is gay. From what I've heard so far, none of the Romano family would dare to show up. Wouldn't that makes things easier? "

I stared at Tony for a moment before a burst of laughter shot out of my mouth. "That's a brilliant idea."

It would drive the Romanos insane, but there wouldn't be anything they could do about it. The Romano family was even more homophobic than my uncle. They'd never send someone.

My uncle was going to have a shit fit.

"One of my guys is questioning those thugs right now," Luca said. "If there's any information to be had, he'll get it for us. He has unique ways of extracting information."

Okay, that gave me a little shiver.

My heart skipped a beat when Luca's phone rang. I didn't know where this premonition of doom was coming from. Maybe Tony was rubbing off on me.

"Hello?" Luca said after answering the phone. "Okay, hold on and I'll put you on speaker." He hit a button on his phone and then laid it down in the middle of the coffee table. "Go ahead, Vinnie."

"My friends were able to track some of the money based on the information I got from Franco about the thugs that took you two. They traced the wire transfer back to a bank in Genoa."

I was afraid of that.

"What was the account holder's name?" I asked. Maybe I knew who it was.

"That's the crazy part. There isn't one. It's under a shell corporation called Angel Unlimited. My guys are trying to track down the owner of that group right now, but it might take awhile. They said it's buried pretty deep."

"So, what's our next step?" I wondered out loud.

Before anyone could answer, the door crashed open and Franco came rushing in. "We're under attack."

Luca leapt to his feet. "Where's Nico?"

"I already had Stefano move Nico and your grandmother to the safe room," Franco replied.

Luca stalked over to the bookshelf behind his desk and hit something I didn't see. The bookshelf slid out of the way revealing a rack filled with guns. He grabbed one and started checking the magazine.

Tony jumped up and hurried over to him. "Got another one of those?"

Luca stepped out of the way. "Take your pick."

Tony grabbed three pistols and several extra magazines. He brought me one of the pistols and a couple of the magazines before sticking the others in his pocket.

"What's the situation, Franco?" Luca asked.

"Four SUVs pulled up in front of the gate two minutes ago. The people inside got out and immediately took our guards hostage. I had our guys hold them off, but they are

demanding entrance. They haven't moved from in front of the estate so I suspect they are stalling until they can fully surround us."

"Do you know who they are?" I asked.

Franco shook his head. "I don't recognize any of them."

That wasn't good.

"Put more guards on Nico and my grandmother, and do you know where my grandfather is?" Luca asked.

"He drove into Messina on business," Franco replied. "He's not expected back until tomorrow."

"Call him and warn him. I don't want him unguarded."

"Luca, do you want me to have my grandfather send some of his men?" Vinnie asked through the cell phone.

"I doubt they would get here in time for the fight, but some backup wouldn't hurt just in case."

"I'll call him right now."

Once Vinnie hung up, there was dead silence in the room for a moment as everyone prepared for a fight that might or might not come.

Luca tossed me and Tony a couple of flak vests and then put one on himself. I'd worn one once or twice before. I hated them then and I hated them now, but they were useful, especially when headed into a tense situation that could quickly turn into a fire

fight.

Before we headed out the door, I grabbed Tony around the neck and reeled him in, pressing a hard kiss to his lips. "Don't get dead. I have plans for you later."

Tony gave me one of his patented smirks. "I hope it's riding lessons."

Oh, he'd definitely be riding something.

"It will be."

"Then I won't get dead."

It was always nice to have something to look forward to.

"Sir, the surveillance from the front gate." Franco held a tablet out to Luca. "Another two SUVs full of guards have joined the first four."

Luca grabbed the tablet and stared down at the screen on the screen. "Has anyone tried to breach the walls?"

"Not yet, sir," Franco replied. "It's almost as if they are waiting for something."

"Or someone," Tony said.

We all stared at him.

Tony's eyes rolled. "Come on, you've been at this whole mafia thing longer than I have. Think. If four SUVs full of guards suddenly attack, but don't kill anyone, and they are not trying to break in, then they are obviously waiting for something to happen or someone to arrive."

Tony waved his hand toward the open doorway. "Has anyone gone out there and tried to talk to them? Ask them what they want?"

Again, everyone just stared at Tony.

Did he not get how things were done in the mafia? There were armed men out there, armed men that were aggressive and hostile. We couldn't exactly ask them in for tea.

"Tony—"

Tony's eyes rolled. "You guys are ridiculous," he said before spinning on his heels and storming out of the room.

"Does he not get how dangerous it would be to do something like that?" Luca asked.

"I don't think he cares," I replied as I started after Tony.

I had to run to catch up to him, but once I did I began walking casually beside him. "So, you know this is a really stupid idea, right?"

"Yeah, but I don't have a better one at the moment."

"You could maybe not confront the angry men with guns." I chuckled when Tony shot me a glare. "Just a suggestion."

"I'd take that suggestion, but they are starting to piss me off. I'm getting damn tired of people trying to kill me. If they want me so bad, why not make it easier for them?"

My heart leapt into my throat. "Tony, please, don't—"

Tony stopped so suddenly, I almost passed him up. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes, of course," I said without hesitation.

"Then trust me when I say I am not walking to my doom."

I didn't see how he couldn't be, but I did trust him and I'd seen him to amazing things. I was terrified that in this case he was wrong, but if I didn't trust him now, I was pretty sure I was going to lose him.

Might anyway.

"What do you need me to do?" I asked.

"Give me five minutes and then come down to the gate."

I swallowed tightly. I had no idea what his plan was, but he seemed confident in himself. I had to be, too. "Five minutes. Not a second more."

I had to be as crazy as he was.

Tony beamed at me, leaned in to press a kiss to my lips, and then hurried out the front door. I closed my eyes for a moment and prayed with everything in me that his planned worked and he came back to me unscathed.

"Where'd Tony go?" Luca asked as he reached me.

I opened my eyes and let out a big sigh. "You don't want to know."

I glanced at my watch to note the time and then walked out to stand on the front steps. I easily spotted Tony running through the yard, but he was headed to the corner of the property, not the main gate.

"What is he doing?" Luca asked just about the time Tony leapt over a bush, jumped toward the fence, and then climbed up the tall fence like he was Spiderman.

I'd never seen anything like it.

"I have no idea," I replied. "He said to come down to the main gate in five minutes."

I just hoped he was still breathing when I got there.

When Tony disappeared over the top of the stone fence I thought my heart was going to leap right out of my chest. It took every bit of control I had to stay standing where I was and not go running after him.

The waiting was agony.

When a lot of shouting erupted from the other side of the fence, Luca jerked and then started for the stairs. I quickly grabbed his arm. "Five minutes is not up."

Luca looked at me as if I was crazy, and maybe I was, but Tony said five minutes and I was going to give him those five minutes.

I glanced at my watch. Two minutes to go.

"You're not even going to go check?"

"I trust Tony," I stated no matter how much I wanted to go check.

"There are several carloads of armed men over there. What can he do? He's a single man. He's going to get himself killed."

I really wished Luca would shut up. I already had a million bad images running

rampant through my brain. I didn't need him to be adding to them.

When a gunshot rang out, I forgot about my promise to Tony, only concerned with getting to him as quickly as I could. I raced down the steps and then ran as fast as I could toward the gate.

Five minutes be damned.

When I reached the gate, Luca was right there with me. He pulled out his gun and then gestured to the guard. "Open the gate!" he shouted.

"My five minutes aren't up," someone shouted from the other side of the gate. It sounded a lot like Tony.

Fuck the five minutes.

"Open the gate!" I shouted as loudly as Luca had.

The gate opened so slowly I wanted to scream. When I finally saw the scene on the other side, I felt paralyzed, unable to move a single muscle.

It just wasn't possible.

Tony stood there in the middle of a pile of bodies, his hair messed and blowing gently in the breeze. There was a slight sheen of sweat on his body and a few rips in his clothes.

Other than that, there didn't seem to be a scratch on him.

"You guys are ruining all my fun," Tony complained. He was frowning as if truly put out by us interrupting him.

"Tony!"

I darted toward him, catching him as his legs gave out.

"I need some water," Tony stated, his skin flushed a rosy tone as if he had run a great distance. "That took a lot of energy."

I slowly looked around, unable to believe what I was seeing. Not a single man was moving except for Tony. They all seemed to be out cold.

"Did you kill them?"

"Naw, I just put them to sleep," Tony replied in a casual tone as if this was just an everyday thing. "Since we don't know who these guys are, I didn't want to ruffle any feathers."

"How?" Luca looked around with a stunned expression. "How did you do all of this? You're one man against..." Luca frowned. "At least twenty armed guards. How did you knock them all out?"

Tony wagged his eyebrows. "I'm special like that."

I couldn't deny that fact anymore.

"Could you maybe keep this type of thing to a minimum?" I pleaded. "You almost made my heart stop beating."

Tony patted my cheek, smiling up at me. "For you, I'll consider it."

Pretty sure that was as good as it was going to get for me.

I swung Tony up in my arms and started for the villa. "Let's get you some water."

I also needed to do a full body inspection and make sure he didn't have any wounds I couldn't see. I wasn't about to lose him now that I had found him.

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~ Anthony ~

Vito was hovering.

It was cute, but it was also annoying. I really hadn't gotten a scratch on me. Granted, there were a few bruises and my hand and foot hurt like hell from knocking everyone out, but there had been no blood.

That had to count for something.

"I'm fine, Vito."

"Just let me do this," Vito said as he ran a wet cloth down my arm. "I need to get that picture of you standing in the middle of all those bodies out of my head."

"Seriously, I'm fine."

"I'll decide that once I check you over."

"Vito." I grabbed him by his shirt collar and pulled him closer until we were nose to nose. I could see the concern and worry in his eyes, but it was the fear that bothered me. "I wouldn't lie to you."

I fingered the collar of Vito's shirt and then let my hand trail lazily down the front of his chest. "But maybe you should check me out just to be sure."

Vito's brow flickered.

I could almost smell the man's growing arousal. Vito's eyes flickered with growing lust as he watched the tiny movement of my tongue.

I didn't say a word as I straddled the man's thighs like an expert bull rider. From the desire I could see burning in Vito's dark eyes, no words were needed. Vito knew exactly what I wanted.

An involuntary shiver raced through my body when the Vito's large hands closed around my waist. They were pulling me closer.

My cock ached, my need growing with every passing second. I knew if I didn't get Vito's cock in my ass in the next sixty seconds, I was going to blow without him.

And wouldn't that be the saddest thing on earth?

I felt a fraction of fear when my shirt was suddenly ripped open, bits of fabric flying in every direction. That fear slithered away when I felt those delicious hands move over my chest, settling on my nipples to pluck and pull at them.

I dropped my head back on my shoulders and groaned. It was unintelligible sound, but crystal clear in its volume. A deep groan of need, my need.

Vito seemed to know just how much to tug, to pull, how much pressure to use to bring me to the very edge of bliss.

That bliss was ripped away when a sudden pain started in my head. I blinked in shock, not from the pain of Vito's hand fisting in my hair, but from heat I could see building in Vito's eyes, turning them darker with every passing second.

When Vito used the hand gripping my hair to push me down to my knees between his thighs, I couldn't help but grin.

I knew what Vito wanted.

I quickly lowered the man's zipper and reached in to pull his cock out. I could feel my heart skip a beat before I had fully pulled Vito's cock free from his pants.

I had forgotten just how big Vito truly was. The man was hung like a fucking horse. His cock was so thick that my hand wouldn't even fully close around it and I seriously doubted I could cover every inch of his length if I had four hands. Vito had to be at least ten inches long.

I gulped, knowing I might be in trouble.

The hand curled in my hair tightened. When I glanced up, Vito's dark eyebrow was arched as if he were challenging me.

I was never one to turn down a challenge.

Keeping my eyes locked with tall, dark, and handsome, I carefully lowered my mouth and swallowed just the tip of the Vito's cock. My lips burned as they stretched around his wide girth.

The drops of pre-cum pooling on the head of Vito's cock trickled over my tongue, bathing me in the most exotic flavors I had ever tasted in my life. I had expected tart, because let's face it, most men had bitter tasting cum.

Vito tasted spicy.

Tangy.

Irresistible.

Hell, he tasted like the ambrosia of the gods. I could seriously get addicted to sucking this guy off on a regular basis. I might even beg for the chance.

I stroked my tongue over the head of Vito's cock as I waited for my lips to stretch around him enough to swallow him. It was obvious that it was going to take a little more effort than normal for me to suck Vito off.

Once my mouth had adjusted to Vito's size, I licked a long path from the tip of Vito's cock down to the root and then down just a bit further. I felt Vito's hand tighten in my hair when I sucked one of his balls into my mouth.

Oh yeah, he liked that. I could tell.

I took the time to suck the other ball into my mouth, rolling it around with my tongue before licking a line back up the thickly veined side of his cock.

By the time I reached the slit on the head of Vito's cock, another pool of pre-cum had gathered and started dripping down the sides. I eagerly licked at each drop until my mouth exploded in flavor.

Another long, deep groan fell from my lips as I slowly sucked Vito's shaft down my throat. I got about half way down the man's impressive erection before I had to pause and draw in a deep breath through my nose.

Once I had more air in my lungs, I continued.

The lust that flared in Vito's deep dark eyes as I swallowed him down until my nose was nestled in pubic hair, was the biggest ego boost I had ever received. It made me feel like I could conquer the world.

I wanted more.

I slowly started to bob my head, sucking in my cheeks as I moved my lips up and down Vito's thick shaft. I wanted to savor every last inch as Vito moved through my mouth.

The more my mouth moved up and down, the easier it became to swallow Vito's cock down to the root every time. I could still feel drops of luscious tasting pre-cum splattering over my tongue every time I swallowed, and god, it was fucking fantastic.

When Vito's balls started to pull up tight to his body, I increased the speed of my movements, sucking Vito's length down my throat faster and faster each time, hollowing my cheeks out as I moved back up to the tip.

I knew Vito was getting close and I wanted him to remember this blow job as the best one he had ever received.

When Vito's cock began to swell, my eyes widened and I gagged. Vito just grinned and held my head in place with a hand to the back of my head.

I suddenly couldn't get any air into my lungs. I tried breathing through my nose, but it was buried in Vito's pubic hair as he shoved his cock all of the way down my throat and came with a low grunt.

Load after load of cum shot into my mouth. I swallowed as fast as I was able to, but I could feel drops of it slide out of the edges of my mouth.

I ached to swallow every drop, but I just couldn't.

When the pressure on the back of my head released, I lifted my head, Vito's spent cock falling from my mouth with a loud plop, and then went about licking up every drop of cum I could find.

When Mr. Sex on a stick was all cleaned up, I carefully put him back in his pants, but didn't zip him up. I was really hoping our time together wasn't over.

My need had been growing while I sucked Vito off and if I didn't get a cock in my ass pretty soon, I was going to scream.

It wouldn't be a pretty sight.

When I was suddenly pulled from the floor and bent over the edge of the bed, I knew my dreams were about to be fulfilled. I had a sudden bout of fear when I remembered how large the man was.

This might hurt.

My pants were yanked down my legs. My shirt followed quickly. After that until I was laid out on the mattress like a display. My legs were spread apart and I felt Vito step between them before I could protest.

I rolled my eyes, like I was going to protest.

Not.

I found myself doing the one thing I never did. I begged. "Please."

Yeah, I was that damn needy.

"I have to stretch you first, cara mia ."

My eyebrows rose when Vito pulled a small bottle of lube and a condom out of his pocket.

"I got these from Luca earlier," Vito explained.

"Uh uh."

Vito chuckled as he popped the lid and poured a sufficient amount of slick out onto his fingers, and then snapped the lid closed. He dropped the lube onto the bed.

My high pitched grunt filled the room as Vito's fingers pushed into my ass. My body stiffened for a moment and then rippled.

My heart thundered against my chest.

Vito started thrusting his fingers into my tight ass over and over again until I felt the little ring of muscles stretch and pulse against his fingers.

"Need you, Tony," Vito whispered as he pulled his fingers free and he scooted up against my ass cheeks.

I heard something tear and then a moment later a big thick cock was pushed into my ass, the burning so intense that for a moment, I thought he might pass out.

I felt as if my ass was being speared in two as Vito slowly pushed forward, sinking his huge cock into my tight hole. By the time I felt Vito's thighs brush up against my ass, I thought I might be able to taste the man's cock in my throat.

I gripped the blankets and tried not to wince when Vito stilled inside of me. I needed Vito to move, to fuck me, to do something. I was being impaled on a two by four and the man was just standing there, not moving.

It was driving me insane.

My heart jumped into my throat when Vito smacked me on the ass cheek. I almost reared back in protest. I didn't do the whole spanking thing. It wasn't one of my kinks.

And then those large, powerful hands slammed down on me again just as the man started to move. Whatever protest I was going to utter was lost in the loud cry of ecstasy that flew out of my mouth.

Every inch of Vito's massive cock dragged across my sweet spot as the man pulled out and pushed back in. For one crazy second, I wondered if Vito's cock had been specifically designed just for my ass. It felt as if he filled every inch of me, as if Vito was supposed to ignite every nerve in my ass.

It was fucking fantastic, better than I had even hoped.

When my hips were grabbed and I was dragged to the very edge of the bed and then lifted up onto my knees, all I could do was moan.

My ass was being pummeled as the man pounded into me at a rate that was, frankly, very astonishing. I could barely register the fact that Vito had pulled out before he was pushing back in.

I was suddenly lifted up into the man's arms. And then Vito sat, dragging me down with him. As my body settled over Vito's, the cock in my ass slid in even further, which surprised the hell out of me. I didn't think Vito could sink any further inside of me.

My legs were spread until they draped over Vito's thighs and my back was pulled up snug against Vito's sweaty chest.

All thoughts and breathing in general faded from my mind when a hand closed around my cock. I was so sensitive I swore I could feel a tickling on my balls as Vito

started to stroke me.

Maybe it was sweat.

I didn't care.

I really didn't.

I just needed that magnificent cock to not stop filling me. I was so close I could practically taste it. I needed so fucking bad. Every inch of my skin tingled. I was flushed with heat and getting hotter. I had started to feel as if my insides were boiling.

"Please," I begged.

Yes, I was begging.

Again.

I couldn't help it. It just felt so damn good. No one had ever fucked me like this before. It was raw and animalistic and I knew I'd have bruises tomorrow.

I just didn't care.

My blood pounded through my body as I was impaled on Vito's cock over and over again, my tight abused little hole screaming in agony as it was stretched beyond imagination.

And it felt so damn good.

My loud scream shook the windows as my release filled Vito's hand. Vito roared as he shoved his thick cock as deep into my ass as he could possibly go and released

inside of me, filling the condom.

He'd never come out of I had my way.

Vito gently stroked his hand down my chest as his rapid panting slowed to a low rise and fall. My head flopped back against Vito's chest. I smiled when Vito reached up and brushed the sweat dampened hair back from my face.

"I think you're good."

I snorted. "I'll be lucky to walk tomorrow."

"Are you complaining?" Vito asked.

"Hell, no."

I wasn't that stupid.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Vittorio ~

I woke to someone knocking on the door. Besides the fact that I could have used a few hours more of sleep, getting out of a nice warm comfortable bed with a sexy man in it was not something I wanted to do, but whoever it was at the door was very persistent.

I groaned almost silently as I rolled to the side of the bed and reached for the lounge pants Luca had loaned me.

I grumbled to myself as I walked across the room and yanked the door open. "What?" I snarled in a whisper so i didn't wake Tony.

Luca cocked an eyebrow.

I sighed as I rubbed a hand over my face. "Sorry, man, you woke me from a dead sleep."

Not to mention a snuggle with a warm body.

"You might want to put these on." Luca handed me a stack of clothes. "Your Uncle Carmine is at the gate demanding to see you."

My eyebrows snapped together. "How did he know we were here? I didn't call him."

"I don't know, but he's making a lot of racket. If he doesn't quite down, the authorities are going to show up and I can't have that."

"No, no, of course not." I'd already caused Luca enough problems. I didn't want to cause him anymore. "Look, if it's okay with you, let him in and serve him some coffee or something. I need fifteen minutes to shower and dress, and then I'll be down."

"I'll give you twenty, but not a minute more. He's starting to get on my nerves."

"Oh, hey, did Vinnie's guys arrive?" I asked before the man could leave.

"Not yet, but they should be here soon. I talked to Vinnie and he's going to loan them to me for a couple of days just in case anyone decides to attack us again."

"Any word on who was behind the attack?"

Luca snorted as he waved a hand toward the bed. "Your boy there did a pretty good job. Those ass hats are all still unconscious."

I wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not.

"I have them all locked up and under guard. The moment one of them wakes up, I'll be informed."

"If it's okay with you, I'd like to be there when you talk to them."

Luca nodded. "That would be fine."

"I'll be as quick as I can."

"Are you bringing Tony down with you?"

I glanced back at the sleeping man in the bed. "No, I think I'll let him sleep a little

longer."

"You know he's going to be pissed at you, don't you?"

"Probably, but it's a chance I'll take. I want to meet with my uncle first and find out what kind of mood he's in before I introduce him to Tony. I have a feeling that that introduction is going to go sideways rather quickly."

Tony was not going to put up with any of my uncle's shit.

"You're probably right."

Oh, I knew I was.

"Okay, see you downstairs in twenty," Luca said before turning and walking away.

I carried the clothes Luca had given me into the bathroom and took the quickest shower I remembered taking in years. I basically jumped in, ran a soapy washrag over my body real quick, and then rinsed off.

Once I climbed out and dried off, I went through the stack of clothes separating mine from clothes that would fit Tony. I left his in a pile on the counter and then dressed in the ones that fit me.

I walked out of the bathroom and headed straight for the bed, or rather the sexy man in the bed. I seriously didn't want to wake Tony, but Luca was right. He'd be pissed.

I sat down on the side of the bed and leaned over until I could press a kiss to Tony's forehead. He looked so sweet and innocent when he slept. He was the devil when he was awake.

"Tony, I need you to wake up for a moment."

Tony's eyelids fluttered and then slowly lifted. As soon as Tony saw me, a smile spread across his lips. "Morning."

I smiled back, liking this softer side of the man. "Morning."

Tony's brow flickered when his eyes dropped away from my face. "Why are you dressed?"

"My Uncle Carmine is here."

Tony's eyes rounded. "Oh crap."

Pretty much.

"I'll go down and deal with him," I told Tony. "I just wanted you to know where I was going."

"I'll get dressed."

Tony started to sit up, but I pushed him back down.

"I can deal with my uncle," I assured him. "You go back to sleep. You need the rest. When you wake up, there is a clean set of clothes for you on the bathroom counter."

"Are you sure?"

I smiled again, something warm igniting inside of me. "I'm sure, cara mia ."

Tony settled back against the pillows. "One of these days you're going to have to tell

me what that means."

"It's a term of endearment like my dear or sweetheart."

It also meant my beloved, but I wasn't ready to think about that right now, let alone tell Tony. The words had just come naturally to my lips. They felt right when referring to him.

Tony's smile grew sleepy. "Mmm, I like that."

"I'm glad." I leaned down to press another kiss to his forehead. "Go back to sleep. I'll come wake you when I'm done talking to my uncle."

I waited until his eyes closed before getting up and walking out of the room. I shut the door firmly behind me before making my way downstairs and heading for Luca's study.

I could hear the yelling before I reached the door.

I sighed as I pressed two fingers to my temple and then took a deep calming breath. One of these days my uncle was going to be the death of me. I just hoped it wasn't today.

I knocked and then opened the door, stepping inside the room. My Uncle Carmine stood toe to toe with Luca, who had his arms crossed and was staring down at him with a look of utter disdain on his face.

"I demand you let me see my nephew right now!"

Luca rolled his eyes before turning to look at me. "It's too early for this shit."

"Uncle, have you lost your mind?" I snapped as I hurried over to pull Uncle Carmine away from Luca. "You don't speak to the head of another family like that."

It was a good way to end up dead.

"Nephew!"

When my uncle rushed toward me, I held out a hand to stop him and looked at Luca. "Can I have a few minutes with my uncle?" I glared at Uncle Carmine. "I need to remind him of the rules of etiquette."

"I'll go see if Sophia has started breakfast yet," Luca said as he started out of the room.

I waited until the door closed behind him before turning on my uncle. "Are you insane? You don't talk to the head of another family like that." I know I had already said that, but apparently it needed to be repeated. "Luca could—"

My uncle reared back. "Luca? You call Sabatino by his first name and you want to remind me of the rules?"

"He told me to," I retorted.

"He's the one that kidnapped you, Vito."

Man, my uncle needed to get a clue.

"And who told you that?"

"It doesn't matter," Uncle Carmine insisted. "We just need to get out of here."

I narrowed my eyes, a sliver of unease sliding down my spine. "Why?"

"Look, our men are waiting outside the gates. As soon as we get out of here, they are going to come in and take Sabatino down. None of the other families will sanction us considering Sabatino took out the entire D'Angelo family."

He really was insane.

I took a hasty step back from my uncle. I didn't want to catch whatever had made him crazy. "Luca didn't kill the D'Angelo family. He wasn't even in the country when it happened."

Uncle Carmine snorted. "But his men were here. You don't think he could have ordered someone to set the bomb? He was probably out of the country to give himself an alibi."

"He was out of the country rescuing his husband. He could care less what was going on with the D'Angelo family."

"Look, the Romano family promised me that if we could take Sabatino out, they would sign a peace accord with us. Do you have any idea what that means? With the D'Angelo family gone, we can—"

"Who said the D'Angelo family was gone?" Tony asked as he walked into the study. "I'm still here and last time I checked you couldn't sign a peace agreement without my signature."

Uncle Carmine's eyes rounded. "You're alive."

"Very much so," Tony replied.

"But they said you were dead."

"They who?" I asked.

"The Romanos. They showed me pictures of the crash scene. There were even pictures of Sabatino's guards pulling Vito out of the wreck, but they said you burned up in the fire."

Tony snorted, crossing his arms. "They lied."

"Oh, we were kidnapped all right," I said. "We were taken to a warehouse right here in Palermo."

"See?" Uncle Carmine asked with righteous indignation. "I knew it was Sabatino."

"It wasn't actually," Tony said. "Luca rescued us."

Uncle Carmine frantically shook his head. "That's just what he wants you to believe."

Tony's eyes narrowed, and that was never a good thing. "Why are you so against Luca Sabatino?"

"Because." Uncle Carmine stomped his foot. "He's not the kind of man that should be in charge."

Oh, I could see where this was going.

"And why is that, Uncle?"

"He's married to a man," my uncle insisted.

"He is," Tony agreed. "That man's name is Nico and he's very nice."

"He's gay!"

"News flash." Tony leaned his upper body closer. "So am I."

My uncle's mouth dropped open.

I smirked as I stepped over to Tony, grabbed his hand, and brought it to my lips, pressing a soft kiss to the top, before turning to look at my uncle. "Since Tony and I are now involved, guess that makes me gay as well."

Uncle carmine's eyes snapped to me. "You can't be gay."

"Been gay since I was twelve years old," I stated firmly. "Well, probably before that, but that's when I figured out I liked guys and not girls."

"You can't be gay in the mafia!"

"Well," I started, "considering a peace agreement between Luca and four of the five families in New York is in the works, and they are all gay, pretty sure gay in the mafia is here to stay."

Uncle Carmine's head jerked back. "What?"

"I've already spoken to Luca and Vinnie Borelli and they are both on board. Vinnie and Luca are currently speaking to the other five families in New York to see if they are interested, but yeah, we've all agreed to not only have a peace accord between our families, but to meet up once a month to keep the peace between us." Tony tilted his head a little. "Funny, the only family not invited to join was the Romano family."

"So, basically, three of the four families in Italy plus four, possibly five of the families in New York City have all agreed to peace between our families. The only one not on board with this is the one family not invited because they can't stand gay people." Tony smirked. "Imagine that."

Uncle Carmine stumbled back, collapsing into one of the chairs. "You haven't even been in Italy for more than a couple of days. How did you get them to all agree?"

Tony's eyes rolled. "Must be my winning personality."

"Things don't happen this way!"

Tony snorted "They do in my world."

He walked over to sit on the couch, crossing one leg over the other. I naturally followed, sitting down next to him and stretching my arm along the back of the couch behind him.

When Tony pulled out a knife and started cleaning under his fingernails with it, I leaned back. I didn't want anything to happen to my uncle, but I wasn't stupid enough to get between Tony and his prey.

"It's like this, Carmine. I am the last remaining D'Angelo. At some point, I am sure I will decide to have kids and I'll pass on the bloodline to the next generation, but until that time I am in charge." He pointed the knife tip at himself and then back to Carmine. "Me, not you. Understand?"

"Yes, of course, but—"

"No buts here...well, unless you count mine and it's a little sore after the pounding Vito gave me last night."

I tucked my lips in and bit down on them to stop myself from laughing when my uncle's face paled. I knew Tony was going to toss things upside down, but I hadn't exactly been expecting this.

"Do you see how he is speaking to me?" Uncle Carmine snapped as he glared at me.

"I do," I admitted, "but he's right. I did give him quite the pounding last night."

Tony must have liked what I said because he leaned over and pressed a kiss to my cheek before patting it. "Be a good boy and I'll let you do it again tonight."

I could be a good boy.

"You're insane," Carmine whispered. "You're both insane."

Tony was up and over the coffee table, the knife blade pressed against Carmine's throat before the man could even get up. "What part of this aren't you getting, Carmine? I am the head of the D'Angelo family. Vito is my underboss. That puts you third in line, not first. What I say goes. If you don't like it, get the hell out."

"Are you going to let him do this to me?" Uncle Carmine asked me.

I shrugged as I crossed my legs at the ankles. "He's the boss."

Carmine gaped at me. "I'm your uncle."

"Boss and lover trump uncle."

And always would.

Tony pressed the blade into Carmine's throat just a little harder. "And you'd better

keep that biased gay bullshit to yourself if you decide to stay. I won't stand for it."

"If word of this gets out—"

"I don't care if word gets out," Tony interrupted. "It's not my problem if other people don't agree with the fact that I like dick. It's their problem, not mine."

"You'll get us all killed."

"Yeah, probably, but I plan to have a lot of fun before then."

When Carmine looked at Tony with eyes the size of saucers, I couldn't help chuckling. He was experiencing Tony at his finest. It was glorious to watch from the sidelines.

Tony walked back over to sit down next to me, going back to picking at his fingernails with the tip of the knife. "Now, what are we going to do about the Romanos? It seems to me that not only do they want to use Luca as a scapegoat for my death, but they want to use Uncle Carmine here as their instrument of death. Either way you look at it, they get off scott free while someone else takes the blame."

"Leads me to think that the Romans are behind the bombing," I told him.

"True, but is it all the Romanos or just a few of them? Like that nephew that pissed Luca off?"

"We should probably talk to Luca," I suggested. "It also wouldn't hurt to get Vinnie on the phone. Maybe he has some insight that we don't have."

Tony hopped up and started for the door. "I'll track down Luca. You deal with your uncle before I do. I don't want to pay for a new rug. We can call Vinnie when I get

back."

"Yes, Boss."

Tony stopped and glared at me.

I smiled. "Yes, cara mia ."

I waited until Tony had left the room before rubbing my hands over my face and then dropping them into my lap so I could look at my uncle. "Do you want to die because I'm pretty sure Tony is willing to accommodate you if that's the case?"

"You can't be gay, Vittorio."

"Why not?"

I'd been gay all my life.

"Because I don't want you to die!"

"Pretty sure being gay does not kill you."

"You'd be wrong," Uncle Carmine whispered as he turned to look out the window.

"Being gay in the mafia does kill you, or at least the people you love."

Wait...what was going on here?

"Uncle Carmine?"

There was no happiness in the smile on my uncle's face when he turned to look at me, just sadness. "His name was Leonardo Borelli. I met him the summer I turned sixteen.

He was everything a red blooded teenager dreamed about. Handsome, charming, smart. He was perfect in every way."

I blinked in surprise. "You fell in love with a man?"

Granted, I'd never really seen my uncle with women, but I'd never seen him with men either. I always thought he was too dedicated to his job to be involved with someone.

Carmine's hands were shaking as he pulled his billfold out of his suit pocket, opened it, and then pulled out a faded photograph, handing it to me. "This was taken that summer."

It was an old faded photograph of two dark haired teenagers standing next to each other, arms around each other's shoulders. Any stranger looking at it could have easily thought they were just friends. I could see the glimmer in their eyes as they looked at one another.

"Knowing how things were in the mafia and that we were from different families, we decided we were going to run away together, but the night we planned to escape we got caught."

Uncle Carmine took the photo when I handed it back to him and stared down at it as if it was his most precious treasure. "They killed Leonardo right in front of me, but not before torturing us both first. They wanted to make sure we learned our lesson to not mess around with other men."

Carmine put the photograph away and then stared at me with tears in his eyes. "I didn't want that for you."

"Who did this?"

"Does it matter?" Uncle Carmine asked. "It was a long time ago, over fifty years. The people that killed Leonardo are long gone and buried and I've never repeated that mistake."

"So, what? You've been alone all these years?"

I'd at least fooled around a bit when I was out of town.

Carmine stared down a simple silver ring on his finger and smiled, again, not with happiness, but with sadness. "My heart will always belong to Leonardo. It doesn't matter if he is here or not."

Sadly, this was the kind of love I wanted. I just wanted it without the whole dead part.

I got up and walked around the coffee table before sitting down on it right in front of my uncle. I grabbed both of his hands with mine. "Uncle, you've always been someone I've admired and looked up to. You became a father figure to me when my parents died, but I can't live my life like you do. I want love in my life, even if it gets me killed."

I was praying it wouldn't.

"And you think you'll get that with a mafia boss?" Uncle Carmine asked.

"I think I'll get that with Tony. Him being a mafia boss has nothing to do with it."

"It has everything to do with it," Carmine insisted. "If the other families find out that the head of our family is gay, what do you think they will do?"

"Depends on the family. I'm pretty sure we're in the clear when it comes to the Borelli and Sabatino families. In fact, I think that it improves our chances of peace with

them. That just leaves the Romano family and I am pretty sure they are the ones trying to wipe our family out, but that has nothing to do with me or Tony being gay."

"How do you know that?" Carmine asked. "It could have everything to do with you being gay."

"Because if it did, then why take out the entire D'Angelo family?" I was getting really tired of Uncle Carmine's denial. "If they wanted me dead, they could have just killed me, but instead, they took out the entire family. Why? Because I'm gay? Because Tony is gay? I don't buy that. They didn't know we are gay when they attacked us."

"How do you know?"

"Because I just came out of the closet yesterday."

And I had no plans on climbing back in.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Tony ~

I had been warned about Uncle Carmine, but seeing him in person and listening to the shit coming out of his mouth made me fume. This man was one of the reasons Vito hadn't been able to live his life to the fullest and felt ashamed of the things he desired.

I wanted to punch the man so badly I could practically feel the impact of my fist in his face. How dare he make Vito feel ashamed of something that he was born with, something that couldn't be changed.

Vito had been forced to hide a large part of himself his entire life and it was all due to sanctimonious assholes like Carmine.

I almost turned around to go back and punch him.

"Luca," I called out when I saw the man coming out of the dining room. "We might have a problem."

"Define problem," Luca requested.

"Carmine said something about the Romanos wanting you taken out. They offered a peace agreement to him if he did their dirty work for them. He's got guys waiting outside the gate to attack."

Luca pulled out his phone and started barking out orders, the main one to get Nico and his grandparents to the safe room. Once he was done with that, he made another phone call.

"Vinnie? It's Luca. You know those extra men you said you could send my way? How far out are they?"

I hadn't realized Luca had put the phone on speaker until I heard Vinnie's voice. "Trouble?"

"Looks like the Romano family are stirring up trouble and they've got Carmine convinced to do their dirty work for them."

"My uncle said they are only about ten minutes out."

"Tell them to be careful," Luca warned. "I doubt these guys came unarmed."

"I'm going to go get Vito and go talk them down," I said. "As the head of the family, they have to listen to me, right?"

"Technically, yes," Luca replied, "but since none of them have ever met you before, I doubt they will."

"Which is why I plan to take Vito with me. Him they know." It wasn't a great plan, but it was the only one I had at the moment.

"I'll call my grandfather," Vinnie stated, "and see if he can do some nosing around about the Romanos. If they have declared all out war on you, you know we'll back you up."

"I appreciate it, Vinnie," Luca replied. "My main concern is that nothing happens to Nico. If things get to dangerous here, can I send him your way?"

"My uncle and my men flew into the airport there. If your family needs a ride out of there, just get them to the airport. I'll let my pilot know he might have a passenger or

two. I'll protect them until you come for them. You have my word of honor."

Luca visibly sighed in relief. "Thank you, Vinnie."

"I know you'd do the same for me if needed."

"I would," Luca stated, "but let's hope it never comes to that."

"From your lips to God's ears, my friend."

Luca hung up with Vinnie and put his cell phone away before turning to look at me.

"I need to go have a word with Nico before he freaks out. Are you going to be okay by yourself?"

I nodded. "I'll be fine."

"Try not to rack up such a large body count this time. I'm running out of room."

I snorted. "I promise nothing."

Luca chuckled as he walked away.

I turned and made a beeline for Luca's study. I wished I'd had time to ask him for more ammo clips, but I was praying I wouldn't need them. I really didn't want to have to shoot any of my own men.

I would if forced to though.

I hurried back to the study just in time to hear Vito say he had just come out of the closet yesterday. I was damn happy about that. It felt as if not only had he come out of the closet, but he had come out full force.

Even if something happened in the future and we didn't work out—I was praying that didn't happen—at least he could continue to be true to himself.

I pushed open the study door and stepped inside. "Vinnie's people are ten minutes out. Luca has Nico on lockdown. We're on idiot duty. I need you to go with me since none of these guys have ever seen me."

Vito instantly stood and started toward me.

"Wait," Carmine called out as he stood. "Where are you going?"

"To tell the guards you brought with you to stand down before someone gets killed."

"You can't go out there."

I rolled my eyes as I turned to look at Carmine, eliciting a small chuckle from Vito. "And why not?"

"You'll be killed."

He was worried about my safety?

I wasn't buying it.

"Look, whether you like it or not, I am going to go out there and try to stop an all out war. My body count is already high enough. I don't need to add to it."

Carmine's brow flickered. "Your body count?"

I turned and continued out of the room without saying a word. I was so not going to explain my last few days to this guy.

"Wait!" Carmine called out as he hurried after me and Vito.

Nope, not waiting.

Luca met us at the front door, the look on his face fierce, but determined. "I've got men stationed around the estate, but they won't do anything without my say so. I'll wait here for you to deal with your men, but if they breach the perimeter I will take them out."

I nodded. "Understood."

Luca really was being gracious in allowing me to deal with this situation considering this was where his family lived.

Vito stayed right by my side as I walked down the steps and then the driveway to the main gate. We stopped right on the other side of the gate, waiting for the guard to open it.

"Try not to get dead," I advised Vito.

"Me? You're the adventurous one in this relationship."

I cocked an eyebrow. "Are you saying you don't like my adventurous side?"

Vito gulped. "I didn't say that."

I didn't think so.

"I'm hoping most of this will blow over once they see you, and once you tell them who I am, I can deal with them. I'm sure they are all geared up for a battle so watch your words. We don't need some trigger happy moron going off."

"I try very hard not to have morons in our organization."

"Explain Mateo."

Vito winced as if I had just jabbed him with the tip of my knife. "I can't."

"I trust you, Vito." I waved my hand toward the small crowd of men waiting for us when the gate began to open. "I don't trust them."

"Why don't you let me speak first?" Vito asked. "See if I can defuse the situation?"

I nodded my agreement and stayed where I was once the gate fully opened. My eyes widened when I saw everyone standing there. That was a lot of guns pointed in our direction.

"Vito."

"It's okay," Vito said, but I was not reassured.

Vito took several steps forward and then crossed his arms over his chest. "Stand down."

Most of the men put their guns away, but a few didn't.

Vito's voice grew harder when he snapped, "I said stand down."

The rest of the guns lowered, but I could still feel the tension in the air. It was like a knife's edge, dangerous on every side. My gut started to tighten as I scanned the guards and the area around us. I was once again getting that feeling that something wasn't right.

I squinted as I scanned the crowd of guards again, going slower this time. I was looking for anything that didn't seem normal. It wasn't like I knew what a normal mafia gang looked like, but still, I trusted my gut. I'd be able to find anything that was out of place.

I found nothing until I had looked over almost every man there. But there was one. He stood near the back of the small crowd close to one of the SUVs. He was dressed as the others and from my vantage point, I couldn't see a weapon in his hands, but there was something definitely off about him.

It was his eyes. While they seemed to be somewhat hooded from the way he had his head bowed down, I could see them darting around in an almost frantic manner. That didn't seem right to me.

Was he waiting for something?

Someone?

"What is he doing?"

I glanced to my side to find Carmine standing next to me. He was staring at Vito as if he had never seen him before.

"He's telling them to stand down," I explained.

When I glanced back toward the crowd, the man I had been watching was no longer standing where he had been. That put me immediately on alert. I quickly searched for him, taking a step forward.

He had to be here somewhere.

My search became almost frantic. The moment I spotted him inching his way through the crowd, I knew he was up to no good.

"Vito, airport!" I shouted as I started running, praying I'd get there in time. The loud retort of a gun echoed through the air, telling me I was too late.

"Tony!" Vito shouted when I started running forward toward the guards. I jumped up onto the hood of one of the SUVs, slid across it, and then leapt onto the man that had fired the gun, taking him down to the ground.

"You I don't like," I snapped as I repeatedly punched the guy. "You're fired."

When the guy collapsed on the ground, I let him go and stood. I turned to look to make sure Vito was okay. He stood several feet away, his arms crossed as he talked with his uncle.

No bullet hole in sight.

I glanced at the guards standing around me. Most of them were avoiding my gaze, some outright looking away, but a couple were staring at me with looks I couldn't quite decipher.

"My name is Anthony D'Angelo. I am the son of Anthony D'Angelo senior. I am the new head of the D'Angelo family. If you don't believe me, ask my underboss."

Every head turned towards Vito, who nodded. "He's telling the truth. He's your new boss. Whatever he says goes."

"We have no conflict with the Sabatino family or the Borelli family," I stated firmly. "The first person I learn goes against them without my direct order will suffer a fate they do not want. Is that clearly understood? If you do not hear the words from my

lips, it doesn't happen."

"Um, Mr. D'Angelo, sir—"

"Call me Boss or Tony," I retorted quickly. "Do not call me sir."

"Yes, sir...I mean, yes, Boss."

I crossed my arms and looked at the guy who had spoken. "What's your question?"

The man looked all sorts of confused, a frown marring his face. "I thought we were here to rescue Mr. Vito and eliminate the Sabatino family."

Wonder why I wasn't included in that rescue?

Was I not supposed to make it out of here alive?

"That decision was made without me. It was also made on faulty information. I'm about to sign a peace agreement with the Borelli and Sabatino families, not eliminate them. As of this moment, you will consider every member of the Borelli and Sabatino families to be our friends and allies."

"Every member?"

I don't know who asked that question, but I had a pretty good idea of who they were referring to.

"Nico Sabatino and Nicky Borelli are personal friends of mine. They also fall under the family veil. If anyone harms them, insults them, or makes them feel uncomfortable in any way, not only will I go after the offender, but I will go after their family, their friends, and even their dog. Is that clear enough for you?"

"Yes, Boss!" they all shouted at once.

"Over the last few days, I've heard a lot about what is allowed in the mafia and what is not. News flash. I don't care. Prejudice against gay people will not be allowed in my organization. If you don't like it, get the hell out."

Surprisingly, no one walked away.

I walked through the crowd of guards to where Vito was standing, sending him a wink before turning to face the guards once again.

"For those of you that feel uncomfortable with this, I'll give you one last chance to leave with no recriminations and half a month's severance pay in your pocket. But there is one more thing you need to know before you make your decision. I'm gay, and no, I am not interested in any of you. I have a partner."

I wasn't going to out Vito, although I suspect people would eventually figure it out. It wasn't like I could keep my hands off the man.

"I don't plan to throw any wild orgies or whatever perverted thoughts might be going through your mind right now. I am totally loyal to my partner as he is to me."

I was thrilled right down to my toes when Vito wrapped an arm around my waist and pulled me flush up against his body.

"I am loyal to you."

I shot him a quick smile. "I know."

"Boss, you're Mr. D'Angelo's—"

"Yes, I'm Tony's partner."

I frowned when I heard a soft grunt from the other side of Vito. I leaned forward to look and then snorted when I saw the pained look on Carmine's face. "Deal with it or get out."

Carmine's shoulders slumped.

"You're gay?" someone asked from the crowd.

"I've been gay all my life. I just had no reason to share that with anyone else until Tony came into my life. Now, I do."

And here we had talked so much about not making some big announcement. That wasn't working out so well for us, but maybe this was better.

"So, here's the bottom line," I started. "I'm gay. Vito is gay. We're friends and allies with the gay leaders of other mafia families both here and in New York City. If you don't like it"—I waved my hand toward the road—"there's the door."

This time, a couple of people walked away. I was actually surprised more didn't. If we only lost a couple here and there, it was no big loss. If we lost all of our people, we might be in trouble.

When my nerves started to vibrate and my stomach knotted, I knew losing some of our people might not be our biggest problem.

"Vito, we've got trouble coming."

I just didn't know where it was coming from.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Vittorio ~

Without question, I shoved Tony toward the villa. "Warn Luca."

Once Tony had taken off running toward the villa, I faced the guards and started shouting out orders. "Use the SUVs to block the gate and get ready to fight. Do not let anyone through. Defend the Sabatino family at all costs!"

"Vito, are you insane? We have to get out of here."

Carmines tried to grab my arm, but I shook him off. "I am not leaving Luca to fight this fight alone so either help me or leave."

"What if it's the Romanos coming?"

"I don't care if it's the Roman Legions," I snapped. "I'm leaving Luca and his family defenseless."

"I appreciate that," Luca said as he hurried up to us, "but we only need to hold them off for about ten minutes. Borelli's men should be here by then."

I wasn't sure that was going to be enough.

The problem here was that Tony had said trouble was coming. He didn't say what that trouble was. Until I knew, it was going to be hard to plan a defense.

"Vito!" Tony shouted as he started shooting into the air.

I had no idea what he was shooting at until a black object fell to the ground several feet away. I had just enough time to recognize it as a drone before it exploded and I was thrown back, crashing down onto the ground.

"Shoot the drones!" Tony shouted as he continued to pull the trigger on the pistol in his hand. "Shoot them down before they reach us. They are loaded with explosives."

This was new. I'd never seen someone attack with exploding drones before. Might be something to look into in the future.

While several of the guards started shooting into the air, I tried to keep track of Tony. He was all over the place. Running and jumped and hurling himself over obstacles.

At one point, I swear I heard him laugh.

When the drones stopped coming, we only had a few injured and several large craters blasted into the ground. We'd been lucky. If they tried to attack from the air again like that a second time, I didn't think we'd get the same outcome.

I walked over to Tony who was bent over with his hands on his knees, panting heavily. "Are you injured at all?" I asked as I started running my hands over him looking for any sign of blood.

Tony shook his head. "No, but I'm a little winded."

Yeah, I would be too if I'd run all over the place like he had.

"Any airport anxiety?" I asked.

"A little, but not like it was."

"Do you think this is the intermission and they will attack again?"

"That would be my bet."

"By land or by water?"

Tony squinted for a moment and looked off into the distance. I had no idea what he was looking at or even if he was looking at anything specifically.

"Both, I think," he finally replied.

I turned and searched the area until I spotted Luca, calling out his name. When he walked over to us, I said, "Tony says the next attack will come by land and water. Do you have anyone watching the beach?"

Luca blinked as he turned to look at Tony. "How do you know this?"

"Really long story that we don't have time to explain right now. We'll do it later over a drink," Tony replied. "Right now, we need to get ready for the next attack." He turned and pointed to the high stone fence. "Can you get some sharp shooters up on that wall? Some on each side of the gate?"

Luca snapped his fingers and called over one of the guards. "Find me six of our best sharp shooters. Get them outfitted and armed and then have them man the top of the fence at the front of the estate. I also want another unit of guards at the beach access to the estate."

One the guard had run off, Luca turned back to me and Tony. "What else?"

I was amazed that the man was just taking our word for how things might go. "Why are you doing this without demanding to know why?"

"Because I've seen what Tony can do," Luca said, reminding me he had been standing outside with us the entire time. "If he says we got trouble, we got trouble."

I was glad for his belief in Tony, especially when Tony suddenly gasped and took off running toward the villa. Luca and I both took off after him. We reached the front doors at the same time.

"Tony!"

"I think Nico's in trouble."

That was all he needed to say for the three of us to run into the villa. Luca ran faster and got several feet in front of us. He started to race down the hallway when Tony suddenly put on a burst of speed and dove for his legs, tripping Luca.

They both went tumbling to the ground.

When Luca tried to get up, Tony held onto his legs, wrapping himself around the man.

"Tony, wha—"

We were all thrown back by a loud blast and a hot gust of wind that came from the direction of the safe room.

"Nico!" Luca cried out in a voice so filled with agony that it brought tears to my eyes. For someone to fill that level of anguish...It was something I prayed I never went through.

Tony had a tight hold on Luca, not letting him go. He was dragged along when the man started clawing at the marbled tiles trying to reach the exploded safe room.

"Nico!"

When Luca turned toward Tony with ravaged eyes and took a swing at him, I jumped forward and grabbed his arm, keeping him from hitting Tony again.

"Let me go!"

"Nico wasn't in there," Tony explained quickly, hanging onto Luca like an octopus.

Luca froze. "What?"

Tony shook his head. "I don't think Nico was in there, but I still feel like he's in danger. We need to find him."

"Let me go!" Luca shouted again.

This time, Tony let him go.

Luca scrambled to his feet and raced over to the area where the safe room had been located. I helped Tony up and then hurried over to join him. The blast had ripped a hole in the side of the steel walled room big enough for a man to step through, but with all the debris hanging from the ceiling, we didn't dare.

One thing was clear, Nico wasn't in there.

"Franco!" Luca shouted at the top of his lungs. When the man came running, Luca grabbed him by his suit jacket. "Nico is missing. I want him found now."

Franco stared at the blast scene with wide eyes. "Wasn't he in...?"

"He's missing!" Luca shouted with a frantic tone. "Find him."

"Yes, sir." Franco started shouting out orders to the guards in the area, demanding a full search of the villa.

I watched Tony as he rubbed his arms, his gaze going to the double doors at the end of the hallway. "Tony, what is it?"

Tony shook his head and started walking toward the doors.

I snapped my fingers to get Luca's attention and then started following Tony. When he reached the double doors, he didn't open them. He just stood there staring out through the glass.

"Tony?"

Tony waved a hand at me. "Sssh."

I frowned, my confusion growing bigger when Tony tilted his head, turning the side of it toward the double doors. "I hear a boat engine."

Boat engine?

My head snapped to Luca. "Do you have a marina at your beach?"

"No, it's just a small cove with a private beach."

"It's probably a Zodiac then," Tony stated.

Zodiac?

"It's an inflatable power boat," Tony continued, "one like they use in all those crime dramas. They are easy to use, they go fast, and they can be driven right up onto the

beach."

I quickly looked at Luca. "Do you have any boats?"

Luca frowned at me. "A few. Why?"

"Get them in the water and to that cove. If whoever took Nico has a boat, they will use it to try and escape. We have to be able to catch them before they do."

Luca stared at me for just a moment before spinning on heels and running back down the hallway to where Franco stood barking out orders. I don't know what Luca said to the man, but Franco took off while Luca hurried back to us.

"Let's go," Luca said as he pulled his gun and then pushed the double doors open, stepping through them.

Not knowing what else to do, I pulled my gun and stepped out after Luca. When we started for the stairs that led down to the beach, Tony grabbed my arm and stopped me.

Tony nodded his head toward the edge of the cliff. "I'm going to take the scenic route."

"You're what?"

Before I could ask more, Tony raced over to the edge. He glanced back at me, shooting me a smirk, and then jumped.

"Tony!" I screamed at the top of my lungs.

I fully understood Luca's anguish.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Anthony ~

I winced when I heard Vito cry out my name. I maybe should have talked to him about what I wanted to do before I did it.

He was going to strangle me.

I kept my body close to the cliff wall as I moved from foothold to foothold. It was easier to climb something like this with a rope, but I didn't currently have one.

This also wasn't like the brick buildings I was used to climbing so I was going a little slower than usual. The limestone had a lot of edges sticking out, but I was still scaling a rock cliff. If I fell, I wouldn't be getting back up again.

I hoped I didn't fall.

I really liked breathing, especially now that I had Vito in my life.

I paused halfway down when I heard voices. Looking down, I spotted two boats just as I had thought, although I hadn't expected two of them. The boats were actually a little ways off the beach floating in the water.

What really freaked me out was the larger boat moored out at sea. If they got back to that boat, there was a large chance we'd never see Nico again.

One man stood at the wheel of each boat. Two more men were wading through the water headed for the beach. A few more stood in a small crowd in the sand.

The sun was starting to set so the light wasn't optimal for searching, but I did it anyway. I needed to find Nico.

I searched the area below me again. With the low light, it was hard to spot him. When I finally saw a small figure lay on the beach near the edge of the limestone wall, I realized that hadn't helped either. Nico was practically hidden by shadows.

But that worked in my favor.

I made quick work climbing down the rest of the way. Once I reached the sandy bottom, I dropped down into a crouch and scooted close to the cliff wall. I stayed low to the ground as I made my way toward him, stopping every few feet to make sure no one was looking in my direction.

When I reached Nico I found him unconscious with his hands bound behind his back. I quickly pulled my knife and cut through the rope tied around his wrists, but there wasn't much I could do about him being unconscious.

I could move him out of harm's way however. I knew I had a better chance at escaping than Nico did. He wasn't a fighter. I was.

Sort of.

I glanced at the men standing on the beach, keeping a close eye on them. I slid my knife back into my pocket and then grabbed Nico's legs and started pulling him through the sand.

I was aiming for a small outcropping of rocks that I had passed on my way to him. If I could hide him there, hopefully Luca would find him or if he woke up, he could escape.

As soon as I reached the outcropping of rocks, I hid Nico behind them. I gently brushed the hair back from his face and then felt for a pulse. I was relieved when I found it to be strong and steady.

I tucked my gun under him by his hand. I didn't know if Nico knew anything about guns, but I had to leave him with some means of defense. Besides, I was better with a knife.

I peaked around the pile of rocks to see where everyone was. I was a little concerned when I found them all still standing there in a small group. I didn't understand why they hadn't moved yet.

If this was a kidnapping, they should have loaded Nico up in one of the boats and taken him away. Instead, they looked as if they were waiting for a nighttime beach party to start.

What the hell was going on here?

I inched my way back to where Nico had been laying, using my knees and feet to cover my tracks. Once I was in place, I grabbed the rope and wrapped it around my wrists and then laid my head down on the sand.

I watched from the shadows through half closed eyes as the men in the circle continued to talk. I couldn't hear what they were saying, just the low murmur of voices.

I wanted to move closer so I could hear what they were talking about, but that would be stupid and I tried not to be stupid too many times in one day.

Pretty sure I had reached my quota for today.

Basically, all I could do was lay there and wait for Vito and Luca to arrive. I almost glanced up toward the stone steps from the villa, wondering just what was keeping them. I hadn't gone down the cliff face that fast. They should have been here by now.

The sound of another boat engine caught my attention. It was steadily growing louder, which meant it was probably moving in my direction. I cast a quick glance at the morons just standing there and then lifted my head to search for the boat.

Yep, found it. It was coming in a straight line from the large boat moored out in the ocean. Not sure why more people were coming, but it couldn't mean anything good.

When one of the men looked in my direction, I snapped my eyes closed and lay as still as I could. Eventually they would figure out I wasn't Nico, but I wanted that realization to be far in the distant future.

When the boat landed, four people climbed off and then waded through the water to the beach. Surprisingly, I heard a woman's voice. If she hadn't been speaking in such a loud shrill tone, I probably would have missed it altogether.

God, she was really loud.

Unfortunately, from the way the others jumped when she shouted, I suspected she was the one in charge. I did hear one of the guards say, "Yes, Mrs. Romano," which told me a lot more about who she was.

I about jumped out of my skin when a hand suddenly covered my mouth. I started to reach for my knife when a small that curled my toes and made me have really inappropriate naughty thoughts filled my nose.

"Vito?" I whispered, my voice muffled by the hand covering it.

"If you ever scare me like that again," Vito snarled into my ear in a quiet voice, "I'll beat you bloody."

Yeah, I probably shouldn't have done that.

Vito grabbed my arm and tugged. "Move."

I glanced over my shoulder at him. "Nico—"

"Luca already has him," Vito replied. "Now move."

Pretty sure arguing wasn't in my best interest.

I started to scoot along the sand again when the woman's voice grew louder...and recognizable. I wasn't feeling terror, but the shock rolling through me was close.

I lifted my head and glanced toward the crowd just as the woman stepped into a shaft of moonlight.

"Mom?"

* * * *

~ Vittorio ~

When Tony had gone over that cliff edge, I'd almost followed him except my grief had frozen me in place.

It wasn't until Luca ran and looked over the edge and his shoulders slumped, the man bending over to rest his hands on his knees that I could move.

I ran.

"Tony," I whispered desperately as I dropped to my knees.

"He's fine, Vito," Luca said. "He's climbing down the cliff face."

I peeked over the edge, frantically searching for him. When I spotted a head of blond hair, my eyes narrowed. "I'm going to beat him."

"I'll get you a paddle, but we need to rescue him and Nico first."

Still going to beat him.

Tony had just taken ten years off my life. I knew he was adventurous and I was still learning everything he could do, but jumping off a cliff with no warning was not okay, not by a long shot.

"We need to hurry," Luca said.

I jumped to my feet and started following him to the stone steps leading down to the beach. Luckily, the steps were carved into the side of the cliff face and partially hidden from anyone down on the beach. As long as we moved quickly and kept our heads down, we wouldn't be seen.

I hoped.

By the time we reached the bottom, I was ready for someone to provide an elevator to get back up. If this was what it took to get to the beach, I'd rather use a pool.

I crouched down next to the cliff wall right beside Luca. I wasn't sure what the situation was on the beach, but I could see several men dressed in black standing

around in a circle. I had no idea what they were doing and I didn't really care. My concern was finding Tony.

"Over there," Luca whispered as he started moving.

I wasn't sure what he'd seen so I just followed after him.

It wasn't until Luca stopped and dropped to his knees that I saw the small body lying in the sand in the shadows of an outcropping of rocks.

"Nico." Luca grabbed the man and pulled him into his arms. " Cuore mio. "

"Luca," Nico whispered back.

I thought Luca was going to hug the stuffing right out of Nico.

I scooted closer. "Nico, where's Tony?"

Nico shook his head. "I haven't seen him."

My gut twisted.

"Luca, get him out of here," I told him. "I'll find Tony."

Luca didn't even argue with me, but I didn't expect him to. Nico was his number one priority just as Tony was mine.

As soon as they moved past me heading back toward the steps, I continued my trek along the cliff wall. Tony had to be here somewhere and I wasn't leaving until I found him.

I spotted him a few feet in front of me. For a moment, my heart climbed into my throat, and then I saw him move. It was just a small movement of his head, but it was enough to let me know he was alive.

I quickly covered the distance between us, moving in behind Tony. I covered his mouth with my hand so he wouldn't cry out and alert the others that I was there.

"Vito?"

"If you ever scare me like that again," I snarled into his ear in a quiet voice, "I will beat you bloody."

I grabbed his arm and tugged. "Move."

Tony glanced over his shoulder at me. "Nico—"

"Luca already has him," I replied. "Now move."

We needed to get out of there before we were discovered.

I started to scoot along the sand again Tony suddenly froze and lifted his head, glancing toward the people gathered by the water.

"Mom?"

Mom?

I snapped my attention to Tony's face. "Tony, what—"

"That's my mom."

Holy shit!

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Anthony ~

It might have been several years since I'd seen her, but I'd know my mother's face anywhere. Her image had a starring imagine in my nightmares. I doubted I would ever forget it.

But one of the guards had referred to her as Mrs. Romano.

I turned my head so I could whisper into Vito's ear. "Vito, one of them called her Mrs. Romano."

There were clues starting to come together in my head and I didn't like the conclusions I was coming to.

One...Carmine had said the Romanos wanted Luca's family eliminated.

Two...The Romanos had given him information about our crash including pictures.

Three...When we had been kidnapped, Vito was the only one beaten up. I had been left alone.

Four...They had kidnapped Nico.

Five...My mother, who I hadn't seen in years, was suddenly here.

Six...She was referred to as Mrs. Romano.

Those clues led to questions I needed answers to. Had she been involved with the deaths of the entire D'Angelo family? Was I on her list of people to kill? Was she intending to kill Vito, too?

Was my mother behind all of this?

"Move," Vito growled in my ear again.

I realized I had been so deep in thought I had frozen in place. Vito was tugging on my arm trying to get me to crawl through the sand with him.

I started moving again when I heard one of the guards shout that a boat had been spotted moving toward them. I couldn't prevent myself from looking, but what I saw sent fear racing through me.

It wasn't just a boat. It was an entire armada. There were at least ten boats moving toward the beach at a high rate of speed.

I started crawling as fast as I could.

The noise on the beach started getting louder, people shouting as they ran toward the two inflatable boats waiting for them. I thought we were home free until I heard the unmistakable click of a gun cocking.

I froze again, swallowing hard before slowly turning my head. "Hey, Mom, long time no see."

"I've been waiting for you, son."

"Really?"

My mother gestured with her gun for us to get up.

I was quick to get to my feet, Vito a little slower. He tried to move around me to place himself between me and my mom, but I knew the kind of violence she was capable of. I didn't want him hurt.

A couple of guards rushed over, their guns pointed at us. When my mother started walking, we were forced to walk with her. She headed over to the small group of men standing there watching us.

When she walked up to one of them and wrapped her hands around his arm I asked, "New customer?"

I fell back into Vito's arms when she smacked me across the face.

I probably should have seen that coming.

"Remember that whole don't get dead thing?" Vito whispered. "You're skating really close to the edge right now."

"I don't care who he is," I replied in a louder tone. "I just want to know why she is doing all of this. Why try to kill me? Why kidnap Nico?"

"I wasn't trying to kill you, Anthony," my mother insisted. "I need you alive."

"Why?"

It was an honest question.

"Without you, how am I supposed to take over the D'Angelo family?" That question came from the man at my mother's side.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Geno Romano."

I nodded absently. I had been expecting him to be a Romano. "And what makes you think you can take over the D'Angelo family?"

"You're the only one left, aren't you?"

I narrowed my eyes. "You set the bomb that killed my entire family?"

He just went to the top of my hit list.

"So, let me guess. You're the idiot Romano that harassed Nico at the last conclave, right? Is that why you kidnapped him?"

Geno's eyes became hooded by his prominent eyebrows as he glared at me. "That disgusting little brat deserved it."

"You're pissed because you turned him down?" I glanced at the woman who had given birth to me, the only good thing she had ever done in her life. "My mother getting too old for you?"

When my mother raised her hand to smack me again, I grabbed his wrist as it came down. "Fuck you, you two-bit whore! It should have been you that died that day."

I pulled my knife out of my pocket with one hand and yanked down on my mother's arm with the other. When she stumbled and started to fall, I gave her a good shove and leapt at Geno, driving the knife into his chest as hard as I could.

I was very aware of the fact that this would probably get me killed, but if I could

create an opportunity for Vito to escape, it would be worth my life.

"Vito, run!" I shouted as I yanked the knife free and jumped toward the next guy.

"Not on your life," Vito called back. "You go, we both go."

Damn fool.

I swung my leg around, kicking out and slamming it into one of the guards while swiping the knife blade across the throat of another one.

When I heard a gun go off, I was pretty sure my life expectancy had just been shortened by a lot. Still, I refused to go down without a fight.

I darted for the next guy, but instead of stabbing him I grabbed the strap of the automatic rifle in his hand, looped it over his head, tightened it around his throat, and then I started spinning him. Every time I needed him to pull the trigger, I jerked on the heavy canvas strap.

Worked like a charm.

Within moments only me and Vito stood on the beach. Everyone else was either dead or dying.

I glanced at Vito, my eyes instantly dropping to the blood dripping down his arm. "You've been shot."

"It's nothing," he said. "Just a flesh wound."

"Nothing?" Were those spots dancing in front of my eyes? "You've been shot!"

Hysterical mode engaged.

"Tony, I'm fine. I promise."

I wasn't buying it.

I walked over to him and started to pull up his sleeve when Vito pointed to the bodies on the ground a few feet away. "Don't you think we'd better deal with them first?"

Oh, right, them.

I picked up one of the dropped guns off the ground and walked over to my mother, pressing the tip of the barrel against her forehead. "Look, Ma, Santa brought me a nice new gun for Christmas. It comes with shiny bullets and everything."

God, I wanted to pull the trigger so damn bad.

"Since I like shiny things, I kind of want to keep them all. So, why don't you start talking so I don't have to put one of them in your fucking head?"

"You can't kill me," she protested. "I'm your mother."

"Funny, that mother son bond never seemed to bother you when you were knocking me around or locking me in a closet for days on end with no food. It certainly didn't bother you when you took off with one of your customers, taking all of the money my father had sent me."

She looked a little more wary now. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Then let me remind you." I pointed the rifle at her arm and pulled the trigger.

My mother screamed and grabbed her bleeding arm. She stared up at me with shock in her wide eyes. "You shot me!"

I pointed the rifle at her leg. "Want to try for the leg or has your memory been jogged?"

"Okay, okay, okay!"

"Start talking," I demanded. I could hear Vito moving around behind me, but kept my attention on my mother. "How do you know the Romanos?"

"Geno," my mother said. "He was the man I left with. We got married and I've been living with the Romano family ever since."

That actually made more sense than I thought it would.

"So, you married into the Romano family. So what? How does that relate to you trying to kill me?"

"I wasn't trying to kill you," my mother insisted.

"The bomb on the airplane? The crash? Getting kidnapped? The attack on the Sabatino estate? None of that was you trying to kill me?"

"Him." My mother pointed to Vito. "I was trying to kill him."

I didn't know whether to get angry or laugh.

"Why would you want to kill Vito? He's done nothing to you." At least nothing I knew of and I was pretty sure he would have told me.

"Because he's one of them."

"Them?"

"A D'Angelo."

"Actually, he's an Antonelli."

"He works for them. He's worked for your father for years. I hate them, all of them."

"That's why you killed them?" I asked her. "Some petty revenge?"

That was stupid.

"They deserved it," my mother snarled. "I should have been treated like a queen after that old man knocked me up. Instead, I was left with a brat and a monthly allowance that barely paid the rent. I had to turn tricks just to keep a roof over our heads."

I snorted in disgust. "You had to turn tricks because you never learned the fact that, despite popular belief, Prada is not a necessity."

She let out a bitter sounding laugh. "In your world I am sure that's true, but in my world, it is, and I want to continue living in that world."

"Let me guess, you made a deal with the Romanos. Eliminate the other families and they would give you whatever you wanted, right?"

A sly grin crossed my mother's lips. "Pretty much."

"You're an idiot." I pointed the rifle at my mother's head and pulled the trigger. I was walking away before her body even hit the ground. I walked right into Vito's waiting

arms. "I want a nap."

"Okay, cara mia ." Vito wrapped his arms around me, pressing his hand to the back of my head. "Help is coming. We'll let them deal with this mess once they get here and we'll go back to the villa for a nap."

I snuggled into Vito, burying my face in his neck, until I heard several boats approaching. When I lifted my head and glanced toward the water, I saw Franco, Carmine, and another man climbing out of one of the boats. Several heavily armed guards were climbing out of the other two.

Franco, Carmine, and the stranger hurried over to us.

"Are you two okay?" Franco asked.

"Vito has a gunshot wound in his arm, but other than that we're okay," I answered.
"How is Nico?"

"A little shaken up," Franco replied. "Luca is with him and the doctor is looking at him now."

Hopefully not the same doctor.

"What happened here?" Franco asked as he looked around with rounded eyes.

It did kind of look like a war zone.

"Beach party gone bad." I smirked. "Someone forgot to bring the beer so I shot them."

Franco's eyebrows lifted nearly to his hairline. "You did all of this?"

"Some of it." I winced as I glanced around. "I guess my body count went up again."

"Has Borelli's men arrived yet?" Vito asked.

Franco pointed to the stranger. "That's Borelli's guy right there."

"And the situation at the villa?"

"Borelli's men and your men took care of it. Everyone that lived has been locked up until we know who in the hell sent them."

"The Romanos."

Franco cocked an eyebrow.

It took several minutes for Vito and I to tell the story of what had happened, starting back to the day I was conceived and going forward through time from there.

By the time we were done talking, Vito and I were kind of slumped against each other. Him from his wound and me from exhaustion.

We really needed that nap.

"You can take the stairs up or ride in one of the boats to get to the docks where a car can take you back to the villa. Me and my men will take care of all of this."

"I vote boat," Vito said instantly. "I came down those stairs. There is no way in hell I am climbing back up them."

"Well, I ain't going back up the way I came," I countered. "I've been ordered not to do that anymore."

Vito huffed as he grabbed my arm and started leading me toward one of the boats. I thought it was going to be just the two of us until Carmine and the stranger climbed into the boat with us.

Vito squinted at the man as we got underway. "Do I know you?"

"This is Roman Borelli," Carmine said. "Roman Leonardo Borelli."

"Leonardo?" Vito's eyebrows snapped together. "But isn't he—"

Carmine's smile was a surprise, especially when he aimed it at Roman. "We were both lied to. The men that captured us when we tried to escape made it seem like each of us had died. I only saw Leonardo's broken and bloody body and heard someone say he was dead. Same as Roman."

"And you two haven't had the chance to meet in like fifty years?" Vito asked.

"We were from separate families in different areas of Italy, the chances of us meeting were pretty slim so they've been able to get away with separating us for all of these years."

I was listening with rapt attention, but I really had no idea what was going on. I hoped Vito would explain it to me later.

"So, what are you going to do now?" Vito asked.

Carmine smiled as he grabbed Roman's hand and held it. "Get to know the man I fell in love with fifty years ago."

Say what?

Vito leaned over to whisper in my ear. "Long story. I'll tell you later."

Okay, fine, whatever.

"I still want a nap."

Carmine smiled once again, but this time I was the recipient. "Yes, Boss."

I liked the way that sounded.

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 4:24 am

~ Anthony ~

" Cara mia ?"

"Here," I called out as I hurried out of my study. "I'm here."

I hadn't seen Vito in three very long, very lonely days. He'd been away on a business trip getting things set up in Asia for the shipping contract we had signed with Vinnie. I hated to let him go alone, but I had been needed here.

While I was settling in, there were still things that needed to be done, people that had to be dealt with, and more paperwork than I had ever wanted to see in my life.

If people thought being the head of a mafia family was easy, they were insane. I was pretty sure I'd put in as much work since I'd taken over as I did in the three jobs I had before.

As soon as I spotted Vito standing in the grand entrance, I raced over and jumped into his arms. Vito laughed as he caught me, his hands going under my ass so he could lift me up.

Boris, who had just returned to work after healing from his injuries glanced away, but not without a small smile spreading his lips. I had been really glad to learn he had lived through the crash. I had been sure the kidnappers had killed him.

"Hi," I whispered as I looped my arms around Vito's neck. "Did everything go okay?"

Vito gave a quick nod. "It went fine. If our people do their jobs right, Vinnie will be happy. Did everything go okay here?"

"Sort of?"

Vito cocked an eyebrow.

"Okay, okay, I might have, kind of, sort of, agreed to host the next gay convention here at the end of the month."

Vito rolled his eyes as he started carrying me toward the study. "You can't keep calling it the gay convention, Tony."

"Can too."

I could call it whatever I wanted to.

I was the boss.

Vito carried me into the study, kicked the door closed with his foot, and then walked around to sit in the large leather chair behind my desk. he settled me on his lap and then threaded his fingers through my hair, grabbing a fistful.

I smirked when he yanked my head back. "Miss me?"

"Maybe a little," Vito said before settling his lips over mine.

I was just starting to get into the kiss when someone knocked on the door. "Seriously? You've been here thirty seconds." It would be nice if they gave us a little time to get reacquainted.

Vito moved me so that I was sitting sideways on his lap instead of straddling it, not a

move I was in favor of by the way, and then called out, "Come."

The door opened and Carmine walked in followed closely by Roman. It was very rare to see the two men more than a few feet apart. I was happy for them, especially since Carmine was no longer harping on Vito about gay people.

"Oh hey, glad you stopped by," I said. "Vinnie and Luca wanted me to let you know that everything has finally been cleared up with the Romano family. They are paying fifty million dollars in compensation to each family involved in that mess my mother and her husband created."

"That's good," Carmine replied, "but that doesn't negate the fact that one of their family didn't adhere to the family veil rule. It's going to take more than money to get back what they lost in this case."

"Oh, I know that." I was fully aware of that and if I hadn't been, I was reminded of how easily I could have lost Vito. I wanted him protected by that sacred law, but until I married him—which I hoped to do soon—he was just my lover, which kind of made him fair game in a mob war.

"With that idiot nephew and my mother gone, the Romanos are claiming it was all their fault and they had nothing to do with the attack. I am not sure I believe them so until they gain my trust again, they won't be invited to anything other than the annual conclave."

Roman snorted. "Good choice."

Carmine set a large manila envelope down on the desk. "I wanted to give this to you before we left. It's my letter of resignation."

"You're really leaving us?" Vito asked.

"You can always reach me by phone and we'll come back to visit often, but Roman and I have a lot of years to make up for. We want to travel a bit and see the world."

"You'll call if you run into any problems?" I asked. "We have friends in a lot of places now. Help can be there quickly."

"We have no plans to visit anywhere we're not supposed to," Roman assured me. "Both Carmine and I have been at this business for a lot of years. It's time to step back and let the younger generation take over."

I snorted. "You mean the stupider generation."

"You'll get smarter." Roman chuckled, something he seemed to do more often nowadays. "You don't get all these gray hairs without learning a thing or two along the way."

It wasn't me I was worried about.

"How Carlos taking your retiring?" Vito asked.

Roman frowned. "Not well."

My eyebrows lifted. "He's not going to cause any trouble, is he?"

"His wife won't let him," Roman replied. "Most of it is bluster. I've been working at his side for over forty years. I'm not sure he can get along without me, but Rosa says it will be good for him. She's trying to talk him into stepping down and handing the business over to Vinnie."

"Are you sure Vinnie wants the job?" I was positive he wouldn't. Vinnie liked New York too much.

"Better him than my idiot brother Frank or one of his idiot kids." Roman's eyes rolled as he shook his head. "I swear, the gene pool really screwed up when those two were born."

"Isn't there anyone else?" I asked.

"There are a few cousins with promise, but they need some experience in the mafia world before they'd be ready to take over. I'm not sure they have what it takes."

I smirked and wagged my eyebrows. "Send them my way."

I could weed out the good ones from the bad ones easily. They just needed to spend a few days with me. They'd either start to become men or run home screaming for their mommy.

Roman stared at me for a moment before grinning. "I'll call Carlos before we leave."

"Okay, we're headed out," Carmine stated. "We need to get our stuff and get to the airport. There's a bottle of wine in Paris with our names on it."

I waited until the door closed behind them before swinging my leg over Vito again and settling down on his lap. "Now, where were we?"

Vito smiled at me as he fisted a handful of my hair and started to lower his lips to mine. "Right here, Boss."

It was good to be the boss.

~ The End ~