



# Remember That Time (The Galeazzi Trilogy #3)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** ~ Gianni ~

My name was Gianni Galeazzi and I am the youngest of three brothers. The baby of the family. I am also an omega, which is why I went to medical school instead of joining the family business. I wanted to know what made someone an omega and how to prevent myself from getting pregnant. I was gay, but that did not mean I wanted to give birth to a baby.

Yeah, that worked out real well for me. One party and too much to drink and I found myself in the exact condition I was trying to prevent. My whole life had suddenly derailed and I had no idea who to yell at because that fateful night was a complete blur. I was about to be a single parent with no idea who the other parent was. Worse yet, I had just met someone I was interested in.

Could my life get any worse?

~ János ~

I was rich, very rich. I started out with nothing and crawled my way to the top of the real estate business one building at a time. Being rich meant I got to enjoy the finer things in life. It also meant every con artist and scammer in the world came after my money.

When a paternity test arrives at my office, I dismissed it as another con, but then DNA evidence was provided and it was proven that the kid was mine. My mind drew a complete blank. Just who had I slept with? Before I could answer that question, threatening letters started to arrive demanding money. All of this comes just when I meet the man of my dreams.

How could I bring him into this mess?

**Total Pages (Source):** 20

# Page 1

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~ Gianni ~

I shivered when I heard a low growl at my throat and then felt a man's arms tighten around me. I soaked everything in with a deep hunger—the chiseled jaw, the deep blue eyes, the black hair framing a rugged face.

I licked my lips, my hunger riding me hard.

I leaned in and shoved my face into the curve of man's neck, inhaling deeply. I shuddered at the deep rich scent that filled me. My cock hardened at the sweet, manly scent started weaving in and around me. I nuzzled my face against his skin, rubbing the man's heady scent all over me.

I would bathe in this scent if I could.

I moaned and arched into the air when I felt rough callused hands stroke down my back. It felt so good to be touched, caressed. It felt as though it had been forever.

I wanted to touch as well.

A muscled naked chest was right there in front of me. All that smooth skin combined with a smattering of dark hair across the top of his chest—it was incredibly yummy.

I leaned down and followed the small trail of black hair from the edge of the man's bellybutton and up his chest to one dark- hued nipple hidden in even more curly hair. I heard him cry out when I gently bit down on that nipple. Large hands curled into my hair, holding me there.

I took it as an invitation for more and gently bit down again.

One of those hands stayed in my hair. The other moved down my back to grab my ass. I moaned as heat filled me. The need to feel more snapped any control I might have had.

I wanted the man naked, and I wanted him naked now. I grabbed at his pants. I groaned in protest when my hands were pushed out of the way until I realized that he was undoing his pants and pushing them down his legs.

As soon as the pants were gone, I scooted down his body and buried my face in the man's groin. The strong masculine fragrance was overwhelming. I inhaled again and again, rubbing my face back and forth over him.

The man's erect cock smacked me in the face. Damn, it was such a perfect cock, too—all nice and thick and long with hot silky skin.

I wanted to feel that hard cock in my mouth.

I wrapped my hand around his wide girth and licked the tip, pressing my tongue into the small slit on the top before swirling it around the mushroomed head.

The man groaned within seconds and bucked beneath me. Hot spunk filled my mouth. I swallowed it down and kept licking and sucking until he was hard again.

I wasn't done with that beautiful cock yet.

I yelped when I was suddenly grabbed and rolled beneath a much larger body. The man was all over me, as wild as I felt. Our mouths came together suddenly. He was a master kisser. I could come just from being kissed by the man.

His hands move to my pants. I kept my lips pressed against his as I lifted my ass and tried to help him drag my pants down my legs. I kicked them off then wrapped my legs around his waist.

I stiffened when our cocks rubbed together. My hands clenched against his shoulders. I ached. I throbbed. I felt as if my head was going to blow off, both of them.

I inhaled sharply when he grabbed his shirt and ripped it off over his head. Smooth naked skin met hairy muscular skin. I groaned as a shiver of pure ecstasy rippled through my body.

I watched the desire burning in his eyes start to combust as I dragged my hands down his chest. He took in every move I made as if obsessed. I stroked my hands over his chest, tweaking his nipples, the man groaning as I tugged on them.

"Need," I pleaded.

"I have to get you ready."

"Yesss," I hissed when I felt his hands stroked over my ass cheeks. I dropped my head onto his chest as I envisioned the man's fingers in my ass.

I stiffened for a moment when thick fingers trail between my ass cheeks, and then they were spread wide and cold gel dripped down onto me. I whimpered when his fingers pushed into me.

I wanted to be fucked. I wanted it rough. I was getting exactly what I wanted.

Almost.

"Please," I whimpered

"I've got you, baby," he whispered back as he rolled us over until I was straddling him. I closed my eyes for a moment. The hunger in the man's face was going to make me cream right there and then.

I yelped when I was grabbed by my arms and pulled me up his chest until I was straddling his face. Hot breath blew across my balls followed quickly by something wet and cold. I shuddered when his long tongue stroked over me.

I was lifted me up by my thighs. I fell forward, catching myself by my arms. I started shaking when his tongue scrapped across my hole. I could feel his fingers digging into my ass cheeks. The man's thumbs were just a hair's breadth away from my opening, almost within touching distance.

The tease was my undoing.

All coherent thoughts were wiped from my mind when his tongue began pushing into me. I inhaled deeply and clenched the tight little ring of muscles. He just pushed right on through them and started fucking me with his tongue.

Before long, I started bouncing, impaling myself on the thick organ. My arms shook even as my ass quivered. I felt as if I was on fire. Every stroke of his tongue lit another fire. I could feel my body opening up, begging for more. I didn't know how much more I could take without exploding into a million pieces. I ached so bad that my entire body shuddered.

"Please," I pleaded again, my voice strained with my need.

I could only shiver in anticipation as I was pulled down until I was once again straddling him, our cocks rubbing together.

"Put me in you, baby."

I lifted my ass into the air. I grabbed his cock and placed the head against the entrance to my body. I held his breath as I slowly lowered myself down on his thick cock. I winced a little at how much I was being stretched.

This man was no slouch in the cock department.

"Damn, you're so tight, baby."

I grinned down at him as his hands gripped my hips. His lips were pulled back tight against his teeth. If I didn't know better, I would have thought he was in pain.

"Please, baby, I need to move."

I smirked. "So move already."

I was certainly all for it.

His instant reaction to my words took me by surprise. Exquisite pleasure shot through me as he suddenly started to move, pulling my hips down as he thrust up. The sensations were at first a little abrupt, but they quickly turned into something that kept building and building until I couldn't catch my breath.

I groaned, the pleasure threatening to drown me. I spread my legs farther apart as I rocked my ass back and up, wanting him to fuck me until I was unconscious. He hammered into me. It was raw, fast, and made my head swoon. I keened and mewled, begging him to take me harder.

He didn't disappoint.

Fingers dug into my hips as he switched his position, tagging my prostate on every damn stroke. My body tingled and buzzed, my heart beat faster as I felt the all-too-

familiar tingling shoot up my spine.

My orgasm roared up my spine and down to my groin, and then my cock erupted, splattering his abdomen and chest with my seed. My body felt as if it was seizing, shaking from head to toe. I rocked back and forth, bathing in the release that had had me hazy and sated.

He roared as he slammed into my ass, his fingers digging in so deeply that I knew I was going to have bruises. He suddenly stiffened, and then burning hot liquid filled me.

I groaned as collapsed down onto him, lying across his chest. I panted heavily trying to suck oxygen into my deprived lungs. I could hear the heavy thud of his heart beneath my ear. Every few seconds, the cock in my ass would spasm, sending little shockwaves through me.

His arms wrapped me and he pulled the blanket over us both. "Close your eyes and rest. I'll be here when you wake up."

I smiled against his sweaty skin. I ached in places I hadn't even known I had. I'd have a few extra bruises tomorrow for sure, and I had cooling cum leaking out of my ass and smashed between me and him. I couldn't say I regretted a single second of it because I didn't.

I just wished I remembered his name.

\* \* \* \*

"Dude." I blinked widely before digging my thumb into my temple. "Did anyone get the license plate of the truck that hit me?"

I felt like road kill. Pretty sure I had hair growing on my tongue, and my stomach was trying to climb out through my throat. I didn't even want to think about the pounding in my head.

My college roommate chuckled. "I don't know how much you had to drink last night, but I had to pour your hairy ass into bed around four this morning after you stumbled through the door. That must have been some party."

I squinted, not just because I was trying to get my brain to process what Tony had said, but because I was trying to remember the party.

I drew a complete blank.

Tony started to laugh even harder. "You don't remember. That's epic, man."

I grimaced as I stumbled toward the bathroom. I vaguely remembered being invited to an afterhours party at the Regency Hotel hosted by one of the medical residents I worked with. We'd all just gotten off two weeks of hell and wanted to cut loose a little.

I remember coming home after rounds at the hospital and changing into some casual clothes. I remember going to the party and accepting a drink from someone. I don't remember much after that.

Tony was right. It must have been epic.

I really needed to stop doing that. Granted, I didn't party very often, hardly ever really, but maybe I needed to stop all together. I was not a party animal and never wanted to be.

The headaches sucked.



Good thing I had today off, even if I did need to study. I pretty much studied every spare second I had. If I wasn't at the hospital doing rounds, I had my nose stuck in a book. Becoming a doctor wasn't easy, but I had my heart set on it.

I didn't plan to become an emergency room doctor or even open my own practice. I wanted to get into research. Unfortunately, that meant I needed a medical degree and several additional classes.

It was my only choice if I wanted to find a way to save myself. See, I was born an omega. I could get pregnant and carry a child. It was a secret known only to my immediate family.

It was a crapshoot every time a child was born. No one knew exactly how it happened or why it manifested in some people and not others. Sure, they had isolated the gene that caused it, but I wanted to figure out what to do for people that were born with that gene and didn't want it.

I didn't want to stop my ability to father children. I just didn't want to do it myself. I also didn't want my choices taken away from me. I had heard horror stories of omega markets and wanted nothing to do with them.

"So, who was that handsome hunk you were hanging all over last night?" Tony asked with a sly grin. "And was he any good?"

Handsome hunk?

Why did I feel like I was missing something?

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

"You're pregnant."

I spit the vile tasting liquid in my mouth into the toilet and then took the washcloth my brother-in-law Henry was holding out to me. I quickly wiped my mouth and then pushed myself to my feet, staggering a few steps until I righted myself by holding onto the wall.

"Don't be ridiculous." My eyes darted away as I formed the lie my brain was telling me to say. I couldn't admit the truth to the man when I refused to believe it myself. "I just ate something that didn't agree with me."

It had been disagreeing with me for weeks.

"Gianni—"

"I am not pregnant!"

I couldn't be pregnant. I just couldn't be. Being pregnant implied that I'd had sexual relations with someone and I very firmly do not remember even having a date in the last two years, let alone having sex with someone.

I was not Mother Mary and this was not Immaculate Conception or an alien abduction, which meant I was not pregnant, even if all the signs—including the ten different pregnancy tests I'd taken—said otherwise.

This wasn't happening to me. My whole life would be derailed. The whole basis of my research would be debunked. How was I supposed to prove that omegas had choices when I got myself knocked up?

And who in the hell had I slept with?

That might be the biggest nagging question. I literally did not remember having sex with anyone in the last two years. And if I had, I would hope that I would remember.

Could the sex have been so bad that I blanked it out?

I tried to remember who had attended that damn party. Considering that was the only blank space in my memory, I had to believe that something had happened then. If I could remember who attended maybe I could question them about who I couldn't remember.

I pressed a hand to my stomach as it began to swirl. Assuming I had slept with someone—I wasn't ready to admit that yet—I had to assume it was a one-night stand or I would have heard from this mysterious person by now.

"Hey, look," Henry said. "I know this can be scary, but it doesn't mean it's a bad thing."

"You don't understand, Henry."

I didn't even understand.

Henry's voice was gentle when he asked, "What don't I understand?"

"I don't remember sleeping with anyone." At least if I remembered, it might explain my current condition. I'd know why and how I ended up this way. It was hell not

knowing.

"You don't remember having sex?"

"Ugh," I groaned as I dropped my head back and stared up at the ceiling. "As far as I know, I haven't had sex in nearly two years, so this is something of a surprise for me."

Major understatement right there.

"Bloody hell, Gianni, were you raped?"

I gasped at the implication, and then quickly turned and puked into the toilet again. My thoughts had never even gone in that direction, but now it was all I could think about.

Had I been raped?

After wiping my mouth again, I sat down and leaned back against the wall. Henry flushed the toilet before getting me a glass of water so I could rinse my mouth.

Henry knelt down in front of me, a wan smile crossing his lips. "It's just you and me here right now, okay? And whatever you share with me will stay between us unless you give me permission to say something."

I gave a small nod.

"Can you tell me what happened or what you remember?"

"That's just it," I replied. "I don't remember anything. I went to an afterhour's party hosted by one of the medical residents I work with. We'd all just gotten off two weeks

of hell and wanted to cut loose a little."

"And what happened while you were there?"

"I remember coming home after rounds at the hospital and changing into some casual clothes. I remember going to the party and accepting a drink from someone. I don't remember much after that."

The entire night was still a complete blank for me.

"Were there signs that you had been raped or had sex?"

My brows drew together as I tried to remember waking up the next day. "I had one hell of a hangover and I kind of felt like road kill, but I didn't have any bruises or anything."

"That's a good sign," Henry said.

"How so?" I asked, because I didn't see it.

"People who force themselves on other people don't tend to care how they treat the person they are assaulting. If you didn't have any bruises or signs of rape, you might not have been raped."

I didn't think it worked that way.

"Just because I didn't have any signs of rape didn't mean it didn't happen, Henry." I was a little pissed that he would think that. "If I wasn't in my right mind then I could not have agreed to have sex with someone, and since I don't remember a single second of that encounter, well..."

Pretty sure the facts spoke for themselves.

"No, no, you're right, of course. I didn't mean to say otherwise. I just wondered if maybe you got drunk at the party and slept with someone willingly, even if you don't remember it."

I sighed and let my head clunk back against the wall again. "Anything is possible, I suppose."

I groaned as I buried my head in my hands. There was no possibility of informing whoever I had slept with that he was going to be a father because I didn't remember who he was.

My family was going to kill me.

"Before you blacked out, do you remember anyone that might have been at the party at the same time as you were?" Henry asked. "Maybe we can make a few discrete inquiries and find out if anyone saw you with someone."

My hand snapped up. "My roommate."

"Your roommate?"

"Yeah, Tony said I was all over some guy that night. Maybe he knows who it was."

"Is there any way that you can ask him?"

"When I get home, I suppose. I lost my cell phone somewhere during the trip here or I'd call him. I don't remember his number."

He was a number on the dial pad.

"Well, come on." Henry stood and then held his hand out to me. "Let's get you some ginger tea. It'll settle your stomach."

"Ginger tea?"

Henry nodded. "For now, we'll just tell everyone you ate something bad at dinner last night, but you know you'll need to tell them eventually."

I did, but I was going to put that nightmare off for as long as I could manage it. I did not need my parents or my overprotective brothers butting into my life.

"I just need time to figure this out."

Henry nodded as if he knew exactly how I was feeling, and considering what had happened between him and my brother, he probably did.

"How did you do it?" I asked. "How did you become a single father and raise Eva all on your own?"

Henry shrugged. "I didn't really have a choice. I couldn't go to Frank, but I wasn't about to give up my child. I muddled through as best as I could until I figured out what I was doing."

"How long did that take?"

Henry nodded as he patted my shoulder. "I'll let you know when that happens."

I was not reassured.

"If I have this kid, it'll mess up my whole life. I'd have to drop out of my residency and everything." Granted, I only had a couple of years left, but taking time off to have

and raise a kid would derail all of that.

"Maybe or maybe you could tell your family and let them help you. There are a lot of people that love you, Gianni. They aren't going to abandon you just because you got pregnant."

I wasn't so sure of that.

Oh, I knew my family loved me. That had never been an issue. But an unwanted pregnancy out of wedlock changed a lot of things. I didn't think it would change their love for me, but I also wasn't sure I could face their disapproval.

Things would get even worse when they learned I had no idea who the father was.

I groaned as I rubbed my hands over my face. "I can't believe this is happening to me. I've always been so careful."

"Life doesn't ask us what we want, Gianni. It just throws things at us and waits to see if we sink or swim. The choice is yours."

I dropped my hands and stared at my brother-in-law for a moment before asking the one question I had never asked. "Was it hard for you to forgive my brother?"

I was relieved when Henry didn't answer me right away. It meant he was really thinking about the question.

"I didn't want to in the beginning, not after what he had done, but he eventually wore me down. Loving Frank was never the problem. I have always loved him. It was the trust that was the issue. He had broken my trust. Getting that back took awhile."

I smiled weakly as I pressed a hand against my swirling stomach. "I'm glad you two



were able to finally work things out."

Seeing my older brother and Henry so happy together after those five years of hell was better than anything. If my ex-brother-in-law wasn't behind bars serving a life sentence, I'd track him down and strangle him with my own hands for what he'd done to my family.

"Loving someone is easy," Henry stated. "Living with them is hard."

I wasn't sure what that meant, but it sounded somewhat ominous. "Well, I don't have anyone in my life like that, so..." My brow flickered as I glanced down to where my hand was resting against my abdomen. Maybe, if I figured my life out, I could have someone to love.

As soon as that thought hit me, I wanted to slap myself. What was I thinking? I couldn't have a kid. I knew nothing about kids beyond the time I spent with my nieces and nephews.

I couldn't have a kid!

"I think I'm going to go lay down until my stomach settles."

"That's probably a good idea," Henry replied. "I'll bring you up some ginger tea."

"Thank you, Henry."

Henry started to turn to leave, but paused and glanced back. "One thing I want to warn you about. Pregnancy hormones are a real bitch. Your emotions are going to be all over the place. Don't make any rash decisions without really thinking it through first."

I nodded.

I knew better than that. I just felt as if the weight of the world was sitting on me and I had no idea how to make it stop. I didn't know if that was a symptom of pregnancy hormones or if I was just bat-shit crazy.

Maybe both.

I knew I needed to figure something out before I truly lost my mind.

I followed Henry out of the bathroom, but when he went right, I went left and headed for the guest bedroom I'd been using for my visit to the West Coast. Once inside, I closed the door, but instead of heading for bed, I walked over to the row of windows overlooking the bay below.

Seattle was a beautiful place. I could see snowcapped mountains off in the distance and several sailing boats in the water. If all of my schooling wasn't on the East Coast, I might consider living in a place like this. Maybe not directly in the city like my brothers, but one of the smaller outlying communities.

I liked the one directly across the bay from me. I loved water. I had always loved water. Didn't matter if they were lakes, rivers, bays, or even my bathtub. I loved water. Living someplace with this much water around it would be a dream come true.

Too bad I lived in the land of cement and glass.

Maybe I needed to move?

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

"Sir, this letter was addressed to you, but there's no return address. I wasn't sure if it was important or not."

I frowned as I looked at the white envelope Lester held out to me. I got a lot of mail every single day. Most of it was handled by the mailroom or Lester. It was unusual for me to get something like this.

I grabbed it and then used my letter opener to slice a clean cut across the top of the envelope. There was a single piece of paper inside with a sticky note on it that said, "More to come."

That was odd.

When I unfolded the paper, my heart skipped a beat, but then anger took over. I tossed the paper at Lester. "Find out if this is real and find out who sent it."

"Yes, sir." Lester's eyes widened when he took the paper and glanced down at it. "Sir, this is a—"

"Now, Lester."

"Yes, sir." Lester quickly exited my office.

Instead of going back to the project file I was working on, I turned and looked out the row of windows that spanned one entire wall of my office. The view wasn't great

because of the office building across the street, but there was a small slice of the eastern sky between that building and the next one.

Someone sending me a paternity test and claiming I was the father was nothing new. I was rich, very rich. People from all walks of life wanted a piece of the pie and they wanted to get it from me. I'd learned early on to have every single one of them verified or debunked through a very reputable lab here in the city.

It still rankled a bit every time I received one of those paternity tests, which was usually about every two weeks. I didn't even have sex that often.

Except for a couple of months ago.

I squinted as I tried to remember the man's face. I remembered his body. I'd been dreaming about it for the last two months. Unfortunately, his face was a little hazy.

I'd also failed to get a name and the guy had been gone by the time I woke up. I hadn't asked around about who he was because everyone has had a one night stand before and knew the rules.

You didn't ask questions or get too personal.

I certainly didn't want him to know who I was, but it looked like that wish might have come a little too late. This was the only guy I'd had sex with in the last six months. There was also the fact that maturity of the fetus lined up with that one-night stand.

Yet another reason to verify if the paternity test was real.

I picked up my cell phone and dialed my assistant. "Lester, I want all the surveillance tapes from that night I spent at the Savoy Hotel a couple of months ago, especially the hallway outside my room."

"Of course, sir."

I hung up and set my phone down. I wasn't positive the man in my dreams was the one sending me the paternity test, but it just seemed like too much of a coincidence for him not to be.

If he was the same man, I wanted to nip this problem in the bud immediately. If he wasn't, I wanted the guy's phone number. Maybe that one night stand could become two nights.

I groaned, tilting my head back to stare up at the ceiling. I was being ridiculous and I knew it. I needed to stop thinking with my little head and start thinking with my big head.

I had five big projects in the works right now, not to mention my grandmother breathing down my neck about getting married and carrying on the family name. I did not need to be getting involved with anyone.

I rubbed my hand over my face, wishing it was the end of the day so I could have a stiff drink. I was getting pretty tired of people playing these stupid games.

I scooted closer to my desk and began reading over the latest project notes again. Tough day or not, work did not stop.

When my cell phone rang, I glanced at the screen and then swiped my finger across it and held it to my ear. "'Frank Galeazzi, I thought I'd never hear from you again."

"You're not that lucky." Frank chuckled. "I'm calling about the project over on Madison."

I put my earpiece in my ear and then connected it to my cell phone before laying the

phone down on my desk. It was easier to be hands free for business conversations like this.

"What about it?" I asked as I opened the project folder on my desk.

"I was looking over the plans you submitted and I wanted to talk to you about the bathrooms. They'll pass inspection just fine and you have the allotted number of ADA approved stalls, but you might want to consider a couple more per floor."

"Hold on a minute," I said. "I need to get the blueprints out." I tapped the button on the intercom to reach my secretary. "Mable, can you bring me the blueprints for the Madison project?"

"Right away, sir."

I got up and walked over to the small conference table I had on one side of my office. It was set up to only sit about eight people, unlike the conference room which could seat at least twenty.

When Mable walked in and handed me the blueprints, I spread them out over the table, placing a small golden deer shaped weight in each corner.

"Okay, tell me what I'm looking at, Frank."

"As it stands right now, you have four separate multi-user bathrooms on each floor for general use. Two for women and two for men. In each of those bathrooms, there are five stalls with at least one being ADA compliant."

I moved my fingers along the blueprint, looking to where each of the bathrooms were located. "I'm with you so far."

"ADA requires one accessible bathroom for every two hundred people and your architect has met that requirement. If you added one more ADA compliant stall in at least one woman's and one men's bathroom per floor, not only would you meet the requirement set by the ADA, but you'd exceed it. It'll allow for more diversity in the companies and people working those floors."

"What would be the cost in doing that, Frank?"

There was always a cost.

"That's the golden part of this, Janos. Since we're still working on the skeleton of the building, all it would take is your architect getting me a new set of blueprints and the cost of the materials for those additional ADA stalls. You'd lose one of your regular stalls and maybe a little counter space, but not enough for it to make a difference."

"Okay, let me talk to my architect and see about getting you some new blueprints. The only thing I'd like to change is installing that extra ADA stall in all the public bathrooms instead of just a couple per floor. Is that feasible?"

"As long as your guy puts it in the blueprints, I'll build it."

There was a reason I liked this guy.

I walked back to my desk and sat down. I started typing, sending off a quick message to my architect letting him know how I wanted the blueprints revised.

"As soon as we get the new blueprints and get approval from the city, I'll send those off to you, Frank."

"I'll be waiting for them."

I smiled for what must have been the first time in the day. "How are you liking the West Coast?"

"It's pretty nice out here actually. A lot less people and more open space."

"So, you think you're going to stay out there?"

"For now, yeah," Frank replied. "Henry doesn't want to uproot the kids. We've been back to visit my parents a few times, but this is home for now."

"I can't believe you're a father."

I'd been working with the Galeazzi Construction for several years. Frank, his brother Martino, and I had spent more than one night drinking at bars together. It was weird to think both Frank and Martino were married with kids.

Kind of made me feel old and lonely.

"It can be a little nerve wracking at times," Frank replied, "but Henry seems to handle it all like a pro. I just follow his lead." Frank chuckled for a moment and then said, "It could be worse. Martino's husband had twin girls. I swear that man's hair gets grayer every single day."

I couldn't relate and I wasn't sure I ever wanted to.

"You and your husband just had a baby a couple of months ago, right?"

"We did, our son just turned three months old, but we also have a daughter who is five."

"And how's fatherhood?"



I could hear the happiness in Frank's voice when he replied, "Nothing better in the world."

I wouldn't know.

I frowned and glanced down at my phone when it dinged. "Oh, hey, Frank. I need to go. I have another call coming in."

"Okay, just send me the new blueprints when you get them approved."

"I will," I replied. "Take care of that family of yours."

"Always."

I hung up with Frank and then swiped my finger across the screen to answer the other call. "Hello, Yiayia ."

"Janos."

I braced myself.

"I just spoke with Teresa and she told me that the Daphne Mykonos just returned home from school in Europe. She graduated from the university with a degree in business. Her father is—"

"I know who her father is, Yiayia ." I'd done business with the man a time or two. "What does that have to do with Daphne?"

My grandmother's exasperated sigh told me everything.

"You're not getting any younger, Janos. It's time for you to settle down and start a

family. I wanted to hold my great-grandchild in my arms before I die."

I thought about the paternity test that had just been delivered to me, and for a brief moment I considered telling my grandmother about it, but then I quickly came to my senses. She'd never leave me alone if I did that.

"I'm not interested in Daphne, Yiayai . She's not my type. But I'll consider your words." That was the best that I could give her. I knew she wanted me to settle down, but she kept introducing me to women I had no interest in.

I was bisexual. I liked men and women equally, just not very often.

Someone once told me my sexuality was defined as Sapiosexuality . I was interested in a person's personality, not the way they looked. I needed to feel intellectually stimulated by another person in order to feel sexually attracted to them.

I wasn't sure that was true, but I wasn't attracted by that many people, so maybe it was. I'm sure most people assumed I slept with anything that had a pulse. They would be surprised at how few lovers I'd actually had in my life. They weren't even in double digits.

I couldn't explain the man I'd slept with two months ago. I'd don't remember having any deep conversations with him that would have stimulated my interest. I don't remember talking to him at all.

I did remember everything we'd done together, however, and those images fueled my nightly fantasies.

I seriously needed to find this man.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

I groaned with pure delight as I bit into the fried pickle I'd bought at the farmer's market. I'd never had one before always thinking they sounded gross.

Oh, how wrong I was. This little bit of breaded sour crispiness might have been the best invention anyone had ever made in their life.

"How can you eat that crap?" Tony asked.

"It tastes good." I just grinned before taking another bite. Tony wasn't an omega like I was. He'd never understand the food cravings of a pregnant person.

I hadn't gotten up the courage to tell anyone I was pregnant—including my roommate—simply because I still wasn't sure what I was going to do about the situation yet.

Part of me wanted to keep the baby. Even if I couldn't remember who the man was that I had slept with, this baby was genetically half mine. Considering how unpredictable life could be—this baby being a perfect example—I couldn't say for sure that I'd get another chance to have a child.

On the other hand, having this baby would completely derail the path I had set for my life. Granted, I could take up my residency again once the baby was born, but raising a kid and working incredibly hard and long hours as a doctor at the same time didn't sound like a good idea.

Then there was my family.

If my Nonna and parents ever learned I was pregnant, whether to have this baby or not would no longer be a question. They had very firm ideas about family and children and about taking responsibility for our actions.

I'd never escape.

The flip side of that was that if I decided to keep the baby, they would back me one hundred percent. I just wasn't sure I was ready for all the questions that would come with it.

Mostly, because I didn't have answers.

"So, I met someone."

I glanced at Tony. "You met someone?"

Tony's cheeks flushed. "He's a few years older than me, but fuck, he's gorgeous."

"Where did you meet him?"

Tony snorted. "You'll never believe me."

Oh, now my interest was piqued. "Tell me."

"The grocery store."

"What?"

"Serious as a heart attack," Tony said. "We both reached for some salmon at the same

time. We laughed about it and then got to talking, decided to go for coffee, and the rest is history. We've kind of been seeing each other for a couple of weeks now."

"Nice."

"I want you to meet him." Tony wagged his eyebrows at me. "Do you work tomorrow night? There's another party going on at—"

My stomach instantly rebelled—which really wasn't a good thing—and I held up my hand. "No more parties for me." I grimaced at the very idea. "I need my beauty sleep."

"Are you sure?" Tony asked. "It's supposed to be one of those black tie fundraisers for the children's hospital."

"A fundraiser?"

That was a little different than an afterhour's party put on by a burned out medical student. It was still filled with party animals all dressed up, but these ones usually had money to burn.

They were still party animals.

"Yeah, all sorts of bigwigs are supposed to be there."

This was looking less inviting by the second.

"You should go," Tony encouraged. "Making those connections early can be good for your career."

I was totally aware of what having the right connections meant in society. My family

lived and breathed connections. I just didn't want to base my career on who I knew instead of what I knew.

I'd either make it or break it on my own merits.

I glanced at Tony. "Are you going?"

Tony shook his head. "Naw, man, I'm working the night shift that night."

I had to give it to Tony, he worked hard. His parents weren't rich like mine were. He worked a part time job at a convenience store to help pay his way through medical school.

I wished I could help him, but that was a no-no. If I outright handed him cash, I could damage his pride, and he had a lot of it. Instead, I secretly helped by making sure our room was always stocked with food and necessities and took Tony out for a meal on occasion.

We'd lived in the same dorm room for the last three years. We weren't best friends—that spot was reserved for my brothers—but we were pretty good friends.

Tony grinned as he bumped shoulders with me. "If you go, maybe you could drop my name a few times, like to the dean of the medical school."

I squinted at the man. "Who are you?"

"I'll buy you another pickle."

"Done," I replied before I could think it over. I instantly wanted to take it back. My stomach was going to get me into so much trouble.

Tony bumped shoulders with me again, something I wish he'd stop doing. It jarred me every time. "Thanks, man. I'm really hoping to get into that cancer research trial. Even if I'm changing bedpans it would look good on my resume."

That was probably true, but name dropping also went back to that whole "doing it on your own merits" thing. I could afford to be choosy though. Tony couldn't.

"I'll see what I can do."

I shuddered at the thought of putting on a tux and attending one of these high society charity parties, but it wasn't anything I hadn't done before. I could tough it out for one night.

Three hours later as I entered the event venue, I wished I'd said no. There was a lot of noise even if everyone was talking in low voices. With almost a hundred people, it was still loud. The guy up on the stage playing the piano only added to the noise level.

I was going to have a headache before the night was over. I could tell it now. Tony better appreciate what I was doing for him.

I was still waiting for that pickle.

When a waiter passed me, I quietly asked him for something non-alcoholic. One, I wanted to keep my wits about me, especially after the last party I had attended. Two, it wasn't good for the baby, and until I fully decided what I was going to do, I wasn't taking any chances.

He pointed me to a tower of champagne glasses that were supposed to have sparkling apple juice in them. I passed many people as I made my way to the small round table to grab a glass and take a sip.

Okay, so it was sparkling apple juice.

Good to know.

I took another sip and then let my gaze wander around the room. I spotted a few people I knew, most of them from the medical field I worked in, but some were acquaintances and friends of my parents.

I casually walked over to one small group and began making small talk. That was probably what I hated most about these events. No one really spoke what they meant. It was all just platitudes and the latest rumors floating around the social circles.

I'd bet just about anything that half the people that donated tonight did it so they could get their name recognized and not because they truly cared about the children's hospital.

The Galeazzi family had donated a hundred thousand dollars because my parents believed in caring for the children and making sure they received adequate medical care no matter what.

"Dr. Galeazzi, can I have a moment of your time?"

I turned and then smiled when I saw the dean of the medical school. "Dean Roberts, what can I do for you?"

"I had planned to call you later this week to speak to you," the older man stated. "I didn't realize you'd be attending tonight."

"I'm just here on behalf of my parents. They are still out west visiting their new grandkids and couldn't come so they sent me instead."



Half truth, but whatever.

"I wanted to talk to you about that paper you wrote last month, the one about autoimmune diseases and their effects on the nervous system."

"I didn't write that one." I shook my head. "I wrote the one on autoimmune diseases and their effects on genetic cell reproduction."

Dean Roberts nodded quickly. "That's the one."

"What about it?"

"I think it might have some bearing on some case studies I'm reviewing at the moment and I wanted your permission to compare the data from those cases and the data from your report."

"I can send you what I have tomorrow if you'd like." While many researchers kept their research top secret, the article about this had already been published. It wasn't like the data I could send to the dean would be a trade secret or anything. "I'd be interested in what conclusions you come up with and if there is any correlation to my research."

"Of course, of course." The dean gave me a smile. "I'd actually like your take on my conclusions if you have the time. It'll take me a few weeks to get everything completed, but you might see something I miss."

"Sure, I'd be happy to look at it." If it had any impact on my research, that would be great. "Just send me what you have when you're all done."

While I had studied hard to become a doctor, medical research was where my heart truly lay. I didn't want to be treating patients day in and day out. I wanted to make

medical breakthroughs that could save lives.

I was lucky enough now that my residency was mostly in a medical research lab. Granted, I wasn't very high up on the totem pole, but I wasn't at the bottom either. I could use a lot of my time to research stuff that truly interested me.

"How are your parents?"

"Like I said, they are in Seattle visiting my brothers and their families. There are three new grandkids to the two they already had so I doubt I'll be seeing them any time soon."

"Your brothers are both married to omegas, aren't they?"

I stiffened, the smile on my face freezing in place. "They are."

Dean Roberts nodded. "My nephew on my mother's side is an omega. He's currently carrying his third child." Surprisingly, the man smiled. "Don't think I've ever seen someone so happy to be pregnant before, not even my own wife and she gave birth to five children. Garret's husband totally dotes on him, and those kids, smart as a whip even at their young age."

The tension in my shoulders lessened, but not by much. This was not my favorite subject to discuss. "My brothers-in-law seem pretty happy, too," was my only comment.

The comment did make me wonder if I would ever get to feel the same joy they did about being pregnant. It hadn't happened yet. I was still confused, worried, and terrified.

This was not joy.

I lifted my half empty glass. "I'm going to go get a refill."

And maybe a little fresh air.

Dean Roberts nodded to me before patting me on the shoulder. "We'll talk later."

Right.

Instead of heading back to the champagne glasses of apple juice, I walked out onto the patio into the opulent backyard area. I had to give it to this event owner. They knew how to make a place look like a million bucks.

The patio was large enough to host a small gathering, but it opened up into a lavish garden lit with fairy lights to give it an almost fairytale feeling. It didn't hurt that the small pathway weaving through the outdoors space was lined with flowers of every color.

There were a few people lingering on the patio so I started down the winding pathway until I found a small cement bench in front of a Koi pond. It was set off to one side of the path so I didn't think I'd be disturbed.

It was quiet here and I needed that. The trickling sounds of the water and the gentle breeze through the tree leaves helped ease my mind.

I took another sip of my apple juice and then set it aside. As much as I wasn't sure what I was going to do about being pregnant, I knew I didn't want to bring any harm to my baby until I'd made a decision. Apple juice, while better for me than champagne, still had a lot of sugar in it.

I really didn't need the extra stimulation right now.

Even in this relative calm, my thoughts were chaotic. There was a large part of me that wanted to keep the baby simply because it was my own flesh and blood.

Another part was scared out of my mind. What did I know about raising a kid? I'd spent a few days here and there with my nieces and nephews. That was it. That was the extent of my knowledge.

I'd heard stories about what Ryan and Henry went through being single parents, but at least they had each other to rely on. I knew I'd have the support of my family, but that wasn't the same thing.

And it wasn't like I could tell this kid who his father was when he got older. I still had no freaking idea. He was just a hazy memory that came to me in the deep of the night. I couldn't picture his face if I tried.

Tears sprouted to my eyes as I rested my hand over my abdomen. So much would change if I had this baby, but could I really give it up? That was the question that kept swirling in my mind.

The scrape of a shoe as someone casually walked through the garden caught my attention. I smelled cigar smoke before I saw the glowing red ash from the tip of it.

"Who's there?" I asked when it didn't come any closer. I quickly wiped the tears from my eyes and then called out again. "Hello? Is someone there?"

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

I took a puff of my cigar and watched the man sitting on the bench from the shadows. I'd spotted him come into the fundraiser and had been unable to look away from him ever since.

There was something about him that reminded me of the man I'd spent the night with all those weeks ago. I doubted they were the same person simply because this guy didn't scream "gold digger" to me. He was dressed as if he came from money and he carried himself as if he was used to the finer things in life.

Still, I had been intrigued, and that didn't happen often. When he walked out onto the patio I had felt compelled to follow him. At a distance, of course. I wasn't ready to make myself—or my weird obsession—known.

"Who's there?" the man asked before wiping quickly at his eyes, making me wonder if someone had upset him. "Hello? Is someone there?"

I stepped partway out of the shadows, just enough for him to know where I was. "I didn't mean to intrude."

A faint smile graced his lips. "Oh, no, you didn't. I was just getting some fresh air." He was polite and his speech said he had some higher education.

"It is a bit stuffy in there."

"Just a bit." The smile widened. "I didn't really want to come, but a friend convinced

me it was for a good cause so..."

I nodded, understanding exactly where he was coming from. "I'm forced to attend these things two or three times a month. They are meant to be endured, not enjoyed."

"Work?"

I nodded.

"Yeah, me, too," he stated, "although I don't have to attend as many as you probably do."

"What do you do?" I asked out of curiosity.

"I'm a doctor."

Nice.

"I'm in real estate." That was a broad definition of what I did. Yes, I was in real estate, but I was usually the one buying the land and having something built on it before selling it. I did buy some readymade buildings here and there, but I preferred building it myself so I could put my personal touches on things.

I gestured to the lone glass sitting on the bench beside the man. "How's the champagne?"

"I wouldn't know." He picked up the glass and took a small sip. "This is apple juice."

That got my eyebrow to cock up. "Apple juice?"

I was a little surprised when the man glanced away. "I don't think drinking a lot at

one of these functions is a good idea."

That didn't sound like the total truth, but I wasn't going to question the man about it. It wasn't my place. I didn't even know the guy.

I wanted to.

"I'm János Kostas."

The smile wasn't back when he glanced at me, but at least he was looking at me. "Gianni Galeazzi."

Interesting.

"Any connection with Galeazzi Construction?"

Gianni nodded. "My parents own it."

"They're currently erecting a building for me," I stated. "I spoke with Frank just the other day about ADA compliant bathrooms."

Gianni finally smiled. "Frank is my brother."

If his parents owned the company, he'd have to be.

I took a couple of slow casual steps closer, found a good tree, and leaned up against it. "I know Frank and Martino followed in your father's footsteps. Why go the doctor route? Why not join the family business?"

Gianni chuckled. "No interest."

I realized I was basically interrogating the guy, but I had questions. I took a long puff of my cigar before asking, "Is it true that Martino retired to become a starving artist?"

"Yes and no," Gianni replied. "He partially retired. He spends most of his time in the studio he built onto his husband's family cottage, but he still helps Frank out every now and then."

"He really gave all that up to become a painter?"

I couldn't imagine it.

Gianni shrugged. "It makes him happy."

I guess I could see that. People should do what made them happy. I was lucky in the fact that I made money in the fierce field of real estate and building things. It's what made me happy.

"Does being a doctor make you happy?"

"For the most part," Gianni stated. "I'm at the tail end of my residency and then I plan to go into research fulltime. That's where my true passion lies."

This man was getting more interesting by the second.

"Research?" I asked. "What kind of research?"

"I'm basically a lab tech right now, but once I finish my residency I hope to get promoted or hired on somewhere else. My current research is on genetic cell reproduction. I just published an article in one of the medical journals on autoimmune diseases and their effects on genetic cell reproduction."



Way above my understanding.

"Is there a lot of call for that type of research?"

Gianni nodded. "There are labs all over the world studying genetics."

Huh.

"I have no idea what any of that stuff is beyond recognizing some of the words, but if you want to know where to buy the best land for the lowest price, I'm your man."

I liked the way Gianni's face lit up when he truly laughed. There was a brightness in his brown eyes that had been missing when I first walked up. I didn't know what Gianni was going through—and it certainly wasn't my place to ask—but it was weighing heavy on him.

"If you were in the lab it would be even worse," Gianni said before leaning toward me and speaking in a lower tone. "We use code words."

I let out a small snicker. "I'd probably end up blowing up the place."

"Wouldn't be the first time something like that happened," Gianni said. "I blew up the bathroom when I was nine."

My eyebrows shot up. The shock I felt was not something I was used to. "You blew up the bathroom?"

"My first chemistry set. Blew a hole the size of a dinner plate right through the wall."

My concern was instant. "Were you hurt?"

"Only after my father got done with me." Gianni laughed again. "They banned me from using chemistry sets at home for the rest of my life."

Yeah, I could see why.

"Guess it's a good thing your family went into construction."

"My grandfather started the business when he came here from Italy after World War II, but I'm pretty sure my father stayed with it because my mother gave birth to three boys. Not a girl in the bunch."

"I have a younger sister, no brothers, so I couldn't imagine what that must have been like."

"I was the baby of the family so I doubt my experience was like Frank's or Martino's. I was a bit spoiled."

I didn't want to ask.

Well, that wasn't true. I did want to ask. I just wasn't going to.

Again, I didn't know this guy.

I frowned when my phone rang and pulled it out of my pocket. I was even less thrilled when I saw who was calling. I swiped my finger across the screen and then held it to my ear. "Yes?"

"Sir, it's time to present the check for the fundraiser."

Damn.

"I'll be right there." I hung up and stuck my phone back in my pocket before looking at Gianni. "I need to head in to hand over the big fat check I wrote for the fundraiser. Apparently, they want a face to go with it."

Gianni nodded.

"It was very nice meeting you, Gianni Galeazzi. Maybe we'll meet again someday."

The sooner, the better.

I very reluctantly walked away and headed back inside. I wanted to stay and talk to Gianni some more. He intrigued me in more ways than one, and that was rare for me. I usually found people to be very tedious. Long conversations made me want to strangle people.

I was not a patient person.

When I reached the patio doors and glanced back, Gianni was still sitting there. The forlorn look on his face made me wonder what he was thinking so hard about. Whatever it was, it obviously made him sad.

That didn't sit right with me.

Knowing I had no other choice at this point, I left Gianni to his thoughts and walked into the event venue. Lester met me just inside the doors and led me over to the staging area.

The next hour was an hour of time I would never get back in my life. By the time I made my way to the car, my eyeballs ached so much I wanted to gouge them out with a toothpick from one of those stupid cocktail wieners.

I hated those damn things.

"Lester, get me everything on Gianni Galeazzi."

"Yes, sir."

"Do it quietly," I directed. I didn't want the man to know I was looking into his background. At least, not until I was ready to tell him.

"Of course, sir."

Lester sounded like a "yes man" but he wasn't. He was just very, very good at his job. He got things done in a timely manner when I asked for them. I wasn't sure where all of his connections came from, but in the five years he had worked for me, he had never let me down.

"Any news on the pregnancy test?" I asked.

"The test has been verified, but whether it is your child or not remains to be seen. We're unable to test paternity until we know who this person is. I'm still trying to track down who sent the letter, but until they contact us again, the lead is pretty cold."

"Let me know the second you have something." As much as I wanted to get rid of whoever this was trying to blackmail me—and I was positive that was what they were doing—I didn't want it affecting me trying to get to know Gianni.

"Yes, sir."

The rest of the ride back to my penthouse was quiet. Lester worked on his tablet and I read through contracts and project notes. Just because it was evening didn't mean my work day had ended.

That was the thing that most people didn't understand about the rich. I had to scratch my way to the top one dollar at a time, but it took working almost twenty-four hours a day for years to reach this point. I still tended to keep long hours simply because I was bored and had no social life.

I did not consider tonight's charity fundraiser a social event. It was a "see and be seen" event where people went to pander to their fellow rich people, look good, and make connections. Very few of them actually cared where the money they donated was going.

I didn't much care either beyond having Lester make sure that the money was actually going to fund the children's hospital. I hated organizations that raised money and only sent a little to what they were actually raising the money for, using the rest for "administrative costs", and fifty percent of those were bogus.

By the time we pulled up in front of my building, I was ready to grab a drink and call it a day. I climbed out of the back of the car and waved Lester away, telling him to head home, before walking inside.

My penthouse was on the top floor, which allowed me an unobstructed view of Upper New York Bay and the Statue of Liberty. It also allowed me to wave my keycard and get an express ride to the penthouse on the elevator. No waiting for it to stop on every floor.

Vasso, my butler, cook, and all around handyman at home, was waiting for me when the elevator doors opened. He was the only person I allowed free reign in my house. I'd brought him over from Greece ten years ago and he'd been with me ever since.

"Good evening, sir," he stated as he took my coat.

"Evening, Vasso."

"Will you be wanting dinner tonight, sir?"

"No, I had some finger foods at the fundraiser. I'm just going to head to my study for a little while and then I will be going to bed."

"Very good, sir."

I liked the efficient man.

I headed down the hallway to my study. Once inside I headed right for the crystal decanter of ouzo I had sitting on a small round table in the corner and poured myself a drink.

I took a deep sip of it as I strolled toward the floor to ceiling windows all along one wall of my study. In my line of work I had been all over the world, but I'd never found another night skyline like the one in New York City. Between the bright lights and the view, it couldn't be beat.

I wonder if Gianni had a view like this.

I pressed the cold glass against my forehead a moment after that thought filled my head. Why couldn't I stop thinking about this guy? Between him and the mysterious man I'd slept with, my libido was in overdrive.

Strange thing was, I'd hadn't been attracted to anyone in ages, so why these two men? One was a mystery and one was lost in some sort of sorrow that I didn't understand. Both seemed unattainable at the moment.

I needed to fix that.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

"Ouch!"

Fuck a duck!

I quickly grabbed some toilet paper and held it to my finger.

"You okay?" Tony called out. A moment later, he appeared in the kitchen doorway.

"What's wrong?"

"I cut myself shaving." I held up said finger, wincing when I saw the blood dripping from the small cut near the middle knuckle.

"Let me see that." Tony walked over and grabbed my wrist. He turned my hand one way and then the other. "It doesn't look too deep, but you're going to need at least a butterfly bandage.

Oh, yippee.

"How in the hell did you cut your finger while shaving?"

I shrugged because I didn't know. "At least it wasn't my face."

Tony reached under the bathroom sink and grabbed the first aid kit we kept there. He opened it up and then began grabbing what he'd need to fix my finger.

"This thing is bleeding like the dickens."

Well, at least my blood flow was good.

Tony cleaned up the blood, put some antibiotic cream on the wound, and then covered it with a small bandage. "There, good as new."

"Do I get a lollipop?"

Tony reached back into the first aid kit and grabbed a lollipop, handing it to me. Yes, we kept them in the first aid kit just for occasions like this.

Didn't everyone?

"I'll clean this mess up," Tony said as he put the first aid kit away and then started gathering up the garbage. "You shave. Try and skip the cutting this time."

"I'll do my best, Dad."

Tony snickered as he left the bathroom.

I finished shaving, washed my face, combed my hair, and then headed back into my bedroom to finish getting ready for my day. After dressing in a simple pair of faded denim jeans and a white button down shirt, I grabbed my wallet and slid it into my back pocket.

And then I went to grab my cell phone.

It wasn't on the nightstand.

I looked on the dresser, the bed, the floor, under the bed, and the closet. Finding



nothing, I went to search the bathroom.

No dice.

Where the hell was my cell phone?

"Tony, have you seen my phone?"

"Look on the kitchen counter," Tony called out from the living room. "That was the last place I saw it."

I walked to the kitchen and began hunting around for my cell phone. I know I'd had it yesterday because I'd taken a call around noon, but I don't remember what happened to it after that.

I was pretty sure it was due to my stress from that call that I couldn't remember. The hospital had called to confirm my appointment to get an abortion and I had instantly felt everything inside of me freeze up. I had been shocked at my reply even after I hung up the phone.

I had canceled the procedure.

I just couldn't do it.

In that instant, I realized that I didn't want to give my baby up, not even for adoption. I might not know who the father was, but when it came right down to it this was my kid and I was keeping him or her.

Now, I had to break the news to my family.

That wasn't going to be easy. My parents would be upset and they would fuss. I

shuddered to think what my father would do once he found out. If he ever discovered who the father was, the guy wouldn't live long.

My mother would fuss over me. I was her youngest kid after all. She would fuss and cry and probably read me the riot act, but she would also hug the stuffing out of me.

My brothers would go into protective mode. Hopefully, Henry and Ryan could talk them down.

Nonna was the wild card. She was the one I was most afraid of disappointing. Her beliefs were a little outdated for this modern world. I had no idea how she would react.

I was already twelve weeks into a forty week pregnancy. I'd been able to hide everything up till this point, but I was going to start to show pretty soon. I already had a small bump, but it was easily hidden by my clothes. At some point, that wouldn't be possible.

I didn't want to deal with all of the questions that would come with people knowing I was pregnant. I especially didn't want to deal with the questions and disdainful looks I'd get once people learned I was an omega.

People could be rude at the best of times. When faced with things that were unexpected or situations they didn't truly understand, they became worse and my family's money could only protect me so much.

I searched the entire kitchen for my cell phone and then moved on to the dining room and then the living room. I'd already searched the bathroom and my bedroom.

No cell phone.

Maybe I'd left it somewhere?

I tried to think of all the places I'd gone yesterday. Luckily, there weren't that many. I'd been to the lab, the library, and a little cafe near the edge of the campus. That was pretty much it.

I needed to find it and now.

"Tony, can you call my phone?"

"Yeah, sure," Tony replied. "Give me a minute."

After a moment, he walked into the kitchen with his cell pressed to his ear. "It's ringing, man, but no one is answering and I can't hear it anywhere in the apartment."

Damn.

"I'm going out," I told Tony as I headed for the door. "If you spot my cell phone, just drop it on my bed."

Tony waved a hand at me, too engrossed in texting on his cell phone to pay me too much attention. "Yeah, yeah."

I never understood why Tony didn't study more, but his education wasn't my problem. He seemed to do okay on his tests and pass all of his classes, so he must be doing something right. Once he started his residency, he wouldn't have time for video games.

The apartment I shared with Tony was just off campus. The lab was on the other side of the campus from our apartment. The library was on this side of the campus and the cafe where I liked to stop for lunch was on the far side of the lab.

It wasn't too long of a walk to get to the library. My first stop was the reception desk. I asked the lady behind the counter if anyone had turned in a lost phone. After she searched lost and found and didn't find anything, I hurried up the stairs to the second floor where I had been studying.

Again, nothing.

I left the library and began making my way across campus to the lab I worked in. I had worked a full shift the previous day, but I had taken time to have lunch. Keeping my body healthy was extra important at this point.

It helped that most of the morning sickness had started to go away over the last week. Puking my guts out every morning like clockwork was not my idea of a good time.

How I had kept it from Tony I would never know.

When I got to the lab, I checked my locker first. When I didn't find it there, I checked the lab. Again, no cell phone. I searched the lost and found...found a sweater I had been missing for a couple of months, but no phone.

I felt a little desperate as I headed out of the lab and to the last place I could remember going yesterday. If my cell phone wasn't there, I'd have to start thinking about getting a new one. Having a phone on me was kind of a must. I could be called in to work at any time. Besides, my parents would freak if they couldn't get a hold of me.

That was worse.

When I reached the cafe, I went up to the counter and asked if anyone had turned in a lost cell phone. When I was told no, my heart sank. I had to consider the possibility that someone might have found it and decided to keep it.

I pressed a hand to my stomach when it rumbled. I had been really, really good about my diet as of late, but for once I wanted to cheat. I ordered a double iced mocha, decaf, of course, a ham and cheese croissant, and some fresh fruit.

Maybe I could balance out the bad with the good.

After paying for my order, I walked over to one of the tables by the window. I usually sat toward the back of the cafe where there was less traffic, but I was usually studying during lunch, too. This time, I didn't have a single book with me.

"Is this seat taken?"

I glanced up and then smiled when I saw the man gesturing to the seat across from me. "Mr. Kostas."

Janos draped his jacket over the back of the seat and then sat down. "Is the coffee any good here?"

"It's very good," I said enthusiastically. "I usually come here for my lunch breaks. Much better than the cafeteria at the lab."

"And how are things at the lab?"

"Pretty much the same as they were yesterday." I know that didn't explain a lot, but being a researcher didn't bring about quick results. Things happened slowly in a lab, significant discoveries sometimes taking decades. "What about you? Buy any new properties lately?"

"A couple." Janos chuckled. "I'm attending an auction tonight to buy a tract of land over near Brentwood. I hope to turn it into commercial building use."

My brow flickered as I tried to remember where that was. "I don't think I've ever been to Brentwood."

"I can have my driver take us out there if you wish to see it."

"Thanks, but I'm on the hunt for my phone at the moment."

Janos's eyebrows lifted. "Your phone?"

"I lost my cell phone sometime yesterday. This cafe was the last place I looked. I've already looked everywhere else I went yesterday. Still no phone."

Nothing else was said by is for a moment as my lunch order was delivered and Janos ordered his own coffee and sandwich. I took a bite of my sandwich first before drinking any of the double mocha. I was going to need the buffer for the sugar rush.

I still groaned in delight when I took a sip.

When I glanced at Janos, he was staring intently at me, his eyes narrowed. "What?"

Did I have something on my face?

"Good coffee?"

I knew my face was flushing when I glanced at my cup. "I don't get it very often, but every once in awhile you just need chocolaty goodness, you know?"

"I'm not much of a sweets person, so I can't comment, but I do know what a good cigar is like. I don't indulge often, but every once in awhile you just need it, so I get the concept."

Never had a cigar in my life, never planned to.

"Those are bad for you, you know?"

Janos gestured to my double chocolate mocha. "And that isn't?"

Okay, he had me there.

"I guess moderation is the key, huh?"

"I have one or two cigars a month."

That wasn't as bad as I thought.

"Your life, your choice, but please don't smoke them around me."

I'd puke for sure.

Janos gave a single nod. "I won't, I promise."

I gestured to the empty spot in front of Janos with one hand, took a bite of my sandwich with the other. "Are you going to eat?" I asked him after I chewed my food.

One corner of Janos's mouth curved up in a half smile. "Coffee is enough for now."

"I'm a doctor and I can tell you with my professional opinion, man cannot live on coffee alone, although I have tried."

"I was actually on my way to a lunch meeting when I saw you sitting here through the window. I thought I'd drop by and say hello."

That was sweet of him, but... "Shouldn't you get to your meeting?"

Janos waved a dismissive hand. "It can wait."

This did not seem like the real estate tycoon I'd read about online.

Yes, after that first meeting I had gone home and researched him. Although Janos had started in real estate over fifteen years ago, his name hadn't really been known until the last ten years. Now, he was considered one of the best in the business.

He was the one that said, "Oh, let's buy there and do something crazy" and then make billions on the deal.

"I'd like to ask you to attend the auction as my date."

I blinked at Janos. That had come out of nowhere.

"How do you know I'm gay?" I asked. I knew I didn't look like the Hollywood stereotype.

Janos smirked. "I had you checked out."

Okay, so now I didn't feel so bad about checking him out.

"You're under no obligation to say yes to me," Janos said. "I'd like you to be my date for the evening. If that makes you uncomfortable, just say no. Believe it or not, I can take rejection."

I set my sandwich down because eating right now didn't seem like a good idea. The food already in my stomach was threatening a return.



"It's not that I want to reject you...Under normal circumstances, I'd be all over that invitation." Who wouldn't? The guy was gorgeous. "But my life is really chaotic right now. I'm not in a place where I can start dating someone."

Janos's face grew pensive for a moment before he smiled. "Okay, then how about as a friend? Everyone could use a friend."

Man, this guy was trying hard. I did have to give it to him, though, he wasn't being overly pushy about it. He was just asking.

"Two conditions." I held up one of my fingers. "One, you really need to understand that I can't start dating someone right now. There are things going on in my life that I can't discuss and it's taking all of my energy not to go stark raving mad. Dating isn't even on my scope right now. I'll only go if you accept the fact that we can only be friends."

"Understood," Janos said. "And the second condition?"

"You can't wear anything around me that smells like cigar smoke." If he did, he'd learn real quick why I couldn't start dating.

"Agreed." Janos smiled wickedly, his brown eyes sparkling with delight. He was looking way too handsome. "The auction is at seven. What time should I pick you up?"

This was a really bad idea.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

"Sir," Lester said as soon as I walked into my office. "You received a small package this time, but it looks like it came from the same sender."

Damn.

I had been in such a good mood after attending the auction with Gianni last night. Even if we'd only gone as friends, I'd been floating on cloud nine since the moment I had picked him up for our non-date date.

"Let me see it."

Lester handed me the small white box. I cut the tape holding it closed and the pulled the lid up. The first thing I spotted was a folded piece of paper. I felt a bit of trepidation when I opened it up and read what it said.

"For use in a Non-Invasive Prenatal Paternity Test (NIPP)."

I set the note aside and looked into the box to find a small plastic baggy with what looked like several bloody cotton swaps inside.

I frowned, confused. "Lester, what is a Non-Invasive Prenatal Paternity Test or NIPP?" I don't think I'd ever heard that term before.

"Let me look, sir."

I could hear Lester typing away on his tablet as I stared down at the bloody cotton swabs. I wasn't sure what to think of them. Whoever was behind this was obviously persistent that I was the father of this baby, but was that to be believed?

Just how far would they go to blackmail me?

"Sir, a Non-Invasive Prenatal Paternity Test uses a blood sample from the mother and a cheek swab from the father to do a paternity test. It's a bit expensive, but is considered the safest method for the fetus and it only takes three to five days for the results."

"Set up an appointment with the lab." I wanted this test done as soon as possible. Maybe that would give us some ammunition to use against whoever was doing this. "And have them put a rush on the results."

"Yes, sir."

"How in the hell do I do a cheek swab?" I asked absently. "Do we need to call a lab guy down here or something?"

I had no idea how these things were done. My knowledge lay in making money out of mud holes, not paternity tests. Although, as often as people accused me of knocking them up, maybe I needed to learn.

"That would probably be best, sir," Lester replied. "It'll lessen the possibility of the sample being contaminated."

"Call whoever you need to call and get it done."

Lester was already pulling his phone out of his suit jacket as he walked away.

I felt as if I was being led around by the nose. Each piece of information was being spoon fed to me by someone I didn't know. Well, according to them, I knew them very well, at least in the biblical sense.

The rest of my afternoon was spent deep in meetings, answering phone calls, and getting the inside of my cheek swapped. It was a pretty uneventful day, but I kind of preferred it that way.

Usually, I enjoyed the hustle and bustle of buying and selling real estate. There were times when I could make or lose millions of dollars in a single second and that made my heart race with adrenaline.

This was my high.

There were other times when I just wanted peace and quiet, like today. I took the drink Vasso held out to me as I walked in the front door of my penthouse and handed him my suit jacket.

"Dinner will be ready in an hour, sir."

"Thank you, Vasso."

I walked directly through the living room to the outside patio overlooking the city. I stopped at the railing at the edge of the building, one hand holding my drink and one hand resting on the railing.

This might actually be my favorite spot in the entire penthouse.

When my cell phone rang, I slid it out of my pocket and checked the caller. I didn't recognize the number, but answered it anyway.

"Hello?"

"Janos?"

My heart skipped a beat. "Gianni?"

"Yeah, hey, um...I got a new phone, but they wouldn't give me a new number. So, I thought I'd call and give it to you."

I couldn't even describe how that made me feel.

Giddy?

"I appreciate it," I said as I settled myself in a chair facing the sunset.

He sounded a little hesitant when he asked, "I didn't call at a bad time, did I?"

"No, I'm just having a drink out on my patio, watching the sun set."

"Oh." He sounded much chipper. "Do you have a good view from your patio?"

"I do. I'd love to show it to you sometime." There were a lot of things that I wanted to show Gianni, including the view from my bedroom. Now just was not the time to mention that.

I could tell from the look on Gianni's face when we were together and the tone of his voice when he spoke that he was interested, but something was holding him back, something he wasn't ready to talk about.

That was okay. I could wait.

"The view is what sold me on this place," I continued. "Work can be fun, but it can also be tedious and frustrating at times. I like being able to come home and just unwind with a drink and a little peace and quiet."

Gianni let out a small chuckle. "Sounds nice."

"It is." I took a sip of my drink, my mind whirling with ideas. "Maybe you could come over for dinner sometime and we can sit and watch the sun go down together."

"I'd love to," Gianni replied.

"Are you free this weekend?"

The sooner the better.

"No, I'm actually flying out to Seattle to see my family this weekend."

Disappointment weighed heavy on me, but I understood Gianni's desire to see his family. From what I could recall, they were a pretty close-knit family.

"When you get back then."

"Sounds like a plan," Gianni replied.

I certainly thought so.

I was going to keep pursuing Gianni until I figured out what fascinated me about him. It wasn't his looks, although he was exceptionally beautiful. And I wasn't sure it was his intellect either, although that was far superior to most people I'd met. There was just something about Gianni that grabbed my attention and held onto it with a vice grip.

"Why don't you give me a call when you get back and we can plan something?"

"I will," Gianni replied. "I'll only be gone for the weekend."

"Do you need a ride?" I asked. "I have my jet on standby."

I'd fly him out myself if I had to.

Yes, I had a pilot's license.

"No, but thank you for the offer. My father is sending a plane for me."

We talked until the sun had set before Gianni said he had to go so he could get some rest. I hated hanging up. I was enjoying our conversation, but I understood the need for a goodnight's sleep.

I needed some myself.

"I'd better let you go so you can get some sleep," I told Gianni. "Call me when you get back." Instant distaste filled me at the idea of not hearing from Gianni for so long. "Call me if you just want to talk."

Gianni's chuckle rumbled through the phone. "I will."

"Okay, goodnight, Gianni."

"Nite, Janos."

I loved hearing my name on his lips.

I reluctantly hung up, but it was for the best. Right now, Gianni thought of us as

merely friends, and that was okay. A good solid friendship would give us a foundation to build something else on.

After eating dinner, I looked over a few files that I needed for tomorrow, took a shower, and then headed for bed.

Unfortunately, morning came way too quickly.

I tried not to groan in protest and toss the alarm clock across the room. Instead, I slapped it to give myself ten more minutes.

When it went off again, I slapped it again, this time shutting it off. I'd taken a shower the night before and I probably should again, but I was just too damn tired. If I didn't have an important merger meeting later this afternoon, I'd take the day off and go back to sleep.

I sighed as I rolled to the side of the bed and then sat up. I rubbed both hands over my face before briefly glancing around my room. I glanced at my bed with longing as I got up and went to the bathroom to start my day.

Vasso was waiting for me when I walked out of the bedroom, a cup of coffee and the morning's newspaper in his hand. "Lester called this morning, sir. He wished you to call him before you leave for work."

Damn.

"Thank you, Vasso," I stated as I grabbed the coffee cup and then took a big gulp. I grabbed the paper and made my way out to the patio. As soon as I sat down, I dialed Lester. He usually didn't call before I reached my office so it must be important.

"Good morning, sir," Lester said as soon as the line connected. "Sorry to bother you



before you left for work, but I wanted to remind you to bring the De Luca file with you. It should be on your desk, sir."

I vaguely remembered going over it the night before. "Any reason?"

It hadn't seemed like top priority.

"Victor De Luca called and requested a meeting, sir. I believe he wants to discuss the contract in more detail."

Asshole.

"When?"

"Ten o'clock, sir."

"This morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Alright, set the meeting for the conference room at ten, but make sure everything is set in there. I don't like this guy very much. I want everything he says to be on record in case he tries to come back later and say something else."

If it wasn't for the fact that Victor De Luca had connections all over the city, I wouldn't even entertain the idea of having a meeting with him. I certainly didn't want to do business with him.

Unfortunately, I might not have a choice.

"Yes, sir."

"I'll see you in a little while, Lester."

"Yes, sir."

As I hung up the phone, I sighed. I could already feel a headache coming on and I hadn't even left the building yet. That did not bode well for the rest of my day.

I read over the morning news as I drank my coffee. This might be one of my favorite times of the day. It was just me, my coffee, something to read, and silence. Vasso didn't even say a word when he delivered my breakfast.

I paid the man well and he was worth every cent.

I finished my coffee, my breakfast, and the morning paper, and then got up to go to work. I was looking forward to this day even less than I had been when my alarm went off.

I couldn't wait until the weekend.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

I wiped my sweaty palms on my slacks before opening the bedroom door of the guestroom and walking out to head downstairs. I could hear Henry and my mother talking in the kitchen before I even reached the first floor.

I'd flown in last night and went straight to the guestroom, too tired to bring my news to my family. Unfortunately, it was a new day and I knew they had questions about why I'd suddenly shown up out of the blue.

Granted, I knew they would welcome me no matter what, but I was usually too busy with work to fly out to see everyone on the spur of the moment. Which would be why my grandmother raised an eyebrow at me when I walked into the living room.

I winced and smiled weakly. When she patted the cushion next to her, I reluctantly walked over and sat down. I just knew she was going to start asking questions that I wasn't sure I was ready to answer.

I needed a few more minutes.

"Hey, Nonna ," I said as I sat down next to her. "How are you?"

"I think the better question is how are you, Niptino ."

I always did like it when she called me her "little grandson". It was my special name. Neither of my brothers had it because they were not the baby of the family. I was.

"I'm okay at the moment." The morning sickness had already passed this morning, so I wasn't lying. "Just kind of taking things day by day."

Nonna patted my hand. "Sometimes, that's the best way to do things."

It was working for me.

"Just tell us when you're ready, Gianni. Your parents will fuss a bit, but they will take it well. Same as your brothers."

I glanced at my grandmother with wide eyes.

How did she know?

Did she know?

" Nonna —"

"You think I can't tell, boy?" Nonna let out a very unlady-like snort. "These eyes of mine may be old, but they still work."

Well, spit.

"You didn't tell anyone, did you?" Even if I had flown out here to break the news to my family, I wanted to do this in my own time.

I still needed a few more minutes.

"It's not my news to share, Gianni. It's yours."

"Nonna, I—" I swallowed tightly, my throat feeling as if it was seconds from closing

up. "Mother and Father are going to flip." I didn't even want to think about how my brothers would receive the news. "I don't know who the father is."

This time, it was my grandmother who turned wide eyes to me.

"I went to a party and had a little too much to drink. I know I slept with someone, but I don't remember who it was."

"Well, that does put a different slant on things, but I still think your parents will take it okay. I take it you've decided to keep the baby?"

"What baby?" my mother asked as she walked into the room.

Every ounce of blood drained from my face as I looked up at her.

"What are the two of you gabbing about in here?" she asked.

"Uh..." I glanced at Nonna again.

She was no help.

"Mother, I have something I need to discuss with you, but I want to wait until the others are here." Might as well get all the yelling done at one time. "Do you know when they might be back?"

"Your father and brothers went to grab breakfast for everyone," Delinda replied. "There is this delightful little bakery about two blocks away. Henry introduced it to me. They make the most fabulous breakfast pastries."

Yeah, I had no interest in that. Not only had I thrown up this morning, but I seriously doubted I could get anything to settle in my stomach right now anyway.

I might even go throw up again.

When the front door opened and my father and brothers walked in, I was pretty damn sure I was going to throw up again. I pressed my hand to my stomach and swallowed, trying not to.

"Here, Niptino ." Nonna handed him a small piece of candy. "This is made with ginger. It will help settle your stomach."

I'd try anything.

I popped the candy into my mouth and started sucking on it. Surprisingly, after a few minutes, my stomach did start to settle. I leaned closed to Nonna and whispered, "I need to know where you got these."

I needed like a million of them.

"I have some in my purse. I'll send you some more when I get home."

I grinned and pressed my head to her thin shoulder, hugging her arm. "Thanks, Nonna ."

She was the best.

Henry had plated the pastries. He brought that and a carafe of orange juice and several glasses into the living room, setting them on the table. "Eat quickly before the kids discover them."

I poured myself a small glass of juice, tried to find the plainest pastry I could, and then sat back on the couch. I really wasn't feeling it so I set everything on the small end table and just sat and watched the others eat.

It was kind of nice being here with my family. Between our work schedules, our social schedules, and distance, we didn't really get to spend all that much time together anymore.

I missed it.

"Whenever you're ready, Niptino. "

Damn.

I cleared my throat loudly as I stood, gaining everyone's attention. "So, I have an announcement to make. I hope you'll think it's a happy announcement. I do." I pressed my hand to my abdomen, swallowing tightly before saying, "I'm pregnant."

The silence that followed my statement made my stomach swirl.

"You're pregnant, son?" my mother finally asked.

I nodded. "About three months."

"Who is the father?" she asked.

I knew that question was coming.

"Where is the father?" Frank snapped as he jumped to his feet. His hands clenched into fists. "Why isn't he here to give us this news along with you?"

"Francesco, lower your tone," my father ordered. "There is no call for shouting at your brother."

Frank flushed and instantly sat down. "Sorry."

This was the question I didn't want to answer, but I knew I had to say something. "I'm not ready to discuss the father yet." Maybe never. "I will be a single father for now."

My mother's gaze softened, but there was a twinge of sadness in her eyes. "Is this what you want, Gianni?"

I smiled for real as I glanced down at my slightly rounded stomach. The baby bump was barely visible. "I thought about it a lot after I found out I was pregnant." The smile was still on my face when I looked up at her. "This is what I want, Mama."

I was scared to death, but I wanted this baby.

That was the only truth I had to hold onto at the moment. Maybe one day I'd figure out who my baby's father was and we could take things from there, but that day was not today.

"Are you planning on dropping out of school?" my father asked.

"I'm going to take a year off," I admitted. "I figure that is long enough to have this kid and get used to being a parent."

I didn't understand the laughter.

"I assume you still want to live in the city?" Father continued. "You are more than welcome to live at home, you know."

"I actually haven't decided that part. I'm still getting used to the whole being pregnant thing."

"Why don't you stay at home until you decide what you want to do?"



I nodded. "That would probably be for the best."

Once I took that year off from medical school, I couldn't stay in the apartment I shared with Tony. I'd have to move somewhere else. Home with my family seemed like a good place to start thinking about the rest of my life.

"If you want," my mother said, "we can set up a nursery next to your room and put in a connecting door."

"I want to wait until the baby is fully stable before I start buying a bunch of stuff." I refused to admit I'd already bought a couple of baby things.

My mother's brow furrowed as her eyes dropped to my abdomen. "Is there something wrong with the baby?"

"No, no," I said quickly to reassure her. "I've just heard that it's best to wait until at least the fifth month before buying stuff. Miscarriages happen a lot more frequently in the early months."

The thought terrified me.

"Do you have any juice?" I asked Frank.

"Always." He snorted before gesturing toward the kitchen. "There should be some fresh juice in the refrigerator."

I got up and headed to the kitchen. As much as I wanted a cup of coffee, I'd read that caffeine was bad for pregnant people. I found the juice easy enough, but it was a little harder to find a glass.

"Cabinet left of the fridge."

I glanced over to see Frank leaning against the wall, his arms crossed over his chest. I ignored him as I grabbed a glass and poured myself some juice. I knew why he had followed me in here. He was in big brother mode.

I actually expected Martino to show up any moment now.

I crossed one arm over my waist and took a sip of juice as I leaned back against the counter. I could feel my brother's eyes on me, assessing me. I knew he had questions. I also knew I wouldn't get out of answering a few of them. I just wanted to get away without spilling everything.

"You doing okay?" Frank finally asked after several moments of agonizing silence.

I placed both hands around my glass, enjoying the coolness of it, and nodded. "Still a little morning sickness, but I'm kind of used to it by now."

"Henry had morning sickness into his fifth month and then again for the last month."

I prayed that didn't happen to me.

"Nonna gave me some ginger candy to suck on," I stated. "It helps."

"She made a bunch up for Henry and Ryan when they were pregnant. Trust me, it works."

Good to know.

I sighed when Martino walked into the room. He came over and leaned back against the center island, his arms crossed over his chest much like Frank.

Yeah, this was going to be fun.

Martino pursed his lips as he glanced between me and Frank. "So..."

"You do remember the part where I said I wasn't ready to discuss the father yet, right?"

Frank smiled.

Martino smiled.

I tried to run out of the kitchen, but they caught me, each grabbing one of my arms. I thought they were going to drill me with questions right there and then.

That's what I got for thinking.

They lifted me up off my feet and carried me through the penthouse to Frank's study. The door shut firmly behind them. Frank walked around to sit at his desk while Martino leaned up against the door, cutting off my escape.

When they both just stared at me, neither of them saying a word, I knew I wasn't going to get out of that room until I spilled every last detail.

"You have to swear to me that you won't say anything to our parents or Nonna ."

Frank's eyebrows lifted. "It's that bad?"

It wasn't good.

"Swear to it," I demanded.

Surprisingly, both of my brothers lifted their hands, raising three fingers in the air and said, "I swear."

My shoulders slumped. I walked over to stare out the window. It wasn't the spectacular water view that the living room had, but the open air market across the street was interesting.

"I don't know who the father is," I finally admitted. "I went to a party put on by another medical resident, had too much to drink, and woke up six weeks later pregnant."

"Were you raped?" Frank asked in a very serious tone.

I shook my head. "I don't think so. There were no signs that I was forced. I'm pretty sure it was consensual sex."

"But you're not positive?" Martino asked.

"It's all kind of a hazy blur." I turned around to face my brothers. The intensity of the looks they were giving me both frightened me and comforted me. They were good brothers, just a little overprotective. "Beyond not knowing who I slept with, I don't have any apprehensive emotions connected to what happened."

"Then you most likely weren't raped," Frank said.

That had been my conclusion as well.

"Are you going to tell our parents?"

"At some point," I replied. "I'm just not ready to yet."

"Have you tried to track down who this man is?" Martino asked.

I shook my head. "I've been too busy trying to decide if I wanted to keep this baby or

not. I finally decided that even if I never know who this guy is, this is still my kid and I want him."

Never thought I'd say that.

Martino sighed, but Frank came over and pulled me to his chest, giving me a hug. I understood it. Martino had been betrayed, not once, but twice, but men professing to love him. It had nearly cost him his current husband and child.

Frank had been betrayed, too, but not in the same manner. He'd been lied to and manipulated. It had cost him five years of his daughter's life and almost the man he loves.

Frank had an easy smile on his face when he leaned back. "So, single parenthood, huh?"

"Looks that way."

"You know, Henry and Ryan could be really good resources for you," Frank stated. "While they shared a house for those first few years, they were still essentially single fathers. If you have questions, they'd be the ones to ask."

I had questions, a lot of them. And every time I thought of a question, another one popped up. I felt so out of my element I could have been on the moon.

"I'm pretty sure Nonna knows something is up because when doesn't she? But I'm not ready to tell our parents yet. Please don't say anything to them."

Frank and Martino shook their heads.

"We won't say a word until you're ready," Frank said. "That doesn't mean you can

hide it from them forever. Eventually, you're going to have to tell them the truth."

Yeah, I was afraid of that.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

"Sir, the DNA paternity test result is back," Lester said as he hurried into my office with a manila envelope.

I jumped up from my seat and took the envelope, quickly opening it. My heart pounded in my chest as I pulled the papers out and started to read over them. I had to flip through several pages before I found the answer I was after.

I collapsed in my chair.

"Are you sure this is accurate?"

Was there any way they could have been tampered with?

"I had them run the test three times, sir."

Holy shit!

I was going to be a father.

"I want you to use every resource and find out who this person is." I wanted to know where my kid was and who the other parent was. "And inform the mailroom that anything like the previous letters is to be delivered to me immediately."

"Yes, sir."

I blew out a breath as I stared down at the test report. I was really going to be a father. I knew that it would happen eventually, but I always assumed I would be married first, and hopefully in love with the person I married.

Didn't matter. This was my child. Married or not, I wanted it. I just had to find the person I'd slept with. I could offer them a lot of money to let me have the kid. I wasn't thrilled with the idea of being a single parent, but I was less thrilled with the idea of never seeing my child.

I needed to figure out a way to tell my grandmother. I wanted to wait until I found the person behind all of this and got them to sign an iron-clad agreement to give me the child when it was born. I didn't want to get Yiayia's hopes up in case it didn't work out for some reason.

"Lester, get my lawyer on the phone."

I needed to know where I stood in relation to this kid and their other parent. What were my rights and what were my options. I also needed paperwork. I wanted everything tied up in a nice neat legal package. I'd even put a bow on it.

Lester held the phone receiver out to me. "Sir, Mr. Anderson."

"Bob," I said after taking the receiver and putting it to my ear. "This is Janos. I'm in need of your assistance. I also want to pick your brain."

"Pick away, my friend."

I briefly explained the situation I was in and what I wanted to do. After some going back and forth about the laws pertaining to child custody and my rights as the non-birthing father, we settled on an agreement I felt was fair to all parties involved.



I reached up and rubbed the bridge of my nose with my fingers. The conversation with my lawyer had taken about an hour. By the time it was done, I had a deep ache right behind my eyes. Not because of anything my lawyer said specifically, but because of how involved all of this was.

It was crazy more than anything. My rights as the non-birthing father were not that much. If this person decided to move across the world and never tell me, I had no real recourse.

On the other hand, if I could get this person to sign the paperwork my lawyer was preparing for me, I could gain custody of my child. I had no doubts that I'd have to hand over a significant amount of money, but I could make it so the other parent wasn't even in the picture.

I wasn't sure that was the right thing to do, though. I knew I wanted full custody. That thought was firm in my mind. But cutting the other parent completely out of our child's life might not be the way to go either.

It all depended on who they were, their character, and what they were trying to get out of me. If they truly just wanted to inform me of the child's existence and get child support, why be so mysterious?

They could have just called.

I glanced at my cell phone when it rang, a smile spreading across my lips when I saw who the caller was. This was a sure fire way to get my headache to go away.

"Hello," I said as soon as I answered the call. "Are you back in town?"

"Flew in with my parents last night," Gianni replied.

"Everything go okay?"

"For the most part."

"Good." I smiled, my body relaxing at the sweet sound of Gianni's voice. "Now for the important question. Did you have fun?"

Gianni chuckled. "I did. We had all the family in the same place for once."

"For once?" I asked.

"Well, with my brothers and their families on the west coast and us on the east coast, plus our work schedules, we don't get to have family get-togethers as often as we used to. Usually just around the holidays."

"I usually spend the holidays with my grandmother. My parents passed away when I was just a kid so she raised me and my younger sister."

"Oh." Gianni's voice became somber. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"It was sudden, a car accident when I was about seven years old, but at least they went together."

I still missed them.

"Your brothers are on the west coast, right?"

"Yes," Gianni replied.

"I spoke to Frank just last month. He said I needed to change some of my bathroom designs and add more ADA compliant stalls."

"Oh." Gianni's voice began to warm once again. "I thought you only bought and sold real estate."

"While the bulk of my business is just buying and selling land, I sometimes buy land that is vacant and build something on it or I buy buildings that need to be modernized."

"And you work with Galeazzi Construction?"

"Not every time, but yes, over the years Galeazzi Construction has either built or retrofitted several of my properties."

"And that's how you know my brothers?"

"It is."

"So, if I was to call them and ask them about you, what would they tell me?"

I chuckled. "I need more ADA compliant bathrooms."

I loved the sound of Gianni's laughter. It was clear, light, and unabashed. It made me think of warm sunshine. I knew that didn't make sense because sunshine was naturally warm, but that's how it sounded.

"Since you're back in town, does that mean we can do that dinner we talked about?" I wanted to see him. It didn't matter if it was a walk in the park, coffee somewhere, or dinner at my penthouse. I needed to see him.

"Dinner sounds nice," Gianni replied. "I want to see that sunset you told me about."

"Great." A wide smile spread across my face as delight filled me. "Say, about six

then? That will give us a little time to eat before the sun goes down." I was already starting to make plans in my head. "Is there anything you can't eat?"

"No, but not anything too heavy, please."

"Okay, then, I'll see you at six."

"One problem."

My heart skipped a beat. "What?"

"I don't know where you live."

I snorted before stating, "I'll text you my address." I was reluctant to hang up, but I had plans to make and people to call. "I'll see you tonight at six then."

"Okay, see you then."

I hung up and immediately sent Gianni the address and then dialed Vasso. The penthouse needed to be gone over and dinner needed to be started. I wanted something outside on the patio, something that would be romantic without seeming to be romantic.

Gianni had been pretty firm on his friends only boundaries. I planned to test those boundaries, but I wouldn't cross them until I had his permission. Despite what the media liked to report, I was not a beast. If all I could ever be to Gianni was a friend, I'd accept it. I just hoped for more.

Waiting for work to be over was excruciating. By the time five o'clock rolled around, I had mastered clock watching. The second the big hand hit the five, I grabbed my stuff and headed out the door.

I got more than a few surprised looks.

Having no social life to speak of, I tended to stay late at the office. People were used to seeing behind my computer as they left work. They weren't used to me speeding out of the office at a fast clip.

Vasso should have already done what I'd asked him to do, so I knew I just needed to get home, shower, and change into something a little more comfortable. I didn't want to meet Gianni in a three piece suit. I wanted our evening together to be more casual.

This wasn't a board meeting.

I arrived home soon enough and hurried upstairs to my penthouse. Vasso was waiting for me at the door. "Is everything ready?"

Gianni was to be here in a half hour.

"It is, sir. Dinner is almost done and I've set a place for you to eat on the patio. As soon as your guest arrives, I will light the candles and the fire pit."

"Thank you, Vasso. I'm going to jump in the shower and change my clothes. Would you put on some jazz?"

I figured a little background music would be nice, but I wanted something mellow and soothing. I didn't want it to overtake our possible conversation.

"Of course, sir."

Without saying another word, I headed for my bedroom and ultimately the bathroom. I only had about thirty minutes left and I wanted to be prepared for when Gianni arrived.

My heart was beating a little faster and there was a strong sense of anticipation filling me. I admit, I hadn't felt something like this in longer than I could remember.

Showering was done quickly. Picking out something casual to wear for our "first date" was a bit trickier. I went through my entire closet before finally settling on a simple pair of tan slacks and a white button down shirt.

After pulling them on, I neatly rolled the sleeves halfway up my forearm and left the first couple of buttons at the collar undone. I finished the ensemble with a tan leather belt and matching loafers. Lastly, I splashed a little cologne on my neck and wrists and then headed out of the bedroom.

The soft sounds of Coltrane filled the air. I stopped for a moment, closing my eyes as I listened to the soft sultry music. I wanted soothing music and that's exactly what I got. I could feel the tension rolling off of me by the second.

Of course, it all came rushing back when I heard the doorbell ring.

"I've got it," I told Vasso when I saw him heading for the door. I wanted to greet Gianni myself. Well, truth be told, I wanted all of his attention for myself.

Yeah, it was petty.

Sue me.

I had a smile on my face even before I opened the front door. "Gianni."

A flickered moved across my forehead when I saw a small shudder shake the man. "I see you found the place."

Gianni's smile was somewhat shy, which was weird. "It wasn't that hard."

"Come in, come in." I stepped back to allow Gianni into my home. As soon as he passed me, I closed and locked the door. "Can I take your jacket?"

I had dressed casually and so had Gianni. His was a button down shirt and a pair of faded denim jeans. I still nearly swallowed my tongue when he took his black leather jacket off and turned to face me, holding the jacket out to me.

"Thank you."

I quickly hung the jacket up in the closet and then led Gianni through the penthouse to the patio just off the living room. "Can I get you a drink?"

"Oh, um, do you have anything non-alcoholic?"

I was a bit surprised, but I wasn't going to argue about it.

"Vasso, do we have anything non-alcoholic for Mr. Galeazzi?"

"Hot or cold, sir?" Vasso asked.

"Oh, cold if you have it," Gianni replied.

Vasso nodded once. "Right away, sir."

Gianni waited until Vasso walked away before glancing at me. "He seems...nice."

"Vasso is very good at his job and that is all I care about." The man had actually been with me for many years. We weren't friends, but I respected him.

I smiled as I pressed my hand to the middle of Gianni's back. "Come on, let's head out to the patio. Dinner is just about ready."

And tonight was just starting.



## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

I was nervous as all hell.

I wanted this to be a date even if I knew we needed to just stay friends at this point. Maybe sometime in the future we could be more, but right now my world was so chaotic, I couldn't even entertain the idea of dating someone and starting a relationship.

I also didn't want to explain to Janos why I couldn't date. I'm sure he would instantly assume that I had loose morals. Explaining that I didn't even know who the father of my child was would be horrible. I didn't want to lose whatever was between us already, even if it was just friendship.

"Is that Coltrane?"

Janos grinned. "You know your jazz."

"Not really," I replied. "I just have a few of his records."

It was nice that we had similar tastes in music.

I blinked as soon as that thought ran across my mind. Why would it matter if we liked the same music? We weren't dating. We were barely even friends.

I needed to stop thinking like this.

The setting that awaited me on the patio did not help me at all. A fire pit was glowing with a roaring fire. Candles in glass jars sat in different areas around a small square table covered with a white tablecloth. That, along with the sultry jazz music playing in the background, made this a very romantic scene.

Right after we sat down, Vasso brought us our drinks. Janos's glass looked to be filled with red wine. I wasn't sure what mine was. It was red, too, but I had specifically asked for something non-alcoholic so I wasn't sure what I had gotten.

I raised the glass. "This is?"

"Sparkling red grape juice, sir."

Oh.

I smiled brightly after taking a sip of the bubbly liquid. "Thank you."

"Your very welcome, sir. I'll have dinner out in a few minutes."

I drew in a deep breath as I looked out over the city view beyond the railing surrounding the patio. "I can see why you like this view so much."

"I bought this building for a song about ten years ago. Your father's company, in fact, did the retrofitting on it."

"It seems like it was a good investment."

Janos snickered. "People laughed at me at the time, thought I was crazy for buying it. Now, the property is worth ten times what it was when I bought it."

"Isn't that the hope of everyone involved in buying and selling real estate?"

"It is, but I've been lucky. I started out with a rundown dilapidated house that I bought for fifteen thousand dollars at auction and went from there. People thought I was crazy then, too. I was buying houses in neighborhoods no one was buying in."

"That's not a good way to make money, Janos." I didn't know a lot about the real estate business, but it seemed to me you needed to buy low and sell high.

Could I be wrong?

"I've had a few duds over the years, but for the most part the properties I've bought have either sold quickly or I held onto them until the market improved in those areas and then sold them for a huge profit. Now, I buy and sell property all over the world."

I shook my head. "Ask me about cell reproduction and I could talk your ear off. I know nothing about real estate."

"And I know nothing about cell reproduction, so we're even."

I tipped my glass to Janos. "Touché."

"The important question is, do you like what you do?"

"I do," I admitted. "I like knowing what I am doing is going to benefit someone someday. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but someday." I took another sip of my juice, my mind wandering just a bit. "I'm going to miss it."

"Miss what?"

"The research mostly. Solving the medical puzzle of how the human body ticks."

Janos frowned. "Why would you miss it? Are you being transferred or something?"

I paled as I suddenly realized what I had said. "Um, no, not exactly. I'm, um, I'm taking a year off at the end of this term."

I winced when Janos's frown deepened. I seriously hadn't wanted to go here, but maybe I should. Janos needed to be aware of the situation I was in so he could understand why I couldn't get into a relationship with him.

"I'm taking a year off to have a baby."

Janos's eyes widened. "A baby?"

"I'm pregnant."

Dead silence met my words. Janos stared at me for a moment before his eyes dropped to my stomach or at least to that general direction since we were sitting at the table and he couldn't see my stomach.

"You're an omega?"

I nodded.

"Is that why you don't want to date me?"

I nodded again. "My life is really chaotic right now. Dating would just add to that."

"Where's the father?"

I knew he was going to ask that.

"I honestly don't know."

Janos's eyes instantly narrowed. "He abandoned you?" I was a bit surprised at the anger I could hear in his voice. "Does he even know that you're pregnant?"

I winced and glanced away. "Not exactly."

I looked back when I felt Janos's hand settle over mine.

"You can tell me as much or as little as you want. I won't judge you and nothing you say will be repeated. You have my word on that."

My shoulders heaved as I sighed. "I don't exactly know who the father is."

Janos's jaw hit the table.

"I know that makes me sound like the biggest slut in the world, but I'm not. I swear. I haven't even been on a date in two years. I just don't have the time."

"Then how...?"

"I went to a party hosted by another medical student. It was right after two weeks of hell doing hospital rotations and I needed to unwind a little bit. I guess I had too much to drink and six weeks later I found out I was pregnant."

"And no idea who the father is?" Janos asked as if he had to be sure he'd heard me correctly.

"I don't even remember having sex. That night is a complete blur." Well, not a total blur. I got impressions of some really hot sex, but nothing of the man I had been having sex with.

"How far along are you?"

"About twelve weeks."

Janos was silent for a moment, his thumb rubbing over the top of my hand. "Are you keeping it?" he finally asked.

"I am." I nodded as I dropped my gaze to our hands. "It took me a while to get to that decision, but ultimately, even if I don't know who the father is, this is still my baby and I don't want to give him or her up."

"Good for you."

My head popped up. That wasn't the response I had been expecting. "You don't think I'm a slut?"

Janos's eyebrows furrowed. "No, why would I?"

"Because I slept with a man I don't know and got pregnant?"

The smartest minds in the world couldn't have helped me interpret the smile that crossed Janos's face. It almost looked self-depreciating.

"About a month ago I received a letter at work. It was a positive pregnancy test. There were no names on it."

My eyebrows lifted. "Seriously?"

"It happens more often than you would think."

"Why?" I asked.

"I have money, a lot of it, and people want it."

Oh, right.

"I didn't really think anything of it until a few weeks later when some bloody cotton swaps were delivered in the same way the pregnancy test was and it was recommended that I do a Non-Invasive Prenatal Paternity Test." Janos raised an eyebrow. "I assume you know what that is?"

I nodded.

"Turns out I'm going to be a father," Janos admitted. "Problem is, I don't know who I got pregnant. I vaguely remember having sex with someone, but it's more of a blur than anything. And whoever it was, they were gone when I woke up."

"I woke up the next morning in my apartment. I have no idea how I got there."

Janos grunted. "I woke up in a hotel room."

My heart skipped a beat. "What hotel?"

"The Regency Hotel."

I swallowed tightly. "The Regency?"

Janos's brow furrowed. "Yeah, why?"

"That's where I attended the afterhour's party."

We both stared at each other, the silence between us poignant. I was terrified to give voice to the thoughts racing through my mind, and yet my curiosity was overwhelming me.

"You don't think...?"

"There's only one way to find out," Janos replied stoically. "We need to do another Non-Invasive Prenatal Paternity Test. I can call my assistant and arrange something for tomorrow. It'll take a few days to get the results back, though."

"Janos, are we really thinking this is a possibility?"

Had I slept with him?

Was he the biological father of my baby?

"I'd be thrilled if it was true."

I blinked at the man in surprise. "Thrilled?"

Janos's face flushed and he stared at me as if he hadn't meant to utter those words, but now they were out there and he didn't know quite how to respond.

"I don't like not knowing who I slept with or who might be out there carrying my child." Janos's eyebrows snapped together. "Am I right in assuming you didn't send me a paternity test?"

I quickly shook my head. "I wouldn't do that. If I knew who the father was, I'd confront them in person."

"That's what I thought," Janos said. "Which makes me wonder why I am getting these letters. Who all knows you're pregnant?"

I huffed as I thought about it. "My family and the doctor and nurse at the clinic where I got the pregnancy test confirmed."



"No one else?"

"I didn't tell anyone else." I didn't even tell my roommate. I knew eventually I'd need to because I'd be moving out of our shared apartment and back home with my family. I just wasn't there yet in my head.

"Well, if your kid is my kid, then someone definitely knows."

I was afraid he was going to say that.

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

"Someone will be by first thing in the morning to take samples from each of us for testing," I told Gianni after hanging up with Lester. "I have a guestroom if you want to stay over."

Gianni nodded, but he was staring absently over the scene of the sun setting off in the distance. I could tell his mind was elsewhere and I couldn't blame him. If what we suspected was true, our world had just been turned upside down.

"How are you feeling about all of this?"

It was a lot for both of us to take in. If what we suspected was true, that meant we had slept together and created a new life. Our child. It also meant there was someone else involved, someone that did not have good intentions.

Gianni let out a heavy breath before turning to look at me. "Do you really think this could be your kid?"

"I think it's a strong possibility," I stated. "The timelines match up. But I also I think we shouldn't freak out until we know for sure," I continued, hoping to settle him a bit. "Nothing needs to be decided right now. We have time."

Gianni gently patted his abdomen. "We have about six months."

I chuckled lightly. "I think we can figure things out before then."

It was a hope at least.

I could see that Gianni was wrestling with something. His brow was furrowed and his eyes kept darting from me to the sunset and then back to me.

"What is it?" I finally asked. "Whatever it is, you can just say it or ask it. I'll answer you honestly if I can."

"What if this is your kid?" Gianni asked. "What then?"

"Well, I would definitely want to be a part of the child's life. This could be my son or daughter we're talking about. I don't have any other kids or any plans for others kids. Besides my grandmother and my sister, I don't really have anyone in my life."

That was kind of sad when stated like that, but it was true.

"So, you'd want a shared custody type of deal?"

That didn't sit right with me, but I wasn't sure how to explain it to Gianni. I wanted full custody, but I wanted to share that custody with Gianni.

"I think I'd prefer if we just got married and gave the child a real family. I don't like the idea of him or her bouncing between homes, never feeling secure in either of them."

Gianni's lips parted, his eyes growing round. "You want us to get married?"

Why did he have to say it like it was an alien concept?

I gestured between the two of us with my hand. "You do get that I've been trying to date you, right?"

Gianni's flush was instant. "Yes, but—"

"I know why you said we could only be friends, and if friends is all we can ever be then I accept that, but I hope us dating isn't totally out of the realm of possibilities."

A small smirk curved up the corner of Gianni's mouth. "If I wasn't pregnant, I'd be all over you like white on rice."

I swallowed tightly. "Really?"

I could only hope.

"I've always found you attractive," Gianni replied. "That was never the problem." He waved his hand toward his abdomen. "This is. I don't know if this is your kid or not. Until tonight, that thought never even entered my mind."

"And now that it has?"

Gianni shook his head. "It's just wishful thinking."

"It doesn't have to be," I insisted.

"Janos, this might not even be your child."

"That's true. We won't know until the test results come back, but that doesn't change the fact that it will still need a family."

Gianni's dark eyebrows drew together. "What are you saying here?"

I wasn't sure.

"I'm saying don't give up on the idea of us just because you're pregnant." It was the best way I could explain what was going through my head. "I realize that anything that might happen between us means you come as a package deal, but so do I."

"What do you mean?"

"If this kid isn't mine, then there is still someone out there pregnant with my child. I would still want to be a part of that child's life. I'm assuming, if you ever discovered who the father is, he'd want to be a part of your child's life as well. That's the deal. I have baggage and you have baggage, and guess what, it's kind of the same baggage just different manufacturers."

"So, we both might have a child with someone we don't know or we could be sharing a child..." Gianni's eyes narrowed. "But that shouldn't stop us from dating?"

Sort of?

"We like each other. We're attracted to each other. Under normal circumstances, we'd both want to date each other. Why let a little thing like a baby or two stop us from getting to know each other and deciding if we're a good fit?"

Gianni snorted as he glanced away. "A little thing like a baby or two. Seriously?"

"My hope is that I am the father of your baby," I admitted. "I'd be thrilled if you were carrying my kid and not some random stranger's. You need to remember, I tried to date you before I even knew you were pregnant so this isn't about the baby. It's about us."

That was as real as I could get at the moment. I felt as if we were both holding our breath until we got those test results back. We were in limbo, not being able to go forward and not being able to go backward.

"There's nothing we can do anyway until we get the test done and the results come back, but I would like this all to be out there in the open. I want to date you, whether it is your baby and my baby or our baby, with the idea of pursuing a possible future with you."

Gianni just stared at me, making me grow nervous. Was he against the idea of us dating? He had said he wasn't in a place in his life where he could date, but that was before his admission that he was pregnant. Was that still true?

"What do you think?" I finally asked, growing nervous. "You haven't said a word."

"You really want to date me even knowing that I could be pregnant with some random stranger's baby?"

"Yes," I said without hesitation. "If you understand and accept the fact that there might be some random stranger out there pregnant with my baby."

After a moment, Gianni nodded and my heart began to flutter with joy. "Do you mean that? You'll date me with the idea of a possible future together?"

"I think at this point, we should stick to the getting to know you phase, but I suppose you could consider this our first date."

I mentally thrust my fist into the air.

"Okay then." I grinned at Gianni, flashing him my brightest smile.

Vasso delivered our dinner right after that. I could barely contain my excitement as we began to eat. Gianni had agreed to date me. It wasn't marriage by any means, but we could work up to that. I wanted him to know I was serious about us. I wasn't just trying to get him into bed.

"You said you planned to take a year off?"

Gianni nodded. "Once the term ends, which is in a couple of weeks. I don't think it's a good idea to be pregnant and working my crazy schedule at the same time."

"So, what are your plans then?"

"I don't have any actually. I'll be moving back to my parents' house for right now. Whether I remain there or move out on my own remains to be seen. I'm not going to make any major decisions right now."

That was probably a good idea.

"If you ever need a sounding board or just someone to talk to about everything, I'm available."

Gianni smiled brightly. "I appreciate that."

Our conversation was stilted for a bit and then it wasn't. The more we talked, the easier it seemed to get. By the time dinner was done and Vasso had cleared away the dishes, we were both relaxed.

I think that was a good thing.

"So, do you like my view?"

Gianni chuckled. "I do. It's very relaxing."

I'd always thought so.

"It's especially nice in the summer months, but the winter is nice, too. I tend to stay

indoors then, of course, but I like keeping the curtains open so I can watch the snow fall. Up here, looking down on the city when it's covered in snow, it's kind of magical."

"Do you ever dance in the rain?"

I blinked at Gianni. "I haven't in the past, but I'd be open to it." If Gianni wanted to dance in the rain, I'd be right there holding my hand out to him.

"I love to dance in the rain," Gianni admitted. "Not storm rain, but just your normal every day rain. There's something cleansing about it."

I guess I could see that.

"We should probably think about turning in for the night," I said as I stood. I tossed back the last of my drink and then set my glass on the table before holding my hand out to Gianni. "Come on, I'll show you to the guestroom."

Gianni stood up and set his glass down on the table. His cheeks flushed in the most adorable way as he took my hand. I admit I was a bit surprised. Gianni seemed so self confident. It was odd to see this shy side of his personality.

I led Gianni back inside and through the house to the guest bedroom. I opened the door and waved my hand for him to enter before me. Once he did, I followed him in.

"The bathroom is right over there." I pointed. "It should have towels and everything in case you want to shower. I'll go get you something you can sleep in and something for you to wear tomorrow."

We weren't the same size, but I was sure I could find something for him to wear.



"Thank you," Gianni replied.

I nodded to him before forcing myself to turn and walk away. I headed straight for my bedroom. There was something stimulating knowing Gianni would be wearing my clothes, even if they didn't quite fit him.

I would describe my feelings as feral and possessive.

I shook my head at my ridiculous thoughts. Gianni was his own man. He'd proven that when he went his own way instead of joining his family's business. If I tried to dominate him, he'd probably hand me my head, but I couldn't deny that the desire was there. I wanted to pin him to the bed and ravage him.

Probably not a good idea with him being pregnant and all.

I found clothes for Gianni to wear to bed and in the morning, carrying them back to his room. I knocked before opening the door. Gianni stood on the far side of the room looking out the window. He turned when I walked in.

I frowned at the somber look on his face. "Are you okay?"

Gianni drew in a deep breath before answering me. "Yes. I'm just thinking about everything."

I wasn't sure if that was good or bad.

"Anything I can help with?"

"Not unless you can fast forward to the test results."

I set the clothes down on the end of the bed and walked over to stand in front of him.

My touch was gentle as I pressed my hand against the side of his face and tilted his head until our eyes met.

"No matter what the test results are, you're not in this alone."

Gianni gave me a weak smile.

"I mean it, Gianni." I wrapped my arms around him and pulled him up against my larger body. I pressed a small kiss to his forehead. "We're doing this, right?"

Gianni let out a little laugh. "Yes."

"Then believe me when I say you are not alone," I stated firmly. "I am right here beside you."

If I had my way, I'd always be beside him.

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

The sky had turned dark hours ago and still I could not find my sleep. Janos's words kept twirling around in my head like a raging hurricane.

The man really wanted to date me with the intention of marriage?

Granted, I didn't think I was a dog or anything. I came from a good family background, was relatively well off even without my parents' money, I had a promising career, and I had inherited my family's strong Italian genes.

Frankly, I was a catch.

I was also a pregnant omega. I wasn't sure if that brought down my marriage value or not. Janos didn't seem to think so. He was actively pursuing me.

I still wasn't sure how I felt about that.

Ever since discovering I was pregnant, I had kind of pushed dating anyone to the back of my mind. When I met Janos, those thoughts had resurfaced, but I'd fought each and every one of them. I had too much on my plate to deal with dating.

Now, I didn't have to?

I was confused. Elated, but confused.

Very, very confused.

Raindrops began to hit the window. I pressed my hand to the cool glass and watched them fall. My heart felt like those raindrops. Hitting hard and then dripping down. Strong enough to create a flood, but soft enough to land on the ground and sink into the soil.

I pushed away from the window and walked out of the guestroom. When I reached the living room, I pushed the patio doors open and stepped out into the rain.

I tilted my face up, closing my eyes when the rain started to land on my face. For just a moment, all the rampant thoughts swirling in my mind stopped.

Everything stopped.

"Gianni."

My name was said softly, but I still heard it through the falling rain. When I opened my eyes and turned my head, I saw Janos standing just outside the patio doors, his hand held out to me.

"Dance with me?"

I swallowed tightly and then stepped over to take Janos's hand. A smile started to spread across my lips as Janos twirled me into his arms. It quickly turned to laughter as he began waltzing me around the patio in the pouring rain. I felt light and free and as if all of the chaos in my life was being washed away.

When Janos finally brought us to a stop, we were pressed chest to chest, thigh to thigh. I felt my heart leap into my throat as I lifted my head and looked into his deep blue eyes.

I don't know which one of us moved first, but suddenly, our lips were pressed

together, our hands clenching each other. Our movements were frantic and frenzied, filled with passion.

The sweep of Janos's tongue against mine drew a moan from deep in my throat. I opened my mouth wider, tilting my head, silently begging for more.

Janos seemed to eagerly grant my plea. He swept his tongue into my mouth devouring me, conquering me. His hands moved to my hips, holding me tightly against him.

When my hands went to the buttons of his shirt, Janos lifted his head and grabbed my wrists, stopping me from taking his clothes off. "Are you sure?"

I wasn't, but I nodded anyway.

I didn't want to think about my problems. I didn't want to consider the consequences of my actions. I didn't even want to think about how embarrassed I would become morning.

I just wanted to feel without thinking.

Janos chuckled as he lifted me up into his arms and carried me inside. I instinctively wrapped my legs around him, my arms going around his neck. Janos braced his hands under my ass.

The kiss to the side of my neck made me shiver, want and need instantly flaring to life. Apparently, he could get me going from zero to overloaded with one little brush of his lips on my skin.

"Janos."

I wasn't begging.

Really.

Janos smirked as he set me on my feet. "I'm going to make love to you."

"Oh, yes, please."

Okay, I was begging, but hearing Janos put words to the feeling rolling through me was more than any mere mortal could bear. Knowing the man wanted me as much as I wanted him made my crazy world worth living in.

Janos's hand went to the back of my head, holding me there. His breath blew out across my cheek before his mouth settled on mine. It was a full contact, wet-tongued, tonsil-probing kiss. Our lips met, parted, and then met again.

I whimpered when he pulled back.

Janos's deep chuckle was just mean.

"Janos," I groaned when he carefully stripped me of my clothes, dropping them aimlessly to the floor before pushing me back onto the bed.

"Take it or leave it, baby," Janos said as if he knew why I was protesting.

He probably did.

I wanted to gripe some more, but Janos stood back and started pulling off his own clothes, and then I forgot all about my objection.

Who cared?

I groaned when six foot three inches of rippling muscle moved over the top of me and pinned me to the bed. I inhaled a shaky breath as Janos's grabbed my wrists and pinned them to the bed, his thigh pushed between mine, and the man's hard cock pressed against my abdomen.

"Gianni."

"Hmm?" I murmured a response, but it was lost as I rubbed the side of my face over the warm chest in front of me. And it smelled so nice, so masculine. I opened my mouth and turned my head, licking a trail across the thick layer of hair.

Janos was aroused. I could feel it.

I could also feel my response in my own hardening cock. Having Janos's warm body pressed against me and wrapped around me like an octopus was playing havoc with my libido and my willpower.

"You smell really good," I murmured as I nuzzled my face into the curve of Janos's neck.

"Gianni."

"What?" I finally asked.

Janos's eyes dropped to my chest with a deep hunger in his deep blue eyes. I almost groaned when Janos licked his lips.

It was such a sensuous gesture.

I wondered if Janos actually knew that and was just torturing me. Fuck if I didn't want to feel Janos licking me in other, lower places. Just the thought had my cock

pulsing.

When he leaned down and claimed my lips in a hungry kiss that demanded a response, I thought I'd lose my damn mind. I felt a needy groan build up in my throat as I pushed into the kiss.

The caress of Janos's lips on my mouth and the longing in my body set me on fire. Despite the warning bells going off in my head, I returned Janos's kiss with reckless unrestraint.

I wanted it too damn much.

When the hands holding my wrists down to the bed moved to caress the side of my face, I wound my fingers in Janos's dark hair and pulled the man closer. I swept my tongue over Janos's lips, then pressed in, exploring tentatively.

I could feel the simmering need building, overwhelming me as I opened wider for Janos, allowing the man to explore at his leisure. My brain tried to remind me that I shouldn't be doing this, but I refused to listen. Janos's mouth was devouring mine, making me forget all rhyme and reason.

"Janos," I whispered as I tore my mouth away. Janos's callused hands slowly moved downward, skimming either side of my body to my hips, making me shiver from the feather light tracing.

A spurt of hungry desire spiraled through me. I whimpered, tilted my hips up, and prayed that Janos could read the invitation without me having to voice what I wanted.

Rational speech was beyond me at this point.

Janos leaned forward, his lips nibbling at my ear, sending a spark of electricity



through my entire body.

"You ready?" he whispered in a low, sensual tone.

"Yes," I whispered in a low breathy tone, letting a small groan escape my lips. Just for good measure, I lie back on the bed and spread my legs, trailing my fingers down my chest in an erotic motion.

"Oh, yeah," Janos said just as sensually and just as needy.

I bit my lip to stifle a cry when Janos's hands settled on my chest. Oh man, did I want to be touched by Janos—preferably from the top of my head, down to my toes, and every inch in between. Janos's hands were firm as they touched me, sending a shiver of longing through me.

Each touch was perfect.

Janos's body moved closer until his massive body pressed against mine. We fit so perfectly together.

"Touch me," I whispered when Janos seemed to hesitate, his hand hovering over my body. I sucked in my lower lip and bit down on it when Janos's fingers circled one nipple.

Janos locked eyes with mine and then lowered his head, his tongue flicking out as he lapped at my nipple. I was lost in the sight as Janos tugged on my nipple with his teeth. My cock throbbed painfully, ready to explode, but I fought the need to come as I watched Janos explore me.

"You're teasing me," I said with a whimper, twisting in the grip of an erotic heat that was burning me alive. "Don't tease me, Janos, please."

I couldn't stand it.

A wicked smile formed on Janos's gorgeous face. "You have to learn patience, baby."

Yeah, that wasn't happening.

"Janos!"

I wanted to be fucked now, but it seemed my begging hadn't hurried Janos along. If anything, the man seemed to slow down. His licks were slower, tracing from one nipple to the next as he teased the flesh with his teeth.

I wasn't going to survive.

Janos's hands traced over my skin. The gentle caress caused a surge of heat to rise within me. The man seemed to want to explore every inch of my body at his leisure.

Janos was sweating, his skin flushed as he stared at me with glazed eyes. They were so sensually filled that I could almost feel the heat scorching my skin. Janos grabbed the lube, slicking his fingers.

"Turn over."

I scrambled to roll over as the words left his mouth. When a wet finger touched my hole, I couldn't help but rise to my hands and knees, rocking back against the finger.

"Janos." I was losing my mind, and waiting on Janos to move was going to make me even more insane.

Placing one hand on my back, Janos rose to his knees and slid his lubed finger inside me. My eyes crossed. The man had nailed my sweet spot on the first try.

Lowering my shoulders to the bed, I whimpered.

"Am I hurting you?" Janos asked, stilling.

"God, no," I said as I panted. "Another. Please, just give me another."

Janos pulled the first finger free, and then slid it back in, the second right next to it. Janos was killing me, killing me with pleasure that was building, increasing, and threatening to make me cry out.

So I did.

"Feel good?" Janos asked as he slipped a third finger into my needy hole.

"Yes!" I wasn't even sure how I was stringing two thoughts together, enabling me to speak. Not when Janos was making my world tilt on its axis. I was mewling and writhing, pushing back as Janos pushed forward.

And then the fingers were gone.

Janos settled behind me a moment later, gripped my hips, and then slowly began to split me in half with his massive cock. He eased inside of me, almost as if he was afraid he would hurt me if he went too fast. My body tightened, my heart thudded, and my mind grew frantic with a need so primitive and sensual, it threatened to make a slave out of me.

"Gianni," came a shattered whisper as Janos seated himself fully inside my body. "Fuck, Gianni, so good."

My cock hardened to steel at the needy sounds Janos made. Moaning, I wiggled my hips to take the swollen shaft deeper inside of me. Sweat slid down my back as I

arched into Janos, who had blanketed my body, running his lips over my exposed shoulder.

My head rolled to the other side of my shoulder, giving him better access. I was drowning in the feeling of Janos's cock sink in and out of my ass, stretching me to the limits. My body tingled with the need to come, but I fought against my release.

I didn't want this to end.

Janos wrapped an arm around me, grabbing my cock, and giving my shaft slow, torturous strokes. With steel determination, I began to push against Janos, pounding my ass into the man's groin, demanding Janos take me harder, faster, and rougher.

"Is that what you want?" Janos asked as he pulled back and gripped my hips.

"Fuck me!" I nearly snarled the words.

Janos took me at my word. His cock began to batter my ass. I curled my fingers into the mattress, meeting Janos thrust for thrust.

"Harder, Janos!" I shouted as Janos began to pound into me with fervor. I felt my climax cresting as Janos continued to drive into my ass.

I was almost there.

Reaching underneath me, I grabbed my cock and stroked the swollen flesh in time with Janos's movements. Stroking my dick harder, I bowed my back, crying out as my seed was ripped from my body.

I jerked, shuddered, and gasped for air as Janos's movements became uncoordinated. Janos rammed his cock harder and harder into me, rocking the bed with the force of

his thrusts. The long thick cock that seemed to fill me so perfectly brushed across my prostate with every thrust of Janos's hips.

A deep guttural roar rumbled through Janos's chest. His thrusts faltered as his orgasm ripped a loud cry from him. Janos threw his head back, his movements frantic as his cock erupted, filling me with his seed.

I smiled as Janos's body settled next to mine a few minutes later.

"Janos," I whispered as I rolled to my side and cuddled up to the man. I reached up to caress the side of Janos's face. Janos captured my hand and brushed a kiss against the palm.

Dropping my hand, Janos leaned down, pressing his body against mine. His hands captured my face, holding me still. My breath caught in my throat as Janos lowered his head and kissed me. He devoured me.

I felt the kiss all of the way down to my toes.

My hands clenched against Janos's shoulders as his tongue brushed against mine, hard lips nipping at me. When Janos finally lifted his head to stare down at me again, I let out a groan.

I didn't want the kiss to end.

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

Waking up with Gianni in my arms was better than I had dreamed. It was something I had been thinking about pretty much since that night in the hotel, even if I hadn't known who he was at the time.

I tightened my arms around him, not wanting it to end. I knew it would. Gianni was either going to wake up and be so embarrassed by what we'd done, he'd escape the first chance he got, or he was simply going to decide that this wasn't what he wanted. That we had moved ahead in our relationship too quickly.

I wouldn't blame him for either. I hadn't expected to sleep with him when I saw him standing in the rain. I'd just been so mesmerized by the serenity on his face. I had remembered his desire to dance in the rain and before I could stop myself, I was holding a hand out to him.

Things had kind of exploded from there.

Who could blame me? Gianni was a stunning man. He was beyond smart, he was funny, charming, and I simply liked being around him. He was also drop dead gorgeous. Deep chocolate brown eyes, wavy brown hair, thick muscles on a slim body.

What wasn't to like?

And, after the night we had just spent together, I was even more positive that he was the man I had slept with at the Regency Hotel. The way the two men moved was the

same, the way they smelled, and even the soft cries they made when I touched them.

All the same.

I didn't want to get up. I wanted to stay cuddled next to Gianni until the sun went down, and maybe even into the next day. Unfortunately, someone was coming to take samples for the paternity test soon and we needed to be awake and functioning.

With a great deal of reluctance, I unwound myself from Gianni and moved to the side of the bed. I went to the bathroom and took the quickest shower I could before drying off, doing my hair, brushing my teeth, and just generally making myself presentable.

I went with a casual look again, slacks, a dress shirt, belt, and loafers. I could always change into a suit later if I needed to. I didn't want Gianni thinking I was rushing him out the door because I needed to go to work.

I owned the company. I could take the day off if I wanted to, and I wanted to. I wanted to spend the day with Gianni even if we didn't spend it in bed.

Maybe I could take him out to lunch.

I searched through my closet until I found clothes that I felt would fit Gianni and then carried them into the bedroom, setting them on the end of the bed. I'd already gotten some clothes for him the night before and left them in the guestroom, but I had no idea where those were.

I didn't want to leave Gianni long enough to go looking for them.

I checked to see if it was raining first and then I did pick up the phone and dialed Vasso, asking him to bring me coffee out to the patio outside my bedroom. He could bring breakfast after Gianni woke up and joined me.

I made sure the curtains were open before going out to the patio. I wanted to be able to see when Gianni woke up. I settled in a chair and pulled out my cell phone to make a few calls while I waited on him.

At some point, Vasso brought me my morning coffee.

I finished my phone calls just about the time I saw Gianni start moving. I set my coffee cup down on the table next to my chair and then got up to go back into the bedroom.

I sat down on the side of the bed and reached out to brush the bangs back from Gianni's face. "Good morning," I said when his eyelids fluttered open. "How did you sleep?"

I knew that I had been right about him feeling shy when his face flushed and he tugged the blankets up to his neck.

"Okay," he whispered.

It was all I could do to fight the smirk threatening to come out. I wanted to shout it to the world that I had claimed him last night, but that was probably the last thing Gianni needed from me.

He needed reassurance.

I leaned down and pressed a gentle kiss to Gianni's forehead. "Breakfast is going to be ready soon. Why don't you go take a shower?" I pointed to the end of the bed. "There are some clothes for you to use. If they don't fit, let me know and I'll get you something else."

"Thank you."



I didn't want to leave Gianni, but he looked as if he needed a little time to himself. I wouldn't stay away for long. I didn't want him to over think what had happened between us last night. I was afraid he'd talk himself out of us dating.

I flashed Gianni a smile. "If you need anything else, I'll be right out on the patio."

"Okay."

I was reluctant to leave him, but I needed to. If I didn't, I'd climb right back into bed with him. He looked very cute with his cheeks flushed and the blankets held tightly to his neck.

Adorable even.

I got up and walked back out to the patio. When I glanced back, I caught just the barest hint of a rounded ass as Gianni raced for the bathroom. I chuckled and took my seat again, reaching for my cooling coffee.

While I waited, I picked up my phone and started scrolling through my messages, emails, and social media platforms. I didn't use social media too much in my personal life, but there was a place for it in my business.

I had a very good public relations team. They handled most of the social media nightmare for me, but I still needed to keep abreast of everything that was happening. I didn't want to get a microphone shoved in my face and have a reporter ask me something I had no idea about.

There was a news story about my sister attending some high society social function with a few of her friends, but that wasn't unusual. She liked those sorts of things.

It was the fact that she had thrown her drink in someone's face that concerned me.

That was bad news all the way around. Not only could it affect her, but it could affect the company.

I dialed her number. "Tess, tell me about the party," I said as soon as she answered.

"That crap made the news?"

"It did."

My baby sister huffed. "Stupid reporters."

I couldn't disagree.

"Tell me what happened."

"It was stupid."

It usually was.

"Marla Thomas started sprouting a bunch of shit about how she was going to marry you and that I needed to listen to her because she was older than me and I was going to be her sister-in-law. When I disagreed, she said she was going to have you kick me out just as soon as she became Mrs. Kostas."

"Marla who?"

"Marla Thomas," my sister replied. "She's the daughter of Richard Thomas, the president of T-Corp. Industries."

"I know who Mr. Thomas is, but I don't think I've ever met his daughter." T-Corp. Industries supplied a lot of the materials we used to finish and furnish our buildings

after they were built.

"Well, she seems to think she's not only met you, but you two have fallen in love. She was going around telling everyone at the party that she was going to be Mrs. Kostas."

Wouldn't she be surprised when I brought Gianni to the next social event we both attended?

"I'm not worried about her," I told my sister. "I've already found the person I want to marry and it is not Marla Thomas."

I knew I shouldn't have said that the second I heard my sister suck in a sharp breath.

"Oh, really?" my sister mused. "And just who is this person that has stolen your heart?"

I grinned because how could I not when thinking about the man of my dreams. "His name is Gianni and he's beautiful."

I turned quickly when I heard a soft gasp behind me. "I need to go, sis. I'll call you later."

"Oh, but—"

I hung up on her and stood. "You look good in my clothes."

It was a stupid thing to say, but it was the truth. Gianni looked outstanding wearing my clothes.

"Did you just tell your sister about me?"

"A little," I admitted. I shook my cell phone. "There was a news story about her throwing her drink in the face of a woman named Marla Thomas. My sister said she was going around a party they both attended telling everyone that she was soon going to be Mrs. Kostas. I simply told my sister that I had never met Marla, let alone was interested in her. I already had someone I was interested in."

Gianni's eyes rounded as he pointed to himself and asked hesitantly, "Me, right?"

I smiled. "Didn't you hear me tell my sister that the person I was interested in was named Gianni and that he was beautiful?"

He nodded.

"Then could it be anyone else but you?"

He shook his head.

I chuckled as I gestured to the seat across from me. "Come sit down and have breakfast. We have a big day ahead of us."

"We do?" Gianni's eyebrows lifted as he walked over to sit down. "What else are we going to do besides get the paternity test samples taken?"

I helped him push his chair in and then walked around to my side of the table and sat down. "I'm taking the day off and I'd like to spend it with you."

"Oh." Gianni blinked owlishly at me. "What are we doing?"

I rested my elbows on the table and clasped my hands together. "What would you like to do?"

"I know I need to go back to my apartment to grab a couple of things, but other than that..." Gianni shrugged. "Up to you, I guess."

"I think I can manage that."

Growing up in the Galeazzi family, I had no doubt that he had been exposed to the finer things in life. It would be useless for me to show those types of things to him.

I wanted to show Gianni what dating me would be like. I wanted to spoil him and show him our little corner of the world.

I had just the place in mind.

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

I grimaced as I stared down at the cotton ball taped to my arm with a thin piece of white medical tape. It hadn't really hurt when the technician drew my blood, but the thought of it was making me a little woozy.

Apparently, I didn't do blood while pregnant.

"You doing okay?" Janos asked.

I nodded even though I really wasn't. I felt as if I was just moments from spewing. "I just need some fresh air."

"Then let's go." Janos grabbed me by the elbow and started steering me toward the front door. "The lab should have our results back in a few days. There's nothing we can do about them now and worrying isn't going to help. Let's go have some fun."

I wasn't sure what Janos's idea of fun was, but I was more than willing to get out of the penthouse. "Don't forget that I need to stop by my apartment."

Janos gave a quick nod. "We can go there first."

I didn't mind wearing Janos's clothes. They almost fit me, but he was about four inches taller than me so the pants were dragging on the ground just a bit. If we were going to be out and about all day long, I wanted my own pants.

I might keep the shirt.

"So, what are we going to do today?" I asked as we went down in the elevator.

Janos held his finger to his lips. "Sshhh. Secret."

Seriously?

When I raised an eyebrow, Janos just chuckled mysteriously at me. I wanted to argue with him for his high-handed ways, but it was also kind of exciting being taken out for a day without me having to plan anything.

I was basically just along for the ride.

Time seemed to fly by after we reached the car and got on the road. It wasn't long before we were pulling up in front of my apartment building.

Before getting out I turned to Janos and asked, "Do you want to stay in the car while I run up or—"

"If you don't mind, I'd like to go up with you."

I smiled to reassure Janos that I didn't have a problem with him coming up with me. "I don't mind."

Neither Tony nor I were slobs. We tended to keep our apartment pretty tidy so I knew I wouldn't be embarrassed if Janos saw the place. Granted, it looked nothing like his penthouse, but it was still a nice place.

Once the driver opened the door, I slid out. I turned, expecting Janos to climb out the other side of the vehicle, but he just slid across the seat and got out on my side.

He took my hand as soon as he stood up. "Ready?"

I nodded and started leading him toward the building. "We won't be here long. I just need to change my clothes and grab a couple of things."

"Take whatever time you need, Gianni. I'm in no hurry."

He might not be, but I was. I wanted to see what he had planned for us. I tugged him into the building and directly over to the elevator to take us upstairs. The ride up to my apartment was silent and quick.

I couldn't keep the smile off my face when Janos refused to let go of my hand. "Are you like this all the time?"

"Like what?" he asked.

I held up our clasped hands. "Are you like this all the time?" I repeated. "Or are you just trying to impress me?"

Janos squinted for a moment as if thinking about it before saying, "Both."

I chuckled lightly. "It's working."

He was still holding my hand when we reached my apartment. I cocked an eyebrow and glanced at our clasped hands. "I'm going to need that back so I can unlock the door."

Janos sighed dramatically as he released his grip on my hand. "If you must."

I felt cold as soon as he let me go.

I shook the feeling off, dug my key out, and unlocked the door. I pushed it open and gestured for Janos to follow me. "This is home."



For now, at least. I still needed to break the news to Tony that I was moving out.

"It's nice," Janos stated as he looked around.

"If you want to wait here, I'm going to go change real quick. I'll only be a few minutes. There's coffee and water in the kitchen if you're thirsty." I had no idea what else might be in the fridge.

Janos slid his hands into his pockets and smiled at me. "I'm good."

I almost asked him if he wanted to go with me, but I figured it would be quicker if I went by myself. Despite what had happened the night before, I wasn't ready to invite Janos into my bedroom.

I wouldn't mind visiting his bedroom again, though.

I made quick work of finding something casual to wear for the day after reaching my bedroom. A pair of faded denim jeans, a tan leather belt, and my white deck shoes.

I did keep Janos's shirt though.

I decided to pack a change of clothes in my backpack along with the current medical texts I was reading just in case I stayed the night with Janos again. I wanted to be prepared for every possibility.

I heard voices as soon as I opened my bedroom door. They weren't loud, but they sounded kind of dark and aggressive. I hurried down the hallway to the living room.

Janos was still standing there with his hands in his slacks, but he was standing nose to nose with Tony.

"Hey, Tony."

Tony's head snapped in my direction. "Gianni?"

"I see you've met my—" My eyes darted to Janos. I had no idea how to introduce him. What was he comfortable with?

"I'm Janos." He smiled as he held his hand out to Tony. "I'm Gianni's boyfriend."

Tony's jaw dropped as he glanced back at Janos. "Boyfriend?" His gaze snapped back to me just as fast. "Since when?"

"Officially last night, but we've been seeing each other for a little while now." I knew that was pretty evasive, but I didn't want to have to tell Tony everything that was going on in my life right now. At least not until those test results were back.

"And you didn't tell me?"

I frowned at Tony. "You didn't tell me about your boyfriend either."

Tony's eyes rolled dramatically. "Ex-boyfriend."

I blinked at that sudden news. "Ex-boyfriend?"

"I caught that asshole sniffing in your underwear drawer two days ago. I kicked him out and told him if he ever tried to come around again, I'd call the police."

"He was in my underwear drawer?"

Gross.

"Don't worry," Tony said. "I tossed everything in the wash right after I kicked him out."

Still gross.

I needed new underwear.

"Who is this man?" Janos growled.

"Who cares?" Tony retorted harshly. "He's gone now and he damn well better never come back."

What a freaking headache.

Maybe I needed a lock on my bedroom door?

Oh wait, I wasn't staying here. It didn't matter if I had a lock on the door or not. Once I moved out, it wouldn't be my problem.

I wasn't ready to mention that to Tony just yet.

"Janos and I are going to head out," I stated. "If that asshole comes back, call me or call the police."

Tony nodded.

"You got my new number, right?"

I hated having to get a new number along with my new cell phone, but it was for the best. If someone had stolen it, they might be trying to use it. I didn't want the old number associated with my account.

"Yeah."

Janos walked over to stand by the door.

I stopped next to Tony and gripped his shoulder. "I'm sorry, man. Men can be real dicks."

"He seemed so nice, you know?" Tony mused as he plopped down on the couch and reached for the remote. "He had a good job. He dressed nice. He took me to some nice places. I really thought he was one of the good guys."

"You'll find someone, Tony," I replied, "and when you do it won't matter how he dresses or where he takes you. It'll be more important just to spend time together."

As I said these words, I glanced over to Janos. Maybe that was why he was taking the day off from work and taking me out? Just so we could spend time together.

Wouldn't that be cool?

I grabbed Janos's hand as I opened the door. I glanced back over my shoulder to Tony. "I may or may not be back tonight. I'll call to let you know so you don't worry."

Tony waved a dismissive hand at me, but he was already becoming engrossed in whatever he was watching on the television. I doubted he had heard a word I'd said.

It didn't really matter if I called or not. I could even text him if I needed to. We were roommates. We didn't live in each other's pockets. I was just trying to be polite by informing him of where I'd be.

When Janos and I got downstairs to the car, I handed my backpack to the driver. "Can

you put this in the trunk?"

"Of course, sir," the man replied and then did exactly that.

I waited for Janos to get into the car before climbing in beside him and shutting the door. I turned to him with a smile. "Where to next?"

Janos wagged his eyebrows at me as the car took off, merging with traffic. "Secret."

I rolled my eyes.

"When do I get let in on this little secret of yours?"

"When we get there."

That was not helpful.

We'd been on the road for awhile when I saw a road sign. I gasped and turned to look at Janos. "We're going to Coney Island?"

"Surprise!"

I'd only been to Coney Island once before in my life. My parents had taken us three brothers there one day during the summer I turned ten years old. At the time, it had been the most exciting thing I'd ever experienced.

Sadly, due to my father's work schedule we hadn't been back. Over time, mine and my brothers' work schedules had added to the reasons we didn't go back.

"Thank you!" Before I could think about it, I leaned over and planted a kiss on Janos's cheek. As soon as I settled back in my seat, my eyes rounded.

Why had I done that?

I quickly turned to watch out the window, praying Janos couldn't see my flushed cheeks. I really hadn't meant to do that.

Silence hung in the air between me and Janos like a pendulum blade—heavy, sharp, and deadly. I wasn't sure why he wasn't talking, but I knew why I wasn't.

Even if I had packed a change of clothes in my backpack, I didn't want to put voice to my desire to spend another night in Janos's bed. I wasn't ready to acknowledge my desire for the handsome man and I was terrified he'd make me.

This thing between us—whatever it was—was happening way too fast for me. My experience with relationships could be counted on one hand with a couple of fingers left over.

I was in way over my head.

## Page 15

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

"Sir, another letter arrived."

I frowned at Lester as I took the envelope he held out to me. I quickly slit the envelope open with my letter opener and pulled the paper out from inside.

My jaw clenched as I started reading what was written.

By now, you should know the child is yours. Babies are expensive. If you want this one to live to see its first day, I want ten million dollars in small unmarked bills. Failure to get the money and I'll get an abortion. I'll contact you in one week with drop-off information.

I gripped the paper with my hand until the edges crumbled. Rage ripped through me until I trembled with it. This monster was threatening me with an abortion? Threatening my child?

I was going to kill them when I got my hands on them.

"Have you had any luck tracking who is sending these letters?"

"No, sir," Lester replied. "Whoever wrote the letters printed them out on a printer. Until we have a suspect, we can't test against any printers. There were no fingerprints on the letter and all the fingerprints on the envelope have been ruled out."

I glanced up. "Ruled out? Why?"

"They are fingerprints of people who have handled the envelope. My fingerprints, yours, one of the mailroom clerks, and like that."

Damn.

I vaguely remember asking Lester to get the video footage from the hotel. Maybe that could give us a clue? "What about the video surveillance from the hotel? Were you able to get it?"

"The only thing that they show is you getting off the elevator and starting down the hallway. Unfortunately, none of the cameras were pointed in the direction of your hotel room. Just in front of the elevators."

Double damn.

I took a picture of the letter with my camera and then folded it up and put it back into the envelope before holding it out to Lester. "Have our people go over this."

Maybe we'd get lucky and there would be something on it.

"Yes, sir."

I briefly closed my eyes, my anger and fear warring with each other. I was enraged that someone was threatening me with my child's life, but I also feared for that life.

Even if I gave this idiot the money, there was no guarantee that she wouldn't go through with her threat or even give me the child after it was born. There was a very real possibility that she would just ask for more money.

Still...



"Lester, arrange for ten million dollars to be set aside in a separate account by the bank. I may need to withdraw it at the end of the week."

Lester's eyebrows lifted to his hairline. "Ten million dollars, sir?"

"This bitch is threatening to abort the baby if I don't give her ten million dollars in small unmarked bills."

"But, sir—"

I held up my hand to stop Lester. "I don't like it anymore than you do, but I won't let my kid be killed by this maniac."

Lester's eyebrows shot up. "You think she's going to kill the child?"

I pointed to the envelope in Lester's hand. "That's what she threatened to do." I clenched my hands, my anger renewing itself when I thought about those words written in that envelope. "I want this woman found, and I want her found now. Use whatever resources you need to, but find her."

"Yes, sir."

I sank back down in my chair as Lester hurried out of my office, burying my head in my hands. I couldn't believe it had come to this. What sane person blackmails another using an abortion as a threat to get money?

I knew in my soul that this wasn't Gianni. He had wanted the baby too much. But did that mean the baby he was carrying wasn't mine? That my baby belonged to someone else? Someone threatening to kill my baby?

I dropped my hands and glanced at my phone when it dinged. As soon as I saw who

the message was from I reached for it, fumbling in my haste. The moment I had a good grip on it, I brought up the message.

It was from the testing lab. The text message stated that they would be sending me the official documents, but they had texted me the results since I had been in such a rush to get them.

I quickly opened the attached document and then scrolled through until I got to the important part. I sucked in a shaky breath as my world screeched to a halt.

Gianni's baby was mine.

I chuckled, letting go of the breath I had sucked in. Gianni's baby was mine. It wasn't some random stranger's baby. The joy that news brought to me was almost as good as what I had experienced with him a few days ago when he let me make love to him.

Close second.

I flipped through my phone until I got to the contact list and found Gianni's number, quickly dialing it before holding the phone to my ear.

"Hey," he said as soon as he answered. "What are you up to today?"

"Where are you?"

I needed to see him.

"I'm at the lab," Gianni replied. "Why?"

"I have news," I stated. "Can you take some time off? We need to talk."

"I'm not sure I like the way that sounds."

"It's good news and bad news, but I don't want to talk about it over the phone. I'll be there in thirty minutes." I hung up before he could argue with me.

I grabbed my blazer and pulled it on, made sure my cell phone was in my pocket, and then headed out the door. "I'll be gone for the rest of the day, Mabel. Clear my schedule."

"Yes, Mr. Kostas," my secretary replied. "Should I inform Mr. Douglas?"

I shook my head. "I'll call him if I need him." I usually took Lester wherever I went, but this conversation needed to be in private and it was only between me and Gianni.

I decided not to take any of my regular bodyguards with me today. My driver would be enough. Besides being an excellent driver, he was trained to defend me if need be.

When I reached the parking garage and my car, I gave him the address of where we were headed and then sat back in my seat. As I waited to get there, I pulled out my phone and went back to the message from the lab.

It really was my baby.

I had never really given much thought to being a parent simply because I didn't have anyone in my life to build a family with. It was amazing to me how just a few short months could change my whole perspective.

Now, I was looking forward to the future. I wanted to build that family and I wanted to build it with Gianni, which worked out perfectly since he was carrying my child.

I couldn't be happier about that prospect.

I was, however, enraged that someone was trying to fuck with the perfect future I envisioned. I didn't know who was doing this—and no, I did not think it was Gianni—but once I found them I was going to wrap my hands around their neck and squeeze until their head popped off.

When we pulled up in front of the lab, all of the bravado I felt before seemed to escape me. I rubbed my hands on my slacks to get rid of my nervousness.

Despite the test results and the night we had spent together, Gianni hadn't said he wanted to spend a lifetime with me. He hadn't even said whether or not he'd allow me to be in my child's life.

I was pretty sure he would, but I wasn't positive.

"Stay with the car," I told my driver. "I shouldn't be more than a few minutes."

I really wanted to grab Gianni, get in my car, and drive back to the penthouse where we could talk in private. The lab facility or even the cafe he liked so much wasn't private enough for what we had to talk about.

I was a little reluctant as I climbed out of the car and then shut the door. I wasn't sure what Gianni's reaction to my news was going to be. He could easily tell me to get lost or never contact him again. I don't think a day at Coney Island—no matter how much fun we'd had—would change his mind simply because I was the biological father.

My mind was fogged with questions and possibilities as I entered the lab facility. I didn't realize Gianni was waiting for me until I plowed right into him. I grabbed him quickly to keep him from falling, yanking him against my chest.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Gianni replied, his eyebrows knit together. "But are you? I called out to you three times and you didn't answer me. Is everything okay?"

Not really.

"We need to talk. Will you come back to the penthouse with me?"

Gianni swallowed tightly. "You're not breaking up with me, are you?"

"No!" I realized I had shouted when Gianni winced and several people in the lobby stopped and turned to look at us. I lowered my voice and said, "Never."

That thought hadn't even crossed my mind.

"I got the—" I snapped my lips together when I realized we were standing in the middle of the lobby. I reached down and grabbed Gianni's hand, giving it a little tug. "Come home with me so we can talk."

Gianni was giving me a weird look as if he thought I was five seconds from crazy. "Okay."

I led him outside to the car, pulling the door open and letting him get in before I did. Once the doors were closed, I directed my driver to take us back to the penthouse.

I refused to let go of Gianni's hand.

"Can you tell me what this is all about?" Gianni asked. "You're making me nervous."

My eyes went to the front of the vehicle. I trusted my driver to a point, but, except for close family, I never trusted anyone fully. "We'll talk about it when we get home," I told Gianni when I looked back to him. I spoke in a whisper as I said, "This needs to

be a me and you conversation."

Gianni's eyes darted to the driver for a moment before he nodded. He obviously understood what I was getting at. Coming from the family that he did, I assumed he would.

This was another downside to being rich. We never knew who we could fully trust. Sometimes, not even our own family members were safe. I'd been lucky in the fact that I hadn't experienced that hell yet, but my understanding was that one of Gianni's brothers had.

I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

The ride to my penthouse was relatively quiet, not because I didn't have anything to say, but because I had plenty to say. I just didn't want to do it with other people around and I knew once I started I wouldn't be able to stop until everything came out.

Gianni was the first to get out of the car when we reached my building. I climbed out on my side and then walked around the vehicle to join him. I grabbed his hand with mine before leading him into the building.

It was a short ride in the elevator. Still, by the time we reached the top floor and walked into the penthouse, I was ready for a stiff drink. My nerves were stung tighter than a violin.

In the next ten minutes, the whole course of my world would change. Whether for the good or for the bad remained to be seen.

"Okay, we're here," Gianni said as he crossed his arms. "Now, what's going on? Why do you need to talk to me in private?"

"You want the good news or the bad news first?"

Gianni huffed. "Give me the bad news first. That way I'll have something to make me happy when this is all over with."

I hoped he thought of it as happy.

"I received another letter today from the person that says they are pregnant with my child."

Gianni's eyes rounded and he instantly held up his hands. "It's not me."

"I never thought it was. I trust you, Gianni." Strangely, I did. "They said that if I didn't give them ten million dollars by the end of the week, they would abort the baby."

Gianni's mouth dropped. "They plan to kill your baby?"

"That's where the good news part comes in." I held up my phone showing the lab results. "Turns out you are the one carrying my baby."

Gianni stumbled back a couple of steps before collapsing down onto the couch. His hand pressed over his abdomen. "I'm carrying your baby?" he whispered.

I walked over and knelt down in front of him, letting him see all the joy I felt at the news I had just shared. I smiled as I pressed my hand over the top of his.

"The test results of the Non-Invasive Prenatal Paternity Test just came in. I rushed over to see you just as soon as I had them."

"Your baby. It's your baby. That means you're the man I slept with."

I nodded, not sure where he was going with this or even what he was thinking. His face was a bit pale and his eyes were as round as saucers. That gave me no clue as to how he was taking the news.

"Gianni?"

"It's your baby?"

I nodded. "It is."

Gianni's dark eyebrows snapped together as he frowned menacingly. "Then who in the hell is threatening to kill our baby?"

I had no idea.



## Page 16

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Gianni ~

"There are no clues as to the identity of this person, Gianni," Janos stated. "I've had the letters and envelopes dusted for fingerprints and none of them are suspect. We even figured out that the letter was made on a printer, but we don't have a printer to match it to. We have nothing to follow up on."

"What are you going to do?"

Janos rubbed his hands over his face for a moment before dropping them and letting them dangle between his legs. "I honestly don't know."

"You know this isn't me, right?" He had answered that question before, but I had to be sure. "I would never threaten the life of the baby."

Janos gave me a wan smile as he patted my leg. "I know it's not you, Gianni. You would never harm our baby, even if you never learned that I was the father."

He was the father.

That might be taking longer to sink in than someone threatening the baby. "You're really the father?" I asked just to be sure I'd heard him right.

"That's what the test results stated. The lab sent them directly to my phone since I put a rush on them. The official documents should be here in a couple of days."

My eyes narrowed for a moment. "Who has access to your penthouse?"

"Me and Vasso." Janos frowned. "Why?"

"Do you trust him?"

"Besides you, my grandmother, and my sister, he's probably the only other person on the planet that I completely trust."

Something in the center of my chest warmed. "You trust me?"

"Yes, of course I do. I wouldn't want to marry you if I didn't."

I wrapped both hands around Janos's arm and leaned my head on his shoulder.  
"Thank you."

"Don't break that trust, Gianni," Janos warned. "Once it's gone, it's gone for good."

I got it. My family was the same way.

"I won't," I promised in a solemn tone. I lifted my head so I could see his face clearly.  
"Although, I do have to warn you that my family has pretty tough pre-nuptial agreement that you'll have to sign."

Janos lifted one dark eyebrow. "Does that mean you'll marry me?"

"Let's just say you're in the running." Luckily for him, it was a one man race. "Is there any way you can stop the lab from sending the official papers or maybe send them here instead of your office?"

"I can, but why would I do that?"

I was still trying to piece my thoughts together myself so it was going to be hard to

explain it to Janos. Someone close was acting behind the scenes. I could feel it.

"Whoever is doing this knows too much about your personal life. I feel like they are close to you or getting information from someone close to you. I mean, I doubt you've talked to a lot of people about sleeping with a stranger in a hotel room and getting them pregnant. There's certainly nothing about it on the news or even the gossip magazines. That tells me that whoever is behind this wants it kept quiet."

"So, maybe we need to not keep quiet."

I frowned at Janos, not quite understanding what he was getting at. "What do you mean?"

"Marry me and we can announce it to the world that we're expecting a baby," Janos stated calmly as if he hadn't just pulled the rug out from under my feet. "If we get married and prove that the baby you are carrying is mine, then this person has no ammunition against us."

"We still need to know who they are, Janos." How was he not getting that? "This person is trying to blackmail you for ten million dollars. If they can't do it this way, they'll figure out another way."

They wouldn't stop until they were behind bars or dead.

"Don't worry, I have people looking into this."

I knew Janos was trying to reassure me, but I was not reassured. If anything, his casual reply made me think he wasn't taking this seriously at all. "And how do you know the people looking into this aren't behind it."

"Technically, I don't, but—"

I snorted as I dug my phone out of my pocket and dialed the one person I knew could help me find whoever was doing this. " Nonna , I need your help."

"Of course, Niptino. What do you need?"

"The father of my baby is in a little trouble."

"What kind of trouble?" Nonna asked.

"Someone is sending him threatening letters pretending to be pregnant with his kid and threatening to have an abortion if he doesn't give them ten million dollars. Janos has people investigating it, but I'm worried these people might be involved. I need to know if you can help. We need to find this person before they do something drastic."

"Of course, Gianni. Send me all the information you have and I'll make some calls. I'm sure we can find this person."

I breathed a sigh of relief. I knew she could help. Nonna had contacts in some very interesting places. "Thank you, Nonna ."

"Are you ready to talk about him now?"

I glanced at Janos. "Um, well, his name is Janos Kostas and he's a real estate developer. He's worked with the family business a few times, so Frank and Martino know who he is."

"And is he going to take responsibility?"

Even if she couldn't see it, I felt my cheeks flushing. Leave it to my grandmother to ask the embarrassing questions.

"He says he wants to marry me so we can be a family and raise our baby together." Janos nodded vigorously when I said that. "We actually started dating before we knew he was the biological father."

"Before?"

"We liked each other, but I was hesitant to start dating because I was pregnant and didn't know who the father was."

"You didn't know who the father was?"

I groaned, knowing I shouldn't have mentioned that part. It just kind of slipped out. "Long story. I'll explain that part later." I really didn't want to, but I doubted I'd get away with not explaining this whole sordid tale.

"All right."

"Sufficient to say, we had this paternity test done and found out that Janos is the father of my baby, but we had already started dating before the results came back." I smiled as I glanced at him. "He said he didn't care if it was someone else's baby. He still wanted to be a part of my life."

There had been a lot more to our conversation than that, but that was for him and me. I didn't need to share all the details with my grandmother.

"Now," I continued, "someone is threatening him and saying they will abort his baby if he doesn't pay them ten million dollars, except I'm pregnant with his baby. You can see why I'm worried, right?"

"Send me what you have so far," Nonna said again. "I'll make some calls."

"Thank you, Nonna ."

"Your parents are going to want to meet him."

"I already told him about the pre-nup, but I suspect he'll have one for me to sign as well." He might actually have more money than my parents.

Wouldn't that be a switch?

"I'll call you as soon as I hear anything, Nipotino ."

"You're the best, Nonna ," I said. "I knew I could count on you."

"Always, my dear boy." My grandmother let out a little laugh. "Don't forget to bring your young man home so I can meet him."

"Maybe this weekend, Nonna ."

"I'll let Mrs. Rovito know so that she can plan dinner."

"Goodbye, Nonna ." I hung up and then glanced at Janos again. "How do you feel about going back to the old house and meeting all the family this weekend?"

"Can I put an engagement ring on your finger first?"

I swallowed tightly and then nodded. "You can."

Janos beamed at me before jumping to his feet and then pulling me up. When he started dragging me toward the front door, I dug my feet in. "Where are you taking me?"

"To buy an engagement ring."

Oh.

I snickered as I allowed Janos to pull me from his penthouse into the elevator. I didn't mind getting engagement rings now, but I wasn't sure I wanted to get married right away. We still needed time to get to know each other better.

"How about we plan a wedding for after the baby is born?" I suggested. "Maybe a summer wedding outdoors somewhere?"

Janos shot me a quick look. "You want to wait until the baby is born?"

"I think we need time to get to know each other a little bit better."

Sounded reasonable to me.

Janos's brow furrowed. "If that's what you want."

"It doesn't sound like that is what you want."

"Honestly, I'd marry you right now if there wasn't a three day waiting period, but I also don't want to rush you into anything you're not comfortable with. I'm willing to wait until you're ready to get married."

"You don't think we should wait?"

Janos's arm wrapped around my waist as the elevator doors opened. "I think we are going to be together for a very long time, whether it's dating engaged, or married. Just because we put a label on it doesn't mean we won't spend the next fifty years getting to know each other."

That made a weird sort of sense to me.

"So, you're saying, if we got married right now it would be no different than if we were just dating or engaged because we'd still need to get to know each other?"

"Basically, yes," Janos replied. "There are differences, of course. If we got married before the baby arrives, then there's no issue with custody or my right to be in the delivery room with you. The three of us would also have the same last name, assuming you want to take my name."

That's one I'd have to think about.

"I wouldn't mind getting married before the baby was born I suppose," I said, "but I don't want a big wedding. Just our family and a few close friends. Nothing fancy."

"I'd still want to put a notice in the social pages just so people were aware we are off the market and stop trying to date us."

I let out a light chuckle. "I'd agree to that."

I hated how many people tried to hook up with me once they found out who my family was. They didn't really care about me. They just wanted the money.

My eyes narrowed. "You haven't had anyone coming onto you lately, have you?"

Janos shook my head. "Nothing note-worthy."

That wasn't a no.

"Get in the car," I growled. "We need to get those rings."



I suddenly understood Janos's desire to let the world know we were off the market. If I caught anyone coming on to him, I'd punch their lights out. Janos Kostas was mine.

Maybe an early wedding wasn't a bad idea.

## Page 17

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

"Make sure to have copies of the updated cost analysis for everyone at the conference."

"Of course, sir." Lester tapped away at his tablet for a moment. "Is there anything else, sir?"

"Is there any new information on the investigation?"

"No, sir," Lester replied. "There have been no new leads or letters."

"I'm expecting one any day now," I replied. "This bitch said she would be sending details on where to take the money by the end of the week and we're almost there."

"Are you really going to give in to blackmail, sir?"

I sighed as I set my pen down and then pinched the bridge of my nose. "I don't want to, but I'm not sure I have any other choice." I dropped my hand from my face and looked up at Lester. "I don't want something happening to this baby."

My words weren't exactly truthful, but Gianni had suggested I play along with the blackmailer until his grandmother got back to him. That also meant keeping everyone except Gianni and family members out of the loop.

I needed to call my grandmother before she found out about Gianni and the baby. I'd never hear the end of it if I didn't tell her first—I smiled as I glanced down at the

platinum ring on my finger—especially now that we were engaged.

"Sir, sir!"

"Huh?"

"Are you okay, sir? I called you out to you, but you didn't hear me."

Daydreaming. It'll get you every time. "I'm fine, Lester."

"You were smiling, sir."

My eyebrows lifted. "Am I not supposed to smile?"

"You never smile, sir."

Never?

"I smile," I insisted. Maybe I didn't smile in the past like I was now, but I smiled.

"You smirk, sir. You never smile."

Huh.

"Well, now I smile."

I might keep smirking though.

Lester gave me a peculiar frown as if he wasn't quite sure I had all my oars in the water. "Yes, sir."

"What time is the conference meeting?" I asked.

"Three o'clock, sir."

"Set it for two." If I could get off work early, maybe I could pick Gianni up at his apartment. He was supposed to start packing today. He also had to break the news to his roommate that he was moving out.

I wish he was moving directly in with me, but he wanted to stay with his parents until we officially told everyone we were engaged. I didn't like it, but I understood it.

"I have an appointment on the fifteenth at two o'clock. Clear my schedule for everything after noon on that day." It would be my first prenatal care appointment with Gianni. I wasn't going to miss it.

"Anything I need to be concerned with, sir?"

"It's a personal matter."

"Very good, sir." Lester handed me a tablet. "These are your appointments for the next week. Is there anything I need to change?"

I slowly looked over each day, making sure I was meeting with people I actually wanted to meet with. It didn't make sense to meet with people that couldn't help me get ahead in business, although some people tried.

I was a real estate developer to make money and create a better world for everyone. I was not here to line other people's pockets. If it so happened that cooperation between companies made us all money, great. If not, I was paying for someone's services. I didn't owe them a damn thing except a paycheck.

"Is that a ring on your finger, sir?" Lester asked. "I don't think I've ever seen you wear any jewelry before besides your watch and a set of cufflinks."

I smiled once again as I glanced down at my ring. "It is."

"Is it a family heirloom, sir?"

"No, my fiancé and I bought it a couple of days ago."

Lester's mouth dropped open. "You're engaged?"

"I am."

"When are you getting married?"

"We haven't decided yet. We just got engaged. We have time. Besides, I don't want to rush. I want to enjoy the process."

Lester's voice sounded a little stilted as he said, "Congratulations, sir."

"Thank you."

I glanced up a few minutes later when Lester received a phone call. He answered it, nodding several times before saying, "Thank you. I'll take care of it right away."

"Problems?" I asked when he hung up.

"No, sir. The copy machine usually used for printing out material for the conference meetings jammed up. I just need to arrange for maintenance to come up and fix it."

I glanced at the clock. "Better hurry. The meeting starts in an hour."

"I'll get right on it, sir."

I watched as Lester hurried out of the room as if his shoes were on fire. While it was important to have all the pertinent documents on hand when having a meeting, I didn't think the building would fall down if we didn't.

Lester needed a raise or a vacation. He was good at his job, but that man was a little high strung.

I finished up the paperwork I was working on just as my alarm went off to let me know it was time to go to my meeting. Lester hadn't come back yet so I sent him a quick text asking him where he was. I wasn't surprised in the least when he returned my text within seconds, letting me know he was still working on the problem and would have it fixed as quickly as possible.

The man was very efficient.

Grabbing what I needed, I headed for the conference room. I refused to let this meeting take any longer than necessary. I wanted to be done and out the door by four o'clock at the latest.

When I reached the conference room, only a couple of people were there. After greeting them, I sat down in my designated chair at the head of the table and pulled out my cell phone and sent Gianni a quick text.

"Getting ready for a meeting. Are you getting ready to tell Tony the news?"

A few moments later, Gianni texted me back. "Yes."

"Good luck. If you need anything, just call or text. And I do mean anything. This meeting is going to be a snooze fest."

"I shouldn't need anything, but I'll keep that in mind."

I smiled and set my phone down on the table where I could easily see it. When I looked up, more people had entered the room. Everyone was staring at me.

I rolled my eyes. "Yes, I am smiling."

They all hastily looked away.

Lester wasn't back yet, but... I opened my laptop before stating, "Let's get this meeting started."

\* \* \* \*

"Hey, Tony, you got a minute?"

Tony glanced away from the television to look up at me. "Yeah, sure. What's up?"

I sat down in the chair next to the couch and clasped my hands together. "I wanted to officially give you notice that I'm moving out. I'll pay one month's rent, of course, but I'm moving just as soon as I get my stuff packed."

Tony frowned and then suddenly clicked off the television and sat forward. "You're moving out?"

I nodded.

"Why?" he asked. "Is it something I did?"

"No." I shook my head. "Do you remember that man you met last week?"

"Your boyfriend?"

I held up my hand, flashing my new engagement ring. "Fiancé."

"Ah." Tony started to smile. "That's why you're moving out."

Well, it was one of the reasons.

"Wow, you're really getting married. I thought for sure you'd stay single for the rest of your life."

"Hey!"

"Oh, come on, Gianni. You never date. You hardly even go out. With as much time as you spend in the lab, I was pretty sure you'd end up married to a Petri dish."

I wasn't that bad.

"So, when's the big day?"

"We're discussing it," I replied. "Janos says he'll accept any day I choose, but I'm in no hurry. Maybe a summer wedding."

Tony's brow furrowed. "Janos?"

"Yes, Janos Kostas, my fiancé."

Hadn't I made that clear?

"Janos is a pretty unique name."



"It's Greek." I imagined in Greece it was pretty common. Here in America, not so much.

Tony's brow furrowed. "I've heard that name before."

"Yeah, when I introduced you to my boyfriend a few days ago."

Tony shook his head. "No, that's not it."

I had no idea what Tony was talking about.

"Do you think you'll be able to find a roommate?" I asked. "I hate leaving you in the lurch like this."

Tony waved a dismissive hand at me. "Don't worry about it. There are a couple of residents at the hospital I can talk to. Finding a roommate that understands our crazy schedules is not easy. I'm sure one of them would jump at the chance."

That was good.

I chuckled, knowing he was right, and he gestured toward the hallway with my head. "I'm going to go start packing."

"Have fun."

I snorted. "Wanna help?"

Tony grinned broadly. "Not a chance in hell."

Yeah, I didn't think he would.

I got up and started for the hallway only to stop when someone knocked on the door.

"I'll get it," Tony said as he got up. "You go pack."

Right.

I took a step only to stop and turn when I heard Tony groan. "What's wrong?"

"It's my asshole ex-boyfriend."

I frowned. "What does he want?"

I had yet to meet this man, but Tony seemed to dislike him a great deal. After hearing that the man had been sniffing in my underwear drawer, I wasn't too fond of him either.

Tony shrugged. "Hell if I know."

"Ignore him then."

"He'll just keep knocking."

This guy sounded like a real winner.

"Go doing your packing thing. I've got this."

"Are you sure? I could stick around."

I wasn't sure I wanted to leave Tony alone with this guy.

Tony made a shooing motion with his hands. "Go, go."

I frowned, but did as Tony said and started down the hallway toward my bedroom.

"What the hell do you want, Doug?" I heard Tony snarl as he yanked the door open. "I thought I told you never to come around here again."

I heard a mumbled reply followed almost instantly by Tony's loud shout. I spun around and ran back down the hallway. I heard a crash before I reached the living room.

The sight that met me quickly explained what had happened. Tony lay on the floor in front of the bookcase. Several books and decorations were littering the floor around him.

I turned and opened the hallway closet, pulling out the broom that was kept in there. I would have preferred something a little stronger, but I'd take what I could get.

"Get away from him!" I shouted as I lunged at the guy, swinging the broom as hard as I could. It hit him, but it didn't seem to faze him one damn bit. When I went to swing at him again, he grabbed it before it could connect, ripped it out of my hands, and threw it across the room.

I stumbled back, frantically searching for another weapon. It wasn't so much that I couldn't protect myself, but more that I was worried about the baby I was carrying. If I got hit in the stomach, it could be devastating.

"Get out of here before I call the police!"

The man smirked at me, letting out a vicious sounding laugh. "You think they can stop me? I've been planning this for far too long to let a couple of glorified mall cops stop me now."

Wow, bitter much?

I did the only thing I could think of and darted out of the room, running toward my bedroom. I hated leaving Tony alone with this freak, but I needed to get to a phone and mine was on my nightstand in my bedroom.

I raced into my bedroom and slammed the door closed just as Doug reached it, quickly turning the lock. For good measure, I pushed my dresser over in front of the door.

I hurried over and grabbed my cell phone, dialing the police.

"Police, fire, or medical?"

"Police," I replied. "My name is Dr. Gianni Galeazzi. Someone just broke into my apartment and attacked me and my roommate. My roommate is unconscious and I'm barricaded in my bedroom." I glanced toward the door, wincing at the pounding noise. "You need to hurry. This guy is really pissed about something."

"Police are on their way, Mr. Galeazzi."

"Doctor Galeazzi," I replied automatically.

"Yes, sir."

"Sorry. Habit."

"I understand, sir."

I jumped when I heard a loud crashing noise. My eyes rounded in shock when I saw half of the door smashed in. "He's breaking through the door."

"Do you have anywhere you can hide or anything you can defend yourself with, Dr. Galeazzi?"

"No." I glanced around my room, but nothing looked like a weapon.

Wait.

"Maybe."

I ran over to my nightstand, dropping to my knees before yanking the bottom drawer open. I kept a small emergency first aid kit in there. I grabbed it and opened it. It took me a moment to find what I was looking for.

A small sense of relief filled me as my hand closed around a scalpel. It might seem weird to some people to keep something like this in their first aid kits, but not me. I never knew when I might need to cut someone open.

Now was a perfect example.

"Okay, I have a weapon, but you might want to dispatch the paramedics. If I am forced to protect myself, it's going to get messy."

"Dispatching paramedics now, sir."

This lady was good.

I swallowed tightly when Doug broke off another piece of the door. "Does this thing record?"

"All emergency dispatch calls are recorded, sir."

"Great, I need you to record something for me."

The woman's voice was more solemn when she spoke again. "Go ahead, Dr. Galeazzi."

Tears sprouted to my eyes, my fear that I wasn't going to make it out of this alive riding me hard. "Whoever hears this, tell Janos that I love him and I really, really wanted to marry him and that I was looking forward to raising our baby together."

"Baby?" the dispatcher asked. "Is there a baby there, sir?"

Technically?

"I'm three months pregnant."

"You're going to be fine, Dr. Galeazzi. The police are almost there."

I didn't think they were going to get here in time.

## Page 18

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

The phone number that came up on my cell when it rang wasn't one I recognized. I answered it anyway. "Hello?"

"Mr. Kostas, this is Eva Galeazzi," a woman said. "Have you spoken to my grandson today?"

"I have. He's at his apartment packing right now. I'm supposed to be going over there to pick him up just as soon as I am done with work." My stomach tensed. "Why?"

"I haven't been able to reach him."

I looked around for Lester, wanting to use his phone to call Gianni so I could stay on the line with Mrs. Galeazzi, but he wasn't in the conference room.

"Let me call you right back, Mrs. Galeazzi."

I hung up and dialed Gianni. I could hear the phone ring, but no one answered. When it started to go to voicemail, I hung up and called back. I got the same response.

Panic was not setting in yet.

Really.

"Meeting canceled," I told everyone as I got up and headed for the door. I dialed Gianni's grandmother as I hurried down the hallway toward the elevators. "Mrs.

Galeazzi, Gianni isn't answering his phone. I'm headed over to his apartment right now."

"I'll send Francesco and Martino there as well. You might need the backup."

I swear to god, my heart stopped beating for a moment. "Why?"

"Someone has been keeping close tabs on you, Mr. Kostas. I don't have a name yet, but several of my contacts have been able to dig up information, and none of it is good. Whoever is after you may try and use my grandson to get what they want. I can't allow that to happen."

"I won't allow that to happen."

As soon the elevator reached me, I jumped in and hit the button for the parking garage. "Mrs. Galeazzi, I'm going to have to call you back. I need to call my head of security and get some guards to go with me."

"Call me as soon as you find my grandson."

The woman didn't slam the phone down, but she might as well have. The implication was there. Mrs. Galeazzi was pissed, but so was I. I wasn't positive anything had happened to Gianni, but I wasn't dismissing it either.

Someone had been threatening me and the quickest way to make me cave was to do something to Gianni or our baby. I'd give up my entire world for them.

I dialed the head of my security and ordered him to grab as many men as he could and have them meet me in the parking garage as soon as possible. I'd actually prefer that they were waiting for me, but I doubt that would happen.



Color me surprised when I did reach the parking garage and found my head of security and six bodyguards waiting for me.

"Let's go," I said as I headed right for my car. As soon as I climbed in I ordered my driver to take me to Gianni's apartment, and to get there as quickly as he could. I didn't care how many traffic laws he broke.

Bruce, the head of my security, jumped into the front seat just as we started to move. The rest of the bodyguards climbed into the vehicle behind us.

"What's going on, sir?"

"Something might have happened to my fiancé."

"Fiancé, sir? You're engaged?"

"I am, but it's a recent thing, which is why you don't know yet. Now that you do, you need to start interviewing bodyguards for my fiancé." I'd be damned if I went through this hell again.

"I'll get started as soon as we get back to the office."

I nodded before dialing Gianni's phone again. Maybe he had just left it in another room or something. It could be charging. He had lost one already. Maybe he lost this one, too.

There were a dozen reasons to explain why Gianni wasn't answering his phone and all of them were shit excuses. My gut was telling me that he was in danger.

By the time the car screeched to a stop in front of Gianni's apartment building, my nerves were frayed. I jumped out of the car and started for the building just as another

car pulled up and two men jumped out.

I instantly recognized them and winced at my poor luck. Granted, the extra muscle was welcome, but not the anger I could see in Frank and Martino's eyes.

As soon as they reached me, I knew from their expressions and the clenched fists hanging at their sides that they wanted to punch me.

I held up my hand. "Save Gianni first, punch me later."

"Deal," Frank said.

Martino snorted.

When we went into the apartment building and headed for the elevator, I directed my bodyguards to take the stairs to the fifth floor, giving them the apartment number.

I whipped out my cell phone and brought up a picture of Gianni, showing it to them. "This man is your only priority. He's my fiancé. Treat him with extreme caution. He's carrying my child."

I started to turn only to stumble back, cradling my jaw. I felt as if I had been hit with a sledgehammer instead of Frank's fist.

"You're the asshole that knocked up our baby brother?" Frank shouted.

"Gianni first, Frank." After we rescued him, they could do whatever they wanted to me.

Frank sent me a narrow-eyed glare and stormed into the elevator. Martino, Bruce, and I followed. I swear everyone and their dog decided they needed to use the elevator

right there and then. I finally told Bruce to stand in the doorway in case it stopped. We didn't need anymore passengers.

When we reached the fifth floor and the doors slid open, we all filed out. I hurried down the hallway toward Gianni's apartment. My steps slowed the closer I got, especially when I heard pounding.

Someone grabbed me and pulled me to a stop. I turned, a snarl on my face. Bruce was standing behind me, a gun in his hand.

"Let me go first, sir. I'm trained for this."

Yeah, okay, but I was going to be right behind him.

As soon as Bruce stepped into the apartment, I lipped in behind him. We hadn't gone more than a couple of steps before we all heard a low painful sounding groan.

I glanced around until I spotted a body on the floor next to the bookshelf. I knew it wasn't Gianni simply because of the hair color. Gianni's hair was brown. This guy's hair was dark blond.

I gestured for a couple of my bodyguards to get him out of the apartment. I knew Gianni wouldn't want him in harm's way.

When Bruce started moving again, so did I. The pounding grew louder. As soon as we reached the corner of the hallway, Bruce motioned for us to stop and then peeked around the corner.

When he glanced at me, his eyes were as wide as they could be.

I frowned at him and mouthed, "What?"

"It's Lester, sir," Bruce mouthed back.

My frown deepened. "Lester?"

"Lester Douglas, your executive assistant."

No fucking way.

I darted around Bruce and into the hallway.

It was Lester.

"What in the hell are you doing?" It looked as if he was trying to rip the door to Gianni's apartment apart.

Lester spun around, a funny little smirk crossing his lips for a moment before his expression turned to worry. "Sir," he quickly stated. "I think something has happened to your fiancé. I heard a bunch of yelling and—"

I cocked my head. "Lester, I never told you who my fiancé was."

"You were dating him sir, so I assumed—"

I shook my head. "I never told anyone that I was dating Gianni."

"Sir, you pay me to know these things."

"No, actually, I don't." This guy was starting to piss me off, and not just because he stood between me and Gianni. "I pay you to help me run my business. I do not pay you to stick your nose in my personal life."

"Sir—"

"How did you know Gianni was pregnant? You knew even before I knew I'd slept with Gianni. How did you know?"

"Like I said, sir, you pay me to know these things."

"Man." I rubbed my hands over my face for a moment before dropping them to my hips. "You must have been thrilled when I assigned you to investigate this shit. Now it all makes sense why there were no leads. You erased them all."

I narrowed my eyes at Lester. "Did you erase the surveillance at the hotel, too?" I was in total disbelief. I had trusted Lester for years and he had stabbed me in the back. "You sent me those threatening letters demanding ten million dollars?"

"So what if I did," Lester shouted, finally losing his pretense of being innocent. "I deserve that money!"

"No, you don't," I retorted.

"I work for you day and night," Lester continued as if I hadn't spoken a word. "Every time you call I have to ask how high I'm supposed to jump. I gave up my nights for you, my weekends, my holidays, everything. That money is mine."

"And you get paid damn well for that work," I snapped. "You knew what the job was like when I hired you. If you didn't like it, you should have quit. Instead, you're going to jail where I hear the working conditions are worse than hell."

"You first!"

I barely had time to drop to the floor before I heard two gunshots. I covered my head

with my arms, praying there wouldn't be more.

"You can get off the floor now."

Someone snorted. I think it was Frank.

"Actually, I think he should stay there."

Yeah, it was Frank.

I climbed to my feet and looked around. It didn't take more than a glance to see two of my bodyguards helping a bleeding Lester to his feet. It looked like he had been hit in the upper chest.

Good. I wanted him to live long enough to enjoy prison.

As soon as they escorted Lester past me, I darted for the bedroom. "Gianni!"

"Janos?"

"Baby, where are you?"

"I'm in my bedroom."

That's what I was afraid of.

When I reached the bedroom door, my eyebrows road up. The door was barely hanging on the hinges and it looked as if someone had tried to tear it apart with their bare hands.

I tried to open it, but it wouldn't budge.

"Gianni?"

A moment later, he appeared in front of the door. I couldn't see all of him because there was part of a door and a dresser in front of him, but my eyes dropped to his stomach anyway.

"Are you okay?" I asked a near whisper. "Is the baby okay?"

"We're fine." Gianni gave me a weak smile. "We're both just a little freaked out. When Doug broke in, he—"

"His name is Lester. Lester Douglas. He's my executive assistant." Well, ex-executive assistant now."

Gianni frowned. "Tony said his name was Doug."

"Tony said?"

"Yeah, he's Tony's ex-boyfriend, the one that was sniffing around in my underwear drawer."

I was going to kill him...just as soon as Gianni and our baby was safe...and maybe after I recovered from the beat down I was going to receive from Frank and Martino.

"Come on, baby, let's get you out of there."

After Gianni pushed the dresser out of the way, I pushed the door open. The moment I was inside the room, I grabbed Gianni and pulled him into my arms.

"I want to go home."

"Just as soon as the police are done talking to us I'm taking you to the hospital for a check-up and then I am taking you back to the penthouse," I whispered into his hair as I pressed my face against his head. "I don't care if we're married or not, but you will live there with me until we decide to buy a house together. I refuse to go through something like this again."

I felt Gianni's arms tighten around me for just a moment before he whispered back, "Okay."

I refused to accept any other answer.



## Page 19

*Source Creation Date: July 16, 2025, 10:26 am*

~ Janos ~

"Thanks for letting me know."

I hung up the phone and turned toward Gianni. I smiled and took a moment to watch him as he pulled a white jumper over our son's head and then down his body. It amazed me sometimes that he and I had made this adorable little baby.

Gianni picked Neo up and settled him on his shoulder, gently patting his back. "Who was that?"

"Oh." I shook myself out of my daze. "That was the prosecutor. He just wanted to let me know that the verdict has finally come in and the sentencing has been decided."

"Oh?"

"After looking at all of the evidence, the judge gave Lester twenty to life."

Gianni's eyebrows lifted. "For blackmail and attempted murder? That seems a little excessive, doesn't it?"

My upper lip curled back in disgust. "He's lucky he didn't get the death penalty." I would have volunteered to flip the switch on his electric chair myself. "He tried to kill you and Neo. He deserves to die."

"Okay, okay." Gianni handed me our son. "It's over and done with now. We're both safe. Let it go."

As much as I wanted to argue, I couldn't stay angry when I held Neo in my arms. He was only a couple of months old and looked nothing like the squalling wrinkled thing that had come out of Gianni.

He was simply beautiful with Gianni's brown hair and my blue eyes. He'd be a heartbreaker when he was older. I shuddered to think of what our lives were going to be like when he reached dating age.

I was interviewing for bodyguards already.

I walked over and laid Neo in his bassinet. I stared down at him for a moment, once again mesmerized by the fact that Gianni and I had made such a perfect creature. I was stunned by that fact.

"What time do we have to head to your parents' house?" I asked as I glanced over my shoulder at Gianni.

"We don't have to be there until six," Gianni replied. "Why? Do you have to go to the office or something?"

"Or something," I said as I walked over to wrap my arms around Gianni's waist. I leaned down and nuzzled my face into the crook of his neck, inhaling his intoxicating scent. "Why don't we go to the bedroom and see if we can make another one?"

Gianni glanced at me with wide eyes. "Have you lost your mind?"

"Well, we don't have to have another one right away, but we should practice."

Gianni's eyes narrowed. "I think you love me for my body."

"I love you for your mind." I placed a kiss on Gianni's forehead.

"For your nose."

I kissed his nose.

"For your lips."

I kissed his lips.

Twice.

"For your chin."

I kissed his chin.

Gianni started laughing and squirming by the time I reached his jaw line. I smiled against his skin as I picked him up and started carrying him toward the bedroom.

It had been hard not to attack Gianni the last few months of his pregnancy. The myth that pregnant people glowed when they were pregnant was proven to be true for him. He had radiated joy. It was almost as if looking at him for too long was a sin.

I carried Gianni straight into our bedroom. After dropping him down in the middle of the mattress, I came down on top of him, settling between his thighs.

I captured Gianni's mouth in another bruising kiss. I licked at the seam of his lips until he opened his mouth, and then I delved inside. I licked and nipped and tried my best to devour him, to conquer him, to make him mine.

I lifted my head and then grinned when I looked down and saw Gianni's red, swollen lips. With his olive skin, it was a very good look on the man. I tugged at his shirt.  
"Time to take these off, baby."

I wanted skin.

Gianni tugged at the hem of my shirt. I grinned as I leaned back onto my knees and pulled my shirt over my head, tossing onto the floor. "Now you."

Gianni scooted up and pulled his shirt off. For a moment, all I could do was kneel there and stare at what could quite possibly be the most perfect chest ever created. There wasn't a hair in sight, just miles of fair skin for the licking.

I crawled my way backward until I reached the end of the bed, and then I stood. I reached down and pulled Gianni's shoes off. I dropped them on the floor before going to work on his pants. I pulled them slowly down his legs, watching intently as I revealed each inch of luscious skin.

I quickly shucked my own pants then went over to my nightstand to grab some lube and a condom, which I tossed onto the bed next to Gianni before climbing on the bed again.

I leaned in to kiss him again, but changed my mind at the last moment and went for the underside of his chin, which was one of my favorite spots.

Gianni groaned and tilted his head back, giving me better access.

"I'm never letting you go," I whispered as I kissed a line from his chin to his ear. "You're mine forever. Mine to hold. Mine to love. Mine to keep."

Gianni shuddered against me.

I licked a patch of skin on Gianni's neck then kissed and nibbled my way down his chest to his nipples. I wrapped my lips around one taut little nub and lavished it with my tongue. When I gently tugged at the nipple, Gianni cried out and arched against

me.

Gianni was panting softly, his eyes closed. I grinned as I leaned down and stroked my tongue across the other nipple. Gianni groaned and shuddered. It was a heady thing to know I could create such a reaction in the man.

I wanted more.

I was pretty sure I knew how to get it.

When I reached Gianni's groin, I licked a long line up from his perineum to the top of his balls. Gianni cried out as his legs fell open. I took that as an invitation and sucked one of his balls into my mouth. I released Gianni's ball and replaced it with the man's hard cock, swallowing it down until my nose hit curly hairs. Gianni's cries became moans. His fingers curled in my hair. His entire body trembled.

I licked my way to the top of Gianni's dick, circled the mushroom shaped head with my tongue, and then sucked him back into my mouth. I did this several times, moving faster each time, sucking harder.

When Gianni screamed and hot cream filled my mouth, I continued to suck until he had nothing else to give and then lifted my head and glanced up at him. Gianni was staring back at me. His pupils were totally blown and he was panting softly.

I grinned as I grabbed the lube and a condom held them up. "Are you ready?"

I chuckled when Gianni grunted and dropped his head back to the mattress. I opened the lube and squirted a liberal amount on my fingers. I wiped some between Gianni's ass cheeks then squirted some more out onto my fingers. I wanted to make sure not only that I was slick enough, but that I didn't cause Gianni any pain.

I planted a couple of kisses along his thigh as I slid my fingers down the crack of his ass. When I felt the tips of my fingers notch in place, I applied a little pressure then pulled back, then applied more pressure. I did this again and again until Gianni's tight ring of muscles began to loosen and allow me in.

I fit three fingers into Gianni's ass just as soon as he was stretched enough. The man was moaning and panting and pushing back against my fingers. His ass was pulsing, squeezing my fingers just as hard as I hoped it squeezed my cock.

When I felt he was stretched enough, I pulled my fingers free then sat up to kneel between his legs. I rolled the condom down my aching shaft then lathered it up with a bit more lube. I wiped my fingers on my shirt then slid my arms under Gianni's ass and lifted him up.

"You ready, baby?"

Gianni whimpered, tilting his hips up in invitation. I started to push into him. My breath caught as I watched the head of my fat cock pop inside, followed quickly by the rest of my aching cock until I was buried so deep inside of Gianni, I wondered if I was ever going to come out.

I glanced up at Gianni, groaning at the sight he made. His eyes were half-lidded and dazed, his cheeks were flushed with arousal, his hair was in disarray, and sweat dripped down his temples.

I didn't think he had ever looked sexier.

I slid my arms under Gianni's thighs and tightened my grip, then thrust forward, driving my cock back into him again.

Gianni squirmed beneath me. "More," he groaned. "Please, more."

My cock hardened to steel at his words. I pumped it slowly in and out, taunting Gianni with what he wanted. I started moving faster, thrusting into Gianni's tight depths over and over again.

I rammed my cock harder and harder into Gianni, rocking the bed with the force of my thrusts. This was the first time I had ever been at the point of losing control with anyone so quickly. I was overwhelmed by the heated tightness surrounding my hard shaft and the look of pure ecstasy on Gianni's face.

Gianni's eyes rolled back, his head thrashed, and he screamed my name as he came hard. His channel rippled around me, searing me, bringing me to the brink of the abyss.

I felt Gianni's tight channel begin to contract around me with almost brutal intensity, and my thrusts became feral and erratic as I sought my own release.

With a flurry of hard and fast thrusts, I finally froze, buried as deep as I could be. I roared out my completion and flooded Gianni's still shuddering body with my seed.

I dropped down over the top of Gianni, making sure to keep the bulk of my weight on my arms. I leaned down and traced the fullness of Gianni's lips with my tongue before moving my mouth over his, devouring its softness.

When I finally lifted my head, Gianni opened his eyes and smiled up at me. "I guess it wouldn't hurt to practice for the next one."

I wagged my eyebrows at him then groaned when I heard a faint cry from the other room. I reluctantly pulled out and rolled to the side of the bed. I pulled the condom off, tied the end, and tossed it in the garbage can before getting up and heading to the nursery attached to our bedroom.

"At least he waited until we were done," Gianni called out.

I chuckled, knowing he was right. Still, a little time alone with Gianni was precious to me. I smiled as I bent over the bassinet and picked up my son. A little time with both of my handsome men was even better.

"Come on, Neo, let's go cuddle your father."

There wasn't any other place I'd rather be.

~ The End ~



~ Martino ~

"They look happy."

Ryan Jones glanced at me over his shoulder. "Why shouldn't they be?"

"I was just making a statement, Ryan." I was never going to win with this guy. I'd been trying for a month now to break the ice, and he either ignored me or spat venom at me. It was getting aggravating. "It's been a while since I've seen my brother this happy."

I was a little jealous.

"It looks good on him." I shoved my hands into my slacks, not sure what else to say to keep Ryan talking to me. The tension between us was almost visible. It had been that way since he opened his eyes for the first time when he was in the hospital. He'd been surprised to see me and then pissed, and he'd been pissed ever since.

Ryan had every right to be angry with me. I'd fucked up five years ago, and everyone knew it, me most of all. I'd just been so screwed up at the time, messed in the head, my heartbroken, feeling betrayed. Unfortunately, Ryan had been totally innocent in the situation, but I'd taken it out on him anyway.

I was paying for that mistake now.

My gaze strayed to the little four-year-old little boy who looked so much like my childhood pictures, he could have been me. He even had my brown eyes.

I had a son, one I hadn't even known about a month ago. Sure, Ryan had told me he was carrying my kid five years ago, but I hadn't believed him at the time. I had assumed he was lying to me just like my ex-husband had lied to me when he said he was pregnant. I thought Ryan had been trying to trap me into marriage like Steward had done.

Boy, was I wrong.

A month ago, I not only found out that Stewart had never even been pregnant, but Ryan had been telling the truth, and the child he carried was mine.

Talk about a total mind fuck.

"Are you and Arty going to the zoo and the park tomorrow?" I asked.

"Yes," Ryan said sharply.

"Do you mind if I go?" As much as I wanted to spend time with Ryan and Arty, getting to know them both, I wasn't going to push my presence on them. I would only go if Ryan agreed to it.

Ryan glanced over at me, looking me up and down and curling his lips back as if he was looking at something distasteful. "I guess you can go. I'm sure Arty would like it."

"And you?" It was stupid to ask, but I found myself doing it anyway. "How do you feel about me going?"

Ryan shot me a look that left me no doubt to exactly how he felt about me being anywhere near him, and it wasn't a pretty look. I tried to keep my heart cold and still, but my stomach was churning with anxiety and frustration.

I nodded curtly to Ryan and, without saying a word, moved over to stand behind the couch my parents were sitting on. Maybe it was time I cut my losses and went back to the East Coast. I certainly wasn't making any headway here.

My gaze went to Arty again. I couldn't leave him. Even if Ryan wanted nothing to do with me, Arty was still my son, whom I very much wanted to get to know. I'd just have to see about planning my get-to-know-you sessions when Ryan wasn't around.

I had no idea how to do that.

I had no idea how to do any of this. I'd never even been around little kids before, and it wasn't like I could buy my son's affections. Ryan made me sign that stupid parenting agreement before I was even allowed to see him. From the way Arty kept looking at me with a confused little frown, I doubted he even knew who I was.

Going back east might be easier on all of us. Despite the parenting agreement, no one could refuse me providing financially for my own flesh and blood. I could set something up so that Arty had everything he could need in life and then simply disappear from his life before he ever figured out who I was.

I tried not to let my morbid thoughts bring me down any farther than I already was. Still, the longer I stared at Arty, the harder it was to remember I needed to make the right decision for him, whatever that was.

I stayed quiet as I watched everyone around me smile and make plans I wasn't really invited to. Sure, they talked about Arty being there and me being there and all of us having a good time at the zoo tomorrow, but I could tell that I was an afterthought.

I felt as if I was always an afterthought. Frank was the oldest, and Gianni was the baby. I had a severe case of middle child syndrome and had since Gianni was born. I tried not to let it affect me and my dealings with my siblings, but sometimes I felt as if my envy of them and their positions in the family bled through.

I waited until the others had gathered around the couch before walking into the kitchenette to order some drinks and snacks. When they arrived, I pulled the cart into the room and pushed it over to the small dinette set.

"I got some snacks."

I stood back while everyone got up and came to the table. I stopped Mama before she reached the table and kissed her on the cheek. "I have some things I need to go do. I'll see you later."

"Oh, do you have to go now?"

"Yes."

Mama's smile faded. "Well, if you must."

"I'll be back later." I shot Arty one last look—a long look—and then walked out of the penthouse suite. I turned and pressed the button for the lobby, and as I did, I saw Ryan watching me. The door closed before I could figure out the look on his face.

Just as well.

I was fucked up before Ryan came into my life, and I'd been fucked up ever since. I didn't have anything to offer him except my money, and he didn't want that. I didn't know whether to be relieved or more frustrated than I already was.

The ride down to my floor went faster than I would have liked. I straightened my tie and smoothed down the lapels of my suit just as the doors opened. I ignored the interested looks I received from those I passed. I wasn't interested.

It had been a long time since I'd been interested in anyone.

I walked down the corridor to the hotel room I'd rented for the last few weeks. I was getting tired of living out of a hotel suite. For the money I'd paid for the damn thing since I'd been here, I could have put a down payment on a condo. Which was not a bad idea, especially if I was going to be here more than once to see my son, and I was. Maybe.

I let myself into the suite and walked directly over to the decanter on the sideboard. I pulled the top off and lifted the decanter, prepared to make myself a drink, but then I stopped. I was going to have a drink to try and drown my sorrows instead of trying to stick with the plan I'd come up with in my head.

That was stupid.