







# Salvatore (Kings of Chaos #3)

**Author:** *Lena Little*

**Category:** Action&Adventure

**Description:** Cold, calculating, and ruthless—until he falls for her.

Salvatore

Getting trapped in a snowstorm is not how I thought my night would end.

Sitting in my car, listening to the radio, and cursing myself for losing control of my temper is just the icing on top of the cake. Maybe it's what I deserve. Solitude and isolation, apart from my phone buzzing and the icy cold air around me as punishment.

But all my self-loathing seems to melt away in an instant when the beautiful blonde taps on my window.

I'm drawn to her in an instant. Lost in her deep blue eyes and the kindness she offers to give me shelter from the storm. Kindness that is rare in my world.

If I had a shred of goodness left in me, I shouldn't allow her to come any closer. I should tell her to run for the hills. Stay as far away from me as possible.

But my moral compass has never truly pointed north, and when it comes to her, my resolve has the strength of a wet cardboard.

Silver will be the death of me, but I won't have it any other way.

Silver

I can't let him freeze out there alone.

Even if it flies in the face of the safety instructions my dad has given me.

But I'm lucky to find a man who's charming, kind, and doesn't give me any reason to be afraid of him.

The weight of the world might rest heavily on Salvatore Leone's shoulders, but I can see the goodness in his heart beneath all that

## SALVATORE

Crimson droplets fall to the floor with a rhythmic plop , plop off the sharp edge of the stainless steel blade in my leather-clad grip. The warm stink of death fills my lungs with every inhale and tightens the growing pit in my gut. And I've got a gun pointed square between Harry Peterson's eyes.

Fuck. I lost control again. Can't even remember how I got here, let alone how the three once-moving security guards became limp masses at my feet.

Or maybe I do, and I just don't give a fuck about taking a life anymore. Either way, I'm here on business, and the man pissing his pants in the corner is my target.

"I thought I made myself clear when I was here last, Harry." I should be dead, not them. I'm holding a knife, and they have M16s strapped to their chests.

Now isn't the time to piece this mystery together. It's best to consider it divine intervention and move on.

"You did." Wide-eyed and gulping, Harry barely gets the words out. He has both hands high above his ginger mop top of hair, and his eyes travel from my face to the barrel and back again.

"Then why am I here?" I turn my attention away from the bodies to him.

“It isn’t as simple as shutting my doors and walking away,” Harry says, determined to convince me that he’s genuinely trying to make a change.

I’ve been watching him for weeks and know he’s lying through his fake white teeth.

“I understand.” To some degree. “But how can you justify eight dead and fourteen injured because you wouldn’t allow them to leave during a snowstorm? At the very same building that caught my attention in the first place.”

“I’ve settled this with the lawyers.” The practiced fear so clearly etched into his pasty face slips for a moment. And his lack of remorse burns furiously in his green eyes. “Everyone who died in those buildings didn’t want to lea?—”

“Think I’m here waving a gun in your face out of some misguided sense of justice?” I cut him off.

“With a name like the Lawless Lion following you around, it would’ve surprised me.” Harry hasn’t managed to find his false terror since I rattled his cage.

It should be enough for me to gun him down where he stands. Knock out the man plaguing my thoughts and making my life annoying. But it isn’t. Not yet. He has a purpose that I need him to fulfill before I can finish this for good.

Harry is the perfect scapegoat. He’ll show the people of Delta County that the Lion’s Den isn’t the enemy. That they have us on their side against tyrants like Billy Mayfair and Harry Peterson, and for their protection, all we’ll ask in return is that they hold their tongues if anyone asks too many questions about us.

I got the idea from Pablo Escobar. If everyone loves you, they’d rather have the devil they know than the monster waiting to replace him.

“What’s this about? You want money? A cut of my business? What’s it going to take for you to fuck off out of my life?” Harry drops his hands at his side, realizing if I was going to shoot him, I’d have done it by now.

If those hands make one wrong move, I’ll do it without hesitation.

“No, the easy option for better working conditions has been exhausted. What I want now—and this time, you will oblige or face the full wrath of the Lion’s Den—is for you to start shutting down your doors. One by one, starting tomorrow, until every poorly run warehouse and office park is moved far away from my backyard.” Every word I say has Harry’s jaw falling further to the ground.

He must think I’m crazy. Hell, with the way I’ve left his office in disarray, I might be. But this time, I won’t take no for an answer.

“If I decline,” he poses it as a statement he’d rather follow through with than a question.

“You’ll meet the same end as these three.” I wave the blood-stained dagger over the bodies. “But your death won’t be as swift. I’ll take my time with you. Relish in your screams and cherish the sight of life escaping your eyes.”

There it is. A quivering lip and urge to recoil away from me. Genuine fear that pricks up the corner of my lips.

Still holding the gun toward Harry, I walk backward through the door that led me into his office. I keep the pistol trained on the door until I reach the elevator, only stowing it and the dagger once I head down.

I arrive at my car and speed off into the night. My heart’s pounding in my chest, my mind’s racing and it’s the first moment of peace I have had to process what just

happened.

And still, I can't. No matter what I do, I can't recall the events that led me to Harry. Shit, the last thing I can remember is having drinks with Dante and then?—

A blood-covered blade and a terrified redhead.

It's only when my phone starts buzzing in my pocket and my car's Bluetooth plays the ringtone that I snap back to reality. And with it, the realization that I have no idea where I am other than a long stretch of road leading far away from the city.

It's Dante. No doubt wanting a conversation I can't face right now. He'll have to wait.

I kill the call and keep on cruising into the stormy night.

Maybe my salvation waits at the end of this long, lonesome road.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:20 am*

2

SILVER

“ L ook out, Crawford. The storm has landed, and we’re in for an icy night ahead.” The radio presenter’s voice crackles over every other word while I adjust the nob to clear the signal. “So lock your doors, plant your asses, and buckle in, Buttercups, because our advice is to stay where you are and listen to these groovy tunes.”

“For shit’s sake.” I slam the portable radio onto the counter next to my cash register, trying to get a grip on my encroaching anger.

Getting pissed off at a radio presenter is the silliest thing I’ve done in a long time. It’s his job to tell us the news and usher in the next song to keep his listeners entertained. But that doesn’t change the fact that I want actual, tangible answers to how bad this storm really is.

I wouldn’t have cared if I was home, but I’m stuck in my diner, and I don’t want to spend the whole night here if I don’t have to.

I knew Crawford was in for a stormy night when the clouds rolled in. And I should’ve taken my chance to get out when the first snowflakes trickled down from them. The stubborn tenacity to get my work done and have everything ready for tomorrow morning’s early birds kept me here longer than expected.

Now I’m stuck.



The only plus side to this whole thing is that Dad converted the back office into a man cave a few years back to watch sports and relax when the shop wasn't busy. Thank God, I haven't had the good sense to change it back to an actual office or break room yet.

As the thought crosses my mind, my cell phone starts to ring. The Caller ID reads, Dear Ol' Dad.

Speak of the devil, as they say.

"Hey, Dad. What's up?" I hook the phone into the crook of my neck, using my ear to pin it to my shoulder, and get up from the counter.

"Saw on the news the storm's worse than expected. Checking to see if you're okay," he says.

His caring side brings a smile to my face. No matter how big or how small a problem is, I can always count on him for support.

"I'm fine. Still at the shop, but don't worry, I'm not going to brave it home. I'll spend the night here." I make my way to the main floor, move a few chairs back under their tables, and clear the tops of empty coffee mugs and straw wrappers left behind during the evening sprint.

"Anyone there with you?" Concern floods his voice.

"No. Janie and Matt left at six." When I should have. "I had a few things that needed taking care of."

"Well, lock the door and make sure you're safe. Just because us sensible folk ain't moving around in the snow doesn't mean there won't be bad apples out there

tonight,” he orders with the intensity only a father can muster.

“Of course. I’m heading to the front door right now.” After I toss the trash and rinse out the glasses, that is.

“And if you need anything, you call me. I’m a few streets up, and I’ll bring Bucky.” One might think, with the joy he says the name Bucky, it would be our family dog or an older sibling who enjoys beating the snot out of anyone who wants to cause trouble.

However, what I’m quickly starting to realize—probably more worrying than not—is that Bucky is a rifle he has an unnatural affinity for. The funniest part is that the name is far better suited for a shotgun than a hunting rifle, but Dad has a way of subverting expectations.

“You and Bucky will be the first to know if any trouble comes my way. Promise.” I finish in the kitchen and make my way to the front room to lock up.

Through the glass door, I’m not greeted by the peaceful serenity of a snowy night. Instead, I see the bright red of brake lights and the vague outline of a pitch-black car blending in with the shadows surrounding it.

Unlike Dad, my first thought isn’t that whoever is parked outside is going to be trouble. In a town like Crawford, where Main Street is Highway 92, and the general population never exceeds four hundred and fifty people, trouble is just a made-up word from the out-of-towners.

Whoever is trapped in that car is no doubt trying to hide away from the storm like the rest of us. Only difference is, the poor bugger doesn’t have anywhere to go if they’re just passing through.

Must've seen my lights were on and thought it was a good place to stop.

Luckily, they're right. Where Dad taught me how to shoot a gun, hunt, and fend for myself, Mom's sound advice was to lend a hand to those who need it most. A single act of kindness will make the world a better place.

Doesn't mean I won't keep my eye on him. Then again, I'd feel terrible knowing he's freezing out there alone when I could've offered him a warm meal and a place to rest.

"Dad, I've gotta go." I don't elaborate on why. It would only lead to an earful of judgment about my terrible decision.

"All right, hon. I'll call you in the morning. Love you."

"Love you." I hang up the call.

Now, let's go see who needs shelter from the storm.

I pull on my parka, hanging on a coat rack next to the front door, and venture out. The thick fleece interior of my parka barely does anything at all against the harsh wind whipping icy cold lashes against my body. Every gust feels like it penetrates through my layers and down to the bone.

I'm shivering by the time I reach his car, and if we don't hurry, I'll probably be an ice cube before I've had a chance to enact Mom's kindness.

Tinted windows meet me when I reach the driver's seat. They block out any sign of life inside and raise my suspicions that maybe I was foolish to be so gallant in my efforts to help this guy. Nothing good can come from someone who feels they need to hide away completely.

Before I have a chance to turn back and run inside, the window starts rolling down.

“What are you doing?” I hear his voice long before I can see his face. “You’ll catch your death of cold out here.”

“Same goes for yo—” As he flicks on the overhead light, the rest of my sentence gets trapped in my throat the moment I look at his face for the first time.

Good Lord, he’s handsome. With a swirling inferno of hazel and gold in his eyes and a gentle smile carved straight into his marble jawline, I’m lost for words and out of my depth.

Sure, there are handsome guys in Crawford, but none display this aura of regality and charm without so much as dashing me a smile.

“You shouldn’t be out here. Go back inside. Shut the doors. Stay warm,” he orders with the confidence of a man used to delivering them.

“I was about to say the same thing to you.” My lower jaw rattles so viciously, I stutter on a few of the words. “That’s why you stopped here, isn’t it? Outside my diner?”

He scoffs and shakes his head. “Not at all. Kindness in a snowstorm wasn’t the first thing I’d expect. But if you’re offering, I won’t decline.”

“Then get your ass out of there, and let’s go. I’m fucking freezing.” I step away from his window to allow him an easy exit.

“My, my. I do like a woman with a loose tongue.” With a flick of his wrist, the window starts moving up again, and for the first time since I stepped outside, I feel the warmth emanating from my core instead of icy cold chills.

Was that what I think it was? Did the stranger just flirt with me?

It can't be sane to look too deeply into a statement he probably made to anyone who offered him shelter, but I can't help myself. It isn't every day someone breathtaking happens upon your humble family-owned diner and throws out compliments.

As the door opens and he emerges from it, the same warmth that radiated inside me turns to tingles in places I wasn't expecting. With a face as perfect as his, I expected at least one fault somewhere on his body.

There isn't.

He's tall and broad-shouldered, and his frame is dense and layered in muscle from top to bottom. Without a jacket on and the top two buttons of his white button-up loosened, there isn't much getting in the way of my haphazard inspection of his exquisite physique.

"Are we going inside? Or did I make a mistake getting out of my car?" he teases, and even though he has less on than me, he barely shows signs of being cold.

"Yes, sorry, I—" Don't know how to finish my sentence. While I inspect him, he's doing the same to me, and the thrill of having his eyes wander is more alluring than I expected.

My body is better hidden, but his scan of my front seems to burn away my layers as his smile grows wider and wider.

"This way." I turn my eyes back to my store and start leading the way. In the few minutes we spent in the cold, a layer of snow has formed on the ground and crunches under our feet.

At least I'll have company tonight, for whatever it's worth.

Might make riding out the storm a little bit easier.

### SALVATORE

A single look at this blonde bombshell is sweet vindication for running off into the night. She called to me from the instant I set eyes on her. Spoke to something buried deep inside an icy prison inside my soul, and her smile stokes the flames to thaw it.

I fucking hate metaphors, but this storm, this diner, and this beautiful woman make me wonder if I'm living in one.

"Salvatore," I introduce myself before she finishes latching the front door. If she isn't wary of me, she ought to be. Though I have no ill intentions toward her, I'm a gigantic stranger she found in his car on a pitch-black, stormy night.

Maybe my name will give her the comfort and reprieve that I'm not a monster.

"Silver." She looks at me over her shoulder as she slides the final looped lock into place.

Silver. Like her eyes. Magnificent.

"It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance." I'm not at a loss for words. Mindless platitudes come easy to a man like me. But if I had to say anything of substance, I'd be stumbling over every sentence trying to talk to her.

"Is that the best you can come up with?" Silver discards her jacket on the coat rack

before crossing her arms underneath her ample bosom. The motion raises her tits enough for the slightest bit of cleavage to squeeze its way to the top of her shirt, and I have to fight off my urges to gawk.

Christ. Pull it together.

Spending time with a beautiful woman isn't new to me. It comes with the territory. So why is this one so different?

I can't get a grip on myself, let alone the next foolish thing that's going to slip through my mouth if I'm not careful. She has my mind in a tailspin, and every direction it lands in is either some vile play on words to elicit a smile or some cheesy compliment I'd usually not dare let slip.

Interesting.

"Taking it slow. Testing the waters," I admit.

"For what?" She rolls her eyes and starts walking toward me.

My heart starts thumping in my chest. Every step closer shortens my breathing until I'm practically holding it in full. My mind races with the possibilities of what might come next. A lingering touch? The feeling of her cool hand against my feverish skin? Or, perhaps what I might be able to handle, a jab at the fact that my cock is so stiff I'm tenting the front of my trousers.

"To gauge the atmosphere. Kindness is in rare supply where I'm from, and I don't take anything for granted." I empty my pockets onto the counter next to me. Another vain attempt at showing Silver I'm not a threat.

My phone buzzes and hasn't stopped since Dante's first call. If I didn't answer it



then, there's no chance I will do it now.

“Well, you're in luck. You're my good deed for the year. Saved it for the holiday season so Santa can bring me a present.” Accompanying her ever-growing smile is a cheeky wink. It makes my manhood rattle so violently, I have to shove my hand into my pocket and grab it by the base to still the motion.

“Why would you want a present from that guy?” The thoughts that crossed my mind about her approach are instantly dashed as she passes by me and finds her place behind the diner counter. “He's a bit of a creep if you ask me. Always going on about hoe, hoe, hoes.”

Silver giggles and rolls her eyes. “I'm glad you're funny. Getting through the night would've been a lot worse if you were some stick in the mud.”

“For better or worse, a stick in the mud, I'm not.” Careful, Sal. Don't give too much away. You don't want to scare this pretty little thing off.

“Then what are you?” She leans forward on the counter, and once more, the snow-white curves of her breasts peek through the top of her shirt. This time, no matter how I fight my urge, I can't stop glancing down.

A moment of awkwardness, explaining how I'm staring down her shirt, is far better than trying to answer her question. Neither comes to pass. Instead of shying away, Silver pushes herself further forward as if she wants to give me something to look at. Rather than prying for an answer, she continues her sentence as if I wasn't stalling.

“Hungry or thirsty?” she asks, adjusting a knob on the radio beside her until some late eighties pop starts playing. “Or both. I can boil a pot of coffee and fry up some steaks. Kitchen is stacked with goodies for the night.”

Hungry for a piece of you.

Thirsty for the river between your thighs.

“Both.” I settle on the simple, truthful answer. “Skipped dinner, and I wouldn’t mind a nightcap with a beautiful woman.”

Her cheeks instantly flush a rosy pink, and the sight is more alluring than even the mounds squeezing against her shirt.

“Both it is.” Silver swallows hard. “Have a seat. I’ll be right back.”

I hate to see her go, but I love watching her ass walk away.

Fuck. She’s incredible. Unafraid and unabashedly herself. She isn’t putting on airs the same way I must. I guess that comes with the lives we lead. I can’t spill my secret of being head of the Lion’s Den and expect her to look at me the same way. Silver, however, doesn’t need to hide. She runs a diner in a small town where everybody knows your name.

“How about I make the coffee while you sort out the grub?” I’m already making my way behind the counter before she can answer.

“Sure, why not? It isn’t every day I get free labor in my shop.” Another heart-melting chuckle graces my ears over the noise of a hissing stove top.

I’m in trouble, aren’t I?

Stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Wanting this, the normalcy of flirting with a stranger. Exchanging naughty looks

between the kitchen window and the main room while the other isn't looking. Pretending life can be a dream and we could be so happy in this winter wonderland.

But having the opposite. A cell phone constantly on blast from a crew of blood-hungry savages awaiting orders for our next move.

It's lonely at the top, that's for damn sure, but maybe it doesn't have to be.

4

SILVER

Steaks served and eaten. Coffee poured and drank. Good music on the radio and a handsome man, acting dark, broody, and mysterious.

Getting snowed in has never been this good.

“Sure you ate enough? Minute steaks and a few potatoes on the side don’t strike me like enough for a man of your size,” I say while clearing the plates out of our way. If I weren’t entertaining, I’d wash them off immediately, but something about Salvatore keeps me glued in place.

Like a strong magnetic pull that, no matter how I try and break, will not release me.

“Happy as a clam.” He downs the last of his coffee, reaching for the pot I know is empty. “Dang, looks like I’ve gotta get another on the brew.”

“About that.” I drop to my haunches and rummage inside the counter’s cupboard. It hasn’t seen much love or attention since Dad worked the register, so it takes me a while to find what I’m after, but when I do, I return by slamming the glass bottle of Old Buck whiskey on the counter. “I thought we could move onto something a little more thirst-quenching.”

“Thirst quenching and lip loosening.” Salvatore reaches for the bottle and wipes away a thin layer of dust coating the label. He nods, satisfied, and pours two fingers into

each of our mugs.

“My thoughts exactly. Might as well make the best of a bad situation, right?” I raise my mug, and he brings his to clink glasses before sipping.

Good Lord, age has not been kind to the Old Buck. It’s bitter and burns as it travels down my throat. I can’t imagine the funny faces I’m pulling, but they’re leaving a smile on Salvatore’s face, so it’s not all bad.

“Why don’t we play a game? Kickstart this party the old-fashioned way.” Salvatore rolls up his sleeves and goes for another sip of the whiskey as if immune to its poisonous bite.

“What did you have in mind?” I grab a bottle of water from the mini-fridge under the counter and pour it into the mug. Only way I’m getting through another sip of it is by cutting it down to something less disgusting.

“We go question for question. Failure to answer results in a shot.” He swirls his glass around to show it’s going to be a shot of the nasty stuff.

“And if we do answer?” I raise a brow, intrigued and excited by the possibility of breaking down his stoic walls.

“That’s the prize. Getting to know one another. We’re in for a long night ahead, so we might as well make the best of it.”

“I must say, I’m surprised. You didn’t strike me as the type who’d want to engage in a game of getting to know me.” I find myself leaning forward. A subconscious reaction of intrigue, my body’s instant desire for the man sitting opposite me, and the mind-melting effects of the aged liquor.

It isn't much, but it gives Salvatore's wandering golden eyes a better view of my chest. Not that he's had any problem staring at my tits so far, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't enjoying his attention.

"I've been full of surprises lately. Being here is probably the biggest." His eyes travel away from me and settle on his cell phone, which has vibrated every ten minutes since we sat together.

Inquiring about it will have to be one of my questions at some point tonight, but I've got a much better starting point.

"Fine, I'll play your game," I say. By the way Salvatore's face hardens while he stares at the phone, he needs a distraction from whatever landed him in Crawford. "I'll start. You're not married, are you?"

"Married?" His head snaps back to me, and the sternness in his eyes vanishes with a chuckle. "No, I'm not. Why is that your jumping-off point?"

"Oh, y'know, the way you're looking at me. The thousand-yard stare at whoever is calling. I can go on and on with a list of reasons, but mostly, it's because of how you're looking at me. I'm not the home-wrecking sort and wanted to be sure I wasn't crossing a line." Purely for my own sake.

I don't expect anything but a few sheepish glances from both of us to happen tonight. But even those would leave me feeling a lot more dirty if he had a wife waiting at home.

"Are you?" Salvatore looks at my hands wrapped around the glass of whiskey and water. Probably trying to see if there's a ring or ring lines. His tone, however, expresses his profound distaste for the possibility of a yes leaving my lips.

Heartbroken before an answer even comes.

“No. Never had time to marry, and don’t suppose I will anytime soon. Between the shop, hunting with my dad, and helping cook up the meat with my mom on weekends, I’ve got my hands full.”

“Ah, so you know how to handle big things that shoot in spurts? Good to know.” He chuckles at his own joke and immediately looks at me, flabbergasted. “God, I’m sorry. I don’t know where that came from.”

Neither do I, but I like it more than I’m willing to admit. A silly joke with filthy connotations that doesn’t even make sense in the context of what we’re talking about? Somehow, Salvatore’s checking every box to make our shut-in way more fun.

“No need for apologies. I’m probably at fault, giving those burning eyes an easy line on these.” I shake my chest a little to push my message across before erupting into a loud laugh to hide my reddening cheeks.

Salvatore grin widens at my gesture, and he eases back in his chair. “I could think of a few things to improve the view. But this is a diner, not a sleazy sports bar.”

A wink follows, and for a brief second, I consider giving in to those desires. It would be so easy to toss my shirt to the side and change the drinking portion of this game to stripping instead. I wouldn’t mind seeing what he’s packing beneath that expensive suit.

“Anyway, back to the game.” Salvatore snaps me back to reality. “You said you go hunting every weekend. Isn’t that a hell of a lot of meat for a family of three?”

“It is, but we sell the rest off to the butcher. It’s a good way to make extra cash, and it helps our community. A win-win, if I’ve ever seen one.” I watch Salvatore take

another swallow of whiskey. He doesn't even grimace at its foul taste.

Now I can't stop wondering if he really doesn't mind it or if he's putting on a show to impress me. That he's so hard and calloused, nothing can penetrate his iron facade.

Whatever the case, I find myself more and more into it.

"Your turn," he says as he adjusts in his chair and closes the gap between us by propping himself up on his elbows over the counter.

Before I have a chance to think of my next question, though they aren't too hard to come by with a complete stranger, his phone starts to vibrate on the counter again.

His head begrudgingly turns to it, and mine does too. The ID reads, Dante .

"Why aren't you answering it?" No time like the present. Or maybe, deep down, I know he doesn't want to answer this question, and it'll force him to drink. Our night might take a far more interesting turn if I plaster him with liquor.

"It's a work call." He sounds grim.

"Isn't that more reason to answer, then?" Without thinking, I extend my hand and press it against his arm reassuringly. Mostly for him, but a little bit for me to feel the rock-solid mass of muscle he calls a bicep.

"When you do what I do, it's good to know your limits. I reached that point earlier tonight, and well, let's just say no good can come from answering it right now." His focus moves away from the phone to my hand brushing against him.

Salvatore's own hand raises from beneath the desk, and he presses his rough fingers against my forearm gently. An audible gulp follows as it turns into a squeeze.



“And what do you do that’s so bad you have to cut yourself out of reality for a while?” I try to match his seriousness with my tone. Even though I haven’t sensed any danger since he came into my bar, I can tell he’s a dangerous man just by looking at him.

No one wearing a suit this fancy, driving a car that has so many illegal modifications, and exuding this level of intensity can be on the straight and narrow.

“Full disclosure?” He shuts his eyes and releases his grip on my arm, almost expecting me to pull away when he answers. “I stand as head to a powerful family in Colorado. I’ll spare you the details for your sanity and mine, but let’s just say we’re not blood-related.”

I. Fucking. Knew. It.

Well, I didn’t, but I could’ve guessed it.

“I should’ve seen it coming with a name like Salvatore in our neck of the woods.” I chuckle to his surprise, and he meets my eyes with a furrowed brow and pursed lips of confusion. “Salvatore Lione, right?”

“You’ve heard of me?”

“Everyone’s heard of you.”

His attention travels back to my hand, which hasn’t budged. “And you’re not afraid?”

“Why would I be?” I squeeze his bicep. Goodness, it feels amazing. “You haven’t done anything to show me you’re a bad guy. Where I’m concerned, you’re just another wayward soul trying to brave a stormy night.”

The corner of his lip curls upward, and warmth burns in his hazel eyes.

I know I shouldn't continue playing this game now that I know who he is. But what good is chasing him away going to do? We're both trapped here, for better or worse.

More than any moral objections, carrying on as if our conversation didn't go the way it did is incredibly thrilling.

It's not every day you happen upon a criminal king and live to tell the tale. And with the way Salvatore can't take his eyes off me, I'm sure it's going to be a great story to tell.

### SALVATORE

Hours drift by, and we polish the remainder of the Old Buck whiskey and play our game. While we sit in the warmth of Silver's diner, an ice-cold sting lingers where her hand touches my arm.

Fucking pathetic. That's how it makes me feel. Pining over something as simple as a touch. Never in my life has a woman gripped me so hard by the core that I've wanted to derail my entire existence to spend another moment in her company.

And my window is closing, I realize. Silver's yawning and has been for half an hour, and I'm growing increasingly upset at the idea of her turning in for the night.

"Did you at least have a good night?" she asks, and like magic, her hand returns to my arm and soothes the frozen ache.

Get a hold of yourself. You're a goddamned Mafia boss. Bringing this pure, beautiful creature into your world is a mistake. You'll shatter her perfection as you have so many poor souls before.

I can't even fucking reprimand myself without making it all about her.

"Beats sitting in my car and waiting for the snow to thaw." I hate how desperate I sound.

A bright smile forms on Silver's lips and loosens the pit in my gut, if only for a moment.

"Well, I aim to please." She breaks contact again, this time wobbling unsteadily until she gets to her feet. "But I've also had way too much of that engine cleaner, and I need to get out of these clothes." She giggles to herself and pulls the front of her long-sleeved shirt up to her nose. "I can still smell this morning's bacon on these."

"You keep a change of clothes in the back?"

Silver adjusts her shirt, and with my eyes intently following her actions, I'm almost floored by her motion to get it back in place. Without realizing, or maybe it's intentional, her haphazard tugging stretches the neck hole far enough to expose her cleavage.

Two mountainous peaks held in place by black cotton. I only get a snapshot of her, but I salivate at the sight, and my mind starts drifting to all the wrong places.

Better run, pretty little thing. Otherwise, I might do something I regret.

"Whoops, shit, sorry," she says, noticing her mistake and covering herself in full. With her first unsteady step toward the short hall leading to the back of the diner, she answers my question. "No, but I do have gym clothes back there. I've passed out in them before, so they'll do."

The mental anguish of Silver stripping a few feet away from me hammers in my skull, and it hasn't even started. She isn't even past the counter, and my mind spirals into unfathomable depths.

Deep breaths and count to ten. Someone told me that works to still anger, and it might do the same for this. Closing my eyes to give it a real shot is a bad mistake. The sight

of Silver's perky tits held together and hidden by a thin covering of black is burned into eyelids. The longer I keep them closed, the more intense the throbbing in my trousers becomes.

She drives me crazy and doesn't even know it, while she giggles, hums, and talks to herself all the way into the back of the building.

I launch out of my chair and start walking in her direction. The engine cleaner tasted awful, but I'm a seasoned drinker, and it doesn't knock me around the same way as Silver.

As quickly as my storming of her gates begins, it ends before I take my first step into the corridor.

Stop.

Think.

I've already exposed her to too much of my life. Just being here puts her at risk of something wicked coming her way.

Talking and teasing each other is one thing. Me following her down this hall feels like the only logical end to our night, but where does it go from there? I can't let her in. She accepted my admittance of being head of the Lion's Den because we're trapped here.

That's where it ends. Tomorrow is another day, and I can't let tonight weigh on her mind forever. If anything happened to her because of me...

Wait. Why the fuck have I started walking again? Despite my weak reservations, my feet continue barreling in the direction of Silver's giggling.

The wrong head is calling the shots, and I can't regain control over myself.

Reaching the door brings another hurdle to overcome. A crack wide enough for me to see inside. Do I look? Could I stop myself?

No to both, but the latter and the ever-swelling flames in my gut lead me closer. Closer. Until I finally see her.

Bent over, with her long, silky smooth, milky thighs in plain view. Already stripped of her shirt and jeans, all that's left is a strip of matching black panties that runs down her ass and hides her pink slit.

I'm fucking enamored by it. If one look at her tits was enough to drive me crazy, seeing the rest of her exquisite body is going to leave me certified insane. For one look, one taste, I'll give up my mind in a heartbeat.

I catch a rumble trying to escape my throat and still it by clenching my fists so tight my nails dig into my palm. I'm not ready to let her know I'm here. Not yet, while I take in this incredible view.

When she stands and reaches for her dark blue gym leggings, it's time to make my move.

Turn away and run , the last sane thought crosses my mind. It's the right thing to do, but I have a bad habit of making the wrong decisions.

I push the door open, and with a hop and a squeal, Silver turns to me, hoisting her leggings in front of her chest to cover her now-bare breasts. The momentary shock of my arrival is quickly replaced by a devious grin and a teasingly slow lowering of the garment.

“Naughty boy.” Lust drips heavily on her words. I’d reply if I could find any words. But this turned out better than I expected. My eyes are glued to her tits, and my mind is in a swirl of emotions I haven’t felt in decades. “I told you I was gonna change.”

I’ve been thinking about this all wrong.

Not once has Silver treated me like the monster I am. Raised her torch or pitchfork to chase me away from this place. She’s only shown me hospitable kindness and the warmth of a stranger’s good graces.

So, to hell with the consequences. Anyone brave enough to put a target on Silver’s back will have to go through me. And God help the poor souls who suffer the full extent of my wrath.

“Exactly.” I approach her cautiously, challenging myself to meet her eyes and failing as her chest bounces with every breath she draws. “The image in my mind couldn’t live up to the real thing. And I’d hate myself in the morning if I missed my opportunity.”

“For what?” Silver drops her leggings at her feet and shifts her arms to her sides. Her sultry tone has changed almost nervously. Eager to see where I plan on taking this.

Unluckily for the both of us, I haven’t thought that far. Peering through a crack in the door and standing face-to-face with this beauty are worlds apart.

Well, my second head brought me this far, better let it do the thinking from here.

“This.” I take three long strides to reach her before I wrap a hand around her neck. No more words, just actions.

With my new grip on Silver, I pull her closer until her warm breath caresses my lips.

Our mouths meet in a ferocious embrace. Tongues bash through our lips and dance across one another as primal noises bellow out from deep inside my chest.

Silver's hands dance over the front of my chest. Her fingers find every groove of my muscular abdomen, tracing lines as they descend further. My hands aren't far behind. The one holding her neck sinks down her back, caressing every inch of her bare skin.

I don't have the same self-control she does. Slow and tactful isn't part of my handbook, and before I realize what I'm doing, I've got a firm grip on her ass cheeks.

"Fucking amazing," I manage to get out in a moment when Silver catches her breath from the kiss.

"Smooth talker, huh?" she teases before she drives forward again, and her hands finally meet my belt.

Our mouths lock again as she unbuckles it and pulls it painfully slow through the belt loops. She discards it at our feet before working the top button of my trousers.

My hands are too busy feeling her ass and playing with tearing at the cotton panties to stop her. Not that I really want to, but I'm not going to take advantage of this pretty little thing inside an office in the backroom of her diner. This is all about Silver. Blowing her mind and leaving her a puddle, begging for more until the end of time.

As my pants drop to meet my belt, I plan on making it known.

"Now, who's naughty?" I break our kiss and take a step back.

Silver's eyes instantly drop to my meaty erection, teasing the limits of my dark gray boxers.



“Holy shit.” Her mouth is parted in awe at the sight, and my desperation wishes she was on her knees and ready to receive it. “That thing’s going to break me in half.”

“It will, but not tonight.”

Her brow scrunches up in confusion and slight annoyance, but I don’t give her long to brood. I grab her by the shoulders and spin her around until she’s facing an old single-seater recliner in the corner. Her gym bag and the rest of her clothes are on top of it, but she flings them to the floor as I nudge her toward it.

“On your knees. Stick your ass out. I want to see it,” I order, and Silver does as instructed.

She moves slowly, pressing one knee into the cushion, then the next, before parting her legs and arching her back to stick her ass out.

“Like this?” She faces me over her shoulder, just in time to see me collapse to the floor to truly worship her stunning attributes.

I nod because all words escape me.

I slide my hands up her calves, then her thighs, and finally get a grip on the waistband of her panties. A small wet spot stains the thin fabric.

I tear the tiny strip of material and shove it into my pocket. I’d have loved to shove them in my mouth, but why waste an opportunity to drink straight from her source?

“Like what you see?” Silver asks. With another haphazard giggle, she shakes her ass in my face.

Fucking love. Need it. Can’t live without it.

For someone so tiny, Silver's ass is a plump, round peach that holds my attention far longer than I'd have liked. So long, in fact, that I nearly topple over when my eyes finally trail down to the pink wetness below it.

"It's perfect." I move my hands back along her legs until I settle them on her ass. With a squeeze, I part her cheeks, and the motion spreads her lips. And, like in the bar, I salivate at the sight.

So close now, I just need to stick my tongue out and take her. Rattle the very foundation she stands on. Shatter her mind the way she's done to me. Claim her as mine.

No more thoughts, just actions.

I dart my head forward until the flat pad of my tongue connects with Silver's thighs. Shit, maybe the Old Buck did hit me harder than I thought. I was aiming for her pussy. My mistake doesn't stop me from lapping at every inch of her soaked flesh, breathing in the intoxicating scent of her womanly aroma while quenching my thirst on her sweet nectar.

Silver instantly lunges forward, and a loud squeal tears from her lips. Her fists clench against the leather back of the recliner, and it mimics her sounds.

I move my head across her inner thighs, kissing and licking her flushed skin.

This is it. The moment I've been waiting for, and it feels like Christmas morning. The tip of my tongue finds its way against her folds, sinking until it connects with the swollen bead of her clitoris.

"Ah, fuck," Silver groans above me, and she starts shifting her hips in a rhythmic motion toward my mouth.

My tongue dances over her clit, up her pussy lips, and to her hole. I sharpen the tip from the flat pad and slide it inside her, and she can't contain her frantic moans and unsteady breathing.

"So fucking good," she mutters, bucking her hips more feverishly toward me. "I'm gonna?—"

She doesn't finish the sentence, instead erupting into a mess of choked moans and rattling limbs, her liquids spilling into my mouth.

I lap at every drop. It would be a sin to let any of it go to waste, and it inspires more jolted spasms from Silver.

When I finally manage to get a hold of myself, Silver turns to me over her shoulder again. Her cheeks are glowing a bright shade of red, and she's wearing a smile that stretches on for miles.

"Your turn," she pants, spinning around in the recliner.

I hate to see her ass go, but getting another glimpse of the perfect orbs hanging from her chest is a wonderful consolation.

Pressing my palm to her cheek to hold her in place as I fling my face back to hers, I lose myself in another kiss. Partly to give her a taste of what she so generously allowed me to fill up on, but mostly because I can't get enough of this woman.

"Sure," I say and part from our kiss. "But not tonight. Not here. I'd rather wait until we're a little more comfortable to break this little body of yours."

She giggles at the comment and rolls her eyes as she snakes her way off the recliner. "Is that so?" She crawls her way onto my lap. Her still-soaked thighs meet my aching

cock, and she groans as she wriggles her hips against it.

“It kills me to say it, but yes.” Feeble words leave my devastated mouth.

One-night stands are one thing, but I don’t want to have one with Silver. If I’m going to do this, it’ll be done right. By the imaginary book of *How To Be A Gentleman* , so she knows I’m not just in it for a fling.

Her lower lip juts out in a pout, and she crosses her arms over her chest. “That’s not fair. I want it, and I want it now.” Her playful tantrum doesn’t extend to her eyes, making me sigh in relief.

I won’t be able to hold myself back any longer if she truly insists on taking what she wants right here, right now.

After another kiss and a few more minutes of Silver grinding against me, she stands up and prepares the recliner to use as a bed. I strip down to my boxers, and Silver doesn’t bother dressing more than her sports bra before we crumble into the chair together.

How the hell did I get here?

One minute, I’m trying to escape from the nightmare of my life, and the next, I’m in the arms of an angel who makes me believe everything will be okay.

But I’m not one to decline the miracles of life, and as I hold her soft body against mine, I realize this might be the biggest one so far.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:20 am*

6

SILVER

B zzt. Bzzt. Bzzt.

A low hum against my side tears me from slumber. In the brief moment of hungover wake-up confusion, a sharp spike of fear runs up my spine at the feeling of two strong arms wrapped around my shoulders.

I'm so used to being and living alone that I only manage to still myself when I see Salvatore's face. For such a rock-hard man, he's wearing such a gentle smile as he nuzzles his way tighter into me.

Seeing him brings warmth to my heart, which quickly transfers to my cheeks as I remember what we did last night.

With a gentle peck to his cheek, Salvatore's golden eyes open. The smile never breaks, and his gentle fingers make their way up to my cheek.

"God, you're beautiful," he says.

And yet again, my cheeks start to burn uncomfortably.

"Now, where did that come from?" I giggle to hide my embarrassment and shuffle out of his arms.

“The bottom of my heart.” Salvatore’s calm confidence is followed by a cheeky wink as he stretches out with more room on the recliner. “Where are you off to in such a hurry?” His eyes trail me across the room as I head for the door.

“To see if the storm has subsided.” As bad as the storms can be, and as much as I want to get home, I hope it hasn’t.

I’m not ready for our time together to end, at least not until I’ve gotten the chance to follow up with what we spoke about last night anyway. His tongue felt amazing, but I want the rest of him.

But I’ve got a feeling that the Lion is a busy man who will have to return to his life as soon as the opportunity presents itself. So I plod my way through the diner and back to the front, still wearing nothing but a smile, praying that black clouds hang overhead and spikes of ice rain down.

“How’s it looking out there?” Salvatore calls from the hallway. His head is the only part of him sticking out of the door.

“It’s...” My heart sinks as I reach the giant glass windows looking outside. Snow still falls, and there are clouds, but they are the furthest thing from dangerous I’ve seen in a long time. “It’s clear.”

“You sound sad about it.” Salvatore steps into the hallway, wrapping the blanket we shared around his broad shoulders.

“I am a little,” I sigh. Admitting it makes me sound pathetic, but I’ve got one chance at letting him know I’m not finished with him yet. Better make it count.

“Why? I thought you’d be happy to get out of here.” He shrugs and makes his way over to me.

In another heartwarming gesture, Salvatore wraps half the blanket around my shoulders and yanks me into his side.

“I...” Don’t want to lie to him, but being honest will make me sound pathetic. So I let the word ring out for a while, hoping it would buy me enough time to come up with a proper excuse.

“Ah, I see what’s going on here,” Salvatore jumps in before something comes to mind. “And you don’t have to worry, my pretty little thing. I don’t plan on going anywhere yet.”

Trying to contain the excitement of his words is a fool’s errand. I’m practically vibrating at the thought of spending more time with Salvatore.

“How did you know?” I do my best to play it off coyly.

“Your depressed stare at my car.” He squeezes me tighter into his side while he chuckles playfully. “Jokes aside, it’s because I don’t want to go anywhere either. Hell, I’d spend the rest of my life here if it meant spending it with you.”

God, so cheesy. Yet, it’s exactly what I need to hear.

“As fun as that sounds, I’d rather spend it at my place. Maybe even in my bed,” I say. Salvatore’s jaw nearly smashes into the tiled floor below us at my suggestion.

“Then why the hell are we standing here?” He claws for my wrist and half-sprints back to the office to gather our things.

Before I know it, we’re in his car, traveling down the snow-covered roads toward my one-bedroom apartment.

I can't keep my hands off Salvatore the whole drive over. They wander across his body, gently tease his thick girth with my fingertips, and mostly give him payback for how he left me last night—a desperate mess ready for the next step.

Sure, we're going to have some fun, and the wicked grin my touching brings across his face tells me I'm playing straight into Salvatore's fantasies.



### SILVER

We can't keep our hands to ourselves as we reach my condominium. Salvatore's have returned to his new favorite position, cupping my ass, while mine find new planes and packed muscle making up his sculpted physique. He kissed me the moment we stepped out of his car, and neither of us has broken it since. Even as we tumble and nearly fall to our asses because we can't see where we're walking, the thrill of being entwined together is far better than the consequence.

More than once, Salvatore has tried to undress me as we ascend the staircase, and I've reluctantly stopped him each time.

My neighbors could be watching, and if we didn't live in such a small-knit community where gossip spreads like a disease, I would've let him. But most of them are older, and I wouldn't want to be the cause of a heart attack or two because my bare ass is flashed in front of their windows.

Somehow, between our unsteady walking and inability to do anything but grope one another, we make it to my apartment. With my back to the door and one arm around Salvatore's shoulders to keep his head locked to mine, I manage to unlock and open the door.

Finally, we're inside, away from prying eyes, and Salvatore jumps at the opportunity. His fingertips slide into the waistband of my leggings and, without hesitation, tear them off me. My own start to tug away at the buttons of his shirt until it rolls off his

shoulders, exposing the white tank top beneath.

“Sal, wait,” I say between kisses and his attempt to pull my shirt over my head.

“I’m sorry. Am I going too fast?” He stops immediately and pulls his hands back, almost nervous that he’s crossed a boundary he wasn’t meant to.

“No. God no. Not fast enough,” I groan. “But I need a shower. Unless you like the smell of day-old bacon lingering on your woman?”

“The only shower you need is the one my cock’s going to open between your legs.”

“You’re not wrong, but I’ll only be a few minutes. Then I’m all yours.” I don’t give him time to answer before spinning on my heels and making my way past the kitchenette and toward my bedroom.

I can pretend that this shower is to get clean, and Salvatore might even believe it, but heading to the bathroom is for purely selfish reasons. My mind is riddled with the events of last night. Something about the way Salvatore watched me from the door and waited for me to be as close to naked as possible before he barged in lights a flame in my belly.

I want it again. Hell, I need it. To see the look in his eye while he observes me from the shadows. Drinks me in with his lustful gaze while I tease him by touching myself.

And that’s what I’m going to do. I start the shower and wait for the water to turn warm before I step inside. Like the office, only this time it’s intentional, I leave the door open enough for him to see inside.

Dirty thoughts immediately start swirling in my head. First of his tongue brushing against my sensitive areas, then mine running from the base to the tip of his cock.

One of those things actually happened, but the other would have, too, if he hadn't stopped me.

The picture of his enormous cock dangling in front of my face takes over my mind, and my body is quick to follow. My hands slide down my now-wet body, and every touch is an electric tingle that nestles in the warmth of my belly. My fingers dance across my skin until they find their place against the delicate nub between my thighs, and I allow them to do whatever they like while fantasies of the savage one room over scatter through my head.

When I open my eyes to see myself in the mirror, I'm not the only person standing in it. As expected, and as I wanted, Salvatore's staring straight back at me from the door. He's naked, with his hand wrapped around the base of his enormous cock. He strokes it back and forth, with lingering eyes nestled firmly between my thighs.

It's the first time I've seen him fully naked, and I love the sight of him. The front of his carved physique is littered with battle scars. Without even trying, every muscle in his body looks like it's flexing to the point of collapse.

It's the slab of meat dangling from his waist that has me entranced. Seeing it in his boxers, I knew it was big. But watching his already massive hands struggle to wrap around it fully is confirmation that he's going to split me in two.

God, I can't wait.

Rabid, primal growls erupt from deep inside Salvatore as he strokes himself. This voyeuristic longing, a fantasy we both share, it seems, is driving him as crazy as it is me.

"Ah, fuck," I whimper, and his eyes make their way up to mine. He doesn't break away from himself immediately. He stays there, watching, moaning, and losing his

internal battle to keep control.

“Ah, fuck,” he parrots my words and barges through the door. “I can’t wait any longer.”

“I’m surprised you made it this long,” I tease, feeling the first winding tension of what’s to come nestling in my core. Yesterday’s orgasm against his face was amazing, but I can already tell it’s going to pale in comparison to what the rest of him has to offer.

Salvatore doesn’t reply. His eyes are glazed over with a wild, frantic stare that tells me his mind is on one thing and one thing only. He needs this, and he’s going to take it.

He pulls open the shower door and flings his enormous frame into me. His hands instantly find my hips, and he pins me to the wall. With our bodies so close, his manhood presses against my belly, and I can feel it throbbing in anticipation.

Desperate roars emit from Salvatore, and timid whimpers part from me as our mouths lock in a long, heated embrace. With his grip on my hips, Salvatore starts lifting me up against the wet shower wall, and I wrap my legs around his hips for stability.

The head of his cock smashes against my entrance without needing assistance from either of us. Salvatore bucks his hips, and I release a shrieking moan into his mouth at the hefty weight pressing against my folds.

“You’re so fucking perfect,” Salvatore says between kisses. “A beam of pure, brilliant light.” He thrusts his hips again, and this time, without warning, the tip of his cock slips between my lips.

He doesn’t stop it from going further, even as his legs start to buckle, and we nearly

topple over. It glides slowly at first while Salvatore chokes on noises fighting eagerly to break out of his mouth.

My eyes roll to the back of my skull at the overwhelming sensation of his girth filling me to the brim. Every inch it slides deeper, tightens the coil in my core, and scratches the itch of lust and desire that started building up from the second I met him.

Salvatore flings his lips toward my neck, and his tongue starts to trail toward my chest as he sinks into my depths. Using his grip on my waist to lift me higher, his mouth eventually meets my breasts, and he wraps his lips around my pointy, peaked nipples.

I throw my arms around his shoulders and instinctively dig my nails into his back. He groans at the sensation, but he doesn't sound hurt. It's more like I'm throwing fuel to his fire, and the way his tongue flicks over my nipple and his hips start to buck feverishly confirm it.

"You feel so good inside me," I sputter.

I want to say more. That I've never felt a cock so good, that I don't want him to leave, and that I feel so oddly drawn to him that I never want this to end. But those words don't exist in my head. They're feelings and emotions that swirl from the ever-tightening coil in my core, which is getting knocked loose with every thrust of his incredible dick.

"So. Fucking. Tight," Salvatore groans one word after the next slowly. The wild look in his eyes that brought him into the shower has fully consumed his features now.

He's no longer the man I saw hovering at the door but a beast that needs this release to function. And I'll give it to him. Again and again until he's satisfied.

Until we're satisfied.

I start gyrating my hips in time with his feverish humping. I take everything he has to offer, with squeals of delight as my only sign of still being conscious.

"Are you going to come for me?" Salvatore asks as he pounds one long thrust after the next into me. "Are you going to come on my cock?"

Oh, fuck.

Those vulgar words are precisely what I needed to hear.

I make a sound somewhere between I am and I ahhhhhh ! as the spring inside me releases in an earth-shattering climax.

Salvatore's grip tightens, and his breathing becomes more rapid as I start to fumble and flail against him.

"Good girl," he whispers against my chest, but I can hear the strain on his voice. He's close. Right on the verge of his own tantric release, and I want to feel it inside me.

I start pulling him with my legs around his waist, scanning his face for the inevitable signs. Heavy breathing, anguished groaning, and rolling eyes with each and every thrust.

With a lion's roar that echoes intensely through the bathroom, I feel it. His hot seed floods my pussy as his thrusting moves from fast and precise to slower and more deliberate. He squeezes onto me so tightly, pinning me in place, while his mouth returns to my breasts as a way to still the noises erupting from him.

His lips don't linger there long before they glide their way up my body and to my

mouth. He locks me in a deep kiss, fueled by desire from our joint release.

I didn't want to admit it last night, but Salvatore was right.

This was worth the wait. Every second of it, perfection.

But now that our fun is over comes the hardest question.

Where do we go from here?

### SALVATORE

“Y our phone’s ringing again,” Silver says without making any attempt to lift herself off my body. From the shower, we towed ourselves off and collapsed in her bed, and it’s here we’ve remained since.

“Non-stop,” I grumble and turn to the little black device buzzing on the floor. I don’t need to see the screen to know it’s Dante, back at his attempt to get a hold of me. “Let it ring. I don’t want to be anywhere else.”

“Neither do I.” Silver’s grim tone comes with stirring. It’s subtle at first, slowly creeping her head off my chest and removing her arm from across my body.

“Why do I sense a big, hairy but on the horizon?” It’s bound to happen. As much as I want to, we can’t spend the rest of our lives in her double bed.

“Because even though you’d prefer mine, the big hairy is wagging in your face?” She snickers as she tears herself off me and gets to her feet. “You’ve got to deal with whatever that is, and I have to get back to work. One stormy night isn’t going to stop the hard-working folk of Crawford from demanding their morning brew.” Silver sounds upset that she has to leave. That’s a good sign if I’ve ever seen one.

Not that she’s sad, of course. Instead, like me, she doesn’t want this to end.

“Holy fuck, I thought you were dead.” Dante ignores pleasantries, and the panic in



his voice gives me enough reason why.

Though I've disappeared on him for the better part of twelve hours, he doesn't dare question where I've been or what I've been up to. Dante's sort of loyalty is near-impossible to find in this modern age, and I could never express just how much I appreciate it.

"Still kicking. What's going on, Dante?" Best to get ahead of whatever this is without idle chitchat. The sooner I can sort it out, the sooner I can return to Silver's bed.

"Harry's on a war path. He's been hitting our boys all night. We've suffered three casualties at the hands of his mercs, but they're gunning for you."

Fuck. I should've seen that coming, but finding Silver in a snowstorm stripped me of all my senses. It was all about her. I didn't care what happened outside the four walls of her diner. And now I'm suffering the cost of good men who have fallen because of my terrible decisions.

I remove the phone from my ear and flick the loudspeaker so she can listen while dressing. It's for work, but if this conversation is headed where I think it is, I refuse to let her out of my sight.

"So, he ignored me then." I feel the venomous sting of fury bubbling inside my chest. I made myself clear to Harry. The next time we have the misfortune of crossing paths, I'd be the last thing he ever sees.

"Guess so, but there's no time to think about that now. We need to get you back to the Lion's Den."

Silver pulls a dark t-shirt over her head before her eyes turn to me. Nervousness bubbles inside the deep blue pools.

“I’ll head back now,” I answer, extending a hand toward Silver. She rushes closer, taking my hand in a firm squeeze. “But it’s not my safety I’m concerned about, Dante. I met a woman. She’s...” Amazing. Beautiful. Perfect beyond the meaning of the word. Everything I could have wished for and more. “Her safety is my main priority. We’ll return to the Lion’s Den and figure out how to deal with Harry together, but I want you to ensure that nothing happens to Silver.”

“Understood,” he says, not even trying to second-guess my decision.

But how could he, having felt the pure exhilaration of meeting the love of his life only a few short months ago?

“Are you willing to join me?” I ask Silver, who hasn’t left my side since I let her listen in to the call.

“Wherever you go, I go.” She wraps herself under my arm.

“Pack a bag and bring whatever you need because we’re walking into a war zone, and I need you to be ready.”

“I’ll need to make a stop before we head back to the city,” Silver says, gathering her things for an extended stay in the Lion’s Den.

“Back at the shop?” I ask, escorting her from the bedroom and out of her apartment.

“No. My parents’ place.”

Confused but in no position to argue about needing to get out of here, I accept. Whatever she’s collecting must be important, but the sly smirk on her face tells me Silver’s cooking up a plan of her own.

Here's hoping whatever it is won't have to come to fruition.

### SILVER

Dense trees, still covered in last night's snow, tower around me as I drive down the long, narrow road leading back to the Lion's Den.

Against my wishes to drive together, Salvatore insisted we take separate cars on the off-chance something happened to him on the road. After a lengthy back and forth outside my parents' place, I relented and accepted his wishes.

He knows what we're walking into, after all, and this is new to me.

"There's a roadblock up ahead," Salvatore's voice comes through my car's Bluetooth system.

We started a call the second we got into separate vehicles. The rational part of me understands that it's so we can keep in contact and make sure we're moving along smoothly.

"Police?" I ask, gulping nervously.

"Black cars. No lights." His brake lights shine as the cars come into my view. A heavily armed man waves his arm toward Salvatore's car, motioning that he get out of the road. "I want you to keep on driving. Go to the Lion's Den and find Dante Vitorri. He'll know what to do."

“Sal, I’m not—” He kills the call as I drive by, and I watch two of the armed men approach his window with raised guns.

I continue staring at them through my rearview mirror as I continue down the road. Terror nips at my heels, and every inch of me wants to turn away as my greatest fears start to become a reality.

What if they shoot him where he’s sitting? How could I live with myself if I watched it through the tiny mirror hanging above my head?

I need to do something. I can’t just leave him here alone.

And I’ve got the perfect solution to our problem. I keep the men in their black cars in focus until they become nothing more than tiny ants moving Salvatore from his car to their trucks. When they’re barely visible, I pull my Jeep off the road and hide it inside the tree line.

Shoving my hand into the backseat, I grab the leather-bound rifle I collected from my parent’s place.

“Alright, Bucky,” I whisper to the gun, feeling almost crazy doing so. “Let’s see why Dad loves you so much.”

Jumping out of the driver’s seat, I take my position among the trees. I train Bucky’s scope down the length of the road until I find my targets. The last few heavily armored men get into the back of the car, and it starts to move toward me.

God, the things I do for love.

Wait a second. Is that what this is? Having it play in the back of my mind is one thing, but actually using the L-word makes my cheeks burn so hot, even the frigid

cold can't permeate them.

I could've never guessed it would come my way under such peculiar circumstances, either. Shut in from a snowstorm, meeting a man trying to escape his own past, only to find myself training a scope on the black, hulking monstrosity of a car heading my way.

Gotta love life's little treasures, even if they aren't always easy to grab.

"Okay," I draw a long breath and exhale it into a thin white mist. "Time to be brave."

Bang!

The first shot rings out, and birds instantly squawk overhead as they rush to fly off to safety.

Bang!

I fire a second in case I missed my target with the first. But I've always been a pretty good shot, and Salvatore's abductors start swerving ahead, coming to a sudden stop when their vehicle smashes into one of the huge blue spruce trees on my side of the road.

My victory is short-lived as three of the four men who escorted Salvatore into the car emerge from the front seat. They use their doors as cover, aiming the barrels of their assault rifles in my direction, and open fire without hesitation.

Had I been braver, I'd have aimed for the driver while the second would be focused on the guy next to him. But shooting a deer for Sunday lunch and providing food to my community is a far reach from taking a human life.

But like I said, it's time to be brave. I duck back into the tree line and get into my car.

I've done all I can to help Salvatore; the rest is for him to figure out.

I just hope I've done enough.

### SALVATORE

If there was ever a doubt in my mind that Silver wasn't the perfect woman for me, it's gone now. She had every opportunity to vanish, save herself, and find security in the comfort of my home and the company of my people. Yet, she risked it all to ensure I'd still be at her side.

Happiness is an understatement for how my heart swells at the thought. Even as I sit beside one of the men handcuffed, I can't stop the overwhelming love coursing through my veins.

But we're not out of the woods yet, literally or figuratively, and it's time to do what I do best.

"What the fuck?" the guy beside me grumbles while he tries to catch his bearings. He took the hardest blow out of the four, with his face plummeting into the driver's seat because he wasn't wearing a seat belt.

His disorientation gives me an opportunity to throw my bound hands toward the pistol on his hip. He tries to fight me for it, but with blood pouring from his broken nose and misplaced attempts to grab at my arms, I manage to put two bullets in his chest before he can touch me.

After searching his body for a key to my cuffs, I exit the car, half expecting to find a firing squad ready to gun me down. But two of the remaining mercenaries have



disappeared into the tree line, with the third close behind.

Didn't he hear the gunshots? Or is he truly so fucking brazen to believe his colleague would get the jump on me?

Either way, I put a bullet in the back of his head before making my way into the trees and following along them to find the bastards trying to hunt Silver.

"What the fuck's going on back there, Joey?" my third victim calls out. Big mistake. His voice is what leads me directly to him.

The last two of Harry's men haven't made it far. I'm glad to see it, too. It means I can deal with them and get back to Silver long before they have a chance of getting close to her. My only fear is that she has already seen too much and won't want to continue this charade with me after what I've done.

But her safety is far more important than my worries. These men are out for a pound of flesh, and they'll take it without batting an eye.

"Ah, shit. Let's get this done quickly. I think something happened to the boys," he mutters to the merc ahead of him.

"Something?" the fourth scoffs. "The Lion got 'em. And we'll be next if we don't deal with whoever's at the end of this road."

Speaking about me like I'm some fairy-tale monster fills me with a deep sense of pride I shouldn't be this excited about.

"You're not making it that far," I say, firing two expertly placed shots into the remaining mercenaries.

It's no wonder I got to Harry so fucking easily. He's employing the worst soldiers I've ever seen. But their deaths bring with them a deep sense of irrational insecurity.

Somewhere along this road, Silver is waiting for me. Beautiful as the thought is, will my actions scare her away? With adrenaline thumping through my body, it's a fear I haven't been able to deal with. Now, as I walk over the last two dead bodies in the only direction she could be, I feel crippled by it.

"Silver?" I call once I've made my way far enough to hide the dead behind me. No matter what she believes transpired with my escape, she doesn't need to see them. Doesn't need to know the monster I truly am.

"Over here." Her reply guides me in her direction.

I find her huddled behind her car, the barrel of her rifle panning across the treeline ahead of her. I expect to see fear in her big blue eyes, but instead, there's an icy determination—the kind that only comes from a seasoned survival instinct.

"It's done," I say, holding the mercenary's gun into the air and dropping it to the floor.

"How did you?—"

I cut off her question with a shake of my head. "We're safe now, Silver. That's all that matters."

She drops her gun and sprints toward me, wrapping her arms around my shoulders and pulling me into a tight bear hug. She bounces against my frame, elated that we survived the onslaught and can live to tell the tale.

"Ready to get out of here?" I peck her on the lips and break our hug to take her hand

in mine.

“As long as it’s at your side,” she answers.

Though I know my battle isn’t over, and Harry is still out there waiting in the wings, none of that seems to matter. The only thing that does is walking hand in hand with the woman I love, pretending the world isn’t on fire.

11

SILVER

One Week Later

“Well, isn’t this a surprise?” Salvatore says, rolling his chair out from under his desk as I cross the vast expanse of his office. Holy shit, this single room is bigger than my entire apartment.

“Thought you could use a pick-me-up,” I say, holding two to-go cups of coffee with my diner’s logo on the front.

After what happened with our grand escape from Harry’s men, I had to head back home. Salvatore hated the idea, somewhat for my safety but mostly because he couldn’t stand the thought of not seeing me again for a few days. Like him, I had a few loose ends to tie up before I could give myself over.

Now, with Dad back at the helm of the diner and Mom helping wherever she can, I can start whatever future Salvatore Lione has in store for us.

He tries to stand when I get to his side of the desk, but with a single finger pressed into his chest, I force him to stay seated in his chair. A week without him in my presence was hard enough, but not being able to use and abuse the python between his legs was pure torture.

I won’t give him another second to keep it away from me.

Fire burns in Salvatore's golden eyes as I lower myself onto his lap. I discard the long-cold coffee cups on his desk and swing my arms around his neck.

"I missed you, big boy," I say, leaning in close and giving him our first kiss in way too long.

He reciprocates it, moving his hands underneath my dress and finding his favorite spot on my ass.

Blood rushes to his cock in an instant, and the huge slab of meat immediately starts to struggle against his pants. I know I shouldn't be doing this with him at work and all, but there's no way I can let this opportunity slip me by.

I slowly trail my hands down the front of his body and work his trousers to free the beast from its confines. The second it bobs free from the restrictive prison of his boxers, Salvatore releases a quivering moan that tickles my brain.

"Don't worry," I whisper against his lips as I take a firm hold on the base of his swollen member. "It's why I wore a dress. Neither of us has to get naked."

"To hell with that," Salvatore growls. His hands slide up my back, and he shoves them through my neckline to grab the spaghetti straps holding my dress up.

With a hard tug, they fall down my arms, and my tits bounce free from the cups.

"No bra. No panties. You came prepared," he groans as I adjust his cock toward my already soaking pussy. Having this moment play on repeat in my head for a week will do that, I guess.

"I did. But now it's time we both came properly." A silly play on words, but who could blame me? My mind is on other things.

Salvatore leans in to slide his cock between my silky folds. His mouth moves in haphazard freedom with nibbles, licks, and kisses all over my chest. It stops with a satisfied ah, fuck , as I sink my wetness around his girth.

I move my hand back to his jawline, using it to guide his lips back to mine. He doesn't waste a second to lick my thumb that got drenched as I slide him inside of me.

Everything about Salvatore is so fucking hot, but the way he can't get enough of me has to be the best part. He sucks my digit clean before he parts with it to kiss me again. As our mouths meld together, I rock back and forth, adjusting to his size.

Not that I think it's actually possible. Every time I move up and back down, his cock manages to find new and tantalizing ways to tease and pleasure me.

While we make out, I start bouncing harder, faster, and deeper. I gyrate my hips as my body starts to rattle from sheer delight. Salvatore adjusts his hips lower in his chair until half his ass is hanging off the seat.

He plants his feet firmly on the ground, and with his new leverage, he starts thrusting his hips in time with my movements.

"Jesus Christ, you feel so fucking amazing," I mutter and sputter words that sound foreign to my ear.

Salvatore doesn't reply. He can't. Too focused on his task of delivering absolute satisfaction. His growls and groans fill my ears. He isn't worried about who hears him, and I manage to follow suit, allowing my shrieking moans to escape against his lips.

"I'm going to fill your warm cunt, baby." Salvatore's vulgar words are precisely what

I need to hear. They switch my brain off and hurl me over the edge of absolute gratification.

My skin tingles with pure electric energy, and my body shakes in ways I never knew possible. The feeling of my climax around his cock makes Salvatore buck his hips in a feverish need for his own release.

“Fill you up. Claim you as mine.” He struggles to get the words out, but he needs to say them.

I have my own things to say, even if they come out in a disjointed mess. “I’m...” Two more hard thrusts nearly knock the words out of my mouth. “Already yours,” I finish.

With it, Salvatore loses control. His chaotic rhythm starts to speed up as he drives every inch he has to offer into me.

He releases his hot, sticky liquid inside of me with three powerful thrusts before crumbling into his chair. Spent, exhausted, and heaving air into our lungs, I give him a tender kiss.

A sign of what’s to come, I suppose. That I’m not going anywhere just because of what happened.

“Boss, I need to tell you som—” Dante Vitorri says from the door as he barges in without knocking. “Sweet, baby, fuck. I didn’t see nothing,” he roars as he makes a quick escape from his interruption.

Salvatore and I chuckle against each other’s lips. Lost in the clarity of release, our loving embrace, and the promise of our bright future.

### EPILOGUE

### SALVATORE

#### Six Months Later

Dante and Romeo sit in front of me. Their wives are at the bar, collecting drinks and greeting the horde of familiar faces who attended each of our weddings.

“I never thought I’d see the day where the Lion got hitched,” Romeo says, easing back in his chair. “Think it’s going to be harder keeping your boys in line when you’re the one bending at the knee for your wife?”

Dante chuckles, and so do I. I’d usually be against this sort of insubordination, but considering I’m moments away from sharing my first dance with my wife, I don’t give a shit about Romeo stepping out of line. It’s all fun and games anyway, and he’s just throwing back what I dished him when he was in the same position.

“If you knew what was under that dress, you’d know why I do my best work being bent over in front of her,” I wink and get up from my chair. “If you’ll excuse me, gentlemen?—”

“Boss, before you go.” Dante raises a hand to stop me from retreating too soon. “We’ve got some news about Harry.”

“He’s not dead before you get your hopes up,” Romeo cuts in. It’s like the two of them rehearsed this. “But we’ve bashed his mercenaries for six months, and it’s eaten



into his wallet.”

“He won’t be bothering us anymore. This time, he really knows what will happen if he steps out of line again,” Dante concludes.

“I don’t give a fuck about Harry right now,” I scoff. “Glad you did it, but today isn’t about me or our business. It’s about her.”

I gesture toward the dance floor, where through a sea of moving bodies, Silver sways in her father’s arms. I’m glad we’ve managed to do right by the people of Delta County, and knocking Harry from his perch means that people like her dad—the good, salt-of-the-earth kind—stand a fighting chance.

But discussing it here is a disservice to Silver. Tomorrow is another day.

I cross the distance between me and Silver in an instant. Her dad catches my eye as I approach them, giving me a tender smile. I return it with a nod of my head.

“May I steal Silver for a dance?” I ask politely.

“Of course, son,” he says with fatherly pride as he steps away from his daughter. “Now, don’t get too tuckered out. It’s a long-standing tradition in our house that the boys have to have their one-on-one behind a bottle of whiskey. And I’m counting on you honoring the tradition.”

“Old Buck?” I raise a brow and scoff at the realization that his gun’s name, Bucky, must’ve come from his favorite bottle of liquor.

“There’s my boy.” He pats me on the back as he passes.

I take Silver’s hands in mine, and we dance to a song in mostly silence, apart from a

giggle or two from her at my lack of coordination.

“You look beautiful today,” I say, in the pause of the DJ changing songs.

“With talk like that, I’d think you were trying to get under my dress, Mr. Lione.” Silver lifts herself onto her toes and presses a delicate kiss on the tip of my nose.

“Am I that easy to read?” I chuckle as I sway with her once more, even before the music begins to play.

“You are, and that’s what I love about you.”

“Well, I love you too. So fucking much.” It feels amazing to say those words out loud.

And I will say it over and over again until the day I die.

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 3:20 am*

SILVER

Three Years Later

“Order up,” Salvatore calls from the kitchen as the sound of a plate strikes the metal divider between the kitchen and my counter. “Two Early Bird specials and a bowl of porridge, ready to go.”

“You know you don’t have to announce our breakfast, right?” I burst out laughing as I get a look at my husband through the hole in the wall.

“How am I going to get my practice in if I don’t do it when the diner’s empty?” He cleans his hands on a pristine white dishcloth hanging over his shoulder.

“By doing it when the diner’s busy,” I tease, allowing myself the indulgence of checking out his ass while he walks to the rotating doors that lead back to the front of the shop.

“Daddy,” Sylvia, our daughter, shouts at the sight of Salvatore coming into view. “I drew you a picture.”

She runs to Salvatore, and he catches her, hoisting her high into the air before inspecting the picture.

“It’s Mommy, Daddy, and me,” Sylvia says, pointing at each of us on the page.

“And who’s this?” Salvatore turns to point at a strange lump of brown standing next

to Sylvia on the page.

“That’s our puppy,” she announces triumphantly, believing that if it’s on the page, it will come true.

Salvatore and I both laugh, and he pulls me into their hug. “We’ll have to convince your momma of it first, but who am I to say no? Look how happy he is.”

I giggle against his chest, observing the picture once more. Three stick figures, all smiles in the sunshine, with a square-blocked house behind.

When we met in this diner all those years ago, I never thought my life would turn out like this. Happiness and a family felt like a dream that only other people had the fortune of living.

Yet, here we stand. With a daughter in our arms and Salvatore having dropped his old life behind him for the simpler side of running a diner in the middle of nowhere.

“I love you,” I say, feeling the warm sting of a tear flooding my eyelids.

Sylvia is the first to answer. “I love you more.”

Salvatore’s turn comes with a gentle squeeze on my shoulder. “And I love you both most.”

The End

Thanks for reading!