

WANITTA
PRAKS

MAID to the
MAFIA

A NOVELLA: PREQUEL TO TOTALLY CAPTIVATED

Maid to the Mafia
Prequel to Totally Captivated
(Maid to the Mafia Book 0.5)
Wanitta Praks

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WANITTA PRAKS

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all my fans who laughed out loud when reading my books. You rock.

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From Wanitta Praks

Hello,

Thanks for downloading this free novella, the prequel to Totally Captivated.

Maid to the mafia is the hilarious story of Jenny Stone, a maid and college student, who must work her ass off, day and night, to pay for her father's debt, only for her heart to end up totally captivated, intoxicated, and irresistibly attached to her mafia boss, Giovanni Dente.

Maid to the Mafia is my new series and I hope you will enjoy this one as you did with my other comedic series, Spinsters & Casanovas. It is guaranteed to make you laugh out loud. Well, I did anyway when I was writing. And I hope you will laugh too, or at least put a smile on your face.

So without further ado, read on.

And don't forget to love, laugh, and enjoy life.

WANITTA PRAKS

Romance with Emotion

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Prologue

Coffee for You

“Handsome boy. Are you hurt?”

The lone teen looked up upon hearing the little girl’s voice.

He scowled when he saw her, looking curious, with half a licorice hanging from her red lips. She was a little wee thing, no more than five, he estimated, with light-brown hair, a dull, boring color, tied into pigtails.

“Hurt?” he found himself asking.

“Mmm. Are you in pain? Want me to ring the doctor for you?”

Pain?

Another foreign word. Words that were never directed at him in all his fourteen years of life.

Oh, right. Of course she would ask such a question. He was hunched over, resting himself against the tall American beech tree in the secluded part of the national park, hands clenching his stomach. Any idiot could tell he was in pain.

But the thought amused him. And drove him crazy. And so he laughed. Laughed until he had tears in his eyes.

“Why are you laughing, handsome boy? Is it so painful that you laugh just to forget about it? I do that too when I’m in pain.”

Oh God. Oh fuck. A mere child, caring about his health, whereas his family hadn’t given a fuck about him since he was born. Only wanted to sculpt him to be the next big heir in their clan. His life was so fucked up.

“You shouldn’t talk to a person like me,” he said, finally dismissing her.

She cocked her head to one side, assessing him. “You look like a friendly person to me, handsome boy. You wouldn’t hurt me, would you?”

Hurt her? He should definitely hurt her if she didn’t move away from him in ten seconds. It was in his blood after all. To hurt people. To make money. That was his family’s ultimate goal, right? That’s what his family did. So why not him?

“I’m a bad guy. You got that? So go,” he growled, hoping to scare her so she would run off and play somewhere else. And hopefully, this time she would get the message and scam.

He closed his eyes, fighting hard to breathe. Fuck, one of his ribs must be broken. Even breathing was taking its toll. He felt pain all over, from his split lips to the bruise on his knuckles. It was a fight that was gruesome yet so satisfying. But he was slowly turning into the very facade of his family. Bile rose up his throat.

No. No. He didn’t want anything to do with them. He hated that he was born in this fucked-up family. An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth. No mincing words; just fight and kill. That was his family motto.

Fuck. Wasn’t he trying to run away from his own heritage? So why did he behave like them when a little provocation from his classmate caused him to unleash his inner demon?

God. He needed to flog that nightmare from his mind. He needed to be alone, *wanted* to be alone, so he could wallow in this misery. He didn’t need some little girl to console him. But no matter how hard he tried to shove back those memories, it still played in his head like that insistent pain in his heart.

They were in this park just hours prior. Four against one. Him against them. The son of a criminal against four policemen's sons. The unlawful verses the lawful. Fuck, what a tip of the scales. He'd used his fists to punch them. But they held him back, restraining him and punching him until what remained was a bloody pulp.

"What are you going to do?" He could hear them taunt him. "Just 'cause you're the son of a thug, you think you can hurt me? My old man's in the police force. He's not going to let a thug like you run America."

That was the last straw. He spurred into action and punched the living daylights out of those four. Yeah, four against one. But this one won. This one made four of them unconscious. Fuck. What had he become? A monster. Just like his family.

I control my own destiny. I control my own destiny, he chanted to himself, trying to erase that image from his head.

He flinched suddenly when he felt those small fingers tracing his hair, patting his head like he needed it. He looked up and met mossy green eyes. Fuck. She still didn't leave him. And her next words almost made tears leak from of his eyes.

"Is it sore, handsome boy? Does it hurt a lot?"

What was she referring to? His cut lips, his blue-black eyes, or the pain in his chest?

What a pathetic kid. What did she know about pain? From the look of her pink dress, she looked to be from a normal family, one he'd never experienced.

But his heart burned with that insistent threading of her fingers through his hair. And now he felt something else. Warmth, like he wanted her to caress his hair for real, with the love and care that one bestowed on someone you loved.

“Please don’t look too sad.” She consoled him, crouching down to sit in front of him. And then she looked up at him with a beaming smile on her face. “Ah. I got it. Wait here. Hold my licorice. I’ll be right back.”

She shoved the half-eaten black licorice into his palm and raced across the field. He saw her disappear into one of the cafés lining the streets opposite the national park.

He closed his eyes again. Good. She was gone. Which should make him happy, but he wasn’t.

He looked at the licorice in his hands. He should really throw it away. She was gone. She wasn’t going to come back. But she said she would, and something humane within him still grasped onto that licorice like it was his lifeline or something.

He gazed up into the sky, feeling the heat on his face. The midafternoon sun really was soothing. Such warmth. Such freedom. When would he feel this free again?

He really should head back home, though. And then tell his family what? That he had a fight. Trying to defend what he despised all along, only for his mother to taunt him again.

“A leaf never falls far from its branch. You better accept your position and embrace your fate.”

A strong coffee scent woke him from those hurtful memories. He lifted his head and saw the little girl was back. And she was holding a foamy drink in her hand.

“What’s this?” he asked, looking at the cup thrust in his face.

“Coffee. For you.” She beamed.

“I don’t want it.” He shifted his gaze to the sky again. Not a second later, the cup was in his face again. “I said I don’t want it. I don’t drink coffee.”

“But I made it for you.” Her little voice sounded slightly hurt.

Fuck. He hurt her feelings. And something within him died a little. “Look, I don’t drink coffee. Okay. I don’t like coffee.”

“How do you know if you’ve never drunk it?” she asked.

Because my whole fucking family drinks coffee like water. But he didn’t tell her that. And clearly, she was starting to irritate him. “Look. I just don’t like it, all right. Now leave me alone.”

“Can’t you just try it? It’ll make you happy. Try it. You’ll love it. Ma’s café is just across the road from here. I get to make coffee all I want. It’s really nice. She tells me I make good coffee, and when I grow up, she bets I’ll win a barista award. So you can be the judge. I just know you’ll like it because I put all my love in this cup. I want to see a smile on your face, handsome boy. Smile for me?”

She wanted to see him smile. For what?

“Go on. Drink it. I didn’t put any poison in it like that queen from Snow White with that apple thingy. Once you taste it, you’ll become addicted to it like cocaine. That’s what Ma always tells me. But I don’t know what cocaine is. I think she should compare it to chocolate. Do you like chocolate, handsome boy? I like chocolate. Taste it and see if my coffee tastes like chocolate.”

She held that black cup of coffee in her small fingers, not pushing him to accept it, but in turn making him feel guilty if he didn’t. He felt miserable, a thousand times worse than when he got into that fight.

“I can’t push you to like it, but you can choose to like it once you’ve tasted it. It’s your choice.”

It was his choice. He could choose to accept his fate and be the head of the clan at age fourteen or forgo the right and build his own future. But to start from scratch, with no support or money?

He reached out his hand and took the coffee cup from her grasp. And he drank it. He'd never tasted anything so bitter, so foul and disgusting, but for that one moment in his life, he felt happy, his heart singing loudly in his chest.

"What's your name, little girl?" he asked, taking another sip, finding he did like the taste.

"Jennifer." She smiled back, sitting next to him, shuffling her body until she was right beside him. Then she took out a series of bandages from her dress pocket and plastered his whole face with them.

He blinked, staring at her large green eyes in front of his face as she proceeded with her work.

"Wow, you have nice black eyes. I've never seen anyone with black eyes before. It's like looking into the night sky. Have you been outside at night and looked at the sky? It's very hard to see in the city, but my ma takes us to the country all the time, and there you can see the stars. They're so bright against the black sky, like your eyes. I like your eyes. I like you."

He blinked again and shook his head. Jennifer was talking a mile a minute. He couldn't comprehend what she was saying.

"I like you," she repeated, like he didn't hear her declaration the first time. "Can I be your friend?"

Friend. Another foreign word. No one wanted to be your friend when you're part of *that* family.

“Well, can I be your friend? Or do you like to be alone? But I mean, who wants to be alone anyway? Not me. I want to have friends. Don’t you?”

“I don’t know if you want to be my friend, though,” he managed to say at last. “Like I said, I’m not a good person.”

“What did you do? Did you hurt an animal? Ma says if you hurt an animal, you’re a bad person. Humans should never hurt animals. They have feelings too, you know. They feel the pain. So did you hurt any animals?”

“No. No, I didn’t hurt any animals.” He wanted to tell her he hurt humans, not animals, but couldn’t get the words out. What happened to those four? Were they still lying there on the ground, unconscious?

“Well, then you’re not a bad person,” she declared. “You’re cool. And I like you. So let’s be friends. I gotta go now. Ma is waiting for me in the café. Will you come back tomorrow? Meet me here tomorrow, and I’ll share some of my favorite licorice. Did you get to eat some when I gave it to you? They’re so nice. Pa always buys them for me. We’ll meet tomorrow, then. Bye for now.”

And she leaned in to kiss his bruised cheek. He was so surprised he jumped back and hit his head on a tree branch.

She giggled. “You’re so funny, handsome boy. I want to marry you when I grow up. Want to marry me?”

“I...” She shoved her face right in front of his eyes and all he could make out were those sparkling green pupils, sucking him into that whirlpool, captivating even his cold heart.

“Don’t answer me just yet. I’ll see you tomorrow. Wait for me, okay? I’ll see you tomorrow.” She raced off the field then. But not a minute went by before he saw her midget

body galloping toward him again. “I forgot to ask you for your name. What’s your name, handsome boy?”

“Gio. Call me Gio.” His lips stretched into a smile, again, a foreign expression on his face.

“Okay, Gio, handsome boy. I’ll see you tomorrow.” Another peck on his check and then she was gone again.

Gio’s heart smiled for the first time in his fourteen years. Tomorrow, he’d come. To see his new friend Jennifer.

* * * * *

Chapter One

Delivery Service

My Sweet Jenny,

Be a dear and deliver this letter for Pa. It's very important that you should deliver this by hand to Mr. Dente. I promise I'll give you more of your favorite licorice when you return. And I won't tell your sister.

Pa will see you soon.

I stared at the white envelope on the table, my heart about to drum out of my chest.

Pa! I wanted to yell at him. I missed my important accounting lecture because of this?

Pa had left a message for me to come home as soon as possible. It was an emergency. That was what the message had said. I'd thought he had an accident or something, so I was rushing to get here. I didn't know which was my left or right foot as I stumbled and fell to try to reach home in time. But what did I get when I got here? A note on the table, beside the white envelope that contained that letter.

What was he thinking? At the rate I was going, I wouldn't even pass the first year of university if Pa kept calling me out to do errands for him like this.

Use the post office for once, Pa. Surely he could just drop this letter off at the post office and be done with it. Why use me?

Then again, why did I bother to ask this silly question? It was because I wasn't good at anything else except for

errands like this. I wasn't beautiful, so no one really took a second look at me, unlike my sister Amelia, who was the star of her law school. In fact, I could blend in with the furniture very well. Sometimes, Pa and Amelia couldn't even tell the difference between me and the couch.

Despite all these negative comments about my appearance, though, I'd never been bothered by this. Brown hair with a dust of freckles on my nose and green catlike eyes, I considered myself to be quite cute.

But back to Pa, though. I wondered where he was right then. I'd definitely give him an earful when I saw him.

I went to search the house. It was empty, no one inside, not Pa or Amelia.

Where had they gone? At this hour, Pa should have been in his office, and Amelia should have been home doing the cooking. She didn't have class in the afternoon, unlike first years whose schedules were chock full of lectures.

I picked the letter up in my hand, dismissing Pa's absence for now. I examined the address. Upper East Side, Manhattan. It didn't look familiar to me.

Maybe I should put a few stamps on it and slot it in the postbox. That'd save me time. I recalled some stamps stashed away in my backpack somewhere. But Pa did say to deliver this letter by hand. And there was also the case of the licorice. It was tempting me next to the envelope.

"Humph!" I huffed to myself. *Who does he think he is, bribing me with candy? It's not like I'm five years old anymore. I can live without candy. Especially licorice.*

* * * * *

I was now walking along the streets of Islington Hill, chewing the licorice. How could I resist a bribe such as this licorice Pa bought for me? He knew it was my one weakness and he used it to his full advantage. I was surprised my teeth weren't covered with holes yet, what with the amounts of sweets I ate. But then again, my oral hygiene skills were spectacular.

After the initial shock, I took the bus and walked to deliver this letter. I was sure whatever contents were in the envelope, it must be something important. *Maybe Pa doesn't trust the post because it might go missing.* A sense of pride filled my chest.

"All right, Jenny. Let's deliver this letter for Pa and make him proud."

Cory Mansion, as stated on the address, was part of a well-established suburb in Upper East Side, Manhattan. If it weren't for the naked Adonis statue sitting in front of the huge fountain with a loincloth covering his private part, I was sure I'd have missed it altogether.

Adonis really is beautiful, even though he's made out of white marble. But imagine seeing a real live man that looks like Adonis. He'd be the god of all passion, a person that would totally captivate my heart.

"Ahh," I sighed. "So beautiful."

"What business do you have here?"

What? Who? Where? Did someone just speak?

I looked up and saw a camera pointed in my direction.

Oh, the speaker. I stared at the speaker and said, "I'm sorry. I was just admiring the statue."

"Any other business?"

Swallowing another piece of licorice, I replied, "I'm looking for Cory Mansion. Could you please tell me where it is?"

"This is Cory Mansion."

"Cor... Cory Mansion!" I almost choked on the licorice. I stared at the immaculate garden with lineage of green trees on either side, the fountain housing Adonis.

Wow! This mansion must belong to a millionaire.

And then a fleeting thought rushed through my head. *What business does Pa have with the resident of this multimillion-dollar mansion?*

"What business do you have with us?"

I swallowed the last remaining licorice and composed myself. "I'm here to deliver a letter on behalf of my Pa, Mr. Stone. It's to be handed to a Mr. Dente. May I see him?"

A few minutes passed by before the voice spoke again. "Come in. The gate will open in three seconds. Then walk along the white brick footpath and knock on the door three times. The front door will open."

What's this? White brick road and knock on the front door three times? What am I, Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz? I have a great sense of direction, thank you very much. I never get lost. But I did what the gate keeper told me to do. I knocked on the door three times. Then I stood back while the door took its time to reveal the inside of the property.

"Wow, what a waste of space," I muttered when I stepped inside.

The mansion itself was a huge block of ancient buildings that stood right at the center of the property. From outside, it looked beautiful, but on the inside, it was majestic. The whole foyer was the size of our house alone.

Except there was hardly any furniture around, unlike our house.

I was a hoarder, so I always managed to get some secondhand books or some sort of junk to decorate our home. But this place was just adorned with a few couches and an armchair. A beautiful chandelier dropped down from the ceiling, and a skylight provided light in the foyer.

I walked toward the lone armchair, almost not noticing a couple of buff-looking men who stood to the side, staring at me through black sunglasses. They almost gave me a fright, standing there like statues. They had their arms behind their backs, looking quite intimidating.

“Hi,” I managed.

The men didn’t respond, but just glared back at me. I sat in the chair uncomfortably, wondering what to do. Then something caught my eyes. I advanced toward them and saw they were guns. They looked like the real ones from *007*, the James Bond movie. *I wonder if I can touch it.*

Too late. Before anyone saw me, I held one in my hand. They’re heavy and...cold.

I turned the gun around and put my finger near the trigger. They did feel nice to the touch. Maybe I should have become a policewoman and caught all the bad guys instead of working my butt off for an accounting degree. Using this gun, I could have the ultimate power to tame anyone into submission. My evil side lurked, and I felt like Austin Powers, the bad one of course.

“They aren’t real, are they?” I asked one of the men in black, out of curiosity.

“They’re real,” came his clipped reply.

A shiver ran down my spine. *Okay.* I swallowed and felt my heart racing a bit. I put the gun back in its resting place and went back to sit in my seat like an obedient child.

Where have I landed? Surely this was even weirder than Oz. I only hoped those beautiful guns were used for decoration instead of actually killing people.

I knew I should have listened to my instincts and posted the letter instead. But I couldn't help being tempted by that licorice. Now my only hope was to have Mr. Dente appear fast so I could give him the letter and scam.

Suddenly, two more men walked past me. One came to stand right in front of me and stared down.

"You're the one with the letter?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied promptly.

"Come this way. Boss is ready to see you."

"Boss? Is he Mr. Dente?"

Me and my big mouth. It just wouldn't stop yapping when I was nervous. Then again, I was actually quite excited. I was eager to find out who the millionaire owner of this estate was. Maybe some old man in his sixties.

I was led to another stylish room with more guns out on display.

Is this a gun museum?

One of the men in the black suits walked in first. Then some moments later, I was urged to enter the room.

I walked in bravely, proud that I'd almost completed my task for Pa. As soon as I stepped inside, a man sitting behind the desk caught my attention. And almost knocked the air out of my lungs. The man was almost an exact replica of Adonis statue outside. My heart pounded and I smiled. But he didn't smile back. It didn't matter, though. I was here to

see Mr. Dente anyway, not this young man who barely passed for twenty-five.

“I’m here to see Mr. Dente,” I said before he could say anything.

He still didn’t respond, but continued to gaze at me with his midnight eyes. His facial expression twisted as if he’d sucked on a lemon.

“Give me that letter,” Adonis finally spoke.

“I’m sorry, but I can only give this to Mr. Dente,” I said.

“Give me that letter,” he repeated, this time more threatening.

I held the letter against my chest as if it were my lifeline. “But Pa said—”

“Give boss the letter.” One of the men in black trudged forward and snapped at me.

“No!” I snapped back. “Pa said to hand this letter only to Mr. Dente.” I stubbornly stood my ground.

I’ve no idea why I did that. It wasn’t like I was going to win a battle with these men anyway, but still, I wanted to make Pa proud.

“I *am* Giovanni Dente,” Adonis bit back from behind his desk.

I almost swallowed my own tongue. Giovanni Dente was this young man whom I had admired. *What does Pa have to do with this young man?*

I gave Giovanni the letter and smiled up at him again. “Why didn’t you say so in the first place? We could have avoided this whole confusion.”

He gave me a spiteful look and read the letter.

I didn’t know what to do with myself. He was busy reading. It wasn’t like I could talk to him when his eyes

were skimming across the page, his lips pulled tight. I busied myself with the display of more guns on the wall cabinet.

Gee, I seriously think this place is a gun museum.

Slap!

The sound of a fist meeting a table alerted me, and I shifted my attention to Adonis. His eyes were burning fire.

What's gotten him all fired up? Could it be—

“You’re very brave.” Giovanni still held my gaze, and then he started rubbing his lips.

“Well, I am brave,” I told him, eyes transfixed on those lips.

I was the one who had to carry a beehive filled with bees when I was only twelve years old. No one in my class could do that. They were scared they would get stung. I got stung too, but I was named the bravest girl in my class. Plus, I could ride a unicycle. Even though it was only for two minutes, I still considered that brave.

“Tsk!” He snarled at me and removed his fingers from those lips. That kind of woke me up, too. “Are you brave or stupid?”

Now wait a minute here. Was he trying to hit my sensitive spot? No amount of godlike beauty could get me to look at him in the same gentle way as that Adonis statue if he was going to start tossing negative comments like this.

“Excuse me?” I stated, chest thrust forward to show I wasn’t intimidated by him. “I am brave, and I’m clearly not stupid.”

“Then tell me.”

His voice suddenly sent a shocking tremble to my heart. *What’s this? Why is my heart beating so madly? Why does it seem I’ve heard that voice somewhere before?*

“If you’re not stupid, then why have you entered a mafia den all alone?”

Upon hearing that, all I could do was stupidly stammer back in disbelief, “Ma-ma-mafia den?”

* * * * *

Chapter Two

Brains before Beauty

“Mafia den...” I was still muttering to myself. I was really in the mafia’s den. I couldn’t believe this. I was going to die for sure. Worse yet, what did Pa have to do with all this? I looked at the man named Giovanni Dente, my Adonis in real life. “Are you sure you’re not jesting with me?”

Giovanni gave me a glare that could even kill a corpse.

“Do you think boss is joking?” one of the men said. “What do you think this place is? Disney Land?”

“What’s your name?” Giovanni asked, drawing everyone’s attention back to him.

I felt proud of myself suddenly, forgetting all about my circumstances. I was only eighteen, turning nineteen in three months and one day, but I’d achieved so much in life.

“My name is Jenny. I’m a first-year student at Brooklyn College. I study accounting. I’m very good at—”

“You’re ugly.” Giovanni dropped his line, making my jaw drop to the floor.

“Excuse me!” I huffed. “I may be plain, but I’m not *ugly*.”

Giovanni dismissed me with a wave. “Take the girl away. I can’t even bed her with my eyes closed. She talks too much.”

“You galoot,” I snapped.

Sure, I looked like I’d gone through a twister just to get here, not to mention running home after getting that fake message. My appearance right now was no match to a princess. In fact, I was no different from a beggar, what with my wild platted hair in a jumbled mess. But I was so not

ugly. I did have some beautiful points too, like my freckles, for example. They were beautiful and I was proud of them. So how dare that Adonis mafia boss degrade my appearance like this? I'd give him a piece of my mind.

"Give me a million dollars, and I still wouldn't bed you. In fact, even if you were the last man on this earth, I still wouldn't bed you. And hear this. Even if you were the last remaining man on this earth, and the fate of all humanity depended on us, I still wouldn't—"

"SHUT UP!" he barked. "Say one more word and I'll cut out your tongue and feed it to Beasty."

I wanted to blast another earful at him, but I was scared he might really cut out my tongue. I didn't know about these mafia people. They looked scary, acted scary, and behaved in a scary way, especially that big boss. I didn't want to have to find out if they were going to act on their threats or not. It was best if I kept quiet. But then my curiosity to know what was in that letter got the better of me.

"Can I ask what my pa wrote in the letter?" I tweeted out.

He glared at me again and then threw me the letter. I felt so mad. I really wanted to bash his handsome face. But what stopped me was that one single phrase in the letter that caught my attention when it landed on the floor.

...my daughter as collateral, in exchange for my debt...

"Debt! Collateral! Pa, you..." I went into full outrage mode. I screamed. I yelled. I cursed.

What was Pa thinking? Using me as collateral in exchange for his debt? So that's what it was all about. He wanted to trade me for his debt, his plain daughter.

I continued to yell and berate him. Even if he wasn't here to hear it, at least I felt better. I was about to release another throng of words when Giovanni stopped my outrage.

"GOD, you're so bloody annoying," he shouted. He massaged his temple, then fired a demand at the man beside him. "Bobby, take her away. Her screeching is hurting my ears."

The man named Bobby cowered in fear. "Yes, boss." And then he scratched his head. "Where to, boss?"

Giovanni almost lost his temper. He glared at his underling. "Do I have to spell out every single instruction? Use your brain for once. Go shoot her or throw her over a bridge or something. Just get her out of my sight."

"Come this way." Bobby dragged me until I almost lost my footing.

"Hey, take it slow, pal," I yelled, pain shooting up my leg. Then I turned to the big boss. "Look! How much does my dad owe you? Maybe we could work something out."

"What are you suggesting? If you want to trade your body, then I prefer to sleep with a pig."

"I'm not trading my body, you galoot," I yelled, firing back at him for comparing me to swine. "I'm proposing I pay for you via my excellent service."

Giovanni, that hot mafia man, assessed me for a second longer, and then he signaled his underling again. "Take her away."

"What?" I shrieked. No sooner had that word left my mouth, I was dragged out the door again.

I dug my foot on the floor to stop Bobby from dragging me forward. "Where are you taking me?" I pushed back and escaped his hold.

"To the bridge," Bobby said.

“No! You can’t throw me over the bridge,” I shrieked again. My voice echoed around the large foyer as I fought with Bobby to let me go. But he was as tough as a nail, sticking to my skin like a barnacle to a rock.

“Okay, then, I’ll shoot you right here.”

“No!” Both Giovanni and I chorused out at the same time.

I turned to stare at Giovanni in surprise. Did I have the wrong impression of this man? Had he decided to change his mind about killing me? Maybe he did have a kind bone in his body.

I smiled at him. He ignored me and said to Bobby, “If you want to kill her, take it outside. I just got the carpet replaced. It’s such a hassle to organize for a new one.”

What?

I was so freaked out of my bones. Did he really mean to kill me? That answered my question from before. Those guns on display out in the hallway, they weren’t merely for decoration.

“You can’t shoot me either. Not here nor outside,” I hurriedly objected. And then I revealed my last playing card. I yelled with my eyes closed, “I’m an asset to you.”

Giovanni smirked. “How are you an asset to me?”

Time to play the technical brain game. I squared my shoulders and looked up into his eyes. *If I can’t lie through my teeth then I’m a monkey’s uncle.*

“Let’s think about this for a minute,” I said like I was a major philosophy professor and he the student.

“I don’t have time,” he retorted, his face darkening a shade.

“Okay, for a second, then,” I said in a rush. God, I was a puddle of goopy mess. My feet were about to give way. “Just give me a second to explain myself.”

“Your second’s up. Bobby, take her outside.”

“Wait!” I halted him, putting up my hands. “Stop being so impatient and let me explain. If you kill me now, how are you going to know my pa’s location?”

He paused.

I smirked.

I finally had him in the palm of my hand. I knew I was the smart one. There was no doubt about it now. Only a smart girl like me could get out of this situation alive.

“I know he’ll contact me sooner or later.” I continued, gaining confidence when the big boss still stood listening. “So don’t you think you should keep me alive, just so Pa can contact me?”

He stared at me for a minute too long. I only prayed to God he would relent.

“Bobby, take her outside. And finish her quick.”

“What? Why?” I asked in panic. “Didn’t I just say Pa’s going to contact me? If you finish me off now, how are you supposed—”

“If I want to know where your old man’s gone to, I have my own methods. I don’t need to keep your annoying mouth here. So annoying. Bobby. Take her.”

“Yes, boss.”

Crap, I’m in deep shit. No, wait. This is worse than shit. I’m in deep pooh.

“You can’t. You just can’t. I said I’m willing to do anything. I’ll be your maid, clean your room, cook you food. I’m good at cooking.”

“I’ve got plenty of maids. I don’t need another one. Go, get out.” He tossed me to the side like I was piece of garbage, but I clung to his leg for dear life. I wasn’t going to die yet. I hadn’t even been kissed yet, let alone had a boyfriend. Even if it was just for a minute or two minutes or two hours, I was willing to grasp his pants so I could stay alive.

I didn’t want to die. I knew I don’t want to, but Giovanni was stronger as he lifted me and pushed me off him. But one thing he didn’t know about me was I was resilient. No amount of struggling and tugging could peel me off his pants. I stuck to him like glue.

“I’ll do anything,” I cried and begged, just to extend my life. “Cooking, cleaning, even making coffee. I’m the best at making coffee.”

There was a pause and his body went still. *Have I got his attention?*

“Good coffee?” It was Bobby who spoke. He must have had enough of my wailing and strangling his boss’ pants. “If boss wants coffee, he would’ve—”

“Hush!”

That came from Giovanni. Bobby stopped his blabbering. I let Giovanni’s pants go and looked up at his towering figure.

“You sure you make really good coffee?” Giovanni asked.

I nodded and stood. “Of course.” I boosted myself. “I won the barista award for two years in a row. I worked in a café my whole life. Of course I know how to make coffee. And once you’ve tasted it, you’ll become addicted to it like cocaine. Not that I ever tried cocaine of course. That’s just for comparison.”

“Hmm,” Giovanni said, staring at me while tracing his lips. “The coffee sounds tempting.” Then he turned to Bobby. “Test her. If her coffee tastes good, then keep her and let her be in charge of the coffee making.”

* * * * *

Chapter Three

The Contract

I was sweating like a pig. God, I hoped I didn't smell. Girls who smell didn't attract guys. That much I knew. Not that I wanted to attract any of the men here. But I really couldn't help myself with all this sweating. I'd never been so nervous in my entire life. Standing there with their murderous watchful eyes as I prepped the coffee machine and grinded the coffee beans were Bobby and Heath, the two men in black I saw earlier, and Jonny and Finnie, the other two who appeared just now.

What's with their names? They don't sound mafia-ish at all.

Although I wasn't intimidated by them in the least, I was actually talking about that big boss Giovanni. Him and his stares, they were freaking me out.

Big stature, big name, and big ego. And did I mention big ass too, figuratively speaking, of course. But seriously, what a waste of a handsome face. Such nice eyes and lips, yet with the face he was making now, I bet none of the girls would want to look at him. That included me. I wondered if he had a girlfriend, though.

Crap! Why am I thinking these thoughts now?

I hurriedly tamped the coffee and inserted it into the slot, then let the machine do its magic. Not knowing where to turn my eyes, I accidentally glanced in Giovanni's direction and saw him tracing his lower lip.

Damn! What's with him and his fingers always running along his lips? Does he know that action causes my heart to palpitate?

Flicking back to the coffee machine, I watched as the color changed from a golden dark brown to light gold. I took the purified coffee and poured milk into it. I couldn't help but impress him with my coffee art. It was a swan, my favorite bird.

I squeezed my lips into a megawatt smile and was about to present the whole cup to him when—

Oh hell, how did my coffee end up on Giovanni's pants? And why was there a dark stain on his groin area? What on earth did I do?

There was a growl from Giovanni like a beast had been unleashed from his chest, followed by the rushing of feet. I was in a flustered state, too. Apparently, in my nervous state, my knees had buckled and I'd thrown the entire cup of coffee at Giovanni.

Believe me. Although all that glaring really freaked me out, I didn't have any intention of burning his groin area with my scalding hot coffee. I hoped his little sperm still worked. Poor thing if he couldn't reproduce. No cute, captivating babies.

I grabbed a towel Bobby got from somewhere and threw it onto Giovanni's private area, then smacked my hand on it, grinding it, rubbing it to remove all that excess liquid, but he only jumped up off the couch like he'd caught on fire.

What's his problem? I was just trying to help.

So I did help. I followed him, knees on the floor, hands busy rubbing that area clean, until he pushed me off.

"The fuck are you doing, you stupid girl? Get off me," he growled and shook his legs free of my grasp.

Only then did I realize what I'd done. I was vigorously cleaning his private area. I shyly retracted my hands and gave him pleading puppy eyes.

I'm dead. I am so dead right now.

He stormed out the door.

Oh shit! Did I piss him off that much?

I trembled, awaiting the verdict. The whole room was cloaked in silence. I didn't dare move. It was Finnie who broke the silent.

"Since you're here and don't have much time left to live, make us some coffee."

What? I didn't expect that. But no, I was a smart girl. I wasn't going to question them. I had a plan up my sleeve.

One after another, I made what they ordered. By the time they were sipping their drinks, I felt ecstatic. Perhaps if I were to continue to distract them, they'd forget what I'd done to that big boss and let me live.

I smiled at my possible future. But that smile died a sudden death when Giovanni reappeared with a new set of clothing, and oh my lord, did it made me drool. Hotness overload.

Which gym does he use? Let me sign up, too.

Giovanni was wearing slacks, a comfortable grey, and a black turtleneck with a light suit jacket. *This guy sure knows how to dress himself.* I didn't dare look him in the eyes, though.

"Let's taste that coffee, then," he said coldly.

Again, that was pretty unexpected. Maybe these mafia people were kind after all.

I nodded like a shaggy dog and proceeded to give him a second cup. This time I made sure to walk slowly. And I mean really slow just so I wouldn't spill a single drop.

“Do you want me to wait until the next century to drink that?”

I glanced up and walked a bit faster. Squeezing my lips into a tight smile, I presented him with my best work, again, another swan.

He blew the beverage gently.

I was hypnotized. *Those lips, they're really something.*

He took a sip. I held my breath. Then he put it down.

That's it. He's not going to drink anymore. Am I going to die now?

“You can all go now.”

Is Giovanni talking to me?

Apparently not. He was addressing his underlings.

“I said you can all go now.”

They weren't listening. They were blissfully sipping their coffee.

“The fuck is wrong with you all? Get out. Go do your jobs.” He slammed his fist on the wooden desk.

The guys immediately returned to earth and scurried off. One minute I was surrounded by four hunky dudes, and now I was left all alone with the beast, fending for myself.

It's all right, Jenny. You're smart. You can handle this.

“Sit.” He gestured when we were all alone.

I gracefully sat on the nearest couch, like a gentle-bred lady. Except my bottom didn't even get to touch the soft cushion before he barked at me again.

“Not on the couch. On the floor.”

Sadistic, bossy brute, I cursed inside my head. But not wanting to die, I obeyed.

“This is your contract—”

“Contract?” I shot up, interrupting him. “Does that mean I don't die?”

“If you interrupt me again, you will. Do I make myself clear?”

I didn't respond.

“I said do I make myself clear?” Giovanni's eye twitched. He glared at me, and a second later my eyes were filled with his face. He was exactly one inch from my eyes.

“I said do I make myself clear?” he repeated once more, each syllable coming out loud and clear, echoing around the room and into my ears, resonating into my heart.

“Clear as the sun on a cloudless day.” I swallowed, nodding.

“Now be a good servant and sit back down.”

I mumbled another curse under my breath and sat on the floor again.

Giovanni went to sit on the nearest couch and folded his legs like the big boss he was. He tossed a glare at me and proceeded to outline my role.

“You are my servant, Jay. And most importantly, you will be my coffee machine. Whenever I want one, you will make one for me. You must be available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.”

“Excuse me!” I shot up from the floor again and stood my ground.

Giovanni was a little startled at my sudden movement. He blinked a few times, but then he composed himself again. *That Adonis statue. That's what I'm going to nickname him from now on.*

“But wouldn't that be going against employee rights? You can't demand me to make you coffee twenty-four hours a day. I need to go to school. I need to sleep.”

“Unless you want me to cut your body up into little pieces and grind it in the coffee machine, then I require my

coffee twenty-four-seven. Which do you choose? Being the coffee bean or making the coffee?"

I swallowed again. That was an easy choice. I didn't need to think. I grinned and flashed him my best smile. "I'm happy to be your servant and your coffee machine. Just call me anytime. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week."

"Very good." He was about to turn away when I intercepted him, jumping right in his path.

"Can I ask how much Pa owes you? So I know how long I'm supposed to be in service to you."

"Three million."

Upon hearing his answer, my eyes rolled back and I crumpled into a dead lump on the couch.

* * * * *

"You're useless. Utterly useless. Why are you still sleeping? Get up."

I was already wide awake from his yelling, but I didn't listen to him. I was still mulling over the notion of why Pa had abandoned me.

Three million dollars. What in the eggshell did he do with all that money? And why must I be the collateral? I have to go to school, too. Doesn't he know that? And where has Amelia gone to? Ahh. I can't wait to find him. When I do, I'll give him an earful for sure.

"I said get up. Don't pretend to faint," he growled, and in the next second, a cushion smacked me right in the face.

Bastard!

I got up slowly and followed Giovanni as he took me around the mansion, explaining what kind of jobs I'd have to

do during my stay as a maid here. Although, most of the time, I just stood admiring his tall, lean form.

Hotness overload. Totally captivating. This guy really was the epitome of perfection. From where I stood, he looked to be about six feet one. Such a tall man. I was so jealous. I looked like a midget standing next to him with my five-foot-two status.

Finally, after touring the whole house, or should I say mansion, he decided to take me to see his bedroom, since it would be my duty to clean his room. And his bedroom was huge. It was the size of our whole house. And when I saw his bed, I gaped.

Is this how rich people live? With a king-size bed fit for a... well, king?

I paced around the bed, mesmerized, feeling the soft fabric between my fingers. *Oh, it's pure silk. What a rich bastard. I want to sleep on this bed, too.*

"Oh, boss, your bed feels so nice." I rubbed my palm on his pillowcase. In all my life, I'd never touched material this rich before.

I hadn't a clue how Giovanni saw me at that moment. I was enjoying my fantasy of sleeping on that bed too much, and I didn't realize I messed up his bed sheets until a soft cough startled me.

"Ah, boss, I'm so sorry. I messed up your bed. I'll tidy it." I flipped out.

But Giovanni still didn't say a word. He just observed me as if I were an object on display. He looked as if he were lost in another world altogether.

"Ah, boss." I waved my hand in front of his face to check his response.

"What?" he shouted, freaking the soul out of me.

“You’re staring at me,” I muttered.

Giovanni blinked, then shook his head. “Let’s go to your bedroom.”

My bedroom. Finally. My legs are about to cave in already. The first thing I’m going to do is jump on the bed and rest my feet.

“This is your room.” Giovanni led me to a—

What the hell is this? Why is he opening the door to the hallway closet?

“We’re in a closet,” I said stupidly, looking around the tiny room with a small cot on the far wall. “Why are we in a closet?”

“It’s your bedroom.”

I was gob smacked.

“Come on. I’m an award-winning barista. I deserve better than to live in a closet,” I argued.

“You’re a coffee machine and my maid. You’re staying in the closet.”

“I don’t think I can get used to this. Can’t I live in a normal room?” I bargained, tilting my head back to give him my puppy dog pleading eyes.

“No. Get used to it.” He blinked, then shook his head again. “You’ll be living here until every last cent is paid.” And then he strode across the room like a male model on a catwalk, slamming the door so it rattled on its hinges.

Why must he always be so dramatic when he enters and exits the room? Tsk. That Adonis with few words. Just wait. I’d make him such delicious coffee that he wouldn’t be able to drink another coffee again. And then when he was so sucked in, I’d bargain for my freedom.

Ha-ha. I grinned an evil smile. I couldn’t wait for that day.

* * * * *

Chapter Four

Chessboard and Hotness-Overload

Giovanni felt his heart go into palpitations. It was weird. His heart never palpitated for anyone or anything. Not since that time twelve years ago when his heart had smiled that once at the taste of that bitter coffee. He smiled at that pleasant thought. A sudden image of Jenny with pleading green puppy dog eyes just moments before robbed his senses, and he could see her in his mind's eye.

Fuck. His heart flip-flopped again. It must be that instant coffee. Too much wasn't good. He needed the real stuff. Where was that midget girl when he needed her?

"Bobby," he barked, his expression growing darker when his right-hand man didn't appear in that instant. "The fuck're you hiding, Bobby? Get here right now or I'll chop your balls off."

"Ah, boss. Coming." Bobby came scurrying into the room with hands shielding his private parts. "You need me, boss?"

"Where the fuck were you when I called?" he growled at his underling.

"I was working, boss. You know that collection report you were telling me about. We missed one, a man from downtown. We need to collect money from him today if we want to meet our quota."

"You've been drinking coffee, haven't you?" He snarled, not listening to a single word his underling was saying.

Bobby blinked at him. "How do you—"

Thwack!

“Ow, boss! Why’d you hit me on the head?” Bobby yelped, rubbing his already throbbing skull.

“You think I’m an idiot. I can smell it across the room. How many cups did Jay make for you?”

“Two, boss.”

“She only made me one,” he muttered under his breath, suppressing the desire to show his jealousy. “And I didn’t even get to finish it before it turned cold. Where is she? Tell her I demand a flat white on my desk now.”

“Ah, boss, that might be a bit difficult,” Bobby pointed out timidly.

“Why?” he roared.

“Because she’s cleaning the bathroom.”

“Which bathroom?”

“Our bathroom.”

“Fuck!” Giovanni swore. If that girl was cleaning that bathroom, there was no way he’d allow her anywhere near him. His underlings’ bathroom was even worse than dog shit. It was the one place he never dared venture to. And for good reason, since he considered himself a clean freak. “Fine. I’ll wait. But when she’s done and all cleaned up, tell her I want my flat white.”

“Yes, boss.”

“And make sure to tell her to wash her hands thoroughly. I don’t want any germs from you all,” he added, just in case Bobby forgot. His right-hand man tended to forget the small details, which really peeved him big time.

“On it, boss. I’ll tell her right now.”

Giovanni sank into the cushy chair as his underling disappeared out the door. He let that small disappointment sag out of his shoulders and turned to more pressing matters, like the money Jay’s father owed him.

Three million dollars.

Stupid old man. He should've never loaned him that money. Now look where it got him. A plain midget girl he couldn't even bed in exchange for the measly three million.

How long would his daughter stay under his charge to pay his debt? Three million wasn't a lot to him, but to someone like the Stones, who hadn't a couple of dollars to rub together, it was a big deal.

Giovanni admitted he didn't like the old man's daughter. On first sight, she'd disturbed his peace of mind like no other. The way she spoke, loud and rude, not even caring he was a mafia boss, really pissed him off. If it weren't for her coffee skills, she would have been gone by now. Yet he couldn't stop staring at her then or thinking about her now. There was something about her that he couldn't quite put his finger on. She looked so familiar somehow, like...

Fuck! He needed to stop this before his head exploded.

Giovanni strode to his bedroom on the second floor and stripped off his clothes, a snake shedding its skin, taking off one article of clothing at a time and scattering them all over the floor. He did say he was a clean freak, but that didn't mean he had to pick up after himself. He had many servants around, especially that new one he couldn't get out of his mind.

Ah, fuck. There he went again. Thinking about her. He needed to stop this. It must be the fucking weather. Too fucking hot for spring. It was frying his brains. He needed to cool down. And fast. First a shower. Then coffee. In that order.

Once completely naked, he walked to the ensuite bathroom and opened the door...

* * * * *

The clock on the wall read 3:00 p.m. That meant I'd been here for more than four hours. And in that time, I'd been doing the following: serving coffee, cleaning, and doing a mountain of laundry accumulated by five grown men. And the list just went on.

And here Adonis said he didn't need a maid. Slap my ass. What a liar. My hands were already numb from mopping the floor. Thankfully, the last job on the list was to clean the bathroom.

I cringed. *How many bathrooms are in this mansion? Two?* I doubted it. More like twenty. But no matter, I went in with renewed strength. This was my last job, after all, before I got to rest my feet.

"Man up, Jenny. You can do this. Don't give up." I pumped myself up for the full task ahead.

It was only cleaning the bathroom. No big deal. I cleaned the bathroom all the time at home anyway. A quick spray here, a simple wipe there, then voilà, all done. I was even faster than Amelia painting her nails.

That was my initial thought anyway. Until I opened the door and a whiff of what smelled like rotten eggs and a three month-old fart bomb blasted me right in the face.

"Oooew. What a stink bomb!" I was so not prepared for that.

I stood surveying the site, pinching my nose. From the look of the tub, a herd of elephants had taken a dump in it.

"Just you wait, Adonis," I muttered under my breath, scrubbing the tub until it shone and sparkled. "I'll clean this

tub until you can see your face in it. And then you'll reduce my life sentence."

I worked hard and fast cleaning that bathroom. Sweat and grime poured off my body in buckets. But if only one droplet of sweat equate to one dollar, I was sure I'd be a millionaire just like Adonis. Then I'd have enough money to pay back Pa's debt. Right?

In your dreams, Jenny. I rolled my eyes. From the look of things, I'd have to spend at least two more lifetimes working as a mafia's maid in order to pay off his debt. For a poor college student like me, I guessed I'd been condemned to this hellhole of a stink bomb for a lot longer.

Well, at least another ten minutes anyway. I chuckled. I was almost finished. I did a jiggly dance at this thought.

Ah. Sometimes I amazed myself at how quick and adaptable I was to new living environments. *Is that why Pa left me behind with the sharks instead of taking me with him?* This thought suddenly depressed me.

What the hell, Jenny? Get your head together. This is no time to mull over this problem. Right now, let's clean this bathroom so it's all spic and span, then have a shower and get into clean clothes.

God, I stunk. Just like a skunk. No, wait, not like any normal skunk. I was the queen of all skunks.

Oh, how pathetic. I was losing my mind. I seriously needed a shower. Or a bath. And fast. And then food. In that order.

I inched my way upstairs, back to my adorable, oh-so-cozy closet bedroom. Not!

Stripping myself of my soiled clothes, I donned a towel that I found in the back of my bedroom and made a mad race

across the long hallway, eager to find a bathroom fit for the skunk queen from Brooklyn.

And then I stopped.

Oh crap! I didn't recall sighting any bathroom along the Giovanni tour. Now what was I going to do? I needed to find a shower. Fast. I was literally naked beneath this towel. I couldn't go around parading on my skimpy towel to search for a bath. What happened if that mafia guy saw me? No, that wouldn't do at all.

Well, I could always go back down to the guys' bathroom. I know where that was. But the probability of seeing more people would be higher if I showered there.

Oh, what to do? From the sheer size of this mansion—no, I should say museum—it'd take me more than half a day just to find one.

Just then, a proverbial lightbulb lit above my head. *Adonis's bathroom. Brilliant, Jenny.* I remembered where that was. Next to my closet bedroom. I didn't have to walk far at all. We were literally next-door neighbors.

I grinned like the Cheshire cat. *Ah. It's only going to be for a minute. I'll just hop in the shower. Five minutes, max. I'm sure he wouldn't mind.*

I clutched my towel more securely around myself, then inched closer to Giovanni's bedroom door. I opened it gently and quietly, slowly peeking between that small gap to check whether Adonis was in.

Good. He wasn't in there. That being said, though, I hadn't seen him since this morning.

Humph. I shrugged. Probably out and about doing whatever mafia stuff he did. Threatening people and criminal activities, I bet. Not my problem and none of my concern if he got caught by the law. All the better for me for

getting out of this debt earlier. But I hadn't time to think about him right now. I had more important issues to deal with. Like getting myself clean.

Dashing to the bathroom through Adonis's bedroom, I once again found myself in awe of the sheer size of his bed. I couldn't help but jump on it for a good bounce.

Oh golly, it felt so damn good on my bottom. But before anyone caught me, I jumped back up, giving the sheets an extra tight tug before making my way to the bathroom.

If the guys' bathroom downstairs was a dump for the zoo animals, then Adonis's bathroom must be a dump for—

Oh my Lord, I take back that thought. Is this guy a clean freak or what? All the shampoo, deodorant, cologne, basically all the necessary items that makes a guy's charm ooze with pheromones were laid out like artwork on the shelf.

Clean. Too clean. This bathroom was literally plucked from the top housing magazine. I could literally see my face on every reflective surface, including the huge wall mirror attached to one side of the room.

I looked at myself. *Hmm.* I really didn't look half bad at all. My light-brown hair still stuck out on all ends. But nothing a little hairbrush couldn't fix. Sun-kissed freckles still scattered my nose, highlighting them even further against my ivory-pale skin. My eyes were still green. No, green is such a boring color. Emerald or jade would be more suited to describe my irises. My lips were red, full, and plump. I didn't need to waste money on Botox. I had natural beauty. And although I stood at five feet two, I considered myself model material. I was slim, with the right amount of curves in all the right places.

“Oh, Jenny. You’re so hot. Definitely model material.” I contorted myself this way and that against the stylish shower stall, giggling and laughing at myself while viewing my own reflection in the tall mirror.

Why was that mafia boss saying he couldn’t sleep with me? Comparing me to a pig. Gosh, he was just too blind to see my real beauty.

Well, just my luck, then. I was going to use his bathroom as revenge.

Not waiting another second, I dropped my towel in eager anticipation. Turning on the hot shower, I slipped in, forgetting about my towel on the floor.

Oh my, this is pure heaven. Happiness right there in the shower. The water back home would run and stop, like there was a clot in the showerhead. Here, the spray came at just the right pressure, making my skin tingle in delight.

I closed my eyes, feeling the weight of grime and stress draining off me.

And saw Adonis in the mirror.

Holy cow. Too much of his pheromones in the air, and now I was reacting to him by daydreaming of him in the shower?

I blinked my eyes open, yet he was still there, his perfectly formed body on full display for me. I splashed water on my face and even scrubbed my eyes until I was all sore, but...

Oh crap. I was definitely not dreaming. Adonis was really there in his bedroom, stripping off his clothes slowly. I plastered my face against the glass, watching as he unbuttoned his shirt, like he was slowly unwrapping a Christmas present. Each article he took off made my eyes

bulge even farther out their sockets. Perfect chest, perfect abs, and perfect...

Holy cow. He's taking off his pants.

Turn around. Turn around. I want to see your—

Giovanni did turn around, resulting in my heart going into arrhythmic mode. I had to remind myself to calm down and breathe.

I felt something dripping down my chin. Oh my gosh! I was drooling. I wiped my saliva and continued to stare at him, mesmerized and entranced at his beauty. He was seriously Adonis. Even down there.

So hot. So captivating. Hotness overload!

And then he had to walk into the bathroom, putting me into panic attack mode. I seized and shook in the shower.

Oh golly, golly. I'm naked. I'm naked.

I managed to shut off the shower nozzle in time, fluffing around the stall like a featherless chicken about to take flight, now only realizing I'd left my towel outside. I couldn't possibly open the shower door now. And I could already hear his footsteps approaching the bathroom.

Luckily, this shower was very high-tech. It had one of those technology thingybobs, whereby I could just push a button and the glass wall frosted up. And that was what I did. My once translucent glass wall was now opaque. I couldn't see a damn thing. Now I had to rely on my hearing alone.

I pressed my ear to the wall, not hearing anything. Had he gone back to his bedroom again? I opened the shower door slowly to check and—

Noo! Giovanni was coming back in the bathroom. My arms reacted faster than my brain, jerking the door shut quick enough that it slammed into my nose. Now my nose

was like Rudolph the reindeer, except this was no happy reindeer; this was pure misery times ten. I had to clamp my mouth shut to stop my banshee scream from escaping my lips.

Giovanni must have heard my wee tweet, because his footsteps approached the shower stall faster than lightning and he started rattling the door. I freaked out and jumped to tug at the door handle myself, closing it in time before he could pull it open. Now both of us were playing a game of tug-of-war, with Giovanni trying to pull open the door while I was trying my best to keep it closed.

He was strong, but I was adamant. He might have the strength of a full-grown man with testosterone that whipped at my senses and made me drool, but no way was I letting him open that door. I was naked. Who knew? He might even want to sleep with me after seeing my sexy body. I was a virgin, thank you very much. And I was very happy to stay that way. Until I found the guy I loved. And this mafia boss—nope, not the one for me.

Giovanni rattled the door again. I still didn't let go.

“Fuck. Bobby, did you accidently lock my shower stall again,” he yelled to his underling. “I told you not to use my bathroom, you ass.”

I shivered under my naked skin. Not because I was cold. Oh no. Because I was so freaked out. I could feel his anger radiating off him in just his voice alone. I knew he'd kill me if he knew I was showering in his bathroom. No amount of coffee skill could save me now. So I hung tight with my plan. *Hold on to that door handle for dear life.*

I heard receding footsteps. I knew he must have gone to bark at Bobby.

I didn't think further. I quickly yanked myself out of the shower stall, grabbed my towel off the floor, thanking the Lord on the way for giving me this golden opportunity to escape, and then ran for my life, almost reaching the sanctuary of my closet bedroom when—

“Jay!”

Holy crap! Giovanni called my name. I clutched the flimsy material against myself, making sure my beautiful twin assets wouldn't peek out from beneath the towel, and then turned around to face the mafia boss.

I cringed when I saw him. He was a pure devil from hell, out to carve out my thumping heart. Black hair, black pupils, and hot tanned skin. He was also wearing a black bathrobe just to complete the whole dark devil-may-care look, which suited me just fine since I didn't want to experience another episode of being a drooling idiot. Now, if he were to appear in the nude, I was sure I wouldn't just dribble saliva; I would dribble blood from my nose, too.

I smiled at him timidly, staring up at his tall stature. “Hi, boss. Fancy seeing you in the hallway. What are you ___”

“Where were you?” He cut me off frostily, eyes glaring down at me with black flames.

“Down the hallway, boss. Just had a shower. As you can see right here.” I indicated my oh-so-wet body, drenched like a drowned mouse, with only a measly towel covering me.

But why oh why did I mention I had a shower? Giovanni stared me up and down, his eyes eating up every inch of my skin, making my whole body heat in a foreign way. I felt something warm and hot constricting at the pit of my belly.

“Boss, stop staring at me like that. You’re making me nervous.”

“Nervous? What reason do you have to be nervous? You’re as flat as a chessboard.” He indicated my breasts with his eyes.

I held the towel to cover up my beautiful assets. “Stop making fun of my breasts.”

“Do I look like I’m laughing?” His eyes roamed my body up and down again. “You really have no breasts, chessboard. How old are you?”

“Eighteen when you declared me your coffee machine,” I snapped, face going red with anger, humiliation, and something else. *Crap, my heart is going into palpitation mode again.*

“Undeveloped child. Get dressed and come downstairs. I want my flat white after my shower. And make that quick, chessboard.” He shook his head and then walked off.

Chessboard. Undeveloped child. I wanted to bonk him on the head, but luckily, he’d already gone. And thankfully, I was able to escape to my closet with no further disruption. But by the time I got there, I was struggling for breath.

Holy Lord, help me. That encounter with Adonis almost caused me to have a heart attack. Never again would I share the same bathroom as that Greek god.

* * * * *

Chapter Five

First Dirty Job

As soon as I got downstairs, I was hit with a bunch of requests from all four corners.

“Jenny, tall black!” Jonny. Very demanding.

“Jenny, hot chocolate! And make that swan on it too. I like it.” Bobby. Very whiny.

“Jenny, a short black.” Heath. I didn’t know much about him.

“Jenny, long black please.” Finnie. Very polite.

I was about to deliver their orders when Gio’s husky voice travelled to my ears, alerting me to full active mode.

I turned toward him by instinct and almost drooled again. What was up with this mafia boss? Was he trying to show off his full spring collection in his wardrobe? This dude was really playing with a maiden’s heart here. And didn’t he just have a shower this morning when I accidentally dumped my scalding coffee on him?

“What the fuck are all of you doing?” Giovanni yelled at his underlings. “Get your bloody asses on the street and start collecting money.”

“Yes, boss.” They all scurried off their chairs, flipping over backward trying to reach the door.

I stood there staring at the chaos. *What just happened?*

Giovanni glared at me when I didn’t move. “Jay, you go, too.”

“What?” I blurted.

Did I hear that right? Giovanni wanted me to go with those guys to do mafia jobs. Was he kidding me? This was only my first day as his maid. Surely threatening and hurting

people were jobs only reserved for the male species. A soft delicate creature like me couldn't even hurt a fly, let alone a human being.

So I put forth my good reasoning. "But I'm a woman."

"You're an apparatus, equipment in this household, like this chair or table here," he barked, shutting me up. "Now get moving and make me some money."

"What am I supposed to be doing?"

"Follow them and you'll find out," he hissed in my face.

Was he still mad at me from this afternoon? Heck! Did he find out I'd used his bathroom? I had to be careful next time.

"Jay!"

"What?"

"Get going. Or do you want me to whack your butt?"

Whacking? Would I be punished if I defied his orders? Gee, this guy was a sadistic brute. There was no way I was staying around to find out. My gluteus maximus was very sensitive tissue. So I raced outside like the devil—aka Giovanni Dente—was chasing my tail.

As soon as I caught up to the guys outside, they were already sliding into the black van. I hauled myself into the van before it took off, only to come face to face with a crying man.

"Why are you crying? You know boss doesn't like us showing our feminine side," Finnie said, consoling the crying Bobby who was sobbing like a child.

"I can't help it. Why... why do I have to be called Bobby? It's so... so not manly," Bobby explained between hiccups.

I didn't know what the commotion was about, but I cleared my throat anyway, alerting them to my presence.

They all glared at me. I wasn't the least bit intimidated. If I were to stay in Cory Mansion as maid, then at least I should get on their good side. Who knew? My time here might be more enjoyable if I were to become their friend. Always look on the positive side of everything, I say.

"Bobby. It's Bobby, isn't it?" I asked, using my soothing voice. But I still couldn't believe I was about to console the very man who'd tried to throw me off the bridge just this morning, though. "It's okay, Bobby. I think you have a cute name. We can call you Bob for short, if you like. What do you think, guys?"

"Nooo," Bobby wailed, shaking his head like a little baby.

"Okay, how about Bobby Baby, then," I suggested again.

Oh crap! I think I touched a sensitive spot. Bobby wailed even louder.

"I don't want to be called Bobby Baby," he sobbed.

I hushed him up. "The big boss might reprimand us again if you don't stop crying, you know?"

And what do you know? Just when I mentioned him, the devil arrived.

"What the fuck are you sorry asses crying about?" he yelled through the car window. "Didn't I say to get your asses on the street and collect the money?"

"Sorry, boss. We'll be on our way now," they all said in unison, seat belts sliding into place.

"Crazy bastard," I muttered under my breath, putting my seat belt on properly as well.

"Jay!"

Crap. Did he hear me?

“Yes, boss.” I immediately twirled around in my seat to face him.

“You stay behind. I just remembered you didn’t make me my flat white.”

“You can drink the guys’ coffees. They didn’t get to drink theirs yet. On the kitchen island.”

“I already did. But I still want my flat white.”

“Ah, sorry boss, but I have to help Bobby and the guys collect the money first.” I made my excuse.

I didn’t want to stay in this huge mansion with Giovanni all by myself. The episode of the naked Adonis flinging his thingaling in the bathroom was still fresh in my mind. Not to mention he might smack my butt as he threatened just minutes ago. Whacking and smacking, that just wasn’t my thing.

“Will be back to cook you dinner by six, so I won’t be too long.”

“Jay, wait. You have—”

I didn’t wait for him to finish. I slammed the door shut in his face, and Finnie slammed his foot on the accelerator, driving me away from the Greek god.

* * * * *

My first dirty job and I was stuck between two macho men in a black van. I couldn’t believe my life had degraded to this level. Not that I was rich before, but this was just beyond my imagination. If I told my friends I was actually living with a mafia clan, would they believe me? I shook the thought out of my head and concentrated on the task at hand.

We were now parked in one of the secluded, highly prized neighborhoods, sitting in the van, observing the

building we—Bobby, Heath, Finnie, Jonny and myself—were supposed to collect the money from. Heath, who'd hardly spit a word out since this morning, finally said his first word to me. "That's some courage you said to big boss right there."

I cracked my neck, staring at him. Heath was even taller than Giovanni. I estimated him to be about six feet six. *Maybe I should rename him Bigfoot.*

"You really think I'm all that courageous." I eyed him with questionable doubt.

"No, Jay. I think you're just some stupid girl who's about to get her butt kicked for real if you behave with that attitude again. Boss doesn't take it too kindly when someone shuts the door in his face when he's talking to you. That's disrespectful."

"Well, I say he's being disrespectful for always shouting and swearing at us like some mad person. Lunatic. That's what he is. Always using that F-word. F this. F that. Don't you guys hate it when he swears at you all the time?"

"That's just the boss' way of saying he cares for us," Bobby explained.

"That's some weird way to show his love," I muttered. Although I didn't want to say this out loud, I thought this whole mafia clan belonged in a mental institution, the boss and his underlings. Even his hot body and face wouldn't help save his life. "I say if he ever swears at me again, I'll... I'll..."

"You'll what?" Heath asked, challenging me.

"I'll... I'll... Hey, look, there's a hot woman over there."

Heath and Bobby were like any normal men. With the mention of a hot woman, their eyes swirled around like a camera lens.

“Where? I don’t see a hot woman.” Bobby pouted when none appeared.

“Oh, you missed her.” I lied. At least I didn’t have to answer Heath’s question after distracting them like that.

Back to the subject of Giovanni, I asked them some more. “Hey, at least I’m bound to him because of my Pa’s debt. If I leave, he’ll...” I made a zipping sound and a cutting gesture across my neck. “You know what I mean. But you guys. What are you in it for?”

“He saved my life. I’m bound to serve him forever. It’s my promise to him,” Bobby said, expressing his sparkling sincerity in his eyes.

Is Bobby gay? Does he have a crush on that mafia boss? Ooh, gay couples. They do look hot together.

“All right, enough of this sappy talk. Let’s get to work.” Heath shut us all up, including my fantasizing thoughts.

Heath and Bobby broke in the door like cops on the raid and burst into the room. A man near the corner who was sitting playing cards rushed out the back way, but Heath was really fast. He grabbed the guy by the collar and stopped him.

The man struggled, but Heath was stronger. He pinned the guy to the wall.

Heath didn’t say anything. It was Bobby who spoke. “Where’s the money?”

“What money? I ain’t got any.”

Heath strangled the guy tighter, and Bobby punched the wall. I thought he must have bad aim, but no, that must have

been his way of intimidating the guy. Although, I bet the only one in pain would be him and his knuckles.

But I was wrong. The guy did cower in fear. “I say I ain’t got any money. Just look around ya. I ain’t got no money.”

I looked around the apartment. This guy was obviously lying. He was living in such a high-maintenance building. Someone had to pay for it.

“You said you don’t have any money,” Bobby voiced my thoughts. “Then what’s with the iPad and flat screen?”

“They’re rented.” The man shook like he was about to pee in his pants.

“Rented?” Bobby’s harsh words made the man’s legs crumble even farther.

“Aye. Rented. I just want to show off to me friends that I live in the fast lane.”

“Well, now it’s time to live in the slow lane. Give us the money.” Bobby threatened by punching his fist into the wall again.

“But I ain’t got none.”

“You give us the money, Grandpa, or I’ll cut you into thin slices of bacon and fry you up. Add a poached egg too and you’re all ready for breakfast. Have you ever heard of it, eggs benedict?”

“No. I’m vegan.”

“It’s an English breakfast. Now, do you want to be that eggs benedict?”

“No.”

“Then give us the money.”

Gee, was this the same guy that just cried on my shoulder a moment ago. He was threatening to turn this guy into breakfast.

Although, that did do the trick. The guy was shaking in his boots. He crumbled like the Berlin wall and went to retrieve the cash from under his mattress instantly.

It was a quick exchange. Once the guys collected the money, they all retracted back into the black van. My feet wouldn't move as I stood rooted to the floor. I stared at the collapsed form of the vegan man.

"I'm sorry. Try to make the repayment next time instead of spending money impressing your friends." I tried to console him before Bobby called me back to the car. And then off we went again, collecting more badass money.

I was starting to think this mafia clan was actually a debt collection company. But then again, what did I know of mafias and their activities? It had only been my first day as maid for the mafia boss.

Suddenly, my nose twitched. This usually indicated something interesting would happen in the near future. Although, I had absolutely no idea what that could be. But I didn't have to wait long to find out. It came faster than I could say the word *whack*.

* * * * *

Chapter Six

Serving the God at Ungodly Hours

This was still my first day on the job, and I was still working. Apparently, that mafia boss really was true to his word. He planned to use me to the bones. Straight from collecting money, I was immediately ordered to cook them dinner. I couldn't even get a glass of water to quench my parched throat. I was tossed into the kitchen and expected to cook a five-course meal fit for the king of the mafia.

He thinks I can't live up to his expectations. Well, he's wrong. I was the master chef in our household. Forcing me to cook something like a roast, that was my specialty.

At exactly 6:00 p.m. sharp, as promised, I served them dinner. Roast pork with crackling that could break your teeth and an abundance of roasted vegetables. The smell of my food was so succulent even I was salivating.

One thing I found out while working here, even though it had only been one day, was this clan, boss and underlings, ate together like a family, which I thought was a bit strange. *Where's Giovanni's family? Is he an only child?*

What the heck? This issue didn't concern me one bit. I was all too eager to launch forward with my fork and fill my belly with delicious food.

We were all dishing up my succulent homemade meal when I looked up at the boss and muttered, "Gio, could you pass me the bowl of peas?"

Everyone at the dining table dropped their cutlery. Giovanni glared at me in a cutthroat manner.

Did I say something wrong? Am I not supposed to ask him? But the bowl of peas is right in front of him.

“You’re my servant, Jay. Never ever use my name,” Giovanni said coldly, his tone giving off another layer of ice.

“Okay,” I answered, nodding, not really taking the whole “ice glare” seriously. “But what happens on the off chance I forget?”

“Then it’s simple.” He laid his knife and fork on the table and looked directly at me, his hot lips in a thin, straight line. “I’ll just cut out your tongue.”

I gaped and stuttered, “But... but... if you cut out my tongue, how do we communicate? What happens if you want a flat white and I make you a short black instead?”

Giovanni clenched his jaws and his eye ticked, which meant he was pissed off. I smirked. I loved riling him up. Especially with what happened in the bathroom before. This could be my form of revenge on him. Hee-hee.

“Sorry, boss, you can go back to eating your dinner.” I dismissed him. I was about to dish up my second course since the first one didn’t do an ounce to fill my ravenous belly, when I was yanked out of my chair and somehow found myself on his lap, my head facing the floor and my bottom facing up.

Oh no, what’s he doing? And then...

Whack!

There was a collective gasp from everyone. I forced back my tears.

Giovanni smacked my bottom. This mafia boss smacked my bottom. So he didn’t lie after all. He was capable of smacking me.

*Was this why my nose had been twitching nonstop?
Was this it?*

Tears welled from my eyes. I forced them back and glared at him. No way would I give him the luxury of seeing me cry.

“Never, ever talk back to me, Jay. You have no right to use my name. I’m your master and you’re my servant. Remember, you’re a coffee machine.”

“But you call me Jay.” I got off his lap and yelled at him. Oh my, was I angry. Like really mad. I gave him my own interpretation of his stupid notion. “My name is *Jenny*, not Jay. So shouldn’t I have the right to call you Gio instead of boss all the time?”

Giovanni stood to his full height, dwarfing me. He started poking his finger on my forehead as he made his declaration. “I’m your owner, Jay.” *Poke*. “I can call you whatever I like.” *Poke*. “You, on the other hand, must call me boss at all times.”

“Agh,” I squealed, slapping his finger off my forehead. I stood up higher, almost on tiptoe, and squared my shoulders, determined to give him my own version of the death glare, except it didn’t do me an ounce of good. Giovanni wasn’t even intimidated. Plus, I had to look up at him, which made me the one at a disadvantage since I was shorter than him by so many inches.

“That’s right, *boss*.” I emphasized the word boss just to let him know I was pissed with him. “I’m a coffee machine. And you know what? You’re not getting any coffee tonight until you apologize, and that’s the end of our conversation. If you feel the need to apologize, I’ll be in my closet.” I then stormed to my assigned room.

“I think you made the coffee machine angry,” I heard Bobby say just before I got out of earshot.

Once I got to my room, I yelled a thousand curses at him, enough to even sting his dead ancestors' ears.

I couldn't believe this. Getting spanked for calling him by his name? What's so special about the name Gio anyway? Did he have a lover who called him by that name and now she was gone, so he was wounded?

Agh. Stupid idiot. You nincompoop.

I rubbed at my butt. *My poor gluteus maximus. Now it stings. I'll have to sleep on my stomach.*

I slumped on my cot and thought about my dire situation. When would I ever get out of this hellhole? And how would I survive if he kept using me like this? I had college to attend, plus midterm exams coming up. I needed to study. If I worked twenty-four hours around the clock like this, would I pass?

The thought really depressed me. I wished Pa would have thought about me for a bit before he took off like a thief and left me behind.

But then again, I actually had a roof over my head. I tried to smile and look on the bright side. At least I wouldn't have to go homeless. Maybe Pa and Amelia were lying in the gutter somewhere right now. This thought didn't sit well with me either.

A good two hours had passed. It was well past midnight. My eyes started drooping. Guess there wouldn't be any apology coming from that mafia boss tonight. Then again, I was his servant. He did have a point. And at least he was kind enough not to kill me. I had a full day of classes planned tomorrow. I knew I'd better get some sleep. Wouldn't want to appear in class with panda eyes.

I closed my eyes and fell asleep. Only for a second, though, before a disturbing knock jolted me awake. I jerked

my eyes open, in turn flipping on my cellphone to check the time. 3:00 a.m. *Who on earth is waking me at three in the morning? And didn't I just fall asleep like a second ago?*

I pressed the pillows to my ears, trying hard to ignore that insistent knocking. Only for a good second. Suddenly, the door to my closet room burst open, revealing the silhouette of that Adonis in his human form.

“What do you want?” I burrowed my head into the pillow farther, knowing immediately it was the devil out to disturb my peaceful sleep.

It was only two small words from him, but I knew by morning, I'd have panda eyes for sure.

“My coffee.”

“I'll make it in three hours. Go back to sleep.” I waved him off.

“Make my coffee. Now!” he growled, threw a pillow, which landed nicely and correctly on my forehead, and then slammed the door to my room, so hard even my soul was now shaking.

“Ugh,” I moaned and drummed my head against the pillow three times. “I'll poison you, Gio. I'll definitely poison you with my coffee so you can't think of anyone but me. Then you'll give me some sleep.”

I whimpered as I padded out of my bed, half yawning, and made my way to the kitchen, prepping the machine and making Giovanni his ultimate flat white. Once done, I swaggered in a zigzag to his office, once again half yawning and talking to myself just to keep from dropping off.

“Morning, boss. You're an early riser,” I commented, walking into his office and delivering his coffee to his desk.

I couldn't help admiring Giovanni's appearance at this time of night, or should I say morning? He looked so fresh

with his sleek black hair and suit and tie, sitting there behind his desk, conquering the world, compared to me, who was like a dead fish, harping with no oxygen, what with my persistent yawning.

“I haven’t been to sleep yet,” he answered, making my head swing in his direction so fast I almost strained a neck muscle.

“What? Really, but it’s three in the morning. Aren’t you tired? I’m so tired right now.”

“And you’re yapping nonstop.” He glared at me from under his hooded black lashes, probably annoyed at my talkative behavior again.

“That’s me sleep talking,” I explained cheerfully, finding myself somewhere comfortable to sit. When I found the only available chair was the one positioned in front of his desk, I sat there and watched as he took a sip of his coffee.

I couldn’t divert my eyes from his lips. *I wonder what they taste like.* Not knowing what I was doing and through some unexplained phenomenal force, my face inched forward until I was literally staring at him right in front of his face.

“Your eyes are really black, like the night sky outside. I’ve never seen eyes like that before,” I commented, gazing at his jet-black pupils, somehow feeling a familiar ache in my heart.

Giovanni froze. He flicked his eyes to me and brought his face even closer to mine. From this distance, I had a clear view of his irises, which were now almost like a deep blue, swirling and mucky. I swallowed, struck by something odd and feeling somewhat hazy. Then he did something really peculiar. He grabbed my chin and tilted it from left to

right, as if assessing my face for something. I blinked, cutting off the tense atmosphere.

Yikes! Did I drool in my sleep? That's awful.

I wiped at my mouth, dislodging his fingers from my chin. I checked for any signs of wetness, but there were none. I heaved a sigh of relief. Thank God I didn't drool.

Giovanni shook his head in confusion, the once intense raven irises now clear once more. "Did you think you drooled?" he had to ask, embarrassing me even further.

"What? Of course not." Two peachy blossoms were already branded on my cheeks. "I just don't like anyone touching my chin. That's all. A soft and delicate girl like me doesn't drool when she sleeps."

"I thought people who sleep talk have their eyes closed. Your eyes are open." He dismissed me and took another sip of his flat white.

"Haven't you heard of people sleep talking while their eyes are open? I'm one of them."

The atmosphere was once again lightened. When I saw him sipping the coffee like he had all the time in the world, I ended up making small talks.

"So are you going to stay up all night and write threatening letters to people who don't pay you like that vegan man? I tell you. He has tons of cash stashed under his mattress. Good thing Bobby threatened to make him into breakfast. Otherwise, you wouldn't get your money at all. So is this what mafias do? You go and collect money from people. So you're like some sort of money lending company, except with higher interest rates, right? Right?"

Giovanni glowered at me, shutting my nonsense right up. "Who gave you permission to talk? Your job is done. Go back to sleep."

What? How could he wake me up in the middle of the night for a cup of coffee and demand me to go back to sleep when I was fully awake. My eyes were as large as saucers already.

“Fine. I’ll go,” I said, grumpily standing up.

“Jay, wait.” He caught my wrist, stopping me. A slight zap shot up my arm at his touch.

I looked at him. His eyes locked with mine. Something like an electric current passed between us again. I quickly jerked my hand away.

“What is it, bo-boss?” I stuttered, suddenly becoming aware of his body too close to mine. We were literally breathing the same air, his body wedged against mine.

Giovanni didn’t look at me. He just said the following, with his eyes fixed intently on my face. “Stay. Keep me company. Until I finish my coffee.”

I buckled back on the seat, my legs could no longer hold my weight. This time I didn’t talk. My heart was already doing all the talking, thumping like crazy in my chest. We just sat together in silence. I sat watching him sipping that steaming cup of flat white. After a while, my heart calmed and I couldn’t suppress the yawn from escaping my lips.

Giovanni quietly looked up at me and announced, “Go to sleep, Jay. You’re making my office unattractive.”

I stood from my spot, sending him a scolding look.

Seriously, this mafia boss. He has pissed me right off. First he wants me to stay. Now he wants me to go. I just want to... I want to...

* * * * *

Giovanni caught Jenny in time before she toppled over backward in her sleep.

Am I demanding too much from her on her first day of work? He questioned himself as he carried the delicate girl in his arms to her bedroom. He pushed open the door with his foot and walked slowly to the little cot on the far side of the small room. He laid her gently, folding the blankets back to cover her up. Then he straightened himself and asked what the fuck he'd just done.

He'd just carried a servant girl and deposited her into her bedroom like a bride on her wedding night. This girl did something to him he didn't like. It must be that constant yapping of hers.

Giovanni took a deep breath and let out a sigh. He couldn't help but move his face closer, examining her features, like he did moments before, touching her chin before she jerked from his fingers. She definitely looked like someone he knew, this distant memory of his that had been compartmented away at the back of his skull somewhere.

Giovanni growled at himself and ran his fingers through his hair, a habit that tended to show up when he was frustrated with himself. He admitted she was beautiful in a way he couldn't explain. It was like her beauty was too natural, yet like a plant that continued to grow, she glowed with each passing second he stood in her presence.

She didn't need powder or makeup to make her beautiful. She was different, unlike his other women. And what he was itching to do at that moment really pissed him off. His fingers were already reaching out and touching her scattered freckles and those soft, smooth cheeks that always seemed to glow peachy whenever he looked at her,

especially when he came to see her with the skimpy towel wrapped around her thin body.

He admitted he had a hard-on right in that instant, a fact he tried so hard to conceal and tone down with a long, cold shower. He was even denying that feeling right now as he stared at that skimpy girl lying in bed like a half-dead goldfish.

Giovanni jerked his hand back and cursed himself again. *Have I gone out of my fucking mind?*

But there was no denying that something inside him moved when he touched her. He wasn't sure what. And he wasn't looking forward to finding it out either. But he knew he'd have to, and soon, too, since he'd be stuck living with this particular maid of his for a long, long time.

* * * * *

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Twisted Love Book 3

The final conclusion to Kimberly and Julian's tragic love story

"You captivated me. You trapped me. And now I am bound to you. Now and forever."

Julian Devereux. So strong and courageous on the outside yet so fragile and sensitive on the inside. My damaged prince. How long will you let the past destroy you? How long will you let those secrets torment you?

Let it go. Take my hand and we will escape together, escape to a future filled with love.

But is letting go the hardest decision to make? Or is there something else holding you back?

Whatever choice you make, I will stand by your side.

But never in my life did I anticipate such a violent ending to our story.

Preorder Now

MORE BOOKS BY WANITTA PRAKS

SPINSTERS & CASANOVAS The Series

featuring
Clarice and Hunter

Baby Be Mine Spinsters & Casanovas Book 1

Turning thirty is like a big sale at the meat market. You have to go on discount before someone starts considering you. And that's not the only problem Clarice Mason has to deal with, because right now her biological clock is ticking and she realizes that one morning she might wake up with white hair and a walking cane as her only companion. So to soothe her problem, Clarice has resolved to have a baby.

Enter Anton Silverton, the man that possesses all the traits Clarice has ever wanted in a mate: tall, handsome, smart, and an overall gentleman—all the perfect genes for her baby. All she has to do now is ask him nicely to donate a little sperm so she can conceive. But damn Hunter Silverton—Anton's smart-mouth, no-good cousin with the title of number one Casanova in Australasia—has to come stirring up trouble. And now, under the influence of hormonal imbalances, Clarice finds her craving for a baby might not be enough, for she is beginning to crave the love of one of these men.

Free to download on www.obooko.com

Baby I'm Your Spinsters & Casanovas Book 2

The Casanova

Hunter's life has never been so perfect, until he meets the spinster Clarice Mason. He accidentally impregnates her, then confesses to the whole world that he wants to sleep with her again.

Knowing Clarice will think he's the same playboy Casanova as always, Hunter is determined to prove her wrong by being the perfect partner and father for their baby. But nosy people tend to crop up where he least expects them, out to destroy his chances.

The Spinster

All Clarice Mason's thoughts are preoccupied with her unborn baby. When Hunter comes barging into her life, claiming he's taking responsibility as the father, it's like he's grown three heads. She can take care of herself. It is her baby after all. If the father of her baby is this Casanova, then she would prefer he's not involved at all. But when Hunter begins displaying all the traits she so desires in a man, she knows her *heart* is in grave danger.

How can Hunter prove to her that he is utterly and undeniably in love with her? That he's giving her his heart and soul for all eternity? All he wants to say are those three words that will bind him to her forever...

Baby, I'm yours

Baby Love Me

Spinsters & Casanovas Book 3

The Casanova

Cooking, cleaning... List all the household chores a housewife can do, and Hunter can do them better. In fact, his life has made a complete one hundred eighty-degree turn, from being the number one Casanova of Australasia to the number one partner for Clarice. And he loves his new life.

But as the days leading to the birth of their child lessen, someone is planning to tear them apart. Will he ever hear Clarice say, "I love you," or will the forces of his past reputation ruin his chances at this one happiness?

The Spinster

Clarice is basking in her happy glow. Having Hunter by her side on the day of their baby's birth is all she's ever wished for. But when she witnesses Hunter with another woman, her world shatters.

Now she must ask herself, should she risk the heartbreak of losing the man she loves or continue to live as a spinster with her baby forever?

TWISTED LOVE TRILOGY

From the author of the comedic series, Spinsters and Casanovas, comes a sizzling and intense new series full of deceit, fierce love, and betrayal. Twisted Love features the story of Julian Devereux, a broken billionaire whose thirst to reclaim his rightful place as heir to the Devereux Legacy leads him to the one woman who can heal his dark past.

Captivated By You Twisted Love Book 1

“I want to be scorched by your flame. I want to be enticed by your touch. Let me in. Open the door to your heart so I can save you.”

What is it about the enigmatic and taciturn Julian Devereux that captivates me so? His kind and selfless acts towards others ignite my compassionate nature to protect him from the bitter onslaught of his brother, Joshua Devereux.

But is it merely my nature to help the weak, or is it simply to indulge myself in pleasure, watching in delight as two brothers battle for my attention and their family inheritance?

Maybe deep down, I already know I love him and am willing to sacrifice and back him up in every ordeal. But I didn't anticipate the path I chose would eventually spiral out of my control, tearing at my heart and tossing me into a labyrinth of illusion.

Trapped By You

Twisted Love Book 2

“Your touch sings me. Your kisses are like drugs. I am addicted to you. I am trapped by you. Yet I don’t want to escape from this beautiful prison.”

Julian Devereux. So beautiful and mysterious on the outside yet so damaged and broken on the inside. Who is this monster standing before me?

I thought I knew you well, but the past was only an illusion. But why do I find myself coming back for more? Do I enjoy being your pawn in your elaborate game to gain back the title of heir to the Devereux Legacy? Or am I so captivated by you that I am trapped by my own doing?

Maybe deep down, I want to dig for the truth, to find out why you turned out to be this monster. But I didn’t anticipate the story unfolding was beyond what I could imagine. Julian, what have you gone through?

FORBIDDEN LOVE TRILOGY

The love story of Zac and Ivy

Forbidden Love
Forbidden Love Book 0.5
Prequel to Love Me Today

Free to download on all ebook stores

Love Me Today

Forbidden Love Book 1

Ivy only wants two things in life. To become a lawyer when she grows up and to stop having those nightmares of her parents, and brother dying in that car crash. To achieve these goals Ivy moves to a new city with her grandma, sister in-law and niece.

A new school. A fresh start. Life is now good. Until she meets Zac.

Zac, with his inky black hair and deep emerald eyes, makes her want things she doesn't know existed. But wanting Zac is the one thing she cannot have, because to her, Zac is forbidden.

Zac, the lead singer of Apollo, is attracted to Ivy on first sight. He knows he's got to have her. But he can't understand why she keeps pushing him away. When he finds out the reason behind her action, he pursues her even more. But as internal conflict collides, would he still be able to tell Ivy those three words hidden deep within his heart...

Love me today.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS by Alexia Praks

His Hired Girlfriend
Highland Kiss
A Rogue's Desire
The Duke's Revenge
Falling for Sakura

Books Coming Soon by Alexia Praks

His Crimson Rose Vol. 1
The Daemon's Wrath Vol. 1
When the Sun courts the Moon

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