



D. J. MANLY



TRAPPED

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Trapped

By

D.J. Manly

Chapter One

The time was finally here, and it was more infinitely terrifying than he could have ever imaged. Somewhere in his naivety, he'd imagined this time to be far in the future, a time that would never come. He'd been wrong. It had come. He was here, sitting in a practically barren hotel room, waiting, a stale cup of cold coffee in a paper cup practically glued to the fingers of one hand and a Glock 17 tightly clutched in the other.

He sat and listened to the minutes ticking loudly away on the antiquated clock on the wall and stared at the door, his heart thudding in his chest, sweat dripping into his eyes.

He knew that when he walked out that door for the final time, his entire world would change. He'd never be the same. His cousin, Luigi, told him, "Gio, the first time is the worst. After that, there's nothing to it. You'll be the man. It will be like brushing your teeth."

Luigi had already gone through this a few years ago, but no matter how many times Giovanni asked him, Luigi wouldn't tell him what he'd had

to do. Giovanni suspected it was something much the same as what he was doing here. It was *always something like this*. "Yours will be tougher, Gio," Luigi warned, "you're his son. And then there's the talk...you know."

Yes, *the talk*. There were all the rumours about his sexuality... the jibs about him not jumping the bones of every girl who threw herself in his path, the questions about his manhood. But those rumours would soon be put to rest by the fact that he was already promised to the daughter of one of his fathers so called business associates, a wedding that would be coming far too soon.

Eighteen. You're a man. You have to prove yourself. It's your initiation. It's nothing. Nothing. Go out there, Gio, and prove that all this nonsense...you know about you being...a sissy boy...are bullshit.

A sissy boy? Is that what he was? If it was true, he'd never acted on it and he never would. Maybe it wasn't even true. He hoped to hell not. He hoped that all those feelings he kept buried deep inside would stay there forever. His father would never accept it.

Right now, he had a job to do. He had to prove himself. It was noting to kill the son of a rival crime boss, right? He had to keep telling himself that. He'd do it fast, leave this room forever, no one would ever know what he'd done. He didn't know this guy. He didn't want to know him. His

father would be pleased with him when it was over. He'd prove himself, and maybe he'd never have to do it again, and maybe he'd get over this marriage trip for awhile.

He stood up. With a sigh, he walked over to the window and peered out with his binoculars. The window across the alley was open, thin curtains blowing in the breeze, just another run down dive in a bad section of town. You'd think the son of a millionaire business man could afford to bring his whores somewhere classier.

Amador Derringer-Vega, more commonly called Amad by his nearest and dearest, the product of a Columbian father, Carlos Vega, who'd immigrated to the United states twenty-four years ago, and an American beauty queen runner up, Christina Derringer. That's all he knew really He wasn't given a hell of a lot of information starting out, and that was deliberate.

Carlos Vega ran a number of apparently legitimate businesses in the city of Los Angeles, one of them was Vega Construction, managed by eldest son, Amador. His wife, Christiana had left her husband years earlier, but Vega kept her on a short leash, setting her up in a gigantic millionaire mansion nestled among the homes of Hollywood celebrities where she lived with her two youngest children.

The Mark was twenty-two years old. Rumour

had it that Vega expected his son to marry soon as well, in order to carry on the family name. The only other information he had was the address of the hotel he was now installed next to. The room he now occupied had been empty when he arrived, waiting for him. It gave him a perfect view into the room across the alley where the Mark was expected to bring his flavour of the week, as Luigi had called it.

He wasn't sure what Carlos Vega had done exactly to piss his father off, but he suspected it had something to do with the drug trade. He preferred not to know. Anyway, it had to be major because killing the man's son was an extreme form of revenge.

For the past two days, he had tailed the Mark, never getting too close. He'd watched his comings and goings from his office to various construction sites around the city, and finally, to the home of his mother in Hollywood Hills, where he apparently still lived.

Now he waited, figuring that this was where he was supposed to do the dirty deed. But the room stayed empty across the way and he was getting cabin fever.

Alone by himself, he'd had plenty of time to think, too much time. If there had been any way for him to get out of this, he would have. There wasn't. He could run, just leave this place and go

as far away as possible, never look back. But they'd find him eventually. He could go back home, look his father in the face and refuse to do the job, but he couldn't do that either. He didn't have the nerve, not to mention he couldn't have stood the humiliation.

His father would disown him and then what? He couldn't see his father kicking him out. No, he'd still be a prisoner, but this time, one without any honour. He'd be a disgrace to his father, his family. He closed his eyes. Marriage. The thought terrified him. The bride was Tony Melina's daughter, Francine. She was nice enough and she'd made it clear that she found him attractive. Another prison he'd have to live in.

Giovanni threw out the paper cup he held in his hand and paced. The sun was going down. He eyed the cell phone he'd been given, only to be used in emergencies and felt the gun in his hand. It was a 9 mm, semi-automatic. It had 17 rounds in the magazine, and one in the chamber. He knew how to use it. His father had made sure of that. He'd been made to practise as soon as he turned ten. He had no doubt he could do the job. He just wasn't sure if he could live with it after. He'd never so much as hurt a fly, let alone kill someone. And then what? After.

Was he to go on killing at his father's whim? His father. Frank Bianchi, the son of a poor Italian

immigrant who'd come to this country when Frank was only two. They'd had to struggle to survive, but his father vowed he'd never do that. Today, he was known and feared all over the city and beyond. The family had been under the scrutiny of the FBI for years, but Frank made sure there was never any evidence to link him to anything. Two of his uncles were already dead, murdered by someone or other. His mother suffered on and off from depression and was basically not accessible to him on any level. He was an only child. His mother couldn't have any more children after him, which meant that all the pressure was on him to carry on after his father. He didn't want to do it and sometimes he wasn't sure if he could do it.

He looked at the gun in his hand. He'd been given very clear instructions of how to dispose of it once the job was done. *Murder. The word took on an ominous quality, one he'd never attached to it before.*

He stopped pacing, glanced once more in the viewfinder of his binoculars and went to lie down on the bed. He tried to close his eyes, to find peace, for just a little while, but he couldn't. He was covered in sweat, his hands clammy and hot. It was simple really, locate the Mark, aim for some vital organ, squeeze the trigger, then clean everything he'd touched, dispose of the weapon and go home.

The clock ticked extraordinarily loud on the wall as he tried to will himself into sleep. He sighed, sat up, paced again. He couldn't take much more of this. If he didn't come soon, he'd track him down in the streets and do it there. It didn't matter what his father said. The waiting was killing him.

It was almost two in the morning when he spotted a light coming from the window across the alley. He adjusted his binoculars and peered into them. There was someone moving in there. Although he hadn't gotten a close up view of the Mark, he knew it was him. He was tall with shoulder length black hair and he was in the right room. It was enough. Giovanni felt the gun in his hand. He took a breath. *Do it. Get it over with. It only takes a second.*

He waited for the man to stop moving. Suddenly he stood in the center of the room, his profile turned to the window. He had a clear shot. *Go. Go.* Then he paused, sucked in some breath. The man wasn't alone. There was someone there with him and it was no girl. It was a man and he was pulling his t-shirt up over his head. He threw it aside and moved in behind the Mark. From the back, he began to slowly undo the buttons on the Mark's shirt, then he reached for the pants and began to unzip them.

"Holy shit," Giovanni said between clenched teeth, putting the gun down on the night table and moving closer to the window with his binoculars.

The blond haired man moved his hands up over the impressively toned chest of the Mark. The jeans were discarded and the underwear as well. The Mark's body arched and his hands reached over his head to grab the other guy and pull his head down and to the side for a lingering kiss. Giovanni felt himself go warm all over, his cock beginning to twitch a little in his pants.

His Mark turned around now, tearing at the blond's clothing, sinking onto his knees, the top of his head moving up and down, obviously sucking the guy off. A few minutes later, he got to his feet, the blond moving to the bureau where he knocked off several items. He spread his legs and leaned forward, presenting his ass to the Mark.

Giovanni saw him rub something on his palms and then spread the guy's ass cheeks. He inserted his fingers and Giovanni reared back from the window. Jesus, he was...a fag. He picked up the gun again and put down the binoculars. He didn't particularly like that word, but his father always called them that. He took a breath, his cock jutting uncomfortably against the material of his jeans. He picked up the binoculars again and when he did, saw his Mark ramming his hips up against the blond's ass. They both looked as if they were

thoroughly enjoying it.

He groaned, walked away from the window and lay on the bed. He closed his eyes now, unzipped his pants and began to stroke his aching cock. He was breathing fast and hard within minutes, his cock spurting out its release with a deeply satisfying orgasm.

He must have fallen asleep for when he awoke, it was well past eleven in the morning and the room across the alley was empty.

He felt guilty, not only for watching the hot sex that was going on across the alley and the aftermath of it, but for missing his chance. Now, he'd have to wait again.

He decided to take a shower, get dressed and go out, maybe watch him a little, find another place to hit him. After drying his curly light brown hair and donning a comfortable pair of beige cotton pants and a light blue shirt, he left the room and got into his car.

He had a hard time tracking him today. The Mark drove an imported silver Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren, not even available yet in the U.S. It was hard to miss, but it wasn't parked in any of its usual spots, not at his mother's house or at the office. Where in the hell was he? When he got back to his stifling little room, he walked immediately over to the window. No sign of him. Giovanni checked his watch. It was early yet.

At around midnight, the light in the room came on. He was there again, this time with a different man. They wasted no time getting down and dirty. Clothes were on the floor and so were they, cutting off his view. When they finally did come into view, they rolled together on the bed at the far end of the room. With both his arms over his head and his legs spread, the other man tied his wrists to the rungs in the headboard. A few seconds later, he was coating his body with something shiny and then licking it off his skin. He rubbed it into his nipples, his belly, his cock. His Mark's hips bucked upward. The man straddled his hips and took his cock up inside of his ass.

Giovanni wiped the sweat off his forehead. He watched a gay porno once, but damn, this made that movie look like Disneyland. Giovanni undid his pants, moved his hand down to his cock and gave it a gentle squeeze. This brought a moan as he watched the man move up and down on the cock he'd captured with his ass.

Giovanni pressed his back against the wall, lowering the binoculars. He stroked his cock frantically, coming in seconds, his head banging against the wall. "Um...yeah...oh God," he murmured. The gun lay discarded on the bed.

He slept again. When he opened his eyes, he

walked back over to the window. The Mark was lying in the same position, sleeping, his wrists still attached. The blond lay sleeping beside him, a hand possessively coveting his Mark's muscular thigh. Damn. He had a beautiful body, his skin the colour of honey gold and shining with whatever it was that other guy had rubbed into it. He picked up his gun. *Do it now. They're both sleeping. Hit them both and get out.* He aimed the Glock, first at his Mark, then at the other guy. So much power and they were completely unaware. His gun stayed on the blond. Get rid of him and go over there to that room and...and what, run your hands all over his beautiful body, kiss those sensuous lips, use that cock of his? No, he couldn't do that. He could never give into these wicked urges he got every once in awhile and he certainly couldn't... He groaned slightly, his cock hard again. Damn. He needed a shower. After a shower, he'd be more clearheaded and he'd figure out what to do. He'd already been here four days. This should have been over by now. His father was probably wondering what in hell was taking him so long.

He spent over twenty minutes in the shower, soaping himself, masturbating, trying not to think about what he had to do once he came out. The water soothed him somehow, made him forget.

He wrapped a towel around his waist and

stood looking in the mirror. He brushed his damp hair, brushed his teeth and ran a hand over the slight stubble on his jaw. He didn't feel like shaving. Maybe he'd grow a beard. He walked out of the bathroom and then froze as a deep, male voice said, "I was wondering when you were going to come out of there."

Giovanni turned around slowly, clutching the towel in his hand. When he saw him sitting there in the chair by the window, his Glock in his hand, the towel fell to the floor. He took an intake of breath and went to bend down and retrieve it.

The man stood. "I wouldn't do that if I was you."

Giovanni straightened back up, holding his hand modestly in front of his genitals. "How...how did you..."

"The door was unlocked. I let myself in. Pretty careless for an assassin, wouldn't you say?" He lifted an eyebrow and took a few steps closer.

"I'm not a...an assassin. You have me confused with some...some one else."

His eyes were blue, standing in beautiful contrast with his thick black hair, but right now, the look in those blue eyes was deadly. "I don't think so. You're not very good at tailing and I wouldn't be afraid to bet that you're not much of a hit man either. I should be dead now, shouldn't I?"

"I...I don't understand."

"You don't? Then let me jog your memory," he growled. He suddenly took Giovanni by the throat with one hand, backed him against the wall and pressed the gun against his head with the other. "You came here to kill me. Now, what I want to know is who sent you?"

When Giovanni didn't react, the Glock was pressed harder against his head.

"One more time," he said, close to his face. "Who sent you?"

"No...I don't know." Oh God, was he going to die looking into those furious blue eyes? "It was...was anonymous, really. I don't know...I really don't...I never saw the guy face to face."

He was released. The man backed away. Giovanni blinked. It was bizarre to suddenly be face to face with the man he was supposed to kill. Amador Vega. He was even more gorgeous close up, but it was not feelings of attraction that were overwhelming him right now, it was feelings of fear and failure. No matter how he argued it, he was screwed. If Vega didn't kill him, he'd have to face his father. Right now, he wasn't sure what was worse.

Vega let his gaze wander over the length of him suddenly, a smirk on his face.

Giovanni felt the blood rush to his face. He was shivering. Fear and cold mixed together created

goose bumps on his flesh. His cock nudged annoyingly against his palms. "Do you mind if I put some clothes on?"

He sneered. "What's the difference?"

He didn't bother answering. He had a feeling it wouldn't get him anywhere. He mumbled something about being cold.

Vega tilted his head and studied him for a minute. "You know, if you don't tell me who sent you, I just have to make a phone call. There are people who can make you talk and it won't be comfortable. Make it easy on yourself and —"

"Call your boys if you want. It won't do any good." There was no way in hell he could ever mention his father, no matter what they did to him. At least if he died without ratting, his father would be left with some pride in his only son.

Vega took his cell phone out of his jeans, keeping one eye on him as he did, the gun still pointed in his direction.

"Maybe if you didn't spend your time fucking, you'd be less vulnerable," Giovanni muttered abruptly. Those images were still pretty fresh in his consciousness.

Amador Vega looked as if Giovanni had struck him suddenly. He snapped his cell phoned shut and glared at him. "What did you say?"

"You heard me." Giovanni met his gaze.

Amador threw his phone on the bed. He backed

Giovanni against the wall again, the cold hard steel of the weapon pressed into his gut. "Were you watching me in the room?"

"No, I..." Giovanni grunted, starting to struggle now. Standing here naked with Amador's hard body glued to him was giving him a raging hard on. Maybe it was just the fear, but whatever it was, it was damn embarrassing. Thankfully, the man didn't seem to notice.

Amador seized his forearm and dragged him over to the window. He peered out of it, then looked back at Giovanni. "You God damned perverted little cucaracha." He released him abruptly. "Did you enjoy yourself? Did you get off?"

Giovanni rubbed his arm, then grabbed the blanket off the bed hastily and wrapped it around him. "I had no choice. I was tailing you, remember, I was..." He trailed off.

"Yeah, waiting for the perfect moment to shoot my head off. How did you find me?" Giovanni asked.

"Your car was parked out back. I spotted it by accident. I'd seen it the last few days a couple of times. It wasn't hard to make the connection." Giovanni sunk down on the bed. Amateur, he was a rank amateur. He knew he'd never be any good at this stuff. He might as well be dead. He sunk his face in his hands. "Just go ahead and kill me. I'm

as good as dead anyway.”

* * * *

Amador stood there staring at this guy in disbelief. He was pathetic. It was obvious that he was no professional, but who ever sent him, probably wouldn't stop until the job was done. There had been three attempts on his life already. One was when he was twelve and a hit man had come to his boarding school. Amador had hid in the air vent. That same guy tried again a few months later, shooting at him while he was in the pool at his mother's. His father had hired a bodyguard and the bodyguard had been shot and killed. He had no idea if his father had discovered who was behind it. Now this. He knew the drill. If he was in danger, he was to call his father and his father would send men out to deal with it. But he couldn't do that. This guy was a witness to his extra curriculum activities, activities his father would never approve of.

So far, he'd managed to stay out of the nasty side of his father's business interests. He ran the construction business and it was legitimate. He'd convinced his father that he was indispensable there. His father had let it be for awhile, especially since Amador had agreed to marry a Columbian drug lord's daughter next summer, which would

bring both the daughter and her family to America.

But what in hell was he supposed to do with this guy? He couldn't kill him. He didn't have it in him. He couldn't call *the boys* to take care of it, this guy could let something slip about what he'd seen from the hotel window. He certainly couldn't just let him go, ever. "Okay," he said, clearing his throat, "stop snivelling. Get dressed, get your shit. You're coming with me."

Giovanni glanced up at him in trepidation. "Where? Am I going to end up at the bottom of a lake somewhere?"

"Yeah, as soon as I find the right size of cement shoes. Come on. Hurry up." He waved the gun.

Giovanni got to his feet, the blanket still around him. He picked the suitcase off the floor and placed it on the bed.

Amador walked over to the bed and opened the suitcase, searching it first. "Okay, go ahead," he said, standing at his shoulder while Giovanni took out underwear, jeans, socks and a t-shirt.

Amador backed away and watched while he dressed, having to admit to himself that his would-be assassin had a great ass. In fact, he had a pretty nice body, a little thinner than he liked them, but smooth skin, nicely toned, the cock, now slack, was more than adequate.

Giovanni was staring at him now, waiting. He

slipped into loafers at the same time. "Now what?"

"We're taking your car, out the door and down the fire stairs."

Amador stayed close to his back on the way down, the gun discreetly held against his kidneys. When they were in the car, he told Giovanni to drive. "Take that exit there." He pointed. "And hang a left."

The ignition started, the car rolled forward. Amador noticed that the guy's knuckles were strained white as he gripped the wheel.

"Relax," he said, sitting back, the gun resting on his knee.

"You can say that."

"You're not dead yet. Just enjoy the minutes you got left to breathe."

* * * *

Giovanni drove, following the instruction the man at his side barked at him. He was thinking about death. Growing up in the Bianchi family, he'd spent a lot of time thinking about it. Death had always been all around him. He wondered what it was like, that silent, eternal sleep. He didn't want to die, even if he couldn't face the thought of looking his father in the eye after this. "If you let me go," he blurted, "I'll leave the country. I'll

never come back. I promise, you'll never see me again." He cast a desperate look at Amador.

"Just shut up and drive," he said.

"Where are we going? We've been driving for close to an hour. I don't know these roads." They were outside the city, driving along the coast.

Amador didn't answer.

"Talk to me, okay?" His voice shook a little and he had broken out into a sweat.

No answer.

"I didn't mean to...you know... I'm not a voyeur by nature."

Again no answer.

"You were so..." He stopped. No, that would sound absolutely lame. "I found it...I was curious, distracted a little."

"Then you're telling me that fucking saved my life?" He laughed a little. "Go figure."

Giovanni swallowed. His throat was dry. "I...had a crush on a guy once."

"Oh yeah?" He didn't sound all that interested.

"He worked for the...well, for the family." He didn't want to say too much. "He was really handsome. I was only fourteen." He laughed harshly. "He never knew and I would have never...you know." He gripped the steering wheel. Somehow, it seemed important to talk about this, to tell someone, even if it was the man who would ultimately take his life. "I think I'm

gay." There he'd said it. The world hadn't fallen in. He glanced at Amador. He said nothing, just looked straight ahead. "I know you don't care. You don't even have to listen. I just need to...before it's over...I have to confess who I am, what I am. Doesn't matter if I never had the chance to ever...what's it like? What's it feel like to hold another man in your arms, to be...inside of him, or have him inside of you?" He was looking at Amador now, his gaze off the road.

Amador turned his head and looked back at him for a moment, then reached over and straightened the wheel. "Pay attention to what you're doing," he snapped. "You'll get us both killed."

Giovanni returned his eyes to the road. He felt numb suddenly, immune from his impending doom. He didn't care what this man did to him, he had to know. "Please," he said, "tell me."

"Stop it," Amador said. "Stop talking. Stop asking me—"

"But you know, you know the mystery, the secret. I saw you. I saw your face and you looked like...like an angel, like you'd gone to heaven and—"

"That's enough," he snapped. "Have you lost your mind? Turn left, up this road."

"Where are we going?" Giovanni asked.

No answer.

He was told to pull up in front a large, ranch style house up on a hill overlooking the water. As he got out, he thought that this wouldn't be such a bad place to die. "Is this where you'll do it?" Giovanni asked Amador. "You take me to the edge of the cliff and push me off?"

"You're a real drama queen," he accused. "Come on."

Amador inserted a key into the lock and pulled him inside. The place was spacey and lavish, furnishings in white with thick carpets. Amador walked into the living room and went over to the bar. He poured himself a drink and downed it. "Sit," he told him.

Giovanni sunk down on one of the white leather love seats. "Is this your house?"

"No. It belongs to a friend of mine who's out of town."

Giovanni nodded. "What are we doing here?"

"We're going to stay here until you tell me who sent you and I can decide what to do with you."

"I'm not going to tell you anything, so do it, put me out of my misery."

Amador sighed heavily.

"Or you can let me go. I'll leave the country like I said and —"

"Who are you running from? Hit men usually don't run from the people who hire them, unless you don't intend to give the money back. So I'm

curious, how much were you paid to knock me off?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" He raised an eyebrow. "You work for free? Try again."

"I said nothing. It was a...requirement."

"Requirement for what?" He came and sat down opposite him.

"I can't tell you that."

"It was your first time," he said.

Giovanni laughed bitterly. "Oh, you think?"

Amador put down his empty glass. "How old are you?"

"Old enough."

He looked at the Glock. "This is typical gun for a hit. It's easy to dispose of. I know you're associated with some crime family, but which one?" He sat forward, studying his face.

"You're so smart, you tell me."

"Feeling braver now."

"I've got nothing to lose."

"You got a point," he said. He stood up. "I don't know about you, but I'm hungry."

"Aren't you going to tie me up?"

"Would you like that?" He smirked.

Giovanni blushed. "No, I...I mean..."

"You can try and run if you want, but you won't get far. I'll find you." He gave him a meaningful look. "So enjoy your reprieve. Come

on, kitchen."

In the kitchen, Giovanni watched as Vega took out various things and put them on the counter. "Roast beef, mayonnaise, lettuce, tomato, sounds good. Now, where's the bread?" He went about making a sandwich, glancing occasionally at Giovanni as he did. "Go ahead. You might as well eat."

"I'm not hungry," Giovanni said.

"Suit yourself." Amador finished two sandwiches, then cleaned up.

Giovanni felt as if he was in a dream. Here he was, after botching his first job, standing in a kitchen with the man he was supposed to have killed.

Amador motioned to him to follow him into the living room. He sat down and switched on the television. Suddenly Giovanni thought of his cell phone. Where had he left it? It had been on the bed, no in his suitcase. The suitcase was still in the car. If he could get it to it...then what...call his father, tell him what a mess he'd made of everything?

He sat there in stunned silence for awhile with Amador focussed on some soccer game. He felt paralysed to do anything but wait. He could jump him, try to escape, but Amador Vega was over six foot tall, bigger, more muscular, he knew he couldn't take him. He needed a weapon. He

scanned the room. There was a table lamp, a heavy statue of David.

"Don't bother," Vega said suddenly, never removing his gaze from the set. "You'll just give yourself trouble for nothing."

"What are you talking about?"

"You're looking for a weapon, a way to take me down so that you can escape." He looked at him now. "It's not going to happen. You're not leaving here. So what's your name? You got a name?"

"Gio," he said.

"Ah. Guess you know mine."

Giovanni nodded silently. "Nice name."

"Yeah?" He laughed. "How would you like to be a kid at school named Amador? It means lover."

Giovanni glanced at him. "It does?"

"Yeah. Everyone calls me Amad anyway." He looked bored suddenly. He checked his watch. "It's late. I got to get some sleep. I'll think better after that. Come on." He stood up.

Giovanni met his gaze. "We're going to sleep together?"

"Don't get excited," he muttered. He gave him a shove down the hall after Giovanni rose to his feet. The walls were sand coloured, pictures of ancient Rome lined the walls, statues from antiquity stood on marble stands. When he found himself in a bedroom with a huge, round bed and

an oil painting of two naked Greeks on the wall, he froze.

Amad looked around, then suddenly said, "Aha," and walked over to the closet door. He took the sash off a white terry robe and held it up. "Lay on the bed."

"What...what for?" His heart was pounding in his chest.

"Just do it." He grabbed his arm and pushed him down on the bed. "Raise your arms over your head."

Giovanni slowly raised his arms. As Amador leaned down to tie his wrists to the bed posts, Giovanni kicked him hard in the gut. Amador grunted, stumbled backward and Giovanni took off on a run. He raced down the hallway and out the door, making a beeline for the car. He swore loudly as he pulled on the handle and discovered that the door was locked.

"Looking for this?" a voice asked him.

He glanced up to see Amador standing in front of him, dangling the car keys.

"Come on, let me go. I won't bother you anymore. I didn't want to shoot you in the first place. I just want to —"

"Get inside."

Giovanni saw the glint of steel. He sighed, nodded.

Once inside, Amador locked the door. He

glared at him. "I tried to play nice with you. No more!"

* * * *

Amador's gut ached from that kick. He was tired and frustrated, not sure what in hell he was going to do with this guy. He was just lucky that he'd thought of this house, a former lover who was always waiting for him with open arms, in case he decided to return. He remembered that Edward was always in the South of France at this time of year and he would never agree to accept the spare key back for Amador. This place was okay for now, but he couldn't stay here with this guy forever. Ed would return eventually, and someone had to run Vega Construction. He could call in and beg off for a few days, putting his foreman in charge, but eventually there'd be questions.

He pushed Giovanni onto the bed none too gently and tightly tied both wrists over his head. He had to get some sleep and his earlier instincts not to trust him had been correct. There was a part of him that felt for this guy. Those things he was saying on the way there had gotten to him somehow. This guy was as trapped in his life as he was. He suspected that whoever this guy's family was, they were big time mobsters and this job had been his initiation somehow. And not only did this

guy not have it in him to kill, he was so deep in the closet he was suffocating.

Amador took off his shoes and shirt and lay down on the bed beside him. He could hear Giovanni breathing hard, pulling some against the restraints. What in hell was he going to do with this guy? The idea of sending him to some far away country had its appeal, but could he trust him? What if, at the first opportunity, he called someone to finish the job he couldn't? And he needed to find out who had sent him, if not he'd be continually looking over his shoulder. It wasn't funny to be a Vega. He'd never asked for this. And it seemed no matter how he tried to stay out of the shit, it always managed to catch up with him.

Amador closed his eyes, the pull of sleep becoming more than he could resist. Tomorrow. He'd have the answer tomorrow.

Chapter Two

"Well, this is pretty kinky," a voice said loudly, followed by a chuckle.

Giovanni's eyes snapped open. Was this his killer? He didn't look like much of a killer, standing there with flashy Bermuda shorts and an orange tank top.

"Eddie," Amador said, sitting up. "I didn't expect you to be home so early."

"Well, I didn't expect to come home and find you in my bed either, although, I must say, I'm delighted, even if you are in it with another man. And who might this be?"

He had a pleasant British accent, cultured, educated, a man whose fair hair had started to grey on the sides.

Giovanni pulled against the ties. "His prisoner, as you see. Help me."

"You're losing your touch, my boy," Eddie told Amador. "I've never known you to have to tie them down before."

"We need to talk," Amador said. He glanced at Giovanni.

"Don't tell me not to go anywhere," Giovanni snapped.

Amador gave him a faint smile and headed for the door. He motioned to Eddie who was staring at Giovanni curiously.

Giovanni swore, "Bastard!"

* * * *

Amador paced the living room a few times while Edward looked on. "I need your help."

"You have it."

"He tried to kill me. He's a hit man."

"He's a what?" He laughed. "He doesn't look like a hit man."

"He doesn't act like one either. I suspect he's related to some crime family, someone's toes my dad stepped on. I was his initiation."

"It's a shame he didn't opt for another kind of initiation. You could have taught me much." He grinned.

"This isn't funny, Edward."

Edward sobered. "I see you're very upset. I apologise. Why aren't you dead?"

"Because he got distracted. He was watching me fuck."

"Come again, pardon the pun."

"He was across the way from a hotel room I rent out from time to time. He saw everything. I couldn't call my father's men to take care of...it...because he might have let something slip when they were questioning him. He won't tell me who sent him."

Edward pursed his lips. "My beautiful Amador, isn't it time your father knows the truth? You aren't seriously considering marrying that Columbian girl, are you?"

"Do I have a choice?"

"Yes, you do. Tell him who you are." He moved closer, placed a hand on his shoulder. "Tell him you are a beautiful man who makes love like a demonic angel and that you don't want anything to do with his so called...business."

"I've managed to keep my hands clean." He moved away.

"But you are still his slave. And you will break that poor girl's heart. She'll take one look at you and fall in love over the moon. She'll have your children and spend her life wondering why you don't want her."

He sighed. "I have more pressing problems. What do I do with him?"

"Let him go."

"I can't let him go, Eddie." He shook his head. "He'll go right back to who ever sent him. They'll put another hit on me. I'll be on the run. And he

knows my secret."

"What scares you more?" He looked at him.

Amador fell silent.

"What is it exactly your father can do to you?"

"Look at my mother. Look what it took for her to leave him and still he controls her life. Every man she has even looked at has disappeared, never to be seen again. We're his possessions. I shudder when I think about my younger sister and brother. I can't turn my back on them."

"You don't have to."

"Yes, I do, Eddie. You don't understand. If he ever finds out I fuck men, he'll disown me. I won't be allowed to see my mother or my siblings ever again. They need me. I'm the only thing that stands between them and my father. I protect them."

Eddie pulled him close, kissed his hair. "You can stay here as long as you need to. What about the business?"

Amador pulled away. "I'll call in, tell them I'm taking a few days off. It will be okay. My foreman will cover for me and he won't say anything. I can trust him."

"And the young man you got tied up in the bedroom?"

"I'll go untie him. I just need time to think."

"You're no killer, Amad."

He nodded. "I'll do what I have to do to protect

my family."

* * * *

Giovanni sighed with relief when Amador untied his wrists. He rubbed them frantically. "Thank you, oh, Mr. Benevolence."

Amad blinked at him. "Don't get smart mouthed today. I'm not in the mood. And be nice to Edward. He's our host."

"So who is he exactly, your Sugar Daddy?" He sat up.

Amad gave him a dirty look. "He's my friend and watch your mouth."

"I'll be nice if you will."

"I'm not usually inclined to be nice with people who try to kill me."

"Back at ya. I have to take a pee. Is that allowed?"

"Be my guest. And I'll get your clothes from the car. You can change and take a shower. Bathroom is there." He pointed to the right and left the room.

Giovanni stripped off his clothes and walked into the shower, one of those huge round ones with a variety of sprays sticking out everywhere. His body ached from lying in one place all night. His wrists hurt, too, but he was still alive. He hadn't slept all night, not only due to the

discomfort, but because there was a man sleeping beside him, and, for a little while last night, Amador had rolled over to his side of the bed. His body had collided with his and stayed there for at least an hour or so. He'd moved his head and watched him sleeping. He looked like a god damned angel, beautiful, stunning even, the contours of his face giving him a haunting look, his lips full, jaw square, and his chest, smooth, all those muscles and taut, brown nipples. The more he studied him, the harder his cock got, eventually aching more than his wrists. And there was nothing he could do to ease the ache. But now, under the shower, he took his cock in both hands and began to slowly stroke it. He squeezed gently, his tongue reaching out to wet his lips, a soft moan escaping, then a whimper as he felt his cock pulse in his fingers.

The door opened and he jumped, instantly removing his hands. The door was glass and he was clearly visible.

Amador stood there. "I just wanted to let you know that your suitcase is on the bed." He cleared his throat, then grinned at him. "Sorry to interrupt."

"You fucker!" Giovanni banged on the shower door, then yanked it open.

Amador turned around to look at him. He seemed surprised.

"You have no sense of common...you could have waited until I..."

Amador folded his arms across his chest. He was wearing jeans, but he was still shirtless. He deliberately let his gaze wander over him. "You're making a spectacle of yourself."

Giovanni looked down at himself and then reached over and grabbed a big towel. "Next time knock."

"I'll remember that," he said, laughing. "Hurry up, will you. I'd like to take one, too."

Giovanni slammed the door. At least if he was going to die soon, he should be able to masturbate in peace.

When he finally came out, Amador was waiting. He stood there with a towel in his hands, nothing on but a pair of white briefs. Giovanni looked everywhere but at those briefs. "You...your turn," he managed.

Amador walked into the bathroom without a word.

Giovanni eyed his suitcase and began to dress, glancing at the bathroom door occasionally because Amador had left it wide open. The shower was running now and, as Giovanni put on his t-shirt, he couldn't help but picture him in there. He still had that mental image of him in the hotel room, his body sleek with whatever it was that man had oiled him up with. Muscular hills of

delicious flesh. Amador had a beautiful body. He would have given much for a closer look. Now, he had his chance. The door was ajar, the shower still running. He could just casually walk past and glance in. Amador wouldn't even notice. What to hell. If he was going to die, he might as well live before the end.

He backed up a little to the wall, moved closer to the bathroom and then paused at the opening of the door. The bathroom was a little steamy, but he could still see well enough. And then suddenly the door slid open and he stood there, completely naked, wet, his long black hair clinging to his face. He shook his head, pushed his hair back.

Giovanni couldn't move. He was so beautiful, far more so than the men in those gay magazines he used to stash under his bed. His cock, his balls, the muscled curves of his stomach and his chest, his shoulders, square, broad, and those legs, muscular, long. Giovanni had no idea that he'd fallen into some kind of a trance until he heard Amador's voice.

"Now that you've memorized every inch of my body, do you mind getting me a towel. You used both of them."

Giovanni blinked. "Well...you should have...have...closed the damn door." He tore his gaze away.

Amador held out his hand. "Towel?" He was

plainly irritated.

"Ah...where?"

"In the closet in the hallway, right across the hall."

"Okay," Giovanni said, stumbling across the room and coming back with the towel. He lowered his head when he handed it to him, which wasn't helpful. He trained his eyes on his cock for a second, then looked away.

Amador began to dry his chest, moving the towel over his stomach to his thighs. Giovanni suspected that he didn't have a clue what he was doing to him, but his cock was now again rock hard. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest. This was surreal. He turned his back.

"So," Amador said, "is it true?"

"Is what true?" Giovanni managed.

"What you were talking about on the way here?"

"Forget what I said. I wasn't thinking straight."

"You've never been with a man."

Giovanni turned around, relieved when he saw Amador zip up his jeans. "I...no, of course not."

"But you want to?"

"Stop looking at me like that."

"Like what?" Amador shrugged, rubbing his hair with the towel. He had a bit of stubble on his jaw, made him look dark, dangerous, sexy. His skin was the most beautiful colour of honey

brown, like the sun had kissed him all over.

"Where do the blue eyes come from? Your dad is Columbian, right?"

"My mother. Irish. Blonde, blue eyes."

"Oh yeah, that's right."

"So how much do you know about me anyway?"

"Far more than I should apparently."

Amad didn't answer that. He threw down his towel, went over to the bureau and began brushing his hair.

"Are they yours?" Giovanni asked, indicating the items on the bureau.

"Yeah."

"You live here?"

"I did, once."

"With that man?"

"That man has a name," a voice said suddenly, laughing. "And to answer your question, Amad did live with me. I was his first lover actually. I keep praying he will come to his senses and come back to me, but he's outgrown me. How about some breakfast, Giovanni?"

Giovanni looked at Amador.

"Oh, don't worry about him," Edward said, "even he'll give you the chance to eat. Coffee?" He looked at Amador.

"I have to make a few phone calls first," he said. "I'll be down later."

"Then come," Edward said to Giovanni. He held out his arm. "Breakfast is ready."

* * * *

Giovanni didn't know what to make of Edward. He was obviously filthy rich, handsome, cultured and he seemed very relaxed about the whole situation. He led him to the balcony where they ate eggs Benedict and fresh fruit.

"Do you know what I'm doing here?"

He sipped his coffee and glanced over at him. "Yes. You tried to shoot Amador, but when you got him in your sights, you watched him fucking and you decided not to."

Giovanni's eyes widened. "He told you that?"

He smiled. "It's nothing to be embarrassed about. He fucks like a champion. And he's beautiful to boot. How long have you known you were gay, sweetie?"

"I'm not..."

"Look, Gio." He smiled, putting down his coffee. "I've been around a lot longer than you. I've met the most professional closet queens in the world, and believe me, you don't hide it well, especially not when you're in the same room with a beautiful man. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It should be celebrated."

"Not where I come from?"

"If they don't respect who you are, leave."

"I can't do that either."

"I suspect that you and my Amador are two of a kind. He's as trapped as you."

"Well, I'm sorry if I don't feel sympathy for him. He is planning on killing me."

"He won't do that."

"He won't let me go."

"Do you want to go?"

"Of course I do."

He smiled.

"I made a mistake. I didn't do what I was sent to. I'm in deep shit. I can't go home. I just want to go away somewhere. I told him I wouldn't come back."

"He has to be sure. He can't just let you go. Give him time, and if you're patient, you'll find that he's not as bad as he seems. You're far more of a threat to him than he is to you right now. Believe me. Now finish your breakfast, sweetie, and stop stressing. It will give you wrinkles."

Giovanni laughed a little at that. He felt a little better after breakfast. He had to hold on to what Edward told him, that Amador wouldn't hurt him. But he wasn't about to let him go either from the looks of it.

Later that afternoon, Giovanni sat outside in the back, watching the water crash against the waves. He couldn't help thinking that at least his prison

was a pleasant one. He fell asleep only to be awakened by Edward calling him for dinner.

Amador came to join them and they ate crab salad in the dining room and drank wine. Amador seemed distracted and he drank quite a bit of wine. Edward conversed with Giovanni, telling him about the beaches in France, and one particular nude beach where he said, "The angels of gay paradise strolled looking for love."

Giovanni laughed. It felt liberating to talk like this, out loud about desires, which had always been forbidden to him. He drank his wine and marveled at the joy in Edward's voice. "There was one such angel there," he said, his eyes bright, "I never did get his name. He could suck cock like none other, beautiful ass and a tongue, which could curl itself around a bamboo tree."

"And you had him?" Giovanni laughed, thinking of the pure freedom of it, seeing something you wanted and taking it, touching and tasting.

"But of course, my boy, life is too short to deprive yourself." He looked at Amador. "Right?"

Amador lifted his glass, but didn't reply.

"What's wrong with you?" Giovanni asked him boldly, the wine making his head spin a bit.

"You. You're what's wrong with me." He looked him directly in the eye. "If only you hadn't come along and ruined my fucking life." He stood

up.

Giovanni sighed. "Well, you've ruined mine as well."

"Doesn't look like it," he said, "looks like you're having a great old time, maybe the best you've ever had." He leaned forward and grabbed Giovanni by the neck. Edward shouted, but Amador didn't pay any attention. "Why didn't you tell me you were Frank Bianchi's boy?"

Giovanni tipped back in the chair, but Amador held him steady. "I...couldn't. I..."

"Frank Bianchi," he said, releasing Giovanni, who fell on the floor.

* * * *

Amador looked at Edward.

Edward shook his head. "Jesus," he said softly.

Amador nodded his head. "Yeah."

Giovanni scrambled to his feet. "Does it matter?"

"Yes, it matters," he said softly. "You're the son of one of the biggest crime families on this continent. My father must have really trampled on some toes. When the Bianchi family wants you, they get you, one way or another. Jesus Christ," he said, putting his hands in his hair, "I've been marked by the Bianchi family. There's no safe place for me. God damn it. I'm a dead man."

"Your family," Edward said, "they'll protect you. They'll..."

"No," Amador said. "They can't. My father doesn't have the resources of this family, Edward. All the big power is still in South America. It's like David and Goliath."

"I'll call them off," Giovanni blurted.

"How?" Amador muttered. "And even if you could, why would you?"

Giovanni met his gaze. "I don't want anything to happen to you."

Amador's mouth hung open.

"I mean," Giovanni muttered. "I'm a lot of things, but I'm not a murderer. I'm not like my father."

"He's not going to listen to you. Besides, you failed. You're not going to exactly be in a bargaining position. No, I know what we have to do. We have to get out of here, go far away."

"Anything you need, Amad," Edward interjected. "Money, another car."

He nodded.

"What do...do you mean by...we?" Giovanni interrupted.

"You're coming with me. You're my insurance. And in the meantime, I'll work on trying to get my father to make amends for what he did, get your father to call off the hit. Come on, get your stuff, we're leaving. Edward, I'm going to need another

car."

Edward nodded. "You got it."

Amador ran upstairs, pulling Giovanni with him.

"Maybe I can talk to my father," Giovanni suggested as he put things into his suitcase.

"And tell him where we're going. No."

"How can I tell him where we're going if I don't know myself?"

Amador grabbed the suitcase and ran downstairs.

Edward was ready with money and keys to another car. Edward hugged Amador goodbye and kissed him on the forehead. "Be careful, baby."

He nodded.

Edward reached over and squeezed Giovanni's arm. "You, too," he said, then mouthed, *take care of him*.

Giovanni's eyes widened, but he had no time to respond. Amador was already pulling him down the driveway. "I wish to hell you'd stop pulling me around like one of those pull toys." That was ignored.

"Get in the passenger side. I'll drive. We have to see a guy I know first. He'll get us fake passports."

"Fake passports? Where are we going?"

That was also ignored.

Chapter Three

"Where in hell is Cartagena?" Giovanni demanded, glancing around the boarding lounge. He was exhausted. They'd driven twelve hours non stop only to end up in this creepy place where an old man with dirty hands gave them new passports. Now they were waiting in the airport for a flight to some place he'd never heard about and Amador Vega hadn't said two words to him.

"It's in South America. Columbia," Amador finally confessed, grabbing him by the arm and urging him to sit down in one of those hard assed airport seats. "Look, you said you wanted to get away. We're getting away."

"I didn't say I wanted to get away with you," he sneered.

"You could do worse." He gave him a meaningful look.

Giovanni rolled his eyes. "Why in hell are we going there?"

"The family is there. Maybe I can get myself

taken off the hit list, and if not, at least I'll be protected."

"Columbia," Giovanni muttered, "drug trade."

Amador nodded, tight lipped.

"That's what the fight was over, the fight between our families, drugs, wasn't it?"

"I suppose."

"And you, you're going to join them now?"

"No, God damn it," he snapped, "I'm not going to join them. Do you really think that's why I'm going there, to join the drug cartel?"

"I have no idea why you're going there or why you're dragging me along. I'm sure they're not going to be thrilled to see me."

"They won't know you're Bianchi's son, at least not until I decide it would be to my advantage to let them know."

Giovanni just stared at him.

"Look." Amador pointed at him. "You keep my secret, and I'll keep yours. You have a new passport, a new name. Maybe if we get out of this alive, you can just keep on going, live a new life. That's what you want, isn't it?"

Giovanni considered that. "Yeah, I'm Douglas Prue, it's not even an Italian name, but it will do. What's yours again?"

"Alan Simcoe."

Giovanni hid a smile.

"Don't get funny."

"I have to laugh. Here I am in an airport with the guy I was supposed to kill, going to some Godforsaken place I can't even pronounce to meet a bunch of drug lords. Don't you see the irony in that?"

"Why don't you say that louder, the woman at the far end didn't hear you?"

He made a face.

Amador stood. "They're calling our flight."

"Is there even an airport in Carta...wherever?"

"Cartagena, and yes, it's Rafael Nunez Airport."

* * * *

On the plane, Giovanni slept. Amador stared out the window. He'd been on edge right up until the time they'd boarded the plane, looking over his shoulder, expecting to see a real hit man. He felt better now, thirty thousand feet in the air, but his anxiety would climb again very quickly as soon as they touched down.

The last time he'd seen his father's family, he was sixteen years old, but in spite of the distance, his father had maintained family ties. Of course Amador knew that loyalty to the family wasn't just about sentiment. There were drugs involved, very profitable ones, and the chain began here and stretched all the way to Los Angeles.

Amador figured that if he told his uncle about Bianchi's vengeance, they'd try to find some solution. At the same time, he'd be under their protection, far enough away to perhaps avoid being killed. He had considered the possibility of going directly to his father, but that would have been a mistake. Giovanni would have been interrogated, maybe even tortured and killed and blood would flow in the streets. His father had a tendency to act first and think later. He wouldn't take kindly to anyone messing with his family. No, this was the only way. He had his brother and sister to think about, too, not to mention his mother. What if Bianchi went after them?

He glanced over at Giovanni for a second and sighed. He wasn't sure what Giovanni's fate would be when this was all over. Maybe he'd just keep going, travelling from place to place. He hoped he would find a way to live his life. He wished he could do the same, but that was a dream. He'd had all he could do these last years to stay away from all the nastiness. And right now, he had no time for dreams. He had more pressing problems.

"You think I'm a coward, don't you?" Amador said a few hours later when they were installed in a small hotel room in Cartagena. He had already called his father's older brother, Manuel. He

would come to get them in the morning. He had told his uncle very little over the phone.

Giovanni glanced at him from where he was lying on one of the twin beds, finishing the last bite of his hamburger. "No, I don't think that. Why would you ask me that?"

"Running away, coming here." He shrugged broad shoulders.

Giovanni stood up and went to join him at the window. He reached out and touched his shoulder.

Amador looked at him in surprise.

Giovanni removed his hand. "I guess I never really liked admitting how much power my father had. You're right to get away." He sighed. "My father knows by now I've failed. He probably has his men out looking for me and you. My father doesn't like to fail, that's why I could never go home now." He walked over to the bed and sat back down.

"My father and I don't get along either," Amador said suddenly. "He expects me to marry some girl from out here."

Giovanni looked up. "You, too? My father has someone in mind for me to marry as well. I don't want to...well, guess you know, I kind of like boys...couldn't help it, what with my big confession in the car."

"Boys?" he laughed, "or men?"

Giovanni grinned. "Men, of course, you know what I meant. But I could never really act upon it. Well, maybe one day I will but..." He trailed off.

"Why not now?"

Giovanni looked up at him. "What did you say?"

Amador pulled off his t-shirt. "I said, why not now? Look," he said, hands on his hips, "I'm feeling a little shaky right now, feeling my mortality. I don't know if we're going to come out of this alive and you don't want to die a virgin, do you?"

Giovanni flushed. "Well, technically, I'm not a virgin, except where men are concerned. I did have sex with a girl in high school once, but we..." He was babbling. He looked up to see that Amador had a smile pasted on his face. He was unzipping his jeans. Giovanni's mouth went dry. "Are you sure you want to..."

Amador pushed his jeans down over his hips. "You do find me attractive, don't you? You were distracted enough to refrain from shooting my head off, right?"

"Ah, yeah, I guess, I mean, yes." He nodded frantically.

"You guess?" He laughed and kicked the jeans away, pushing down his white briefs. "Oh come on, Gio," he murmured, his voice deep and seductive, "you can do better than that."

Amador pushed him back on the bed, straddling his hips, undoing the buttons on the shirt. "Tonight you can have me anyway you want me. We don't have to talk about this ever again. But right now, let's not talk at all," he said, looking down into his eyes. He pushed Giovanni's shirt aside and pressed his mouth to his.

Amador's mouth was sweet and insistent. This kiss was definitely going somewhere. For a moment or two, Giovanni was lost in the feeling of those lips on his, the tip of his tongue teasing, not the mention that Amador's erection was pressing against his thigh. Amador's mouth came off his and moved down his throat, hands sliding down to his waist to undo the button on the top of his jeans.

"Wait," Giovanni said breathlessly when he could finally speak.

Amador glanced up at him, moving downward, undoing his pants, pulling down the zipper. He met his gaze for a second. "What? Wait? Why?"

"I...we shouldn't be...I mean..."

Amador narrowed his eyes. "You don't want this?"

When Giovanni let his head fall to the side without speaking, Amador raised his hands. He got off him and stood up. "Okay." Without another word, he went over and crawled into the other twin bed. He switched off the light.

Giovanni lay there in the dark, his cock throbbing. What was wrong with him? What in the hell did he stop him for? He wanted him. He wanted this more than anything, more than the very air he was breathing. Was it fear? Was it the situation? He didn't know. So much had happened. Here he was in a foreign country, on the run with the very man he'd been sent to kill. He sighed, turned his head to glance over at the other bed. Amador lay there, too, staring up at the ceiling. "I'm sorry," Giovanni said.

"What for?"

"It's not that I didn't..."

"I started it. I should be the one apologising. You don't want to make love, that's fine."

"Is that what we'd be doing, making love?"

"Making love, having sex, it's all the same."

"Is it?"

"Are you trying to make me nuts?" He sat up and looked over at him. "Call it whatever you want. A few moments ago, I wanted you. I thought you wanted me, too. I made a serious error in judgement."

"No, you didn't make an error." Giovanni swung his legs over the side. "I...I've been attracted to you since I first saw you."

"Through the window with my ass in the air," he slurred.

Giovanni laughed. "Yeah, and it's some ass, by

the way. I meant to tell you that."

Silence.

"Can we try again?" Giovanni asked, discarding his shirt and pulling off his jeans. He was shaking, but he wasn't going to back down.

"Now?"

"Yes, now."

"Are you sure that you..."

Giovanni didn't bother letting him finish. He came and sat down on the bed next to him. He took Amador's face between his hands and kissed his mouth gently. He stroked his hair. "You taste so sweet," he whispered. "I want you. I want you to make love to me, Amador. I want you to be my lover tonight. Show me," he urged, "please, show me how."

Amador wrapped his arms around Giovanni and pulled him down on top of him. He looked at him for a second, then lifted his head off the pillow to kiss him again. Giovanni caught his wrists and pressed them up over his head, intensifying the kiss. There was no turning back now. Kissing him felt so natural, so real. His heart was beating so loudly he could hear it. He tore his mouth away for a second, feeling a little high, crazed. "God, you're so beautiful. Can I say that to a man?"

"Think you just did," he whispered. "Touch me."

Giovanni swallowed hard. He pushed up off him and knelt beside him, trembling fingers tripping across his chest, down his stomach, hesitating just a little as he allowed himself to move his thumb around the head of his erection. "You cock is...so..."

"You want to taste it," he urged. "Taste it."

"What if I..."

"Guard your teeth with your lips and..."

Giovanni seized Amador's cock at the base and opened his mouth to capture the head. He pushed down the length of the shaft, only getting halfway before he felt the head hit his throat. Amador's cock was thick and long, the stuff fantasies were made of. Amador instructed him on how to use his tongue and lips and eventually Giovanni stopped listening. Everything was sensation, taste, feel and smell. He let go, did exactly what he'd wanted to for so long and Amador stopped talking, the words being replaced by short gasps of breaths and deep, satisfied moans.

Giovanni felt strong fingers grip his hair and he remained stubbornly connected to him as he tasted the come in his mouth. He would have stayed until the end if Amador hadn't pulled back, urging him to back off. Giovanni watched him in the semi lit room, his beautiful face ravished with pleasure.

Amador reached for his hand. "Yeah," he said,

"yeah."

"I did okay?"

"Um," he nodded, tongue reaching out and wetting his lips, head nestled in the pillow.

"There's more, right? That's not it?"

Amador lifted his head. He chuckled. "No." He sat up. "Of course not. I just need a minute. For a novice, you're damn good at that."

Giovanni lowered his head, smiling. "I just did what I felt."

"Um," he replied, "now, I'm going to do what I feel." He reached for him and took him down on the bed, his hands roaming over Giovanni's body. When he began kissing his chest, Giovanni sighed. His cock was so hard it hurt.

Amador licked his nipples, teasing and nibbling, then moved to his stomach where he laid tiny kisses. He kissed the inside of his thighs and then took Giovanni by surprise when he reached under him and wiggled his finger up between his ass cheeks. "What...ah...are you doing?"

"I'm going to make you feel really good."

"Are you going to...fuck me?"

Amador lifted his head and looked at him. "Do you want me to fuck you?"

Giovanni hesitated for a moment, then nodded vigorously. "Yeah. Will it hurt?"

"Probably. I don't have any lube. I don't think I have condoms either. Maybe we should wait."

Giovanni reached down and touched his cheek. "You mean we'll do this again?"

"You never know," he said. "Now, shut up, will you. Even if I don't fuck you, I can do something almost as good. Roll over."

Giovanni lifted an eyebrow.

"Don't worry. Trust me. Roll over."

Giovanni rolled onto his stomach.

Amador began kissing him again, his shoulders, the small of his back, then he opened his ass cheeks and dipped his tongue between them, lightly touching his anus.

Giovanni shuddered.

He did it again, this time probing a bit with his tongue, stabbing in and out.

"Oh, God," Giovanni moaned.

The motion intensified and Amador reached between his legs and began to fondle his cock, his balls, all the while tonguing his most intimate of openings.

He was shaking all over and, just when he thought he couldn't take any more pleasure, Amador inserted a finger into his ass.

"Ahh...oh yeah...do that...do that."

The finger moved deeper, in a circle, easing up and down and up and down until he felt as if Amador was fucking him. Two fingers now...thicker, deeper. His moans became louder, his hips slammed into the mattress. He would

have never dreamt that there was so much pleasure to be had there. His cock sang with orgasm, pumping out its load almost in sync with Amador's finger fucking.

When Giovanni had recovered, he rolled over and reached for him. Amador came up into his arms, kissed his forehead. "I want your cock," he said.

Amador laughed. "Boy, you took to that like a duck to water."

Giovanni stroked his hair, pulled him closer. "I've wasted so much time. I want to feel everything and I know I love fucking. I love to be fucked. I just want it to be bigger and deeper. You've given me the taste, and, baby." He moved his hand down to Amador's cock. "You're so big and thick. I know you could make me feel it. Do it, do it tonight, fuck me."

"Gio," he said, taking his hand, "I want to but..."

"Never mind the lube and the condom."

"It will hurt. It's your first time. I don't want to fuck you dry."

"Then find a pharmacy." Giovanni looked directly into those beautiful blue eyes. "Listen to me, I don't want to do this again, this first time thing without having it all. I want you, right now, right here, after I do it once, I won't be scared anymore."

"Are you scared?"

"Yeah, a little, but I'm more turned on than scared. Feel my cock," he urged. He placed Amador's hand on it.

Amador leaned down and kissed it. "It's almost morning. Maybe I can find a drug store, but my uncle will be here soon. There's no time, Gio."

Giovanni moaned. "Damn. Then promise me, at the earliest opportunity, you'll fuck me. After that, it will be..."

Amador narrowed his eyes. "You want me to break you in, and then after that what, you become a fuck slut?"

Giovanni shrugged. "Maybe. What do you care? It's not like we're in love."

"No, but...yeah, you're right."

"You like to fuck, right?"

"Yeah."

"So how many guys have you fucked?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I don't keep track."

"And how many guys have fucked you? Do you prefer to be fucked or do the fucking?"

"I like to be on top, but I don't mind the occasional fucking when I'm feeling really dirty."

Giovanni chuckled. "I felt that when you were doing what you did with your fingers...really dirty...like a wanton whore. I loved it."

Amador laughed out loud. "I've created a

monster.”

Giovanni snuggled down with him. “What’s your dirtiest fantasy?”

“I don’t know...a gang bang maybe. You?”

“Yeah, to be powerless and have all these gorgeous men wanting to fuck you one after another, but right now I’d settle for you fucking me.”

“Thanks, I think.”

Giovanni laughed. “I guess I should go to my own bed?”

Amador didn’t answer. When Giovanni looked at him, he had fallen asleep.

Chapter Four

Manuel Vega was an impressive looking man, about thirty-five years old. Giovanni first saw him from the window of the hotel room. He stood in the courtyard, deep in conversation with Amador. He could hear the odd word in Spanish float up to him, but his Spanish was rusty at best and none of it made much sense.

He stared over at the unmade bed, feeling a little guilty about his thoughts. It wasn't what they did in that bed that caused the guilt, it was that he should be thinking about other things, like what was going to happen to him now.

When the door opened, Giovanni looked up, half-expecting to see Amador and his uncle, Manuel, but Amador was alone. "Get dressed," he said, "we'll go have some breakfast. My uncle will be back in an hour."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that I'm on the Bianchi family hit list and that you came to warn me."

"Who does he think I am?"

"That Prue guy. We're friends, that's all I told him."

"What's he going to do?"

"I don't know. He didn't say much. He said we'd talk later. You better have a story. We'll flesh it out over breakfast. We don't want to trip each other up. I'm sure he's going to question you about...stuff."

Giovanni went to put on his pants. "I could use some clean clothes. I have money. I'm just not sure..."

"They'll take American here. When we get the chance, we'll pick up some things we need. I'll wait downstairs."

Amador was waiting patiently by the door when Giovanni came outside. His uncle hadn't said much during their encounter. He'd hugged him, told him he was glad to see him, but wasn't happy to hear about his plight. He'd been concerned about the rest of the Vega family, and Amador said, he didn't think they were in any danger at the moment.

"I'll call your father," he said. "He needs to increase his security now. What happened to the hit man?"

Amador shrugged. "He got scared off, I guess."

"And this Prue, what does he have to do with

all this?"

"He saved my life." That was no lie. He'd be dead now if Giovanni hadn't been so fixated on watching him fuck.

* * * *

As they walked together through what Amador told him was the neighbourhood of Crespo, which was still undergoing development, Amador pointed out a few places of interest. "That's the Hotel Las Americas."

"It's beautiful," Giovanni said.

"This area is about ten minutes from downtown by car. Let's grab a taxi."

A few minutes later, they were driving through the Puerta del Reloj, known as the clock gate, which was the official entrance to the city. "This is the Plaza de los Coches, Square of the Carriages," Amador said.

The city was truly a mix of the old and the new, sky scrapers stood side by side with ancient buildings. It was breathtaking.

Amador paid the driver and got out. He pointed out San Pedro Claver Square and the church, which was also called by that name, and they passed the museum of Modern Art. "We should find somewhere to eat nearby," he said.

Giovanni stood awe struck in front of the

church. "It's so old," he said, but he was talking to himself. Amador was way out in front. Giovanni ran to catch up. "How many times have you been here?"

"Tons of times. When my grandmother was alive, we came often. She used to live in Bocagrande. It's very touristy now, the most modern part of the city. Let's go in here," he suggested. It was a little restaurant that served crepes, waffles and fruit. They drank some good strong coffee and ate heartily.

Amador didn't talk much until he'd finished eating. He ordered more coffee and glanced across the table at him. "Prue?"

He looked up.

"I need to call you that here, remember?"

"Yeah, okay."

"You were working for me on the construction site and you noticed someone was tailing me."

"Doesn't your father know who works for you?"

"I hire on temporary labour all the time. He doesn't know everyone."

"How you going to explain that I knew about it being a Bianchi hit?"

"That I haven't figured out yet."

"Pretty important detail, wouldn't you say? And by the way, how did you figure out who I was?"

"I didn't."

"What do you mean? Yes, you did."

"I wasn't sure. I figured if I acted like I was, you'd come clean. Oldest trick in the book."

Giovanni shook his head when Amador laughed. "Fine, you won that one, but still, how are you going to explain about—"

"I don't know, maybe—"

"Look, my father's men have girlfriends. Maybe I've dated one of them and she mentions it when she's drunk?"

"No. I wouldn't believe that. Why don't I just say I assume its Bianchi because there's been some bad blood?"

"Okay. And you took me with you because..."

"The hit man saw you and we thought you could be in danger and or helpful to me...I don't know." He looked frustrated.

"Or I'm a good kisser?" He grinned.

"Don't even joke about that shit. If my uncle ever found out that we—"

"We didn't really." He lowered his voice and met his gaze across the table. "No lube, no condoms. But I'm holding you to your promise."

"I thought we weren't going to talk about it."

Giovanni put down his folk. "So it was one time?"

"I don't know," he said, looking around. "We'll see." He stood up. "I need to call my uncle, tell

him where we are. He'll pick us up."

Giovanni nodded. He watched him walk over to the counter and ask for a phone. Beautiful. Amador was as beautiful in the day as he had been in that bed last night. He wasn't falling in love. He just wanted more of what Amador had started last night.

Amador's uncle picked them up about a half hour later in a white Eldorado. Giovanni had a hard time understanding him, although out of courtesy, he was speaking in English. His accent was thick. He didn't mention the reason why they were there, just pointed out places of interest as they sped out of the downtown core and headed to the Bocagrande area. He said something about dancing all night and no good beaches, then laughed. Giovanni understood that much. Giovanni nodded and smiled at him from the backseat often.

Manuel Vega was a tall, handsome man, and Amador strongly resembled him. In spite of his good looks, Giovanni also recognized him as a man who didn't like games. They would have to be very careful.

Bocogrande, translated into Big Mouth, was the most modern part of the city complete with hotels, shops and clubs. It formed part of the land extension delimited by Cartagena Bay to the East

and the Caribbean Sea to the West. If he hadn't been so stressed out he might have appreciated its beauty more.

"It's for tourist," Manuel said as if disgusted. "Our house is hidden away, but near water."

Manuel's house turned out to be more of a chateau. It had many rooms and romantic looking wrought iron balconies. It surrounded a huge courtyard filled with flowers and trees.

Manuel's wife was a shy lady with beautiful eyes. She said little, just smiled and ran around, trying to serve them things. Manuel waved her off as if she was a disruptive fly and led them into a beautiful study. They sat on big leather sofas and Manuel made them each a drink. Giovanni didn't ask what it was, he just swallowed it, hoping it would keep his knees from shaking.

"Now," Manuel said slowly, looking at Giovanni, "just who in the hell are you?"

Giovanni glanced at Amador.

"Uncle, he..."

"I didn't ask you," he said, "I asked him. And what is it with you, you can't speak your language anymore?"

"I don't speak it often and —"

He put up a hand. "One thing at a time." He glared at Giovanni. "Mr. Prue, or whatever your name is, what is going on with you and Amador?"

"Going on? Nothing. I was working for him

and I noticed that there was this man following him and I..." He stopped.

Manuel looked at his nephew. "What makes you think this is Bianchi?"

"There's been bad blood between the two families and I—"

"So Bianchi would risk trying to kill my brother's son?"

"It's the imports," Amador muttered.

"I knew he couldn't be trusted to handle it," Manuel said as if to himself. "You'll stay here until this is settled," he said. Then he turned and pointed at Giovanni. "You, I don't trust. We'll talk again. Amador, you will keep an eye on him."

"Yes, Sir," he said.

He walked out, leaving them both breathless.

* * * *

"He doesn't fool around," Giovanni said suddenly as Amador walked over to the bar and poured another drink.

"No."

"What's your aunt's name?"

"Maria."

"Do they have children?"

"Yes, a daughter Sophia. She works at the hotel. My uncle owns part of it. They had two sons."

"Had?"

"Both killed."

"Oh. It's going to be all right, isn't it, Amador?"

Amador turned around. He drained his glass. He didn't have an answer to that question. All he knew was that this man looking at him now with fear in his eyes had completely changed the course of his life, and not in a good way.

"Amador?"

"Don't ask me to ease your fears, Gio. We're here because of you...your family. And I don't know any more than you do. This could start a huge war at home. People I love could get hurt or worse."

"You blame me."

"Who else should I blame?"

"Do you think I wanted to do this? Do you think I had a God damned choice?"

"There's no use in talking about that now. It's too late."

"You should be grateful to be alive."

"Should I?" He came closer, looked down into his face. "I'm not so sure about that right now."

A knock came on the door suddenly and they both looked up. His aunt stood there. She told Amador in Spanish that their room was ready.

"Come on," he told Giovanni, "let's go upstairs. My aunt has prepared the room."

"Just one room?"

Amador glanced at him. "I'm supposed to

watch you, remember?"

"Oh yeah," he said. "Right."

* * * *

The room was spacious, the windows opening out onto the fragrant courtyard. There were two single beds placed far apart on opposite sides of the room. Giovanni's heart sunk. "There's a chance I might die here," he said suddenly when Amador's aunt left the room.

Amador glanced at him before sitting on the side of the bed. "What made you say that? We both could end up dead."

"He doesn't trust me, your uncle."

"He doesn't trust anyone." Amador lay down on the bed. "No one trusts anyone in this business, you should know that."

"You're not going to sleep are you? It's not even afternoon." Giovanni looked out the window. "Can't we take a walk?"

"I have jet lag. You want to walk?"

"I just can't sit around."

"Well, that's exactly what you need to do until we find out how my father is going to react to all this."

Giovanni looked at him. "Why don't you just give me up, tell your uncle who I am?"

"Because I don't want your murder on my

conscience."

Giovanni paced. "I hated being a Bianchi. I never wanted any of this."

"It shows."

Giovanni walked over to the bed and looked down at him. "I don't want to die without..." He took a breath.

Amador opened his eyes. "Is that all you can think about?"

"Yes, God damn it. That's all I dare think about. I want to feel alive. I want to feel alive before I end up..." He swallowed, walked back to the window. "Can you imagine what my father thinks of me right now? He knows I've failed."

"He might think you're dead. He might be grieving."

"No, right now, he is feeling humiliated because his son has failed him and all those things they say about me...he can't deny them."

"What things?"

"That I'm a fag."

"You are." He laughed.

Giovanni turned around and glared at him. "Don't say that."

"I didn't say it, you did. I don't personally like that word. And what does failing to kill me have to do with your sexuality? Do you think they're related?"

"No, but he does. They do. I'm not a man."

"You look like a man."

"How can you be so God damned flippant?"

He shrugged, looking at him through half-closed eyes. "You're over reacting. Calm down. And what do you care what your father thinks? If you survive this, you're not going back there, are you?"

"That would be a punishment worse than death."

"There you have it. If you're lucky, you'll leave here and end up living in some place far away where you can get fucked by a different hunk every night."

But he didn't want a different hunk every night. Right now, the only hunk he wanted to get fucked by was him.

* * * *

Finally, Giovanni had convinced Amador to go for a walk. They strolled along the Bocagrande Beach, which lay along the Hotel Caribe. The resort was 11,486 square feet and constructed with Colonial architecture. It was surrounded by exotic gardens and swimming pools with a spectacular view of the bay.

"Your cousin Sophia works here, right?" Giovanni said suddenly, gazing out over the water.

"Yes. She's assistant manager." Amador was having difficulty appreciating their surroundings, and it wasn't only because he had seen it many times before. He was worried. He was sure his uncle had already contacted his father. His father had a vicious temper. He truly hoped that Manual would be able to keep him in line. Their relationship was an odd one. Although Manual was the younger brother, he had always clearly been the most level headed and sometimes, due to the sheer number of men he had doing his bidding, he was the one who made the decisions. All the drugs were transported to America through him. His father was dependent on those shipments to stay in business.

"Are you here?" Giovanni asked him, grabbing his arm.

Amador's first instinct was to pull away. He wasn't sure what that was last night between them. He knew that people did strange things when they were under pressure. He'd never meant it to go so far. Giovanni acted like he wanted more and Amador didn't think that was a good idea at all for a variety of reasons. He let him hold onto his arm, then when the first opportunity arose, he moved away. "Let's go see if Sophia is around, shall we?"

Giovanni nodded. "Sure. Are you close to your cousin?"

"We used to hang out a lot when I'd come here with my father. We're the same age."

They walked into the beautiful hotel lobby with the highly polished tile floors and the high beige ceilings. Everything was so light and airy and luxurious, with green foliage everywhere.

Sophia was a tall, statuesque woman with a beautiful round face and huge brown eyes. When she saw Amador, she threw her arms around him and kissed him several times, speaking to him in Spanish and then switching into impeccable English. "You devil, no one told me you were coming. And who is this?" She turned to smile at Giovanni.

"A friend of mine, his name is Prue, Doug Prue."

"How do you do, Mr. Prue." She smiled at him. "How do you like the hotel?"

"It's incredible," he said.

"Yes. You're not staying here?"

"No," Amador said, "we're staying with you."

"Good." She took his hand. "We'll have plenty of time to...how do you say that...catch up?"

Amador kissed her cheek. "Yes."

She looked at him suddenly, her eyes narrowing. "You're not in trouble?"

"There's a little family matter that needs to be taken care of."

"Ah, I'm sure father and Uncle Carlos will work

it out, no?"

"I hope so."

"So how long do I get to have you?"

"I don't know, but we'll make the best of it, okay?"

She nodded, glancing at the desk. "I must get back. See you at home?"

"Yeah." Amador walked out of the hotel lobby.

Giovanni was on his heels.

"We should get back."

"She's nice."

"Yes, but she's under my uncle's thumb. He watches her every move."

"She's not married?"

"She was. My uncle married her off to one of his most trusted men. He was an asshole, beat her so badly one time, she had to have reconstructive surgery on her face."

"Oh my God."

"Yeah. My uncle took care of it."

"I bet. And now?"

"As you can guess, she's a widow. If she does fall in love with someone, he'd have to approve it. Not an ideal situation."

"Sounds like my life. How come you..."

"You don't know anything about me, okay," he snapped.

"Whoa, okay, I didn't mean to imply anything."

"I spend my time fighting my father, trying to

lead my own life. I convinced him to let me handle the construction business. He didn't want that. He wants me to be just like him."

"Did you ever think of getting away?"

He sighed. "I think about it all the time, if it wasn't for my younger brother. If I leave, I'm not sure what his fate would be. I'm sure my father would dump everything on him. He'd never be able to live his own life."

"Amador." Giovanni placed a hand on his forearm. "Don't you see how much alike we are?"

"I'm nothing like you," he replied. "Don't try to understand me." He moved away.

"Okay, but I think personally that all we have here is each other."

Amador glanced at him. "Don't romanticise this, Gio, don't romanticise us, okay? You have a flair for the dramatic."

"That's not fair," Giovanni protested, hurrying to catch up with him.

"I'm hungry. It's dinner time. Let's go back. Maybe we'll hear some news."

"Or something we don't want to hear."

"Maybe so, but it's better than this waiting."

Chapter Five

Nothing was said about Amador's uncle at supper. He was conspicuously absent. Although Maria Vega was a shy person, she was a pleasant hostess and a phenomenal cook. They ate chicken and warm tortilla's with cheese and fruit and Giovanni thoroughly enjoyed it. The long walk along the beach had made him hungry.

Sophia was talkative and entertaining, making up for her mother's lack of conversation. She told them stories of the hotel and recalled things she and Amador used to do when they were younger.

When Amador asked where his uncle was, there were no answers forthcoming. Giovanni noticed the presence of armed guards around the perimeter of the house and he wondered if they were there to keep undesirables out or them in.

After supper when the sun went down, giving them a break from the humidity, Sophia announced out of the blue, "Let's go dancing."

Amador had already consumed a lot of wine

and he was falling asleep on the sofa. He wasn't going anywhere.

"What do you say, Doug?" she asked, poking him. "We can dance all night."

Giovanni was reluctant. He knew that Amador wouldn't like it, but damn it, he couldn't just sit around, stressing out all the time. It had been good for him today to walk along the beach. For a little while, he didn't think about the shit he was in. He smiled at Sophia suddenly. "Yeah," he said, "let's go."

Sophia drove her fancy convertible at top speed. It was exhilarating and the breeze was a refreshing reprieve from the humidity.

"Where are we going?" Giovanni laughed, his hair flying in the breeze.

"Cartegena is a musical city. There is music everywhere, the bars, the clubs, the parks. We can take a carriage ride if you like or go to Donde Fidel, sit outside and order Club Colombia Beer, or aguardiente, do you know it?"

"No."

"It's a national favourite, flavoured with anise."

"What's anise?"

"It's a seed, tastes like liquorice."

"Oh," he replied, "sounds positively awful."

She laughed. "You have to try it. Do you like techno music?"

"Yeah."

"Good, we'll go have a few drinks and then go dancing."

"Sounds great."

They had a blast. He drank several glasses of the national favourite, Sophia convincing him that if he drank enough, eventually he'd like it. At the end, he was so loaded he wasn't sure if he did or not. After visiting several cafes, they hit the clubs, techno music was still vibrating in his head when they walked along the white beach with the crystal clear water at dawn.

Sophia had taken off her shoes and she was talking about the sunset.

Giovanni plunked down in the sand and looked up at the sky, waiting for the sun to rise. He suddenly had a pang of regret. He wished Amador was here with him, holding his hand, kissing his mouth. *Damn*. What was it about that man? He'd seen a lot of beautiful man tonight, but every time he looked at one, he found himself comparing them to Amador and they all came up short.

Sophia was now sitting beside him. "You know," she said, "I have this crazy urge to kiss you."

He looked at her in surprise.

"I won't though. It's clear your heart is elsewhere."

"It is?"

She nodded. "Doug, I know a man in love. Amador will always be in the closet. It's this damn family."

He blinked. "Amador? No, I—"

"Come now," she laughed. "I'm a Vega. I've been one all my life. I will never be free, neither with Amad."

"How did you know? Did he tell you?"

"That he was gay? No. I found out when we were teenagers. I noticed the way he looked at boys. And I caught him kissing one once. He begged me not to tell. I never would. It would destroy him. He told me he'd outgrow it, but you don't outgrow that kind of thing."

"Do you think...anyone else knows...I mean...notices that I...I don't love him, you know?"

"You want him. Maybe you've had him." She giggled. "You want more."

"We...well...we didn't do everything."

"I'm still not sure who you are, but don't tell me. I don't want to know. I find you really sweet and handsome. And if you weren't so enamoured with my cousin, I'd jump you right here on this beach."

"Your father wouldn't like it," he teased.

"To hell with my father, he's not here and when the cats away..." She laughed, standing up. "But

that said, I need to get to the hotel."

"No sleep?" Giovanni stood up.

"I can always sleep." She shrugged. She hugged him. "Thanks. It was fun. I'll drive you back."

They watched the sun come up together then left.

* * * *

Amador stood at the bedroom window, waiting. When he saw Giovanni get out of his cousin's car, he swore. How dare he take off like that when he was responsible for watching him?

Giovanni looked surprised when he walked in the room. "Hey, what are you doing up, it's barely seven."

"What in fuck is wrong with you? Are you trying to get us killed?"

"No, I..."

Amador walked over and took his arm, dragging him close to his chest. "If my uncle knew about—"

"Well, he won't." He pulled away. "Are you going to tell him?"

"I don't have to. His men will."

"Relax. Look, you handle stress with alcohol and I handle it other ways. Okay?"

Amador sighed deeply, shook his head. "Where did you go?"

"Dancing."

"Dancing?"

"Yeah, you heard of that, you move in time to the music."

"Very smart."

"I missed you."

"Missed me?"

"Yeah, you big jerk."

Amador made a face.

Giovanni pulled a small bag out of his pocket.

"What's that?"

"Lube and condoms."

Amador raised an eyebrow. "What for?"

"You know what for. Now I don't care where we do it, but..." He paused and deliberately ran his gaze over him.

Amador was standing there in a pair of jeans, the top button undone, no shirt.

"I've never seen a sexier man. Amador," Giovanni said softly, coming closer to him. "Fuck me."

Amador went to protest, but Giovanni caught his face in his hand and kissed him deeply. He released him.

* * * *

"I...we can't do this here." Amador said, putting some distance between them. What in hell was he

thinking? But in spite of the danger, his cock was hard. Giovanni wanted to get fucked, well, he was going to get fucked. "I know a place."

"Well, take me there." He handed him the bag.

Amador grabbed his shirt and put on his shoes. "We have to be quiet, come with me, out the back way."

* * * *

Giovanni followed him down the back stairs and through the corridor. When they hit the field, Amador began to run. Giovanni was breathless by the time they reached the stables. Amador grabbed his hand and pulled him past the stalls where restless horses pounded their hooves on the ground. Amador scrambled up a rickety ladder to the hayloft above and lowered himself onto a big pile of hay.

Giovanni grinned. "I'm going to get fucked for the first time in a smelly hayloft."

Amador took off his shirt, then undid the button and the zipper on his jeans and pulled them down over his hips. They lay discarded on the pile of hay beside him. He looked up at him with those beautiful blue eyes, his body perfectly bronzed and totally naked, his cock, erect and pointed straight up in the air. He smiled at him. "If you want it, come and get it."

Giovanni stripped off his clothes, his gaze hungry for the sight of him, his hands desperate to touch him. He sunk down on his knees in front of him and wrapped his fist around his cock with wonder. "Beautiful," he whispered. "If you knew how long I've waited for this." He looked at him. "Giving me a taste was like giving a dying man just enough medicine to keep him alive, but not enough to cure him."

Amador grinned, his thick black hair falling over his forehead. "Okay, my little drama queen, shut up and suck it, will yeah? If I recall, you're a natural."

"I am," he teased, stroking his cock, wetting his lips in anticipation. "But are you a natural stud? Can you fuck me like you mean it?"

"Try me and see."

That made him crazy. His cock seemed to bob in accord as he leaned over, shielded his teeth and prepared to give him the cock sucking of a lifetime.

Amador was moaning within minutes, his head slung back, his throat exposed. Giovanni was using his tongue and his lips, trying to swallow as much of his cock as he could. He used his muscles at the back of his throat, massaging the flesh in his mouth. Ummmm. He tasted like heaven. He used his free hand to move over his stomach and up to his gorgeous chest, tweaking each hard brown

nub in turn, dying suddenly to taste him there, taste him everywhere.

"Ahh...yeah, yeah..." he cried out suddenly, his hips pumping as Giovanni backed off and watched the intoxicating performance of Amador coming. His face twisted, his body undulated and he moved his own hands over his chest, down to his belly as his tongue tasted his lips sensuously.

Giovanni straddled his hips, dipped his head down to taste those nipples, kissed his throat, melting into his incredible mouth. "It was good?" he whispered, raising his head as Amador traced his fingers along Giovanni's flanks.

"Um, yeah," he breathed. "You're good."

"Now, fuck me. And make it something I'll never forget, okay baby?"

He raised his head up and kissed his mouth deeply. Then Amador released him and slid out from under him. He grabbed him from the back, seized his hair and pushed him onto all fours.

Giovanni's heart pounded in his chest, his cock aching with anticipation. Amador spread his ass cheeks and licked his anus. It sent shudders down his spine. One hand moved down his back to his ass where he received a gentle slap. "This ass is mine," he said, one hand snaking around and massaging his balls.

Giovanni began to breathe hard. His ass was opened again, this time he felt Amador massage

some of the gel into his anus. He moaned as his finger slipped in, then two, the other hand roughly handling his cock now. "Do you feel it?"

"Oh yeah." Giovanni clenched his teeth together, his arms shaking now, desperately trying to support his weight. He cried out as Amador's tongue hit his anus again, then fingers, then tongue, then finally, the head of his cock.

"Say you want my cock," he urged, the head of it teasing his already stimulated anus.

"Um, I want it. Fuck me, Amad, fuck me, please."

The head pushed in through the first ring of muscles. It hurt like hell. Giovanni grunted, set his jaw. "Um, um...go, don't stop," he breathed. Another push. "Oh god, you're ripping me apart, but it feels so good. Do it, Amador, do it."

He pushed deeper, a hand caressing his back. "Relax. You're too tense. Relax, baby. It will feel good in a minute."

Giovanni closed his eyes. He cleared his mind. He concentrated on the feeling of Amador inside him and finally it was like a damn breaking. Amador began to move slowly, in and out and in and out, until the pace increased and Giovanni muffled his cries by keeping his lips sealed tightly. He was breathless, he was removed from all rationality, all pain, all thought...only pleasure and this incredible feeling of being connected.

When Amador's come filled his ass, he slid down onto his belly. When he found the strength to look, Amador was lying beside him, staring up at the ceiling of the barn, one arm comfortably tucked under him. "It gets better the more you do it," he said, turning his head to look at him.

"Gets better? How could it get any better? That was astounding," he said softly, reaching over and taking some strands of Amador's black hair between his fingers. "You're astounding." Giovanni wiggled closer to him and pressed his mouth to his. The kiss was incredibly sweet. "Where did you learn to fuck like that?"

He smiled. "I'm a natural."

Giovanni laughed and lay back down on his back. "Sure, sure. Thanks."

"What are you thanking me for?"

"For giving me that before..."

"Will you stop," he said, sitting up. "Stop being such a ..."

"I know, I know, drama queen."

Amador looked at him, then shook his head with a laugh. "Come on, Hamlet, let's get back before anyone knows we're missing."

"Can we do it again?"

He stood up, began to put on his jeans. "Sure, if we get the chance. Now, put your clothes on."

Giovanni nodded solemnly.

It was too fast and not enough. That was all Giovanni could think about when they sat out on the terrace later that day eating. It wasn't helped by the fact that the humidity caused Amador to walk around with nothing on but a tight white bathing suit his aunt had found lying among some of his old clothes in a trunk. It left little to the imagination. And Amador took frequent dips in the pool, which meant he was often wet.

"We need to get you some clothes," Giovanni said in desperation later that day. "I thought you said we'd —"

"It's too hot to shop," he complained, lying out in one of the lounge chairs while some of the servants brought him endless glasses of lemonade. "You must be hot in those pants. I'll ask my aunt if she can find you —"

"No." The last thing he needed was to walk around sprouting his perpetual hard on. Finally he did lean down beside his ear and whisper, "God, I'm so horny. Do something."

Amador looked up at him with a smile. "What would you like me to do?"

"Don't tease. You know what I want you to do. You're too god damned good looking and sexy for your own good. I'm dying here. It might help if you put some clothes on."

He laughed. "Relax."

"You relax, stud. Don't forget I know now what

you're capable of."

"Too hot to fuck."

"You're too hot, but not to fuck. Please, Amador." His hand came down on his shoulder. He caressed it for a few minutes, then moved it over one of his pectorals. He brushed the nipple with his thumb a few times, watching the change. "God, you're so sexy." He licked his lip.

Amador looked around. He grinned. "You're a bad boy."

"Um, I'd like to be. I'd like to ride your cock. I want to ride it so bad right now."

There was a noticeable change in Amador's trunks.

"You're driving these poor servant girls mad, not to mention me. Please, baby."

* * * *

Amador glanced around him again. They couldn't do anything here, too risky. There were guards below them and servants all over the place, but damn it was tempting, just enough danger to make him horny as hell. The look in Giovanni's eyes was that of pure lust, need, and it was turning him on big time. "The attic," he said.

"Lead on," Giovanni croaked, taking the lube out of his pocket and the condoms and shoving them at him.

Amador shook his head. The guy came prepared, he couldn't deny him that. He led the way, Giovanni at his back, his hands already moving inside his trunks, squeezing his gluts. He walked quietly into the house, slapping Giovanni's hand away as they went up the stairs, then headed for the attic. "We have to be quiet," Amador told him as he climbed the stairs. "And stop that."

"You'll have to gag me," Giovanni moaned, closing the attic door and immediately pressing Amador against the wall. "Off with these damn shorts. They're driving me fucking insane."

"You are crazy." Amador laughed, but it was cut short by Giovanni's hot mouth on his. Amador put his hands in his hair as Giovanni ran his hands over his body, moaning like a man gone wild. "Shush," he said. "Gio, they'll hear us."

"Get the gag," he said, standing back. "Fuck me, use me, oh God, Amad, I'm so hot for you. I'm like a man possessed, and if you hadn't taken me up here, I would have raped you downstairs. Now, gag me and fuck me," he breathed.

Amador gave him a push. "Whatever you want." Giovanni reached out and held him for a minute, turning him around and telling him to look in the full length mirror, which languished in the corner of the attic. "Gag me with those trunks. They smell like you."

"You're nuts," Amador laughed.

"Am I? Look at you," he urged. "Look how beautiful you are. How could I have ever even thought of hurting a hair on your head?"

Amador caressed Giovanni's cheek for a second, smiling at him through the mirror. "Take off your clothes, baby."

Giovanni stripped down quickly.

Amador dragged him back to the mirror. "Look at you. It's not just me. You have a beautiful cock, Gio, a great ass, it's an ass made for fucking."

Giovanni moaned against him, kissed him hard. "Then do it, fuck me. You're a champ. I want you inside of me."

"First though, let's get you ready." Amador glanced around the attic. He spotted an old wood horse, the type you practise jumping over in gymnastics. Perfect. He took Giovanni by the arm and led him over there. "Lean over it on your belly, ass up."

Giovanni smiled at him. "Oh yeah. I'm going to enjoy this."

Amador smiled, kissing his mouth gently. "Um, me, too. But first, can't risk you making too much noise. Open your mouth."

Giovanni took a large section of the trunks into his mouth and crawled over the wooden contraption.

Amador ran his hands over his back, his ass,

then opened up his cheeks and began to rim him, smiling as he heard the muffled moans coming out of his mouth. Suddenly the moans grew louder and Amador realised that the shorts were on the floor.

"Sorry," Giovanni muttered.

Amador grinned. "Just...keep it down." He began to lube his ass, taking his time, his cock could wait. His soft whimpers were turning him on big time, as was his ass on display like that. He caressed his balls for a minute, dipped a finger into his hole.

Giovanni moaned. "God, yeah...yeah...yeah."

* * * *

Giovanni bit his lower lip. God, he felt like such a dirty whore and that was okay because it was the most beautiful, hot man standing behind him, with a huge cock that knew exactly what to do. *Amador*. Yeah, he was already in love, didn't matter if Amador was just having a good time. He couldn't help it. He was such a hunk, and when his cock hit his slippery entrance, he knew what he was in for. This time, there was no trepidation, no nervousness. Amador's cock went into him with determination and need. He needed him. He wanted him. Amador held his hips and fucked him good and hard and it went on and until they

both collapsed in their private bliss.

Amador slapped his ass a few times, kissed it, pulled Giovanni around so that now his cock was on display rather than his ass. Amador licked the come off his thigh, used his tongue to move around the head of his cock, fondled his balls. He was bringing him to life again. Giovanni let his head go back. He moaned, his legs spread, his cock and balls in Amador's face. Amador placed his palms on Giovanni's thighs, he lowered his mouth onto his cock and Giovanni felt it stiffen, rise and fill his mouth.

Amador came off his cock and smiled at him. "Fuck my face. Fuck my mouth with your cock, then fuck me."

Giovanni caught his breath. "You'd let me fuck you?"

"Do you want to?"

"Um, yes. Oh yeah," he nodded. "Now. In front of the mirror. I want to see your face."

He grinned. "Okay."

"Oh your knees." He came down off the wood horse and Amador went to kneel in front of the mirror, his cock hard again. "Put your hands behind your neck. Um, yeah, like that. Oh god, you're so hot." He leaned down and picked up the lube.

The sight of Amador submitting to him, his hands behind his head, his cock hard, made

Giovanni want to take him right there. "Now move your hands over yourself, handle your nipples, your cock. Oh god, Amador, you're so beautiful." He stood over him, running his hands through Amador's hair, watching him play with himself. He fell down behind him. He spread the cheeks of his ass and roughly lubed his anus. Amador groaned. "God, I'm so hot," he whispered, his eyes blazing at him through the mirror. Giovanni moved his fingers into him, spreading the lube, then lay on his back, lifting his hips. "Ride me, baby. Sit on me, facing the mirror and ride me. I've dreamt of this. Um, do it, do it now."

* * * *

This guy was wild. Amador had been with plenty of men, but Giovanni wanted to do it all, and he had a wild imagination. He was the kind of guy that made him want to please him and he wasn't sure why. He moved over to him and opened himself up to his cock. When he felt Giovanni's cock move up inside of him, his entire body trembled. He felt as if he was going to come right there as he saw himself in the mirror, Giovanni moving his hips upwards, matching his rhythm as he moved up and down on Giovanni's cock, taking his pleasure. Even with the roles reversed,

Giovanni remained his perfect slave, more than happy enough to submit to his pace, moaning out his pleasure in a way which made Amador fear someone would hear. But his concern was short lived, the sensation of Giovanni fucking his ass obliterated all common sense as they both cried out their release.

Giovanni pulled Amador back in his arms. They rolled together on the attic floor, kissing.

"You're going to get splinters," Amador teased.

"Um, and you're going to get my mouth and my cock and my...um...baby." He kissed him again. "That was incredible, so sexy. I came and came. I thought I was never going to stop. It feels like heaven being inside you."

Amador looked at him for a second. What was he doing? This was insane, but God help him, he was getting addicted. "We got to get out of here. Come on." He jumped up, pulling Giovanni with him. "Get your clothes on. And where are my swim trunks."

"I think I spit them out over there." Giovanni chuckled.

"Lovely."

* * * *

Two days went by and his uncle still wasn't back. "I know he went to LA," Amador told Giovanni.

"Is that a bad thing?"

"I don't know, maybe."

Giovanni watched Amador as he paced. They hadn't touched for forty-eight hours and it was torture, so was the heat, almost forty degrees Celsius. "Let's go site seeing."

"Site seeing?"

"Come on, I haven't seen much of this city yet. You know it, don't you?"

He nodded.

"Okay, stop stressing. Let's go."

"I'll tell my aunt we'll be gone for dinner." He ran downstairs and spoke to his aunt.

"Too bad Sophia is working, she would have come, too," Giovanni said, following Amador to one of his uncle's cars.

"You like Sophia."

They got into the car, Amador in the drivers seat.

"She knows you're gay."

He didn't reply. He just drove out of the parking lot.

"I'm surprised the guards let us go."

"I'm not a prisoner. I just need to keep track of you."

"Um."

"Did you hear what I said before?"

"You said Sophia thinks I'm gay."

"Doesn't think, knows."

"I'll have to get married one day."

"What does that mean?"

"It means what it means. I can't be gay all my life."

"You are gay all your life. You expect to change?"

"I'll have to just put it behind me."

"You're serious?"

"Gio, let's have a nice day, okay? We'll drive downtown but we'll get out and walk. It's the best way."

Amador showed him many beautiful things. He saw the Castillo de San Felipe de Barajas, the greatest fortress ever built by the Spaniards. The original fort had been constructed between 1639 and 1657 on top of San Lazaro hill. Numerous attempts were made to storm the fort, but it was never overtaken. There was an extensive system of tunnels underground to distribute provisions and facilitate evacuation. One could hear the footsteps of the enemy soldiers approaching. They went down into some of the tunnels where a guide wasn't required and Giovanni was astonished. He was also sad.

And as they headed out to find some place to eat for supper, he fell quiet.

Amador was very interested in history and he went on talking about the Castillo during supper.

"You know its amazing, no matter what the enemy did, they couldn't destroy it. It was just so well built, designed to last. It was like they'd thought of every probable threat."

Giovanni reached out suddenly and clutched Amador's hand across the table. He squeezed it hard in his. They needed to be the Castillo. If not, they'd be ripped apart, and he wasn't sure if he could bare that.

"What's wrong with you?" Amador looked around, embarrassed. He tried to pull his hand away, but Giovanni wouldn't let him.

"No matter what happens, remember this. I love you. And one day, we'll find our way back to each other. Promise me."

"Gio," he said, "stop it." He pulled his hand out of his now. He took a sip of wine.

"You may not realise it now, but you will. We belong together. I don't care what happens, if you get married, if you become a bloody priest, you'll remember what we had together."

Amador stood up. "Let's go."

They drove in silence. Giovanni looked out the window. He was afraid suddenly. He sensed something. It had made him uneasy all day. "Say something," he urged Amador suddenly.

"What would you like me to say?"

"You're angry at me, why?"

"I don't..." his voice broke, "I don't know."

Sometimes it would be better if you just kept your thoughts to yourself."

"I've done that all my life, didn't get me anywhere."

"Gio," he said, looking at him, "I want to tell you that I..." He stopped, his eyes widening suddenly. He slammed on the brake. "Oh no."

"What?" Giovanni demanded, peering ahead at the house in the darkness.

"My uncle is back and my father's with him."

Chapter Six

Amador stood outside the house for the longest time, security guards watching him curiously. He knew Giovanni was waiting for him to say something. What in hell was there to say? For his father to make the trip here, this was serious. He was beginning to think this had been a mistake. "We should have just made a run for it," he said.

"It's not too late," Giovanni suggested softly, standing next to him.

"Yes. It is." He glanced at him. "Is there any way my father could possibly know who you are? Has your picture been in the paper or —"

"No. Not recently. He won't recognise me."

"I'm sure my uncle has already mentioned to my father that he's not sure about you. Don't say anything. Just follow my lead."

"Okay."

"Come on."

Amador walked up to the house, Giovanni beside him. When they entered the house, his aunt looked pensive. He kissed her gently on the cheek

and walked into the study. He could hear Giovanni's steady breathing from behind.

Carols Vega stood up as his son entered. He walked up to him and clutched him to his chest. "My God, thank God you're okay."

"I'm fine, Papa," he said, nodding at his uncle.

"Why did you leave the house?" Manuel asked.

"Am I prisoner?" he joked.

"No, of course not, Amad, but you could be in danger. We have discovered that—"

"That fucking Bianchi pig, how dare he put a hit on my boy! We're going to grind him into the LA city streets. And who is this man?" He glared at Giovanni.

"Mr. Prue, Doug. He was the one who saved my life, Father. He tipped me off about the hit man, just a temp worker on the site."

"Hmmm," he said, studying Giovanni. "If that's true, I shall reward, Mr....ah, Prue." He smiled like a Cheshire cat.

"No reward is needed, Sir," he cleared his throat.

"And why did you think to run to your uncle and not come home?" His father was looking at him intently.

Amador knew he was angry. "I was scared I guess."

"And your fear prompted you to bring Mr. Prue along?"

"He was in danger, too. I couldn't just leave him there."

"Um," his father nodded.

"What are you doing here exactly?"

"I'm here for the wedding."

"Wedding?" Amador lifted an eyebrow.

"A modest one. You can have a bigger one back in LA."

"What do you mean...I...it's my wedding?"

"That girl, she's here. We need to get her family into the US. And of course we needed to discuss things." He looked at Giovanni. "Family things."

Giovanni nodded. "I'll go upstairs."

"Yes, and my one of the boys will accompany you," Carlos said, "so you won't get lonely."

Amador took a sharp breath as he saw one of the security men escort Giovanni from the room. He didn't like this. "What's going on, Father?"

"Manuel and I have been discussing your future. It's time you got married, produced some heirs and took more of a roll in the family business. I've given the managing of the Construction site over to someone else, my cousin, Juan. You will run some of my clubs in the inner city."

Amador knew what that meant. It meant gangs and drug trafficking. "Dad, I really want to run the...haven't I done a good job?"

"Excellent, now its time to move on, you're

wasting your potential, and don't worry, Frank Bianchi will pay for trying to kill my boy. An eye for an eye."

Amador tried not to let his voice tremble when he spoke. "What are you going to do?"

"We're sending his son home in a box."

"His...his son?"

His father smiled. "Mr. Prue."

"Dad." Amador laughed nervously. "Mr. Prue is not..."

"I don't know what his game is, or why he's here. It doesn't matter and for the sake of family peace, I'm going assume you didn't know who he was." He stood up and came close to his face.

Amador swallowed hard.

"Do you understand what I'm telling you?"

He nodded.

"Now." He smiled, walking over to the window. "We have a wedding to plan. Guess you'll need a suit, eh son?"

* * * *

Giovanni wasn't sure what was happening, but he knew it wasn't good. The guard wasn't up here with him for nothing. For almost an hour, he sat there on his bed, waiting. When the door finally opened, he almost spoke his name, then stopped himself when he saw Carlos Vega standing there.

He was a handsome man like his brother, but his mouth was set in one hard line. He had black eyes and right now they looked as if a storm was brewing in them. He told the guard in Spanish to leave them. The door closed behind them.

He slowly rolled up the sleeves of his expensive white shirt and walked around the room, looking at this and that. He didn't say anything for a few minutes. Giovanni's stress reached a crescendo.

"So is this where you corrupted my son or was your sick perversion limited to the barn and the attic?"

Giovanni went to speak.

Carlos Vega held up his hand. "Don't. Don't say anything. You can deny it all you want, but my brother's guards saw everything. It doesn't matter." He shook his head. "What happened will never leave here. And my son will marry, putting all this craziness behind him."

It was ironic, but Amador had said almost the same thing to him.

"You're a disgrace to your family in every way."

Giovanni nodded. He knew who he was.

"Did you think I was a fool? The minute my brother told me what was happening...I knew. It didn't take long to find out that Bianchi had sent his only son to kill mine. And over what? Money." He shook his finger at him. "No amount of money

could ever replace my son, and he'll understand that, no matter how much shame you bring to his family...he'll understand what it feels like to lose his son."

"I'm not a disgrace to my family," Giovanni said suddenly, just as Carlos was about to leave the room. "They're a disgrace to me."

Carlos paused at the door, his hand on the doorjamb. "You keep that in your head, kid. It's a good thought to take to the grave."

"When? I have the right to know."

Carlos glanced at him. "After the wedding. I want you to watch him do what's natural, then you die."

"Please," he said, his hand shaking, tears threatening. "do it before. Don't make me...because whatever you think of what we did, I'm in love with your son. I will never regret holding him in my arms. You can't make me regret that."

Carlos turned and looked at him. "Don't you ever speak of love and my son in the same breath, or I swear you'll die slowly, and you'll suffer," he said between clenched teeth.

Giovanni wiped the single tear, which ran down his cheek. He wasn't crying for himself, only for Amador.

* * * *

Amador sat at the dinner table, not tasting his food. The young lady he was supposed to be marrying in two weeks time was sitting on his left, a shy girl who spoke no English. Since his Spanish was rusty, they didn't have much to say to each other. He always knew this day would come, but he didn't expect it to happen now.

Sophia kept giving him sympathetic looks across the table while his uncle and father chatted on in Spanish about stuff he didn't want to know anything about. All he could think of was Giovanni, being held under guard, in that room upstairs and what was going to happen to him.

When his aunt rose to get dessert, he rose with her.

His father gave him a dirty look. "That's women's work in the kitchen. Sit down."

He ignored him and went to help her anyway. Poor woman was just a robot servant. His uncle hardly looked at her. Luckily, his father preferred to drink his wine and brag about his latest business ventures so he didn't come after him.

Suddenly Sophia appeared in the kitchen, too. She took the plates out of his hands and pulled him to one side. "One of the guards outside the room takes his break at midnight, leaving only Leo. You can take him from behind and he won't see your face. I'll go downstairs to the courtyard

and distract the guard there. I fucked his brains out last Christmas Eve, he's easily distracted."

Amador's eyes widened.

"What? It's only gay guys who can fuck?"

He shook his head.

"I'll leave the key in the ignition of my car. Tell Doug, or whatever his name is, to drive to the airport, go to the desk and ask for Luis. He has a small plane and he owes me. Luis will get him out of Columbia."

"Sophia," he said, grabbing her arm, waiting for his aunt to leave the kitchen, "why are you doing this? This is too dangerous. If your dad ever finds out, he'll —"

"I can't just sit by and let them kill him. He loves you so much, Amador. Whatever he did to this family, I figure losing you will be punishment enough."

"We can't ever be together."

"I know that, but...at least he'll get away. Oh Amad, I'm so sorry you have to marry that girl. I know it's going to kill you."

"It's not the worst of it. My dad expects me to take over the —"

"Amador, Sophia, where are you?" his uncle called out. "Dessert is on the table?"

"Go," she gave him a push. "I'll call Luis now on my cell phone. I'm coming," she called out, "you mind if I take a pee?"

Amador walked the young lady to the door, bowing to her father. At least he didn't have to feign romance. She wasn't going to be allowed to be alone with him until after the wedding. His father stood outside, talking to the man for a long time, while his uncle mixed him a drink and began talking about what he saw as his role back in the US. "I think you should manage one of the bigger nightclubs," he said. "You like techno? It's popular here."

Amador nodded briefly, his gaze moving to the big grandfather clock standing in the corner. It was after ten already.

"You and Julia will have a nice life. We'll see about finding you a good piece of real estate. You can't live with Mama all your life." He gawfawed.

Amador looked at him suddenly. "Yes, real estate is always a good investment."

"Beverly Hills."

"Um, sounds great."

"Don't worry, Amador. I'll tell you the secret to wedded bliss. Fuck them twice a week, they're happy, any less, they get paranoid, don't think they're attractive anymore, more fucking than that and they find it bothersome. Keep 'em pregnant. Your aunt couldn't have anymore unfortunately, does things to a woman, makes them curious when she doesn't have a brat to feed."

"Right," Amador muttered. What a retrograde he was. These men severely underestimated women.

"Have a mistress but be discrete. It embarrasses the family. No hombres." He pointed a finger. "Your father is really touchy about that, I'm a little bit more modern. As long as you were doing the fucking, it's okay, on top. A little variety, rough trade. But the danger is they make sissies out of you, you know?"

Amador cleared his throat. He was finding this objectionable now. "Right." He downed his drink, refusing a second. He had to keep his wits.

"Julia's father is just what we need in LA. You'll train him, keep him under your wing. He can act as the bouncer in the club, used to be a heavy weight boxer."

"Hum," he managed, his gaze moving to the clock. He stood up. "You know, I'm a little tired. I think I'll go to bed."

"Sure, sure. We'll talk more tomorrow. Don't worry about nothing, Amad, I don't blame you for nothing. You're family. And every boy got to get himself some rough sex once in awhile. I'm sure you fucked him good."

He nodded. "Yeah, right. Night, Uncle Manuel." His room was now in the other wing of the house. He went there immediately, closed the door and paced up and down, his gaze on the

clock. There was an hour to go. He had one shot. That was it. If he screwed it up, not only would he put Giovanni's life in danger, he'd have a hell of a lot of explaining to do.

At ten to midnight, he quietly left the room and waited down the hall from where they were holding Giovanni. He was tense, every muscle in his body taunt. Suddenly, he saw the two guards talking together. When one of them took off in the other direction, Amador crept closer. He didn't hesitate. He grabbed the lone guard from behind and applied pressure to the carotid artery, constricting the flow of blood to his brain. Suddenly, he felt the man's body go limp in his arms and gently lowered him to the floor.

Luckily the door wasn't locked. Amador pulled it open and walked in, putting a finger to his lips when Giovanni sprang off the chair. He rushed headlong into his arms, but there wasn't time for that. "Listen to me," he hissed softly, pushing him away. "I want you to go down the back stairs now, through the courtyard. Sophia's car is there with the key in the ignition. Turn left, go along the beach and follow the signs for the airport. When you get there, go to the desk and ask for Luis. He'll take you out of Columbia."

Giovanni shook his head. "No."

"What in hell do you mean no? They're going

to kill you."

"You have to come with me."

"I can't."

"Amador," he pleaded, tears running down his face, "I'm can't leave you."

"You can leave me and you will."

Giovanni reached out to him. Amador took a step back. "No. Don't. Don't touch me. We weren't meant to be from the start. It's over. You need to leave. Go and don't look back. Live your life. Forget all this. Forget me."

"You —"

"Forget about me," he insisted. "Now go because if you don't, you won't get another chance." Before Giovanni could say another word, Amador ran from the room. He waited in the shadows, and a few seconds later, he breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Giovanni leave the room on a run. At least he'd have a life. He lifted his hand suddenly and was surprised to find his cheek wet. He was crying.

* * * *

Giovanni got lost three times before he found the right road to the airport. When he finally found it, he left the car in the visitor's lot and raced inside, positive that he was being followed. At the desk, out of breath, he asked for Luis. When this short,

chubby little man came around the corner and said he was Luis, Giovanni almost hugged him. "I'm Mr. Prue."

"Doug Prue," he said, "nice to meet you. So how does freezing your ass in Canada strike you?"

"Better than getting it shot off here," Giovanni muttered.

"Fair enough. Let's move."

Even in the air, Giovanni was shaking. He kept thinking they were being followed.

"Naw," Luis said, "they'd never get permission to take off that fast. We do have regulations here. So you pissed off the Vegas, eh?"

Giovanni looked out the window into the darkness. "Somethin' like that. I owe you."

"No, I owe Sophia. She got me out of a jam last year. Consider yourself paid up. Just sit back and relax. I won't be touching down to refuel for awhile. Get some sleep."

* * * *

When his father came busting into his room, Amador sat up in his bed looking as if he'd been awoken out of a dead sleep. "Hey." He yawned sleepily. "What's up?"

"He's gone. He's escaped. Stole Sophia's car. She's cursing him up and down. Did you see

anything?"

"I went to bed about eleven. Weren't the guards on duty?"

"Someone overpowered Leo, knocked him unconscious."

"Did he see anything?" He held his breath.

"No. Just said the guy was tall. Could he have had an accomplice here?"

"You know those Bianchi's, they're everywhere. Maybe you should double the security."

"Good idea. I have the men searching the grounds. Get up. I want you out there looking for him."

Amador nodded and climbed out of bed. It was almost four in the morning. He was sure Giovanni was long gone.

Sophia was putting on a good act when Amador came down the stairs. "That fucking Bianchi bastard. He stole my car. I loved that car. Find him, Daddy, and blow his head off." Her mother clicked her tongue at the foul language. "I want my car!" She screamed at Amador.

He gave her a faint smile. "Sorry," he said, putting on his jacket.

"If you find him, kick him in the balls," she snarled.

Amador nodded and left the house. Someone put a gun in his hand and he spent four hours riding around with some jerk who kept spitting

everywhere, looking for someone he knew they wouldn't find.

Later that night, his father said, "I'm sure he's back with the family. One victory for Bianchi, but I want a hit put on that little bastard."

"Dad," Amador said, "my wedding is coming up. Can't we just let this go? Call it even. Put a hit on his son and he's going to put one back on me. You know it. He'll send a pro this time. He can afford it."

Manuel looked at his brother. "He's right. Let it go, Carlos. Let's celebrate this wedding and get you home. There's a lot of business to take care of. Try to keep to the parts of the city I told you. Tread on Bianchi's toes, we'll have grief. Our territory is big enough and, with Amad running things, it's going to go well."

This seemed to calm him. His father looked at him. "Well, son, you got to have a stag. Carlos, round up the strippers. My son and I are ready for a little home grown pussy."

Amador sat back in his seat and took a swallow of the whiskey he had in his hand. He was almost grateful for the wedding. It was distracting his father. And he knew his father would never suspect he had anything to do with Giovanni's escape. After all, his son would never put everything at stake for just a piece of ass, would he?

Chapter Seven

Two years Later

"Spread your legs," he barked.

The young hustler glanced at him over his shoulder. "You're so beautiful. I want to look at you when you fuck me."

"I'm paying you. You'll do as I tell you to."

"You don't have to pay me, boss. I get paid to dance. Besides, you, I'd do for free. You make me so hot."

Amador grabbed the guy's hips and pushed him over the desk in the back office. "Shut up. Don't talk." He entered him hard and fast, ramming his cock in and out of him, praying to get off. After five minutes, he pulled out in frustration.

"I'll suck it," he offered, reaching out to him.

Amador zipped himself in. "Get out of here," he said. "Go."

The dancer shrugged and pulled up his pants.

He left without a word.

For the last three months, he'd been managing an Adam and Eve type strip joint for his father. He also oversaw the drug operation that was thriving on the east side of LA. Although the male strippers were supposed to be for women, most of them were gay. He had his choice. Problem was, he didn't want any of them. His life had become a hell since he'd left Columbia. He married Julia, who, three weeks after coming to live in LA, demanded to go home, claiming her husband was a frigid clod. Luckily his father didn't care about the girl because her father was already in the country, but he was tied to Julia for life, since she refused to divorce him due to her faith.

His father was pissed at him when his disgruntled wife made a public declaration about Amador's lack of prowess in the bedroom and proceeded to throw every whore at him that he ran across from that time on. In the last several months, he'd screwed several very colourful women, getting the clap and acquiring three stalkers. Every time he had to fuck one of them, it turned his stomach, not because they were women, but because they were the biggest sluts he'd ever seen. Getting blasted drunk helped a little. And this is what his father thought would convert him?

He wasn't sleeping any more at night.

Although he refused to dirty his own hands, he was more than aware of the blood letting that went on in this dirty business, gang slayings and drive bys, and all the while, his bank account grew by leaps and bounds. He tried not to think about it, but each time he saw an addict on the street, he'd go off and get drunk to try and kill the pain. He knew he wouldn't be able to live like this for long and the only thing that kept him going were his siblings, especially his younger brother who he knew would be drawn into the shit as soon as he was old enough. He had to be there for him.

As for thinking about Giovanni, it even hurt to say his name so he didn't. And he tried not to think about him at all. He knew he'd decided not to come back because it was rumoured that Bianchi was still looking for his son. It was the only thing which gave him satisfaction when he looked at his father. His only victory. If he was to be honest with himself, he'd have to admit that maybe, just maybe they'd been falling in love. Giovanni had told him he loved him, told him that no matter what, to remember that he loved him. At his lowest points, he did just that.

The war between the Vega and the Bianchi families was heating up again. He knew that because his father had increased the security around his mother's house.

One day he went to visit and it looked like a

bloody armed camp. His mother seemed panicky when she saw him. She held onto him for dear life. He smoothed back some of her blond hair and kissed her cheek. "Hey, it's okay," he said.

"No," she whispered, "it's not. He came here last night, on a rampage, going on and on about Bianchi. He thinks we're in danger. He says he'll kill him if he —"

"Mom," Amador said, "don't worry. I won't let anything happen to you. I'll move back in if I have to. Where is Jason and Jessie?"

"In the house, they'll be happy to see you." His mother kept her arm around him as they walked into the house. "I'm so worried about you."

"Why? There is nothing to —"

"You look so sad. It's not right for him to draw you into his shit. You were happy running the construction company. At least that was legit. If he gets you killed or you go to jail, I'll...I told him last night."

"Mom, don't okay."

"And that stupid wedding...I told him he's in America now. We don't do that stuff. It's...that poor girl."

He swallowed. "Jas, Jess, come down here and see your brother."

Jason looked strange when he saw him, as if he wasn't happy he was there. His sister ran straight into his arms.

Amador hugged his fourteen year old sister, looking at his brother. It was his seventeenth birthday on the weekend. He was getting to look more and more like him everyday. He hoped to hell he didn't inherit his fate, too. "How you doing, man?"

He shrugged.

"Hey, what's going on with you?" He tried to ruffle his hair, but he pushed him off.

"You copped out."

"What?"

"You joined him, the old man. I never thought you'd do that. You're nothing but a...criminal, just like him."

"Jason," his mother cried.

"It's true," Jason accused. "I used to respect you. Not anymore. And as soon as I turn eighteen, I'm out of here man. He's not going to make me like you."

It was hard to look into the eyes of his brother and hear that. But he was right. He didn't have the balls to stand up to him and fight. "I won't let him do that to you," he said, under his breath.

His sister was crying.

"I don't need your protection, Amad. I don't need you anymore. We don't need you. Mom doesn't need you neither, so why don't you just go back to the shit and stay there."

Suddenly, his mother walked up to Jason and

slapped his face.

Amador closed his eyes.

"Don't you ever talk to your brother like that again."

"He's not my brother," he said. He turned and ran up the stairs.

Jessie came over and hugged him again. "He doesn't mean it."

"Yes, he does." He kissed the top of her head. "And that's okay. He's right." He released his sister and walked out of the house.

He ended up back at the club where he worked and slept most of the time. He was on his forth scotch when his father walked in, followed by his body guards. "Club's closed," he said without looking at him, "it's Sunday."

"What are you doing here?"

"What does it look like I'm doing here?"

"You need to talk to your brother. He's out of control. I went to give him his birthday gift, a brand new car. He threw the keys in my face, the ungrateful little bastard."

Amador glanced at him. "What do you want me to do about it, beat him?"

"No, but he's always respected you, and —"

"Not anymore. I don't deserve his respect. Now if you don't mind, I'd like to get blind drunk alone."

"We need to talk. We got problems. Bianchi is

flexing his muscles again."

"What else is new?" He threw the liquor to the back of his throat.

"He's warning of blood in the streets. I want you to be careful. We're not backing down. We got the gangs in our pockets in this end of town and —"

"Yeah, and they're all disposable right, poor sons of social outcasts, fighting for their tiny piece of turf. Let's throw them to the slaughter."

"What's with you? Did I raise a coward, a faggot coward who couldn't keep some silly girl satisfied enough in bed to —"

Amador sprang off his stool and swung. He hit his father square in the jaw, knocking him off his seat. The body guards rushed forward.

Carlos raised a hand to stop them as he picked himself off the floor. "No," he said, "this is my son, although he's not acting like it right now. He's drunk. He doesn't know what he's doing." His father glared at him. "We'll talk when you're sober," he grunted, brushing off his expensive suit.

"Won't make much of a difference if I'm sober or not," Amador turned back to the bar. "And anyway, I'm making it my mission to stay drunk as much as possible."

His father swore under his breath and left, taking his men with him.

* * * *

Giovanni shook his head. He didn't know who was being the most difficult now, the Canadian or the American authorities. "Look, isn't it enough that you got my father? He's the one you really want. And Vega, he's a big fish, too. You don't need Vega's son."

He left the room at that point because he'd reached the end of his patience. Roy Robertson was on his heels. "Wait, Gio, I agree with you on this one. It's just that Amador Vega has been into it up to his ass lately and —"

"I don't believe it. That's not him."

"We have proof."

Giovanni looked at him. He didn't want proof.

"Gio, now are you going to tell me the truth? You had a thing with this guy, didn't you? Come on, I've seen his pictures. He's drop dead gorgeous. It wouldn't be too hard to fall for someone who looks like that."

"What does it matter? It's over now. We're together."

"You're in my bed, but that's about all."

"Roy." Giovanni sighed. He was doing the best that he could.

"Gio. I'll try to keep Vega out of it, but I can't guarantee it."

"Then they can do it without me. I won't put Amador in prison."

"We can't do it without you. We need your testimony. Your father sent you to kill him. You were in Columbia and—"

"I need some air. I'll be back." Outside, Giovanni walked around a downtown Toronto block. Two years ago, he'd been on his way back to LA, on his way to find Amador and take him out of there. He wasn't even sure if Amador would be back from Columbia when he got there, but he'd wait, he'd wait and then he'd find him.

Luis had taken him to Montreal and he'd spent three days without Amador, three days of missing him, and decided it wasn't worth it. He'd rather die than live without him. He needed to find him, drag him away, kicking and screaming if need be. If he got killed, so be it. There was no living without him.

But he was picked up before he even got to the airport. A special squad who jokingly referred to themselves as the Mob Squad, grabbed him. They wanted information on his family. They wanted to bring down the mob. Reluctantly, Giovanni decided to join them. He certainly couldn't beat them and Roy had convinced him that the only way he'd be able to live a normal life was to help the authorities put an end to their activities. Now, they wanted him to bring Amador down with

them and he couldn't do that. He couldn't believe that Amador had done the things they'd said. He didn't want to believe them.

When he returned to the place where they'd set up the temporary investigation unit, the America task force members came at him from all angles. A big, bald guy peered into his face and said, "Amador Vega is now one of the biggest drug lords in LA...he's got blood on his hands and is responsible for..."

"Immunity." Giovanni shook his head, for the tenth time. "I want immunity for him, with his promise to testify."

"He'll never do that," a dark-haired woman scoffed, "why would he testify against his own father?"

"I'm doing it. I'm testifying against my own father."

There was silence.

"I can talk to him," Giovanni pleaded.

"We'll have to arrest him," Roy cautioned.

Giovanni nodded, biting his lip, tears stinging his eyes. He swallowed. "Okay. Do it."

That night in bed, Giovanni lay still while Roy held him in his arms. After a few minutes, Roy said, "You really love that guy, don't you?"

Giovanni started to cry. He couldn't hold it in anymore. "I'm sorry, Roy."

"You never promised me anything."

"He'll hate me for this, but I don't know of any other way to save him. I have to save him."

"What if he doesn't want saving? What if what you had is long over for him, Gio?"

Giovanni didn't answer.

"I don't want you to get hurt," he said, and got out of bed.

Chapter Eight

Giovanni paced the halls of a clandestine unit hidden away in Beverly Hills. Roy was supposed to call him as soon as it was over. The waiting was killing him. "Don't hurt him," he'd pleaded.

Roy had assured him that they'd take him in as quietly as they could. After all, they didn't want anyone getting wind of what was happening.

Giovanni's phone rang an hour later. He dropped his stale coffee in a garbage can and fumbled with his cell phone.

"We got him," Roy told him. "We'll be there in about twenty minutes. We're on our way. It might be better if you stay out of the way while we're bringing him in."

The plains clothes detective and FBI were alert, standing now, waiting for the unmarked police vehicle to arrive.

Giovanni felt his gut tie in knots as the car flew into the gravel lot. He walked down the hallway and stayed in background where he couldn't be

seen from the front door. He watched as they brought him in. He was unshaven, his hair dishevelled, wearing a blue suit that looked like it had been slept in. He was quiet, not struggling, saying nothing. The police led him down the hallway and into a room.

Giovanni came down the same hallway now to meet Roy. He could hardly speak. It had been a long time since he'd seen him, and seeing him again, even from a distance, had the same effect. He was still madly in love. "Is he all right?"

"Angry and drunk."

"Drunk?"

"Yep. He was at his club, passed out on the bar stool. It looked like he'd had a few. And this is the guy you fell for?"

Giovanni ignored the snide remark. "Did he say anything?"

"Oh, he said plenty, nothing I'd repeat in good company."

Giovanni smiled faintly. "I see."

"Let him sleep it off. We'll clean him up a bit, get some coffee into him and let you talk to him. We can't hold him long. If he doesn't buy into this, we'll have to release him. He'll go down with the rest of them."

Giovanni nodded.

* * * *

Amador stepped out of the shower and put on his clothes, which had been washed and pressed. "This is service," he said to the guard.

"If you need for us to shave you, we'll —"

"Forget it, and what, you can't give me a razor? Afraid, I'll cut my own throat?"

The guard didn't answer.

"Forget it. I'll go for the ruffian look. Some people find it sexy I hear."

A few minutes later, he was led back to the room. That Roy guy came in, the one who acted like he wanted to be his buddy. He stood there looking at him for a moment.

"What am I, a lab rat? What's going on here? You got to either charge me with something or let me go. You can't hold me."

"No, not for more than twenty-four hours, six of which you wasted sleeping. Someone here wants to talk to you."

"Who? My long lost grandma from the grave?"

"Me," Giovanni said, stepping in behind Roy. "Leave us," he told Roy.

Amador couldn't have been more shocked if it had of been his dead grandmother. He said his name in his mind and went to stand up, then he sat back down. "Giovanni?"

"Yes," he said.

Amador studied him. He looked pretty much

the same, a little older, longer hair. Right now he looked tense, sad.

"I'm the reason you're here."

"What? You got me arrested?"

"No. You're not under arrest, not really."

"It sure as hell feels like I'm under arrest."

"I want to rescue you."

"Rescue me?" He laughed harshly. "Come again?"

"I want to get you out, out of that family forever. I tried to come back for you two years ago, but the police found me, thanks to my father's all points bulletin on my disappearance. They wanted me to join the task force. I've asked for immunity...for you."

"Immunity? You're a cop now?"

"No, not really, a kind of civilian cop, it's complicated. If you could help them, testify, they'd cut you some slack...they'd —"

"Rat on my family?"

"Amador, your family is going down, along with mine. They've been building a case for years against both of them. It's a matter of time. I'm trying to save you."

"Why?"

"Because I...because you know why."

Amador fell silent.

"You remember what I told you?"

He nodded.

"I meant it. I still mean it. If I can save you, then...Amador? Look at me."

Amador looked at him. "I can't get out," he whispered, "as much as I'd like to. I couldn't do that to my father."

"Look what he's done to you. Look at you, Amador, sleeping on a bar stool, drinking yourself to death. You don't owe him anything. Think of your brother."

"Don't talk about my brother."

"Protect him, even if you don't care about us anymore."

"I never said I didn't...care." He raised his eyes.

Giovanni rushed over to him. He sat down beside him on the bed. "Then help me get you out. You can lead a normal life. You can't imagine the freedom of that—"

"Gio," Roy poked his head into the room suddenly, "they want to know what's happening?"

"Give me a few more minutes," he said.

He looked at him for a moment and nodded, closing the door.

"So how long has that been going on?" Amador asked.

"What?"

"Your affair with that cop?"

Giovanni stood up. "We're friends."

"You're more than that. That's okay. I didn't

expect you to sit around and —”

“Were you sitting around?”

“No,” he sneered, “I was fucking every whore my father threw at me and screwing male prostitutes up the ass.”

Giovanni nodded. “Thanks for the visual.”

“No problem. Now, if you don’t mind, I have a club to run and you need to get back to Little Boy Blue.”

“Please, don’t do this,” Giovanni pleaded, tears running down his face. “Please, I beg you, Amador. I love you.”

Amador got to his feet. He reached out and wiped the tears off his cheeks. Giovanni closed his eyes. “It’s too late, babe, I’m sorry. I’m sorry about everything.”

Giovanni pushed his hand away. “Not as sorry as I am. What’s happened to you? You’ve changed.”

“I’ve been living in the shit, honey, while you’ve been enjoying the resort. I am what I am. It just took me awhile to realise it.”

Giovanni walked out without another word.

Amador closed his eyes at the same time the door closed. How could he do this? How could he betray his family? He sunk down onto the bed and put his face in his hands. *Oh God, Gio, I love you so much.*

* * * *

"We have to let him go now," Roy insisted.

"No, wait," Giovanni shook his head. "I'm not giving up on him yet."

"We have no right to hold him. It's been twenty-nine hours."

"Who's he going to complain to? He's a mobster for Christ's sakes."

"Yeah, and mobsters have high class lawyers."

"Give me another few hours, please."

Roy sighed and walked outside.

Amador looked up expectedly when the door opened again.

"It's only me, and no, I haven't come to let you go."

"Either charge me with something or release me."

"I'm not letting you go."

"Fine, then arrest my ass and get it over with." He was pissed now.

Giovanni winced. "Okay, I suppose I've earned that. Can you please tell me why you won't do this? It's the answer to everything."

"It's the answer to nothing," he snapped, his blue eyes angry.

Giovanni sighed, images of touching him came into his mind, the feeling of having him close,

fucking him. He tried to keep his voice from trembling. "I've done this all for you."

"Bullshit, Gio, bullshit. You couldn't go home again and you know it."

"I came back to Los Angeles to find you. I risked my life."

"Yeah, well, I risked my life, too, to save yours. I'd call us even."

"Can you tell me you feel nothing for me anymore?" Giovanni lowered his head. He couldn't look at him. When he raised his head, Amador had his back to him. Apparently, he couldn't face him either. "Answer me."

"What we had was...well, it was just the circumstances, an accident, wasn't it? It's been over for a long time. You just can't come back two years later and expect..." He turned around. "And you have someone else in your life now, that cop. He's..." He stopped.

"He's what?"

"He's what you need. I'm what you left behind, what you turned your back on. Why would you want to revisit that?"

"Because I love you. I never stopped. And I never turned my back on you."

"And where does that leave little boy blue?"

"Stop calling him that."

"Enough of this shit. You're not going to get me to testify against my father. You're wasting your

breath. Release me now so I can get back to my —

“To your illegal activities and —”

“Yes,” he growled, “because that’s who I am. I’m a Vega and that’s what we do. I’m no good. Leave me alone, Gio, and go back to your cop. I don’t want you. I don’t feel anything for you anymore.”

Giovanni felt that like a knife in the heart. He lifted his head. “Fine,” he said as loudly as he could. “You’ve made that clear. I tried to save you but —”

“Well, maybe I don’t want saving!”

“Okay, let the chips fall where they may.” He pointed. “And they will fall. Good luck.” He turned his back and, with as much dignity as he could, walked out. “Drive him back to where ever he wants to go,” he said to the guard. “I’m through here.”

Roy walked over to him and started to say something, but Giovanni held up his hand. “Don’t,” he said. “I need to be alone.” He stood at the window in an empty room and watched Amador get into one of the squad cars. He watched until the car disappeared from his sight, then lowered his head and sobbed.

* * * *

Amador sat silently in the back of the squad car,

his face turned to the window. His throat was gripped like a vice with unshed tears. Giovanni didn't understand. He had to let him go. He was no good for him. And testifying against his father wouldn't solve anything. Nothing stuck to Carlos Vega. If he turned his back on his father, he'd make sure he'd never see his mother, or his brother and sister again. Even if Jason hated him now, he had to stick around, to protect him from this life. It no longer mattered what happened to him.

He closed his eyes. Oh, how he wished he hadn't of seen Giovanni again. It opened the wound, made it fresh, made it burn, and to know that Giovanni still loved him, well that was almost more than he could bear.

When the police car pulled up at the curb outside his club, the cop looked at him in the mirror. "Be seeing you, Vega, real soon."

"Yeah," Amador nodded, "so I've heard." He got out and slammed the door, giving the officer a little salute before walking into his club.

* * * *

When Roy came back to the hotel, Giovanni was sitting on the side of the bed, his face in his hands.

"You're leaving me, aren't you?" Roy said.

"I'm staying here in Los Angeles for awhile."

"For what? To get yourself killed over a man who doesn't give a damn about you anymore? If your father finds you, he'll —"

"My father won't hurt me. He may refuse to see me, but he'd never hurt me. He doesn't have that power."

"Only Vega does," Roy sneered.

Giovanni nodded. "I can't just let this go. Try to understand. My head tells me one thing, but my heart..." he moaned. "Oh, Roy, please understand, my heart belongs to him. It has from the first moment I laid eyes on him, for good or bad."

"You're willing to die for him?"

Giovanni thought about that for a moment, then nodded. "If I have to. He lied to me today. I know he did."

"Because you want to believe it."

"Maybe so, but..." He shook his head.

"What are you going to do? You have to testify and —"

"I'll testify, don't worry. I gave you my word." He stood up. He hugged him.

"What are you going to do, Gio? Answer me."

"It's better if you don't know. You wouldn't approve."

"Gio...listen —"

"Roy, leave it alone. You're a good man and I won't put your life or your career in jeopardy. And I can't use you to fill a void only Amador can

fill. I'm sorry."

"You need to be in protective custody, especially since Vega knows now that you're going to testify."

"He'd never put me in harm's way."

"Gio, how can you —"

"Because I trust him."

Roy nodded. "Do what you want, but...they'll be coming to get you, Gio. They'll want to protect you." He picked up his stuff. Giovanni didn't comment. A few minutes later, Roy was gone.

An hour later, Giovanni left the hotel room as well. He went to the nearest gun shop and bought a gun, nothing elaborate, but it would accomplish what had to be done. As he walked out onto the LA street, he glanced up at the sun, which was beginning to set in the sky. "Forgive me," he muttered, "for what I have to do, but Amador, my love, you leave me no choice."

* * * *

When Amador felt the gun at his head, he closed his eyes. This was it and that was okay. It was going to happen sooner or later. And right now, he welcomed it. His car had been the only one in the parking lot and in a way he'd been asking for trouble, parking it in the darkest spot with trees

hanging over it.

The voice said, "Drive."

"Just shoot me," he said. "It's okay. I won't hold it against you."

"Drive. Go down this street and turn left. Keep going until I tell you to stop."

Amador did as the gun man asked. He didn't think about how to overtake him or how he was going survive this. Suddenly, he didn't want to.

"Okay, at this light, turn left and into that alley."

Amador narrowed his eyes. This looked familiar.

"Okay, now get out and don't turn around."

Amador walked slowly toward the building. "I know this hotel."

"Shut up, go inside, up the stairs."

It had really deteriorated from the last time he'd been there, well over two years ago. He climbed the stairs slowly. The gun pushed against his spine. The door was quickly opened and he was shoved inside, into a darkened room, with only the moonlight for illumination.

"Okay, take off all your clothes and sit in that chair over there."

"All my clothes?" Oh great, a horny killer.

"You heard me. Do it."

Amador took off his shirt, now starting to get the idea that he should fight this guy. A quick

death would have been fine, but not sexual torture.

"Pants. Move."

He took off the rest.

"Sit down, now. Put your hands behind you."

Suddenly his hands were pulled back and he felt a rope winding around them. Next, his legs were tied to each chair leg. All Amador could see was the top of a hooded head. "If you're going to kill me, do it."

"You seem really anxious for death. Any reason for that?"

"None of your business, what do you want?"

"You. Only you."

The light switched on and the man in front of him removed his hood.

Giovanni stood there, looking at him. "I need you to listen to reason."

Amador was livid. He rocked the chair back and forth angrily, practically tipping it over. "You fucking asshole. What in hell is wrong with you? Do you know how dangerous this is? You shouldn't even be in the city."

Giovanni came closer. He touched his cheek. "My, my, that doesn't sound like someone who doesn't care about me anymore. Shouldn't you be angry about being kidnapped?"

"Fuck you, Giovanni, and what's with the naked stuff? Give me my clothes."

"I just wanted to see you naked again." He smiled faintly. "Fringe benefit, I guess. Um." He ran his gaze over him critically. "You've kept yourself in great shape, even more beautiful, if that's possible, more definition in the abs and —"

"Giovanni," he snapped, "untie me."

"Why, so you can run away?"

He sighed. "Very cute bringing me to this place, this is where you almost shot my head off if I recall."

"Um, the irony. It's also where you were when I fell in love with you."

"Bullshit. You were just horny and frustrated."

"That, too." He grinned. He put down the gun, walked over to the bed and sat down on it. "Anyway, we have plenty of time now to talk."

"No, we don't. If I don't show up tomorrow, my father is going to start looking. If he finds you —"

"He won't find me. And anyway, that's tomorrow. We have all night."

Amador growled, pulling against the restraints, the chair rocked again back and forth.

"If you tip over, I'll leave you like that."

Amador quieted. "So talk. You have my complete attention."

"I know, but it's not easy to get your attention. I couldn't help thinking when you left of how much you'd changed. Where is my Amador?"

Amador looked at him, really looked at him, and his heartache throbbed. It was too much. He had to look away. "He's gone."

"Well, find him because I miss him."

Amador looked at him again. "Too much has happened. I don't know who I am anymore. All I know is I'm no one you want to be with."

"I wish my heart knew that."

Amador lowered his head.

"Tell me about these last few years. What happened after I escaped?"

"My father made me over in his image. Sounds very biblical, doesn't it?"

He smiled. "Yeah, it does. But you don't have any halo, honey."

He smiled himself now, nodded in agreement. "And you...where did you go? No one would tell me."

"Did you try to find out?"

He nodded. "For awhile and then after the wedding..."

"Yeah, how did that work out for you?"

He met his gaze. "Do you have to ask?"

"Divorce?"

"Oh no, I'm still married actually. She won't give me a divorce...a religious thing."

"Oh. Did you have any children?"

"No. Frigid apparently."

"She was?"

"No, me. I'm frigid."

"You, frigid? You have changed."

"Frigid when it came to my wife, but not when it came to male hustlers. She begged to go home, poor girl, and her father took pity on her. I, of course had to spend the next year proving to my father I wasn't a big Nellie faggot by fucking every whore he threw in my direction."

"Ouch."

"Um. All I got out of that was a severe case of crabs."

"Cured I hope."

"Yeah. And what do you mean, you hope?" He looked at him.

"Honey, do you really think I'm going to keep you in that chair all night long?" He got up and came over to stand in front of him. "There's only so much torture I can take with you sitting there naked."

"Well, I wouldn't be naked if..."

"I know, details." He waved that away. "When I'm sure you'll hang around and fuck me, I'll release me."

"I'm not going to..."

"You're getting angry again."

"Fuck, Gio, stop this."

"You haven't finished. I want to know everything."

"Then you'll tell me everything that happened

with you?"

He nodded. "It's a deal. Okay, so your wife went running off from lack of attention, and then what...after the whore fucking stuff, I think you can skip all that. Cut to the chase. I know you're no longer in the construction business."

Amador looked off in the distance. He didn't want to talk about the things he'd had to do for his father. It was no wonder Jason didn't respect him anymore. He started to talk without realising it, transported back there in every terrifying and ugly situation.

He stood out on the deserted beach, his hair blown by the cool night air. He shivered, wrapping his coat around him, the full moon grinning down at him. The rowboat bobbed on the water, five more kilos to unload. The car lights dimmed on the road behind him. He heard the car doors slam. Several of his father's men languished in the distance, guns a ready. He looked up. They came on a run, Italian, not members of one of the local LA street gangs. Automatic rifles, suits, Italian. He let out a yell to warn the others, hit the sand, took out his own gun, raised it and fired. What followed was a bloody shoot out. He was wounded in the shoulder, more angry than anything. When it was over, two of his fathers men were dead and all three of the Italians.

His father had promised him there was a truce between him and Bianchi. He'd lied. He was still treading on Bianchi's territory. "Are you trying to get me killed?"

His father was sitting outside on his terrace, eating his breakfast while the maid poured coffee. Two half-naked women frolicked around the pool.

"You're bleeding. You should have that looked at."

Amador had tied his shirt around his shoulder. It was soaked in blood. He still wore his coat from last night. The faces of the dead played in his head. "You lied to me."

"We need to expand, Amad. Why do you think I put you in charge there? You can do this. You're alive, aren't you? You have it in you, son."

"No." He shook his head, his hair matted with sweat, his arm throbbing. "And if it is in me, I want to rip it out."

"Don't be stupid. Sit, have some breakfast, go play with one of those girls. The one with the big tits gives—"

"I'm not interested in any more of your sloppy seconds. I want out."

"You'll never get out." He stood up and slammed his fist on the table. The two girls stopped giggling and fell silent. "You were born a Vega. You will die one. Soon you will train your brother." He calmed and sat back down.

He snapped at that point. He swooped down with his good arm and lifted the table, sending it flying into the pool. His father jumped up, almost finding the coffee pot in his lap. Amador pointed at him. "You leave Jason alone. You'll never have him, never!"

His father laughed. "That's my boy," he said. "You do have it in you. You are a Vega, and a Vega protects his own. Do good work for me and maybe I can do without your brother for awhile. But if you fail me, I'll have to have at least one son to keep the family business alive."

He didn't listen anymore. He walked out, got drunk, finally having to call the family's private physician to take out the bullet so there would be no questions from the authorities.

"And the war between your family and mine," Giovanni said suddenly, taking him out of the past, "there was a lot more blood shed, wasn't there? The police sometimes didn't know if it was from the gangs themselves or—"

"I've been the cause of so much misery," he said. "I've killed people, Gio."

"In self-defence."

"Doesn't matter, over drugs, over money."

"You can make it right."

"How, by testifying against my own family?"

"Yes, God damn it. Amador. Listen to me." He

came over to him, stroked his hair. "This has to stop. Your father has to be stopped, just like mine. He stopped being my father long ago and so did yours. You need to protect your brother from him now."

Amador looked up at him, tears on his face. "But that's just it," he whispered, "I can't. If I testify, all those people connected to my father...people in high places, Gio, who took bribes and dirty money, they'll go after my family."

"They'll be protected."

He sighed. "I don't trust them. If someone wants to get to them, they will. What about the rest of your family? Don't you care about them, Gio?"

"I've disconnected. I've had to. I don't think about them anymore."

"Enough talk. I've told you enough. I don't want to talk anymore."

"Okay."

"Tell me now. How did you get to this strange place, a cop?"

* * * *

"I'm not a cop," he said, shaking his head. "I told you." He walked over to the window. Amador's story had shaken him. That could have been him

on that beach. He looked across to the room he'd occupied not so long ago and shivered. He'd been there, a gun in his hand, desperate to prove something to a father who cared nothing for him. "I almost killed you from that room," he whispered.

"But you didn't. You were a horrible hit man."

He smiled. "I suppose I was. But you know, that doesn't give me pain anymore. I'm proud of it. I've changed." He turned around. "You can, too."

Amador looked at him from over his shoulder. "What happened when you escaped?"

"Luis met me at the airport, like Sophia said. He was a nice man. I was so scared, but more than that, I was in pain. I didn't want to leave you. I was so worried about what would happen to you. We ended up in Montreal. Luis handed me an envelope and left me in the downtown core where there were tons of hotels and stores and restaurants. The envelope contained a letter from Sophia and money, five thousand dollars. I couldn't believe she'd done that."

"She always liked you."

"How is she, Sophia?"

"Still at the hotel. My uncle was murdered in a cocaine field six months ago."

"I didn't hear about that."

"It was kept low profile. We went back for the

funeral. I didn't shed any tears. Sophia and her mother seem much happier now. My aunt is far more social and Sophia moved her into a nice condo closer to the hotel."

"I'm glad. Anyway, I read the letter. The one line that stuck out to me was when she wrote that you loved me. And that even if it didn't seem like it now, true love would win out in the end. She ended her letter with, *one day, you'll be together. Believe.*"

"For someone who hasn't had a lot of luck in love, she's a hopeless romantic."

"After a few days in Montreal, I bought a plane ticket for Los Angeles."

"Do you know how stupid that was?"

"Yes, and for many reasons. I wasn't sure if you were still in Columbia and my father was hunting for me. But all I could do was hang out in front of that construction site and wait for you to come home."

"And what did you think you were going to do when I did?"

"I was planning to beg you to run away with me."

Amador shook his head.

"Then they picked me up. I was on my way back to the hotel room after having driven by your mother's home for the tenth time, and just as I was getting out of the car, I was cornered. They were a

special task force, connected to the FBI. They said they wanted my help."

"And you agreed?"

"Not right away. But they made me see that it was the only way. I pleaded with them to do the same for you, take you out of there, but they..." He stopped.

"They saw that I was like my old man and they didn't think I was worth saving."

Giovanni came over and touched his shoulder. He ran his finger along the scar that was left by a bullet. "Something like that."

"And Roy, how does fucking him factor into it?"

"I met Roy in Canada. The Canadian authorities were collaborating on the task force. They made me a permanent part of the task force, on condition that I testify when the time came. I finally convinced them that you could do the same." He stood back.

"And so, the love story?" He lifted an eyebrow.

"It wasn't love, at least not for me. How can I love anyone else? It's always been you from the beginning and to the end. No matter what happens. Please." He went to his knees in front of him. "Do it, Amador, get out. Be with me. Let's end this."

He looked at him for a long time, then slowly nodded.

Giovanni's eyes widened. "You mean it?" He scrambled up off the floor.

"Untie me, okay?"

"You promise me?"

"Yes," he said, "but only on the condition that they protect my family."

"I'll call Roy." He began to untie the ropes.

Amador rubbed his wrists, then he reached up and placed a hand on Giovanni's neck. He pulled him in for a kiss. "Okay," he said softly, "but not just yet."

Giovanni sunk down into his arms, crawling onto his lap and practically knocking them both over. Amador laughed, getting up from the chair and pulling Giovanni with him. They fell together on the bed, Amador on top of him, looking down into his eyes.

"You love me, don't you?" Giovanni managed, laying his hand on the side of his face.

"You're all I've thought about these past two years, when I dared to think about you, and after that..." He lowered his face in his neck. "Only alcohol killed the pain."

"Oh, baby," Giovanni moaned, holding him close to him. "Oh, my love."

Amador lifted his head. He smiled at him. "Am I your love?"

"Yes, my love and my lover, my friend. I've missed you so much."

"Show me," he urged. "Bring me to life."

Giovanni pushed him away, and jumped off the bed. He took off his clothes while Amador watched. When he was naked, he crawled back over to him, letting his fingers trail down over his chest to his cock, which was now in desperate need of attention.

"Take it in your mouth," he urged. "You're a natural." He smiled and Giovanni noticed the fine lines around his eyes now, lines caused by pain and by living in hell.

He touched his lips to them and then moved them down his chest to his cock. When he enveloped his cock in his mouth, Amador sighed, his fingers curling in Giovanni's hair. "Yes," he whispered, "oh yes. Everything is worth this."

Giovanni was crying as he sucked his cock. He couldn't hold the tears back anymore. His tears mingled with Amador's come as he softly whimpered out his relief.

"Hey, hey," he said suddenly, pulling Giovanni up into his arms. "What's all this now?"

Giovanni laid his head on his chest and moved his hand over his stomach. "It's been so long. I wasn't prepared for what it would do to me."

Amador tightened his hold around him. "Baby. Don't cry. It will all be all right. I'll make it all right. I promise."

Giovanni looked at his face. "Fuck me now.

Make me yours again with your body, your cock. I want you so badly. I've always wanted you." Giovanni stroked his cock until it was hard again.

"I have no lube, no condoms."

"Amador." Giovanni grinned. "Do you think I'd come unprepared?" He jumped off the bed and, a few seconds later, held up lube and condoms. He crawled onto his hands and knees and threw the stuff at him. "Go to it, baby."

Amador shook his head. "You never change."

"You made me your slut from the first time you fucked me in that hotel room near the airport. I've been one ever since."

Amador leaned over, kissed his hair, spreading lube on his hand. "I'll remember that."

"You better," he growled when Amador teased his anus with the tip of his slippery finger. "And I'm not that little virgin anymore, so give me all you got, baby. Crying time is over. I'm a man in need of some hot action."

His finger sunk in deeper, then two. Amador was handling his cock and his balls as he finger fucked him.

Giovanni moaned, ramming his hips back and forth. "Baby, yeah...oh God, I've missed you...fuck me. Give me your cock."

Amador positioned himself behind him. The head of his cock pushed inside, then pulled out, then again, driving Giovanni nuts. It looked like

Amador had picked up a few tricks himself in that last two years, but he'd take it. He'd take all of him. In again, deeper, then out, then, "Ohhhhhhhhhhhh...yesssssssssss..." all the way in to the hilt then pull back, in, move it around and in and out and harder, and faster. His head was spinning, his cock close to surrender. "Amad...baby...oh yes...um...ahhhhhhhhhhhh." His cock let go, come squirting everywhere, his head down, heart pounding in his chest. Amador came himself now, slamming the remainder of his come into his ass, then breaking contact.

Giovanni fell on his belly, his head on the cool pillow. He sighed peacefully, as if he hadn't had an orgasm in two years. He had had an orgasm, but nothing like this. This was true peace, surrounded by love. "I love you, baby," he murmured.

Amador moved up beside him. He pulled him into his arms again, kissed him passionately, just for the sake of kissing him. They lay there the longest time then Giovanni said, "I have to call Roy, tell him you've changed your mind."

Amador touched his arm, holding him back as Giovanni went to get out of bed. "Are you sure about this?"

"Of course. You?"

He nodded.

"He'll alert the task force here, tell us where to

go.”

“Okay, but before we do that, I have to go to my mother’s house this morning. I’ve got to get them out of there. They come with us, okay?”

Giovanni kissed him on the forehead. “All right. Don’t worry. I’ll let Roy know.”

Chapter Nine

Amador left Giovanni at the hotel early that morning. He drove slowly towards his mother's house in Beverly Hills. He didn't have a good feeling about all of this, but he trusted Giovanni. As long as his mother and siblings were safe, let the chips fall where they may. His father had never done anything for him. He didn't respect who he was, all he wanted was to create another criminal in his likeness, and all around him was death and destruction.

He didn't want to go to jail, but he may have to. Even though Giovanni believed his testimony could be exchanged for immunity, he still might get some jail time, nothing like what he would get though if he didn't tell them what he knew. He wanted to end this, and with Giovanni at his side, finally, he was about to. He knew that if he had to do some time, Giovanni would wait for him and, for the first time in his entire life, he really felt loved.

He was thinking about Jason when he got out of the car. Jason would never have to experience what he had. He would save him from his inevitable future and maybe eventually, Jason would come to respect him again.

When he walked into his mother's house, he noticed that she looked nervous. "Mother, I don't have a lot of time," he said. "I want you to get Jessie and Jason, pack only what you need. We're getting out of here. Mother, finally." He squeezed her hand. "We'll be rid of him."

Tears ran down her cheeks, "Amador," she said, "my beautiful boy."

Amador blinked. "Mother, what..."

"Freeze," someone yelled and then he heard the click of guns all around him.

He stood in front of his mother. "What is this?" He put up his hands.

Suddenly Roy stepped out into the opening, his police badge swinging from his neck. "You're under arrest, Mr. Vega, for racketeering and organised crime. Put your hands on top of your head and hit the floor."

As Amador got down to his knees, he saw his brother, Jason standing there, looking at him, his sister was sobbing into her brother's shoulder. When had Jason gotten so big, became a man? Roy had betrayed them. But then what did he expect? Giovanni was too trusting or not aware of how

strong Roy's feelings were for him.

He felt the cold steel circle his wrists as he was pulled to his feet, searched. He heard the sirens now all around him and he walked slowly out to the squad car, two uniforms on each arm. He looked back once at her mother, managed to give her a smile, then felt the hand on his head propel him into the backseat.

* * * *

"I trusted you," Giovanni screamed, knocking all the files off Roy's temporary desk with one hand, "you betrayed me."

"I did what I had to do."

"He was coming in. He was going to testify. I know why you did this, to make it look like his testimony isn't voluntary. Why, Roy? Why?"

"He was no good for you. He would have dragged you back down to the dirt." He looked away. "You can't trust a mobster."

"That was my decision to make, not yours. He'll do hard time now."

"He would have done it anyway," he said, sinking into his chair, running a hand through his hair.

"What are the charges?"

"We raided one of his clubs last night and found drugs, laundered money."

Giovanni closed his eyes for a second. "He could refuse to testify now. He's not going to trust anything you say."

"If he cares about his family, he will."

"You have to protect them."

"They're not in any danger right now."

"I want to see him."

"He's being processed."

"I want to see him and I want you to know one thing, Roy, even if he's in prison fifty years, I'll wait for him. I'll never come back to you, especially not after what you've done."

"You're a fool."

"I love him. You can't help who you love."

"Yeah," he sneered. "I know."

Giovanni walked out of his office. He sat in the hallway, waiting.

Every hour, Giovanni asked to see him. He was told he was in the interrogation room. He slept on the bench, drinking horrible vending machine coffee in the morning. No one came to talk to him. At four that afternoon, he demanded to see who ever was in charge. It was Detective Evans, a no nonsense, hard boiled cop with an attitude. He was in a pissy mood.

"What do you want, Biachi? You should not be here. We need to get you into protective custody. This shit is all over the media."

"I want to see him."

He sighed. "Can you get him to talk?"

"Probably not. He was coming in on his own. Roy blew it. Was it worth it for a few drugs and some dirty cash? He could have given you Carlos Vega and a hell of a lot other dirty people."

"I didn't know he was coming in voluntarily. Anyway, with the amount of cooperation he's given us now, he's looking to spend half his life in prison."

"Listen to me and listen good, if you don't make him a deal, I'll walk."

"You can't, you're a material witness."

"Watch me. Now, where is he?"

"Jack," he called out for one of the uniforms, "take Mr. Biachi here to the prisoner. Ten minutes," he said.

Giovanni nodded.

* * * *

Amador sat on the hard cot, his head against the cement wall. When the jail cell rattled, he looked up to see Giovanni standing there.

"Leave us," Giovanni said to the cop.

The cop locked the cell and walked away.

"Are you all right?"

"Just great."

"I didn't do this."

"Your lover did."

"He's not my lover."

"Ex-lover, sorry."

"Amad." He came over and tried to take his hand. He shrugged it off. "You need to help them."

"I was going to do that, remember?"

"It's a minor —"

"Gio, it's not minor. The best I can hope for now is that my father hires some fancy lawyer to tap dance and I get off."

"No. We'll go to the DA. I already told them I wouldn't testify if they didn't cut you a deal."

"You could face prosecution, Giovanni."

"So be it."

"Don't be stupid. It's not worth it."

"Tell them everything, baby," he pleaded. "Throw yourself on their mercy. They have to cut you some slack. Even if you have to do some time... Don't give up. Please. If you love me."

"Time's up," the cop yelled out, opening the cell and waiting for Giovanni to come out. "Please," he pleaded.

Amador looked away.

The night was long in that cell. It was long without Giovanni. He paced. He couldn't sleep. He was informed that a lawyer was on his way for his defence. He knew who was paying for it. He was told that he was going to be transferred soon.

He knew to where. He was sure there were a lot of people waiting to see the son of Carlos Vega.

He wasn't scared for his own life. He'd survive it. He just didn't know if he could survive without Giovanni.

At ten that morning, after his shower, one of the interrogators came to get him, a female agent called Elise Hudson. They sat together in a room where he began to smoke cigarettes again for the first time in years.

She studied him. "You're not what I expected, Mr. Vega."

"Oh?" He raised an eyebrow. "What, gold teeth and a fedora?"

She smiled faintly. "No, not exactly. I've watched the tapes, your discussions with the police over the last little while. There's no malice in you and no fear. You have a lot of enemies in prison."

"My father does, which of course makes me a target by association. Did you have a good relationship with your father, Ms. Hudson?"

"Yes. He was a kind man. I'm afraid I didn't appreciate him enough when he was alive. He died a few years ago."

"I'm sorry for your loss."

She nodded. "I believe you really are. Is there something else you wanted to say?"

He leaned forward. "All my life I've been

surrounded by death, and yet, somehow I've remained relatively untouched by it, until my father wanted me to become him." He looked away. "I had no idea of the misery my father fed, where my clothes came from, my education, my mother's fancy house in Beverly Hills." He stopped, lit another cigarette. "I want it to stop."

"Then help us," she urged, leaning forward.

"I don't trust you," he replied. "I was coming here the morning I was arrested. I was prepared to betray everything I've ever known, even my own name, for love."

"Love?"

He puffed on the cigarette. "Yeah, something I've not known much of. Of course my mother loves me, when she's not too busy loving herself. She doesn't have a lot of substance. She fears my father, but yet accepts his gifts. My brother and sister have nothing to respect. Although they did respect me for awhile when I refused to do anything but run the construction business, which was always legitimate, by the way, when I ran it."

"We know that, Mr. Vega. But the last two years—"

He put up a hand. "Yes, well. You want what I want. You want to bring down Carlos Vega and all those he's corrupted. I can help you do that, at great personal cost. I'll do it, but there are a few things I want in return. Get someone in here to

take this down. I'll tell you my conditions. If I get guarantees, I'll give you enough evidence to put my father away and at least five others like him."

"I can't promise you that your demands will be accepted."

"I can't promise you testimony unless they are."

She stood up. "I'll get someone."

* * * *

Giovanni went back to the hotel to sleep, acutely aware that he was being followed. It was the police. When he got back to the place where Amador was being held, he demanded to know what in hell was going on.

"We can't let you just wander off," Roy told him.

"So I'm a prisoner?"

"No, but we need to protect you, just like we may have to protect your boyfriend."

"What? What do you mean?"

"He's asked for a deal."

Giovanni closed his eyes. "Thank God."

"He wants immunity from prison. He wants into witness protection after, along with you and his family. He wants new identities and a life outside the United States."

"And?"

"It's in the hands of the DA. He has offered a lot in return. It depends on if the DA sees it as worth it or not."

"Can I see him?"

"No. He's been moved. He's up at the prison in solitary confinement, away from the general population. Gio, I'm sorry."

Giovanni looked at him.

"I let my personal feelings interfere with my job. I shouldn't have done that. I watched the tapes of him talking with Elise. He's not a bad man."

"Thank you, Roy," Giovanni said, hugging his neck. "Thank you so much."

He nodded and walked away.

It was difficult not seeing Amador during the trial, a trial that spanned the course of almost a year before it had even begun, and lasted three more years after that, a trial, which brought down over sixty percent of organized criminals on the East Coast, reaching as far as Columbia and Mexico.

Amador remained in prison all that time, in solitary, the authorities figuring it was the safest place for him, given the nature of his testimony.

Giovanni lived in a variety of safe houses, being moved whenever the police suspected a threat, and basically living in fear.

The District Attorney agreed to all of Amador's demands, but Giovanni knew that the day when it would happen was still a long time off.

They were not allowed to correspond in any way. Giovanni was told that Amador seemed at peace and that he was reading a lot and completing a law degree.

Giovanni learned to paint and spent his time doing landscapes and recalling beautiful places he'd visited with Amador in Columbia.

When it was his time to testify, he faced his father in the courtroom. He'd dreaded that day, but somehow when it came to looking him in the eye, he didn't seem to have any trouble.

He was surprised to see Sophia in the courtroom with her mother. She smiled at him, and although he had no time to talk with her, one of his guards told him she'd come to give moral support to her cousin, and that she said *hello*.

Giovanni watched Amador on television as he entered the courtroom surrounded by a heavy arsenal of police. He cried when he saw him. He looked thin and drawn, but determined.

He saw Amador's father, too, entering the courtroom in handcuffs, looking like he was entering a party, laughing, waving his hands, as if nothing could possibly touch him.

Two days after Carlos Vega began to stand trial, Giovanni was told he was being moved out of the

US. "What about Amador?"

No answer was given. They had no idea how long the trail would last. It wasn't expected to be over any time soon. He was given a new identity and flown to London. He was now Antonio Demechi. At least it was Italian. When he was met by some plains clothes cops and led to a small house in London suburbia, he was surprised to see that he wasn't alone.

"Hi, Antonio." A lovely blonde lady moved forward to greet him. "I'm Viola Hunting. These are my children, Alice and Carter. Nice to meet you. I understand you are the new boarder."

Tears filled his eyes and he nodded. The plains clothes officer slapped Giovanni on the back and left. "You know where to reach me," he said.

Amador's mother hugged him tightly. His brother, who looked so much like him it was painful, shook his hand and his sister just looked scared. "It will be okay," he told her, moving over and smiling down at her. "Your brother will be here soon."

She hugged him then, surprising him as he looked back at her mother. He rubbed her back. "It will be okay, I promise."

He had a job already, working as a clerk in a men's shop. He wanted to go back to school. The contact person said they'd set it up. He liked art, figured maybe he'd teach it and, before long, he

was showing Alice/Jessie how to paint.

He followed the trial as much as he could on the tele, but they didn't get a lot of American news. He started his art classes and bonded with Amador's brother over soccer.

An entire year and a half went by and Giovanni sometimes cried himself to sleep. He worried constantly, developing an ulcer to boot. What if they double crossed Amador, didn't send him here when it was over?

The trial finally came to an end. Amador's father joined his friends and enemies in prison. The headlines read, *End of Vega Crime Family, brought down by his own son.* There were a few names listed that even surprised Giovanni. All these people were going to jail.

A week later, their contact person showed up on the doorstep. He took Giovanni aside. "I didn't want to tell the family, but they think it best to keep Amador under wraps for awhile. To have him here with all of you may put him and the entire family in danger. So far, so good with you people, but we can't endanger—"

"Where is he?" Giovanni demanded.

"We can't tell you that."

"Is he still in prison?"

"No. He's not. He's been..." he paused, "relocated."

Giovanni sunk down onto the sofa. "I'm never going to see him again, am I?"

"Yes," he said, "you will. They want to wait...five years."

"Five years?" Tears streamed down his face.

"I'm sorry. Do you want me to tell them?"

He shook his head. "Can you tell him something for me?"

He nodded. "Just this once."

"Tell him I love him and that I'm taking care of his family."

Chapter Ten

Amador sat at the lawyers club, sipping his coke. He was reading a book called *Liebe ewig*, which meant Love Eternal. His German had gotten pretty good over the last three years so that now he could actually get through a trial in German, rather than relying on a translator. The novel was a love story between two men who had been separated by time. They were actually in different centuries, but it didn't feel much different than the way he felt about Giovanni. They might as well be in different times. He was told that there were two years left before he could make contact. It was like a prison sentence. It might as well have been.

He stood up as Norman Filmore walked in. He was a friend from the American Embassy. He'd done some work for them once and they hit it off. He knew that Filmore wanted more, but he wasn't able to give it to him. If anything, he would remain faithful to Giovanni.

"Happy birthday," he said, hugging him. "How

does it feel to be thirty-two, David?"

He laughed and sat back down. "Old."

Filmore laughed. "What's wrong with you, you're gorgeous. I'm taking you to dinner tonight."

"No, I'd rather be alone."

"David...you need to get out. I'll introduce you to the German gay scene...leather and..." He raised an eyebrow.

David shook his head.

"Dave, what are you waiting for, your prince?"

He smiled. "I found him. I'm waiting for him to come back to me."

"How long are you prepared to wait?"

"Two more years," he said, grinning.

Norman Filmore gave him a curious look.

* * * *

Giovanni had been marking off the days on the calendar. He was marking off another day when Amador's mother came and put her arms around him and gave him a hug. "You okay?"

"Three weeks to go. It's a Monday, June 12th."

She kissed his cheek. "I don't want you to be disappointed."

"About what?"

"What if he...it's been five years. He might have..."

"No," Giovanni said. "I don't believe that."

"Hey, teach," Amador's brother came in, pulling off his motorcycle helmet, "you need to help me with my bike. It's making that funny noise again."

"I will," he said. "Later. I got to go to the center. I have a painting class to give."

"Okay," he said, looking at the calendar. "Three weeks." He walked out.

"See, Mom," Giovanni said, "I'm not the only one counting."

She smiled. "Okay, don't forget to pick up the dry cleaning. Alice's prom is on Saturday. You got your suit?"

He made a face. "Yes, but I need a shirt. The one I have is long sleeved."

She patted his shoulder. "I'm going shopping today. Size 16 neck?"

"Yep. I'll pay you back. Hey, what about the gallery?"

"I'm off today. Judy is taking my place. PMS," she said.

"Too much information." He made a face and left by the back door.

Amador's family kept him going, that and his job at the recreation center where he was now in charge of activities for the aged. He loved it. Watching Jason and Jessie grow up was something, too. He only wished Amador could

have been there to enjoy it. Looking at Jason made his heart ache, now that he was a man, he was so like Amador. And he'd confessed to Giovanni that he was gay. His mother and sister had been totally accepting. He'd never have to live what he or Amador had.

The days dragged. Jessie looked beautiful at her graduation and Jason finished college for the summer. He got a job in a bike shop and was thrilled. Giovanni suspected he had a crush on the manager.

Jessie was frustrated with looking for a job so Giovanni got her hired at the center. She loved it.

When the day finally came, nothing happened. There was no knock on the door and the telephone didn't ring. Giovanni called their contact person and asked him if he knew what was going on.

"He doesn't know where you are," he said.

"Well, someone tell him."

"I'll get right on it. Congratulations by the way, your time is up. You don't need me any more. Keep being careful, keep your new names, but relax. If no one has come for you yet, they probably won't."

The week passed. The entire family was down, all of them expecting to see Amador. Giovanni called his contact again. The line had been disconnected. *Amador, where are you?*

* * * *

Amador was acutely aware that the five years were over, but no one had told him where Giovanni was. He'd lost contact with that strange guy from the police long ago. He'd stopped thinking about the danger or his father.

When the phone rang in his office, his receptionist picked it up and told him it was a person to person call from Columbia. He froze. "Who is it?"

"A Ms. Sophia Vega."

He grabbed the phone. "Sophia?"

"Amador...you in..." The phone cut off.

"Sophia?" He pushed the receiver several times.

"Damn." He pushed last number redial. It rang.

"Amador?"

"Sophia? Where are you? Are you all right?"

"I'm on my cell phone...battery...danger...don't London...here..."

"What? I can't...Sophia, Jesus Christ. What are you saying?"

"Giovanni...you're...danger...and...London."

The phone went dead.

Amador hung up the phone, then pressed the number for his secretary. "Get me a first class ticket to London, now. And get me Interpole."

Amador spent an hour on his cell phone with

Interpole, an international police organization. He told them everything. After fifteen transfers, they said they were on it. They knew where his family was, and they rattled off the address. They were sending the police right away.

Amador touched down at Heathrow in London about an hour later and hired a car to take him to the address Interpole had given him. They'd told him to be careful, to stay away until they contacted him, but to hell with that.

After asking directions about ten times, he found the street. It was blocked off and surrounded by police. "No," he said, "oh God, no." He got out of the car.

A policeman glanced at him. "Get out of here," he said.

"That's my family in there. What's happening?"

"There's a hostage taking. The gun man is looking for someone."

"Who is it?"

"Some nut just got out of prison in America, some ex-congressman."

"He's looking for me."

"You?"

"Yeah, I'm Amador Vega."

The cop's eyes popped. "Okay, I got to get my superior."

"Never mind that, I'm going in there."

The sun had gone down. Police surrounded

him, bombarding him with questions. "Has he hurt anyone?"

"No, not yet," the cop in charge told him.

"Who's in there?"

"Two women and two men."

Amador closed his eyes. "I'm going in. It's me he wants. He'll let them go if I go in."

"Too dangerous."

"Give me that," Amador said. "He grabbed the blow horn out of the cop's hand. "Gregory. This is Amador Vega. I'm the one you want. Let them go, and I'll come in."

* * * *

Giovanni gasped. He sat huddled on the sofa with the two women, while Jason lay on the floor, not moving. Jason had jumped the man and was rewarded with a gun to the head. There was blood. Giovanni was scared. He'd tried to talk to gun man, but he wanted none of it. He wanted Amador.

When Giovanni heard his voice, he had the strangest feeling. For the last few years, hearing his voice was all he longed for, now it was the last thing he wanted to hear. "No, Amador," he called out, "he'll kill you."

The white haired man moved to the side of the window. He was sweaty, irrational. "Keep quiet."

"At least, let the women go," Giovanni said. "And let me look at Jason. He's hurt. He could die. You don't want that on your conscience."

He wasn't listening. "Come in here, you coward," he called out. "Come in and I'll let them go."

"Not until they come out," Amador called back. "Show me one, just one. And if you've hurt them—"

"I lost everything because of you, my wife, my house, my career."

"Then make me pay, not them. Send them out."

"No," Giovanni moaned.

Jason moved a little on the floor.

"Okay," the man said, "the ladies. Get out of here."

"Go," Giovanni said. "Women are coming out," he called, "hold your fire."

The door opened and the women were whisked out of sight.

Amador looked at them and smiled, but it was no time for a reunion. "My little brother and the other man, send them out, too." He wasn't sure what name they'd given Giovanni so there was no point saying it.

* * * *

The police man looked at Amador. "Get them all

out and he'll have nothing. We'll go in after him."

"He knows that. He's not going to let them both out. Maybe one."

* * * *

Jason moaned on the floor. Giovanni knelt down beside him.

"Hey," the man said, "I didn't tell you to move."

"He needs medical attention. Let me take him to the door. You can have me. I'll stay."

"Okay, take him to the door. Another one coming out, and that's it," he called out.

* * * *

Amador waited impatiently. He caught a fast glimpse of what looked like Giovanni and then his brother, who was being carried to the ambulance waiting near by. "Oh God," he said. He dropped the horn and ran to the ambulance. His mother and sister busted through the police line and threw themselves at him, wailing hysterically. He tried to comfort them while checking on his brother. "Is he all right?" he asked.

One of the technicians nodded. "Blow to the head. He should be okay."

Amador signalled to the cops to take his mother

and sister away.

"Giovanni," Jessie whimpered.

He nodded. "Don't worry, little sis, I won't let anything happen to him. Stay with the police." He raced back to where the cop was and picked up the horn again.

"Wait," the cop said, "what are you doing?"

"I'm doing what I said I would do, I'm going in there. Okay, Greg, hold your fire," he called out, "I'm coming in."

The police tensed around him as he walked to the door. His mother and sister now stood by the ambulance, holding Jason's hand. He was awake, wanting to know what was happening.

* * * *

Inside, Giovanni watched the gun man intently. If he moved to hurt Amador, he'd jump him, didn't matter what. He wouldn't let him shoot him.

The door opened and closed, and there he was. Giovanni's eyes filled with tears when he glanced at him. Still beautiful, a mature man with a hint of a shadow on his jaw, dressed in a dark blue suit and white shirt. His hair curled some on his collar and he was wearing glasses, round ones with wire rims.

He took them off. "What's all this, Gregory?" His attention was on the man with the gun. "Let

him go, he had nothing to do with it. I'm here now."

"No," Giovanni said, "I'm staying with you."

Gregory sneered at him, pointed the gun. "I've waited a long time for this."

"Waited a long time to go back to jail? If you do this, you will go back and you'll do twenty years. You're still alive, you've got some years left and —"

"My wife left me." He wiped the sweat out of his face. "I have nothing."

"We've all lost something," Amador said. "You made a mistake. Don't make another. Give me the gun." He took a step, his hand outstretched.

Giovanni winced as the gun clicked. He was shaking all over.

Amador took another step. "Shoot me if you want, it won't change the past. Only you can do that, my friend. Please. Give me the gun."

"No," the man said.

Giovanni sprang at him from where he stood in front of the sofa and the gun went off.

* * * *

Amador scrambled to find out who was shot. He pulled Giovanni off of Gregory as the police came in, and yanked him up into his arms, looking for bullet holes because his shirt was covered in

blood. He was stunned, but unharmed. The blood belonged to the former congressman. Gregory had turned the gun on himself.

Amador pulled Giovanni aside and held him tightly in his arms, watching over his shoulder as they carted the congressman's body away. He closed his eyes, only opening them again when his mother and sister came racing inside, ignoring the police who advised them to stay outside.

His mother and sister hugged them both, kissing Amador obsessively as Giovanni clung to him without any words. He had none.

The policeman in charge finally asked Amador to come outside. He disengaged himself and followed the cop.

They spoke for a few minutes and then he returned. "Jason is fine. He's being taken to the hospital. You can all come with me in my car. I don't know where it is."

Giovanni grabbed his arm and they walked outside. He reached up and kissed him on the mouth. "How did you know? How did you find us?"

"Sophia. She called me. I think maybe she was tipped off by someone in Columbia. The congressman had a lot of contacts there." Amador opened the door for his mother and sister and waited to close it. Giovanni crawled into the front seat beside him. He couldn't stop looking at him.

He reached over and kept his hand on his leg the entire time, only removing it when Amador parked in the hospital lot.

His mother and sister were shaken, but fine and they clung to Amador as he walked with them into the hospital. Giovanni followed behind.

When they found Jason's room, his eyes flooded with tears when he saw his big brother and he opened his arms. Amador hugged him tightly and Giovanni motioned to the ladies to give them a minute. They stepped outside the room.

Amador wiped Jason's tears and smiled at him. "You're a man."

"You, too," he joked, with a hint of a British accent.

"Gee thanks," he said, laughing a little.

"I've missed you so. The last time we saw each other, I said some —"

"Never mind. I deserved that."

"No, you didn't. I know you did what you could to protect us, Amad. And what you did...I mean, you gave us our lives back, and today..."

"Don't start crying again," he warned, grinning.

"I'm gay," he said abruptly.

"So what do you want, a medal? I already knew that. You used to steal my sports magazines, the one with the men in tight lycra pants."

Jason went to punch him.

"Things will be all right now, buddy."

"I know. And there's a guy out there in that hallway that loves you like crazy."

"I love him back," he said, smiling. "I'll let your mom and sister in now."

"Oh no, they're going to cry all over me."

"You should talk," he said, laughing.

When his mom and sister went back in, Giovanni stayed in the hall. "Hi," he said.

"Hi, yourself," he said back, smiling. "Someone said you missed me."

"He did, eh? Well, he has news for you."

"I knew that a long time ago."

"Another reason to protect him from—"

"Shush," he said, putting a finger on his lips, "I don't want to talk about him any more. I want to talk about us."

"Okay," Giovanni smiled. "So what are you dressed up for, and what's with the specs?"

"Old age," he said.

Giovanni laughed. "And the suit?"

"I'm a lawyer."

Giovanni nodded. "Always were too smart for your britches, britches by the way, I'm dying to take off."

Amador smiled. "Back at you. Soon. So suppose I'll have to take the bar again if I want to practise here."

"I'll help you study."

"Yeah, sure." He grinned. "I doubt I'd get much studying done."

"I'd like to study you." Giovanni grinned. "Maybe I'll paint you."

"Paint?"

"I'm an art director."

"Ah. In the nude?"

"Of course. Hold on to that thought."

"And all the others."

"They'll be time."

"Your family needs you right now," he said. "It's their time."

"Thanks for looking after them."

"I love them. They've grown, become their own people now."

Amador nodded. "So have we."

* * * *

Jason was released from the hospital later that day and they had a wonderful dinner together. Giovanni had no words for what it felt like to be in the same room with Amador again, to touch his hand and look into his blue eyes. The house rang with laughter and love, finally.

Later that night when the house settled, Amador grabbed his hand and pulled him outside in the backyard. There were fire works going off in the distance. "What's that about?" Giovanni

asked, snuggling into Amador's strong arms.

"Celebration of our love, Liebe ewig."

"Huh?" He looked up at him. "What in the heaven's that?"

"It's German for eternal love."

"Oh, you speak German, I forgot. Will you miss Berlin?"

"No. I won't miss anything as long as you're with me."

"I want you."

He nodded. "I know." He looked up at the upstairs window. "Think I might have to gag you?"

Giovanni laughed. "You might." He ran for the house.

"I can't believe you remember that," Giovanni teased as he pulled Amador down on his bed.

"I remember every minute I've spent with you. I remember you tried to shoot me and you begged to be fucked and..."

Giovanni pulled off his shirt. "Um, I'm going to do it again. Fuck me," he urged. "But ah...it's been awhile. Go slow."

Giovanni tugged on his pants.

"Got lube?"

Giovanni grinned. "Of course. I come prepared remember?" He reached over to his nightstand and pulled out the tube.

Amador looked at it and laughed. "Kind of old, isn't it?"

"It's been sitting around awhile, but." He kissed his naked chest and made a beeline for his erection. "I have a feeling it won't be around for that much longer. Your days are numbered." He pointed at the tube.

"You're a lunatic," Amador said, laughing, as Giovanni wrapped his lips around his cock. He reached up and entwined his fingers with his.

* * * *

There was nothing left to say. Amador closed his eyes and sighed with pleasure. He was home, finally, and there was no reason to ever have to leave it again.

About the Author

I write not only for my own pleasure, but for the pleasure of my readers. I can't remember a time in my life when I haven't written and told stories. When I'm not writing, I'm dreaming about writing, doing something wild and adventurous, or trying to make the world a better and more open minded place to live in. I adore beautiful men, and I know I'm not alone in this! Eroticism between consenting adults, in all its many forms is the icing on the cake of life!

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