
REDEMPTION

Savage Duet: Part One

NICOLINA MARTIN



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

*From a single moment on, my life was forever changed,
Like everything I previously knew had suddenly been rearranged.*

*Change What Is To Come
By Anonymous*

Part I

The End

Chapter 1

New York

Christian

The city that supposedly never sleeps is slowly coming back to life. It was pretty dead when I woke a couple of hours ago. At least this stiff upper lip part of Manhattan was. I sit on a bench at the edge of Central Park, a cup of coffee in my hand. I've spent the night at a hotel, I've run, showered, and now I'm overlooking the entrance to the office building where my target works. Mr. Corben Olsen. CEO of a Fortune 500 company situated on the Upper East Side. He's a short man in his fifties, donning a toupee, working out every day to stay fit. He's on his third wife and has chosen to start over with a second set of kids, the dumb fuck. His wife is almost a head taller and seventeen years younger, a former Victoria's Secret model. She has a lover, a cop who's investigating Corben's business. That's intriguing, but has nothing to do with me.

Corben Olsen is a crook whose business is going to shit. No

bank with any kind of morals is lending him any more money, so to be able to maintain his lavish lifestyle, he had to go to the immoral, and turned to my uncle, Mr. Luciano Salvatore, the most ruthless mob boss on the West Coast. The *only* mob boss on the West Coast after we eliminated all competition some years back.

There are plenty of underground lending businesses in New York. My guess is he turned to someone far away so that he'd feel safe up there, in his tower.

He isn't.

Payment has been due. He isn't delivering.

This is his first warning. It's gonna hurt a little. We'll see if he gets the message, or if I'll have reason to come back. My gut tells me I will.

I glance at the clock. Seven fifteen. I wonder if my brother is awake yet. Oh, fuck it. If he isn't, I'll wake him. I'm tired of hotels, and he owns a whole floor in a building down in Tribeca. He can squeeze me in somewhere. Draining the last of the coffee, I haul up my phone and thumb through my contact list, praying he'll be home, or I'll be pissed. A pissed off Christian won't be good news for Corben. A pissed off Christian won't hurt Corben just a little.

"Chris! To what do I owe this honor?" Nathan's voice is hoarse. He sounds beyond tired.

"Tell me you're in the big apple."

"I'm in a cab. Just left JFK. Got a foggy view of Manhattan across the river. Why?"

"I'm passing through. Need a place to crash."

"What's wrong with hotels, dude?"

"Brother—" He knows I hate them. I'm always traveling. I miss my house like fuck whenever I'm away. Someone else's home is the second best.

"I'm just kidding. Of course you can come by. Wanna hit the town tonight?"

“Definitely.”

“All right. Gimme a call when you get in. I’m not picking you up. I’m fucking beat.”

I don’t bother mentioning I’m already in town. I do worry a tad about Nate. He’s exhausting himself with work, always has. He should sell off a few homes, decide where to live, slow the fuck down.

“How’s the old lady? She with you?”

“Nah, Sydney’s busy running her hotel.” His voice brightens, as always, when he talks about her.

“She’s one of a kind, isn’t she?”

A stab of jealousy hits me. My wayward younger brother has found the love of his life. It struck him out of the blue. No one expected him to ever find the one, to settle down.

“She is.”

“I’m happy for you, you know it.” On the other side of the street, I see Corben walking briskly along the sidewalk. “Talk later.”

I disconnect as I watch Mr. Olsen entering the building. Anticipation builds in me as always before a hit. It’s not time yet, though. I’ll catch him either when he works late, or when his wife leaves for her lover. I expect to be here a few days.

Corben is blindly in love and doesn’t suspect a thing about his unfaithful wife. I wonder if it would be too cruel to enlighten him. Or maybe it will be enough with a couple of broken fingers.

I don’t believe in love. There is no such thing. I’ve never seen it, never felt it. It’s nothing but chemistry, people’s need to copulate. It’s all ingrained in our DNA.

But love?

I care for my brothers, Nate, Matteo, and Luca, and they care about me. We’d die for each other. I don’t know if that qualifies. Maybe what I feel for my sister is something close to ‘love’. Or maybe it’s nothing but a strong protection instinct because we share a set of genes?

I glance at the clock again. It's way too early to call her, and she'll probably be in class in the morning.

Standing, I toss the now empty cup in the nearest bin, and aim for Mr. Olsen's building. Time to check that everything is in order, that the keycard with my picture and my fake name takes me exactly where I want it to.

I spend an hour playing pretend, coming and going, taking note of emergency exits and alarm systems. When I'm satisfied, it's still early, but I decide to go for breakfast, check out of the hotel, and then hit up Nate.

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY. Early autumn. The air is still crisp despite the sun having climbed over the canopy, but it warms the skin a little and I close my eyes, enjoying the feeling. I have my bags by my feet and wait for the car the hotel called. I like the seasons. In San Francisco it varies a little, and is mostly foggy. Nothing like here.

In the cab, southbound, I call our sister.

"Chris!" She almost squeals.

"Angel." As always, my heart warms at hearing her voice. This kid, my much younger sister, the youngest of all five of us, is a unique flower in this family. Artsy, headstrong, living her own life and refusing to conform.

She giggles. "How are things?"

"Same shit."

"Are you in town?" She sounds hopeful which makes me smile.

"Yeah, wanna meet up?"

"*Why* are you in town?" Her light tone turns wary.

I hesitate, contemplating for a moment if I should make life easy and just lie, but decide against it. "Business."

She hates it. She hates what the whole rest of her family does

for a living, hates our dirty money, and the wealth that comes from hurting other people. I admire her stubborn will to support herself, working two jobs, as she studies photography.

“Are you bringing any shit to my doorstep?”

“Of course not. Never.”

She is silent a few beats. “Aren’t you ever getting out, Chris?”

I sigh. “You know I can’t.”

“You—”

“Look,” I say, interrupting the lecture I know will come, “let’s talk tomorrow. When can you meet up?”

She scoffs. “Fine. I have the morning off, then school, then work until late.”

“Still serving the filthy rich?”

“Still serving the undeserving, yes.”

Angela works part time in a private club, serving drinks, scantily clad, but as far as I know she isn’t offering herself up, and isn’t expected to. For that, I’m eternally happy. I’d break a lot more than a finger on anyone who put their filthy hands on her. As was proven when a neighbor assaulted her. We still lived in the seedier parts of Chicago back then. She was sixteen. Nate and I beat the fucker to a pulp.

“I’ll buy you breakfast,” I say.

“All right, cool. Look, I gotta hop in the shower, or I’ll be late.”

“I’ll call you in the morning. Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

She scoffs and hangs up.

Yeah, I know. There isn’t much I wouldn’t do. Bad advice.

AT ELEVEN O’CLOCK I make my way past the door guard in Nathan’s building. He’s got a silly red uniform, no gun, no club, no cuffs. No nothing. He’s just for show. I could take him down in

a second. Ignoring the old elevator with its black, steel scissor door, I take the stairs two at a time and slam my fist on Nate's door.

My slightly younger brother is uncharacteristically disheveled.

"Nate. You look like shit."

"I spent a few days in Houston cleaning up a mess. It's nothing, but yeah, didn't get much rest. Want something to drink?" He cocks his head toward the kitchen.

"Wanna lighten your heart?"

"That's a firm no. Want a beer?"

"Sure. Got anything else other than Mexican? It tastes like water."

"Nope."

I shrug and accept the bottle. Nate has his little getaway in Mexico where he spends as much time as he can. He used to be there a lot more, diving, drinking, doing tourist chicks. Now he only goes there whenever he can get the love of his life to go with him. He's turned into a different man. It's taken some getting used to, but I like it. He seems content.

His loft is out of this world: huge, floor to ceiling windows in three directions, a sliver of a view of the river. Like himself, it's a thing of ridiculous beauty. He was born with everything. I don't look like a slug myself, but he's supermodel material, the fucker. I envy him sometimes, but I'd never admit it. He works hard for our uncle, just like the rest of us, but he has somehow managed to distance himself too. These days there is no longer any dirty business for him, only the legal side of things.

I dump my bag in one of the guest rooms and take a long, hot shower. I'm frustrated. Watching the wife and the cop fuck each other's brains out last night left its mark. It's been a while, but tonight I'm fucking gonna make a New York socialite scream. The thought makes me hard, but I decide to save it, to let it brew. The release will be much sweeter that way.

WE SPEND the afternoon doing absolutely nothing. Vietnamese take out, reruns of old TV-shows, catching up on each other's lives. I like it here. I like the city; I like the distance from our uncle, Luciano Salvatore, head of the business, capo of all organized crime on the West Coast. It would be nice to see more of Nathan and his chick. And Angela. I don't think Salvatore would let me move from San Francisco, though. I'm in too deep, too snared in his claws.

"So, who are you beating up this time?" Nathan has just exited the bathroom, his hair soaked, dripping on his naked shoulders, a white towel tied around his waist. I'm putting on my shirt, way ahead of him in preparations. He wanted to go to a restaurant. I demanded a club. I'm no family man. I need a fucking release tonight, or I'll go crazy. Willing chicks don't magically hang around fancy restaurants.

"Corben Olsen. Owes a lot of money. Late. He needs a little push."

"Little? Luci doesn't send you for 'little'."

I shrug. "I was available. I'll break something and let him know I'll be back if he doesn't pay up. I probably *will* be back, because I'm pretty sure he can't."

"You going back home to the foggy city after this job?"

"Yeah, unless I get sent somewhere else. I'm like a fucking nomad, man."

He raises his eyebrows. "I know the feeling. I'll be with you in a minute, then we'll go find you a woman."

"You know me too well."

I GIVE my brother a nod before I venture deeper into the club. Only a few blocks from his place. Even though a block in the Big

Apple can be really fucking huge, it was still walking distance to the newest, hottest place, where everybody goes.

She's standing by the bar, long black hair, tan – when most women these days stay out of the UV-light –, legs for days, and a little golden-yellow dress. She stands out like a beacon in a place where most play it safe and wear black. Women think they're so edgy in their little black dresses, but it's the colorful ones I look for. They're more adventurous, more into playing the kinds of games I like to play.

“What do you want, love?” I lean in, my voice low, meant for her and her alone. “From the bar, I mean,” I add, letting the double entendre hang in the air.

She turns her head and measures me up, immediate interest flickering in her light blue eyes. She's wearing a ton of makeup, the smoky eyes girls are so fond of, a deep red lipstick that reeks of sin on lush lips I imagine wrapped around my cock. I'll have that makeup smeared all over Nate's expensive sheets before I kick her out in the morning.

“What are you offering?” Her voice is sultry, the sound shooting straight to my groin.

It's ridiculously easy. Being six foot three, nothing but muscle underneath a tailored suit, oozing power and self-assurance, I can get almost any girl I like in here.

I decide to go all in. “Ropes, gag, blindfold.”

She widens her eyes, glances around us, then back at me, taking stock again.

“I don't know,” she says, her voice a little shaky. “Sounds a bit... dangerous.”

“You're telling me it doesn't make you,” I lick my lips and let my gaze wander to her chest, and lower, “interested?”

She squirms, chewing on her lip, measuring me up. “I don't know anything about you.”

“Correct. And I don't know anything about you. That's the way I like it.”

“Maybe have a drink first? Chat a little?”

“I don’t chat.” I pin her with my gaze. Her chest heaves, her cheeks have taken on a slight blush. When she doesn’t answer, I take a step back. “Okay.” I turn and feel her hand on my arm.

“Wait!”

Gotcha. I turn back to her, taking my time. “Yes?”

“How do I know you’re not some mass murderer?”

“You don’t.” I reach out and brush my thumb across her lower lip, making her shudder visibly. “I’m no gentleman, but you’ll leave my place tomorrow morning, somewhat intact, on your own two feet.”

Her mouth falls open, her breathing changes. I can almost smell her arousal and my cock stiffens. “What’s your name, sweetheart?”

“Alexandra,” she says on an exhale.

“I’m Christian. It’s time to make up your mind.”

“Oh God,” she moans in defeat. “I’m not right in the head, but what the hell.”

I smirk as I snake an arm around her waist and steer her out of the club, into a cab I hail. Tomorrow, she’ll be sore, and she’ll probably never want to see me again.

I like it rough.

RIDICULOUSLY SATISFIED, my carnal needs fulfilled, I call a cab for the girl who can barely walk. She’s fresh from a shower and smells of a musky sandalwood. Nathan’s soap. I toss her one of my brother’s shirts to give her some more decency on the way home, and give her a smack on the butt.

“Off you go, Alexandra.”

“You are one sick puppy,” she says as she finds her way into the shirt and grabs her purse.

“And you enjoyed every bit of it.”

She shakes her head, more in disbelief than negating my claim. “Fuck off.” She strides to the door, pulls it open and slams it shut behind her, probably waking Nathan. If he slept at all.

I smirk and go to make myself an espresso, glancing at the clock. Caffeine, a shower, and then off to see what our sis is up to.

ANGELA RUSSO IS a blend of all her brothers. She got all the best features. A hint of a Roman nose, high cheekbones, almond shaped almost-black eyes, and thick, dark brown hair that cascades down her back. We used to chase her and pull her braids when we were kids. The few times we got to play innocent games.

“Looking good!” She gives me a once-over before she sits on the cheap, red vinyl bench opposite me in the booth.

“Same, girl. Exile suits you.”

“I don’t live in exile. I’m the only one who lives a real life, you freak. Now pay for my breakfast and make yourself useful.”

“So dirty money is good enough for coffee and a bagel.”

“Fuck you.”

“Watch your tongue.”

She sticks out her tongue at me and flips me off. I shake my head and shuffle out of my seat to go order us something to eat. My stomach growls. I’m depleted of energy after last night’s activities.

“Hey,” she half shouts, “pancakes too. And orange juice.”

After I’ve ordered, I fall down on my seat again as our coffee is served. “So, Angela. How’s life? Seeing anyone?”

She sighs and accepts the coffee. “Ain’t nobody got time for that.”

“You work too hard. You could live life in luxury.”

“And in the clutches of Uncle Salvatore. No fucking thanks.”

“He’s not happy with this, you know.”

Her face turns serious and she puts down the cup, her hand shaking a little. “Did he say anything?”

“He hints at it from time to time.”

“You’ve got my back, though? Right? It would kill me. I could never live that life, *him* deciding what I do, who I meet, what I fucking eat, drink and wear.”

I frown. Out of all us Russos, Angela is the one who has chosen her own path. I’d rather die than sell her out. There’s nothing more important to me than keeping my promise to her.

“You know it. I won’t let that happen.”

“Thank you,” she says and smiles faintly. “I love you to bits, Bro, but every time I meet with one of you guys my stomach clenches up a little, thinking this is it, this is when it ends and you pull me back by my hair. Now, let’s talk about something else. I found a new site yesterday, an old church a few miles from here. I’ll go check it out this weekend. Want me to send you the pics?”

I smile, fighting down the unease. “I’m always interested in your work, Angel, you know it. Is it in ruins?”

“Yep. A big wonderful pile of rocks. When are you going back to San Francisco?”

“Eager to get me out of town?”

She shrugs. “Just making conversation. If you have time you can buy me breakfast again.”

“I’d be happy to. I’ll head home as soon as I’m done here. Couple of days, tops.”

It’s not a good feeling knowing I represent darkness to her, fear. But it’s who I’ve become. There’s not a thing I can do about it.

I’m not one of the good guys.