
THE SICILIAN BASTARD

Picone Crime Family Book Four

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

Chapter 1

Araceli

The burning in my chest set off a series of coughs and I stumbled. My high-heeled foot caught on a bump in the middle of the ground. I pumped my legs faster as the wind blew through my chestnut locks. Why hadn't I worn sneakers for this? I hadn't been prepared. A sexy catsuit was not what I wanted to wear when running for my life. I wasn't a strong runner, but if there was ever a time to run, it was now. I had made a mistake. Why had I thought I could go against him and win? I had to have been crazy to even try. I breathed through flared nostrils. I couldn't keep this up much longer. They were going to catch me. I veered off the street down an alley. The stench was strong. A dumpster hung wide open and I dodged it before I could wipe it out. There was a homeless man, with his feet dangling out the top, searching for food. I focused on my task at hand. Getting away. I saw a light in front of me and ran full out towards it. The back door to the restaurant was open and I rushed to get there. This was where I would lose them. Renewed hope sprang in my chest. My heart beat faster and faster. A second before I could reach out and touch the open door, it swung shut with an audible thunk. I pounded on the door, losing precious time.

Their heavy breaths got closer and I took off again. I hit the end of the alley. That's exactly what it was. The end. There was no outlet. There was no hidden savior. There was nothing and no one. Only me and them. Fuck. I swung around to face my attackers head-on. I wasn't a coward. No way would I let them take me out from behind. The two figures came out from the shadows. The moonlight hit their features. Roberto had a sneer on his face. He was always snarling at everything. He was never happy. I always wondered how he got into this life. Not now. My eyes darted left and right, looking for a way out. I knew it was futile. I hoped a good Samaritan would come along and help. Hell, I'd even beg that homeless man, but he got the hell out of dodge as soon as he saw the suits. Suits in the middle of Vegas heat were never good.

"Nowhere left to go, traitor," Carlos crowed.

He was the happier of the two. He had been praying for my downfall. Someone like me falling at his feet. That's what he'd wanted since I was a child. Fucking pervert. I'd turned him down the other day, skirting around his advances and snapping at him. I told him I would tell the boss. His eyes showed fear and I could smell it in his musk. Where was that fear now? Nowhere to be found. He was, of course, elated.

"You can't do this," I panted. Maybe pleading would work. That was something I had never tried before. "Please, please. Just let me go. He doesn't have to know. Por favor. Let me go. I was wrong. I won't do it again," I begged. Tears were running down my face. My mascara dripped off my lashes.

I had my hands hung loosely by my sides. If I was going to die, I was going to die fighting.

"The boss told us we don't need to bring you back alive. He doesn't even want to see you. He wants you dead in the streets with no one to claim you."

Carlos was always the most talkative of the two. Roberto had his arms crossed, with an irritating smirk over his face. He watched me. Like he did every day. Watched and waited. There was no getting out of this.

"We can do whatever we want with you, princesa." Roberto grabbed his cajones.

The Sicilian Bastard

I guess I thought only Carlos wanted me the way the inner circle wanted me. I was wrong. They both did.

"What, you think I'm going to drop to the ground and beg? Fuck that. Fuck you. And fuck the boss." I laughed and spat at their shoes.

"I told you she had a mouth on her," Roberto reminded Carlos.

They approached me. Carlos from the front and Roberto went behind me. I tried to back up to the wall, but my body hit his hard body. He chuckled low in my ear. I threw my head back and connected with his nose. Short fucker. He howled and rammed his elbow into the side of my head. I could get away. I kicked Carlos in the cajones and darted around them.

"Araceli," he roared.

I did the stupidest thing ever and looked back as the pop happened. I had a glimpse of Roberto's gun out in front of him. Then fire lit my head as I dropped like a sack of potatoes.

"Bleed out, puta." Carlos spat on me.

Roberto stomped down on my ribcage.

"Traitor," he called me.

I looked up at the sky, knowing that this was the end of the road for me. I looked up at the moon waning in the sky. I would be with her soon. I should've run farther, but that hadn't helped her and it hadn't helped me. All I had were regrets now. My eyelids fluttered closed as I released my last breath in the dank alleyway. Alone.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

I reached over to hit my alarm clock off and felt a pain in my arm. I opened my crust-filled eyes to the brightest room I had ever seen. Where the fuck was I? The walls were the brightest white I had ever seen. They hurt my eyes to look at. There were machines and cords hooked up to me, my arms littered with bruises that I couldn't place. What happened to me.

A woman in her early thirties came into the room. "Oh, you're awake," she chirped.

My head was killing me and she was too cheery for me. I noted her uniform. She was a nurse.

"How are you feeling?" she went on.

"Like shit," I croaked.

Her eyes crinkled as she held back a laugh. She held out a small cup of water to me. I slurped it up as she told me to slow down.

"I'm going to grab the doctor. Hang tight."

She rushed out of the room before I could snark at her. I mean where was she expecting me to go? My body hurt. It felt weak. I knew I was in a hospital, but I wasn't sure where.

"There she is." A stout doctor came in followed by the chirpy nurse.

He checked my vitals and had a murmured conversation with the bright nurse.

"How are you feeling?" He checked my pulse.

I made some noncommittal noise in the back of my throat. I was too confused to figure out anything.

"All right, well, you really scared us. You came in with a GSW to the temple and wouldn't wake up. It's been about a month since they found you. I'm sure you're confused. I'll answer any questions you have to the best of my ability." He looked at me, waiting for a response.

"Yeah, I have two," I rasped. My throat was clogging up again. I could feel myself getting sleepy as well.

"Shoot." He perched on the edge of the bed.

"Where am I, and who am I?"