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The Moretti's - A Different Family Dynamic

Chapter 164

Sunday – Lunch - 16 March 2003

The meeting was scheduled for noon, but Apollonia needed to change from her casual clothing to her meeting clothing. She had Nathan arrive forty-five minutes early so she could go into the women's restroom, change, redo her makeup, and then leave rather than taking a seat at her table. As she explained to the owner, she wanted to arrive after the gentlemen she was going to meet were seated. Knowing the Moretti family for as long and as well as he did, it did not faze him in the least. He smiled and knew when she returned he needed to act like she had just arrived. Apollonia read in his eyes and on his face that he knew how to handle her arrival.

Nathan pulled away from the parking lot of the restaurant and made his way about five miles from the meeting venue. He found another parking lot at a small shopping center, pulled in, and parked so that he had full view of the surrounding area. When he was comfortable, he lowered the center glass divider, and asked, "Miss Moretti, what would you like us to do while you are in the meeting?"

Before she answered, she held up her index finger signaling for him to wait, she tuned to her sister, and said, "Can I trust you not to raise a ruckus if I bring you to the meeting?"

"I promise," said Raffaella, "I will be seen and not heard."

"I was thinking about letting you sit at the bar and have a drink of seltzer water and lemon. You will not be at the table. Nathan will be next to you situated so he can watch and react if he needs to. You won't have to change until after the meeting before we head to the hospital. Assure me Raffy or I will knock you out and put you in the trunk."

"I know you don't have complete trust in me," said Raffaella, "but, I assure you that I will not act up. I will sit quietly and chat with Nathan. For the rest of the patrons, we'll be two colleagues out for a working lunch."

"On a Sunday?" queried Apollonia.

"People work on Sundays and you know that," countered Raffaella.

"Ok" said Apollonia. "This is another chance to change the ledger."

"I know and I thank you."

Detective William Anderson and Detective Marion Trousdale arrived at the restaurant ten minutes before the scheduled meeting. Each man wore a suit, white shirt, tie, and had their weapons in state approved thumb break holsters on their right hip. They thought they were going to be the last to arrive and were surprised to find they were the first. Both detectives were a bit taken back that the restaurant was empty of diners. Both men knew that the people coming to meet them were by definition careful and ultra-paranoid. Even the retired NYC detective. They knew it when he wouldn't allow them to gain entrance to his small ratty NYC apartment without first going through the identification drill.

Before they could ask, their raincoats were taken, they were shown to a table in the rear of the restaurant, and asked if they would like a cocktail. Both men deferred on the cocktail, but asked if they could at least get a couple of glasses of water. They were sat facing away from the front door. Both detectives tried to sit facing the front door only to be rebuffed by the elderly proprietor. After being seated, each of them took turns looking to the front of the restaurant for their meeting partners and more specifically out of paranoia of having at their back to the front door. Like two syncopated clocks each man raised their left hand forcing their wrist to be bared, looked at their watch, growled under their breath, and like identical twins said to each other under their breath, *'Where the fuck are they?'*

Five minutes before noon, Howard Cohen, Esquire entered the restaurant. He was dressed casually in a pair of gray gabardine slacks, blue oxford shirt, and a dark blue heavy cotton jacket. He was greeted by the owner and shown to the table where the detectives sat.

Both detectives started to stand, when Howard said, "Please gentlemen, remain seated. Permit me to introduce myself. I am Howard Cohen. I am Miss Moretti's attorney." He shook both men's hands and sat at the end of the table nearest Detective Anderson.

After the three men shook hands, they did not engage even in innocuous conversation about sports or politics. The waiter brought the new arrival a glass of water with lemon. As the silence grew, Howard looked towards the front door and smiled. He saw Nathan and Raffaella enter the restaurant and be seated at the bar. He knew Apollonia would not be far behind.

Apollonia Moretti entered the restaurant, handed her coat to the proprietor, and made some small talk with the elderly man who knew her since she was a preteen coming to his restaurant with her parents. She then made her way to the rear of the restaurant where she stood opposite her attorney at the end of the table nearest Detective Trousdale. She smiled at the men, offered her hand, and said, "Please do not stand. Nice to meet you both. I am Apollonia Moretti."

Detective Anderson, astounded at her beauty and physically self-assured posture, said, "Sitting to my right is my partner Detective Marion Trousdale. I am Detective William Anderson. Nice to meet you Miss Moretti."

"Nice to meet you both. Let's refrain from formalities," said Apollonia. "Please address me by my first name and my attorney by his." She did this to hopefully set a tone of informality and co-operation between them. She took the chair that was centered at the table facing the detectives with her back to the wall.

"Where is Jon Parks?" asked Marion Trousdale. He too was impressed with the young woman who sat opposite him. Inside his body fluttered with sexual expectations that he knew would never come to fruition, but he wanted more than anything to know her intimately.

"He is in Williamsport, PA," replied Apollonia. "He went there to assure me that the personnel at the lab were working as they promised."

"Have you heard from him?" asked Trousdale continuing his interrogation to cover his rising self-induced sexual stimulation.

"As a matter of fact," said Apollonia, "I hung up with him just as I arrived at the front door of the restaurant. What I need from you gentlemen is the reason or reasons for this meeting. I want it to be open and informal. I would like to be helpful beyond reproach for all concerned."

Every so often Detective Anderson would turn and look to the front door, scan the restaurant, and return his gaze to Apollonia. Both Howard and she were cognizant of his fear of something horrible happening. It was plainly apparent that he was worried about Nathan. Apollonia waved the waiter over, whispered something into his ear, and waited for him to deliver the message. Two minutes later Nathan rose from his bar stool and made his way to the rear of the restaurant. He stood at where Apollonia had stood just minutes before towering over the table.

"Detective Anderson and Detective Trousdale permit me to introduce Mr. Nathan Childress, USMC Retired. He is in my employ as my driver and personal bodyguard. He is carrying a concealed weapon. He is licensed. Do you have any questions for him?" asked Apollonia.

Satisfied that the giant man was not a potential problem Detective Anderson said, "No. But if I may, who is the woman with him?"

Apollonia smiled, "She is my sister. Quite married and quite a good lay, but that is not what we're here to discuss today." She turned to her trusted driver and bodyguard and said, "Thank you Nathan."

"You're quite welcome Miss Moretti," said Nathan before he turned and returned to his seltzer water and lemon.

"Are you gentlemen finally comfortable?" asked Apollonia. "Or, do I need to ask you to remove all of your clothing so I can check for a wire?"

The two detectives nodded and Trousdale said, "We don't need to strip. We're not wired. What we are here to accomplish is the beginning of a symbiotic relationship that will help the state and the Moretti family."

"You've done your homework, I see," said Apollonia.

"Excuse the interruption," said Howard, "but, as Miss Moretti's legal counsel, I must confirm that one, this conversation and all future conversations, if there be any, are off the record, and two, that the Moretti family is not in any way, shape, or form being investigated by the state."

"I can assure you Howard that the Moretti family is not being investigated by the state," said Detective Trousdale."

Howard nodded and said, "Why don't we order something to eat as I am starved."

Apollonia nodded to the owner who personally came over to take their order. She looked around the table and said, "Gentlemen, if would allow me, I would like to order for the table."

The men nodded their assent and in perfect Italian she ordered for the table. Pasta, seafood, veal, salad, and two bottles of wine. One red. One white.

"I understand that you are working out of the State Police Headquarters in Albany," said Apollonia. "What I find curious is the how, what, when, where, and whys of the investigation. After Mr. Moretti's arrest, when Jon uncovered what he did, I started to wonder about the district attorney. Admittedly, I asked Jon to being our own in-depth investigation of Mrs. Margolis. May I ask, what brought her to the state's attention?"

"Right to the crux," said Detective Anderson. "No mincing of words. No beating around the bush. I like that, but, I have to be assured that we are not getting ourselves into something up to our eyeballs that we will not be able to extricate ourselves from. Do you see where I'm headed Miss Moretti?"

"Absolutely," replied Apollonia. "I know you expected to see Jon here."

She paused because a cadre of waiters brought over the food and the wine. They placed it on the table and just as quickly moved away from the diners.

"Excuse me," said Detective Trousdale, "but there are no other patrons. I know of this restaurant. I have never eaten here, but I expected it to be filled with families on a Sunday during the lunch hour."

"I know the owner," said Apollonia. "I told him that this was going to be a very private meeting. It was his decision to cancel and move all reservations between noon and two to a later time. If we're finish early, then what I will give him will pay for more than he lost by cancelling two hours of reservations. If we go longer, then we'll just have to keep our voices down."

"I've heard you have the ability to make things happen," said Detective Trousdale, "but to keep a very popular restaurant empty for two hours is amazing."

Apollonia and Howard laughed. "She is known to have made time stand still," said Howard as he began to take food from the covered dishes.

"Back to reality," said Apollonia. "Now, where were we? Jon not being present." She stopped took some salad, poured a glass of red wine, and continued, "Jon is at the DNA lab that the Moretti family purchased as an expansion of our portfolio of businesses. In today's day and age, diversification of assets is paramount to maintaining and expanding one's monetary investments. What I would like to know from you gentleman is this; an answer to who, what, when, and where, and why the State Police started the investigation. Then we can compare notes."

Detective Anderson took the lead answering Apollonia, "For the past five years, the state's Attorney General's office have been receiving requests from defense attorneys for retesting of DNA. Some have also requested under the Freedom of Information Act access to confidential files within the Nassau County District Attorney's Office. The number of these requests are increasing fourfold every month. From murderers to rapists to simple misdemeanors, the men and women convicted are claiming they were railroaded. In addition, you'll note that I only segregated out the Nassau County District Attorney's office. That is because the other District Attorneys' offices had not had a tenfold increase in requests."

"What about the arresting officers?" asked Howard.

"Some of them have questioned the evidence based upon what was found at the crime scene," replied Detective Anderson. "When they began to raise a quiet ruckus, the governor decided to act. So, here we sit. Was the arrest of your father and indictment for second degree murder your beginning point?"

Apollonia pursed her lips and thought for a moment. She looked around the empty restaurant thinking about a strategic answer to the question that would not give away too much information. Information that could enable the Nassau County District Attorney to either arrest her or convict her hated father. She picked up her wine glass, drained it, and said, "Mario Moretti was arrested and charged with felony murder on totally circumstantial evidence. The woman he has been charged with murdering worked for the Moretti family for several decades. My father and this household employee were on again and off again lovers. The Moretti family did their due diligence after he was arrested and charged. It was Jon Parks who uncovered for us DA Margolis' potential problems and issues."

"We're not stupid Miss Moretti," said Detective Trousdale. "Your family works the legal and illegal sides of everything. What we want you have. We are willing to share our information and give Jon unfettered access to the data. We're not going to ask questions on how certain items got or will get released from the Nassau County police evidentiary custody. All we want are the results. If they're as we believe, then DA Margolis and her husband are going to be serving the rest of their lives in a maximum security prison."

"The lab is testing two of the three," said Apollonia. "One kit was so degraded it was useless for retesting purposes. Of the two remaining, best guess by the lead technician using state-of-the-art DNA machines is one has a fifty-fifty chance and the other is closer to ninety-seven percent chance. But. . ."

"But what???" interjected Detective Anderson.

"The new DNA machines will not arrive and be installed at the lab for a few weeks," said Apollonia. "That means the owner and his lab geeks will have to use every trick in the book to get results that are credible until the new machines are installed, tested, and put into production. What I want is definitive and credible proof that may be used by you to take down that bitch."

"Who else knows where Jon is?" asked Detective Anderson.

"Just Howard, Nathan, and me," replied Apollonia.

"And the airlines," said Detective Trousdale.

Smiling Apollonia said as she poured a second glass of red wine, "Excuse me, the private charter airline that the Moretti family holds a majority interest in knows. Believe me when I tell you, they are not an issue."

Detective Anderson turned his head to eyeball his partner to see if he believed what was just offered up by Miss Moretti. Both men had their doubts and Detective Anderson verbalized them, "We saw him yesterday morning. We know he did not leave yesterday evening. He was with the young lady we met Saturday morning when we knocked on his apartment door. Sorry, Apollonia, I'm not buying that he is in Williamsport."

Apollonia reached into her handbag, pulled out her cell phone, and put it on the table. She pressed the necessary icons and made a speaker enabled call to Jon Parks.

"This is Jon."

"Jon. Apollonia. I have you on speaker. With me are Howard, Detective Anderson, and Detective Trousdale."

"Um, ok."

"Please tell the detectives where you are and how you got there."

"Of course," said Jon. "I am in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. I flew from the city to Republic Airport via private helicopter this morning. Then I boarded a private jet that took me to Williamsport."

Apollonia looked at the detectives, spread her hands, and asked, "Questions?"

Both men shook their head in the negative.

"Thanks Jon," said Apollonia. "Since I have you on the phone, do you have any updated information for me?"

"Yes," said Jon. "The kit that had a fifty-fifty chance is now down to eighty-twenty against. JoAnne thinks the evidence was tampered with so that if retesting was requested by the courts, it would not be possible."

His interest peaked, Detective Trousdale asked, "Jon, Trousdale here, is the age of the kit an aggravating factor?"

"No. The evidence had been tampered with to make it close to useless for retesting," answered Jon. "What we're hoping for is the new technology will strip away the tampering to reveal the original DNA."

"Extrapolating from what you just said, would it be better to have recent DNA evidence to test rather than old evidence?" asked Detective Trousdale.

"Fresh is always better," said Jon. "Doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that one out. But, we need old cases to prove that this has been going on for quite a while. Recently adjudicated cases would help, but we all know to make the case, we need old cases to prove it has been happening for a long period of time."

Apollonia said, "Thanks Jon."

"You're quite welcome Miss Moretti. I should be out of here by late afternoon. I'll check in when I return," said Jon.

Before he could say adieu, Apollonia ended the call. She looked at both detectives and said, "Have I proved that I am not hiding anything? I want this cunt to go down. Her husband isn't any better."

"Miss Moretti," said Detective Anderson, "I have never had the opportunity to work with a person like yourself or your family. I am satisfied that we are on the same page. Please excuse our doubts, but they're not doubts anymore. I wish I could prove it to you somehow, but we'll leave that for another time."

"Detectives," said Apollonia, "I've been quiet when it comes to seeing the look in your eyes. I respect your work even though if we were meeting under different circumstances, you'd have no problem arresting me or shooting me. Truth being told, neither of you have a snowball's chance in hell of getting between my legs. You need to quiet your sexual fantasies about me." She paused, stared at their faces for a reaction, and then matter-of-factly continued, "If you know about the Moretti family, then, to assuage your sexual needs: if both of you or one of you think you have what it takes to bed me, then, whip it out. I'll measure and if you qualify, we'll make a date. If you do not want to embarrass yourselves, then, to be blunt, you can fantasize as you jerk off tonight. Have I made my point?"

"Jesus," said Detective Anderson. "You ever let things just be without being so fuckin' forthright?"

"No," said Apollonia. "I have learned in my twenty-six years that if you let it fester rather than face the truth of the situation, you make it worse of all parties concerned. We're not here to explore whether or not you can get between my legs. I have no interest in either of you sexually. Both of you tried and failed at keeping your desires hidden. Now that it is out in the open, I will allow you to be ashamed and apologize. Or, if you're so sexually stimulated by me, I'll let either or both of you masturbate while sit and stare at me. If not, have we agreed to keep your

desires out of the realm of reality? What I want is a solid working relationship with you to reach our mutual goal. Build upon that foundation and when you need something, ask, and if I have the ability, I will provide it to you."

"At what cost?" asked Detective Trousdale.

"You're not going to believe my answer," replied Apollonia. "Free. The only thing I want going forward is our mutual respect for each other and what, I know, we will accomplish."

The detectives eyed her, each other, and Trousdale responded, "Done. What are you going to do about the new machinery and the DNA kits?"

"I will call the manufacturer this evening," replied Apollonia. "I have his private cell phone number. When I hang up, the machines will be expedited to Williamsport. As far as the DNA kits go, don't get your hands dirty. I will take care of that too. What I will ask is, if there are any cases that would expedite her downfall, then give case numbers to me. I have enough clout to have specific ones pulled. Don't ask how I have the clout, just know I do."

"Done and done," said Detective Anderson.

Apollonia looked at her watch and said, "We have some time, so why don't we agree that the meeting is ended and enjoy our meal?"

The two detectives relaxed. Howard Cohen slipped his hand into his pocket and pushed the button to turn off the digital recorder he had concealed in his jacket pocket. To all concerned parties, the meeting was a rousing success. Nassau County District Attorney Marjorie Margolis was beginning to circle the drain. Her life as she knew it was soon to be over.

The meeting and lunch ended ten minutes after the first patrons were seated. The detectives departed first. Then Howard. Apollonia remained seated as she watched Nathan and her sister walk to the table. Fifteen minutes later after Raffaella had changed her clothing, Nathan and Raffaella departed the restaurant. Apollonia followed stopping momentarily to give the owner an envelope. His eyes widened when he felt the thickness. He nodded appreciatively. Five minutes after Miss Moretti departed his restaurant, he went to his office, opened the envelope, and fell back into his chair. Inside he found five packets of one-hundred dollar bills. Each pack contained ten thousand dollars. He never expected fifty thousand dollars. He would wait a few day before he made a call to personally thank Miss Moretti for her generosity.

Nathan drove at a leisurely pace from Westbury to Great Neck. Apollonia did not mind as they were going to arrive early. She knew that she agreed to after three p.m. but if she was a few minutes early, she was sure the staff would not keep her from seeing her brother-in-law. Arrival at the facility put them there approximately seven minutes early. Nathan pulled to the front, opened the door for his employer, and allowed the doorman to point him to a parking spot not far from the front doors.

"Miss Moretti," said Nathan, "should I wait in the car?"

"Not physically in the car, Nathan," replied Apollonia. "Park the vehicle and enter the building. Make yourself comfortable in the lobby."

"Thank you Miss Moretti," said Nathan as he returned to the vehicle.

Apollonia proceeded her sister into the private hospital facility. This time instead of walking past the main reception desk, Apollonia stopped, and spoke with the nurse on duty. The duty nurse called down to check if Mr. Rossi could accept guests. With a smile on her face, the woman let Apollonia know it was ok to head to Mr. Rossi's room.

Dr. Carter was nowhere to be seen. Apollonia wondered what happened to him considering he expressed a desire to see her again. When she and her sister arrived at Viviano's room, the duty nurse stopped them just outside the intensive care room.

"Miss Moretti," said the nurse, "I have a message from Dr. Carter. He wanted me to express that he intended to be here this afternoon, but he had to attend to an emergency in the city. I am here to help in any way I can. I know he wanted to be here to talk to you about Mr. Rossi."

Raffaella could not contain herself, "How is he?"

The duty nurse looked at Raffaella, then to Apollonia seeking guidance concerning her response. The HIPPA laws prevented her from giving information about a patient to individuals not listed on the form by the patient.

"It is ok," said Apollonia. "This is my sister, Raffaella. She is married to Mr. Rossi. You may answer candidly."

"Mr. Rossi is doing very well," said the nurse. "In fact, we're surprised at how well he is doing. We had him up and walking at eight AM and he wouldn't stop until we forced him to sit at noon so he could eat a small meal. Mr. Rossi has gained an amazing amount of strength considering what he has been through. He is a very determined man."

"Do we need to wear sterile gowns and booties into his room?" asked Apollonia.

"No. The only thing we ask is that you do not kiss him or exchange bodily fluids with him," said the nurse. "We have the curtains closed and if you wish you may open them. He requested that they be kept closed. You may enter his room whenever you wish. And, the one rule I will allow you to break is the three hour time limit set by Dr. Carter."

"Thank you," said Apollonia.

Without a word to her sister, Apollonia stepped to the pneumatic door so the sensor would read her presence, watched as the door slid open, and with bright eyes and a smile on her face entered her brother-in-law's room. The first thing she noticed was the absence of negative airflow. The room was dim, but not totally dark. She saw Viviano lying on the bed with the head end raised. She approached him, took his right hand in hers, and said, "Good to see you. I heard you were up and about this morning."

Viviano did not look at her. He kept his eyes on the wall across from him and simply said, "Raffaella."

Her look of shock did not make it to Viviano's eyes. Apollonia said, "She is here." Apollonia turned, saw her sister still outside the door, and waved her in. Raffaella went to the bed and stood next to her sister. Apollonia dropped his hand, nodded, and said, "Say hello to him."

Holding back a wave of emotion and tears, Raffaella whispered, "Hi Viv. I'm so glad to see you. I prayed all day and night. I'm so happy to see you alive and kicking."

Viviano Rossi turned not to his wife, but his sister-in-law and said, "Please leave us alone. Do not go stand in the corner, Apollonia. I want to hear the door open and close. I want to see you standing on the other side of the door."

Apollonia wanted to push her sister away from the bed and throttle Viviano Rossi. He had no reason to ask her or to make her leave the room. The fact that he was alive was due to her quick decision to transport him to the

Great Neck facility. Rather than open a can of worms, Apollonia stepped away from the bed, turned, and departed the room. Once she was on the other side of the pneumatic door, she turned, placed herself far enough away to not trigger the sensor, and stared into the hospital room.

"Raffaella," said Viviano. "I have a question. I want a yes or no answer. I will be looking into your eyes when I ask. I see hesitation and I know you will be telling me a lie. You lie and we're through."

"What do you want to ask me?" said Raffaella.

"Is Antonio dead?"

The shock of his question caused Raffaella to sway where she stood. Her heart figuratively stopped when she heard the question. Time slowed down as she stared into her husband's eyes. Her tongue circumnavigated her lips. Her hands began to shake and her knees grew weak. Inside she knew she could not just answer yes or no. "What makes you think he is dead?"

Her question riled her husband. He put his hand onto his abdomen to hold and protect his wound as he growled, "DO NOT FUCK WITH ME RAFFAELLA. YES OR NO. IS ANTONIO DEAD?"

"Yes," whispered Raffaella. "How?"

Tears welled up and ran down Viviano's face. He turned his head to face the wall and said, "I was at death's door. I saw the light at the end of the tunnel. I was stopped not by my brother Sonny, but by my son. Antonio's apparition stood and blocked my way. I heard him say it wasn't my time. He was only ten years old. I could see the ear-to-ear wound on his neck." Viviano turned his head to face his wife and said, "Tell me everything or you can get the fuck out of this room. If your decision is to leave I want you to know that I am going to divorce you and take Carmen with me."

"Viv," said Raffaella. "I am at a total loss. You were near death. That I understand. You were on heavy doses of extremely strong antibiotics and pain killers. I know you don't believe in ESP or any of that premonition bullshit. What makes you think that your son is dead?"

Viviano moved to position his body so he could use his stronger right hand to grab his wife around her neck. Raffaella was taken and surprised by his move. His hand did not have the perfect position around her throat, but it was placed close enough to cause her pain. He looked for a split second toward Apollonia and saw that she saw what was happening but did not move to enter the room. Viviano glared at his wife and said, "Do not fuckin' question me, Raffaella Moretti. I felt it like it was happening to me just like my hand is around your neck right now. It was more than a gut feeling. I knew and in my drug induced coma, I saw and felt what I did. Also, like an identical twin, I felt something inside and I knew it was Antonio. I'm going to ask again, is Antonio dead?"

"Release me and I will tell you!!!" cried Raffaella

Viviano did as she asked.

"It was all my fault," said Raffaella. "I got mad at my sister for harping on his possibly being a sissy. Well, Antonio was being badgered, bullied, and raped by three older boys from the public school across the street. He never said anything to me and I know he did not say anything to you." Raffaella paused, took a breath, and knew she would have to continue the lie. She grabbed her husband's hand as she began to speak her lie, "In the midst of all the bullshit going on in and around our family, I lost it. I yelled at Antonio and told him he was a bastard. That I was not his biological mother. I screamed that he seemed like a little gay boy and probably liked having to suck the cocks of the boys from the public school. I'm so, so sorry."

"How did he die?"

Raffaella squeezed Viviano's hand and said, "He committed suicide. He slit his own throat in front of the family. He was determined to take his life. I know in my heart he did it to end his being bullied and raped."

"Where is he buried?"

"Viv, please," cried Raffaella, "please rest. You need your strength to recover. I, we need you healthy and strong. Carmen needs you."

The second time he asked scared Raffaella, "Where the fuck is my son buried?"

"Uncle Gino cremated his body. I'm sorry Viv, but there is nothing left," said Raffaella beginning to cry as the words passed through her lips.

Viviano sneered when he asked, "What part did that insane cunt Apollonia play?"

'Decision time,' thought Raffaella. "My sister had nothing to do with anything except to pummel Antonio with questions about his sexual orientation. You know how she can get. I am the sole reason he took his life. I opened my mouth and I am suffering for it. All I want is for you heal, get your strength back, and come home. I want to take care of you during your recovery."

"What is going on here?" asked Viviano. "Why are you so. . ."

Raffaella leaned down, placed her mouth next to Viviano's ear, and whispered, "I was not born with defective ovaries. I was not born with a defective womb. I pushed what happened to me into my unconscious. Last night Apollonia read to me a page from my mother's journals. I became barren because of my father. He took my virginity and in doing so, ruined my ability to have children. Please, talk to Apollonia."

"Why should I?"

"Why? She is going to make you an offer. An offer I have accepted. Accepted because I am indentured to her now. She owns me, Viv. I have learned what happened to me because Lucia was and Mario still is a degenerate pedophile. I am responsible for everything that has happened in the short period of time you have been fighting for your life." Raffaella had to wipe her eyes so she could maintain a clear vision of her husband. "If you want to divorce me, then divorce me. I will sign the papers. You can have custody of Carmen. She also knows I am not her biological mother. Leave and you give up an opportunity of a lifetime."

"A chance to fuck your sister every night for the rest of my life?" said Viviano.

Where his black sense of humor came from, Raffaella did not know.

"She doesn't want you Viv," said Raffaella. "She made that quite clear to me. What she wants is for you to find a Moretti woman, marry her, and have a family with her. You will continue to reside on Columbus Place. I will be with you, but not as your wife. I will serve you and your new wife. If you want, I will go so far as to be your female cuckold. We can stay married, but you will have her as your lover and the mother of your children."

Viviano screamed, "APOLLONIA!!!"

The glass pneumatic door slid open. Apollonia stepped through and went to Viviano's bedside. She did not push her sister away from the hospital bed. "You called," said Apollonia.

Viviano moved so he could be sitting more upright. His eyes scanned his sister-in-law's body before he spoke, "Is it true that my son is dead?"

Apollonia frowned, looked at her sister, and replied, "How in the fuck did you know that Antonio was dead? Did my sister tell you?"

"No," said Viviano as he shook his head. "I had a dream. I've already told Raffy. I'll say it again. I was at death's door. My brother Sonny did not appear to guide me or hinder me. It was an apparition. Antonio's apparition told me to return; that is wasn't my time. That is how I know."

"I'm stunned," said Apollonia. "I don't believe that you saw an apparition in your dream. I do not accept that you have suddenly developed ESP or some form of precognition. I'll take what you say at face value because I know you as long as I do. What concerns me is your recovery. I need you to take full control of Moretti Construction. And, more importantly you have a job to oversee in Williamsport. Not that you're headed there tomorrow, but I need your expertise."

"I have other questions," said Viviano. "What is going on with Raffaella? Why did she tell me that I have your permission to find a young Moretti woman? To what end?"

Apollonia could see her sister's fear and at the same time, her calm demeanor. "From my sister's demeanor, I see that she has told you of my decision. She is wholly responsible for your son's suicide. Raffaella let it be known that he was a bastard. He rubbed it in his face."

"Like you rubbed his sissiness in his face," countered Viviano. "I had no idea he was being forced to provide unwanted sexual pleasure to those public school boys. If I had known, they. . ."

"But you didn't know," interrupted Apollonia. "Neither did I nor did Raffaella. It took Carmen to tell us what was happening to her brother. Those boys will be dealt with. Again, what is important is your recovery."

"What if I don't want to take another female into my bed?" asked Viviano. "What if I'm happy with your sister? What harm is there in that?"

"The harm is," answered Apollonia, "that I own her. She will no longer be your wife in holy or legally sanctioned matrimony. The state and the church will end the marriage. Raffaella Moretti's life is in my hands. She has penance to pay for her sins."

"What sins? The sins of her parents?" asked Viviano.

"Our parents were pedophiles," stated Apollonia. "My mother allowed my father to ruin his oldest daughter. Her life has been shaped by her physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Her sin was not fighting them off. Her sin was accepting that her life would benefit from sexual activities with pedophile priests."

"This is all coming out now? How were you not abused by your parents?" asked Viviano. "God damn it, I knelt and sucked Mario's cock in front of my family and your parents. The whole time from the first moment I walked into your parent's house, they knew it was impossible for Raffy to have children. When she couldn't get pregnant, they told me she was born that way. What else am I going to learn?"

"My father came to me, Viv," said Apollonia. "I had the fortitude to fight him off. My mother tried to make me see that it was in my best interest to allow him to have sexual relations with me. I basically told her to go fuck herself, but not in those words. When you are healthy enough, I will allow you access to certain volumes of my mother's journals. Otherwise, from this moment forward, Raffaella Moretti is no longer your wife. Carmen is your biological daughter. You have an opportunity to find another love of your life, copulate with her, and bring forth children that are part of a loving relationship."

Raffaella took three steps backwards, rocked on her heels, and with an effort made her way to the only chair in the hospital room. She stared at her sister as her body's level of stress rose to the point of nearly causing a heart attack. *'Strength,'* thought Raffaella. *'Strength and you will survive. You knew it was coming so just take a deep breath and deal with the insanity of being a Moretti.'*

"What if I don't accept Raffaella's departure?" asked Viviano.

"I have told my sister that I would not take it out on you," replied Apollonia. "You may leave Columbus Place and your position in the Moretti family. I will give you a sort of severance, but it will pale in comparison to your present financial status. You can with my permission remain in the family without taking a new wife. You will be allowed to have lovers. Any children born of the sexual encounters will be given up for adoption. Your life will revolve around Moretti Construction and other such duties as determined by me."

"Mario?" asked Viviano.

"Mario is no longer to be acknowledged by you as a human being. I am calling a meeting of the family this coming Thursday. There he will suffer the humiliation of his pedophilia and his life. If your decision is to keep your status within the family, then you will witness his total humiliation and downfall. His life as he knows it ended this morning, but the family will solidify his fall from power."

Viviano turned his head to see his wife sitting in the only chair in the room. He wanted to get up and go to her. His mind raced, but his heart was beating for his wife. To feel her body pressed to his was all he wanted. His eyes sought and found Apollonia's. He saw just her cold hard Moretti stare. Viviano shivered. He rubbed his hands on the blanket that covered his body. A life filled with pleasure and financial security was at a crossroads. He closed his eyes and said, "I don't want anything to happen to Raffaella. I love her and will always love her. I want you to wait until I am home. Then we can revisit what you have just told me. Will you do that Apollonia?"

"Yes," was all she said as she turned from the hospital bed and departed the room.

Raffaella rose from the chair and walked somewhat unsteadily to the bed. She put her arms around her husband's shoulders, put her face next to his, and whispered, "She will never release me, Viv. I want you to enjoy your life. I have done things that will never be reconciled to the positive side of my life's ledger by my sister. I love you so much Viv, but, you have to accept that I am not yours anymore. I want to live. To do that, I have to serve my insane sister. I know in my heart-of-hearts that I will do whatever I can to keep you safe. My body belongs to you. My mind belongs to you. My heart belongs to you. Just get well and live a long fruitful life."

Before Viviano could answer, the pneumatic door slid open, Apollonia leaned her head through, and said, "Raffaella, we have to go. Viviano, I will talk to the doctor tomorrow. You do what you need to be released as soon as possible."

Viviano nodded.

Raffaella kissed him on the forehead and whispered, "I just wish I could have wrapped my lips around your cock and tasted you again," before she turned and headed towards her sister. She wanted to confront her about the length of their stay. It was less than an hour when they were told they could stay three. Raffaella knew if she said anything to her sister the rest of the day would be like water circling the drain of a toilet bowl. Flushed away to the depths of her insane sister's reaction to her just asking to stay longer with the man she loved.

Once the two sisters were away from the room, Apollonia placed her arm around her sister's waist and said, "Do you believe him about his dream?"

"Appy, he brought it up to me first," replied Raffaella. "I had thought long and hard about how I was going to break the news to him. I swear on my life that I did not say a word to him about Antonio. In fact, I took the blame. Do you believe him?"

Apollonia looked at her sister as they walked down the hall and said, "I don't know what to believe about his precognition or Extra Sensory Perception bullshit. What were you saying to him when I called you out of the room?"

"I told him to listen to you," lied Raffaella. "I told him that I loved him, but I could not be with him. I told him that every part of my physical, emotional, and psychological being belongs to him. I told him that I will do everything in my power to protect him. But, I know I will never have him. I accept what you've done. I will live what remains of my life serving you; my mistress."

Just before they reached the corner to turn into the atrium, Apollonia stopped, faced her sister, and asked, "What would you do to assure Viviano lives a long life?"

"I'd give up mine," said Raffaella.

Apollonia put her hand on her sister's cheek, made eye contact with her, and said, "Not by your own hand, Raffaella Moretti."

"I know mistress," said Raffaella. "I would succumb and give you your wish to take my life. I would allow you to sexually abuse me. I want to look into your beautiful turquoise eyes as you watch the light of my life drain from mine. Hopefully, I would explode with a last great orgasm before I died for you mistress. I would only ask that you make it as painless as possible. And, that you insulate Carmen from the truth and promise to take care of her."

"What happens to Carmen," said Apollonia, "depends upon Carmen. I have my doubts just like I doubted Antonio. But, we'll just leave well enough alone for now."

Raffaella wondered about what Apollonia felt about Carmen, but knew better than to ask questions that she was not prepared or want to answer. "Where are we headed?" asked Raffaella.

"Home," said Apollonia. "I'm going to call Alessandro. I'm going to invite him over for dinner. Maybe he can stay the night. I believe Ming would love to feel a large cock inside her. I know I would."

Apollonia resumed their walk to the atrium where Nathan sat quietly rummaging through magazines that would catch and hold his interest. He'd been through the pile numerous times, but always ended up sitting back and thinking about Golda Wallach. With his eyes closed and his brain centered on the petite woman he was trying his best not to fall in love with, Nathan did not hear Apollonia come up to him.

So she would not surprise him, Apollonia quietly said, "Nathan. Time to go."

Shifting his seven foot two inch frame, Nathan opened his eyes, and said, "Sorry Miss Moretti. Guess I fell asleep. I didn't mean to. It won't happen again."

Apollonia smiled and said, "We're not anyplace that you would have to worry about something bad happening to me. If you needed to nap, then nap."

"Where are we headed?" he asked as he rose to his full height.

"Back to Columbus Place," said Apollonia. "I may ask you to pick Alessandro up and bring him to the compound. If he decides to take a train, then I'd ask you to wait and pick him up at the station. If he drives, then you'll be free to go."

Nathan started for the door, opened it, and held it for Apollonia and Raffaella. As they walked to the Lincoln Town Car, Nathan asked, "If I am released, would I be free until Monday morning? Or, would you prefer I remain on call?"

"If you're headed to see the young Jewish girl," said Apollonia, "oops, I mean married woman, then please leave your cell phone on, but I won't need you to return until Monday morning."

Nathan did not answer. He made his way to the car, opened the rear passenger door for his boss and her sister, and in less than a minute had the car headed back to the Village of Lawrence.

Ten minutes into the trip back to Columbus Place, Apollonia tapped on the window separating the driver's compartment from the passenger compartment. Nathan lowered the glass. "Nathan, Alessandro will be driving to Lawrence, so, you are free to go after you've dropped us off. As I said earlier, please keep your cell phone on. I'm sure I will not bother you, but you know the drill. Anything can happen anytime."

Nathan used the rearview mirror to look into the passenger compartment and responded, "I understand Miss Moretti and to add to the possibilities; shit happens."

Without adding anything to the conversation, Nathan returned his eyes to the road, and closed the glass divider. His cock jumped knowing that in a couple of hours it would be deep inside Golda Wallach.