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The Moretti's - A Different Family Dynamic

Chapter 134

Saturday - Apollonia - 8 March 2003

Apollonia Moretti turned left towards York Avenue without a plan as to where she was headed. Her brain was filled with Colin's recovery and Moretti business, but one item kept resurfacing to cause her immense emotional and physical pain. It took but a moment for her to press the emotion back into the recesses of her mind only to have it resurface again, and again, and again. The South side of 70th Street where she was walking was comprised of Weill Medical School and the Graduate School of Medical Sciences. She was totally oblivious to the white coated doctors, nurses, and medical students rushing between buildings without wearing any coats against the forty degree weather. Thankfully, it was not raining, but it took only a few minutes to realize that in her haste to leave for the hospital that morning she forgot to take a coat.

The chill in the air was enough to make her walk a bit faster, but still with no specific destination in mind. She crossed York Avenue. Her eyes sought out a Starbucks or a coffee shop but between York and 1st Avenue she found a sushi restaurant, a punk rock bar, and a private elementary school. She continued on 70th to 2nd Avenue and made her first directional decision since leaving the hospital. She made a right turn and headed uptown. Why? No particular reason. She actually crossed 2nd Avenue so she would be walking on the West side of the avenue as she headed north. Apollonia started to notice the people around her. Mothers with their children caused her to pause for a moment, feel the pain of unrealized motherhood, and force herself to push another of life's needs down into the abyss of her unconscious.

She crossed 71st Street trying to keep from falling to her knees and beseeching God to forgive her and to let her make decisions that would benefit both her and the Moretti family. Apollonia moved from the curb edge to the buildings as she walked which was in contravention to the established unwritten laws of walking in Manhattan. People moved away not out of fear but out of anger as she continued to walk against the pedestrian flow blinded by her emotions. When she reached the corner of 72nd Street she found a small but elegant eatery named Daisy's Café.

Daisy's wasn't a typical New York Café. It was small but open, airy, and inviting. Along the right wall was a counter, display cases, and behind them several Bunn coffee machines, an espresso machine, Panini presses, and a work area to prepare sandwiches. Each coffee machine was labeled with the day's brew. The cases contained bagels, muffins of all types, scones, French Croissants, and yogurt. On the wall was the simple menu of breakfast and lunch items that could be made from the breads in the case and the meats stored underneath the work counter. Along the opposite wall and across the front of the store were small round tables that could comfortably seat two, but had four

chairs around each. The place was not crowded, but there was a constant flow of people entering, making their purchase, and departing for either work or home.

Like everything else, Apollonia always migrated to the table furthermost from the door. It was then she noticed the small rack with the Daily News, the Post, and The New York Times. She realized that there was no waitress service, sighed, and went to the counter. She ordered a large black coffee a blueberry scone, and although she had a copy at home purchased The New York Times. She paid and made her way to the table that was situated in the rear of the establishment and in a corner. She moved the chair so she sat facing the front door. Apollonia had been taught as a young girl to never sit with her back to a door especially an entrance. One never knew when an enemy of the family could take you from behind so, a Moretti always sat with his or her back to the wall in public establishments that were not part of or known to the Moretti family and network.

Coming in from the chill and the hot black coffee was enough to warm Apollonia's body but not her soul. It did not stop the ever present push of her lover's notification that she may be leaving to live in China. Again she forced herself to think about or focus on something else to alleviate the pressure and pain of her lover's news. She finally let it surface and wondered what brought Ming to the decision to go to China. Apollonia thought, '*not decision by possibly*'. She was born in the United States and grew up more American than Chinese. The only thing that made sense to Apollonia was her parents dislike of her lesbian relationship and by extension their disdain for her. Whenever she met with or spent time with Ming's parents she was respectful and made it a point to keep any form of intimacy in check. There was only one incident when Ming's parents came upon them unannounced while they were at school together. That was the first and last time her parents saw their daughter arm-in-arm with Apollonia. She had to get to the crux of whatever was driving Ming away from her. What bothered Apollonia was the lack of knowledge concerning her parent's thoughts on the dissolution of their daughter's marriage. They had to know her husband was a scumbag, a loser, and good-for- nothing low life criminal. '*How could they let their daughter live under the same roof with that animal?*' she pondered. '*One of the reasons they were returning to China could be her parent's possible illegal activities and their expectation of being caught*', she thought. As she pondered and turned over all the possibilities, Apollonia knew the only solution was to meet the issue head on. Apollonia decided she would call Ming and force a meeting with her and her parents. Worst case scenario would be saying good-bye to her knowing she would never see her again. The decision did not help alleviate her pain it just made her sadder. Apollonia Moretti never felt the pang of losing a lover until now.

Finally a somewhat a bit relaxed Apollonia took a sip of her black coffee and watched a mother with her two children enter. She figured the woman to be in her early thirties and considering the age of the children, the woman looked quite appealing. When the oldest child looked towards the back of the small store, Apollonia smiled which resulted the in youngster moving closer to her mother. The woman looked down, saw the child's face, and then with a mother's intuition looked in Apollonia's direction. She had a quizzical look on her face which Apollonia disarmed by smiling and mouthing good morning to her. With a New York arrogance and style, the woman did not acknowledge Apollonia, paid for her purchases, and departed the store. It was then she noticed the article about the owner of ImClone Systems pleading guilty to avoiding sales tax on the purchase of some art. She read the article with interest and was not immediately relieved when it was apparent the art gallery was not named. Sam Waksal had commissioned several pieces through one of the art galleries that dealt with her work. She received her money, so the article was ultimately meaningless to her.

After paying for her third container of coffee, Apollonia looked at her cellular phone to check the time. She had been in Daisy's Café for an hour. During that time, the owner nodded once to acknowledge her and not one customer willingly made eye contact with her. That changed when he walked through the door. From the moment she saw him, Apollonia Moretti wanted to engage him in conversation. He was dressed in a pair of expensive grey tweed dress pants, a white button down collared shirt, a dark grey cashmere sweater, and wore an expensive pair of alligator shoes. He did not carry an attaché case, so she assumed he was just out for some late morning coffee. She estimated him to be six foot five inches tall, weigh about 180 to 195 pounds, had dark brown hair, sparkling blue eyes, clean shaven, and what appeared to be a toned body. She did what all sexual women do and checked out his package, but what really made her day was the absence of a wedding ring on the index finger of his left hand. The only thing she could not figure was his age. There was the possibility he dyed his hair, but she was leaning towards his late twenties or early thirties. A professional. A doctor, lawyer, architect, or engineer.

The man Apollonia was eyeing had noticed her through the window as he passed Daisy's Café. Instead of heading to his destination he entered the café. His intention was to pass the store and stop at a Starbucks closer to his office. He forced himself to keep from staring as he ordered a medium coffee and a coffee cake. He paid, turned towards the door, turned again after getting over his initial shyness, and approached where Apollonia sat.

Without offering his name, he asked, "Mind if I join you?"

Flustered at first, Apollonia caught herself, and replied, "I'd be honored."

His smile sent teenage shivers throughout her body. If he had a dog's sense of smell, he would have noticed the sexual odor beginning to emanate from between her legs. Apollonia Moretti, for the first time in years, was taken with a man. She usually waited for the other individual to state their name, but this time she gave her full name. "Apollonia Moretti." She offered her hand and he took it. He had a strong grip, but knew how to apply just the right amount of pressure. His hands were smooth, soft, and not the hands of a blue collar worker. She stopped for a moment and realized that Colin's hands were similar in feel. "And you are?"

"Alessandro Michele Bruno," he replied.

Apollonia released his hand and he sat so he was next to her on the right. She chuckled to herself because he placed himself with his back to the wall, but accepted the fact that he was not completely facing forward. She sipped her coffee and for the first time broke a small piece of her blueberry scone which she did not put in her mouth. Apollonia did not want to eat but needed to do something with her hands. All she wanted was to stare at the handsome man that sat next to her and fantasize about the possibilities.

Waking from her teenage stupor, she said, "Excuse me, but I'm usually not flustered like a teenager. You said your last name is Bruno. Any relation to the Bruno family of the infamous Five Families?"

Showing no surprise, Alessandro nodded his head, sighed, and replied, "Somewhere in the family tree, but I'm so far removed from them I'd never know who they were or presently are."

"Where are you headed?"

"To my office. I have some work to get finished this morning before I take some time for myself."

"Pardon my forthrightness, but I can see you're not married or are you one of those men that do not wear a wedding ring?"

"Damn, caught again," he deadpanned. Alessandro smiled, "Sorry, I don't fall into either category. I'm divorced. Three years since Samantha and I parted ways. She was a real. . ."

"Cunt," interjected Apollonia.

"Not afraid to call a spade a spade Apollonia. Oh, excuse me, but I may address you by your first name?"

"Absolutely," she replied. "So, what brought your marriage to an end?" The question flowed so easily she had no thought that it may be offensive to him.

"Samantha had an insatiable appetite and a bit of a roving eye," he sighed not showing one sign of offense at the question. "She claimed I was more interested in establishing my career than spending hours on end fornicating in anyplace she suddenly felt the need to experience a gut wrenching orgasm. Truth is I couldn't keep up with her. I may, no I will embarrass myself when I admit that after the second coital act my stamina went down the toilet."

Apollonia nodded knowingly, "It wasn't size that made her stray, but stamina? I can count on one hand the number of men who can maintain an erection after multiple ejaculations. It is also a proven fact that then quantity and quality of the ejaculate decreases with each ejaculation."

"Damn. . ."

"I'd be just as happy having a man with an adept tongue spending more time between my legs than trying to satisfy me with his cock."

Alessandro took not a sip but a gulp of coffee from his cup. The conversation was supposed to simply be an introduction, exchanging of pertinent personal data, and the capture of a phone number for future use. But, his mind churned as he eyed the beauty next to him. An overt sexual conversation was not what he expected coupled with her knowledge of a man's sexual functioning added to his desire to do two things – get to know her better and bed her even if she was married. "Are you always so direct, especially when speaking of sexual matters?"

The response was quick and sharp, "Are you a prude?"

Alessandro's head jerked back when he heard her response. "A prude," he said, "no, I have a moral compass that is always pointing me on the straight and narrow. . ."

"Straight and narrow. Typical answer for a man who is uncomfortable with his sexuality. Is it because we're in a public place or you're just uncomfortable with sex in general? Could that be the true reason your wife left you and not your ability to maintain an erection after ejaculating multiple times in a short period of time?"

Apollonia could see how uncomfortable Alessandro was discussing sexual matters. He was constantly breaking eye contact with her and when he did return his gaze to her face his body language showed a tenseness that only could be attributed to his sexual self-image. A lot of times men who were facing the truth about their sexual abilities and preferences allowed their issue to surface via their musculature. The man sitting next to her appeared to be an extremely handsome man, but he also seemed to be carrying a bit of baggage. The idea of bedding him receded from the forefront as she wondered if he was one of the millions of men who were just did not know how to make love to a woman.

"I have to say you are one hell of a handsome man. My curiosity makes me wonder if you're having a problem because you're not well endowed or you're fighting a desire to seek other avenues of sexual pleasure."

"Damn, woman!!! You don't mince words. I suspect you think I'm all fucked up sexually because of my upbringing or my marriage that ended in a divorce. Neither is the truth. If we were someplace a bit more private, I'd show you. I think you'd be pleasantly surprised. I have no problems with homosexuality, but it isn't my thing."

"Over or under 10."

"You're not serious?"

"I am. My brother-in-law gives my sister nine-and-a-half inches. My father is a good nine. One of the things we take into account when a man marries into the Moretti family is the size of his endowment and how much ejaculate he produces. See, if you marry in, you are expected to maintain the family business and traditions. It is not easy to become married to a Moretti woman. So, over or under 10?"

Alessandro blushed, "Just over."

"How much over?"

"You think I measure it every day or week?"

"Um, no, but you have and I know you know your size. So???"

"Ten-and-a-half inches."

"Cut or Uncut?"

"I can't believe I'm having this conversation with a woman I just met. Uncut. My parents believe in keeping things as natural as possible."

Apollonia licked her lips. It wasn't surreptitious or obnoxious. His size was something she could get used to as long as he could be a lover of consequence. Sonny Rossi was big, but he had lacked intelligence. Colin was three-and-a-half inches smaller, but what he lacked in length, he made up with ability. What surfaced was not a desire to take him by his hand, march him to the townhouse, and fuck him silly, but a desire to get to know him intellectually. She asked him, "Different tact. What do you do?"

"I'm a freelance writer," he replied thankful that they were not discussing sex.

"I'm sorry, but the way you're dressed tells me there's more to you being a freelance writer. The clothing you're wearing says '*style and money*'.

To himself he thought, '*This woman is a handful and had the most incredible eyes. Plus, she is extremely smart and intuitive.*' Alessandro nodded his head and said, "I'm a non-practicing attorney. Admitted to the Bars of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut and I have pled several cases before the Supreme Court of the United States. I left the law because I wanted to write. I've been working on a novel for the past two years. I freelance for newspapers, magazines, and websites."

"Excuse me, but, the pants you're wearing are not Filene's Bargain Basement quality. So, either you come from money or. . ."

"My childhood friend is a Wall Street whizz at a small private hedge company. He took the proceeds of several of my better cases and made investments for me. All I can say is he did his job better than I could have imagined. My investment grew geometrically and the interest income earned is more than adequate for my means. My parents were astounded and asked if they could get him to make investments for them. So, tit-for-tat; what do you do?"

Apollonia was impressed with his answer, but her monetary means would probably make him literally shit his pants. She thought, '*Alessandro Bruno is a non-practicing attorney and a writer. He told her he left the law to write a novel and he was financially secure enough to allow him pursue his dream. He spoke of his parents in the present which made her assume they were very much alive and well.*' Apollonia wanted to know more about his family, but she knew she had to respond to his question.

"I'm a college graduate with a degree in Fine Arts. I draw in pencil and charcoal, paint, sculpt, and occasionally do digital graphics; although I'm a traditionalist when it comes to painting. I prefer to work in oils, but I will use water based paints if I think the piece would look better. I also dabble in photography and film." She paused, smiled anew, and asked, "Any siblings?"

"I'll bet you're not a starving artist. As to siblings, there are three younger. Two sisters and a brother."

Not realizing that the tone of her voice changed ever so subtlety, Apollonia commanded, "Tell me about them."

The flinch was real and he countered it by stating the obvious, "Just a subtle change in your voice and the statement becomes a command. There is more to you Miss Moretti than you portray. My family is private. If we take this conversation to another level, you may get to know about my personal life. I'm not too keen on establishing a relationship with a married woman. Also, I do not kowtow to people because they think they're superior to me. The change in your voice portends what I believe would be the tenor of a relationship between us if one was established beyond today's encounter."

Apollonia's eyes grew dark. Alessandro saw the change in their color. The gold flecks that surrounded the iris in the turquoise color were no longer as bright. He saw the muscles in her face tighten and the fingers on her right hand begin to albeit gently rap on the table top. For Apollonia, it was the turning point in the serendipitous meeting

with one hell of a good-looking man. Either she allowed him to take control or she established that any relationship with her was based upon her dominance. Apollonia Moretti saw something in him, but she knew her own personality and it forbade her from being the submissive partner in a relationship. Without Raffaella or Ming to calm her surging rage, Apollonia knew she had to stem the rise of anger or lose the possibility of establishing some form of a relationship with him.

"Would you excuse me a moment? The lady's room calls." She did not wait for an answer. She stood and made her way to the unisex restroom.

Alessandro Bruno watched Apollonia walk away from the table and inside he knew he had to see where this chance meeting would take them. He noticed that although she was dressed in a pair of jeans and a preppy button down collared white shirt, and running shoes, her body was incredible. What also made him salivate was the fact she was not wearing any makeup. Her beauty was pure as the driven snow. The way she carried herself added to his desire to get to know her both intellectually and intimately. For the first time since sitting down at her table, he felt a twinge of sexual excitement. He thought for a moment whether he was intrigued with her dominance or his desire to forcibly take her with her consent.

Apollonia stood in the women's restroom for five minutes calming down. She flushed the unused toilet before she returned to the table where amazingly Alessandro Bruno remained. As she closed the distance between the table and the restroom, he stood, smiled, and did not sit again until she retook her seat. They sat in silence for a few minutes before the quiet started to take prevalence over their need and desire to continue their conversation.

"Excuse me," said Alessandro. "I'm a private person, a bit, no, a whole lot self-centered, and always like to be in control of the situation. I was hesitant about approaching you. You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen much less spent time with. I'm a bit confused, because on the one hand I want to screw the living shit out of you and on the other I'm thinking about making never ending tender love to you. I'm also intrigued by your intelligence and what appears to be a very dominant personality."

Just as she was about to answer, her cell phone rang. She picked it up, looked at the screen, and saw it was Viviano. She excused herself, turned to face away from Alessandro, and pressed the answer button. "Viviano, what's up?" She listened and took in that he had picked up Joshua's children and was on his way back to Columbus Place. She answered his question, "I'm in a café on 72nd Street. Been here awhile and don't know where I'm headed. Call me when you get to Columbus Place." She didn't say good-bye. She simply terminated the call and turned back to Alessandro.

"Pardon the interruption," she said, "that was my brother-in-law. Where were we? Oh, yes; you were in the midst of a sexual conundrum. Fuck me like a whore or make tender love to me."

Alessandro looked at his wristwatch, sighed, and said, "Time to go. I have a deadline to meet and I've taken a good slice of that allocated time to sit here with you and talk about erotica. It was my intention to talk a wee bit, get your phone number, and call you for a date. But, I don't date married women."

"Major loss for you and a bit smaller loss for me. I would love to feel you inside me," said Apollonia while looking directly into his eyes. She also obnoxiously licked her lips and used her tongue against the side of her cheek as the universal sign of giving a blowjob. Apollonia saw it wasn't lost on him. "How about you come to my townhouse on East 84th Street around two? We can do one of several things – talk, fuck, talk and fuck, or fuck and talk. I promise you, you won't be sorry."

Alessandro Bruno laughed and said, "Sure and the Pope is Jewish. I come to your place; have sex with you, and walk away thinking that I would never want to see you again. I don't think so. I'm not that stupid. If we do it and I'm more than taken with you, I'm the loser. I can see it now; Alessandro Bruno pining over a one night, oops, afternoon stand and chasing an untouchable Apollonia Moretti."

Apollonia decided it was time to move on as the game this hunk was playing was becoming tiresome. She stood, leaned over, and whispered in his left ear, "When I tell you that you have nothing to fear but your own

inadequacies in bed, it is truly your loss. I control one of the most powerful families on this planet. You have exactly one second to agree to meet me or..."

"Or what?" he asked.

"I'll be nothing more than a masturbatory fantasy for you," she breathed.

"East 84th Street between?" he asked.

"Better yet, tell me where your office is and I'll have my driver come and get you," she said as she stood up.

"Is that..." was all he said.

Apollonia placed her hands on the small table, stared hard at him, and said, "Last chance Bruno."

"The office is on Park Avenue at East 67th Street. I'll be downstairs at 1:45," he said.

Apollonia smiled, took her right hand and patted his left cheek, turned, and walked out of Daisy's Café drenched between her legs because she knew she had just found her new lover.

Alessandro Michele Bruno sat with his hand resting on his crotch as he watched the most wanton woman he had ever met depart his company. He waited a few minutes before leaving because he needed his semi to go down. As he waited the few minutes so he could stand without embarrassment, he turned over in his mind the conversation and its implication to his present life. A shiver ran up and down his spine.