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The Moretti's - A Different Family Dynamic

Chapter 136

Saturday – Apollonia - 8 March 2003

Apollonia departed Daisy's Café, made a right turn, and headed West on 72nd Street. She crossed Third, Lexington, Park, and Madison Avenues before she realized she was at Fifth Avenue and the Terrace Drive entrance to Central Park. She crossed Fifth Avenue and entered the park. She migrated north and west on Terrace Drive till she reached The Mall where she again turned right and headed north to the Bethesda Fountain. Upon arriving at the fountain she located a spot on the rim and parked herself there so she could be alone with her thoughts.

The first time her cell phone sounded it was Viviano. She ignored the call. Her problem with Ming was still causing her emotional and physical pain. For a moment she thought of Alessandro and the possibilities, but like a rotten egg, Ming's notice of possible departure resurfaced. For the umpteenth time, she reviewed her relationship with her lover. How they met. Their cohabitating in college. Their separation after graduation and subsequent marriages. Ming seeking her out when her marriage was falling apart. Her problem with the police. To their ultimate desire for each other, allowing Apollonia to give to the love of her life a place to live and an amount of money that would take care of her and her boys well into the next millennium.

Why? Why would Ming allow herself to be psychologically and emotionally beaten into submission by her parents? Both cultures were built upon the respect for the elders and parental authority. Apollonia understood, but also Apollonia had taken the step that she knew Ming would never. She thought that Ming would go so far as to tell her parents that she was not going to move to China. She'd allow them to take her there on a vacation of sorts, but that she would be returning to the United States.

Apollonia pursed her lips for a moment and wondered if the Zheng family had enough clout with the Communist Party to close the door behind Ming and her children when they arrived in China. The thought sent a shiver up and down Apollonia's spine. Getting her out of China would be possible, but it wouldn't happen overnight. She forced herself to look up from the ground so she would not continue to turn the problem over in her head. It was then she noticed a couple walking around the fountain. Her attention was drawn to the young man in the wheelchair and when the cloud of Ming's bombshell cleared she saw it was Jose and Margaret Molina. She thought maybe a conversation with them would be enough to take her mind off of Ming. Apollonia stood and made her way to the couple.

"Hello," she said with a big smile on her face. "How are you two getting along?"

Neither of them recognized Apollonia. It was Margaret who responded, "Excuse me, but do you know us?"

Apollonia's first thought was they were unhappy that there was no follow-up to their initial meeting or they were truly ignorant of who she was. Their faces were neutral and showed absolutely no emotion of recognition. "You are the Molina's? My name is Apollonia Moretti. You were at my house I believe it was a few weeks ago?"

They exchanged glances. Jose Molina did not verbally respond he just nodded to his wife.

Margaret stated in a quiet voice, "We appreciate what your family offered, but after we departed your house we both were shaken by the experience. For me, it proved to be something I could learn to love more than life itself. I had never experienced a sexual encounter like that in my life. Jose admitted to me what happened between your sister and him. Our only issue was how we were going to tell you that we've decided to step away from your offer. We both feel it would be better for our relationship. Adoption is the way we're going to build a family. I hope. . ."

The smile on Apollonia's face was honest and heartfelt, "I completely understand. The one thing the Moretti family would not want is to have you end your relationship because of something that you've come to love more than your relationship with your husband. There is something the family can still do for you and I want you to consider allowing us to help you economically with your adoptions. In fact, we can help you in all aspects of adopting a child or children."

Again they exchanged glances, but this time it was Jose who spoke, "The question I have is how much of the economic aid do we have to repay? We know how much an adoption will cost and we're pretty far from that number."

"Nothing has to be repaid. The Moretti family will pay all costs for as many children as you both want to adopt. That is our commitment to you for what you did for and gave for this country. The government won't do it, so we will. I will have my attorney, Howard Cohen, contact you to begin the process. I have all your contact information so all that you need to do is be happy and content. The Moretti family will make things whole for you."

Their faces told the whole story. Their eyes were as wide as saucers. The smiles on their faces were genuine and Margaret leaned down and hugged her husband. Apollonia was thrilled that she made the offer and inside she knew it was heartfelt and sincere.

"I don't know what to say," said Margret her voice cracking with emotion.

"Nothing needs to be said," stated Apollonia. "Like I said, just relax and let us help you reach your family goals."

Meeting the Molinas was a serendipitous event that helped change Apollonia's outlook for at least the moment. She retrieved he cellular phone to check the time. She saw that she had to make her way back to Fifth Avenue to head uptown to the 84th Street townhouse. Just as she was putting her phone back in her small purse the ringtone for Howard Cohen sounded. This call she did not ignore.

"Hello Howard," she said as she walked towards Fifth Avenue. She listened for a moment, stopped dead in her tracks, and felt herself get nauseous. Apollonia looked around and found a bench to sit. Once she was seated she said, "Please repeat what you said. I was walking and did not catch it all."

"Your father is going to be indicted on second degree murder, deviate sexual intercourse, and a host of other charges. The Nassau County DA is hell bent to put him in prison. She has scheduled the detectives to be at Columbus Place early Tuesday morning. I wouldn't put it past her to alert the media and force him to do a perp walk."

"That isn't going to happen. I'll take care of the media. Does Mario know?"

"Yes."

"Fucker still has his connections. What do you want from me?"

Howard sighed and said, "Nothing right now. But, and this is a very huge but, Apollonia. You have to be beside and behind him. You cannot show any form of division within the family."

"Easier said than done, but I understand," she replied with no inflection in her voice. "Where are we on the lab?"

"I am going to be frank. We're nowhere. The cost to build a lab is exorbitant and the timeline is nothing short of two to three years."

"I hear what you are saying and I am ordering you to find an existing lab and purchase it. No matter the cost!!! If you do not have the funds available, call me and I'll make the transfer. Have John and whomever else you have on it get it done. If you don't have a short list, make one, and I'll leave the decision on which one to purchase to you. I want the deal signed, sealed, and delivered by Monday evening. The lab is the foundation of our defense and the only way we can prove the DA is manipulating forensic evidence. I also see a future in third-party DNA analysis. Don't fail me Howard."

"You're kidding. . ."

"No I am not. Make it happen. Anything else on the agenda?"

"Not at the moment."

"Good, I have some business to attend to. I'll call you later which will probably be early evening."

As per previous phone conversations, Apollonia pressed the End button and terminated the call without saying good-bye. She now had an additional at once issue to deal with and as much as she hated Mario, he was still her father. The time on the cell phone gave her about an hour and forty-five minutes to get to the townhouse. She decided to make a few calls from where she sat.

The first call was to Viviano. "Hey, sorry I didn't pick up earlier, but I was engaged. What's up?"

Viviano was stunned at her cavalier attitude. He thought, 'She doesn't know.' He paused for a moment and listened for some clue as to where she was. Nothing stood out except he could hear and sense she was not inside. Viviano decided to drop the news without any preamble, "Your father is going to be indicted. . . ."

"On Tuesday for multiple counts of felony murder and sexual deviance. I just got off the phone with Howard Cohen."

Viviano sat in front of Raffaella and Mario stunned..."Instructions?"

"Just keep him under control. I have to believe he's fuckin' goin' crazy because he'll be beholden to me after I make sure everything is taken care of, under Moretti control, and he is acquitted of all charges. Keep him calm and if you need to, get a fuckin' thousand dollar an hour hooker in to suck his cock and lick his asshole all night. Just don't leave him alone. Joshua's children there?"

"Yes. They're playing together with Antonio, Carmen, and Alessa."

"The weekend whore?"

"She's locked in a room on the third floor. Nothing to worry about."

"I understand. I don't want her there. Call her father or make arrangements for her to be taken home. I don't want her there when I return to Columbus Place."

"I'll make it happen. When will you be returning home?" asked Viviano.

"I have a meeting scheduled for two at the townhouse. After that, I'm going to stop at the hospital to check in on Colin. He'll be returning home tomorrow morning. I should be home no later than six or seven."

"What about. . ."

"I'll take care of her, but for all intent and purpose, she is not my concern right now. In fact, you keep everything under control there and I'll give her to you. That is between you and me."

Before Viviano could respond, Apollonia pressed the End button. She stared at the phone, paused, and made the decision. She pressed the speed dial key and waited. She knew by the third ring that Ming was not going to answer. She debated and decided to leave a message, "Ming my sweet, I know you're not in a mood to talk or you're with your parents. I've made a decision and I will live with it. My love for you transcends all things in life including my family. I am not going to stop you. I am not going to beg you to stay. All I want is one night so I can say good-bye to you in a way that will heal my broken heart. Call me. Love you."

Her next call was to Nathan. She told him where to go, who to pick up, and where to take him. She ordered him to confirm his instructions before she ended the call. All the calls took a whole twenty minutes to complete which gave her enough time to take a somewhat leisurely walk up Fifth Avenue to 84th Street where she would turn east towards the townhouse.