

An excerpt from *The Lair*:

“Nothing like a wide awake drunk,” Gabe muttered an hour later. They’d gotten back to La Tana and as usual Fausta had grudgingly let them in. “Hey, you can always give us a key,” he’d joked, but his aunt had simply turned around and gone back to her room.

Once in their suite, Dani had been asleep on her feet, which were a little unsteady at best, so he’d pointed her in the direction of her bedroom and reluctantly bid her good night. *God she was beautiful*. So elegant, so feminine, even though she didn’t put on airs *at all*. He’d spent the entire evening fighting the impulse to touch her everywhere, even in places that demanded privacy at the very least. He’d known instinctively that she’d get along great with Marco and Gina, and she hadn’t disappointed him. Man, she was driving him crazy. He heaved a sigh. Both tired and wired, he couldn’t tell which was more to blame, the alcohol or the stress of keeping his desire in check.

He reflexively reached into the small refrigerator for a beer before he realized he was already half pickled, so he opted for water instead. Unscrewing the cap, he drank half the bottle while pulling his shirt out of his slacks. To keep his libido in check he decided to focus on something decidedly unsexy. Reaching for the jacket he’d tossed on the back of the sofa, he pulled out the report that Marco had given him earlier that evening.

“I think we’re on to something,” Marco had told him quietly. “We found a match.”

He was just beginning to scan the document when the bedroom door opened and Dani appeared. Her hair was tousled and she walked a bit uncertainly, as if she were slogging through mud in high heels, even though she was barefoot. She wore an ivory-colored cover-up of some kind and she looked nervous.

“I’m ready,” she said.

He looked at her quizzically. “Ready for what, bella?”

“For us ...you know.” He didn’t have a chance to reply before she tottered up to him and threw her slender arms around his neck, locking her lips with his.

After his initial shock, Gabe took a moment to enjoy the feel of Dani’s curves against him. Jesus, after all that booze his body still reacted immediately, hardening in response to her softness. She felt so damn good—like falling into the most luxurious bed when you’ve been sleeping on the floor all your life. He smiled inwardly at her inexperienced but earnest attempt at seduction, and cursed his inner cop—the prig who wouldn’t let him take advantage of her while she was intoxicated. Reluctantly he took her by the upper arms and peeled her away from his body. “Uh, sweetheart, I don’t think this is a good thing to be doing ...”

“What?” she asked softly but defensively. “Don’t I measure up to your other women friends? Don’t I? Just a little?” She stepped back and before he could stop her she dropped the cover-up, revealing a perfect—and perfectly naked—female form encased in a 5 foot two inch frame. Her breasts were full, high, cream-colored mounds with luscious pink nipples. Her waist was small and her hips slightly flared. She was biting her full lower lip, practically screaming for his approval.

An image flashed before him of Dani pregnant. She was ripe and luscious—the epitome of Woman. Instead of cooling him off, the thought of her big with child—*his* child—only made him hotter, and made what he had to do all the more difficult. He looked at her a long time, so long that he could see uncertainty, followed by embarrassment, overtake her. He reached down and picked up the wrap, putting it around her shoulders.

“I ... I’m sorry,” she mumbled. “I thought ...” She turned to go, but Gabe took her shoulders and turned her back toward him.

“If you think for one second that I don’t want to bury myself in you right now, you are sadly mistaken,” he said roughly. He pulled her wrap off her shoulders once again, but only so that it imprisoned her arms, pressing her breasts together and lifting them. With his right hand he pushed the wrap beneath her breast, raising it even higher so that it spilled out of its cover and he could suckle it. Dani let out a gasp, automatically pressing herself against him. After a minute, Gabe realized he’d better stop before his body took over completely.

“When you and I make love, I am going to be all over you,” he rasped. “You are going to feel me everywhere and know when I’ve taken you higher than you’ve ever been before.” He tore himself away and covered her back up. “And the next morning, you’re going to remember everything I did to you and want me to do it all over again. Count on it. Now go to bed.”

“But—”

“Please,” he said firmly, turning her around and practically pushing her back into the bedroom. It took several minutes after her door shut for Gabe’s upper brain to start functioning again. “Keep your eye on the prize,” he repeated like a mantra. “Keep your eye on the prize.” The prize, in this case, was a Dani who felt no regrets about whatever physical gymnastics they might partake in together. He’d waited this long for the timing to be right; he could wait a little longer, even though it was damn near going to kill him.