

# Under Mafia Protection - Chapter 2 Chapter 2 Reading Online for Free

## Chapter 2

### Mena

As I approached the familiar doorstep of my next-door neighbor, Mrs. Rodriguez, I could already hear the faint hum of a television set and Natalie's cheerful giggling.

I knocked on the door, which swung open, revealing the warm, and welcoming expression of Mrs. Rodriguez. "Hi, Jimena," she greeted, her smile crinkling the corners of her eyes. Mrs. Rodriguez was a kind older lady who lived alone in the apartment next to mine. She was a good person and would often offer to pick up and look after Natalie after school.

I trusted her, and it was a kindness I would forever be indebted to.

"I came to pick up Natalie," I spoke, returning her smile.

"Naty!" The woman turned her head. "Your mommy is here!"

As she turned back to face me, I caught her staring at my uniform, silently judging me. Knowing what was about to come, I fidgeted with the ends of my dress.

"Jimena, do you really have to work for that family? Isn't there any other way?" she asked, her tone heavy with concern.

I shrugged, the weight of her words settling heavily on my shoulders. "I have to pay the bills somehow, Mrs. Rodriguez, and the diner just wasn't enough," I explained. "I'd also like to buy something new for Natalie once in a while."

Truthfully, I didn't need much for myself, but I wanted Naty to grow up without a constant cloud of worry hanging over her head.

A sigh left Mrs. Rodriguez lips, followed by a pitiful frown. "I'm not a big fan of that family, Jimena," she didn't mind giving her opinion. "You must be oblivious to the real state of that family since you've only been here for a few months."

Hoping she would drop the conversation, I waved my hand dismissively. "Oh well."

She looked around nervously, so no one could hear us, before leaning in closer. "It's so bad they've even run the authorities out of the city. Everything belongs to the Fanuccis."

A chill ran down my spine but I quickly pushed the thought aside, focusing instead on the sound of light footsteps approaching.

"Hi, Mommy!" Naty's voice broke through my thoughts, her eyes sparkling with excitement. Her dark brown hair was not quite as neatly braided as I left it in the morning, but her rosy cheeks dimpling with her wide smile made up for that mess.

Mrs. Rodriguez patted Natalie's head, showing her affection. Natalie was the spitting image of me, from her long brown hair to her warm brown eyes. I was grateful every day that she bore no resemblance to that monster.

"Naty has already had dinner and taken a shower. She's ready for bed."

"Thank you, Mrs. Rodriguez."

"B-Bed?" Naty's face fell, a tiny pout forming on her lips. "Awh, but I didn't even get to spend time with you today, mommy!"

"Tomorrow, Naty," I reached out, tucking a stray lock of hair behind her ear before offering Mrs. Rodriguez a final smile. Then I took Naty's hand in mine as we made our way to our apartment.

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As we sat at the table, Naty immediately reached to pull a drawing from her backpack. "Look Mommy, I made this at school today!"

She showcased a beautiful and detailed landscape, perhaps a bit too advanced of a drawing for a six-year-old.

"It's beautiful, princess." I took the paper in my hands, but my voice sounded bittersweet.

I knew she had a gift for drawing and painting. I had high hopes to enroll her in a private elementary academy, with a special art program, in the city. Unfortunately, I almost fainted when I read the fee and accepted that it was just not possible.

Although I enjoyed staring at her art, it also made me feel guilty as it was a harsh reminder of the opportunity I just couldn't afford to give her, despite trying so hard.

"How was school?" I asked, attempting to shift the focus of our conversation.

"Good," she shrugged.

"And what did you do in school today?" I asked further, looking for more than just a one-word answer.

Naty retorted with a playful giggle. "Whatever it is six-year-olds do at school, Mommy," I couldn't help but laugh. "Okay, Miss Smarty Pants," I called her out.

With her sassy attitude and snarky remarks, Naty's personality was also identical to mine. The only difference was that she always spoke her mind while I tried to keep it to myself. She was also way better at making friends.

"Mommy?" Naty blinked. "Do you like your new job? Are the people nice? Is the house very big?" she bombarded me with questions.

I had made it a point not to share too much about my job with Naty. She was too young, and I didn't want her to bear the weight of my decisions, especially one that had the potential of painting us in a questionable light.

I feared once they would find out I was a Fanucci maid, the mothers at school would tell their children to stop talking to her.

Mrs. Rodriguez had told me it would be like that, and after hearing stories about the Fanuccis, I believed her. People were too afraid to associate with their kind, in fear of crossing them.

Between that, they made no separation between a family member, associate, or a simple worker at the mansion.

"My day was great, Naty, and the people are all very nice. And the house? It looks like a palace!" I replied, trying to sound enthusiastic.

"Wow!" Natalie's eyes widened in awe.

I couldn't help but think back to my earlier interaction with the Fanucci brothers, and how uncomfortable it had made me. I hated cleaning, the job was terrible, the brothers seemed like spoiled entitled brats. It had only been day one, but I was already hoping I would never have to see the Lady of the house or Domenico Fanucci. Those were my real thoughts.

"I know you have to work a lot to pay for big people things, Mommy. But once Daddy is here, you won't have to feel tired anymore," Naty placed her small hand on top of mine.

I nodded, forcing a smile on my face. I felt like a fraud for lying to Naty. She believed that her father would soon join us. In reality, we hadn't just moved from our previous city, we'd fled.

Becoming a young mother with no further goal for the future, I decided to move in with Anson so we could raise our daughter.

But he had changed a lot after high school, and was not who I thought he would be. Anson was not a man anyone should ever be around.

After giving up on his NFL dreams, and his scholarship, to work in construction, and take care of me and Natalie—he had changed into a possessive, aggressive and cruel individual.

His verbal abuse had soon escalated to physical abuse over the years, and I had lost count of how many black eyes I'd had to conceal.

The day he threatened to hurt Natalie for my apparent misbehavior, was the day I decided to leave him forever.

She didn't know.

How could I ever tell Naty that her beloved daddy was a monster?

"Look at the time, Naty. You better get to bed," I said, standing up.

"No," Naty sulked in a small voice, pouting her lips.

Ignoring her protest, I scooped her into my arms and carried her to her room. Not long after, I tucked her under a warm, fluffy blanket and watched as she fell asleep in a span of minutes.

Afterwards, I had retired to the couch and switched on the TV. Although my body cried out for sleep, I refused to let it win. I wouldn't let my life become a never-ending loop of work and sleep more than it already was.

As I flipped through channels, a sudden ring of the phone jolted me. Puzzled, I looked at the screen, and the unknown number which had appeared.

I was hesitant, but I picked it up either way.

"Hello?" I greeted.

All I heard was heavy breathing.

"Hello?" I tried again, my heart beating out my chest. Once again, there was the same breathing sound.

I wanted to believe it was a prank call, but I couldn't. I felt sick to my stomach and the anxiety took over as I went through all possible scenarios.

What if it was him?

Anson.

What if he'd found my new number?

I hung up abruptly. In a swift motion, I rushed to close all the curtains and ran to the door to make use of the extra locks I had installed for security.

My breath came in quick gasps, each exhale worse than before as I trembled with panic.

"This isn't real... this isn't real."

It was so bad, I sank to the floor, with my back against the cold, hard door.

"Calm down, Mena," I muttered to myself, struggling to catch my breath. "It's nothing, and you're probably just overthinking it."

That must've been it.