

Every Mafia's Favorite Girl – The Soul Known 13

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They continued down the wide hallway until they reached the main viewing area overlooking the cage. 1

Inside the octagonal fighting pit, two fighters were already training.

Their bodies glistened with sweat under the bright lights. The sharp crack of gloves meeting flesh echoed through the space, violent and relentless.

Aren set Biscuit down at her feet, then stepped closer to the railing. The little dog sat obediently, ears perked, watching the fighters with intense focus.

“Are they training?” Aren asked.

“Yes,” Jeremiah replied, stopping beside her. “We have dedicated training rooms, but some fighters prefer the cage. It helps them get used to the atmosphere... the lights, the pressure, the eyes watching.”

Aren’s gaze followed the taller fighter’s movements with quiet fascination. After a few seconds, she murmured, almost to herself,

“His left knee. Old injury.”

Jeremiah turned to her instantly. A faint chill ran through him before he could stop it.

She was right.

He had read the medical files himself – the man had torn his ACL years ago and never fully recovered. Very few people noticed something like that from a single glance.

Jeremiah’s eyes narrowed into an amused slit.

‘Just how much has she been concealing *behind* that vapid *party girl mask*?’

He stepped closer, letting his shoulder brush lightly against hers.

“How do you feel about becoming a fighter in the Pit, Lady Ariana?” he asked,

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voice teasing yet laced with genuine interest.

Aren didn’t notice the subtle movement of his shoulder, nor the way his voice now sounded like he was recording a late-night ASMR video directly into her

ear.

She turned to him, blinking.

“Me? Fighting?”

“You’re quite skilled,” he said, a playful smile curving his lips. “I only saw a glimpse at the Summit, but it was enough. You move like art in motion.”

“Oh.” A soft flush colored Aren’s cheeks. “About that...”

She braced herself for a barrage of questions about her skills, but Jeremiah only chuckled – low, rich, and warm.

“With skills like yours,” he said teasingly, “you would be perfect for the Pit.”

Aren let out a small breath, relieved he didn’t press further. She looked back at the cage, then at him again, voice small with uncertainty.

“Is that all you wish to ask of me?”

“That is all,” Jeremiah said easily. “I’m sure my contract is the simplest of the three you’ve been offered.”

He leaned one arm casually on the railing, closing the distance between them.

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“One night a week for one year. One hundred million toward your family’s debt. You will be my main event. We will provide everything – a custom outfit, a stage name, full production. People will pay thousands just to watch you walk into the cage, let alone fight.”

He studied her face carefully before adding, “If you sign for five years instead, I can settle the full amount immediately.”

Aren looked down at her hands.

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This body’s wrists still currently possessed the strength of overcooked noodles, which only guaranteed throwing a single punch would likely result in her fracturing her own arm.

“There is one problem,” she said carefully. “I will need time to prepare before I begin. Perhaps a month.”

“Take all the time you need,” Jeremiah replied without hesitation.

His teal eyes softened, voice dropping to a sweet murmur.

“Well then, if that is your only concern... can we sign today?”

Aren considered it for a moment.

She now had three contracts: one with Caio, one with Isidore, and now this. The schedules were tight, but they didn’t overlap dangerously.

“Yes,” she said, nodding earnestly. “That is acceptable.”

At her feet, Biscuit let out a tiny approving sound, as if he too had been consulted.

Jeremiah’s smile deepened, clearly pleased.

"Excellent."

He led her back upstairs, this time to a private office that overlooked the Pit. From this height, the cage looked smaller, like a stage viewed from a balcony framed with glass.

He placed a contract in front of her, printed in gold ink on thick vellum.

Aren sat down and began reading line by line with intense focus.

As she read, Jeremiah moved behind her, resting a hand lightly on the back of her chair. His shoulder brushed hers as he leaned in slightly, close enough that high-end cologne practically waterboarded her sinuses.

The room was dim, lit by amber lamps that cast warm shadows across the walls. In his experience, this setting, combined with his proximity, usually

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had a predictable effect.

"You know, my lady," he murmured, voice low and intimate, "I don't think I've ever enjoyed the Summit as much as I did that day. And it was entirely because of you."

Aren turned to him.

"Oh."

'Why is he *bringing up the Summit?*'

A soft flush instantly warmed her cheeks.

'He must *be* upset I didn't *give* him any cupcake.'

"I regret not bringing enough cupcakes to share," she said apologetically. "I will prepare more next time."

She flipped to the next page, completely missing the way Jeremiah's eyes darkened with quiet fascination as he looked at her.

"I'm very sorry," she added, "but I have a small request."

Jeremiah caught the shift in her tone immediately. A knowing smile touched his lips, the smug expression of a man who routinely handled high-maintenance heiresses for sport.

'So here *it* comes.'

From everything he had heard, Ariana Lombardi was not someone who asked for small things.

"Go ahead," he said with a perfect smile. "Anything you want. Wardrobe, entrance music, lighting – the Pit can provide whatever your heart desires."

Aren hesitated, brow furrowing with genuine concern.

"Do the fighters receive food? Before or after the matches?"

Jeremiah blinked.

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"There is a VIP bar upstairs and water stations for staff," he answered, slightly thrown.

Aren considered this seriously.

"Would it be... possible to have something sweet afterward? Cake, or cookies perhaps. I find that I feel calmer after something sweet. My blood sugar tends to drop during physical exertion."

Jeremiah stared at her.

For ten long seconds, the elegant, silver-tongued heir to the Castellano empire was speechless.

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He had been asked for money, protection, drugs, sexual favors, and illegal weapons. No one — no one had ever requested dessert in his blood-soaked fighting ring.

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"I will... consider it," he said slowly, voice slightly dazed.

"Thank you," Aren brightened immediately. "Then I agree to the terms."

She picked up the pen and signed the name neatly. When she finished, she stood and extended her hand toward him with polite formality.

Jeremiah stared at the small, pale hand for three seconds.

When he finally took it, her skin felt cool and soft against his. His thumb brushed slowly over her knuckles, holding the contact longer than necessary.

Aren didn't seem to notice.

'Would he choose shortbread or sponge cake for me?' she wondered. 'Or would it be cookies?'

A quiet thrill hummed through her just thinking about the satisfying crunch of fresh-baked cookies.

"Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Castellano," she said with a polite nod.

"Of course," Jeremiah replied, still slightly off-balance. "Allow me to walk you

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out."

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"That's not necessary," she replied. "I remember the way."

She called for Biscuit, who stood and trotted after her toward the door. The little dog seemed eager to leave the heavy scent of cologne and ambition behind.

The door closed with a quiet *click*.

Jeremiah remained standing in the center of the room, staring at the signed contract. The faint scent of her soap lingered in the air, smelling like vanilla and rose.

A moment later, the door opened again.

Marco stepped inside and stopped when he saw the strange look on his Young Boss's face.

"Young Boss?" Marco said cautiously. "Is she going to ruin us?"

Jeremiah didn't look at him. He reached out and traced the signature with one finger.

"Marco," he said, voice distant but strangely calm.

"Yes?"

"Add a complimentary post-fight dessert tray to the Pit's operations. Starting next month."

Marco stared at him in disbelief.

"You cannot be serious. You want me to put tiramisu next to the medical kits?"

Jeremiah adjusted his silk tie, composure sliding perfectly back into place.

"Get the good ones. From the bakery on Fifth Street."

"Mister Castellano!" Marco's voice rose in protest. "We are running a fight club, not a bakery! At least tell me why!"

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Jeremiah finally glanced at him. His teal eyes were calm, almost thoughtful.

"It's for the atmosphere. A bit of sweetness against all the violence. Very avant-garde, don't you think?"

Marco continued staring, unconvinced.

Jeremiah didn't bother explaining further.

He turned abruptly and pulled out his phone, then dialed a contact.

The call connected on the first ring.

"Jeremiah, my dear," came a woman's voice, smooth as velvet. "I was beginning to think you'd forgotten I exist."

Jeremiah's tone sweetened at once to match hers, though his expression remained perfectly blank, like a wax figure in a museum that had been programmed to speak.

"How could I ever forget you, Lucilla dear?" he asked lightly. "I've simply been waiting

for the right moment to call.”

On the other end, Lucilla Bellini smiled faintly.

‘As if he hasn’t *ignored my last three* texts,’ she thought, entirely amused. ‘He probably has a reminder set on his calendar just to *keep me* useful.’

Still, Jeremiah Castellano occupied a strange category in her mind. Dangerous, manipulative, magnificent – and entirely exempt from the standards she applied to everyone else.

“And what inspired this sudden longing?” she purred. “You know you can tell me anything.”

Jeremiah drifted toward the glass overlooking the Pit below. Beneath him, the fighters continued circling under the lights.

“There’s a new star in the Pit,” he said softly. “You know what to do.”

Lucilla gave a lazy hum of understanding.

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“You want my media companies to turn it into the biggest story in Borgata by tomorrow morning.”

“You really do understand me perfectly, Lucilla dear.”

His voice carried the warmth of praise. Lucilla leaned back in her chair, savoring the moment despite herself.

Then, he added, almost casually,

“There is one small change this time.”

Lucilla felt the shift immediately. Her posture straightened at once.

“With me, Jeremiah,” she said smoothly, “any change is possible. Go on.”

Jeremiah rested one hand against the glass, satisfied with himself. She was right where he wanted her, wrapped around his little finger like a finely tailored accessory.

“Make sure the entire country hears about this one,” he murmured dreamily. “Not just Borgata. My new little fighter is going to be a superstar. She deserves a proper debut.”

Lucilla’s smile disappeared entirely.

A cold silence settled over the line.

Slowly, her fingers tightened around the phone.

“Jeremiah,” she said carefully, “don’t tell me your new fighter is-”

“Ha ha ha!”

Jeremiah laughed then – soft, amused, entirely delighted with himself.

“You guessed correctly, Lucilla dear. My newest fighter is none other than Ariana Lombardi.”

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