

Every Mafia's Favorite Girl – The Soul Known 14

14 "As Many As You Want"

Isabella had been with the Lombardi family long enough to know when trouble was coming. 1

She stood in the sunlit sitting room of the hotel suite, phone in hand, staring at the new message like it was a live grenade.

The name on the screen was enough to make her stomach tighten.

Jordan *Marchetti*.

Isabella soon found Aren in the adjoining lounge, curled up on the sofa with a thick book on her lap.

Seeing Isabella approach, Aren looked up with her usual calm, slightly distant expression.

"My lady," Isabella said, voice clipped with disapproval. "You have a message. From Jordan Marchetti."

Aren tilted her head, the name unfamiliar to her ears.

"Marchetti... the arms family?"

"Yes." Isabella held out the phone. "He's requesting a meeting with you. I strongly advise against it."

Aren accepted the phone with both hands, read the message, then looked up at her assistant.

"He says it's about the quarterly arms supply. He wants me to inspect the shipment in person."

"Routine shipments are for logistics officers," Isabella countered. "Not the heir himself. And certainly not for the Lombardi heiress to inspect in a warehouse."

Aren studied Isabella's rigid posture for a long moment.

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"Isabella," she said, with mild concern, "why are you tense?"

Isabella's lips pressed into a thin line.

Then, she exploded.

"He's volatile! Last year during one of their demonstrations, three men ended up in the hospital because he lost his temper. He's only twenty-one, and already has a reputation for being impossible to control!"

Aren absorbed the information with a small nod.

"I see. Thank you for telling me."

Her fingers moved calmly across the keyboard.

How about this Friday, 4 PM? Lombardi Hotel. – A.

The message sent with a quiet whoosh.

Isabella stared at her, stunned.

"That's... that's it?" Isabella stammered. "You want no conditions? No security arrangements?"

Aren handed the phone back with a smile.

"He offered to bring the equipment directly to me. That seems efficient."

She stood and glanced toward the bedroom.

"I'll be back in a moment. I need to tell Biscuit we have a visitor coming."

Isabella watched Aren disappear through the doorway, mouth slightly open.

'She was told the man is dangerous. *And* her first *thought* is to inform the dog.'

With a heavy sigh, Isabella turned toward the espresso machine. She was going to need something larger and much stronger than usual.

Inside the bedroom, Aren opened the closet doors.

"Biscuit?"

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A soft rustling answered her from the bottom shelf.

The little dog was half-buried under a pile of clothes, tail wagging lazily. He looked perfectly content in his new favorite hiding spot.

Aren crouched down and lifted him into her arms. Biscuit immediately snuggled against her chest, warm and trusting.

"We have a meeting this Friday," she stroke his scruffy head. "With Jordan Marchetti. He seems... straightforward. You'll behave, won't you?"

Biscuit gave a small happy wiggle, tail thumping against her arm as if in full agreement.

Aren smiled.

"Good boy."

Friday afternoon arrived sooner than either of them expected.

At 4 PM, the lobby of the Lombardi Hotel existed in that rare lull between lunch and evening service.

The marble floors gleamed beneath the filtered sunlight pouring through the towering windows, while the distant sounds of staff moving through the building blended into a soft hum.

Jordan Marchetti arrived precisely on time.

Although several Marchetti soldiers had accompanied him, he instructed them to remain downstairs in the loading area rather than follow him into the hotel.

This meeting did not require a display of force.

Or at least, that was the explanation he gave them.

The receptionist escorted him to one of the private seating areas near the far side of the lobby. Jordan thanked her with a brief nod before taking a seat,

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his hands resting flat against his knees as he settled into stillness.

To anyone watching, he appeared perfectly composed, like a finely carved piece of stone. Like someone entirely comfortable waiting.

Inside, however, the situation was considerably less dignified.

'Don't fidget.'

'*Sit still.*'

'*Stop looking* at the entrance.'

'She *could be here* any second.'

He fixed his gaze on a distant painting on the wall, pretending to appreciate the art instead of checking the time again.

Moments later, the sharp, rhythmic click of approaching heels cut through the quiet lobby.

Jordan looked up automatically.

And every single thought in his head died.

The Lombardi heiress approached wearing a soft burgundy sweater and a pair of simple jeans.

The outfit reminded him faintly of what she had worn to the Summit: modest, comfortable, and completely disconnected from the extravagant wardrobe Ariana Lombardi had always been known for.

Her platinum hair, now cut short, framed her face in soft lines, and she wore no makeup at all.

Nestled comfortably in her arms was the same scruffy little dog from the park, held with such care that it looked less like a pet and more like something precious she had devoted herself to protecting.

There was nothing dramatic about her appearance, nothing designed to draw attention at all. Yet somehow, that made her impossible to ignore.

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Jordan found himself staring despite his best effort.

Aren, meanwhile, stopped in front of him and studied him quietly for a moment.

He was even larger up close than she remembered. He sat perfectly upright, every movement measured, every breath seemingly deliberate.

Broad shoulders stretched beneath his dark shirt, and there was a controlled stillness about him that reminded her of veteran snipers she had once known.

"Hello," Aren greeted politely.

Jordan nodded once. "Hello."

Before either of them could continue, Biscuit suddenly wriggled in Aren's arms.

"Oh—"

The little dog launched himself downward before she could stop him. His paws hit the floor, and he immediately trotted toward Jordan with determined curiosity.

Aren hurried after him at once.

"I'm sorry," she said, visibly flustered. "He sometimes approaches people without permission."

Jordan looked down at the dog circling his boots, surprise flickering across his face.

"It's fine."

Slowly, he lowered his hand, palm down, allowing the dog to investigate on his own terms.

Biscuit immediately shifted his attention away from Jordan's boots and started sniffing his fingers cautiously, then gave a small wag of his tail and stepped closer, conducting a thorough inspection.

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Aren watched the exchange with quiet surprise.

'Woah... Biscuit has never warmed *up* to someone this *quickly*.'

The realization left her oddly pleased.

Taking the seat across from Jordan, she allowed the little dog to continue his investigation uninterrupted.

For a while, neither of them spoke.

The silence stretched longer than most people would allow, yet it wasn't uncomfortable, nor did it demand to be filled.

Jordan's gaze drifted briefly toward Biscuit on the floor.

'I should say something.'

The thought came automatically. Yet for some reason, he felt no urgency to act on it.

'But... this doesn't feel bad.'

Across from him, Aren felt the same quiet ease settle over her.

'He feels... calming.'

'I'm glad he's comfortable with silence.'

Their eyes met for the briefest second, before looking away, almost at the same time.

Neither realized they had shared the same thought.

After a few moments, Aren broke the silence first.

"So... you're Jordan Marchetti."

He nodded rigidly.

"Just Jordan is fine."

A smile instantly appeared on her face.

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"Then just call me Ariana," she said warmly. "You're here for the arms supply contract, correct?"

The warmth of that smile hit Jordan with surprising force.

He should have answered immediately. Instead, he let his gaze linger on her for several seconds longer than necessary.

"You look different."

Aren blinked.

"I'm sorry?"

"You look different," he repeated, eyes tracing the soft lines of her face. "Not just the hair."

A faint flush spread across Aren's cheeks. Her hand rose unconsciously toward the short strands framing her face.

"Ah... yes." She laughed softly. "I've changed a lot."

Jordan studied her for a moment longer.

He knew who Ariana Lombardi was supposed to be. Everyone did.
She had always been reckless. Loud. Impossible to ignore, even for someone as indifferent as him. Yet the girl sitting across from him felt like an entirely different person.

She spoke gently.

She smiled shyly.

She seemed genuinely nervous around people she barely knew.

And, perhaps most strangely of all, she blushed with alarming ease.

"You're not what everyone says," he finally admitted.

Aren looked up. "What do they say?"

Jordan considered softening the truth, then decided against it.

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"They say you're reckless," he said plainly. "And difficult."

Rather than looking offended, Aren simply considered the statement. She could hear the unspoken question beneath it.

'Who are you really?'

She didn't know what the original Ariana had been like, so she gave the simplest truth.

"I think I am... careful," she said softly. "Maybe I was different before. I don't really remember."

Jordan watched her closely.

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He had spent most of his life surrounded by liars men who lied to gain power, men who lied to survive, men who lied because it had become instinct.

He searched her face for any trace of deception.

He found none.

'She's either lying very well... or not lying at all.'

For reasons he could not adequately explain, he found himself believing the latter.

"Shall we inspect the shipment?" Jordan asked eventually, glancing down toward Biscuit, who had somehow migrated to his lap and appeared perfectly content to remain there.

A faint note of regret slipping into his voice at the thought of disturbing the little dog.

"My men have the cases prepared in the hotel's secure loading bay."

"Yes," Aren agreed at once. "Let's go."

Jordan rose from his seat.

The moment he did, Biscuit stood as well and fell into step beside him

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without hesitation.

As the three of them headed toward the elevators together, Biscuit remained glued to Jordan's side as though he had known him his entire life.

Jordan pretended not to notice. Secretly, he found himself hoping the dog would continue following him a little longer.

—

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The private service elevator carried them down in silence.

The loading bay was quiet when they arrived.

Bright fluorescent lights reflected against polished concrete floors. Two Marchetti men waited beside a long steel table where several black weapon cases had already been opened.

Inside, rows of pistols rested beside tactical knives, compact rifles, and neatly arranged ammunition magazines.

The moment Jordan entered, both men straightened.

"Young Boss," they greeted.

Jordan acknowledged them with a short nod, then stepped toward the nearest case and picked up one of the handguns.

"This is the standard defensive package we provide for Lombardi security personnel."

He performed a smooth safety check on the weapon as he continued.

"These models are reliable. Durable. Easy to maintain."

CLICK. CLACK.

He set the weapon back in its slot.

Aren stood and watched with curious eyes. Then, with a slight hesitation, she held out both hands.

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"May I?"

Jordan looked down at her outstretched hands.

Her fingers were slim and pale, looking too delicate for handling weapons. Yet for some strange reason, he felt compelled to hand her the gun.

"...Here."

Aren accepted the weapon with both hands.

"Thank you."

The moment the grip settled into her palm, her entire posture changed.

In one fluid sequence, she ejected the magazine, checked the chamber, and tested the slide tension, weighing the weapon in her hand with terrifying efficiency.

Jordan froze.

So did the men behind him.

'She knows firearms?'

Before anyone could speak, Aren stepped toward the second case. She picked up one of the knives and examined it closely, thumb brushing near the blade without touching the edge.

Her brow furrowed.

"This is not ideal."

Jordan blinked once.

"What?"

Aren glanced between the knife and the pistols laid out on the table.

"These blades are too long. In a nightclub or hotel corridor, they would catch against furniture during a close draw."

She lifted the handgun slightly.

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"And the recoil reset on these handguns is too slow. In a crowded lobby, precision recovery matters more than raw stopping power."

Her face turned apologetic.

"I'm sorry, but these are designed more for open combat zones than civilian interior defense."

Silence settled over the loading bay.

The two Marchetti men openly stared at her, while Jordan didn't move at all.

He knew every specification of the weapons on that table. She had identified flaws most trained buyers never noticed.

"You can tell all that just by handling them?" he asked, quiet and amazed.

Aren blinked, suddenly realizing how blunt she sounded. She handed the gun back to Jordan with both hands, polite again, almost shy.

"I'm sorry. I spoke too bluntly."

"You didn't."

His voice came out softer than before.

Aren let out an exhale, relieved that he wasn't offended. She glanced at the cases, then back at him.

"Do you have lighter models? Something with faster recovery and better maneuverability indoors?"

"Not here," Jordan admitted. "The specialized models are kept at the Marchetti compound. Our primary workshop."

His voice dropped to a quieter tone.

"If you're willing... I'd like to show them to you personally."

Aren's eyes widened. A flush of excitement instantly rushed to her cheeks.

"The workshop?"

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She missed workshops.

The smell of metal. The sound of tools. The quiet focus of people building things with purpose.

With great hesitation, she asked, "Can I... select the models myself?"

Jordan stared at the soft pink coloring her features for a moment too long.

Very quietly, he said,

"As many as you want."

Aren nodded immediately, unable to hide her enthusiasm.

"I would like that very much. When can we go?"

A small smile lit up Jordan's face.

"How about now?"

One of the Marchetti men instantly stiffened.

"Young Boss... workshop visits require prior approval."

The second man looked equally alarmed.

"The Don won't be pleased."

"Then get approval."

The words were cold enough to freeze the room.

Both men fell silent at once.

"Tell my father the Lombardi heiress finds the standard defensive package insufficient," Jordan added firmly. "She'll be selecting the new models personally."

He didn't even look at them as he spoke.

His gaze remained on Aren.

Focused.

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Warm.

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With unmistakable indulgence carefully hidden underneath.

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