

Every Mafia's Favorite Girl – The Soul Known 9

9 "Old Agreement"

Aren's posture remained perfectly calm. 1

Inside, she was panicking.

'Old agreement?!'

She had scoured every message, note, and photo on the phone. There was nothing about any private deal between the original Ariana and Caio Sartori.

"Um... would you mind reminding me which agreement that was? I'm sure I've made quite a few..."

Caio's eyes narrowed, tracking the slight shift in her expression with growing irritation.

"I provide you with supply for your own entertainment. In return, you entertain me. Whenever I demand it."

"...Entertain?" Aren echoed.

Concern hit her like a system error.

She could kill, eliminate, protect. Fire a missile. Snipe a target from a mile out. Distribute food rations to every staff member in the entire estate before anyone even realized they were hungry.

Entertaining people was not exactly part of her skillset.

"Entertainment of... what sort?"

Caio's brow drew even tighter.

The girl used to throw herself at him. Now she was making him spell it out.

"The intimate sort," he said bluntly.

Aren tilted her head, face thoughtful as she tried to process his cryptic words.

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...Intimate?'

"Ah, you mean... You would like me to check your room for threats before you sleep? To stay close? Sit near you at events so you don't feel vulnerable?"

She paused, trying to be thorough.

"Do you need emotional support as well? Or mainly company? I can also make tea."

Caio stared at her.

He searched for a smirk, a coy wink, any trace of mockery. He only found the earnest worry of someone treating his safety like a serious mission.

"Something like that," he said at last, voice thin.

Aren smiled, visibly relieved.

"Oh. That is not difficult at all."

As her pen started moving again, a new concern hit her. Her gaze wandered to the sharp lines of Caio's face, and the way his expensive shirt hung a little loosely off his frame.

"Do you eat properly?" she asked. "I have read that people under sustained threat sometimes forget to eat. You look a little... thin. Under the jacket."

The silence that followed was deafening.

For as long as Caio Sartori had been alive, he couldn't recall ever having been told that he looked thin. And certainly, no one had ever wondered if the man who controlled the city's narcotics trade had eaten enough meals.

"I eat fine," Caio said, in the quietest tone he had ever used in his life.

"I see." Aren wrote in her notebook: Remind client *about* meals.

Satisfied that the negotiation was complete, she stood and walked over to his desk with a small smile.

"If that is everything, I won't waste more of your time. I'll finish discussions

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with the other Houses and inform you if any terms conflict."

She extended her hand toward him, formal and expectant.

Caio stared at the small, pale hand.

The floor felt like it had tilted forty-five degrees. At last, he stood and walked around the desk, coming to stand before her.

Aren's smile grew warmer the closer he approached. When his hand finally shot out and gripped hers, she gave it a gentle, reassuring squeeze.

She let go.

Caio didn't let go.

She tried to pull back gently.

Caio still didn't let go. His grip was like a vise, his knuckles turning white.

Aren's head tilted all the way backward as she looked up at him, the polite smile fading from her face. When she met his gaze, the blue of his eyes had cooled into a terrifying ice.

With a violent pull, he yanked her forward across the space between them.

Biscuit gave a startled *yelp* as Aren stumbled against the desk, the wood striking the back of her thighs.

Her notebook slid sideways.

Her second wrist was caught.

Caio pinned both of her hands above her head in one crushing grip. His other hand braced against the desk beside her as he leaned down until only inches separated them.

"What sort of game are you playing, Ariana Lombardi?"

Aren blinked twice, visibly confused.

"Eh?"

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Caio's jaw only tightened further.

"Don't pretend you forgot!"

His voice dropped dangerously.

"This desk. That couch. The balcony outside. You used to beg me not to stop."

Aren's brain stalled completely.

'Beg him not to stop what?'

Her eyes darted frantically toward the balcony.

'Reconnaissance? Surveillance? Secret meetings? Was there a helicopter on the balcony?'

She looked back at him, utterly bewildered.

"Wha- what do you mean?"

That answer only made something in Caio flared hotter. His instinct screamed at him that this wasn't Ariana Lombardi, but some impossible double.

He searched her features

—

it was the same nose, same lips, same jaw.

He checked the skin on her neck – the bruises he had left just a day ago were still there, fading to a dull yellow–green.

His stomach twisted sharply.

"This **is** truly Ariana', his mind insisted.

Yet when he looked into her eyes, there was no seduction there. No recognition of the intimacy he was throwing in her face.

Only growing concern.

"...Don Caio?" Aren asked carefully. "Are you unwell?"

The words hit Caio like multiple slaps.

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His grip loosened instantly. He pulled her upright, fingers trembling as he reached out to adjust the collar of her sweater, pulling it back over her shoulder.

"My apologies," he said, voice rough. "I... overstepped."

He turned away abruptly, shielding his face with one hand.

His cheeks were burning with a hot, unfamiliar shame. Though he wasn't sure if it was visible, he couldn't let her see even a hint of it.

Aren rubbed her wrists, assessing his state.

'High stress. *Sleep* deprivation. Unresolved grief. Possible hypervigilance.'

"It's... okay," she said softly. "People under active threats can get jumpy. I understand."

Caio shut both eyes completely.

What she said only made it worse.

"You can leave now," he said, voice flat again. "Mrs. Pecora will escort you out."

Aren nodded immediately.

"Of course, I will contact you once I finish reviewing the other contracts."

She bent to retrieve Biscuit, who was now staring at Caio with open distrust, and headed toward the door.

The heavy oak closed behind her with a soft *click*.

Caio remained motionless for several seconds after she was gone. Then he sank into his chair and pulled open the top drawer.

He took out a small piece of paper and stared at it.

Hi *Mister*,

I am very sorry for using your **scissors** without *asking*. They are very *sharp* and *good*. Thank you.

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– A., the note said.

It had been left on the vanity of his bedroom, written in a neat handwriting he couldn't recognize.

Caio read it twice.

Then a fourth time.

He'd already memorized every word.

A few minutes later, the silence of the study was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Boss, it's Leo."

Caio immediately slipped the note back into the drawer and shut it.

"What."

"There's a new request from House Leone."

Irritation crossed Caio's face. His head tipped back against the chair for a second before he spoke again.

"Come in."

The door opened.

Leo entered with the calm caution of a man who had worked for Caio long enough to recognize dangerous moods on sight. He was older by several years, with light brown hair streaked faintly at the temples.

Unlike most men in House Sartori, Leo carried himself without fear or bravado.

Only infinite patience.

He closed the door quietly behind and inclined his head.

"House Leone has extended interest in placing a major order."

Caio's brow instantly furrowed.

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"And this required my personal attention because?"

"There is a complication." Leo spoke carefully, already aware the timing was terrible.

"Lady Chiara requested a private meeting with you personally. A dinner arrangement."

Caio's expression turned visibly colder.

"And?"

"She claims the order will not proceed otherwise."

"Turn her down."

Leo blinked once.

"Boss, the volume she's requesting is unprecedented."

"Must I repeat myself?"

The room chilled several degrees.

Caio leaned back in his chair, eyes sharp with annoyance.

"House Leone traffics labor. We make drugs. There is no operational overlap requiring my presence. Chiara Leone is wasting my time."

Leo inclined his head without protest. He already understood the reasoning; everyone in House Sartori did.

—

assets that actively

If this had been House Lombardi, the situation would be different. They possessed hotels, clubs, and distribution infrastructure benefited House Sartori's operations.

Chiara Leone's request carried no strategic necessity. Only personal interest.

Still, something else lingered in Leo's thoughts.

"I saw Lady Ariana leaving the estate just now," he said cautiously. "You truly intend to use her as part of your security detail?"

"She's not Ariana."

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Leo's brows shifted slightly.

He understood exactly what Caio meant. He had also attended the Summit.

"...She has changed," Leo admitted.

Caio gave a short, humorless laugh.

"That is one way to describe it."

His gaze drifted briefly toward the closed drawer. Then, his expression hardened again.

"Investigate her. Whatever happened to Ariana Lombardi, I want answers."

Leo nodded at once.

"Already underway."

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10 "Let The Dog In"

The Accardi District stood at the heart of Borgata a cold forest of steel and glass skyscrapers that cared nothing for beauty, only power.

On the 82nd floor of the tallest tower, Isidore Accardi's private office overlooked the entire city like a kingdom laid at his feet.

Inside, the room was minimalist and immaculate.

One desk.

One chair.

Floor-to-ceiling windows.

Nothing unnecessary.

Isidore sat behind the desk, eyes fixed on his tablet, his fingers unmoving.

Across the room, Isaac Accardi – Don of House Accardi – leaned against the glass, arms crossed. The city sprawled beneath him like something he already owned, yet his expression remained unimpressed.

“She was trash, Isidore,” Isaac said bluntly. “A drug-addled socialite who couldn’t balance a checkbook, let alone keep a secret.”

He turned slightly, enough to cast his younger brother a hard look.

“Why are we even considering this?”

Isaac was still seething over Isidore’s participation in the bidding at the Summit. However, he knew Isidore never moved a muscle without a thousand calculations behind it.

He had chosen to remain patient until they were behind closed doors. Now, they were behind closed doors.

Isidore, for his part, didn’t look up.

“Trash,” he replied, flat and clipped, “can be recycled into something useful.”

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Isaac exhaled sharply, frustration clear in his voice. “You keep talking in riddles. Would it kill you to speak plainly for once?”

Isidore finally lifted his gaze to his tablet.

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—

a sharp, one-second glare – before returning

‘*Why* must people waste *breath*?’

“The *logic* was clear.’

‘Yet Isaac *needed* it mapped out.’

‘*Being* Don made *him* *dumber* by the day.’

“I had my analysts compile everything on her from the last forty-eight hours,”

Isidore said at last. “The woman who walked into the Summit is not the same woman who was dosing in Sartori’s bed three days ago.”

Isaac’s gaze narrowed.

“So you’re saying she’s sober now.” He shrugged. “Fine. That’s... impressive, I guess. It still doesn’t make her an asset.”

“It makes her a Trojan horse.”

The words landed cleanly. Isidore offered nothing more.

Isaac let out a humorless laugh and shook his head. "There you go again. Next time, remind me to hire a Consigliere who speaks in full sentences."

Isidore granted his brother another glare. A brief one – half a second, he counted.

"No one questions a Lombardi socialite. She can walk into any ballroom, any gala, any bedroom in Borgata without raising suspicion."

Isaac's expression shifted, irritation giving way to thought.

"If there's a breach," Isidore continued, "it won't lead back to us. It will lead to her. A Lombardi girl everyone already assumes is brain-rotted."

Isaac went completely still.

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He turned the idea over in his mind, testing it at different angles, looking for flaws. When he found none, a slow grin spread across his face.

"That," he admitted, "is clever."

'Of course it was.'

The thought passed through Isidore's mind without weight.

"And what do you need from me?" Isaac asked.

Isidore didn't hesitate. "Leak that my contract with her is sexual in nature."

Isaac's brow lifted slightly, already amused.

"A purchased indulgence," Isidore went on, indifferent. "Something I acquired for personal entertainment."

The words carried no embarrassment. No shame. Only utility.

"A pet," Isaac said, tone light.

"If you prefer."

Isaac's grin sharpened.

Before he could say another word, an electronic chime cut through the room.

The receptionist's voice came over the intercom: "*Sir*, Miss Lombardi has arrived."

"Send her in," Isidore replied.

He didn't wait for another response, yet two seconds later, the intercom clicked on again, the receptionist sounding less certain.

"There is... one small problem, **sir**."

Isidore's finger stilled over the tablet.

"What?"

"There's a dog," the receptionist said. "*Miss Lombardi* has asked *if she could* come in with a *dog*. Your permission, *sir?*"

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10 "Let The Dog In"

"No dogs."

Across the room, Isaac let out a scoff.

"A dog? Since when does the Lombardi heiress care about anything that isn't champagne and cameras?"

Isidore didn't reply. His attention had already returned to the tablet, the matter dismissed.

"*But...*" the receptionist hesitated. "She insists the *dog* may feel... lonely outside. She *apologizes* for the inconvenience."

"No," Isidore repeated.

"Sir," the receptionist said quickly. "She's heard you and *apologized*. She's leaving."

Isaac's amusement faded. His brow furrowed as he looked at his brother.

"Isidore," he said slowly, "how much did you propose to Don Gian at the table?"

"A billion."

Isaac's lips pressed into a thin line.

'A billion dollars?'

'And she's walking away over a dog's feelings?'

Isidore's finger hit the intercom button with a sharp *click*.

"Let the dog in."

"Understood, sir."

Isaac pushed off the window, an amused smirk replacing his earlier irritation.

It was rare to see Isidore Accardi recalibrate in real time.

"Good luck with your 'investment, brother," Isaac said.

He didn't wait for a response, just slipped out of the room through a side

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10 "Let The Dog In"

door the moment the main doors slid open.

Aren stepped inside.

—

Biscuit trotted faithfully at her heels – small, scruffy and entirely out of place against

the sterile perfection of the room.

Her eyes found Isidore immediately. He looked exactly as he had at the Summit — like the entire room had been designed around him.

Glasses aligned perfectly on the bridge of his nose.

Suit and tie sharp enough to draw blood.

His golden-blond hair was combed so neatly it looked intentional down to the last strand.

Even the documents on the desk were arranged with unnatural symmetry.

“Mister Accardi,” Aren said, offering a small smile. “Thank you for your approval.”

Isidore didn’t stand to greet her.

—

He evaluated her for exactly three seconds — the cream cardigan, the scruffy dog, the wide, unblinking silver eyes — then returned his attention to the tablet.

“Sit.”

Aren moved at once, lowering herself into the leather chair across from him. Her back was straight, knees pressed together, the posture of a trainee before a commanding officer.

“May I take notes?” she asked. “I don’t wish to forget any details.”

“No.”

The refusal came without pause.

Aren offered no protest. She sat quiet and still, but inside, her admiration for the man increased tenfold.

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10 “Let The Dog In”

‘A real officer,’ she thought. He didn’t even waste a single word on fluff.

Beside her, Biscuit shifted. Then, without warning, he hopped down.

Aren startled.

“Biscuit-”

Her hand shot out, but he had already slipped past her. The little dog trotted toward the desk, nose low, giving the corner of the expensive wood a thorough sniff.

Isidore stopped reading.

Slowly, he lifted his gaze and directed it at the dog.

Biscuit froze in place.

A small, distressed huff escaped him.

Immediately, the dog decided the man was made of permafrost. He retreated to the furthest corner of the room, sat down, and let out a judgmental sigh.

Aren pressed her lips together, visibly flustered.

"I'm sorry," she said. "This is Biscuit. He's new. He's still learning the protocols."

Isidore didn't care for the dog's name or the apology. His attention had already returned to the tablet.

"Your contract with Sartori."

Aren blinked. "I'm sorry?"

"The terms," he said. "What he asked of you. Tell me."

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11 "Okie!"

Aren's expression turned troubled. 1

"Ah, the terms... I don't think it would be right of me to share the details of a private briefing with a third party."

Isidore finally looked up from the tablet. His green eyes settled on her, voice cold and absolute.

"I'm not signing with people I can't trust."

Aren's voice grew softer, quiet yet resolved. "Then I'm afraid I can't sign a contract with you. Loyalty to a client is very important."

"I offered your House the highest bid among three Houses," Isidore countered flatly. "A billion dollars and interest-free loans for future restoration."

Aren stood from her seat and bowed.

"I apologize for wasting your time, Mister Accardi. I shall take my leave now."

One of Isidore's brows shifted upward by perhaps a millimeter.

A dramatic reaction, by his standards.

'No bargaining.'

His gaze followed her calmly as she walked toward the door.

'No hesitation either.'

"Come on, Biscuit, let's go," Aren called.

The dog immediately rose from the corner and trotted after her. Just as her

hand touched the door handle-

"Signorina."

Isidore's voice cut through the room with sudden authority.

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11 "Okie!"

Aren paused and looked back at him.

"Sit."

He gestured toward the chair.

Aren studied his face for a moment. He no longer looked interested in extracting information about the Sartori contract. More importantly, he looked... reasonable again.

A small smile returned to her face as she returned to the chair.

"Thank you," she said warmly. "I appreciate your understanding regarding confidentiality."

Biscuit, however, shared none of Aren's optimism. The little dog returned to the farthest corner of the office and sat down, his back pointed toward

Isidore.

Isidore gave the dog no mind. He set the tablet aside and brought his hands together atop the desk, fingers slowly interlacing.

For the first time since Aren had entered the room, she had his full, undivided attention.

"My terms," he began.

His words came cold and fast, delivered with the rapid-fire precision of a machine gun.

"House Accardi wants House Ombra eliminated. They hold leverage over every other House through their intelligence network. I want their secrets acquired and their network absorbed. You will be my operative. You will meet me on a scheduled basis. You will address me as Master Accardi only."

He paused for the briefest second, scanning her face for any sign of hesitation before continuing.

"You are serving three contracts. That means divided focus. I am reducing the fee to the baseline of five hundred million. Is that fair?"

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11 "Okie!"

Aren listened to every of his word with rapt attention. For the first time since she had woken up in this world, a quiet joy bloomed in her chest.

Unlike the Sartori client, who spoke in confusing riddles of “intimacy” and “memories,” this client spoke a language she understood perfectly: mission structures, clear objectives, and a strict chain of command.

Without hesitation, Aren replied with the standard affirmative she had used for a hundred briefings before:

“Okie!”

Then, remembering his requirement, she snapped her spine even straighter:

“Master Accardi!”

She gave him a wide, attentive smile.

Isidore, for his part, flinched on the spot.

“?????????”

It was a microscopic movement, but his glasses dropped a millimeter lower on the bridge of his nose. Aren didn’t notice.

‘Okie?’his mind recoiled.

No one said “okie” in the Accardi District.

—

with

He found the word deeply... unprofessional. And yet, coming from her that terrifyingly sincere smile – it felt like a bizarrely solid guarantee of mission success.

He adjusted his glasses with a smooth motion as if no changes had ever taken place, then cleared his throat.

“I’m not signing the contract today,” he continued, voice slightly tighter than before. “I don’t tolerate risk. There will be a test of your suitability first. A field evaluation.”

Aren’s eyes brightened. “When?”

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11 “Okie!”

“Not immediately,” he said, regaining his rhythm. “I will contact you via a private device when the timing is optimal. Only then will we finalize the paperwork.”

He slid a small communication device across the glass desk. It was sleek, black, and glowed with a faint blue encryption light.

“For security. Use no other line to reach me.”

Aren stood with an energetic little hop.

“Okie!”

“!!!”

Isidore flinched again.

Harder this time.

He was starting to actively resent the word, yet he couldn't find a logical reason to forbid it.

Instead, he gathered his legendary composure and gestured for her to approach the desk.

"Come."

Aren wasted no time.

She moved to the desk with a brisk stride. Once she was near, he slid a single sheet of paper across the glass and placed a fountain pen beside it.

"Write your name."

Aren clasped both hands behind her back, bending over slightly with curious eyes.

"But... Master Accardi, you already know my name."

"Just write," he said flatly. "Contract protocol."

Aren said nothing more. She picked up the pen with neat, precise movements

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11 "Okie!"

and wrote:

Ariana Lombardi.

Isidore glanced at the writing, then back at Aren. His gaze lingered on her beaming face a second too long.

"I will contact you," he said flatly. "You can leave."

Aren straightened and bowed deeply, the way she would bow to a commanding officer.

"Thank you for the opportunity, Master Accardi."

She picked up the communication device and headed for the door.

Biscuit rose without being called, his tail wagging as if he couldn't wait to be away from the stale air of the skyscraper.

The moment the door closed, Isidore picked up the note.

—

The handwriting was sharp, slanted, and incredibly disciplined – the script of a person who knew how to follow a line and hold a steady hand under pressure.

It was utterly different from the looping, messy, drug-shaken scrawl found in Ariana's old academic files.

Isaac re-entered a moment later, finding his brother staring at the paper in

silence.

"Well?" Isaac asked. "Did she cry? Did she ask for an advance to buy more powder?"

"Neither."

Isidore folded the note, then tucked the note away into the top drawer of his desk.

"Have you ever spoken to the Lombardi heiress before?" he asked.

Isaac let out a short laugh.

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11 "Okie!"

"Once. At the New Year's gala. She was loud, smelled like expensive gin, and tried to touch my watch to see if the diamonds were real. Why?"

Isidore's gaze turned toward the main doors where Aren had just left.

Slowly, he took off his glasses.

"Because that girl is dead. And I'm starting to think whatever's sitting in her place is something far more expensive."

Comment 0

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Every Mafia's Favorite Girl – The Soul Known 12

12 "It's Just Dog Fluid"

Jeremiah stood before the floor-to-ceiling mirror, admiring the man who looked back at him. 1

His light blond hair fell just right, framing a face that had sold more campaigns than he cared to count.

His teal eyes were clear and striking; they held a person's attention even when he wasn't trying.

He would have savored the reflection a moment longer, had his manager, Marco, not been there to shatter the peace with his restless pacing.

"She's Ariana Lombardi, Young Boss," Marco warned for the third time. "She's had three interventions in two years. She's going to be difficult, or high, or both. Most likely both. This is a terrible idea."

Jeremiah didn't answer right away. He tilted his head slightly, studying his reflection from a different angle.

"She dismantled armed men with two fingers, Marco," he said, voice smooth, almost dreamy. "You should've seen the security footage. It was breathtaking."

"She was probably high when she did it!" Marco threw both hands up in the air.

"Adrenaline. Narcotics. Who knows what else. That kind of thing messes with the nervous system."

Jeremiah hummed, low and thoughtful.

"Which," he replied with a lazy smile, "I don't mind at all."

"Young Boss!" Marco's frustration finally cracked. "This is business. We can't put a walking scandal in the Pit. The headlines alone—"

"Marco."

The single word sliced through the air like a blade.

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12 "It's Just Dog Fluid"

Jeremiah's gaze flicked to his manager through the mirror, teal eyes sparkling with tease.

"The scandals," he said lightly, "are always the point."

Marco stopped pacing. He stared at Jeremiah, searching for any sign that this was a joke.

He found none.

Jeremiah watched him through the mirror for a moment longer. Then, a long and weary sigh escaped him.

"Just imagine it," he said, voice softer now. "This is Ariana Lombardi. Millions of followers. A face people would pay to look at. A body every man in this city thinks he deserves."

He tilted his head slightly, already picturing the scene.

"Now, put her in the Pit."

The corner of his mouth curved upward.

"In something provocative. Something delicate. Something that clings when it's soaked through. Sweat. Maybe blood."

A small shrug, careless.

"Hers... or someone else's. Both, if we're lucky."

Marco's brow furrowed, slow and uncertain. He had worked for the Castellanos long enough to think he had seen every shade of madness.

Apparently, he hadn't.

"So that's your plan?" Marco asked, voice hoarse. "Use her as bait? Bring in the high-rollers who want to watch a pretty girl get hurt?"

Jeremiah finally turned away from the mirror and faced Marco fully. For one second, Jeremiah looked almost thoughtful.

Then,

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12 "It's Just Dog Fluid"

He winked.

"Aren't men all secretly a little sadistic?"

The smirk that followed was razor-sharp, cold enough to end the conversation on its own.

Marco opened his mouth, then wisely closed it again.

Jeremiah's expression eased once more, the sharp edges melting back into elegance.

"But truthfully," he added, almost to himself, "I have this eerie feeling the one getting hurt... won't be our dear Ariana."

Ding!

The elevator chimed softly, cutting through the tension of the room.

As the door slid open, Aren stepped into the lounge.

She wore a simple cream cardigan over a modest dress, her short platinum hair neat and unstyled. In her arms she cradled Biscuit, who looked completely out of place among the marble and gold.

Jeremiah's gaze locked onto her immediately.

"Lady Ariana," he greeted, voice like warm silk as he moved toward her with graceful steps. "What a pleasure."

His eyes dropped to the dog.

"And who might this distinguished gentleman be?" he asked, a polite smile curving his lips. "A new member of your security detail?"

"This is Biscuit," Aren said, holding the dog a little closer. "I'm sorry for bringing him. I didn't want to leave him in the car. He gets lonely."

Jeremiah leaned in slightly, still smiling.

"A pleasure to meet you both."

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12 "It's Just Dog Fluid"

Biscuit stared back at him, head tilted.

His nose twitched once.

A second later, he sneezed.

Achoo!

The loud sound echoed in the luxurious room.

A fine mist landed on Jeremiah's perfectly tailored jacket.

Jeremiah froze.

For a fraction of a second, his flawless composure cracked.

He took a sharp step back, blinking twice.

"Ah!"

Aren also stepped back.

"I'm sorry. He's still getting used to air conditioning."

She began fussing over Biscuit, checking his fur with gentle hands.

Jeremiah pulled out a silk handkerchief and wiped his cheek with perfect grace.

'Calm down.'

'Calm down.'

'It's just dog fluid.'

'Very sticky fluid, apparently.'

By the time he lowered it, his smile had returned – smooth, charming, and completely impenetrable.

"It's quite alright," he said, though his voice carried the faintest edge. "These things happen."

He gestured gracefully toward the lounge area.

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12 "It's Just Dog Fluid"

"Would you like a drink? Vintage champagne? Artisanal chocolates? I believe beautiful things should be surrounded by beautiful tastes."

Aren shook her head, still focused on Biscuit.

"No, thank you."

Once Biscuit was fine, she finally looked up at Jeremiah properly.

—

Up close, his face was almost unreal – the perfect symmetry, the pale hair, the striking teal eyes. He reminded her of the painted angels she had once seen in museums in her past life.

She shook her head instantly, reminding herself why she was here.

"I'm here for the terms," she said politely. "I've already settled with Don Caio and Master Accardi. I'd like to be efficient with your time."

Jeremiah's smile twitched, almost imperceptibly.

'Master Accardi?'

The title caught him off guard more than he expected.

Isidore Accardi didn't strike him as the type for such kinks. Yet hearing her say the word sent a sharp itch through him.

He let it go just as quickly.

"Then let us go downstairs," he said warmly. "The real business happens in the Pit."

"Yes, please," Aren replied.

Jeremiah led her toward a hidden service elevator, leaving a stunned and silent Marco behind in the office.

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As the elevator descended, the atmosphere changed.

The air grew heavier, charged with anticipation.

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12 "It's Just Dog Fluid"

When the doors opened, the Pit revealed itself – nothing like the grimy underground rings scattered across the city.

Wide hallways stretched out, lined with original artworks worth millions of dollars. Thick crimson carpet swallowed every footstep, while overhead chandeliers casted warm, dramatic light over everything.

The entire place felt less like a fight club and more like a private theater for the obscenely wealthy.

Jeremiah stepped out first and glanced back at Aren, teal eyes gleaming.

"Welcome, my lady," he said, voice rich with pride, "to the Pit."

Aren took in the glamorous surroundings, then glanced at Jeremiah.

"Why are we coming down here?"

Jeremiah answered her with a small wink.

"Because it has everything to do with the contract I'm offering you."

Comment 0

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