

Mafia God 196

Chapter 196: Send Her In

"Hey, Rick!" Ben poked his head into the office.

Ricardo was leaning back in his chair. His mind wasn't on work.

It hadn't been all day.

"A lady is here to see you," Ben added.

That got his attention.

Ricardo's gaze lifted slowly. "One of the girls?" he asked.

Ben shook his head quickly. "No, no. Scalese or something."

"Shit." His hand came up to his hair, fingers dragging through it roughly. "Send her in," he said quickly.

Ben disappeared just as fast as he had appeared.

Ricardo exhaled sharply, sitting up straighter now. He adjusted his shirt collar, smoothing it down. He hadn't expected her. They hadn't spoken since that night.

A bit of swagger slipped into the way he settled into the chair.

Breaking up with her had been the right decision.

At least, that's what he had told himself, over and over.

It didn't mean it hadn't cost him anything.

The door opened.

Ricardo straightened instinctively, his mind snapping out of its spiral as his attention moved to the door. Anticipation flickered through him. He thought it would be Valentina.

"Miss Scalese!" He was already on his feet.

Veronica stepped inside, closing the door behind her.

"Ricardo..."

"Uh—hi," he said quickly. "Is everything alright?"

"No."

Ricardo's stomach tightened. "What? Valentina—"

"She is why I am here."

"She told you we broke up, I'm guessing," he said.

"She did a whole lot more than that."

"She is pregnant."

"Oh my God."

The chair behind him creaked as he took a step back, his hand instinctively reaching for the edge of the desk to steady himself. His thoughts scattered, collided, reformed too quickly for him to keep track of any single one.

"Oh my God. I didn't know," he said quickly, his eyes snapping back to Veronica. "I swear to you—I didn't know."

"I know. Listen," she continued. "I know my sister can be a handful, and I don't understand what went wrong between you two..."

"No." Ricardo cut in immediately. "It had nothing to do with her. Nothing." He stepped forward slightly, his hands lifting just a fraction. "I swear, Miss Scalese—" he stopped himself, exhaling quickly before starting again. "I am not one of those men." His jaw tightened slightly, frustration flickering through his expression. "I genuinely love your sister."

Veronica folded her arms slowly, her gaze still fixed on him, her mind working through what she was seeing versus what she had expected.

This wasn't the man she had come prepared to confront.

"So explain to me what went wrong," Veronica said. "Because she doesn't understand it either."

Ricardo exhaled sharply. He dragged a hand over his face, his fingers pressing briefly against his eyes. "Oh God... my life is shot." He sank back into his chair, the earlier swagger completely gone now. What remained was a man cornered by his own decisions, watching the consequences arrive all at once.

"Ricardo..."

"Please," he said quickly, gesturing toward the chair across from him. "Sit, Miss Scalese."

She lowered herself into the seat. She sat upright, her gaze fixed on him.

Ricardo leaned forward slightly, his hands clasped loosely together as he stared at the floor for a moment, gathering his thoughts. "I broke up with Valentina... because of the storm surrounding you and Luca."

Veronica's brows drew together slightly, confusion flickering across her face. "I don't understand."

"It's a long story," he began. "But I put myself in a situation where I can be blackmailed. If Luca hears what I've done..." Ricardo continued, his gaze lifting to meet hers briefly before dropping again, "...he's going to kill me. Which," he added with a small, hollow shrug, "doesn't really matter now anyway... if I have a child on the way."

"What have you done?" Veronica asked.

"Mrs. Genovese," he said, the name sitting uneasily on his tongue. "Bianca... she helped put in a word for me with Don Genovese. Got me into the familia here in New York." He glanced up briefly, watching her reaction, then continued before she could interrupt. "It was easy enough," he added, a faint, bitter edge slipping into his tone. "Nonnina is my zia. You know how these things work."

"And what was the price?" Veronica asked, her gaze unwavering.

"She wanted information on you. So when I got here," Ricardo continued, "that's what I did. I gave her the basics. Your name... and what you do."

"Okay..." Veronica said. She leaned back slightly in her chair, one leg crossing over the other, her fingers resting lightly against her arm as she watched him. "Go on."

"Then I met your sister," he said. "And it felt like I'd found... something...Bliss," he corrected himself with a self-aware huff.

Veronica said nothing, but her posture softened just a fraction.

"After your shooting..." Ricardo continued. "Bianca came back. She threatened me," he added, his jaw tightening slightly. "Said if I didn't give her more, she would go to Luca with what she already knew. And

my role in everything. I couldn't live with myself knowing I was handing that woman the armour to hurt you," he continued, his hands spreading slightly, helplessly, "and by extension... hurt Valentina. I couldn't face her," he added. "Not without wanting to spill everything."

"So you broke up with her instead."

"Yeah," he said. "Brilliant move, right?" He pushed himself up from the chair suddenly, restless energy taking over now that the truth was out. His hands moved to his hips, then through his hair, then back down again—nowhere settling for long. "And now I've just made things worse. I gotta see Val."

He was already moving, already halfway toward the door.

"You should know..." Veronica's voice stopped him.

He turned back.

"She doesn't plan on keeping it."

"No," he said. Less denial, more... disbelief. "No..." His mind raced. "I'll quit the job," he said quickly. "We'll relocate. Somewhere else. Anywhere. I can take care of her." He stepped closer to Veronica, his gaze intense now, searching her face. "Miss Scalese, I swear—I can do this."