

Mafia God 286

Chapter 286: You Lost This One

"Something to hold over their heads." Luca added.

"Boss..."

"Calm yourself, Marco." Luca understood what this was costing Marco. But this...whatever was happening right now, was entirely Marco's fault. "You lost this one."

"She is not safe." He said again.

"Then keep her safe," he said finally. "But do it respectably." His eyes held Marco's making sure his instruction didn't leave room for misinterpretation. "Without crossing any lines."

Marghera smelled faintly of the petrochemical plants that had defined its skyline for decades — a working place, a place of cranes and container yards. It had never been beautiful and it had made its peace with that a long time ago.

Bianca had not been here before. She stepped out of the car and took in her surroundings. Her heels found uneven ground immediately, adjusting her weight. She had dressed well. Even here, coming to find a man who lived in a trailer in a district that wasn't on any map she had grown up with, she had dressed as Bianca Genovese.

Even if everything currently suggested otherwise. Ricardo had failed her. She had applied exactly the right pressure at exactly the right points, and he had delivered adequately and then apparently developed a conscience at the least convenient possible moment.

Julian was unclear. That was the most irritating version of failure. He existed in a state of ambiguity that she had come to understand was simply a man who would not spend himself until he could see that he would win.

All the men she had thought would be useful had proven, in their various ways, inadequate.

Which brought her here. To the one person who had never been inadequate. Who was her blood — her brother, her family.

David.

She followed the directions she had memorised through streets that grew progressively less maintained, past men who tracked her passage with hungry eyes. They didn't see women like her very often.

The whistles started immediately. She kept walking. Then she found the trailer sat at the end of a narrow stretch of ground. It was clean — she noted but modest.

David Vitale had been, once upon a time, the answer to every question the family asked about its future. The eldest. The heir apparent. He had been extraordinary.

She stopped at the door. And noticed that the whistles had stopped. She turned slightly and looked back along the stretch of ground she had walked.

Several pairs of eyes found reasons to be elsewhere simultaneously. Bianca smiled. She hadn't even seen him yet and his presence was already doing its work — his reputation operating independently. David barely spoke. She remembered that from childhood but his temper was legendary.

She knocked twice. She stepped back slightly on the narrow metal step and waited. A moment passed. Then another.

Then the door opened. The shock on his face should have been photographed. Should have been documented. He looked at his sister standing on the step outside his trailer in Marghera and became, for one unguarded second, completely undone.

"Fratello," Bianca whispered.

David stepped back from the doorway without speaking. Bianca climbed the small metal steps and entered.

As soon as he pulled the door closed behind her, she turned and hugged him. She hugged him the way she had at twelve, before everything, with the full commitment of someone returning to the only unconditional thing she had ever reliably possessed.

David held her. His arms came around her and pulled her close with a tightness that communicated what his face had already shown in that first unguarded second. His body shook. He kissed her hair. Gently, the way he had when she was a child.

Then he stepped back, held her at arm's length. His eyes moved across her face — cataloguing the changes, measuring the years, looking for the twelve year old girl inside the woman.

"You've grown," he said.

Bianca smiled. "Mama tells me she sends you pictures."

He shrugged. They moved deeper into the trailer. She looked around as she settled into a seat.

It was small. The square footage alone would have fit inside the walk-in wardrobe of her room.

It was kept neatly. And there were touches that carried the fingerprints of a different life. A particular quality of lamp. Books she recognised the spines of. A watch on the narrow counter that had no business being in a trailer and was there anyway, because some things you kept regardless.

The formerly mighty, still refusing to disappear entirely. David took a seat across from her.

"Principessa," he said quietly. "Why are you here?" His sister's presence in a place like this was not something that arrived without serious reason.

She was a princess for a reason. She was never meant to be here. Not even for him.

"I need you, Fratello." She said. "There is no one else I can run to."

David looked at her steadily. The shock of her arrival had moved through him and settled. "Papa?" he said.

"He will just consider me a failure." She said flatly and bitterly. "I cannot have that, David. I can't."

He understood this. He had been on the receiving end of their father's particular brand of judgment. He had lived inside that judgment for years. He was living in its consequences now. "Luciano?" he asked.

Luciano's legend preceded him. David knew his reputation in enough detail to understand that if her own husband couldn't or wouldn't help her, then there was a chance he would fail too.

"He's the reason I am here."

His eyes narrowed.

"No!" Bianca was on her feet immediately, moving toward him with both hands raised. She knew exactly what her brother's silences contained and what they preceded when left unchecked. "No — David, listen to me." She positioned herself in his eyeline. "He didn't hurt me."

David's eyes remained where they were — narrowed, fixed, conducting their own assessment independent of her reassurance.

"He's not like that," she said. "I promise you. That is not — he has never—"

She stopped. Took a breath. David waited. Bianca returned to her seat.