

Mafia God 377

Chapter 377: You Have To Believe Me

"I didn't know that was what I was doing," she said quickly. "Julian used me, Father. You have to believe me!"

"Julian used you," he repeated, one brow rising with deadly contempt. "And you allowed yourself to be used."

Bianca's chin trembled. "Father," she said, "I was taken from you—"

"You were married," Enzo cut in coldly.

"I was taken from you," she insisted, louder this time, the hurt finally pushing against the fear. "From Ma. To a family where I had no friends."

His wife looked up at that, eyes filling.

"My husband wouldn't talk to me," Bianca went on. "He would not look at me. He would not let me in. I took the only lifeline I was given. Julian was the only companion I had," Bianca said. "The only one who spoke to me."

Even Enzo knew what kind of cruelty neglect could become inside an arranged marriage.

"I didn't know what he was planning," Bianca said again. "Father, please..." Her shoulders finally sagged under the burden of pride she had carried too long. She was still kneeling, still trying to hold herself like a Vitale daughter, but now she looked heartbreakingly young all of a sudden.

"I cannot lose you too," she whispered.

His wife's grip tightened around his legs. Bianca looked up at him through wet eyes, no longer trying to sound clever or controlled.

"Don't turn your back on me."

"Bianca Vitale," Enzo said, "if you were wronged, why did you not come to me?"

Why did you do this? Why did you not trust me to handle it. Those were the questions he was actually asking.

Bianca lifted her tear-streaked face to him, breathing unevenly. "Because," she said, "I didn't want you to know that the only thing you ever tasked me with... I failed at it." She kept going because now that she had started, she could not seem to stop. "I failed to make Luca love me."

"And it made me desperate," Bianca whispered. "I..." She swallowed hard. "Father... he couldn't love me, and I couldn't fail you. So I turned to the wrong person, and he used me for his own selfish plot."

Enzo looked down at her. "You will go away," Enzo said at last, "to Paris. For a while. Until all of this dies down."

Her mother let out the smallest breath of relief.

"I cannot walk through town," Enzo continued, "without someone whispering behind my back." His tone sharpened again, bitterness climbing into it. "Hell, everyone thinks the Vitales are backstabbers and betrayers. They think you had my support." His mouth tightened in fury at the insult of it. "If everything had worked, do you have any idea how powerful we would be in this city? The Genovese and Vitale taking down the Bastiones?"

His hand came down hard against the desk. "Now all I hear, left and right, is ridicule."

Bianca lowered her eyes.

"So," Enzo said, "you will go away. I will speak to Don Genovese."

At that, Bianca's head snapped up. "Dad, Don was never on my side."

The bitterness in her voice returned at once. If there was one thing she could still be angry about without shame, it was that.

"He did nothing," she said, "about Luca neglecting me for his mistress!"

"What was he supposed to do?" Enzo spat. "Mistresses are nothing new. I had a mistress. Half the men in the famiglia have mistresses." His hand cut sharply through the air. "Their wives do not go around being stupid. I raised you to be strong," he continued, voice thick with fury and disappointment, "and you let your feelings make fools of us."

"Mistresses do not overthrow wives," she said. "Having a mistress does not mean I am not allowed to sleep with my husband," she said, "or live with him. Luca was with me once," Bianca said. "And even then," she added, her voice trembling with rage more than grief now, "it was as if his mistress was in the room with us."

Her mother looked away.

"Don, his mother—even Nonnina—treated her like the wife," Bianca said. "And I the disposable one."

Her mother agreed because she understood exactly how it would feel to be made to stand in the shape of a wife while everyone around you quietly made room for another woman in the real place.

Enzo exhaled heavily, some of the thunder finally draining out of him. "I will talk to Don," he said. "Leave."

Bianca's mouth tightened. She rose slowly to her feet. Her mother got up with her, reaching out to place a light hand at the center of Bianca's back. Bianca retreated and her mother watched her go with naked sadness in her eyes—sadness for the daughter who had been raised for power and handed loneliness.

Only when Bianca had disappeared beyond the threshold did her mother turn back to Enzo.

Her gaze settled on him. "You cannot keep doing this to our children, Enzo," she said.

"If you had given me children who think with their brains, then we would not be here, would we?" Enzo snarled.

"Think about Bianca first, for God's sakes," she said. "The Genovese have ruined her."

Enzo's scowl deepened.

"No one will want to marry her now. She is ruined." Her voice sharpened on the last word because someone had to say it plainly in this house. "You may be best friends with Massimo, but shouldn't you protect your children?"

His wife held his gaze one moment longer, then turned and walked out. Enzo remained standing behind the desk.

He had no idea what to do now. There was emptiness where his plans used to be. All his hopes were dashed.

David was already cast out of the famiglia, removed from usefulness. Bianca had been the last functional thread in the tapestry. The final hope. If she had borne a child with Luca, then perhaps the family line, the authority, the structure of the Vitale future could have survived.

That had been the plan.

A child between Bianca and Luca to take over the famiglia. Now there was no child. No alliance. Only damage.

Enzo sank slowly into his chair. If no one wanted Bianca anymore... Then the Vitale famiglia was doomed.