

SURRENDER TO THE DON'S EMBRACE (GIO AND MILLIE)

Chapter 2

2 MILLIE

"He became a Made Man at eleven," Enrique said, sharpening his knife like he did every day. The kitchen smelled of tomato and oregano, but it didn't make me feel as comfortable as usual.

"Did he really become a Made Man at eleven?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady. Most people don't become full members of the Mafia until they are sixteen. "Was it because of his father?"

Enrique grinned, showing a gold tooth, and stopped for a moment. "You think he had it easy because he's the Boss' son? No, he killed his first man at eleven, so they decided to initiate him early."

Harper gasped. "He's a monster." Enrique shrugged. "He's just doing what he needs to do. To rule over New York. you can't be weak or afraid." "What

happened?" I wasn't sure I wanted to know. If Gio killed his first man at eleven, how many more had he killed in the nine years since?

Enrique shook his head and scratched the scar on his face. He looked thin and unassuming, but Mother told me he was skilled with a knife. I had never seen him fight. "I don't know the details. I'm not that familiar with New York."

I watched the cook preparing dinner, trying to distract myself from the fear in my stomach. Enrique studied my face. "He's a catch. He'll become the most powerful man on the East coast soon. He'll protect you."

"And who will protect me from him?" I whispered.

Enrique didn't say anything because the answer was obvious: nobody could protect me from Gio after our wedding. Not Enrique, not even my father if he wanted to. In our world, women belonged to their husbands and were under their control

The past couple of months had flown by too quickly, and despite my desire for time to slow down, my engagement party was only two days away. My mother was busy ensuring everything was perfect, ordering the servants around to keep the house spotless and prevent any mishaps. It was a small celebration, limited to our families, Gio's family, and the families of the respective heads of

New York and Chicago, as Enrique insisted for safety reasons due to the recent truce.

I didn't want the engagement party to happen at all. I felt like I didn't need to meet Gio until our wedding day. Meanwhile, my energetic five-year-old brother, Karsen, was excited and wanted to play, but our mother was concerned about maintaining the perfect atmosphere for the guests.

Karsen mentioned that my tears were a common occurrence, revealing that Sienna had spread a rumor that Gio had bought me. This was false, but my sister Harper voiced her disapproval, comparing my situation to being sold like a cow by our father. I tried to hush them, not wanting our father to overhear and get angry.

As the commotion continued, Karsen began to run through the house with Harper and Sienna chasing after him. I followed, worried that they might break something valuable. During our playful chase, we stumbled upon Father's office, and I felt relieved that he wasn't there to catch us.

However, as we turned a corner, we encountered three men, and Karsen came to an abrupt stop. Sienna accidentally ran into the man in the middle. but he remained stable due to his imposing size and strength. It was then that I realized the man was Gio, my future husband, known for his deadly capabilities.

Terrified, I called out to my sister, using her full name to show the seriousness of the situation. All eyes, including Gio's cold gray gaze, were now fixed on me as fear washed over me, knowing that he had the power to crush a man's throat with his bare hands.

He was God-like in stature, towering over the already tall men around him. His hands rested on Sienna's shoulders, but I knew she needed to be away from him. "Sienna, come here," I said firmly, holding out my hand, eager to keep her safe from Gio. She stumbled backward, seeking refuge in my arms, her face buried against my shoulder. Gio's response was a raised eyebrow.

"That's Gio Merante!" Harper said disdainfully, making no effort to hide her disgust. Karsen erupted in anger and lunged at Gio, futilely striking his legs and stomach with his small fists. "Leave Millie alone! You don't get her!"

My heart skipped a beat. The man by Gio's side took a step forward, revealing a gun outline under his vest. Presumably, he was Gio's bodyguard, though I couldn't understand why he would need one.

"No, Valerio," Gio said calmly, and the man froze in place. With one hand, Gio restrained my brother's assault effortlessly. I pushed Sienna towards Harper, who shielded her protectively, and then approached

. ~ : a Gio. Rear gripped me, but I knew I had to get Karsen away from him. Despite the possibility of truce between New York and Chicago, alliances could crumble in an instant. Gio and his men were still our adversaries.

"What a warm welcome we receive. That's the infamous hospitality of the Outfit." remarked Gio's companion, sporting the same black hair but darker eyes. He was a bit smaller and less broad than Gio, but their resemblance marked them as brothers.

"Sebastian," Gio uttered in a low voice that sent shivers down my spine. Karsen was still growling and resisting like a wild animal, but Gio held him at arm's length.

"Karsen," I said firmly, gripping his upper arm. "Enough. That's not how we treat guests." Karsen froze and looked up at me over his shoulder. "He's not a guest. He wants to steal you away, Millie."

Sebastian chuckled. "This is too good. I'm glad Father convinced me to come."

"Ordered you," Gio corrected, his gaze fixed on me. I couldn't meet his eyes. Embarrassment flushed my cheeks as I stood before him. My father and his bodyguards kept Harper, Sienna, and me away from men except for family or those significantly older. Gio was neither young nor old; he was just five years my senior, yet he emanated a mature presence that made me feel like a young girl in his presence.

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Gio released Karsen, and I pulled him close, his back against my legs. I placed my hands on his heaving chest, trying to calm him down. He continued glaring at Gio. I wished I could muster the same courage, but he was a boy, the heir to my father's title, and he didn't have to submit to anyone except the Boss. He could afford to be brave.

"I'm sorry," I said, even though the words tasted bitter. "My brother didn't mean to be disrespectful." "I did!" Karsen yelled. I covered his mouth with my hand, and he squirmed but couldn't break free.

"Don't apologize," Harper interjected sharply, disregarding the warning look I shot her. "It's not our fault that he and his bodyguards take up so much space in the corridor. At least Karsen speaks the truth. Everyone else just kisses his ass because he's going to be the Capo—"

"Harper!" My voice was sharp as a whip. She fell silent, her eyes wide with surprise. "Take Sienna and Karsen to their rooms. Now." "But—" She glanced behind me, and I was grateful I couldn't see Gio's expression

"Now!"

She grabbed Karsen's hand and hurried Sienna away. I didn't think my first encounter with my future husband could have gone any worse. Steeling myself, I turned to face Gio and his men. I expected ~_ fury, but to my surprise, Gio wore a smirk on his face. Embarrassed and nervous

ervatss, now alone with the three men, my stomach churned with nerves. My mother would be livid if she knew I hadn't dressed up for this meeting. Wearing one of my favorite maxi dresses with elbow-length sleeves, I was grateful for the protection the fabric offered. I crossed my arms, unsure of what to do next. "I apologize for my sister and brother. They can be—" I struggled to find a word other than rude.

"Protective of you," Gio said calmly, his deep voice devoid of emotion. "This is my brother, Sebastian."

Sebastian's face broke into a wide grin, a sight that relieved me as I was anxious about any physical contact. If either of them had come any closer, I feared I'd lose my composure. "And this is my right hand, Valerio," Sebastian introduced, with Valerio giving me a quick nod before returning to scanning the corridor. I wondered why he seemed so guarded; we had no hidden assassins waiting to strike.

Focusing on Gio's chin, I pretended to meet his gaze while taking a step back. "I should go to my siblings."

Gio's expression showed that he understood more than I wished him to, but I didn't care anymore if he saw my discomfort and fear. I didn't wait for him to grant permission - after all, he wasn't my husband or fiancé yet. I turned and briskly walked away, proud that I had resisted the urge to run