

Undressed By The Mafia God #Chapter 111: You Are Relentless - Read Undressed By The Mafia God Chapter 111: You Are Relentless

Chapter 111: You Are Relentless

Valentina tilted her head slightly, and let her eyes soften into what could only be described as a perfectly crafted sheepish look. Her lips pursed in a subtle pout. "So...you going to train me?" she asked.

Marco groaned, rubbing the back of his neck, the muscles tense beneath his shirt. His dark eyes narrowed, the lines of his face hardening with determination. He shook his head sharply. "No! You should be thinking about your future, school, normal life. Something girls your age think about," he said.

Valentina tilted her head, pouting more exaggeratedly, her eyes wide and pleading. "Marco..." she whined softly.

"No!" he barked. He gestured sharply to one of the guards waiting nearby. "Get a car, get her back home! Now!"

"Please..." she tugged at his shirt.

"Fine! Fine! God, you are relentless. I will teach you how to handle a gun," he said, "but that doesn't mean you get to carry it. And I am sure your sister will agree with me!"

She was insufferably bold, recklessly so.

A sudden, familiar voice cut through the air. "Marco!"

He turned sharply, and saw Ricardo emerging from a vehicle that belonged to Luca.

He straightened immediately. "Ricardo," he said.

Ricardo's lips pulled into a formal smile. "Marco..." His eyes flicked briefly toward Valentina, who remained standing close by, clearly caught in fascination, her gaze unabashed.

"What are you doing here, Ricardo?"

"Don sent me here," he said.

Marco's eyebrows knitted together. "Why?"

"I'd rather discuss that with Luciano," Ricardo replied, his gaze flicking toward the underground facility. "Is he in?"

Marco's eyes followed the car slowly circling in the lot, the engine purring softly. He glanced at Valentina, who stood nearby, her gaze unabashedly locked on Ricardo. Her dark eyes sparkled, and a faint blush warmed her cheeks. Marco exhaled through his nose. *Lord help me*, he thought.

"Will you stop undressing him in your head?" Marco said sharply, pinching her arm lightly. It only drew a giggle from Valentina.

Valentina straightened and extended her hand, her confidence unshaken. "Hi, I am Valentina Scalse. I'm eighteen years old. Legal age," she said brightly, a subtle challenge hidden beneath her flirtatious grin.

Ricardo arched a brow, his hand rising slowly to take hers. His touch was firm, yet polite, betraying the faintest flicker of amusement at the boldness of this American girl. "I'm Ricardo," he said, eyes briefly studying her posture, her deliberate boldness, the fearless tilt of her chin.

He had heard stories of American women, of their fearless charm and audacious confidence—but to meet it in a girl barely legal was...refreshing.

"Okay, that's enough!" Marco snapped. He moved swiftly, placing a steady hand on Valentina's back and guiding her toward the vehicle. She gave him a look of mock indignation, her lips curving into a teasing smile.

Before sliding into the car, she turned her head slightly, letting her long hair cascade over one shoulder, and gave Ricardo a flirty wave. Her smile was audacious, yet there was a playful innocence behind it.

As the car doors closed, Marco exhaled slowly, his muscles finally relaxing. He turned back to find Ricardo, his own lips curling into a ridiculous, self-satisfied smile.

Marco's gaze sharpened instantly, the edge returning to his tone. "Stay away from her," he warned, his dark eyes locking onto Ricardo's.

Ricardo walked alongside Marco down the wide hallway of the underground compound. "She your sister?" Ricardo asked casually.

"No," Marco said sharply, keeping his own pace steady.

"Your girl? I mean I won't judge..." Ricardo teased.

"Shut up!" Marco snapped. "When did you get into town?"

"A few hours ago," Ricardo replied smoothly, his gaze sliding over the hallway. "Nonnina had me brought here immediately."

They approached the doors that led into Luciano's office. Marco's hand hovered for a brief moment over the handle. "Wait here," he said, and pushed the door open.

Inside, Luca stood there, pouring a finger of whiskey into a glass. His eyes flicked toward the door as Marco entered. "Has my pizza arrived?" he asked casually, swirling the whiskey.

"You ordered pizza?" Marco asked, arching a brow.

"Yes," Luca replied smoothly. "Have them bring it down when it arrives."

"Of course. But someone is here to see you," Marco said, shifting slightly.

"Who?" Luca asked, setting the glass down.

"Ricardo," Marco replied.

"Ricardo? Nonni's nephew?"

"Yes..." Marco said, stepping back slightly, giving space for the meeting to unfold.

"Well, I'll be damned. Bring him in,"

Marco stepped out briefly and returned a moment later with Ricardo, eyes scanning the room. As the door closed behind them, Ricardo's lips curved into a confident smile.

"Luciano!" Ricardo called out.

"Ricardo! You bastard!" Luciano exclaimed, moving forward. He grabbed Ricardo's face in his hands. "How didn't I know you were going to be in town?"

"It was supposed to be a surprise for Nonni," he said. "I told Don to hold off on telling you because I knew you suck at keeping secrets from her."

"Guilty as charged," he admitted. "Father sent you here?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I joined the familia. Yay! Just concluded my initiation." Ricardo said, letting a hint of amusement creep into his voice.

Luca blinked slowly, trying to process the news. "What the fuck is happening with everyone today? I thought you studied medicine."

"Yeah," Ricardo said. "Difficult to get a good job in Vienna unless you are a personal doctor for one of the familias. So, I talked to Don and he thought I might be of better use to you here." His dark eyes flicked briefly to Marco, before returning to Luca, measuring reactions.

"Why here? I don't understand. I have all the men I need," Luca said.

Ricardo cleared his throat, an acknowledgment of the delicate tension threading the room. "He thought you might need a replacement for Marco."

Luca's eyes narrowed further. "Why would I need a replacement for him?"

"I don't know much," he admitted. "But word back at home as soon as your brother came was that Marco betrayed you. Honestly, I am surprised to see him here. Don was of the opinion he would be dead already." He turned briefly to Marco, eyes meeting his with a flicker of teasing caution. "No offense."

(Here's in advance to 200 power stones because I am going to bed. Got church in the morning. Can't skip it again this week or I will have the entire congregation coming for a welfare check up. plus, I have a week break off work! yay! I'm a write till I drop! Lol

Chapter 112: Marco Is Not Being Replaced

"None taken," Marco said.

"Marco is not being replaced," Luca said flatly. "He did what he had to do to stop Bastardi from double crossing me." He turned slowly toward Marco. "Book a flight for me to Vienna tomorrow," Luca continued. "It's time I told Father to either let me handle my shit the way I see fit or find someone else to run New York."

This was not about Marco. Not really. This was about authority. About a father who still reached across an ocean to tug invisible strings.

"Luciano..." Marco started.

"Do as I say, Marco."

"Of course." He turned and walked out.

Ricardo shifted slightly, running a hand through his dark hair.

"I don't mean to cause any trouble, Luciano," he began.

Luca waved a hand dismissively, already reaching for his whiskey again. "No trouble at all," he said. "Spend a few days with your Zia and return to Vienna."

"Of course... of course," Ricardo replied smoothly. He nodded once and left.

He stepped into the garage. That was when he saw a pizza delivery guy walking briskly toward the entrance, balancing two boxes in his hands. The logo across the man's chest caught Ricardo's attention instantly.

Scalese Pizza Parlour.

The same shirt. The same logo.

The same name as the woman he had encountered that morning at Luca's house.

He slowed his steps, eyes narrowing slightly.

The delivery guy disappeared.

Ricardo stood there for a moment, thoughtful.

He reached the car waiting. The driver stepped out immediately, opening the rear door.

Ricardo paused before getting in. "I'm hungry," he said casually. "Let's make a stop at Scalese Pizza Parlour."

"Yes, sir."

Back inside Luca's office, the whiskey glass sat abandoned near the edge of his desk. The pizza box lay unopened.

But it wasn't the pizza box he reached for first.

He slid a smaller box open first, fingers brushing over the soft white fabric.

Her underwear. White. Delicate lace along the edges.

He held it up for a moment, the fabric suspended between his fingers. He brought it to his face and inhaled.

That faint sweetness that lingered between her legs when he pressed his mouth there.

"Perfect," he muttered under his breath.

He closed his eyes briefly, jaw tightening as he exhaled slowly. He slipped the lace into the inner pocket of his jacket, close to his chest.

That was enough.

Enough to sharpen his focus. Enough to make the rest of the day tolerable.

Across the city, Veronica's phone vibrated.

The shop was quiet. The ovens hummed softly, staff moving about in the background.

Valentina had just arrived and was leaning against the counter, scrolling through her phone with exaggerated boredom.

Veronica glanced down at the screen.

Luca.

Her face changed instantly. Her lips curved. Her eyes brightened. She picked up the phone and answered smoothly. "Hello," she said softly. "Got my package?"

"Yes. Yes, I did," Luca replied. "You smell marvelous. I'm sitting here thinking how you are currently naked under those jeans."

Heat flared through her instantly.

Vee chuckled. "Are you now?" She crossed one leg over the other, feeling the cool denim against bare skin beneath. "Will you be home early today?" she asked, the edge in her voice betraying her impatience. She wanted him.

And she needed to talk.

About Voss. About the allegations.

"Uh... I'll come pick you up as soon as I am done here. I'll bring an Uber so we can take your car," Luca said.

"Okay."

"Where are you right now?"

"I'm sitting at my desk behind the counter."

She glanced up instinctively as she said it.

"Touch yourself for me."

Her stomach dropped. "What? Valentina is here. Tony and Rosa are here!" Vee hissed under her breath, pressing the phone tighter to her ear. She swiveled slightly in her chair.

"Touch yourself. Just unzip your jeans and put your finger inside you, Bambola."

"Luca! No!" She kept her voice low, but her pulse spiked hard against her throat. Her fingers trembled slightly where they rested on the desk. Heat rushed up her neck.

"You need to learn not to say no to me."

"Or what?"

"Are you asking me that question?"

"Uh... yeah?" she pushed, heart hammering now.

"Vee, I am well within my rights to fuck you in plain view of anyone who wants to watch."

Her breath caught. "And that is a violation of my own rights," she shot back.

She shifted in her seat. Her thighs pressed together involuntarily, betraying her body's reaction to his words.

"And what if you're the one begging me to?" Luca asked.

"I'm pretty sure I will not be doing that kind of begging."

"We'll see."

She adjusted her position again, trying to will the heat away. "Listen..." Vee cut in quickly, forcing the shift before he could drag her deeper. "Uh... I got another visit from Detective Voss. We need to talk."

"Alright. I'll see you when I get there," Luca said.

"Love you," she replied.

"Obsessed with you," he answered, and the line went dead.

Veronica slid the phone into her pocket and scanned the shop.

Veronica folded her arms.

The drought of walk in customers had been stretching longer than she liked. After Inferi's men had attacked the shop, business had dipped. Fear did that. Even when the

damage was repaired, even when Luca made sure Ineri was gone forever, fear lingered.

The bell above the door jingled.

Veronica's head snapped up, hope flashing across her face. A customer. Finally.

Then recognition hit.

It was the man from this morning. The one she had seen at Luca's house.

She rose from her stool immediately.

But Valentina moved faster.

"I got this!" Valentina said brightly, already smoothing her hair with both hands as she darted toward the counter.

"What the hell—" Veronica muttered under her breath, watching her younger sister practically glide across.

Valentina's energy shifted instantly. That reckless sparkle in her eyes that Veronica knew too well.

Veronica stepped back, crossing her arms, choosing to observe.

Ricardo approached the counter with a smile that belonged in black and white cinema. It was devastatingly effective, and just restrained enough not to look arrogant.

"Hey," he said, leaning casually against the counter. "I know you."

Valentina giggled, a soft, musical sound. "I know you too." She leaned forward slightly, forearms resting on the counter.

Veronica rolled her eyes so hard it was a miracle she did not strain something.

Enough.

She stepped forward and slid between them.

"And I know you too," she said coolly. "What are you doing here?" she continued, arching a brow. "Besides flirting with my sister?"

Valentina gasped softly in mock offense.

"Wow! No! I'm not... I mean... just came for pizza." Ricardo's composure slipped. The polished confidence cracked at the edges before he recovered it with a quick smile. He had not expected to see Valentina here. He had come for information. That was the truth of it.

Bianca's suspicion had grown exhausting. If he could understand what had Luca so tangled, maybe he could feed Bianca enough scraps to quiet her. This stop was strategic.

It was not supposed to be distracting.

"What would you like to order?" Valentina asked brightly, physically nudging Veronica aside with her hip.

Veronica shot her a look that promised a later conversation.

Ricardo cleared his throat and glanced up at the menu board. "Pizza without obvious peppers and onions," he said carefully. "I like a lot of cheese. Sausages, of course."

Valentina's fingers moved swiftly over the register screen, nails tapping softly against glass. "You don't like veggies, uhn."

"I just prefer them in very tiny bits," Ricardo replied smoothly. "Or blended instead."

"That's a peculiar taste," she said.

"I'm a peculiar man," he answered.

Valentina's lips curved.

She tore the small printed ticket from the machine and handed it back to Rosa. "One custom. Extra cheese," she called out.

Rosa raised a brow knowingly before sliding the ticket onto the metal rack for the baker.

"You can wait over there," Valentina said, gesturing toward the dining area.

Ricardo turned slightly, surveying the empty tables.

"By myself?" he asked lightly.

"You want some company?" she asked.

Veronica stiffened from behind the counter, arms crossing instinctively.

"Uh... of course," he said finally.

Valentina smiled, victorious and entirely too pleased with herself.

"I'll get you a bottle of soda and be right by."

"Best customer service ever," Ricardo said lightly, offering a half salute with two fingers before turning away from the counter. His smile lingered even as he stepped toward the row of empty booths.

Valentina pivoted away from the counter, only to collide directly into Veronica, who had planted herself behind her.

The impact made Valentina gasp. Veronica did not budge.

"That was pathetic," Vee said flatly.

Valentina pressed a hand to her chest. "I know," she admitted, sighing dramatically. "But he is so cute."

"Where did you meet him?"

"Uh... I can't tell you. Yet," Valentina said carefully, glancing toward the dining area where Ricardo now sat, scanning the room.

(Please check out this novel below. It is the work of a webnovel colleague who needs more feedback about her work. She is just venturing into this space and well...needs all the encouragement she can get.)

Chapter 113: I'll PDA With You Anytime

Veronica's eyes narrowed immediately. "Yet?" she repeated.

"I promise I will tell you," Valentina said quickly. "But not yet."

"Are you in trouble?" Veronica asked.

"No," Valentina said firmly.

"That's all I need to know," Veronica said quietly, stepping aside.

The Uber rolled to a stop in front of the pizza parlour just as dusk began painting the sky in bruised purples and fading gold. The neon sign in the window flickered on, casting a red glow onto the sidewalk.

Veronica stepped out of the shop at the same moment, waving back at Rosa and Tony through the glass door. The bell jingled softly behind her as it closed.

Luca emerged from the Uber. Dark suit jacket thrown over broad shoulders, shirt collar open slightly, hair still perfectly in place despite the long day. His eyes locked on her instantly.

The tension he carried all afternoon dissolved the second he reached her.

He kissed her. Hard. Urgent. His hand slid into her hair, fingers curling at the nape of her neck as he pulled her closer.

Veronica's hands came up automatically, gripping his shirt. The kiss deepened.

When he finally let her breathe, she blinked up at him, cheeks flushed.

"I didn't know you were into PDA," she laughed softly, catching her breath.

"I'll PDA with you anytime, Bambola," he replied, brushing his thumb along her lower lip. "You ready?"

"Yeah," she said quietly. She handed him her car keys.

He took them without breaking eye contact, then leaned in briefly, pressing a slower kiss to her forehead this time.

"Wait here," he murmured.

He crossed to the street parking where her car sat under the glow of a flickering lamp post.

Veronica stood on the sidewalk, arms wrapped loosely around herself against the evening chill.

Five minutes later, he pulled the car up smoothly in front of her.

He leaned across the passenger seat and pushed the door open.

She stepped forward, and slid inside. "So Detective Voss..." she started, as the car eased into traffic.

He drove with one hand resting loosely on the steering wheel, the other relaxed against the gearshift. "Not here, Bambola," he said, the corner of his mouth lifting in a faint smile. "You keep sensitive topics until you are in a safe place."

Veronica leaned back into the leather seat and exhaled slowly. She was still learning the architecture of his world. The invisible lines. The unseen threats. In her world, conversations happened wherever they needed to. In his, words could be weapons.

Being in love with a mafia god did not come with a handbook.

"I got you something," Luca said suddenly, breaking the silence.

Her head turned sharply toward him. "Luca? Another gift?"

"You still wear the necklace, right?" he asked.

Veronica reached beneath the soft cotton of her fitted t shirt and pulled the pendant free.

"Right here," she said quietly.

His jaw flexed with satisfaction. "That one is for safety." He reached into the inside pocket of his pants and pulled out a small black box. He handed it to her. "This one," he said softly, "is to inform everyone you belong to a Genovese. Specifically me."

Her fingers traced the edges before she opened it slowly.

Inside, nestled against dark velvet, lay a bracelet forged in heavy gold. Studs lined its band.

At its center was a large calligraphed G.

And carved into the middle of that G was an L.

"This is beautiful, Luca," she said. "How is it you come up with such pretty gifts with conditions attached to them?"

"You're branding me," she said quietly.

"Don't you belong to me?" he asked.

They had just pulled into the narrow street where Luca's house stood.

Veronica turned toward him slowly. "Of course, I do," she answered.

"Your sister visited me today," he said.

"I knew the little shit was up to something," she muttered, folding her arms. "Why?"

"I think you should speak with her yourself. I do not want to get in the middle of this," he added with a low chuckle.

"Is that where she met Ricardo?" Veronica asked.

"I suppose," Luca said. "Why?"

She hesitated for a second. Then, "She seems quite smitten with him."

"Well," he said evenly, "unless you want her to move to Italy, then you better save her from the heartache and break it off."

"Hmmm..." she hummed, noncommittal.

"Speaking of," Luca continued casually, "I will be leaving for Vienna in the morning."

Veronica's gaze snapped to him.

Vienna.

Where his wife was.

"Okay," she said.

One word. Flat.

Luca's eyes sharpened immediately. "I sense some opposition."

"No, nothing," she replied.

"It's not nothing," he emphasized.

"Just let it go, Luca."

"Come on. Tell me."

"You never listen," she shot back, rolling her eyes. She exhaled slowly, fighting herself. Whatever she said next would sound small. Petty. Emotional.

"If you know that then tell me what is suddenly wrong," Luca asserted.

The car rolled slowly toward the iron gates of his estate. Black wrought metal twisted into elaborate patterns. A guard stepped forward from the small security booth, rifle slung casually across his chest. He nodded once, recognizing the vehicle, then moved to unlock the gates.

Veronica stared straight ahead, hands clasped tightly in her lap. "Vienna is where your wife is," she said.

"Uh... yes... so?" Luca replied, glancing at her as the gates began to part with a slow mechanical groan.

"So?" she echoed, turning toward him now. "You are going to see her, aren't you?"

He exhaled through his nose impatiently. "Not particularly," he said. "But of course I will see her. She lives in the Genovese house."

Of course.

"Of course," Veronica repeated aloud.

The car rolled forward through the open gates and into the courtyard. The mansion loomed ahead.

"What is happening here?" Luca demanded, cutting the engine but not looking at her. "You always knew I am married. What... what is this?"

"What is this?" she repeated. "Look," she said, turning fully toward him now, her dark blonde hair catching the dim interior light. "I have a right to feel whatever way I feel. I don't need you to validate my feelings."

Luca's head snapped toward her. "Woman, you're testing me," he said, his tone dropping lower as he shifted the car fully into park.

"Which is why I asked you to let it go," she shot back.

"What exactly is the problem?" he pressed. "I can't go to Vienna?"

She threw her hands up. "You can do whatever the hell you want!" she snapped, already reaching for the door handle.

The second the car stilled, she stepped out.

"Fucking hell!"

All he saw was Veronica's back as she strode away from him, shoulders rigid with fury.

He shoved the door open and stepped out. "Vee!" he shouted. She didn't slow down. Didn't even turn her head.

She crossed the courtyard and disappeared along the path that curved behind the mansion, toward the smaller wing.

"Vee! Goddamnit. Answer me when I call you!"

"Fuck you!" she shot back over her shoulder without breaking stride. She reached her door. Her mouth tight. She pushed the door open and stepped inside, slamming it just as Luca reached the threshold.

The door hit his chest.

He swore under his breath and shoved it back open, stepping into her flat. He grabbed her arm. "What the fuck is wrong with you?" His fingers circled her wrist firmly enough to stop her.

She wrenched her hand free.

"Me?!" she fired back, turning on him fully now. Her eyes were bright, furious, wounded. "I'm not the one who fucked me and then running off to be with the wife!"

"I'm not going there to be with the wife!" he snapped.

"Then tell me," she shot back, stepping closer to him instead of retreating, her chest rising with each breath, "are you going to fuck her?!"

His nostrils flared. "She is my wife!"

"Exactly."

"You are being a child!" Luca barked in frustration.

"Go to hell, Luca!" she threw over her shoulder as she ripped her bag off her shoulder and flung it onto the living room chair. She headed toward the bedroom.

He caught her again. His hand wrapped around her arm, stronger this time, pulling her back with enough force that she stumbled. She collided with the back of the velvet sofa, trapped between it and his body as he stepped into her space.

"Don't walk away from me," he warned.

She glared up at him, breath uneven, her back pressing into the edge of the sofa cushion.

"You chose this!" Luca snapped.

"What am I supposed to do while you are off with her, uhn?" she demanded, stepping into him now, refusing to be physically overpowered by his height. "Sit here in your little annex like a well-kept secret? Count the hours until you decide I'm worth returning to?"

"You wait for me," he said.

"Like hell I will!" Vee yelled.

"What does that mean?" .

"It means what it means." Her chin lifted. Defiant. Reckless.

Chapter 114: She Is My Wife

His hand came up, fingers wrapping around her jaw. His thumb pressed into the soft curve beneath her ear, tilting her face upward so she had no choice but to look at him.

"You fuck anyone else," he said, "I'm setting us both on fire. Don't test me."

Her lips curved. "You wanna say that again," she murmured, "and imagine it coming from my mouth?"

His fingers tightened.

The thought hit him. Someone else's hands on her. Someone else's mouth.

It cut deeper than he had expected.

"Vee...I can't... I can't get out of it. I cannot avoid it. She is my wife."

"Then you shouldn't have bothered with me in the first place," she shot back immediately. The heat in her eyes was hurt laid bare. "We are trapped with each other. You fuck someone else, I fuck someone else."

"Tell me," Luca said suddenly, stepping back just enough to create space before delivering the blow he knew would wound, "which one of us paid fucking ten million for the other?"

Her eyes went cold.

Then her hand moved.

The crack of her palm against his face echoed in the room.

It snapped his head to the side.

"Get the hell away from me, you fucking asshole."

Luca slowly turned his face back toward her. "I'm not leaving until we sort this out," Luca said.

Veronica tried to shove past him anyway.

She hit him in the chest, once, twice, again, her fists striking the hard wall of muscle beneath his shirt. "Let me go! Let me go!"

He caught her wrists mid-swing. His fingers wrapped around them firmly. She struggled, dark blonde hair falling across her face in disarray.

"Vee," he said, turning her around so her back was to him, pulling her against his chest. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. It was stupid. I'm sorry."

"Let go of me!" she demanded again, her body tense in his hold.

"I can't."

He bent his head, pressing his mouth to the curve of her neck. His lips lingered against her skin, warm against the pulse beating there.

"I'm sorry," he murmured again, another kiss just below her ear. "I'm sorry, babe."

He repeated it, each word brushing against her skin with heat. The anger that had coiled between them began to unravel slowly, thread by thread. Her fists, once rigid, started to lose their fight. Her shoulders sagged, exhaustion replacing fury.

"You can't take what you dish, can you?" she said finally. "And then every time you throw the fact that you bought me right at my face."

He released her hands and gently swept her hair back from her face, exposing her neck again. "I can't have anyone else touch you, Vee," he said. "I can't." His lips moved over her skin again. "If I could get out of this marriage, I would," he continued. "But I can't."

His hand slid beneath the hem of her shirt, palm flattening against the warmth of her stomach first, fingers splaying there. He moved slowly. His touch traveled upward until he found the curve of her breast beneath the fabric.

"All I can think about is you," he said. "You've become the reason I breathe. Bambola..." he breathed.

"Luca... don't." She reached for his hands where they held her breasts, fingers curling around his wrists. "You can't do this to me and fly away to..."

"Please... forgive me for every sin. The ones I have committed and the ones I will commit. If I had met you a year ago, I'd marry you in a heartbeat."

His fingers moved down her torso impatiently, skimming her waist, catching the button of her jeans. He undid it. The zipper followed in a soft, treacherous sound that seemed louder than it was.

"Luca..." She struggled again.

"Don't deny me." His mouth brushed the shell of her ear. "I've wanted you all day. I can't take days away without being inside you." He slid his hand inside her jeans and stilled. "You've wanted me too." His fingers found warmth and readiness that betrayed her protests. She was his.

Her breath hitched, then broke into a soft, helpless sound that trembled through her. The moan slipped out, confirming everything he had already known.

He exhaled slowly against her neck. "You feel what I feel," he murmured.

He pushed her jeans lower with firm inevitability, until they pooled halfway down her thighs. His hand moved with more urgency inside her while his other hand freed himself.

Veronica bent forward in surrender to sensation. Her fingers gripped the head of the sofa. The world narrowed to the pressure of his touch, the heat of his body against her back, the way his breath grew heavier with every second.

"You're mine," he said quietly. "Do you understand that? Mine."

Luca replaced his fingers with his cock. His hand slid to her lower back, pressing her down further, guiding her into the exact angle he wanted.

Vee cried out. Her fingers reached back instinctively, gripping his thighs as he thrust forward with force that bordered on desperate. He caught the fabric of her shirt in his fist and pulled, arching her spine, reshaping her posture to suit his need. The new angle sent a shock through her, a place inside her responding that she had not known existed until him.

Her eyes fluttered shut, her body yielding to the rhythm he set. The room blurred. The argument dissolved into the overwhelming awareness of him. The way he filled her. The way he moved.

"Oh God...You feel that? You feel what you do to me? You get better and better," he muttered, his forehead briefly dropping to her shoulder. "Take that fucking cock, Bambola."

Vee's mouth parted helplessly, breath coming in broken pulls. Words dissolved into gasps. The stretch of him, the relentless rhythm, the intensity of his focus made everything else insignificant. She tightened around him because her body refused to do anything else.

"Yes... yes..." she breathed.

He felt the way she clenched around him. The way she trembled. A dark satisfaction flickered across his face because she responded only to him this way.

He pulled her upright suddenly, hands firm on her hips, bringing her back against his chest. Her legs closed, trapping him deeper, the sensation intensifying for both of them without breaking the rhythm he maintained. The new closeness changed everything. It was no longer just force.

His mouth found her neck, biting, breathing her in. "You think I'd go to Vienna and forget this?" he murmured against her skin. "You think I'd lie in another bed and not feel you around me?"

"I'm cumming, Luca," she gasped. "I'm cumming. Please... I'm cumming."

His finger slid inside her, guiding, urging, demanding her surrender.

"Remember this when I'm gone," he said. "Remember who makes you feel like this."

"You give me your cum babe, only me," Luca growled against her ear, his voice thick with need and something far more fragile beneath it. "I'll worship you for the rest of my life. Just give only me."

Vee's body answered. Her release tore through her with a force that left her shaking, her cry echoing through the room, stripped of restraint.

"That's it," Luca breathed. "That's it, gorgeous. No one else makes me feel like this. No one touches me the way you do," he added, the rhythm of his movements turning urgent as his own release surged closer. He buried his face against her neck, teeth sinking into her skin as his body gave in violently. "God help me," he muttered hoarsely against her skin. "I'm going to die on this hill."

Vee laughed.

It was breathless and startled, bubbling out of her in the middle of the wreckage of what they had just done.

Behind her, Luca stilled for half a second before swatting her sharply on the backside.

"Oh, that's funny, huh?" he muttered, still catching his breath, his chest rising and falling heavily against her back. A faint shiver ran through him, the aftermath still coursing through his muscles.

"Actually," she said, trying and failing to suppress another laugh, "it is."

He exhaled slowly, steadying himself, before turning her in his arms to face him. For a moment he just looked at her. Flushed skin. Eyes bright from release and emotion. His hand came up to cradle her face.

Then he kissed her.

When he pulled back, his forehead rested against hers.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly. "I'm so sorry."

"I'll think of a way you can pay me back," she said softly.

He kissed her again

"I'll give you anything, babe. Just ask me, anything," he said.

"Be safe," she said simply. "And come back to me."

He reached for her waist, pulling her flush against him.

"Always," he said. "Fucking always."

She stepped back from him then, bent to pull her jeans back up.

Luca zipped himself up.

She turned toward her bag on the chair, rummaging through it until she found the small white box she had tucked inside earlier that morning. She opened it and pulled out the blister pack.

Chapter 115: I Am Obsessed With You

Luca's brow lifted as he fastened his belt. "What's that?"

"Contraceptives," she said. "Got them this morning."

"Ah... right."

She popped one into her mouth and swallowed it dry.

"I'm going to go take a shower," she said.

"I'll check in with Nonnina and have her bring my dinner here," Luca said automatically, slipping back into routine.

"I thought you have a guest. Ricardo?"

He exhaled, running a hand through his hair. "Yeah. Forgot about that. I'll catch up with him and be right back."

"Of course," Vee said. She slipped the pill pack back into her bag and closed it carefully.

There were things he wanted to say.

About the pills.

But tonight had already bled enough.

Tonight was not the night to ignite another war.

They had barely survived the last one.

So instead of addressing the pill, instead of demanding explanations or staking another claim, he stepped back toward her.

He cupped her face in his hands, thumbs brushing along her cheekbones. "I am obsessed with you," he said.

"You better be," she said, folding her arms loosely beneath her chest. "Because while you are in Vienna, your card is going to be keeping me company."

Luca's mouth curved. His hands settled at her waist. "Whatever you need to do to let your anger out," he murmured. "You want to punish me when I come back? You want to draw blood from me? I will let you, Bambola. Without complaint." He meant it. He would kneel if she asked. Bleed if it kept her from walking away.

"Luca..." she warned softly.

"I'm serious." His jaw tightened. "I know. I know that it's unfair. And I wish to God I could get out of it." He dragged a hand down her back slowly. "So do whatever you need to do. Spend me dry."

That earned him a laugh.

"You are going to regret you said that," she replied. Then the smile faded from her lips. Her eyes locked onto his. "No other woman. Okay."

"There can be no other," he said. "Ever."

She leaned in and gave him a claiming kiss. Her fingers slid up into his hair briefly, nails grazing his scalp before she pulled back. She patted his chest lightly afterward.

A queen sending her general back to war.

Then she turned and walked away toward the hallway, hips swaying in that unintentional way that always made his control fray.

Well.

Look at that.

His Bambola was growing teeth. He stepped out of the flat and into the courtyard.

Nonnina was waiting with Ricardo in the living room when Luca stepped inside the main house.

Nonnina rose first. She moved slowly and approached Luca.

He leaned down automatically, pressing a kiss to her hair. She took his jacket, smoothing the fabric before passing it to one of the staff.

"How was work?" Nonnina asked.

"Insightful," Luca replied evenly. "I'll be leaving for Vienna in the morning. Ricardo will spend a few days with you and head back to Vienna."

"I guess you do not agree with him being here."

Luca crossed the room, loosening his cuffs as he spoke. "Not under my father's orders," he clarified. "I want people around me who are loyal to me, not my father."

Ricardo, who had been sitting stiffly at the edge of the leather armchair, stood at that. "I really am sorry, Luciano," Ricardo said. "I should have called you. But I knew Zia would be against me joining the familia."

His eyes flicked toward Nonnina briefly before returning to Luca.

"It's alright, Ricardo," Luca said after a moment. "It has nothing to do with you. It is about my father always wanting to take control of everything."

"Of course," Ricardo said carefully, "but do you really want to have this face off with Don Genovese?"

"Its about time."

The airport lights glowed against a sky the color of bruised ink. Vienna moved with its usual elegance even at that hour, taxis gliding past, glass doors hissing open and shut

as travelers spilled into the dark. Julian stood beside the Maserati, coat buttoned to the throat.

He had been waiting for forty minutes.

When Luca finally emerged from the terminal, he carried no luggage except a single leather duffel slung carelessly over his shoulder.

Luca slid into the car without a word.

The engine purred to life.

They drove.

Silence thickened the air inside the vehicle, heavier than the winter fog gathering along the Danube. Luca stared out the window, jaw clenched.

"Trust you not to even say a word of thanks," Julian began. "I didn't have to pick you up."

"Yeah," Luca said flatly, "like you could say no to Father."

Julian's mouth tightened. He could not argue. Half the sins Luca had committed would have earned Julian broken bones. Luca had always been the prodigal son who could set fire to a cathedral and still be invited to dinner.

The Genovese holdings were arteries running beneath Europe's most beautiful cities. Shipping routes disguised as legitimate trade. Art galleries laundering fortunes. Private security firms that specialized in problems that could not be reported to the police. Vienna was the crown jewel run by Don Genovese and New York was the orb run by Luciano Genovese.

They rode in silence after that.

The Maserati turned through gates that opened. The Genovese estate rose from the heart of the city, its façade lit by ground lights that made it appear holy.

The courtyard was vast, cobblestones gleaming under soft lanterns. Marble statues lined the perimeter, saints frozen in judgment. Security stood at discreet intervals, black coats blending into shadow.

Waiting at the center of it all was Don Genovese.

Julian parked and stepped out first.

Luca exited the vehicle slowly. He walked toward his father. He bent, took the older man's hand, and pressed his lips to the ring.

"What's with the impromptu visit?" Don Genovese asked.

"Are we going to stand out here talking?" Luca replied coolly.

"You should rest first anyway. Your wife is quite excited to see you," Don Genovese said. "It has been months."

Chapter 116: You Will Stay

They followed behind Don into the house.

They stood in the center of the vast living room, boots planted on rugs worth more than most men's houses. The estate's main salon stretched wide as a ballroom.

"I'd rather we talk now," Luca replied. "I'll be leaving in the morning."

Don Genovese's gaze hardened by degrees. "You are here," he said. "You will stay." His authority had never relied on volume.

The Don lowered himself into the central sofa, a piece custom-built in Florence, high-backed and imposing.

Julian remained standing at his father's right.

"How is New York?" Don asked, crossing one leg over the other.

"It's in good hands," Luca answered. His jaw flexed slightly. "Marco's hands."

Don's brows drew together. "Excuse me? He is still alive?"

"Of course," Luca replied, irritation flickering openly now. "He has done nothing wrong. So I don't understand why you sent Ricardo to replace him."

Don's eyes moved slowly to Julian.

"Is someone yanking my chain right now?" he asked quietly. "Or are you boys playing one of those stupid games with me?"

Julian's throat tightened. "Dad..." Julian began.

Luca cut across him without looking. "I have told you countless times that you should not take Julian's reports seriously."

Julian's head snapped toward his brother. "What are you talking about?! My men..."

"Marco was working on a tip," Luca said. His height matched Julian's, but where Julian carried restraint, Luca wore volatility. "He received information that Bastardi was planning to double cross us. He did what he had to do," Luca continued. "Because he couldn't reach me."

"Why didn't Marco tell your brother this?" Don asked.

"I gave him specific instructions," he said evenly. "Never to give Julian information directly. He may be my brother, but I don't trust him as far as I can throw him."

"Luca!" Don thundered. "Do you forget in whose presence you are?"

Luca's shoulders stiffened. His nostrils flared. He lowered his gaze, just slightly. He held his tongue.

Julian watched him struggle against himself. Luca had always burned hotter, hated faster. It was what made him magnetic. It was what made him dangerous.

"Go," Don said at last. "Rest. Come down for dinner."

Luca inclined his head once. "Yes, Father."

He turned, his coat flaring slightly with the movement.

"Luciano." Don's voice halted him.

Luca stopped mid-stride. "Yes, Dad."

The Don rose slowly from his throne-like seat. "Fuck your wife before someone else fucks her for you." His gaze shifted, just briefly, to Julian.

Nothing happened inside these walls without Don Genovese's awareness. Servants reported. Security reported. Silence itself reported. He ran the familia in Vienna with relentless precision, yet he still knew which son lingered too long in the corridor outside a certain bedroom. Which son's eyes darkened at dinner when Bianca laughed too freely.

Julian felt heat crawl up his spine.

Luca's wife had arrived at the estate about a year ago. Dark hair that spilled down her back in waves, skin pale against the heavy jewels she wore, eyes the color of aged cognac. She had been promised to Luca in an alliance that secured shipping routes and political protection.

"Yes, Father," Luca replied. He walked away without another word.

"You believe him?" Julian did not wait for the echo of Luca's footsteps to fade completely before the question tore out of him.

"Do I have any reason not to? I know Luca. If Marco betrayed him, Marco would already be dead. I have seen him kill men for less."

It was fact.

Julian's jaw flexed.

Yes, Luca could kill. He did it cleanly when necessary. Brutally when angry.

"And once again," Julian said, "you take the side of your golden son. You didn't even mention the fact that he tried to stab me for some whore."

Don's eyes hardened slightly. "Your brother will be punished for whatever it is he did to you. But at least let him get some rest," Don continued, irritation creeping in now. "Let him be with his wife for a change. Instead of you hovering around her like a desperate dog."

Julian felt heat climb up his neck. "Of course," he said smoothly. "Of course. The prince needs to rest."

The sarcasm did not hide itself.

"This competition you have with your brother is petty," Don said quietly. "You sound like a fucking child who wants more cookies. You should be out there watching your brother's back," Don continued. "Instead you stand here trying to rip him apart. You have always wanted to prove you are better," he said. "Better than Luca. Better than me."

Julian swallowed hard.

Don stepped back at last, the conversation finished in his mind. "We are strongest when we stand together," he said. "Remember that."

He turned without waiting for response, walking toward the corridor that led to his private suite.

Bianca had been waiting long before the car entered the gates.

Waiting her entire life.

She had been promised to him before she could form words properly, before she understood what marriage meant, before she knew that her future would be decided by men with heavy rings and heavier expectations. Their engagement had been inked between families when she was small enough to sit on her father's lap, and from that day forward, her world had tilted toward one name.

Luciano Genovese.

She had loved him first as a story. The boy who would inherit empires. She would see him every once in a while whenever his mother would bring him to visit Vienna. When she turned sixteen, she had begun to love him as flesh and blood. Tall. Striking. Untouchable.

He never looked at her twice then, but she watched him. At dinners. At gatherings. At church. She memorized the slope of his shoulders, the controlled way he moved, the quiet violence beneath his charm.

Ten months ago, she had finally become his wife.

Ten months of sharing his name.

She stood in their private wing in the mansion, designed in muted golds and creams, with tall windows. The curtains were half drawn. The fireplace crackled softly. She had prepared everything herself.

Chapter 117: I'm Sure You're Tired

Roses scattered across the ground in arcs leading from the door to the bed. Champagne chilling in a silver bucket. Soft music playing low enough to feel intimate. The bed turned down carefully, sheets crisp and inviting.

She wore a sheer ivory dress. It revealed more than it concealed. The curve of her waist. The softness of her hips. The full swell of her breasts barely contained beneath delicate lace. She had chosen it after hours of standing before the mirror, debating whether innocence or boldness would win his attention.

Tonight, she chose boldness.

Her long dark hair fell in loose waves over her shoulders. She had lined her eyes carefully, painted her lips a deep, inviting red. Every detail considered. Every insecurity buried beneath determination.

She wanted him to look at her.

The door handle turned.

Her breath caught sharply.

When Luca stepped inside, he filled the doorway without effort. Even travel-worn, he carried himself like a man who bent environments to his will. His height alone could make other men hesitate. His presence could silence rooms.

The light caught his face, revealing high cheekbones, a straight, uncompromising nose, lips that rarely smiled fully. And those eyes.

Cold, piercing, ocean-before-a-storm blue.

Even exhaustion did not dull him. If anything, it sharpened him. There was tension in the way he held himself.

His gaze swept the suite once. The roses. The champagne. The candles.

Then it landed on her.

Bianca's rehearsed words dissolved instantly. All the practiced lines, the welcoming warmth she had whispered to herself in the mirror, vanished. "Luciano..." she managed to breathe. She took a small step forward. Her breasts pressed forward slightly, the neckline threatening to slip lower. She wanted him to see.

Wanted him to want.

He closed the door behind him slowly.

Bianca's heart pounded against her ribs. She could feel it everywhere. In her throat. In her wrists. Between her thighs.

"Bianca..." He leaned down and pressed a kiss to her forehead.

Bianca inhaled sharply at the contact. She reached for his hand immediately, cradling it with reverence, and bent to kiss the heavy gold ring that bore the Genovese crest. "Welcome home," she whispered. She helped him out of his jacket, her fingers brushing the hard line of his shoulders as she slid the fabric down his arms.

His body was solid beneath the tailored shirt. "How was your trip?" she asked, searching his face.

"Long."

She draped his jacket carefully over a chair, smoothing it automatically. She crossed to the small bar cart near the fireplace and poured brandy into a crystal glass.

"Have you seen Don already?" she asked, keeping her tone light.

"Yeah." His jaw tightened faintly. "But we still have more to discuss."

"I'm sure you're tired," she said softly as she handed him the drink. "Your bath is ready. I made it soothing."

"Of course." Luca took the glass from her hand, his fingers brushing hers briefly. He swallowed the brandy in one steady gulp, the burn sliding down his throat. He handed the empty glass back to her.

Only now did he truly look at her.

The sheer dress. The deliberate vulnerability of it. The way it clung to her curves, revealing the smooth plane of her stomach, the fullness of her breasts barely restrained by delicate fabric. Her long dark hair cascading over bare shoulders. Lips parted slightly, expectant.

There was no escaping it.

He would not be getting out of this tonight.

It was expected.

"You look nice," he said.

Bianca's face lit up, warmth flooding her expression. She stepped closer, and began to unbutton his shirt slowly. "I prepared for you," she murmured.

Luca let out a quiet chuckle, low in his throat. He tilted his head slightly as she worked the buttons open, revealing the hard lines of his chest beneath.

"You are always perfect," he said. "No hair out of place."

Her smile widened, pleased. "Thank you."

But inside, Luca's thoughts did not echo praise.

It wasn't a compliment.

It was an observation.

Bianca was immaculate. Composed. Trained since childhood to be the flawless wife of a powerful man. Raised to never embarrass him. Never question him in front of others. Even her jealousy was to be expressed privately.

She was everything a Don's son should want. And yet...

He shrugged the shirt from his shoulders and let it fall carelessly to the floor.

Bianca's breath caught again at the sight of him fully bared from the waist up. "Come," she urged gently. "Take a bath and we can head down for dinner." She laced her fingers through his and led him further into the suite, into the marble-lined bathroom where steam already curled in soft ribbons through the air. The space was expansive, lined with pale stone and gold fixtures, a sunken tub large enough to drown in comfort. Rose petals floated lazily across the surface of the water.

As they walked, her free hand drifted over his chest, fingertips grazing slowly downward. She traced the defined ridges of his abdomen, feeling the flex beneath her touch. This was her husband. Her king. The man whose name she bore.

She paused just long enough to unbuckle his belt. She pushed his trousers down his hips, sliding them along his powerful thighs until they pooled at his feet.

He stepped free of them and lowered himself into the water slowly.

Bianca slipped out of her sheer dress behind him. The fabric slid down her body, pooling at her feet. She remained in delicate lace. She picked up the loofah, dipping it into the scented water before kneeling beside the tub. She began slowly.

The sponge moved across his shoulders first, gliding over damp skin, over the broad expanse of muscle. She worked carefully, kneading gently, her fingers following behind the loofah to massage deeper. She moved down his arms, over his chest, lingering just slightly where his heart beat steady and strong.

Luca watched her through half-lidded eyes.

She was devoted. There was no doubt in that. Her hands slid lower, across his abdomen, tracing the firm lines there before drifting beneath the surface of the water. The bath rippled softly with the motion.

(This is to 100 power stones. On to 200 people. We can do it before Monday!)

Chapter 118: You're So Tense

When her fingers brushed against his arousal beneath the warmth, her pulse quickened.

Satisfaction flickered quietly across her face. Even exhausted. Even burdened. His body responded.

He still wanted her.

She let her touch linger just enough to confirm it before continuing the careful wash of his thighs.

In her mind, a single thought bloomed with fierce certainty.

Fuck the New York girl.

No matter what happened across oceans, no matter what temptations brushed against him in foreign cities, he returned here.

To Vienna.

To this house.

To her.

"You're so tense, Luciano. You should relax. You're home now. With me." She let the loofah slip from her fingers, abandoning pretense, and allowed her hands to glide through the water toward his cock. Her touch was no longer cautious. She traced his cock slowly, teasing, reminding him that beneath the weight of legacy and violence, he was still a man with a body that should answer to her.

She leaned closer, her hair brushing his shoulder, her breath warm against his skin.

Luca allowed himself to feel it. The heat. The softness. The simplicity of surrendering to the moment.

Then the tension returned.

"Go dress up for dinner," he said abruptly, sitting up in the bath. Water cascaded down his chest as he shifted, breaking the spell as cleanly as a snapped thread. "I'm famished."

"Of course." She lowered her head and kissed him hard, lips pressing against his with urgency that bordered on desperation. A reminder that she was here. That she was willing. That she was his.

When she pulled away, she rose gracefully from her kneeling position and walked out of the bathroom with careful poise.

Luca watched her go.

The curve of her hips. The silent pride in her stride. The devotion he could neither fully embrace nor reject.

He dragged a hand through his damp hair and exhaled sharply. "Well, fuck," he muttered under his breath. He sank back into the bath, staring at the ceiling as steam curled upward. He would have to buy Veronica the moon in exchange for this.

Meanwhile, across an ocean, New York breathed differently.

Veronica sat in the shop.

Luca had sent a text when he landed.

'Arrived.'

That was all.

She understood the rules. He had explained it to her in detail.

"You'll barely hear from me," he had warned.

Phones could be tapped. Conversations could be monitored. Walls could grow ears if the wrong technician was paid enough.

Luca had drilled it into her patiently, repeatedly. Sensitive conversations must be had in a controlled environment.

"Aren't you leaving yet?" Rosa asked, wiping her hands on a towel as she eyed Veronica with mild surprise.

It was past her closing time. There were still no walk in customers and Tony was in charge of delivery. There was no need for her to still be there.

"Uh... uhm... soon," Veronica replied, snapping back from wherever her mind had drifted. "Rosa? A minute?"

Rosa raised a brow but leaned her hip against the counter, giving her full attention.

"I would like you to come shopping with me tomorrow," Veronica said. "I need to get a few things for the shop. Valentina can fill in for you while we're away."

"Of course," Rosa said immediately. "What things?"

"A lot of things," she said. Her lips curved. "See, I have this black card, and I want to use spending as a form of punishment."

Understanding dawned quickly.

Rosa knew exactly who the punishment was meant for.

Sweet Veronica Scalese tangled up with Luciano Genovese. A name that did not belong in Sunday church pews. A name that carried weight in rooms Veronica would never see.

Rosa did not know the details. She did not ask for them. But she knew the dynamic was strange. Unbalanced. Dangerous in ways that had nothing to do with physical harm.

It sounded forbidden when said out loud. Veronica and Luciano. Like two stories stitched together from different books.

And yet.

Rosa had watched Veronica glow. Watched her laugh more easily. Watched her eyes soften when her phone lit up with his name.

"Creative," Rosa said finally, a grin tugging at her mouth. "I must say. Spend him into submission." She chuckled.

Veronica gave a small laugh in return.

It sounded light, but it cracked slightly at the edges.

"Exactly," she said. "If I can't be mad at him, I'll bill him."

New ovens for the shop. A new espresso machine Rosa had been eyeing for months. Maybe even renovations. She would swipe the card and imagine each transaction as a silent protest.

Rosa sighed dramatically. "Listen," she said, lowering her voice. "If you really want to punish this person, we could stop by an adult store too. There are diverse tools and equipment meant to effectively punish a man and make him enjoy it at the same time." She winked, entirely too pleased with herself, then waved goodbye and disappeared out the shop.

Veronica sat frozen. Her mouth dropped open.

Rosa?

A slow heat crept up Veronica's neck.

She did not know whether to laugh or gasp. The suggestion lingered in the air long after Rosa had left, bold and shameless and unexpectedly tempting. Her fingers instinctively wrapped around the bracelet at her wrist. She wondered what he was doing at that exact moment.

Was he with her? With his wife?

Were they in bed already?

She looked back toward the entrance where Rosa had just exited.

Punishment was absolutely in order.

But If she was going to play this game, she had to learn the rules properly.

Quickly, she moved. She packed her bag, cleared her desk.

Tomorrow, she would shop and educate herself.

Luca finally rose from the bath.

Water slid down his body as he stepped out. He grabbed a thick white towel from the hanger and wrapped it low around his hips.

The warmth had relaxed his muscles, but not his mind.

When he stepped into the bedroom, Bianca was waiting.

Dressed for dinner.

Perfection once again. Loud elegance. Diamonds rested at her throat. Her makeup had been touched up, lips freshly colored, eyes subtly darkened. Not a strand of hair out of place.

(I did something stupid. See Author's note.)

Chapter 119: Save Me A Seat

She smiled when she saw him.

"I'll meet you downstairs," he said. "Save me a seat."

She stepped closer, adjusting the towel at his hip as if it needed straightening, she just needed an excuse to touch him again.

"You won't be long?" she asked softly.

"No."

She nodded once and turned gracefully toward the door. "I'll be waiting." Bianca smiled exuberantly and stepped out of the room. Her heels clicked against the marble hallway. They were slender, sharpened things, black and lethal in design. Functional as a murder weapon, literally. One well aimed stomp and a man would remember her forever.

Luca stood in the quiet aftermath of steam and roses. He moved toward the closet, fingers brushing against suits. He pulled out a fitted short. A plain t shirt. Soft cotton.

Just as he moved toward the door, he noticed the travel duffel placed neatly by the bench. He crouched, unzipped the smaller pocket, and retrieved the small box tucked inside.

He had remembered to place it there that morning in New York.

Like he could forget.

He opened the box.

Inside lay a delicate piece of white lace.

Veronica's underwear.

He wrapped it around his palm slowly. Then he brought it to his nose and inhaled. He closed his eyes for a brief second. A selfish second. Then he folded the lace carefully and slipped it into the pocket of his shorts, pressing his hand over it. He straightened.

Dinner awaited.

When he descended the staircase, the sound of male voices drifted upward. The dining hall was lit in gold. A long table of dark wood stretched. Crystal glasses. Heavy silverware. Plates arranged.

His father was already seated at the head of the table.

Beside him, a glass of red wine rested untouched.

Julian sat a few seats down. Bianca occupied the opposite end from him, poised, radiant, composed.

He took his seat beside Bianca.

Bianca's fingers brushed his under the table.

Don Genovese bowed his head, and the entire table followed. "In the name of the Father," he began. He thanked God for provision, for the abundance laid before them,

for Luca's safe return from New York. He thanked Him for unity. For strength. For the preservation of legacy.

Luca kept his head lowered, eyes closed. Bianca folded her hands perfectly.

"Amen," Don Genovese concluded.

"Amen," they echoed.

Silverware chimed against porcelain. Plates were filled. Wine poured. The food was rich. Roasted meats, Crisped rosemary potatoes, glazed vegetables.

Their father spoke as they ate. News from extended families flowed naturally. A cousin had just welcomed twin boys. A second cousin was engaged to a banker's daughter. Achievements were listed. Promotions. University honors.

Then he pivoted.

"And Bianca's family," he continued, glancing warmly at her. "Your cousin Sofia, yes? A healthy son. Already ruling the house. Strong boys are blessings," Don Genovese nodded.

The direction of the conversation was subtle but unmistakable. Heir. Continuity. Bloodline. The future sitting invisibly at the table with them.

Julian wiped his mouth with a napkin and leaned back slightly. "I'm sure Luca's whore would carry a child before Bianca here even begins to dream of it."

Whore.

Luca's fork paused mid motion.

Then tightened.

He knew bait when he saw it. Julian's eyes gleamed with anticipation. A dog waiting to see if the chain would snap.

Luca inhaled once through his nose.

Bianca simply cut another piece of meat and placed it in her mouth.

"Yeah," Don Genovese said after a moment, setting his glass down. His gaze shifted to Luca. "About that. Who is this woman?"

Luca set his fork down carefully. "Company," he said. "Nights in New York get lonely."

Julian smirked.

Don Genovese barked a short laugh, amused. "So you have just one woman for lonely nights." He shook his head. "Didn't think that was possible."

The laughter lingered for a beat longer.

Bianca lifted her wine and took a sip. Her lashes lowered slightly, hiding the storm behind them. She did not interfere. A good wife absorbed. Observed.

But her mind raced.

"Be careful though," Don Genovese said, slicing into his steak. "American women always want more than you can give."

Luca kept his eyes on his plate, cutting his food into even pieces. "You mean like Mother?" he asked.

Don Genovese chewed, swallowed, dabbed his mouth with his napkin before answering. "Exactly like your mother." He took a sip of wine. "Seen her lately?"

"She doesn't want anything to do with me."

His mother was not spoken of often. When she was, it was with sharp edges. An American woman who had wanted nothing to do with the familia. She had left.

And in this family, leaving was a form of treason.

"I don't think Luca needs any more company than me," Bianca said softly, finally stepping into the current. "I can always accompany him back to New York."

"It's not safe yet," Luca replied before his father could speak. "Too many eyes on Commissioned right now."

"Do you need my help?" Don asked.

"No," Luca answered immediately. "I can handle it."

"Handle it fast. You need an heir as soon as possible." His gaze flicked toward Bianca, then back to Luca. "He needs to be trained to take over Vienna when I am gone."

"What?" Julian's voice cut through the room. "What?" he repeated, louder now. "An unborn child has a shot and I don't?"

"We don't shout at dinner tables, son," Don Genovese said evenly.

"What am I supposed to do? Sit here and take this disrespect?" His eyes burned now, fixed on their father. "I am the first son, Dad," he continued. "And yet you hand everything to Luca on a silver platter. What did I ever do to you?"

Luca finally lifted his gaze.

Julian's anger was not new. It had lived in him for years, fed quietly by comparisons, by subtle preferences, by the way Don Genovese addressed Luca about business. Luca, the strategist.

Don Genovese placed his knife and fork down with careful precision. "If you are going to argue at dinner, leave," he said, "or I will have you flogged."

(brought to you by Jennifer Willard)

Chapter 120: Begin Earning Your Keep

Julian's jaw tightened so hard the muscle ticked visibly beneath his skin. He bit his tongue.

Luca watched the exchange with a lazy composure. And then, without meaning to, he allowed the faintest smirk to curve his mouth. Even Luca did not fully understand why their father withheld recognition from Julian the way he did. Julian handled operations. Smoothed disputes. Oversaw shipments. He was competent.

But Don Genovese never handed him the reins to anything substantial.

"Any update on the Bastione ambush?" Luca asked, calmly redirecting the energy at the table.

Don Genovese leaned back slightly. "No. Their Don isn't in the country. We wait. When he returns, we move. We get them all."

"Except Renato," Luca added.

Don's eyes narrowed slightly. "Is he giving you problems in New York?"

"He wouldn't dare."

Don Genovese's chest expanded slightly with pride. "See?" He turned to Julian, gesturing toward Luca with his wine glass. "That's why he gets to manage the famiglia!"

Julian's fingers curled against the table edge.

"You," Don continued bluntly, "are just a love sick fool."

Julian's gaze shifted slowly across the table.

To Bianca.

She sat there, hands folded elegantly in her lap now that her plate was empty. She looked every inch the obedient wife.

And yet.

Julian saw the humiliation.

Love sick fool.

Yes.

He had been.

For years.

Don Genovese continued speaking, detailing shipment routes and retaliatory strategies, already done with the emotional detour.

After dinner, the fracture lines dispersed quietly.

Julian excused himself first. He walked out with a controlled stride, pride bleeding invisibly behind him.

Don Genovese relaxed further into his storytelling mode. He laughed. Bianca laughed lightly when appropriate. Luca listened, nodding when required.

Then, with a dismissive flick of his fingers and a knowing smirk, Don waved them off.

"Go," he said. "Begin earning your keep. I expect good news soon."

As Bianca slipped her hand into Luca's and led him toward the staircase, her fingers laced through his with hopeful firmness. To anyone watching, they were a portrait of unity. The golden couple ascending into candlelit promise.

But Luca knew one thing with chilling clarity.

He was not going to have a child with her.

Inside their suite, Bianca released his hand with a soft smile. "I'll freshen up," she said gently, already moving toward the bathroom.

He crossed to the bar, reached for a cigar, rolling it between his fingers before cutting and lighting it.

Then he stepped outside.

The mansion opened inward. A grand fountain stood at the center of the inner courtyard, water cascading in a steady rhythm. Gardens framed the space in symmetrical perfection. Every suite had a balcony facing the others, an architectural reminder that privacy here was an illusion.

Conversations could travel if voices were raised high enough.

Luca settled into an inflatable sofa positioned along the railing. He leaned back, cigar glowing between his fingers, smoke curling upward into the cool Viennese night.

He exhaled slowly.

His mind wandered unwillingly.

To Veronica.

The cigar burned down to a stub between his fingers. He crushed it out carefully, watching the last ember fade.

The balcony door slid open behind him.

Bianca stepped out into the night dressed in another sheer nightdress. This one more daring than the first, transparent enough to reveal everything beneath.

Except there was nothing beneath.

Just skin and invitation.

Her hair fell loose over her shoulders, still faintly damp.

"Are you coming to bed?" she asked softly.

Luca turned slowly in his seat.

She was beautiful. No one could deny that. Sculpted perfection. Devoted.

Everything aligned for one outcome.

"In a minute," he murmured.

She stepped forward anyway, sliding onto his lap. Legs parted, she settled him between her thighs, the warmth pressing against him. "How long will you keep me waiting?" she whispered, lips brushing against the hollow of his throat. Her fingers reached for him, sliding his own hand between the wet folds of her desire.

"We are not having a kid yet, Bianca." He said.

"Just touch me." she moaned.

There was only one thing to do with a sexually frustrated wife. Fuck her. His free hand gripped her waist, drawing her flush against him, he sank his fingers deep into her heat.

Bianca's gasp cut through the night air, melodic, and intoxicating. She tilted her head, teeth grazing the nape of his neck, lips pressing along his jawline, tracing the curve of his ear before finally claiming his mouth.

Her hands tangled in his hair, pulling him closer, burying his face between her breasts with a confidence that had been growing since the moment they'd met.

His other hand moved, dragging the sheer fabric of her nightdress downward until it pooled around her waist. The sight of her bare skin in the dim balcony light stole what little patience he had left. He kissed, nipped, and explored, the curves of her body.

From the corner of his eyes, he caught a shadow, a flicker of the curtain in Julian's suite. He pulled his fingers out of her with a controlled snap. He scooped her up into his arms, moving her swiftly into the sanctuary of their bedroom.

Her hands slid over his back, over the taut muscles he never let soften, drawing him into her orbit again even as he laid her down on the bed. Her dress lifted over her head. She pressed herself against him once more, shoving his t-shirt up and over his head, revealing the planes of his chest, the tension in his arms.

The room was silent except for their breathing.

Her hands roamed his chest and abs with reverent awe, tracing the lines of his sculpted body, fingertips teasing, pressing, exploring. Then, her fingers drifted lower, brushing against the waistband of his shorts. He stripped them off, positioning himself between her thighs.

The first stroke was seamless, perfect, and Bianca cried out at the sudden invasion. She had always known sex with Luca would be explosive but if her first time felt like this, the pain, the heat, then he could never top it. Her long nails dug into his skin, leaving faint crescents that burned slightly.

Her hands moved with urgency, one brushing over his back, the other gripping his ass, pulling him closer, deeper, insisting on every inch, claiming every fraction of him.

(brought to you by Jennifer Willard)

Okay, everybody pause....I can totally explain. Its simple guys!!! She is his wife! See?
Very simple explanation. Lol