

## Chapter 4 Because I Said So

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Belinda and Ryan simultaneously looked over.

The approaching man carried himself with an ease and allure that seemed to fill the space around him.

"Mr. Thomas," Ryan said with respect.

After giving Ryan a brief nod, Darren Thomas turned to look at Belinda. "Belinie, let's go. It's time to join Uncle Santino and the rest. Your godfather is waiting for you."

"Okay," Belinda responded, quickly falling into step beside Darren.

As Belinda walked away, Ryan's expression registered his astonishment. He hastened back to Lucas and the others, barely containing his excitement. "Did you see that? That woman is Santino Thomas' goddaughter! And Mr. Thomas just called her... Belinie or something. Anyway, her name sounds elegant!"

Hearing what Ryan had said, Lucas narrowed his eyes slightly.

Vincent James, who had been quiet earlier, chimed in, "Santino and his wife never had kids of their own. Despite attempts by relatives to have their children adopted by them, they rejected every proposal. It was only three years ago that they publicly announced a goddaughter in Chixdon, whom they adore. I always assumed she was from there, but now, it turns out she's from our country."

Ryan suddenly burst out laughing, his enthusiasm evident. "I was hesitant about the task my mom had assigned me, but now, I'm fully committed!"

Ryan's mother had hoped Ryan would forge a good connection with Santino's goddaughter.



"You can't pursue her. She's not an option," Lucas interjected in a low, gravelly voice, cutting through the chatter.

Hearing that, Ryan and Verena were visibly taken aback. They both turned to look at Lucas.

"Why not?" Ryan demanded, confusion in his voice.

Lucas' face was expressionless, his gaze fixing on Ryan. "Because I said so."

His voice carried a commanding tone, his striking features betraying no emotion.

Expressions shifted on both Ryan's and Verena's faces.

Verena looked at Lucas and opened her mouth, about to speak. But before she could say anything, Lucas abruptly rose from the sofa and exited the room.

Verena watched him leave, her hands balling into fists out of frustration.

She was lost in thought. Why did Lucas object to Ryan pursuing that woman?

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Belinda exited the restroom, straightening her dress, ready to return to the hall.

She paused abruptly when she noticed a tall and handsome man casually leaning against the wall nearby.

Lucas glanced over at Belinda, their eyes briefly meeting.

Belinda held his gaze for a second before casually looking away and walking past him.

She pretended like she didn't know Lucas at all, ignoring his presence completely.

"Wait, stop." Lucas' cold voice echoed.

Belinda stopped and turned, her eyes locking with Lucas'. A slight smile played on her lips as she said, "Can I help you with anything, sir?"

Her voice was soothing, like a soft melody.

Belinda had thought three years would help her forget the man who had brought so much pain into her life.

Yet, seeing Lucas now, she realized that his image was already ingrained in her memory.

But she could remain composed in front of Lucas now.

Lucas chuckled coldly at her words, staring at her pointedly. His smirk was tinged with irony as he said, "Belinda, are you pretending to have amnesia now?"

Belinda was stunned for a moment. Had Lucas actually recognized her?

Her eyes sparkled with a hint of surprise as she asked, "What do you need from me, Mr. Clark?"

"No longer pretending now, huh?" Lucas said sharply.

With a light smirk, Belinda responded, "Seeing as you've recognized me, there seems to be little point in continuing the charade."

Lucas walked to stand before Belinda. "Belinda, did you think since you fled three years ago, you could avoid our divorce?"

