

Mafia God 245

Chapter 245: You Owe Me Nothing

A bargain. A life for a life.

"Thank you," she said softly after a long pause. "For staying with him." Her eyes lifted to meet Marco's again. "I could never repay that debt."

"You owe me nothing," he said. "You picked up a boy on the streets and made him your son. My life is yours."

Carol exhaled slowly, shaking her head as she moved closer. "My beautiful boy," she said, reaching up to cup his cheek gently, her thumb brushing lightly against his skin. "You do not owe me your life. You owe you your life."

"I want to owe you my life," he said quietly.

Carol sighed softly, her hand falling back to her lap. She had always known this about him.

Loyal to a fault. Marco didn't know how to stop, didn't know how to choose himself when it mattered.

"Then tell me what is going on," she said gently, shifting the conversation back.

"That is the problem," Marco said. "I don't know. I don't. I have investigated," he continued, shaking his head slightly. "I barely slept in Italy. I followed every lead I could, spoke to everyone worth speaking to..." He exhaled sharply, running a hand over his face.

"And the only thing I know— the only thing I can confirm— is that the wrong people are joining forces against Luciano. And they plan on using his weakness against him," Marco added quietly.

Carol didn't need to ask what that meant. She already knew. "The girl?" she asked softly. "Veronica Scalese."

Marco nodded once. "Yes."

"He told me about her," she said after a pause, a faint smile touching her lips. "She seems like a pleasant girl." Her eyes returned to Marco, thoughtful now. "Is she good enough for my son?"

That earned a quiet chuckle from him—brief, but genuine.

"Your son is not good enough for her," he said simply.

"Good," she said, nodding with approval. "With all the bad you people do, you deserve good women to even you out. Help you rack up some good karma."

Marco huffed softly. "What do I do?"

"I'm assuming Vittoria's son is one of those you speak about?" Carol asked.

Marco nodded once. "Yes."

Carol let out a slow breath, her gaze dropping briefly before lifting again, more certain now. "Of course," she murmured. "And let me guess... Luca's wife is another?"

Marco's eyes flicked to hers, a hint of surprise breaking through his usual composure. "Yes," he said. "How do you know?"

"Because history is repeating itself. My advice?" she continued. "Tell this girl to get out before it's too late."

"Ma!" Marco straightened, turning fully toward her, disbelief etched across his face.

"It's the only way, Marco," Carol insisted. "Things calmed down after I left Massimo, didn't it?"

Marco stared at her like he couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Calmed down?" he repeated. "No." He shook his head slowly. "No. No! Vittoria took her anger out on Luciano," he said. "You have no idea... no idea what Luca had to go through."

Carol's expression faltered. "Marco—"

"The only time he got any break," Marco cut in, "was when he travelled. Trainings. Studies. Anywhere that got him out of that house. That house..." He shook his head again, slower this time. "It wasn't a home for him."

Carol's hands tightened in her lap, her eyes fixed on him now.

"It was the typical story," Marco continued. "Stepmother hates the son that isn't hers." He paused. "He was abused," Marco said plainly. "Constantly. Punished. For things he didn't do. For things he did. For things that didn't even matter," he went on. "It didn't matter. She just needed a reason."

Carol's eyes glistened now.

"You weren't there," Marco said. "You didn't see it. Tell me which other path he could have taken where he could have been able to protect himself."

Carol looked down at her hands, her fingers trembling slightly as she tried to process everything he had just said. "And Massimo just watched?" Carol asked.

"Don punished him half the time himself," he said. "Because whatever Julian did... the blame was put on Luca."

Carol's lips parted slightly, her breath catching. It didn't make sense. And yet—it made too much sense.

"You weren't there to protect him," Marco added, not accusing, not harsh—but honest in a way that still cut deep. "And this woman... Veronica... She makes him happy," he said. "He deserves some happiness."

Carol looked away for a moment, her gaze drifting away. "Happiness in the famiglia," she said slowly, "comes at a cost, Marco. This girl is never going to get any peace," she continued, her eyes returning to his. "And it seems it has already begun... if you are this worried."

"I think she is being set up," he admitted. "And I think they are doing a very good job at it. I fear what Luca might do," he continued. "If he believes the setup... he takes it out on her." He paused.

Then turned back to Carol.

"If he doesn't—he takes it out on his brother. And the Vitale famiglia."

War. Blood. Irreversible damage.

"It is going to be a mess whichever way it turns out, Ma," Marco said. "And I don't know what to do. I don't know how to help him," he added more quietly. "You haven't seen him with this woman," Marco went on, a faint shake of his head accompanying his words. "He's... obsessed."

He let out a breath. "That's the word."

"Of course he is," she said. "All love stories have their battles, Marco," she said gently. "They will just have to navigate these storms on their own."

Marco didn't look convinced.

"You cannot fight this battle for him," she continued. "You can stand beside him. You can guide him. But you cannot make his choices. And Luciano..." Carol added, a faint, teasing brow lifting as a small smile touched her lips. "He isn't that much of an idiot."

That earned a quiet huff from Marco. "Debatable," he said under his breath.