

Mafia God 279

Chapter 279: No One Quits The Famiglia

"Do you ever think of leaving this life?" she asked quietly. "This mafia life?"

"I have never really thought about it," he said honestly.

"You should."

"Bambola..." He said it softly. "No one quits the famiglia. You may choose to take a break every once in a while, but you cannot step out of being in the famiglia."

It was the architecture of the world he inhabited — walls that didn't move because you wished them to.

"Then have you ever thought about those you would leave behind?" Vee asked. "People who love you?" She paused. "Me?"

Death was not a new concept to Luca. He had made his peace with it before he'd even hit twenty. He had been in situations where he had wanted death, had bargained for it. He had been captured once, held for days while men with no particular imagination and a great deal of time tested the limits of what a body could endure before its owner gave up information. He hadn't given up a single name.

He had also spent those days fairly certain he was going to die, and the thing he remembered most clearly was that he had not felt particularly sad about it. Just tired. And angry. Mostly angry. His life was a storm. It had always been a storm.

But he hadn't thought about death since the afternoon she had walked into his office carrying nothing but a pizza box, completely unaware that she was walking into a dangerous room. He hadn't let himself think that deeply, hadn't opened that particular door, because he already knew what was on the other side of it.

The thought of losing her — not just to death, to anything, in any capacity, in any version of events — wasn't something he was willing to sit inside even for a moment.

He must have been silent too long, because she said his name again, checking he was still there.

"Luca?"

"I'll always come back to you, Vee."

Even as he said them, some honest part of him registered what they were — a promise built on hope rather than fact. The alternative was saying nothing.

"You cannot know that for sure," she said softly. "One day, you will leave me."

"Maybe I will be as lucky as my father." He said.

Vee raised a brow. "Maybe?"

"Love," he started, shifting slightly so her head settled more comfortably against him, "human beings are like machines. One minute they are working fine, the next—" he clicked his fingers softly in the dark, "—poof. All done. Tomorrow isn't guaranteed for anyone," he continued. "I might very well die from cancer just as surely as I probably will die from a gunshot." He paused. "I could slip in the shower and crack my head open. An AC unit could drop on my head. It happens." He had actually once known a man — three hundred pounds of intimidating muscle — who had been taken out by a faulty electrical socket.

"We don't stop living because the ending is uncertain," he said. "We appreciate the moments we have. Like this one." He let that sit for a second, let her feel the weight of what he actually meant beneath the words. "You. Here. In my arms. There is nowhere else I would rather be, Vee. Not in this city. Not in this world."

This bed, this woman, this specific configuration of the universe was the only place Luca had ever felt anything close to stillness.

She snuggled closer in response, tucking herself further into him. This was where she fit. He brought his hand up and ran his fingers slowly through her hair.

"Make no mistake," he murmured into her hair, "I am always going to love you until my dying breath, Bambola." His fingers moved in slow, unhurried strokes. "I will always be obsessed with you. Completely. Embarrassingly. Without any intention of recovering."

She smiled against his chest. It was a sad smile. She placed a small, soft kiss on his chest. "The life I want for us," she began quietly, "is a peaceful one."

Another kiss.

"One where we don't need guards and guns."

Another one, a little higher.

"A small house."

Another one.

"Sounds wonderful," Luca said, and he was surprised to find that he meant it. "We could pretend for a bit. Stay with my mother in Singapore a couple of days and just... pretend."

The image arrived with startling clarity — a quieter version of his life, Veronica across a breakfast table somewhere, no phones buzzing. Just coffee. Just morning light. Just her.

He wanted it.

"I'd like that," she said softly.

And then she ran her tongue around his nipple. The grunt that escaped him was involuntary and undignified and he was absolutely not going to apologise for it. He stared at the ceiling for a moment, recalibrating, reminding himself of the parameters he had set — her pace, her lead, don't rush her — and tried to locate the gentleman he had been successfully performing for the last several hours.

The gentleman was having a difficult evening. Her hands moved while he was still conducting this internal negotiation — sliding down the plane of his chest. Down, past his stomach, beneath the sheets, until her fingers curved around his cock, and every coherent thought Luca had been carefully arranging scattered.

"We could be a normal couple," she said.

Luca breathed. "Pretend to be married," he offered.

Vee chuckled. He felt her smile against his skin before she grazed her teeth across his nipple. His fingers moved on instinct, coming up to tangle in her hair.

"Vee..." Her name left him as a sigh. A surrender.

Restraint, at this point, was actively destroying him. Because by now — under any previous set of circumstances, he would have already taken control of the situation entirely. He would have had her on her back with her legs around him, her voice breaking on his name, her body arching up to meet every thrust while her nails found his shoulders. He would have buried himself inside her until neither of them could remember what a coherent sentence felt like.