

## Mafia God 318

### Chapter 318: I Wasn't Thinking

"Marco?" she called softly.

He cleared his throat before responding. "Are you properly dressed?"

A faint blush returned to Val's cheeks. She adjusted the robe around her more securely. "Yeah, uh, I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking. I just..." Her words trailed off as Marco finally turned to face her.

Their eyes met, and the air between them seemed to thicken with unspoken emotion. Marco's gaze softened, taking in her disheveled hair, the remnants of tears in her eyes, and the protective way she held the robe closed around her. He quickly schooled his expression into one of calm reassurance.

"Is Vee going to be okay?" Val asked. "Don't lie to me, please."

Marco stepped closer. "She is protected,"

Valentina searched his face, looking for any sign of deception. "This 'kiss of death'..." she began hesitantly, the phrase still foreign and terrifying on her tongue.

"Ricardo exaggerates," he replied, offering a small, comforting smile. "Luca is leaving for Italy. He will sort everything out."

Val let out a shaky breath, some of the tension leaving her shoulders. "He always seems so certain," she murmured. "Like the world bends to his will."

Marco allowed himself a faint chuckle. "Sometimes it does," he said. "And when it doesn't, he forces it to."

Valentina nodded slowly, absorbing Marco's reassurance. For a few moments, they stood in silence, the ticking of a nearby clock the only sound between them.

"Was he right?" Val finally asked.

Marco glanced at her, slightly confused. "Hmmm?"

"Luca," she clarified, her fingers tightening around the belt of the robe. "Those things he said about you being..." She trailed off, suddenly unsure of how to phrase the question without sounding foolish.

Marco let out a soft breath, understanding dawning on his face. "Luca exaggerates..." he replied carefully, realising that was his go to excuse nowadays.

"So, you don't find me sexy,"

Marco shifted his weight, running a hand along the back of his neck as he considered his response. "Okay, Val," he began. "Luca is new to your teasing. I'm not. But seriously, I cannot tell if you are serious or teasing right now, which makes that particular question difficult to answer." He paused, then added, "So I plead the fifth."

A small laugh escaped Valentina, it carried an undercurrent of sadness. She lowered her gaze briefly before looking back up at him. "Would it help if I said a little part of me hopes you do?" she admitted softly, her eyes glancing away immediately after the confession.

Marco shook his head gently. "No, it doesn't," he replied.

"Of course," Val murmured, offering a sad but understanding smile. "I know this isn't a conversation we should be having."

Marco respected her honesty, yet he was acutely aware of the boundaries that existed. "Definitely not,"

Despite the certainty in his words, neither of them moved.

"I love Ricardo... I do," Valentina said softly. Her eyes searched his, pleading for understanding rather than judgment.

"I know," he replied gently.

"But..." she continued, the single word lingering between them.

Marco took a slow step closer, the distance between them shrinking until he was merely inches away. He could see the delicate rise and fall of her chest as she struggled to articulate what she was feeling. His own heart pounded heavily, each beat echoing with anticipation.

"But what?" he asked quietly.

Valentina swallowed hard, her lips parting as she tried to form the words. The conflict within her was evident—love for the man she had chosen to build a life with, and an unexpected, unsettling pull toward the man now standing before her. It wasn't something she had planned or even consciously acknowledged until lately.

"But..." she repeated, her voice barely a whisper.

"Say it," Marco urged softly. All he needed was the smallest admission, the faintest acknowledgment of a shared feeling. And Lord knew, he would endure a hundred floggings for the chance to explore whatever this connection might become.

Valentina opened her mouth. How could she possibly put into words something she barely understood herself? She loved Ricardo—her fiancé, the father of her child, the man she had chosen. That truth was undeniable. Yet, standing this close to Marco stirred emotions that were equally real, though far more complicated.

"I..." she began. She searched her heart for clarity but found only a tangled web of affection, guilt, curiosity, and longing. What exactly did she feel for Marco? Admiration? Safety? A forbidden spark of attraction? None of the labels seemed sufficient.

Her eyes dropped briefly before lifting to meet his once more, silently pleading for patience as she grappled with the enormity of the moment. Marco remained still, giving her the space to find her voice, the tension in his posture betrayed how much her answer mattered to him.

But the words refused to come. Instead, the silence between them deepened, filled with everything left unsaid. Valentina exhaled shakily, realizing that perhaps there was no simple way to complete that sentence.

"Val..." he said gently. "What do you want?"

"I don't know," Valentina whispered. "I don't know."

Marco softened his tone, trying to guide her gently rather than push her. "Forget Ricardo for a moment," he murmured. "Close your eyes. When you think about who should be with you—touching you, loving you, kissing you... who do you see?"

Valentina's breath caught. She parted her lips, her heart pounding as conflicting emotions surged within her. Images flickered through her mind—Ricardo's familiar warmth, the life they had planned together, the child growing inside her. But alongside those memories was another presence: Marco's steady strength, the sense of safety he evoked, the unspoken connection that had formed between them.

"I..." she began, her voice trembling as she struggled to give shape to the feelings she barely understood.

"Val?" Vee's voice suddenly called from the top of the stairs.

The moment shattered instantly. Valentina jerked around, guilt flashing across her face. She instinctively stepped back, increasing the distance between herself and Marco.

"Yeah, sis?" she replied, attempting to steady her voice.

Vee stood at the top of the staircase. "Do you want to take a break," Vee asked, "or will you help me with breakfast?"