

Mafia God 351

Chapter 351: I Wasn't Complimenting You

Luca smiled at that description, because it was annoyingly accurate. But then his jaw tightened again. "No," he said. "You are not going anywhere near him."

Veronica let out a short breath. "You do a spectacular job of being annoying."

"Thank you."

"I wasn't complimenting you!"

"I accept it as one anyway."

"Come on," she said. "Who is your Donna?"

The wink she gave him was pure trouble.

"You are not Donna yet," he said.

"Okay," Veronica said, adjusting instantly, because if one title did not get her what she wanted, she would simply try another. "Who is your fiancée?" She said it with a sweet expression, all innocent eyes and soft tone, very obviously trying to manipulate him with cuteness.

Luca was, unfortunately, not immune to it. He looked at her for a long second, already aware he was in trouble. "Fiancée," he said carefully, "does not handle mafia business."

"This isn't mafia business," she said, pointing between them. "It's family business."

"They are one and the same," Luca argued.

"By that logic," she said, tilting her head and lifting one brow, "then I can do it."

Luca closed his eyes briefly and groaned. There the trap was. Neatly set. Elegantly sprung. And he had marched right into it.

Veronica looked unbearably pleased with herself. "You keep saying I have to learn," she pressed. "This is a good place to start."

"I cannot protect you down there, Vee," he said at last.

"Where exactly is he?" she asked. "Is there some kind of hidden city beneath our feet?"

"This place," Luca said, glancing toward the walls beyond the courtyard, "used to be something close to a castle before it was rebuilt. There are places here," he continued, "you would never imagine there are places."

"Like Commissioned?" Veronica asked.

"Even better."

"Luca," she said, leaning closer. "I need you to trust me on this."

Luca sighed again, he knew he was making a terrible decision and was probably going to do it anyway because the woman in front of him had already won. "Alright then," he said at last. "Alright. I will arrange it."

"Yay!"

The sheer delight in her voice startled a laugh out of him. She bounced a little in her seat, leaned forward, and pressed a quick peck to his lips.

"Should I be wary," he asked slowly, "about you being this excited?"

"I'm just happy." She said as her fingers drifted lightly over his thigh, lingering there. "Very happy."

"I thought there was supposed to be a party for the baby news."

"Don't want you properly on your feet first," Veronica said. "We can't have a party without the baby daddy present."

"Right," Luca said. "I will do my damndest to listen to my doctor so I can get better faster."

"Can't you be moved to a normal bedroom yet?" Veronica asked, lifting a brow as she looked him over. "I can take care of you if that's the problem."

"You will have to ask my very annoyed, very frustrated doctor," he said.

"I will be sure to do that...Wow. It really is nice to be rich. Private hospitals, private prisons..."

Luca laughed once more and he liked that he was laughing a lot, because that meant his future would be filled with it.

Julian would have expected many things before his execution. A priest, his father, possibly Luca, just to enjoy the fall.

Hell, at this point he might even have expected the pope. But not Veronica. In none of the versions of his final moments—none of the bitter, feverish, sleepless imaginings his mind had built in the dark—had Veronica been part of them.

And yet there she was. Earlier, the guards had come in and cuffed his feet to the narrow metal bed bolted to the floor. They had said nothing while they did it. Julian had not bothered asking why. Questions required energy, and energy required hope, and he had very little of either left.

Now, seeing Veronica step into the room, he understood. She was the reason. The space itself was cold. Stone walls. One weak overhead light. A wooden chair. No window.

Julian lay half-reclined against the thin pillow, paler than usual, his face rough. There was no fight in him.

Veronica walked in slowly. She stopped a short distance from him and just looked. Julian watched her with the faintest crease between his brows. She looked at him like she had not yet decided what he was to her.

A monster. A broken man. She moved toward the wooden chair and set both palms on its back.

"I have a sister," she started.

"Why are you here?" Julian interrupted. "Where is Luca?"

"He is right outside that door," Veronica said evenly. "He doesn't trust that you still won't hurt me."

Julian's mouth twitched, it never quite became a smile. "And yet he let you in here."

"Luca would do anything for me," she said.

"That has been established, I guess. I will not say you are being arrogant."

Veronica ignored the dryness in his tone. She had not come down here to win a battle of wit. "I will also do anything for him," she said. "Including forgive you."

"How generous," Julian drawled.

"Do you know why?" she asked. "Because you are his brother. Like I said earlier, I have a sister," Veronica continued. "And there is nothing I wouldn't do for her."

"He's my halfbrother," Julian said.

The correction came fast, clipped, defensive.

"He's your brother!" Vee shot back. "The half is just a label you both use to avoid the reality that you are both idiots."

"Wow," he said. "You've got spunk. I like that."

"You let stupid things come between both of you," she went on. "When it's supposed to be both of you against the world. Idiots. Fools. That's what you both are."

"I still don't know why you are here," he said.

"I'm here," she said at last, "to get to know you."

Julian's brow furrowed slightly, that answer made even less sense than the rest of her presence.