

## **Mafia God 355**

### Chapter 355: You Weren't Worth It

"How could I have been so blinded by that?" she asked. Her eyes lifted to his, bright with humiliation. "You weren't worth it."

"I couldn't agree more."

Bianca straightened anyway and turned toward the door. She did not look back.

He pulled the signed file toward himself and rested one hand over it. He needed the physical confirmation that it was done. That this Chapter, ugly and unfinished and long rotten beneath the surface, was finally closing. He closed his eyes and sighed.

Three months. A waiting period. A bureaucratic insult. A final stretch of time between him and the life he actually wanted.

When it was over, he would have his happily ever after or whatever version of it a man like him was allowed to have.

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"Massi?" Carol pushed the door to his suite open.

The room was dark. She knew he was in there. She stepped inside, one hand sliding along the wall as she tried to pull from old memory where the light switch ought to be. She thought of all the nights she had once moved through these rooms—barefoot, young, angry, in love, pregnant, tired, laughing, furious.

"There you are," she muttered when her fingers finally found the switch and flicked it on.

Warm light spilled across the suite, exposing the damage all at once. Massimo was slouched on the sofa in the sitting room, his long legs stretched out carelessly, one arm hanging off the side, his shirt half-open at the throat, he had stopped caring days ago.

On the low table in front of him sat two whiskey bottles—one empty, the other nearly so—and a glass tipped on its side, even that had given up.

Carol stopped. She had let him grieve for days. The man had lost a son. Worse—he had killed a son with his own hand. There were some wounds she could not mock, not even if he deserved half the hell that had built this family.

Still, grief or not, the world had continued moving. Luca was downstairs, engaged, healing, expecting a future.

Against her better judgment, she had come to see if he could at least try to be present for his son's engagement and baby party.

She looked at the bottles again. "My God," she muttered, moving toward him. "Did you drink yourself to stupor?" Carol came closer and stood over him, folding her arms as she took in the roughness of him. His face was drawn with exhaustion, stubble shadowing his jaw, grief and alcohol having flattened all the polish out of him.

"Massi..." she called. Her eyes narrowed. "Massimo," she tried again. She sighed. "Fine." She leaned down and slapped him across the face, hard enough to wake him.

Massimo jerked violently awake, hand flying halfway up before his eyes focused on her and fury rushed in to replace sleep. "Fuck!" he snapped. "Could you try harder to be meaner?"

"Quit whining," Carol said, straightening after the slap. "What is this?" She gestured to the empty whiskey bottles crowding the table beside him. "Are you trying to pickle yourself?"

Massimo dragged a hand over his face, wincing, still half-dazed and very obviously not in the mood for her brand of mercy. "Go away."

Carol let out a short laugh at that. "Don't worry, I will. Soon. But not before you stop this... this..." She waved one hand around the room, searching for a word cruel enough and accurate enough. "Self-indulgent performance."

Massimo's eyes lifted to hers then. "This was what you wanted, wasn't it?"

The question was so unexpected, so wrong-footed.

"What?"

Massimo pushed himself a little more upright on the sofa, even sitting with dignity had become too much work. His shirt was wrinkled, his hair disordered, and his usual control had been dissolved by grief and whiskey. "Don't worry," he said. "You can admit it. I won't judge."

Carol's face hardened. "What are you saying?"

"You wanted the path clear," he said. "Wanted everyone gone. No one left to give you headaches." His gaze swept over her face. "Well. Now you have it. Is it enough," Massimo asked, "to make you finally come back?"

"What I want," she said, "you could never give me." Carol's hand tightened at her side. She had come up here to drag him downstairs, to force him into a suit, into a room full of family, into some approximation of life continuing. Instead she had found this—this collapsed version of Massimo, all teeth blunted by pain and still somehow dangerous enough to bite the one person who had bothered to come looking.

"Of course, there is always more with you." Massimo let out a tired sigh and sank a little deeper into the sofa, one hand hanging loose over the edge.

Carol shook her head. "I forgot how much of a mean drunk you are."

"I killed my son. I have a right to be mean and drunk."

"Massimo...This was never what I wanted. What I wanted," she continued, "was to get away from all this with you."

"Yeah, yeah..."

"It's no use talking to you," Carol said after a beat. "Are you going to be able to act like a human being at your son's party? The rest of the family will be arriving in Italy soon."

"I'll be there," he grunted.

"For what it's worth, Massi, I'm sorry about Julian."

"Will you stay?"

"You know I cannot," she muttered.

Massimo let out a short, disbelieving chuckle and tipped his head back against the sofa. "There's never been anyone else like you," he said. "No one."

Carol closed her eyes briefly. He kept going.

"You took everything that I am away with you. I haven't been with anyone else since you. No one. Not one."

"Not even Vittoria?" she asked.

"Not once."

"Massi..." she sighed.

Massimo's eyes lifted to hers. "I don't want your pity."

"That isn't what this is."

"No?" His mouth twisted faintly. "Then what is it, Carol?"

She sank to her knees in front of him. She was close enough now to smell the whiskey on him, close enough to see the grief sitting behind his eyes, close enough to remember entirely too much.