

Mafia God 363

Chapter 363: The Dress Suits You

Luca, however, had no room left in his mind for anyone but Veronica. He had never seen Vee dressed like that before.

Usually she was in that stupid Scalese pizza parlour T-shirt he hated. And when she wanted to look good for him, she tended to go for slutty.

But this? This was inspired. She wore yellow. A rich, luminous yellow that made her look like she had stepped out of sunlight itself. The gown was fitted and sleek, a sheath of silk hugging her body, the neckline adorned with delicate jewels and beading. One side slit rose high along her thigh, revealing just enough to remind Luca that God was either very kind or deeply committed to testing him. From one shoulder, a long draped panel of fabric fell behind her, giving her movement a regal lift.

She looked expensive. And entirely his.

"Oh my God..." Luca whispered.

Only Massimo, standing nearest to him, heard it. He stepped forward, drawn to her with the simple inevitability of gravity.

Veronica saw him coming and smiled. That smile nearly killed him. By the time she reached the last step, Luca was waiting for her there, looking at her like he had forgotten how speech worked. "You look like you're going to pass out, Luca."

Luca shook his head quickly, trying to clear the effect she was having on him. "I'm sorry," he said sounding genuinely off balance. "I'm... the dress suits you." His eyes moved over her again, still full of stunned admiration. "You look..." He exhaled softly. "Beautiful. Very beautiful."

"Thank you."

Without taking his eyes off hers, he lifted both her hands and pressed a kiss to her fingers.

"I'm the luckiest man alive."

"I'll show you just how lucky," she murmured, leaning in slightly, "when you take off the dress later tonight."

Luca nearly laughed because she had said it in that tone that made it very difficult for him to continue behaving like a civilized man in a room full of relatives. "Oh," he said, his smile deepening, "you have no idea how much I look forward to it."

Veronica's brows lifted knowing exactly how much and was enjoying his suffering. Luca forced himself to drag his attention back toward the actual structure of the evening before he forgot they were about to enter a ballroom full of family and allies.

"Would you mind," he asked, still holding her hands, "walking with my dad and mum to the ballroom? I'd like to escort Nonnina in."

For all Luca's arrogance, possessiveness, and general talent for damage, moments like this always reminded her that underneath it all lived a deeply loyal man who never forgot the people who had carried him.

"You're such a good boy," she said softly.

Luca's mouth twitched. "Remember that," he said, lowering his voice with a wink, "when I'm asking for extra love later."

Behind her, Carol gave a little pointed cough that said she had heard enough. Veronica slipped her hands from Luca's and moved gracefully to Carol's side.

Valentina, meanwhile, had already found her place in Marco's arms. Luca stepped back and turned toward Nonnina.

"Nonni..." Luca called, holding out his hand to her.

"Oh, Diavolino... you don't have to."

Luca's mouth curved. "Don't tell the other girls," he said in a lowered voice that absolutely carried to everyone nearby, "but you are the most gorgeous one here tonight." Luca, shameless as ever, continued, "I'd like to escort you in, my pretty queen."

Nonnina snorted. "I know you're lying," she said, placing her hand in his, "but okay."

Laughter moved through the group as Luca carefully helped Nonnina down the rest of the stairs, taking his time with her.

They all stepped out through the front doors together and crossed the courtyard toward the ballroom entrance.

Strings of light had been draped across the stone path and trees, turning the courtyard into a soft golden passageway. Music floated faintly from inside the ballroom.

At the doors, two men in dark suits pulled them open. And the room beyond spilled open.

Valentina let out a sharp whistle. "Wow. Mafia money."

Marco chuckled beside her, leaning just enough to murmur, "Behave."

She turned to him with an entirely unapologetic smile. "No promises, Marco. No promises."

"Yeah, that worries me."

The ballroom was drenched in richness. Crystal chandeliers poured light over the floors. Tall arrangements of flowers rose in sweeping, expensive abundance. A band played in one corner. Servers moved through the room with trays of champagne and cocktails while the guests—already gathered in little islands of conversation—turned one by one toward the entrance.

They were mostly the Genovese famiglia lieutenants with their significant others. The women varied by category and intention—some wives, some mistresses, some escorts, elegant enough to blend in.

Every single one of them noticed the family as they entered. Not just because Luca had arrived with Veronica glittering at his side.

Not just because Carol Montgomery was present in the flesh, which was enough to create its own wave of whispers.

But because together, crossing into that room under gold light and scrutiny, they looked like exactly what they were:

a family announcing itself, fractured, dangerous but absolutely stitched together by love.

Soft music drifted through the ballroom from the live band. The room itself was enormous.

The ceiling rose high overhead. Along the far side stood a banquet table long enough to seat dozens, dressed in linen, crystal and silver.

Luca bent and kissed Nonnina on the hair before releasing her. She shuffled off toward the staff alongside the house manager.

Luca watched her go with fond amusement before turning back and reclaiming Veronica's hand. "I'm back for my beautiful fiancée."

Veronica smiled up at him. "It's the only time I will allow you to cheat on me."

Luca huffed a laugh. "Generous."

"Don't abuse it."

"Never."

Together they moved deeper into the room as the family broke apart into smaller streams, each person folding into the social current in their own way. Pleasantries were exchanged. Names were offered. Introductions happened.

Carol did her absolute best to avoid the social core of the famiglia. She was there for her sons. That much was clear. But she had no intention of being swallowed by this life again simply because she had stepped close enough to touch it. So she kept herself moving along the edges—gracious when necessary, warm when it suited her, and elusive whenever conversation began to sound too uncomfortable.

Champagne flowed. So did congratulations. People came to Luca and Veronica one after another, smiling, toasting, offering blessings for the engagement and the pregnancy with varying degrees of sincerity. Veronica handled it as well as she could, but the scale of it all—the attention, the scrutiny, the feeling of being looked at not just as a woman but as Luca's choice—began to weigh on her. She smiled, answered, laughed when required, but there was an unmistakable slight tension in her shoulders whenever a new group approached.

This world was beautiful and exhausting. Valentina, on the other hand, was thriving. Absolutely thriving.

She took to the room. She laughed easily, charmed without effort, made wicked little jokes. She moved through the crowd with brightness and nerve, somehow making even the most formal exchange feel alive.

She was, whether anyone had planned it or not, basically the star of the occasion. Marco stayed beside her the way he always did—not hovering, not drawing attention, just there. Steady. Quiet. A dark anchor to all her glittering energy. He blended into the background, letting her shine while keeping one eye on the room and the other, more often than not, on her.

This part of the famiglia was not his cup of tea. Soon, the lights dimmed. Conversation softening into expectant murmurs and the band gave way to a sharper, more rhythmic sound. A circle of light opened at the center of the floor just as a professional couple stepped into it—sleek, poised, perfectly composed in black and gold.

Then the music began. "Papaoutai." The first beat hit, and the entire room seemed to lean in.

The dancers moved with breathtaking precision. It was salsa, yes, but theatrical too, rich with story. The woman was fire and motion, fast and daring, spinning herself into danger with gorgeous confidence. The man met that energy with control, strength, and impossible timing. He led without swallowing her. Caught her without dimming her. Every time she threw herself too far, too recklessly, too beautifully into the movement, he was there—guiding, grounding, taking the fall out of it before it could become ruin.

It was beautiful. Majestic, really. Even the most cynical faces in the room had softened by the middle of the piece.

Veronica stood very still beside Luca, her eyes fixed on the floor, taking in every twist, every catch, every moment of trust stitched into the performance. And the more she watched, the more something in her chest gave way.

Because it felt symbolic. Too symbolic.