

Mafia God 365

Chapter 365: I'm Obsessed With You

"I'm obsessed with you," he whispered.

The band surged back in then, taking over the song completely, but the words had already landed.

Veronica sobbed, and Luca smiled. He pulled her into his arms. The ballroom disappeared.

Or maybe it didn't. Maybe everyone was still there. It just stopped mattering. He kissed her hard.

A strong and very public declaration. A claim, yes—but more than that, a confession. This woman had taught him everything he had never believed he would learn. She had taught him that love was not weakness. That happiness was not a myth reserved for softer men. That holding your heart in your hands and offering it to another person was worth doing.

She had taught him what it meant to be truly in love. She had taught him what it meant to be truly happy.

Luca kissed her like he wanted the whole damned world to understand that. Veronica was not the only one with wet eyes.

Carol's eyes had gone bright too, hers held a different kind of ache—pride, yes, fierce and swelling in her chest as she watched Luca love without shame. Threaded through it was fear as well. Joy in this family was never simple. It was precious precisely because it had always been vulnerable.

Across the room, her gaze caught Massimo's. And yes—he was already looking at her. There was envy there, relief, gladness.

Massimo might never say it plainly but Carol knew what she was seeing. He was happy for him.

The famiglia had not been to a party this emotional in a very long time. By the end of the night, whatever reservations they had about Luca setting aside the Vitale heiress for this pizza maker from New York was mostly gone.

It was hard to argue with what they had just witnessed. A man baring his soul. Valentina, meanwhile, was positively vibrating with excitement.

She had not stopped smiling either. Her eyes were still fixed on Luca and Veronica. "Did you see that?!" she shouted the moment Carol reached her. "Did you see that?!"

Carol laughed softly and caught her by the arm before she could spin back toward Marco and explode again. "Yes," she said. "Everyone saw that."

Val's hands flew to her chest. "He sang. He sang. And then he just—" She made a dramatic gesture. "Luca!"

"Yes," Carol repeated, far too amused by her. "That was indeed Luca." She glanced briefly toward Marco then she looked back at Val. "Listen," Carol said, lowering her voice just enough to suggest this mattered. "I need to talk to you for a bit."

Val blinked, still giddy. "Now?"

"Now. Come on." Carol guided her gently away from Marco and the two women slipped through one of the side doors, out toward the patio.

"Is everything alright?" Val asked as soon as they stepped onto the patio.

The noise of the ballroom softened into a warm, distant blur.

"Yes... yes," Carol said. "I will be leaving for Singapore first thing tomorrow."

Valentina's face changed at once. Carol looked away briefly toward the dark courtyard before continuing.

"I wanted to tell you," she said, "and you alone."

"Me?" Val asked, surprised.

Carol nodded. "I don't want to make my departure difficult."

"You're afraid you might want to stay," Val said.

Carol swallowed and fought back tears, blinking once before lifting her chin again. "I love my sons," she said. "I love them with my entire being. But I have to go," Carol added. "When the time comes, I will be back." Her eyes drifted to Val's stomach.

"Carol..." Val murmured, not even sure what she meant to say after that.

Carol exhaled, then deliberately shifted the mood. "I left a present for Luca and Vee in their suite," she said. "Something I know you will totally approve of."

"What?"

Carol's mouth curved faintly. "That would ruin the surprise."

Val narrowed her eyes. "No way you can know me that well."

"Oh, trust me, sweetie," Carol said. "I do."

Val gave a suspicious little huff. Carol stepped closer and touched her arm lightly.

"I also left you a present."

"Really? Where?" Val asked at once.

"In Marco's room."

Valentina stopped dead. Whatever smile had been forming on her face faltered as the meaning hit. Her eyes lifted slowly to Carol's, and for once there was no joke ready on her tongue. "Carol... I..."

Carol smiled then. "Baby," she said softly, "I knew the moment I saw you both together."

Val looked away, her fingers twisting lightly against the fabric of her dress.

"Don't make him suffer, please... Val."

Valentina's head snapped back toward her at once. "That's not what I'm doing," she said, and the emotion in her voice surprised even her. "I'm suffering too." She swallowed hard. "I want to..."

The rest caught somewhere in her throat, tangled up in guilt and fear and all the impossible pieces of this mess she still hadn't fully figured out how to hold.

Carol stepped closer and quieted her with the softest little sound. "Sssshh... He took care of everything," Carol said. "But I know my son. He thinks he is not deserving of the happiness he gets," Carol continued. "That's why he puts everyone else before himself."

Yes. That sounded exactly like Marco. All that strength, all that steadiness, all that loyalty—and somewhere underneath, a man who had made peace with being useful long before he ever believed he was allowed to simply be loved.

"It's in your hands now, love," Carol said.

Valentina nodded once then again, the truth of what was being handed to her was settling into place.

"Love him," Carol said. "Protect your family. Do whatever it takes to keep your family safe."

Val nodded once more. Carol opened her arms. Valentina stepped into them immediately.

The embrace was warm and strong and painfully maternal—a mama-bear hug from a woman who had not given birth to Marco and yet somehow understood him as only a mother could. Val let herself sink into it, breathing in the softness, the comfort of being held by the woman who had raised the man she was trying not to break.