

Mafia God 381

Chapter 381: It Makes No Sense

"Ricardo and Cassidy," Luca continued. "If both of them are missing, that means someone is targeting the girls?"

Marco frowned. "I understand if Ricardo is taken. He was Val's fiancé at the time."

Luca's jaw tightened faintly.

"But Miss Scalese broke up with Cassidy a long time ago," Marco went on. "Why go after Cassidy? Why not go after you?"

"It makes no sense," Luca said. "It doesn't add up."

"If I could get an exact date for when Cassidy showed up in Commissioned," Marco said, "I can review the security footage."

Luca couldn't shake the feeling pressing at the back of his mind. He had lived too long by instinct to dismiss it when it woke like this. "I don't like it, Marco," he repeated. "I don't." He glanced over at Veronica who had her back turned now, one hand wrapped around the phone, her shoulders held very still.

Worry etched itself across Luca's face.

"We need to keep the girls safe," he said quietly.

Marco couldn't agree more. Veronica turned back toward them. And one look at her face was enough.

The color had drained from it completely. The phone was still in her hand.

"I think you need to take this, Luca."

Luca's head snapped fully toward her. "What? Who is it?"

Veronica swallowed once before answering. "He says Renato Bastione."

Marco and Luca looked at each other instantly. Luca took the phone from Veronica's hand. His fingers brushed hers for the briefest second, and he felt how cold she'd gone.

He lifted it to his ear. "Luciano Genovese speaking..."

The room held still around him. Marco watched Luca's face. Veronica watched his eyes. There was a pause while Luca listened.

In that pause, his expression changed. First came stillness. Then a narrowing. Then something darker slid into place over his features, a murderous calm so complete it looked like emptiness.

By the time the voice on the other end had finished saying whatever it came to say, Luca no longer looked like a man.

He looked like war. Slowly, he lowered the phone and hung up. He took one long breath even though he wanted to put his fist through a wall.

"Tell me," Marco said simply.

Luca looked at him. Veronica saw the shock beneath the fury. The part of him that had not expected this target. Had not expected the move to come from that direction. "He has Nonnina."

Veronica gasped, one hand flying to her mouth. "Oh my God!"

Of all the possibilities they had been circling, all the missing men and strange movements and wrong timing, this was the one that rewrote everything immediately.

The woman Luca loved with a softness he rarely allowed anyone to see. Luca turned away for one second and pressed the heel of his hand against his mouth. He was thinking fast. Handling Renato Bastione right now was tricky. With Italy still recovering, Voss and his obsession.

He looked back at Marco. This was no longer about preparing for what might be coming.

It had arrived.

"He says one of his for one of mine," Luca said at last, the words forced out through clenched control. "Dammit. Why does everyone think I have Cassidy?"

Veronica stood in the middle of it with her face drained white, the horror of Nonnina's kidnapping still ricocheting through her body in waves that had nowhere to go. "I put her in a cab back home," Vee said quickly, the words tripping over each other. "I made sure she got in the cab. She said..."

Her voice faltered.

Luca turned to her immediately. "Calm down, Bambola."

It was too late for calm. Her breath had gone thin and shallow, her chest rising too quickly now, her hands shaking, her body had decided that panic was the only language left.

"I... I don't know... how? I can't..." She pressed one hand to her chest, trying to physically force the air to stay inside her. "Please..."

"Fuck," Luca swore, shoving his phone at Marco. "Check the app. She had her necklace on."

Marco caught it at once.. He started pulling it up immediately, fingers moving fast, jaw tight.

Luca, meanwhile, reached Veronica just as the panic fully took hold. He caught her by the arms first, then pulled her into him when he felt her starting to fold in on herself. She was breathing too fast, but it

didn't fill anything, only stole more. Her eyes were wide and unfocused, caught somewhere between guilt, fear, and the awful image of Nonnina harmed.

"Bambola, breathe," Luca said. "Come on. Breathe." He held her face. "She will be fine," he said. "I will bring her home."

Veronica shook her head, tears spilling, frustration making it worse because she was trying—God, she was trying—but her body had already slipped beyond reason.

"I'm sorry," she gasped. "I'm trying... I'm... I can't..."

Luca's own panic flashed for her, for the baby, for the fact that the room was splitting into two emergencies and he could only physically hold one at a time. "Bambola, look at me," he said sharply.

She couldn't.

"Look at me!"

Her eyes snapped to his at last, wild and wet and terrified. Luca cupped her face harder, forcing the world to narrow.

"In," he said. "Breathe in." He demonstrated it with her. "That's it. Again."

Marco kept working in the background.

"Stay with me," he said. "Just stay with me for one second. We are good," Luca said. "I promise you. You have nothing to worry about."

The room was full of reasons to worry. But Veronica did what he asked anyway. She breathed.

In. Out. Again.

Her whole body shuddered against him as she fought her way back from the edge of panic, fingers curled into his shirt, face pressed against his chest ashamed of how badly fear had hit her. "I'm sorry," she whispered. "I'm sorry."

Luca kissed the top of her head, his hand still firm at the back of her neck. "Stop apologizing."

"No. Go." She drew in another breath. "Go. I'm fine. I promise I'm fine now."