

Mafia God 397

Chapter 397: Talk To Me

Luca held her close. Recovery from Nonnina would take a while. No. That was a lie. It would take forever.

And he would not heal—could not even imagine healing—until he put a bullet into Renato's brain.

It took a long while before sleep found him. Even then, it was thin and restless. Sometime later, he felt Veronica shaking him awake.

"Luca..."

His eyes flew open instantly. "Vee?"

Her face hovered above his in the dark. "Wake up... something's wrong."

He sat up immediately. "What?"

"I don't know," Vee whispered, one hand pressed to her lower stomach. "I just feel a bit of pain in my stomach."

Luca was fully awake now. He glanced toward the window. Outside, the sky was still dark, caught in that thin hour right before dawn when the world looked too quiet to be trusted. "Come on," he said, throwing the covers off. "I'll get you to the hospital." He jumped off the bed and came around to her side, careful but urgent as he helped her sit up. Vee winced slightly, and the sound went through him.

"Easy, bambola. Easy."

"I'm okay," she said automatically.

He switched on the lights. Warm gold flooded the room. Her robe lay across the sofa. Her slippers sat near a half-open suitcase.

Luca grabbed her robe quickly and returned to her. "Arms," he murmured.

Vee lifted them weakly, and he helped her into it with hands that were steady only because he forced them to be.

As he adjusted the robe around her shoulders, his eyes caught something on the bed. Bright red against the sheets.

Blood.

Luca could not breathe. His gaze snapped back to her face, panic breaking through. "Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

Vee frowned, confused by the sudden change in him. "No, just the pain."

His eyes moved quickly over her, searching, terrified of what he might find. Then he saw the trace of blood running down her leg. "God, no."

Vee's eyes followed his. She looked down. The colour drained from her face. A small gasp escaped her, and when she looked back up at him, panic had fully entered her eyes. "Luca..." she cried.

He stepped in immediately, cupping her face with both hands, forcing his own fear down because hers was already too much. "It's okay... it's okay..." His voice shook, but he kept it gentle. "I'll get you to the hospital. It's alright, okay? Don't panic." He pulled the door open, grabbed his car keys and scooped her into his arms.

Her face was pale, her breathing shallow, one hand pressed against her stomach as he carried her out of the room and down the hallway. The house was still wrapped in pre-dawn silence.

Within minutes, Luca had her in the car. The city outside was dark and empty, streets washed in grey-blue shadow, traffic lights blinking over deserted roads.

"Talk to me." Luca said.

"About what?"

"Anything."

She swallowed. "Your driving is terrible?"

He tried to laugh but it came out broken. About fifteen minutes later, they were at the hospital.

Again.

The sight of the emergency entrance nearly made Luca's stomach turn. It was the same bright, merciless building. The same sliding doors. The same smell of antiseptic. Only hours ago, Nonnina had been carried through here.

Now Vee.

Nurses rushed forward the moment Luca came in with her in his arms. They took her from him, moved her onto a bed, asked questions too quickly, and wheeled her toward the emergency room.

"Sir, you need to wait here."

"No."

"Sir—"

"I'm going with her."

A doctor stepped in. "You'll help her more by letting us work."

Luca stopped. He watched the doors close behind Vee, and for a few seconds, he stood there with empty arms, unable to move.

Then he began to pace. Back and forth. Back and forth. His hands went into his hair, then dropped. He checked the doors. Checked the clock. Checked his phone. Nothing made time move faster.

Finally, he sent a message to Marco. Then he forced himself to sit. The waiting was killing him.

Thirty minutes later, Marco and Val arrived. Val came first, wrapped in a coat, face pale with fear, hair hastily tied back. Marco followed close behind her.

Just the previous evening, they had been gathered here for Nonnina, whose body was still in the morgue waiting to be transported back to Italy.

And now here they were once more.

"What happened?" Val demanded, rushing toward Luca. "What's going on?"

Luca looked up at her, his face drawn, eyes red with exhaustion and fear. "I don't know yet," he said. "She woke bleeding."

"Oh my God... Oh my God!" Val cried. Her hands flew to her mouth. She turned blindly into Marco, and he was already there, arms open, catching her. "Why is this happening?" she sobbed into his chest. "Why?"

Marco held her tightly, one hand at the back of her head, the other firm around her shoulders. He had no answer. No useful one. The hospital had become a cursed place.

Luca sat apart from them, elbows on his knees, hands clasped tightly in front of him. He did not speak. He only stared ahead at the emergency room doors.

All he needed was one thing. Confirmation that Vee was okay. That the blood had looked worse than it was. That the universe, having already taken Nonnina, would show some basic fucking restraint and leave the rest of his world intact.

He kept his hands clasped because if he didn't, they would shake. Marco watched him over Val's head, saying nothing. He knew that stillness. It was Luca holding himself together with wire.

One hour passed. It felt like a lifetime. Then the emergency room doors opened. The doctor came out.

Everyone rose instantly. Val pulled away from Marco, her face wet, eyes wide. Marco's hand stayed at her back. Luca stood slower than the others, but once he was upright, he looked carved from stone.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Genovese..."

Val sucked in a sharp breath.