

Mafia God 400

Chapter 400: I'll Be Right Outside

"Okay." Vee replied.

He hesitated, then stepped closer and brushed his lips against her forehead. "I'll be right outside." Luca held her gaze, his eyes filled with unspoken things then he walked out.

Once the door closed, Vee opened the bag and pulled out the clothes. Soft black stretchy pants. A plain oversized T-shirt. Fluffy slippers.

Vee changed out of the hospital gown quickly. The slippers went on last. Vee looked down at them and gave a little breath. "They are warm."

Val wanted to cry. This wasn't good. There was no way this was good. Vee had completely shut off all of her emotions, and what remained was cold. Extreme cold. So frosty that Val could feel it.

Luciano and Veronica arrived back home alone. She had insisted that Valentina and Marco go home and take a break. Luca didn't like it. Vee needed her sister. That much was clear to anyone with sense and eyes. She was withdrawing from him, slipping somewhere behind herself, locking doors he could not reach. The entire ride home had been silent.

Just Vee staring out the window at the city. By the time they pulled into the courtyard, the house stood waiting. It looked unchanged, which felt offensive. Nonnina should have been there. The house should have known she was gone. The walls should have cracked. The kitchen should have gone cold. Something should have looked different.

But the doors opened. Guards bowed their heads. Staff hovered in the hallway, some with red eyes and careful faces.

The moment Vee stepped inside, she asked the inside staff to take a break. The staff exchanged uncertain glances.

Luca's jaw tightened. Again, he didn't like it. One by one, they obeyed. When the last maid disappeared, the silence became heavier.

"You want some tea?" she asked suddenly. "I'm making some."

"Rest," he said. "I'll make you the tea."

She turned to him then, and for the first time since the hospital, something like amusement touched her mouth. "Do you even know how to make tea?"

She said it lightly. It should have comforted him. It didn't.

"I think I can manage," Luca snapped as he walked to the kitchen.

She followed behind him into the kitchen. The room was too large for two people and too quiet without Nonnina in it. Usually, even when the kitchen was empty, it carried her presence. Now everything sat polished and still beneath the warm lights.

Luca moved to the counter and put the kettle on. Vee watched him from the doorway.

"The herbal one," she said. "With milk and honey."

"I know." His answer came too sharp. Luca grabbed a mug from the cabinet with more force than necessary. The ceramic clicked loudly against the counter.

"Are you mad at me or something?"

"No." He opened another cabinet, searching through tea tins. "Do I have a reason to be mad?"

"That's exactly why I was asking if you were mad."

"I'm not mad."

"You sound mad."

"I'm not mad!" Luca snapped, turning toward her. He immediately regretted it. His grip tightened around the tea tin. He looked exhausted standing there. "I'm not mad, okay? Let's just leave it at that."

She shrugged. "Okay." She moved to the breakfast chair in the middle of the room and sat down. Her hands folded on the marble island.

He turned back to the counter. Neither of them spoke. Vee looked at the empty stove and remembered Nonnina standing there, bossing everyone around. She could hear her voice from memory, commanding the kitchen.

Her throat tightened. She swallowed it down. Luca set the tea tin beside the mug and stared at the kettle.

The silence stretched. Water heated. She picked up an apple from the fruit bowl and bit into it.

The crunch sounded too loud in the kitchen. Vee chewed slowly, staring around the kitchen.

"Kind of weird now that I have to be the one to think about what to make for dinner," she said, trying to sound casual. "Nonnina..."

"That you will talk about?!" Luca turned sharply to face her.

Vee froze with the apple in her mouth. His eyes were bright, angry, wounded. "What's wrong with talking about Nonni?" Vee asked. "She did make all the decisions around here."

"Of course. We can discuss dinner. Tea. Funeral arrangements. Italy. But not that," he said.

She looked away.

"You know what?" Luca said, turning back to the kettle. "Fine. I will drop it. You didn't want the baby in the first place."

Vee's fingers tightened around the apple. The jab hit exactly where he meant it to. It was deep and cruel. Her throat closed. Her stomach twisted. Every part of her wanted to turn on him, to throw the apple, to scream that he had no right.

But she didn't. She was determined not to talk about it. So she let the jab slide. Luca stood with his back to her, breathing hard.

The kettle began to whistle. Luca grabbed it, poured hot water into the mug, added the herbal tea, milk, and honey.

He placed the mug in front of Vee. "Do you need anything else?" he asked.

Vee looked down at the tea, then shook her head. "No. I'm just going to have this then take a shower," she replied.

"I'm going to take a walk," Luca said.

Vee lifted the mug to her lips. "Have fun."

Luca stopped at the kitchen doorway. He looked like he might turn back and start the argument all over again. His shoulders rose, then fell. His jaw worked. Then, with all the maturity of a deeply wounded, emotionally exhausted crime lord, he threw both hands in the air and made a silent strangling gesture behind her back.

Vee saw his reflection in the polished kettle. She said nothing. Luca marched out of the kitchen.

His footsteps faded down the hall, then the front door opened and shut with enough force to announce that he was absolutely not mad, obviously.