

Mafia God 401

Chapter 401: I'm Not Done

Vee calmly sipped her tea. It tasted wrong. Too much honey. She swallowed around it and took another sip.

When the cup was empty, she carried it to the sink and stood there for a while, then she cooked.

She made spaghetti. Vee waited a bit for Luca. She scooped his portion into a plate, covered it, and carried it upstairs to their bedroom. The unpacked boxes still crowded the room. She placed his food on the side table, then began peeling off her clothes. She ran a bath and sank into the tub, letting the hot water climb around her.

For a while, she just lay there, staring at the ceiling, wondering how long his walk actually was. Wondering if he was really walking.

Eventually, the water cooled. Vee got out, dried herself, and headed into the bedroom. She pulled open a drawer, looking for something comfortable to wear, then paused.

Luca's cigar pack sat tucked inside.

"Hmmm..." She picked up the packet and turned it over in her hand, reading the warning label with a dull sort of curiosity.

Why not live dangerously? She changed into her nightdress and hurried back down to get a lighter and a bottle of wine.

Soon, she was lounging on the balcony, cigar in hand, drinking directly from the bottle. Veronica Genovese—well, not yet Genovese, as she kept reminding Luca—sat stretched out on the balcony chair in her nightdress, legs crossed.

The cigar burned between her fingers, clumsy and uneven because she had no idea what the hell she was doing. She had coughed through the first few pulls, cursed Luca for making it look elegant, then decided coughing was still better than crying.

The wine went down easier. By the time the bottle was halfway gone, the sharp edges of the day had begun to blur.

Soon, she felt nothing. No pain. No guilt. No heartache. Just a strange, floating quiet.

"So this is why Dad drank," she murmured.

It was freeing. An escape. A locked door between her and the things waiting to devour her. The alcohol emptied the mind.

The cigar drooped between her fingers. It was almost midnight when Luca returned from his supposed walk.

What he had actually done was go to the animal shelter. He had not worked. He had not spoken much. He had simply stood in front of cages and kennels, staring at the animals with tired eyes, envying them.

Luca had stood there for hours. The staff had noticed something was wrong, of course. But they had always known him to be a man of few words. He preferred to be around the pets than to stand and converse with them. He climbed the stairs slowly, exhausted in a way sleep could not fix.

Once he entered the bedroom, he spotted Vee through the glass doors, sitting on the balcony. He saw her shape in the dim light and thought, at least, she was still there.

He did not notice anything off. He undressed quietly. Then he saw the plate on the side table.

Even after everything, she had made him food. Luca uncovered it then he carried it downstairs to the kitchen, reheated it, and sat alone at the island to eat.

It wasn't Nonnina's cooking. But it was Vee's. So he finished every bite. Then he washed the plate, dried his hands, and came back up once more.

She was still there. Luca stood in the doorway for a moment, watching her through the glass. The balcony lights cast her in a soft, golden glow, her body relaxed in the chair.

He honestly didn't know which hurt him more—the fact that they had lost their child, or the fact that she didn't seem to care.

But how could she not? The thought had been eating at him since the hospital. Yes, he had pressured her into getting pregnant. He knew that. God, he knew that. He had wanted a child as recklessly as he wanted everything involving her. He had pushed, charmed, insisted, dreamed out loud until the idea became a thing between them.

But she had seemed to like it. So why did the grief seem to bounce off her now? Why was he drowning while she sat dry on the shore?

Luca took a shower. He stood under the hot water, jaw tight, palms pressed against the tile, trying to wash away the anger before it found her.

When he came out, changed, and returned to the bedroom, she was still on the balcony.

He'd had enough. He crossed the room and slid the glass door open angrily. "Veronica—"

The words died in his throat. That was when he saw the empty bottle of Tropicato laying on its side near her chair, shining faintly in the balcony light. Between her thighs sat a half-empty bottle of Valpolicella, loosely gripped in one hand.

She wasn't asleep. But she wasn't in this world either. Her eyes were open, unfocused. Her lips were parted slightly. Her face looked strangely peaceful and utterly devastated at the same time.

That was a lot of alcohol for someone who barely drank. And she was on medication.

"Fuck," Luca whispered.

All the anger drained out of him at once. He crouched in front of her, his hands going first to her face, then her hair. He ran his fingers through the strands gently, brushing them away from her cheek.

"Bambola," he said softly.

Her eyes shifted slowly toward him, but he wasn't sure she truly saw him. Luca bent and reached for the bottle.

Vee's hand tightened around it immediately. "I'm not done!" she said, voice slurred but stubborn.

"You are." He yanked the bottle out of her hands before she could pull it back. She made a weak sound of protest, but Luca was already standing. He stepped to the balcony rail and tipped the bottle over, spilling the rest of the wine into the darkness below.

Vee gasped. "I was drinking that."

"I noticed."

She glared at him, or tried to. It came out soft and blurry. Luca set the empty bottle aside, then turned back to her. His expression tightened as he took in the looseness of her body, the flushed warmth in her cheeks, the way her fingers trembled when she reached for nothing.

"Come here," he murmured.

"I'm fine."

He bent, slid one arm under her knees and the other behind her back, and lifted her out of the chair.

Vee's head fell against his shoulder. "You're so bossy."

"I know." He carried her through the balcony doors, back into the bedroom, holding her close. He placed her on the bed.

Vee landed against the pillows with a soft, irritated sound, her hair spilling over her face. Luca pulled the comforter over her, tucking it around her body. "I'm not a baby, Luca!" she protested, her words slightly slurred. "Let go of me." She kicked the comforter off lazily.

Luca stared at the blanket on the floor, then at her. He picked the comforter up and pulled it over her again. "You need to sleep off your stupor."

"I don't feel sleepy!" she snapped, yanking it away again.

"Vee! You lie back and go to sleep or I swear to God, I'm going to cuff you to this bed!"

She froze.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" he snapped. "You just got back from the hospital! You are on medication. You barely drink. And then you empty my bar!"

Her eyes lifted to his, unfocused but wounded. "Why are you yelling at me?"

Luca stopped. He dragged both hands through his hair and exhaled hard. "I'm sorry," he said immediately. "I'm sorry, babe. It's been a long day," he continued. "That is not an excuse. I know. I just..." He swallowed. "I apologise. Just, please sleep."

"I told you," she murmured, looking away from him toward the ceiling, "I don't feel sleepy."

"Then what do you feel?"

Vee blinked slowly. "I feel..." Her brows drew together. "Numb."

"Yeah," he muttered, trying and failing to make his voice lighter. "That much alcohol, you should feel dead." He moved closer again, scooped her up before she could protest, shifting her properly onto the bed.

This time, he reached for the comforter slowly. But before he could pull it over her, Vee lifted both arms and wound them around his neck.

Luca looked down at her. Vee's arms were looped around his neck, her fingers tangled lightly at the back of his hair. Her eyes were heavy from the alcohol.

"Stay with me," she whispered.

"It's my bedroom too. Of course, I'll stay."

"I love you."

Luca lowered his forehead briefly to hers. "I love you too."

"I'm sorry I made you mad."

His eyes closed. She sounded so small.

"I'm not mad, Vee," he said quietly. "We'll talk when you are not drunk." He tried to move.

But for someone who had swallowed enough alcohol to frighten him half to death, she was suddenly freakishly strong. Her arms tightened around his neck desperately. Not strong enough that he couldn't break free, but enough that if he forced himself out, he might hurt her.

And he would rather cut off his own hand.