

Mafia God 406

Chapter 406: The One And Only

Then Bianca saw Veronica. She stood near the edge of the carpet, welcoming guests with small smiles and graceful bows. She wore a little black dress, paired with a hat and sunglasses that hid her eyes completely.

Bianca's lips curved. Interesting. Hiding, then.

Valentina was moving between the rows, helping assign guests to their seats despite her visibly pregnant belly.

Luca was across the courtyard, speaking with a group of men. He looked perfect in black. Devastating, actually. Bianca found it deeply unfair. But even as he nodded at whatever one of the men was saying, his eyes kept returning to Veronica.

She playfully gave him the finger. Luca caught it. His face softened. A small chuckle escaped him before he looked away, returning his attention to the men gathered around him. But even then, Vee knew he would look back again in less than a minute. She turned back to the guests with the polite smile she had been wearing and nearly lost it.

The Vitales stood smack in her line of sight. Don Vitale first, broad-shouldered and solemn in a black suit, his face arranged seriously. Beside him stood his wife, dressed in black lace, holding a handkerchief she had chosen for aesthetic value more than emotional use.

And there, like a curse in designer heels, stood Bianca. Two personal guards lingered behind them.

Vee's smile tightened. Pure irritation took the wheel. "Hi..." she managed to say. "Welcome. Please, take a seat."

Don Vitale's gaze settled on her. "Miss Scalese, right?"

"The one and only."

"I've heard so much about you."

"I'm not sure they are good things, but whatever."

A tiny silence followed.

"I see." Enzo raised both brows briefly.

Vee gave him a stiff smile. Her eyes shifted briefly to Bianca. Vee gestured toward the courtyard seats. "The ceremony will begin shortly."

Don Vitale nodded and moved ahead with his wife. Bianca waited just a bit longer. Long enough to be childish.

As she passed, she turned her face slightly toward Vee and gave her a smug little smirk.

Vee rolled her eyes behind the dark glasses, grateful nobody could see how deeply, spiritually exhausted she was by this woman's existence. She lifted her chin, and watched Bianca glide toward the seats.

"Not today, Satan," she muttered beneath her breath.

The rest of the guests were welcomed smoothly, or as smoothly as one could welcome half the Italian underworld, its wives, family friends.

By the time the ceremony began, the courtyard was full. Rows of guests sat beneath the soft shade of the garden awnings. White roses and dark lilies framed the aisle.

Even Ricardo's mother was there. Nonnina's sister.

Vee took her place beside Luca in the front row. He sat very still, one hand resting over hers.

Bianca found a spot among the other women—the wives of Genovese lieutenants, women she already knew. She slid into their circle like she had never left.

Veronica felt eyes on her throughout the sermon. She did not have to turn to know whose.

The stare crawled over the back of her neck, over her shoulders. It made her uncomfortable first. Then angry.

But she chose to ignore it. She chose not to look behind her. Today, she was going to be the woman the famiglia expected her to be. The woman at Luca's side. The future Donna.

So she kept her chin lifted and her fingers still beneath Luca's hand. The priest spoke of service, devotion, faith, and love that outlived the body.

Then Luca got up. He walked to the podium slowly. When he looked out at the crowd, silence deepened.

He spoke about Nonnina. About how she had come into his life when he was still a boy. About how she had loved him when he least deserved it. She had been his grandmother in every way that mattered.

People oohed and aahed softly.

When Luca stepped down from the podium, the courtyard gave him a round of applause.

A particular set of applause was a little too enthusiastic for Vee's liking.

Soon, they all rode in their respective cars through Italy to the cemetery where Nonnina's casket was to be laid into the ground.

The procession moved like a dark river through the countryside. Black cars followed one another along narrow roads bordered by cypress trees, old stone walls, and sunlit fields.

Veronica sat beside Luca in silence. His hand remained wrapped around hers the entire ride.

At the cemetery, the priest said the final prayers. The family stood together. Luca stood like stone.

Vee stayed beside him, elegant in black, chin lifted, sunglasses hiding the worst of her face. She listened to the prayers, watched the casket lower.

When the final handfuls of earth were thrown, the ritual was done. Nonnina had been laid to rest.

People began to disperse slowly, gathering in little groups, murmuring condolences, exchanging touches on shoulders, kisses on cheeks.

Luca was pulled away for a bit by Don Genovese and two older men. He glanced back at Vee.

She gave him a small nod. She could stand for five minutes. Veronica moved toward their waiting car. She had almost reached the vehicle when a voice came from behind her.

"Hi."

Vee stopped and turned slowly. Bianca walked up to her, veil pushed back. Vee raised a brow.

What the... Well, all she had said was hi. There was nothing wrong with hi, right?

"Hello," Vee replied.

Bianca looked toward the graveside, sighing softly. "It was a very beautiful ceremony. Worthy of the famiglia."

"Thank you."

"I'm assuming Luca put all of these together?" Bianca's eyes drifted over the grandeur of it all. "It takes someone who really belongs, you know."

There was the little hidden knife. Vee smiled. Again, not today, Satan.

"Yes, he did handle everything," she said smoothly. "She is quite special to Luca."

Bianca's gaze returned to her. "Shame, really," she said. "She was quite sweet. My father told me what happened."

"Bianca, we really have to head back to the house for the dinner," Vee continued. "We can play this imaginary catch-up later."