

Mafia God 408

Chapter 408: Men Are Such Easy Creatures

Vee smiled as she looked at Luca. He stood across the hall, surrounded by men he would someday lead fully, his face arranged into that calm, serious mask he wore. Black suit. Tired eyes. Still somehow commanding enough that older men leaned in when he spoke.

But she saw what they didn't. He had not eaten. Since morning, he had moved through ceremony, greetings, condolences, and tense conversations with nothing in his hand. Everyone else had been fed. Everyone else had wine, juice, pastries, espresso, something. Luca had nothing.

Nonnina had always handled that. Vee's chest tightened, but she swallowed the ache and turned toward the serving table. She quickly grabbed a small tray and placed little savoury snacks on it. Then she added a glass of juice.

She walked toward him. One of the lieutenants was speaking when she arrived.

"Excuse me," Vee said softly.

Every man turned. Luca's eyes landed on the tray first then on her.

She held the tray out to him. "Eat."

Luca smiled exuberantly then, a true smile, bright enough to soften the hard lines grief had carved into his face. He took the tray from her and leaned down, placing a gentle kiss on her hair.

Just as he would Nonnina. The gesture made Vee's throat close for a second. They both understood it without saying anything.

She had stepped into a role he had not asked of her. She would never be Nonnina. She wasn't even trying to be. No one could replace that woman, not in Luca's heart.

But Vee could be there. She could love him in the quiet ways too. She could be there for him even when he didn't know he needed her.

"Thank you," Luca said softly.

Vee gave him a small smile. "Finish it."

"Yes, ma'am."

She rolled her eyes and walked back to the women, taking her position beside Valentina.

The women continued talking. The conversation moved from funeral arrangements to travel, from travel to dresses, from dresses to an upcoming wedding involving two members of the famiglia.

For a while, it was harmless. Veronica did not understand how the conversation subtly changed.

One minute they were discussing a wedding and the next Bianca took a shot at her.

"Weddings in the famiglia are overrated," Bianca said conversationally.

The women around her continued smiling.

Then her next words landed.

"You know, you spend all that money on a dream wedding and an inconsequential mistress from nowhere burns everything to the ground."

Silence. Veronica stood very still. Bianca lifted her glass with delicate fingers, her expression bored.

The women went quiet. All except Valentina.

Val took one slow sip of juice, then smiled sweetly. "Oh, men are such easy creatures, you know. They get turned off when women try so hard to be relevant."

A few eyes widened.

Val shrugged, raising her glass slightly. "It becomes desperate after a while."

"Hmmm... I disagree." Bianca turned her head, her gaze sliding toward Vee now. "Maybe in your world of rainbows and sunshine, that is true. But in the famiglia, you have to try hard. Strength has to be your DNA."

Vee's fingers curled at her sides.

Bianca continued. "Otherwise, you wouldn't even be able to hold something as simple as a baby."

And that was it. That was when everything shut down. The performance. The careful restraint Vee had been dragging behind her all day.

Gone.

Bianca had gone low. Too low. Veronica was done being elegant. She reached across Valentina.

Val barely had time to blink before Vee yanked the glass of juice out of her hand. "Vee—"

Too late. Veronica did not pour it. She threw it. The entire glass went flying across the space and struck Bianca straight on the head with a sharp, satisfying crack, juice exploding over her.

The women shrieked instantly. The sound cut through the hall, dragging every male eye toward them.

Across the room, Luca turned. Marco turned. Massimo turned. Everyone turned. Bianca had barely recovered from the juice and glass striking her when Veronica moved again.

She grabbed a bottle from the table, marched straight toward Bianca, and swung it hard against the side of her head.

The bottle shattered. Bianca screamed. The room exploded into chaos. Women stumbled backward. Someone shouted Veronica's name. Valentina gasped, one hand flying to her belly as another woman pulled her away from the mess. Bianca staggered, clutching the side of her head.

Veronica wanted Bianca to understand, with absolute clarity, that there were some wounds a person did not touch unless they were ready to bleed for it.

Everything happened too fast after that. The Vitales' guards reacted first. Both men reached beneath their jackets and drew their weapons, aiming squarely at Veronica.

Veronica saw the guns. She didn't care. A strange calm settled over her. Maybe this was how she was going to die. Maybe this was the end.

Fine. But if she was going down, she was sure as hell dragging Bianca down to hell with her.

She moved towards Bianca again. The women around her surged forward at once, grabbing her arms, her waist, her shoulders, pulling her back before she could lunge again.

"Veronica, stop!"

"Vee!"

"Let me go!" she snapped, fighting against them.

Two gunshots cracked through the room. The Vitales' guards dropped almost at the same time, their weapons clattering uselessly against the floor.

Silence followed. Everyone turned toward the source of the shots.

Luca stood across the hall with a gun in his hand. His posture was almost lazy, one arm lowered slightly now. The tray Veronica had given him earlier sat abandoned on a side table behind him.

The scene was chaos.

Bianca was on the ground trembling, one hand pressed to her injured head. Two men lay on the floor, one grabbing his shoulder, another grabbing his leg. The women still held Veronica back, though she had gone still now, chest rising and falling hard. The Vitales looked stunned.

The Genovese famiglia had their bodies angled toward threat. The entire room prepared itself for war in one breath.