

Mafia God 419

Chapter 419: Anyone With Legs

A few Asian men and women were scattered around the place, drinking tea, eating from small plates, playing cards, laughing in quick bursts. Nobody looked particularly alarmed by his entrance, which annoyed him. Luca preferred when rooms understood the danger he brought in.

He moved straight to the counter. Behind it stood a bored-looking man. "Hi," Luca said, forcing politeness through clenched teeth. "I am looking for Veronica Scalese."

The man looked him up and down slowly then he pointed toward a door at the back. No who are you?

Just a lazy finger toward the unknown.

Luca stared at him. "That's it?"

The man shrugged. "You ask. I answer."

"Anyone can just walk in?"

"Anyone with legs."

Luca blinked. Fantastic, great, wonderful.

Veronica was spending every evening in a place where anyone could walk in without questions. He made a mental note to check both his physical and mental health one of these days.

He moved toward the door at the back. The closer he got, the clearer the sounds became. Grunts.

Sharp exhales. A woman's breath catching hard. Veronica's moans. Luca's heart dropped straight into his stomach.

For one terrifying second, every ugly possibility opened inside his head. He pushed the door open slightly and peeked inside.

Then he stopped. A smile crossed his lips immediately. Ah. That explained it. That explained her being tired every night. It explained why she slept like the dead.

Veronica was training. The room beyond was a private gym. Thick mats covered the floor. Punching bags hung from the ceiling. Wooden staffs rested along one wall. There were mirrors, low benches, towels folded neatly, bottles of water lined up.

And in the centre of the mat was Vee. His Vee. Hair tied high and messy, dressed in black training pants and a fitted top, face flushed, breath sharp, eyes burning with concentration. She was barefoot, knees slightly bent, hands raised, her body moving with more discipline than he expected and more anger than anyone could expect from her.

Across from her stood a woman perhaps in her forties, with greying hair pulled into a tight bun. She circled Vee with light steps, palms relaxed, eyes sharp.

"Again," the woman said. She moved first, stepped in, feinted toward Vee's shoulder, then swept low with her leg. Vee barely avoided it, hopping back with a muttered curse.

Vee reset her stance. Good. Luca leaned slightly against the doorframe. The instructor came again, quicker this time, throwing a soft palm strike toward Vee's chest. Vee blocked, too wide. The instructor tapped her ribs with two fingers.

"Dead. Again."

Vee tried to strike first this time, stepping forward with a punch that had too much force. The instructor shifted aside easily and caught her wrist.

The woman gave one small twist. Vee stumbled and nearly landed on her ass. Luca bit back a laugh.

Vee caught herself, breathing hard.

"Again."

This time, Vee did better. When the instructor reached for her wrist, Vee turned with the motion instead of fighting it directly. She stepped in, shoulder close, trying to use her body weight. It was messy, imperfect, but clever. The instructor's brows lifted by the smallest amount.

Luca stood straighter, unable to stop watching. Vee attacked again. A jab. A palm. A knee that stopped short of contact. The instructor blocked each one, correcting her with sharp taps and clipped instructions.

"Chin down. Breathe. Feet. Use your anger!"

The next time Vee came forward, her anger surfaced. She threw a punch, missed, turned, blocked a counter with her forearm, then drove her palm toward the instructor's shoulder.

The woman shifted, but not fast enough to avoid all of it. Vee made contact. The instructor stepped back.

A grin spread across Vee's face. She wiped sweat from her brow with the back of her hand and took a few steps away, breathing hard.

"Again?" the instructor asked.

Vee bent over, hands on her knees. "Are you trying to kill me?"

The instructor picked up a bottle and tossed it at her. "Drink water."

Vee caught it clumsily and groaned. Luca watched her twist the cap open, her chest rising and falling, sweat shining along her throat. She was learning how not to feel helpless.

Luca's shoulders practically broadened with pride as he closed the training-room door behind him and headed back out through the club. He stepped outside into the cool night air. The street was still alive.

The guard straightened again the moment he saw him.

Luca held out his hand. "Keys."

The guard placed Vee's car keys in his palm.

Luca handed over his own keys. "Go with my car. I'll wait for her."

The guard took the keys and left quickly, disappearing toward Luca's car. Luca stayed behind. He leaned against the car, arms crossed, eyes on the club entrance, still feeling ridiculously proud of her.

Of all the things he had imagined, he had not imagined this. Veronica Scalese, learning to defend herself in a backroom gym behind a Chinese hangout club.

His mouth curved. But why the hell did she have to keep it to herself? He could have helped. He could have gotten her one of the best trainers in town. She would be whipped into shape in just a few days.

Actually, no. Knowing Vee, she would hate every second if he arranged it. She would accuse him of taking over. She would call him controlling. Then somehow, within ten minutes, they would be fighting.

He sighed. A couple of minutes later, the door opened. Vee came out showered and changed, her hair damp at the ends, a little gym bag slung over one shoulder. She looked fresh-faced, tired, and pleased with herself.

Until she spotted him. Her face turned dangerous. Luca straightened slowly.

"What are you doing here?!" she snapped, marching toward him.

"Waiting."

"Luca!"

"That is my name, yes."

"You promised!" she yelled, stopping in front of him. "You promised!"

He merely smiled at the beginning of her usual legendary anger.

"We agreed you were not going to keep tabs on me," she snapped, marching closer. Her eyes bright with betrayal and righteous violence. "What is wrong with you?"