

Mafia God 430

Chapter 430: You Chose This

Val sighed instantly, melting into the chair. "Oh, that's good."

Luca sighed in resignation. Why couldn't he ever leave well enough alone? Why did he have to say anything? Telling Valentina she could ask him for anything was apparently the same as handing a greedy person a blank cheque and then acting shocked when they bought a private island.

"Of all the things you could request for?" he drawled. "You chose this."

"What? My feet hurt. They're carrying too much. Me. The baby. Emotional stress. Wedding plans. The burden of being beautiful."

"You just make a sport of humiliating me," Luca said, continuing to massage one foot.

Val sighed in relief. "I think rubbing a pregnant woman's feet is noble....You're very good at this. I'm surprised every time you show a normal human skill."

Luca chuckled and moved to the other foot. "Have you ever heard of the saying, the sins of the father will be visited on the children?"

Val opened one eye. "Where is this going?"

"In this case, it is the sins of the mother." He looked pointedly at her stomach. "And oh... will I collect."

Val burst into laughter. "You're going to take revenge on a baby?"

"Ohhhh yes... I'm going to read it, sing it, shout it at every opportunity so he will grow up to know how horrible his mother is."

Val looked at Luca for a moment. "I don't know why I was mad at you," she said softly. "You're harmless really. You just attract the wrong people."

Luca's hands paused. His eyes lifted to hers. "You were mad at me?"

"A little, I guess," Val admitted. "I was going through some stuff, but Marco helped me with it."

Luca frowned. "I don't understand."

Val sighed and shifted carefully in the chair, one hand going to her stomach. "It's just..." She searched for the right words. "I needed someone to blame for everything that had been happening and, well... you were the scapegoat."

"Yeah," he said quietly. "I guess I deserve to be. Your lives would be safer without me in it," Luca added.

For all his swagger, violence, and impossible confidence, there were moments when Luca looked painfully aware of what he brought into people's lives.

"But you make my sister happy," Val said.

Luca's eyes lifted to hers.

"And Marco makes me happy," she continued. "You love her. I know you do. And I know you will protect her. That's enough for me."

Luca smiled and returned to his chore, rubbing her swollen foot. "It's that obvious, uhn?" he asked. "I thought I was being cool about it."

Val rolled her eyes. "You couldn't be cool about it if it could save your life."

"To be fair," he said, "she makes me happy too. And proud," he added. "I am really proud of her." His hands slowed around her ankle, his gaze drifting. "She carries a strength I did not know she had. I knew she was tenacious. Protective. Stubborn as hell."

"Family trait."

"Clearly." His mouth curved faintly.

"My world keeps trying to swallow her, scare her, break her. And somehow, she keeps standing taller. She seems strong. Stronger than my mother ever was."

"She's always been strong," Val said. "She just had to learn to be stronger because your world takes a maniac."

That was probably the most accurate description of his life anyone had ever given.

He gave a small shrug. "Marco's not a maniac."

"Thank God for small mercies."

Luca laughed. "I never said this before, at least, not to you." He smiled faintly. "I am glad you and Marco are together. I mean it, I was always rooting for you two."

Val shook her head smiling. She decided to give him a break and carefully took her legs off his thighs.

Luca looked down at his lap. "Finally released from service."

"You did well."

"I expect a tip."

"You ain't getting any." Val eased herself upright with a small groan, one hand going to her back. Luca was on his feet immediately, offering his hand.

"Come on," he said. "I'll escort you home." He helped her to her feet carefully, waiting until she had her balance before letting go. Val waved to Tony.

"Bye, Tony."

Tony lifted a hand. Luca led her outside, one hand hovering near her back as they crossed to her car. He opened the door, helped her settle in, and waited until she was comfortable before closing it.

As soon as she was settled, he walked back to his own car and drove behind her.

Vee stopped by the shop that evening on her way to her self-defence class. The street had settled into that soft after-work rhythm—people hurrying home, shop lights glowing, cars crawling past with impatient horns. She had only meant to check in quickly. She had just stepped out of the car when she noticed David across the street, locking the front door of Heritage Café. The café looked almost ready now. The windows were clean, the tables arranged, the lights warm and welcoming. A chalkboard sign near the entrance promised opening week discounts and the best coffee on the block.

"Miss Scalese?" he called.

Vee paused, then smiled politely. "Hi." Her guard straightened a little behind her.

"I was hoping I would see you before I leave," he said, crossing toward her.

"Oh?" Vee tilted her head. "Is there anything wrong?"

"Not exactly." David stopped a respectful distance away, hands loose at his sides. He looked calm as usual. "I got a visit from your husband," he said.

Vee smiled. She chose not to correct him. Luca had gotten into the habit of calling her his wife already, and honestly, she didn't mind. It was only a matter of months before they were legally married anyway. At this point, correcting people felt like arguing with the inevitable.

David glanced briefly toward Heritage Café, then back at her. "And I get the sense he doesn't want me to have anything to do with you."