

Mafia God 443

Chapter 443: Have Her Call Me

Val had mentioned it before, not in so many words, but enough. The danger, the fear, the way their lives had become one long disaster since Luca entered it. He couldn't even blame her.

"It's just been too much for a while now," Marco said quietly.

Vee turned her head slightly, still held against Luca's chest.

"She's been afraid since Nonnina died," he continued. "Always expecting something bad to happen next. She tries to smile through it, but she's been waiting for the next blow."

Vee swallowed hard.

"She's going to be fine," Marco added. "I'm sure. Just needs time."

Vee sighed. Great. Now Marco understood her own sister better than her. Just great. He had known Val for how long? Five minutes? Vee had been too busy becoming Donna, too busy being Luca's, too busy trying not to fall apart, and in the middle of all that, Val had been unraveling.

"Hey, hey, hey." Luca caught her chin gently and pulled her attention back to him. His eyes searched hers, stern now, refusing to let her spiral. "None of this is your fault," he said. "You hear me? It has absolutely nothing to do with you."

Vee blinked back the sting in her eyes. "I know..."

He kissed her forehead, and she exhaled, turning back to Marco.

"When are you leaving for your honeymoon?"

Marco dragged a hand over his face. "Tonight..."

"Santorini will be good for her." Vee wiped beneath her eye quickly and straightened. "Just... take her away from all this for a while. Have her call me... please."

"Of course, I will. And Vee," Marco added gently. "She loves you. Nothing is going to change that."

Vee fought to hold the tears back, to swallow them down, to keep them somewhere safe until she could be alone. But they rose anyway, blurring Marco's face, blurring the room, blurring everything.

So she turned. Without another word, she walked out of the house. Luca watched her go, every instinct in him pulling toward her, but he stopped himself long enough to turn back to Marco.

"Have a good one, Marco," he said.

Marco gave him a tired, emotional smile. "Thank you. Not just for saying that, but for everything. I owe everything good in my life to you and Ma."

Luca stepped forward and pulled him into a hug. "I'll see you soon."

Marco nodded against him. "Yeah."

Then Luca left. Marco finally headed upstairs. The bedroom door was slightly open. He pushed it gently and stepped inside.

Val was on the bed, curled on her side, one hand wrapped around her stomach. She was sobbing. Body-racking sobs that shook her shoulders and stole her breath.

The sight absolutely wrecked him.

"Val..." Marco sighed. He stopped near the door, maintaining a careful distance from her even though every part of him wanted to rush across the room and gather her into his arms.

"I moved on," she cried. "I moved on while all along he was dead."

There was no right answer. No perfect thing to say.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"How long have you known?" she asked. Val turned her head slightly on the pillow, her eyes swollen, wet, and accusing.

"I didn't exactly know," Marco admitted.

Val's lips trembled. "What does that mean?"

"I suspected."

She closed her eyes. A fresh tear slipped down her cheek. "And you didn't tell me."

Val slowly pushed herself upright against the pillows, one hand bracing her stomach. "Will you still continue keeping secrets from me?" she asked.

"I don't..." He started to say it automatically then stopped. His life was built on silence. On things unsaid. Marco exhaled. "Only things that involve the famiglia."

Val gave a small, bitter laugh. "Of course."

"Val, you need to know you just broke your sister's heart."

"She'll get over it," Val said. "It seems quite easy for her to get over things nowadays."

"Babe," he said carefully, "I know you are hurting."

"Do you? Do you really?" she asked, voice rising.

Marco sighed. Guess it was his turn to get some talking to.

"No, you weren't the one who broke off an engagement to a dead man. You are not the one who moved on while carrying his child, and all the while he was left to..." Her breath caught. Her hand flew to her mouth as if the image had finally formed too clearly in her mind. "Oh my God." She burst into tears. Her shoulders shook. Her breathing fractured. One hand clutched at her stomach.

Marco crossed the room then. Space be damned. He sat beside her and pulled her into his arms. She curled into him immediately, gripping his shirt with desperate fingers, pressing her face into his chest.

"I thought he left me."

Marco closed his eyes, pain moving across his face. "You didn't know."

All he could do was hold her. His hand moved down her back in slow, steady strokes, again and again. He could not fix this.

So he stayed present and hers.

Luca and Vee sat on the balcony outside their bedroom later that night, each with a glass of wine, staring at the sky.

Valentina and Marco would have left by now to Santorini. In a few hours, they would be in a private villa with sea views.

Vee kept her phone on the small table between them. Luca noticed every time her eyes drifted to it. She was still hoping for the call.

Even though Marco and Val were probably already in the air. Vee lifted her wine glass, took a sip, and set it down again. Her shoulders were stiff. Her face was calm.

"I should have let you handle it," she finally said, giving up on hearing the phone ring.

Luca turned his head toward her. "No...I shouldn't have suggested I should be the one telling her at all. It was a stupid idea." He looked back at the sky, jaw tight. "I guess I was trying to shield you from the hurt of breaking such sad news to someone you love."