

## **Mafia God 457**

### Chapter 457: Thank You For Saving Her

David lowered his eyes to his coffee to hide the smile tugging at his mouth. Veronica Scalese was becoming a problem.

An entertaining one, but still a problem. Luca turned his head slightly toward Vee, his jaw clenched. She did not speak. She did not need to. Her eyes said everything: Behave.

Luca stared at her. She stared back. A silent battle took place in the middle of David's café, and somehow, impossibly, Luca lost. He sighed. "Thank you for saving her," Luca said, each word tight and clearly painful. "You didn't have to."

David nodded slowly. "That must have been very hard for you to say."

Luca's eyes went flat. Vee closed her eyes for one second, praying for patience. Luca turned to her, anger flashing bright in his eyes, but Vee simply looked at him.

David found that fascinating. Vee stepped in again.

"Well," she said brightly, "thank you again. We will be on our merry way."

David lifted his coffee in a small, lazy gesture. "Have a nice day."

Vee gave him a small wave, though her smile carried apology and exhaustion all at once. Then she began pulling Luca toward the door.

The bell jingled above them as they stepped out. Through the glass, David watched Vee start saying something to Luca he could no longer hear. Judging by the sharp movement of her hand and the way Luca looked straight ahead, she was probably chewing his head off.

David found himself smiling. He caught himself quickly. His expression smoothed. His face schooled itself once more.

Luca definitely had his hands full. David sat still for a moment after the couple left, staring at the door as the bell above it settled into silence. The street had returned to its usual rhythm.

A supposedly powerful man, feared across the city, and his kryptonite was an American small business owner.

He picked up his coffee, found it cold, and pushed it away with mild disgust. The café suddenly felt too much. Veronica Scalese had been inside for less than ten minutes and still somehow managed to leave energy behind. He decided it was time to head home. He got up, moved through the shop, checked the back door, turned off the lights over the counter, and locked the front. The place looked innocent in the dark. A simple coffee shop waiting for approval. A respectable little business.

A lie.

His car was still at the body shop and it would be really suspicious if he immediately got another one. Ordinary café owners did not replace damaged cars overnight.

So he called a cab. The ride home was uneventful. He sat in the backseat, watching the city smear itself against the window. The driver tried to make conversation.

David ignored him. The man wisely stopped. He hated small talk. By the time he reached the small apartment he rented on the top floor of a decent building, night had settled properly over the city. David unlocked his door and stepped inside. His apartment was neat. A plain sofa. A narrow table.

He crossed the space without turning on all the lights and headed straight to his bedroom. The moment he opened the door, the truth stared back at him. His bedroom had become a shrine.

There was no gentler word for it. The subject of his obsession was Veronica Scalese. Her pictures crowded the room, pinned across the walls, tucked into frames, stacked on the desk, spread near the window where the city light could touch them. Pictures he had taken when she was unaware. When he followed her. When he studied her routes, her habits, her smiles, her silences.

Know your target.

That was what it had started with. There were pictures of her laughing outside the shop, her head tilted back. Pictures of her scolding a worker. Pictures of her training.

And then there was one. One special one. The one from when he had managed to sneak into the Chinese club where she trained.

In the picture, she was alone after training, caught in a private moment, water sliding over her naked body as the steam blurred everything around her.

He stood in front of that one. That one was special. David did not touch it. He never touched it. The photograph rested apart from the others, tucked slightly above his dresser.

Every time he looked at it, he hated Luca a little bit more. Luca had her. Luca had built a life around her.

Maybe this would be his sweetest kill yet. Maybe he would have a little fun before he would kill her.

David stayed where he was, surrounded by stolen versions of a woman who had no idea how completely she had stepped into the wrong man's mind.

Then, slowly, he turned off the lamp. Darkness swallowed the room.

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"Bambola?" Luca called as he stepped out of the shower, a towel wrapped low around his waist.

Steam followed him into the bedroom, curling lazily around his shoulders before fading into the cool air. His hair was damp, pushed back from his face, drops of water sliding down his chest as he paused near the bathroom door and looked around.

The room was warm and soft, lit only by the golden glow of the bedside lamps and the silver spill of moonlight from the balcony doors.

"I'm here," Vee called.

He turned toward the balcony. She stood outside in a silk robe, arms folded loosely over her chest, gazing into the night. The breeze stirred her hair around her face. She looked beautiful.

She also looked worried.

He walked out to her, bare feet silent against the cool balcony tiles. "You cannot still be mad at me," he said, trying for lightness. "I apologised, didn't I?"

"No," she said softly. "No, it's not that. I just..." She sighed, rubbing her fingers over the balcony rail. "It's the situation with you and Val. I don't know what to say to her."

Luca said nothing.

Vee turned fully toward him now, worry tightening her face. "I don't even understand why she is so mad at you."