

## **Mafia God 458**

### Chapter 458: Help Me Understand

"I do." Luca said.

"Then please," Vee said, her voice softening, "help me understand."

"I believe she blames me for every bad thing that has happened, Vee," Luca said.

"Surely, she cannot truly believe that," Vee said.

Luca's eyes stayed on the skyline.

"You..." She stepped closer, searching for the right words and hating that she had to defend him against her own sister, even in theory. "You saved us. Yes, in your own brutal, weird way. You came into our lives like a violent hurricane, yes. But our lives are better." Her voice softened. "She is married to a good man. I have you. We have everything we want. We do not have to work our nails to the bone anymore. We are safe—"

Luca looked at her sadly and the word died in her throat.

Safe.

What a fragile, ridiculous little word.

"Protected..." she corrected herself.

"It's good you are focusing on the positive," he said. "I love that you can do that. I love that after everything, you still manage to look at the ruins and point out the flowers growing through them. But a lot has happened since we met," Luca continued. "How many people have we lost? How many times has your life been threatened?"

"Val basically had to drive the car that was supposed to somehow get you to safety and to medical attention because of me. My family." His jaw tightened. "She has been through you getting shot. She had to watch you bleed. She had to sit with the possibility that this world I dragged you into would take you from her."

"You didn't drag me."

"Vee."

"You didn't."

"But I opened the door." He turned back to the sky, one hand resting on the balcony rail. "Her baby's father is dead. And hell, I don't know how familiar she was with Cassidy, but he is dead too."

The night breeze brushed between them. For a moment, neither spoke. Val could be happy and still be hurt. She could love her life and still resent the road that had led her there.

"Luca," she said.

He looked at her.

"She is my sister." Her throat tightened. "You are to be my husband. If the two of you do not get along, how do I live with that?" she asked. "How am I supposed to split myself between the woman who has been my home since childhood and the man who is my home now? How is it even possible? We have family gatherings and you both stand at opposite ends of the room?"

"Hey..." Luca said softly. "Like I said, give it time. Let the baby come and we see how it goes."

Vee looked at him, unconvinced. "And in the meantime?" she asked.

Luca's expression tightened. He preferred direct questions, and immediate solutions. Emotional distance? Family tension?

That, apparently, was harder than war.

"I will do my best to stay away from her," he said.

Vee scoffed and sniffed a bit, looking away quickly.

"Bambola."

"I'm fine."

Luca closed the space between them and pulled her into his arms. She went willingly, her forehead pressing against his bare chest, her hands curling against his waist. He held her carefully at first, then tighter when she exhaled shakily into him. "Hey," he murmured against her hair. "It's going to be just fine."

"I know Val loves you. Whatever she feels for me, she loves you more."

"That doesn't fix it."

"No. But it means there is something to build from."

Vee closed her eyes.

He kissed the top of her head. "Time heals all wounds."

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Marco was leaving for work. The courtyard was washed in soft sunlight, the fountain trickled lazily.

Val stood outside with him, wrapped in a loose dress that made her pregnancy impossible to ignore and her beauty impossible to argue with. Marco had one hand resting on her waist, from the look on his face, he was dangerously close to abandoning the entire concept of work. "You are going to be late."

"You keep kissing me."

"You keep letting me." She leaned up to kiss him again. Marco kissed her back, smiling against her mouth and the idea of calling in sick very tempting.

"Val," he murmured.

"What?"

"If you keep doing that, I'm not leaving."

"That was the plan."

He pulled back, amused. "You are evil."

The sound of an engine rolled through the courtyard. They both turned as Luca's car drove in. The vehicle stopped beside them. Luca stepped out.

Marco straightened immediately. "Luciano..."

Luca's gaze moved from Marco to Val. Val's smile faded. For one tense second, the courtyard seemed to hold its breath. "My apologies, Marco but I need to borrow your wife. This shit ends now."

Marco planted himself between them. He stepped forward, broad shoulders blocking Luca's direct path to Val. "What's going on?" he asked.

Morning sunlight spilled over the stone tiles, turning everything soft and golden, which was deeply misleading because Luca looked one wrong word away from starting a family war, and Val looked like she had already chosen violence and was merely waiting for permission.

Luca's eyes did not leave her. "I'm done tiptoeing around the situation. We are talking now."

Marco turned slowly to face his wife. Val stood there with one hand on her belly, chin lifted, eyes cold and steady. She looked beautiful, furious, and completely unimpressed. Marco sighed. He had known this day would come.

The tension had been sitting between them for too long. Val carried it quietly, tucked behind smiles and soft replies, but Marco knew his wife. He knew when her silence had teeth.

"If you need to shoot him," Marco said gently, "aim for his shoulder, please. It will be hard for me to explain anything else to our mother."

"You're just leaving me with him?"

Marco leaned in and kissed her forehead. "You can handle him." He smiled, brushed his thumb along her cheek, then glanced at Luca with a warning.