

Undressed By The Mafia God #Chapter 154: Stay With Me - Read Undressed By The Mafia God Chapter 154: Stay With Me

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"Hey... hey, stay with me."

No response.

Marco swore under his breath and pressed his fingers against the side of her neck, checking the pulse.

Still there.

Weak, but there.

"Come on, Miss Scalese," he muttered. "Don't do this to me."

Because the first rule here was simple.

She had to stay conscious.

If she slipped too far into shock while he was digging that bullet out...

He exhaled slowly. Marco shook her shoulder a little harder this time. "Veronica," he said firmly. "Wake up."

Because the next few minutes were going to be hell for both of them.

"Luca?" she whispered.

Even half-conscious and drowning in pain, that was the man she called for.

"It's me Marco," he said quickly, leaning closer so she could focus on his voice instead of the dizziness threatening to pull her under. "Listen. This is going to hurt a lot but I have to do this, okay?" Marco reached toward the glovebox and pulled out a bottle of alcohol he kept there. He poured the alcohol over his fingers.

Then he reached toward her thigh.

The blood had soaked through her clothes completely now, warm and sticky against his hands. Marco clenched his jaw and pushed his fingers into the wound.

The scream that tore out of Veronica was frightening.

Her back arched violently against the seat as the pain exploded through her body. Her vision burst into white stars. She couldn't even breathe. The agony was so intense it felt like her bones had been set on fire. Her head throbbed. Her ears rang.

"Jesus..." Marco muttered under his breath, working quickly. His fingers searched through the torn flesh carefully, ignoring the way her blood coated his skin. "Its alright, almost there..." he kept soothing. "Almost there Miss Scalese. I got you."

Veronica barely heard him.

The pain had swallowed everything else.

Her fingers clawed weakly at the seat beneath her as her body trembled violently.

"Almost there," Marco repeated again.

And then—

His fingers hit metal.

"There you are," he muttered.

With one final careful motion, he dug the bullet out.

Marco pulled his hand back, the small bloody slug resting between his fingers.

His hands were soaked now.

Veronica's blood dripped onto the floor mat as he stared at it for a brief second, relief washing through him.

"Got it." He slipped the bullet into his pocket without another thought.

Marco grabbed the bandage kit quickly, pressing gauze tightly against the wound to slow the bleeding before sliding out of the car.

The back door shut behind him.

Then he ran around to the driver's seat and started the engine.

The car roared to life.

Marco sped out of the compound and toward the hospital.

Inside the back seat, Veronica had finally lost consciousness again.

Her body had simply given up.

By the time Don Genovese and Julian returned to Luca's mansion, the house had returned to its usual eerie calm.

If someone had arrived without knowing what had happened earlier, they would have thought it was just another evening in the home of one of New York's most powerful men.

Dinner was already waiting.

The long dining table had been set perfectly, silverware shining under the chandelier light, plates arranged.

And Bianca was there.

She stood as soon as the two men entered the living room. "Welcome back, Don," Bianca greeted smoothly. She looked perfectly composed.

Not a strand of hair out of place.

Not a hint of the chaos she had caused earlier that evening.

Don Genovese removed his coat slowly, handing it off to one of the waiting maids. "How is the girl you shot?" he asked flatly.

"I'm sure she is fine."

"Our trip to New York was for the wedding and to see if it is calm enough now for you to stay permanently. This little stunt? You just ruined that chance." Don chastised her.

"Don, Luca is my husband!" she said, unable to hide the frustration simmering beneath her composure. "I deserve some respect. His mistress lives here in this house! My house!"

"You're right," he said finally. "And that's why I am not faulting your actions," he continued calmly.

Bianca's shoulders relaxed a fraction.

"However," Don added, "do you truly believe your husband will allow this. You disrespected your husband," he continued. "I don't care if he is fucking her," he said bluntly. "But she is his guest."

That was the part that mattered. Respect. Order.

"Bianca," Don said, "there are ways to get your man glued to you." He looked up at her. "This?" He shook his head slightly. "This isn't it."

Bianca lowered her eyes. "Yes Don."

"I'm famished," he said after a moment. "Where is Nonnina?"

"I'm going to go, father," Julian said suddenly.

Both of them turned toward him.

He had been standing quietly near the doorway the entire time, observing the exchange without interrupting.

"You're not staying for dinner?" Don asked.

"No," Julian replied. "I have a few things to get to back at my house."

"Very well."

Julian turned toward Bianca then. "May I talk to you outside for a minute, Bianca?" he asked.

"Of course."

The two of them stepped out of the room together.

Julian pushed the door open and stepped outside first.

Bianca followed him onto the porch.

"as much as your actions are justified, Bianca, Luca will come back and there will be hell to pay." Julian began.

"I wasn't thinking," she admitted. "The girl laughed in my face Julian."

Even now the memory made her blood simmer again.

That smug American face.

"And besides," Bianca added quickly, trying to reclaim some ground, "I didn't aim the gun at her. The bullet must have ricocheted."

He believed that part.

If she had truly wanted Veronica dead, the girl wouldn't have left that room breathing.

Still, the damage had been done.

Julian sighed quietly. "I will stop by everyday," he said. "Since we have no idea when he is going to be back. But if you need me, just call me. Alright?"

"Sure." Then she gave him a faint smile. "Thank you, Julian. I'm glad you are on my side."

He gave a small nod and turned toward his car.

(Brought to you by Janelle Fox)

Its going to be a busy day today. Got my first dragon and a car. Just home from work and straight to writing. Oooooohh Mama!!!

PS: If you haven't, please drop a review. The book is getting a promotion in about five hours, and reviews do help a lot. Thank you.)

Chapter 155: Still As Threatening As Ever

Carol felt she had pretended to be sick enough.

If she stretched the act any longer Luca might start calling doctors, and that would ruin everything.

Now the two of them sat on the couch.

An old sitcom played quietly in the background while a bowl of popcorn rested between them.

Carol picked a few pieces from the bowl lazily. Her son leaned back against the couch, one arm resting along the backrest behind her. He looked relaxed. "How is your father? I never did ask," Carol said casually, her eyes still on the television.

Luca reached into the bowl and grabbed a handful of popcorn before answering. "Still as threatening as ever. The older he is, the stricter he becomes."

Carol hummed quietly. "I always thought you were going to take after me...." Carol began.

Even before she finished the sentence, he felt the old reflexive irritation crawl up his spine..

"Mum...please don't start. Can we not fight?" Luca whined. He had been here for days now, hovering around her, fetching food, checking on her, pretending he believed the act. The last thing he wanted was one of their usual arguments.

She gave the back of his head a smack. "Don't cut me off while I am speaking."

The slap wasn't hard, but it was sharp enough to sting his pride more than his skull. Luca rubbed the back of his head.

"Sorry."

"I thought you were going to take after me. But seeing you now, you are a balance of both of us and I wouldn't have it any other way."

That was...unexpected.

"that's the first nice thing you have said to me all my life." Luca chuckled.

"Yeah, well, you deserve a bit of my generosity seeing as you have been tending to my sick ass."

It had taken him a while, but the pieces had eventually fallen into place.

"I know you aren't sick mum."

"What?" Carol snapped giving quite the innocent performance.

The woman had nerve, he'd give her that. Her eyebrows lifted, her mouth fell open slightly, the very picture of offended confusion.

"Well, I didn't figure it out rightaway but I eventually did."

At first it had just been little things. The way she moved too easily when she thought he wasn't looking. The fact that she still had enough energy to yell at the television during her evening shows.

Carol chuckled. "So why didn't you say anything?"

Luca shrugged. "It seemed important to you that I stay. Plus, I missed you."

For years he had kept his distance from this house, from her temper, from the complicated mess that was their relationship. Life had been easier that way. But sitting here now, hearing her voice fill the room again, he realized how much space that distance had left inside him.

Carol smiled. "You do have to return. I know how demanding your job can be. When you are away for too long, things tend to fall apart."

Luca looked down at his hands for a moment, thinking about that.

She wasn't wrong. Things stacked up quickly when he disappeared for too long.

"I'll leave tomorrow." He said.

"What are you going to do about your girl?"

Luca leaned back in the chair, running a hand through his hair. "Love her as hard as I possibly can." he answered.

Carol snorted softly. "You are truly your father's son. Loving the mistress more than the wife."

"I hate that word! Mistress...She's...uh...damn. How can it feel so right and yet the label surrounding us is just...wrong." He pushed himself forward in the chair, elbows on his knees.

The truth was, the word mistress made everything sound cheap.

Dirty. Temporary.

And Veronica was none of those things.

"Because it is wrong, Luciano. You are married! And your entire point of coming here is to find a way to keep her safe, which tells me she isn't safe at the moment, no?" Carol asked.

Luca exhaled slowly. "I just want to be on top of things. This woman, Veronica is her name, I call her Bambola, she...she's burrowed herself under my skin, mum. I don't even know how to explain it. I miss her with every breath, I want her with my entire soul. Nothing feels right when she isn't with me." He laughed quietly under his breath.

God, he sounded insane.

"She keeps me falling and falling and I have no grasp at anything and I am afraid of losing her in any capacity."

Luca leaned back again, dragging a hand over his face.

"I'd love to meet her. She sounds incredible." Carol said.

"you have no idea." Luca muttered. He shifted slightly in the chair, suddenly restless. "Will you...will you visit New York one of these days?"

"uh..." Carol sighed. "Its been so long. But I will when you quit the mafia."

Luca huffed a laugh, shaking his head slowly. "Mum, that's not happening."

Carol lifted a shoulder in a casual shrug. "It was worth a try."

Luca couldn't help it. A grin spread across his face. "Still as sly as always."

Veronica laid on the hospital bed, Valentina by her side as Detective Voss entered. Her thigh throbbed beneath the bandages, a dull burning pain that pulsed with every heartbeat. She tried not to move too much, but even breathing reminded her of the bullet that had torn through her flesh only hours ago.

When the door opened and Detective Voss stepped inside, irritation flared instantly.

"You again? What do you fucking want?"

Valentina shifted slightly in the chair beside the bed but didn't say anything. She simply crossed her arms, watching the detective with narrowed eyes.

"The hospital reported a gunshot wound, your name rang straight to my desk." Voss closed the door behind him.

Veronica rolled her eyes. "Don't you have anything better to do, like catch some real criminals?"

Of course the police would show up. A gunshot wound wasn't exactly subtle.

Still, the last person she wanted sniffing around her life was Detective Voss.

"Like your boyfriend, I am guessing. Trust me, that's why I am here." Voss answered.

(Brought to you by Janelle Fox)

Chapter 156: It Happened Fast

"Well, get on with your questions and get out."

If she sounded irritated enough, maybe he would hurry the hell up.

Voss pulled a small notepad from his coat pocket and flipped it open, clicking his pen with a soft snap.

"Who shot you?" Voss asked.

"I don't know. It happened fast."

"Hmmm..."

"I was told the bullet was removed before you got here. Why?"

"Was it?" Veronica tried to deflect.

"Where were you shot?"

Veronica resisted the urge to sigh. "on my way home. Close to the house actually."

"By home, you mean Luciano Genovese's home?" Voss asked, knowing Vee had been lying since he began his questions.

"yes."

"I see. Did he shoot you, Miss Scalese."

The question was so absurd it almost made her laugh.

"You really will do or say anything to take him down, wont you? No, Luca did not shoot me." Vee answered. She watched him carefully as she said it, searching for any shift in his expression. But Voss barely reacted. His pen continued scratching lazily across the page.

"Well, get better soon. I will be coming around to ask some more questions."

Of course he would.

"Nothing I give you or say to you will help you. Why don't you just leave me alone?"

Veronica's patience was wearing thin. Her leg hurt, her head hurt, and the last thing she needed was some detective poking around her life.

Voss finally looked up from his notepad. "I told you, you are my window to Luca's world. and what a very open window." Voss said, gave a small salute and walked out.

"Uggghhhh!" Veronica groaned. She dropped her head back against the pillow dramatically, squeezing her eyes shut. The tension she had been holding in her

shoulders loosened slightly now that Voss was gone, but the irritation remained, simmering just beneath the surface.

God, that man was exhausting.

"Really sis..." Valentina moved closer. She had been sitting quietly through the entire interrogation. "Who shot you? Ricardo wont tell me anything either."

Veronica opened her eyes slowly.

Valentina's expression was tight with worry.

"Its fine, Tina." Veronica shifted slightly, wincing as a sharp sting shot through her thigh. "its just badluck. I was going home, and a stray bullet caught me in the thigh."

Valentina frowned immediately.

The explanation sounded weak even to Veronica's own ears, but she forced her face to remain calm.

Marco had positioned a guard outside the door to keep watch over her and Valentina had overheard Marco telling the guard that Mrs Genovese wasn't allowed in.

Mrs Genovese.

Who was Mrs Genovese? Luca's mother, sister in law?

Valentina kept all of these questions to herself though and just sat there with her sister.

The pale hospital lighting washed some of the color out of her face, and every now and then her jaw tightened slightly — a quiet reaction to the pain she refused to complain about.

Vee had always been like this. Tough when she didn't need to be. Secretive when it would probably help to just talk.

The name Mrs Genovese lingered in her mind again. Whoever that woman was, Marco clearly didn't want her anywhere near Veronica.

That alone made Valentina suspicious.

But she didn't ask.

Not yet.

When Marco saw Luca's call earlier, to say he was relieved was an understatement.

The phone lighting up with Luca's name had felt like a lifeline and a death sentence at the same time.

He was on his way to pick him up from the airport.

The city moved past his windshield in a blur of late afternoon traffic, horns blaring, taxis cutting too close, pedestrians rushing along sidewalks.

His mind was somewhere else.

It had been a challenging few days but the days ahead were going to be even more challenging.

Luca was going to go off like a bomb and when that happened, it would leave many problems in his wake for both him and Veronica.

But still, he had to tell him exactly what had happened and what he had done also.

That part sat heavier in Marco's chest.

Because some of the decisions he had made over the last forty-eight hours had been necessary.

Necessary didn't always mean Luca would approve.

The airport was its usual chaos of rolling luggage, impatient travelers, and the constant murmur of announcements echoing from the high ceilings. Marco leaned against the hood of the car, scanning the crowd automatically.

The moment he stepped out the airport doors, Luca found him.

Marco straightened slightly.

Marco had been Luca's lieutenant since the very beginning.

He knew the man's tells, he knew when there was something too heavy to say.

And right now the weight of it was practically written across Marco's face.

Marco pushed himself off the car and walked toward him, already feeling the words forming in his throat.

Words that were going to make this entire situation far worse before it ever got better.

"Hey boss. Welcome back." Marco said wearily.

"On a scale of one to ten, how pissed off am I going to be?" Luca asked.

"A hundred doesn't even come close." Marco muttered.

Understanding dawned slowly, a dark weight settling over him.

"Veronica..." he whispered, barely audible. "What happened?"

Marco opened the back seat. "We'll talk in the car, boss." He climbed into the driver's seat. His eyes flicked to Luca in the rearview mirror, reading every subtle twitch, every suppressed reaction.

Luca's mind raced ahead, picturing scenarios. Did she see someone else? Did she betray him?

But the words that came out of Marco's mouth were nothing Luca would have ever thought could happen. In fact, he realized with a sickening twist in his stomach, it would have been better if she had fucked someone else.

"Miss Scalese has been shot. She is currently recovering in the hospital. She is fine, out of the woods, nothing to worry about, Luca."

The car seemed to shrink around him. The city's noise faded into a muffled hum as the words landed like lead in his chest.

Luca's mind screamed for a moment of clarity that didn't exist.

(Brought to you by janelle Fox)

Chapter 157: You Fucking Asshole

His thoughts spiraled, jumping from relief to guilt to fear in an endless loop. She could have been gone. She could have bled out while he was thousands of miles away.

His mind was filled with images of pain radiating through her body in ways he couldn't even imagine.

"What part was she shot?" he asked finally.

"In the thigh." Marco answered.

Luca's head lolled back against the seat. His breath shook as the information sank in, each word hammering at his chest. "God..." he whispered. "Oh God..."

Marco could feel Luca's tension radiating. "Luca? I had to dig the bullet out."

Luca's eyes snapped to Marco, disbelief and rage crashing into each other in a violent storm. "Why?! Why the fuck would you do that?! Why in the fucking hell would you put her through that????!!! You fucking asshole!!!"

The kick that smashed into the back of Marco's seat carried all the weight of his panic, his helplessness, and his fear. If he had been sitting beside Marco instead of behind him, Luca knew without a doubt he would have strangled the man, just to vent the raw, scorching anger that consumed him.

"Because it was your gun!"

"What?!"

"I didn't know if there was history to it. It was your gun, Luca. If the doctors got their hands on it, it would get to the police. It was a risk I could not take!" Marco tried to explain.

"Who the fuck shot her?!"

"Your wife!"

Every thought fractured, spiraling uncontrollably. He didn't speak for a long moment. His mind was a cyclone of disbelief, rage, and shock.

He wanted to scream, to shake the world into telling him this wasn't real. "She's here?" Luca asked finally.

"Yes, she came in with Don just a day after you left. They said they had a wedding. Julian was supposed to tell you but I am guessing he didn't." Marco answered.

"Do you have my guns?" Luca asked.

"No! We can pick them up at the office but Luca...you need to think this through." Marco's words were calm but he knew the consequences better than Luca did. He knew what would happen if Luca acted too fast, too angry. This was the Vitale family he would be going up against not just his own father.

"Stop talking. Take me to her."

Cassidy kept an eye on the high-end boutique from the outside, leaning casually against the car, eyes scanning every movement inside. The boutique glimmered with polished marble and golden accents, a temple to wealth and appearances. Inside, attendants

fussed over Bianca Genovese, Luca's wife, showing her various dresses, serving her champagne.

When he had told Bastione his idea, the man had laughed first, a derisive sound. A lunatic idea, he'd said. But Cassidy had pressed on, explaining the logic, the leverage, the weapon hidden in plain sight.

"Luciano doesn't give a crap about his wife," Cassidy had said, eyes cold. "And the best weapon we have is a bitter wife."

Bastione had considered the madness, and then nodded sharply. "Do it."

His assignment had been to relocate briefly to Vienna, but life had a way of shifting plans, and it seemed the secret weapon had arrived ahead of schedule.

He didn't know how long she would be staying in the city, and that uncertainty gnawed at him. Cassidy's gaze lingered on Bianca, noting the way she moved with grace, the effortless sway of someone who believed she owned every room she entered.

Cassidy ran a hand over his jaw, his thoughts circling back to the stakes. Luciano asked him to gain power before coming for him. Who knew that power lived in Luca's own house.

A few minutes later, Bianca was preparing to check out from the boutique. Cassidy pushed off from the car, coffee cup in hand, his mind already rehearsing the plan over and over. He crossed the street, blending into the blur of pedestrians but keeping her in his peripheral vision.

He planted himself on the corner, pretending to scroll through his phone, lips wrapped around the paper cup. His eyes, though, never left her. He knew exactly when to step forward. Timing was everything.

As soon as she emerged, he walked quickly, but casually, pretending to be absorbed by the glow of a digital billboard above him. Then, at the exact moment she was about to pass the car — the driver waiting — Cassidy bumped into her shoulder deliberately, coffee cup in hand.

The warm liquid spilled, splattering across her blouse and cascading down her arm. Cassidy's reflexes kicked in immediately, and he reached for her waist to steady her before she could stumble. The gesture, perfectly timed, appeared accidental.

"Are you blind?" Bianca snapped. Her eyes narrowed, scanning him.

"God, you are gorgeous..." Cassidy whispered under his breath. He had to maintain the illusion, had to sell the accident.

The driver's hand came down roughly on Cassidy's shoulder, snapping him back to the present. "Hey!"

Cassidy's hands lifted slowly, open in mock surrender. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I wasn't looking. Can I...what can I do? You want to clean up somewhere?"

Bianca recoiled slightly. "Get away from me!" she snapped.

"Look, I made a mistake. I'd like to properly apologise for it." Cassidy said. He kept one hand raised, the other adjusting the collar of his jacket.

"How about buy me another dress, you fool?" Bianca snapped.

Wow, he thought. Luca really had this one picked out, didn't he? "I admit, I am a fool. A clumsy fool. Come on, let me make this up to you. I'll let you insult me some more. But I must tell you right now, I cannot afford that dress."

Bianca's gaze flicked over him quickly, assessing, measuring. He could feel it in the way her eyes lingered just a fraction longer than polite, the tilt of her chin, the subtle narrowing of her eyes. Threat level assessment, he thought. Not that he was worried — it was part of the game, part of the dance he had been trained to navigate.

(Brought to you by Jennifer Willard)