

The Mafia King's Unknown Doctor Wife

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Chapter 1

Elena Vitale never should've come back to her childhood home. It was a mafia den of cold cruelty that choked out anything good in life. That's why she had left in the first place.

But she needed to get the money from her old savings account to pay off her student loan—an account her father technically owned. It was linked to his banking account, after all. He used it to show the U.S. government how much of a good, law-abiding citizen he was.

"I could've saved you the trouble. It's empty."

Her father was already in the doorway. The look on his face promised an incoming storm.

"What?"

Blind or uncaring to Elena's dismay, her father walked into his study unbothered.

"Your brother wanted a new sports car," he said simply.

"That's not fair. It was mine!"

The second the heated words left her mouth, Elena knew she'd made another mistake.

"Not fair? Not fair?" Her father towered over her like a raging flame. His face was nearly as red as one.

"I let you go to school to be a doctor, didn't I? I let you live under my house for eighteen years, didn't I?"

Elena wanted to protest that he hadn't let her do anything.

She had to pay her own way through medical school—that's why she had killer loan repayments. Afterwards, she had to find her own apartment to prevent her father from using her as a pawn in his latest power play within mafia circles. Everything Elena had done, she had to do by herself.

She wanted to spit at her father for his arrogance.

"You're my daughter, Elena," he said. "Family. You remember what that means, don't you?"

Truth be told, Elena didn't. Her real family broke apart when she was just three years old. When her mother left the mafia life behind and never looked back.

Her father grew cold afterwards. He moved on fast, remarrying and having a son within a few short years. But as for his first child, Elena might as well have been invisible.

Family had always meant shadows and secrets. Power and control. A tight fist and held breath.

Her father looked down at her, clueless as to her thoughts. His nostrils flared.

"If family needs money, you give it. My word is law. I would've thought you learned that after your marriage proposal."

"I told you already, I'm not marrying Don Morello," Elena spat back.

The Morellos were everything Elena's family, the Vitales, pretended to be. Rich, powerful, and unquestionably in charge. Where Mr. Vitale played at being an old school Italian mafia boss, he was a simple capo compared to the don that was Mr. Morello.

Don Morello was the actual boss, the leader of both the Vitale and Morello families. And he was no doubt pissed at the Vitales for their late payments of tribute.

Now, Elena had become that tribute.

Her father laughed. "You don't have a choice. He's family, and you'll-"

"I won't be a tool so you can move up the mafia ranks."

Elena has no idea what Don Morello promised her father, but it didn't matter. She wouldn't trade her own freedom for anything.

"Don Morello always gets what he wants. And sooner or later, you'll learn there's nothing more important than family."

"Is that why mom left?" Elena asked harshly.

Her father slapped her face. Hard.

Elena's face stung and her eyes were watering. But she still glared at her father before she retreated from his office and his dark prison of a home.

Back at her apartment on the other side of town, Elena tried to calm down. Her money being stolen was unfortunate, but she'd be fine.

She'd be fine.

Elena checked her phone. She had a missed call telling her that, despite her qualifications, the hospital she applied to had chosen to go with a different candidate. About a dozen similar rejection emails waited in her email inbox, too.

This really wasn't her day.

Nobody wanted to hire Elena Vitale, the eldest child of a mafia family, as a doctor. Despite how hard she had worked, her degree was useless.

Her phone rang. Elena almost didn't answer, but the name on her caller ID made her change her mind.

"Mr. Fabio, what's up?"

"Would you care to join me for dinner?"

A city bus ride and an hour later, Elena was finally enjoying good company.

"Really, Mr. Fabio," Elena insisted, gesturing with her wine glass, "I did what anyone would've. You don't have to be so kind."

"I should be saying that to you dear." The elderly man smiled. "There aren't many good neighbors left—not everyone can spot an old fool having a heart attack, let alone call for help."

"Still, that was weeks ago... You're feeling better though, right? Nothing's off?"

Mr. Fabio laughed. It was nothing like her father's laugh. This was hearty and cheerful.

"There you go proving my point. Yes, I'm well. And you?"

Elena felt bad about lying to someone as good and nice as Mr. Fabio. So she didn't.

"I met up with my father. It's not enough his name and influence are preventing me from getting an honest job—he keeps trying to get me to marry some jerk."

Mr. Fabio listened intently and frowned. "Maybe you should get married."

Elena snorted.

"If you want to, I mean," Mr. Fabio insisted. "Arranged marriages in the mafia don't deal with divorcees. Their ideal mafia woman needs to be pure, after all."

Only Mr. Fabio could bring up the mafia traditions without sounding scared stiff or like he was threatening someone. Just another reason Elena admired the old man.

"Are you offering to marry me?" Elena joked.

"No," he laughed. "I'm offering my grandson. He needs someone like you in my life, my dear."

Elena hesitated. The mafia was feared by non-family members for a reason. Getting a stranger involved with her family felt wrong.

"I don't know. I wouldn't want to get someone you love tangled in all my problems."

"He's a paranoid, unfriendly guy. Marrying him would solve one of my problems, actually. He'll never find a wife otherwise."

Maybe it was the wine or Mr. Fabio's kind reassurances, but Elena found herself agreeing to the plan. Mr. Fabio suggested meeting at her apartment to handle the paperwork tomorrow morning. The sooner this was settled, the better.

Imagine Elena's surprise when Mr. Fabio showed up the next day with no grandson.

"I take it your grandson didn't agree?"

Mr. Fabio shook his head. "No, my dear, your groom got held up with work. But I've got everything you need."

He did have all the right paperwork—already signed by her mystery groom and the necessary witnesses. That didn't strike Elena as exactly legal, but having been raised in the mafia, she couldn't complain.

It also reminded her of the mafia in other ways. Signing a woman's life away to someone based on one fatherly man's opinion. Elena would still be marrying a total stranger.

Was this the right choice?

Elena took a deep breath and signed her name confidently. This was the only way she'd be able to start living her own life.

And at least this way, it was her choice.

Hours later, Elena couldn't help feeling giddy. She was free.

She checked her phone. Mr. Fabio had sent her a congratulations text and told her to keep up her spirits in her job search.

"It should get better soon," his last text read.

On impulse, she pulled up her father's number and sent him a photo of her marriage certificate.

"You couldn't control Mom, and you can't control me. I'm not your political pawn."

She could imagine how mad he'd be getting that text. She smiled to herself and blocked his number.

Her phone chimed, letting her know she got another email. Elena frowned. She didn't want another rejection letter to spoil her good mood.

Only it wasn't a rejection letter. It was an acceptance letter. Elena had been hired by one of the most prestigious hospitals.

If you were in the criminal underworld, that is. The hospital was run by the Ferraro family. It was the pet project of the most powerful don in the city.