

Chapter 3

Elena didn't spare Massimo and his wife another thought. She needed to pack up her things and get ready for Massimo's probation period. It was her path to freedom, and she wasn't going to let it slip through her fingers.

But, as she boxed up the little trinkets and equipment she had gathered during her short stay working at the Ferraro's hospital, Elena's thoughts drifted to her own marriage. More specifically, her own husband. A mysterious man she had married ten days ago.

She really didn't know anything about him. All she knew was what Mr. Fabio had told her: he was hopeless with women, distrustful of others, and not very social. It wasn't a lot to go on.

Surely Mr. Fabio had said something else about his grandson, maybe in passing? Before he ever brought up the idea of an arranged marriage?

Elena focused and recalled when she had first met Mr. Fabio. She had been giving him medical treatment and asked if there was anyone to call. Mr. Fabio had informed her that his only relative would be too busy to arrive.

"What does he do?" Elena had asked, hoping the question would distract Mr. Fabio from his pain while she worked.

Mr. Fabio had stayed quiet for a long moment. "He's a mechanic."

The old memory didn't give her many more details, but it was something. So Elena knew the following about her husband: he was a cold, workaholic recluse who had a job as a mechanic.

It didn't paint a flattering picture.

Still Elena hoped she'd get to meet him some day. If Mr. Fabio vouched for him, he couldn't be all bad.

But Elena had to focus on the here and now. She might not work at St. Camillus anymore, but her days would only be getting busier. Being the family doctor for the Ferraros would require her full attention.

She decided to head to the grocery store and meal prep for the week. Then she'd stay up studying, brushing up on her medicinal knowledge. She was determined to pass Massimo's probation period with flying colors.

Contrary to what his grandfather thought, Massimo wasn't unobservant. He wasn't unfeeling either. For example, he felt quite strongly that his entire life situation had taken a turn for the ridiculous lately.

Massimo knew that he was a total outlier in the mafia world. Only 27 yet the mafia don of the most important criminal family, he walked a perilous path.

Add in that he was unmarried and had no legitimate heir, and it became easy to see why Massimo worked as hard to establish himself as he did. Grandfather could call him a workaholic, but Massimo knew the truth: his position required his total focus—otherwise, he'd lose the other families' respect.

Once that was gone, it'd be impossible to stay in control. And Massimo would not lose the position his grandfather had entrusted to him. Not over something so trivial and preventable.

He didn't have time for scheming women—he had enough problems dealing with scheming dons and capos. The big city never slept and neither would Massimo if there was any work to be done. He needed to be ruthless and efficient.

Luca, his second-in-command, approached his desk, interrupting Massimo's musings. Luca's expression was purposefully neutral, which meant he had news that was going to piss off his boss.

"Your grandfather is on the phone, Don Massimo."

With a sigh, Massimo took the phone Luca offered him. "Hello?"

"Have you still not met your wife?" His grandfather, Fabio Ferraro, immediately asked. The old man could really be stubborn and impatient.

"I told you, I'm busy."

Massimo looked back at the reports Luca had handed him an hour ago. The work done by the Morello family looked fine on paper, but his gut said something was fishy. He needed to look into it more closely...

"You'll have to meet her eventually," Fabio scolded, like Massimo was still a young child.

"You should do it sooner rather than later. In fact, you should've done it the day your marriage was registered."

"You know I was busy managing the families," Massimo hissed. He really didn't have time for his grandfather's lectures today, not after he lost so many hours interviewing potential doctors. "And then I was shot—you want me to meet this floozy while I'm bleeding out?"

"I didn't raise you to talk to your elders like that," Fabio scolded. "Mind your manners, boy."

A rant was no doubt at the tip of his grandfather's tongue, so Massimo figured his best bet was to play mediator.

"I know, and I do appreciate you arranging the whole ordeal. I also know you think I need an heir, but I don't understand how I'm supposed to accept a stranger."

"A stranger who saved my life," Fabio said. "You have to meet her at least once because of that. But I promise you, Massimo, she's the right girl for you."

Massimo scoffed.

"I mean it," Fabio continued. "She's a wonderful girl with a sweet personality—far too good for a terrible grandson like yourself."

Great, Fabio was either going to talk his grandson's ear off complaining about Massimo's shortcomings or his fantastic mystery wife. There was no winning.

Massimo hung up the phone and handed it back to Luca. This whole wife business felt terribly suspicious. It left a bad taste in his mouth.

Fabio had raised Massimo to be cold and distrustful—the sort of person who could survive in the harsh mafia world. And now that Massimo was finally ready for it, Fabio kept pestering him about grandkids. Has his grandfather gone crazy?

Massimo should be focused on mafia affairs. His grandfather was retired and needed to stop bothering Massimo and distracting him. Massimo would meet his new wife when he had time.

And he didn't have time to spare today. His work was too important to delay.

"Sir," Luca said impassively. "Your grandfather sent over your wife's address. Should I prepare the car?"

Massimo wanted to scream but he settled for balling his hands into fists. Fabio really wouldn't let this go, would he? Not until he got what he wanted.

"Fine. Let's get this over with."

His wife's apartment was on the humble side of town. Massimo carried the gifts Luca had prepared and tried to work his expression into something more friendly than a scowl. But as he got closer to the apartment door, that became impossible.

The tenant inside was having sex. Loud, passionate groans and pants echoed along the hallway.

Massimo almost walked out immediately. But, for the sake of his grandfather, he merely ground his teeth and knocked on the door.

A kind, sweet girl? The sounds beyond the door confirmed that wasn't the case.

The door opened. But instead of seeing the woman who had tricked his grandfather, Massimo was greeted by a man. One that had nothing on but his boxers.

"I'm here to see the woman that lives here," Massimo said coldly.

"Wait in line outside, buddy. We're kinda in the middle of something."

With that, the door slammed shut. And whoever was beyond it resumed their earlier activities. If anything, the sounds were louder now.

What little was left of Massimo's patience died. He dropped the gifts at the door and marched right back to his car.

Luca did not immediately drive to his next appointment, which only further aggravated Massimo. Instead Luca glanced hesitantly into the backseat to look at Massimo.

"How did meeting your wife go?"

"She's a slut, just like every other woman in New York. Now let's get back to work."

As a fancy black car peeled away, Elena entered her apartment, carrying her grocery bags. She knocked twice before entering. She didn't want to startle her roommate.

"I'm back!" she declared as she made her way to the kitchen.

Her roommate Aria was already sitting at the countertop. She was staring at items Elena had never seen before—must be gifts from her latest boyfriend.

"Elena, can you believe this: some guy left me a watch, cigars, and men's loafers. Who in their right mind would ever give a woman these?"