

Chapter 4

Elena couldn't help but smile. Her boss had made a similar mistake and gotten wildly inappropriate gifts for his wife. "Men are just clueless when it comes to women."

"What are they good for?" Aria joked right back. "Beyond their generosity, I mean." She winked.

It wasn't hard to see why Aria inspired generosity in the opposite sex. She was drop-dead gorgeous with her vivid red curly hair and memorizing jade green eyes. She was the sort of woman you never forgot, so you wanted her to never forget you either.

Elena had met Aria back in college. Even then, Aria always had some man on her arm. Elena thought after graduating that Aria would settle down, but that wasn't her roommate's style.

"If anyone gets too close, the mystery is gone," Aria had once confided in her. "I'd rather break things off and be remembered as a perfect goddess than stay with a guy and let him grow to hate me."

Elena found it hard to believe anyone could be disappointed by Aria. Not only was she beautiful but also kind. Aria offered to let Elena share her dorm room the second she heard Elena had lost her part-time job back in college.

And that wasn't all. Aria could be a downright guardian angel at times. Between paying Elena's share of the rent for the past few months, proofreading Elena's resume, covering grocery expenses more often than not, and always offering a sympathetic ear, Aria had helped Elena out more than she could ever repay her for.

So while Elena might not approve of her roommate's complicated love life, she could tolerate that much for a person as magical as Aria.

Aria waved the expensive luxury watch in front of Elena's face.

"Do you want any of this junk?" Aria asked. "I sure as hell don't need men's loafers."

"Neither do I." Elena started to put away the groceries. "I got some of our favorites to make for dinner tonight."

"Elena, you're the absolute best!" Aria smiled. "Anything I can do in return for my bestie?"

"Turn in early instead of blasting music or a TV show. I want to study up on some medical practices for bed."

"Easy peasy! You'll have a very relaxing, quiet night, I promise!"

Elena was woken up by the pierce ringing of her cell phone. Her clock read 3 am. She stumbled in the dark to answer the call.

"10 Cypress Avenue, Ridgewood," Massimo's ever cold voice rang out from the phone. "Be there in twenty minutes."

He hung up, not letting Elena say even one word.

Cypress Avenue... Ridgewood... Wasn't that address miles away from her apartment?

Adrenaline shot through Elena. She quickly threw on her clothes, grabbed her medical bag, and ran outside to hail a taxi. She offered to pay the cabbie double if he could get her there in twenty minutes.

As the cab drove to her destination, Elena's brain started to properly wake up and process her situation.

Ridgewood was a standard drop address, a place where criminals met up to trade money for all kinds of things but mostly drugs. Not something a don, let alone the King of the Dons, would normally have to get involved with though. So if Massimo needed her now, something had to have gone very wrong with one of those deals.

The cab driver pulled up to the warehouse exactly nineteen minutes later. Elena paid him and rushed into the building. She didn't have time to be subtle.

The heavy doors opened to reveal plenty of men already standing in two groups—one behind Don Massimo and the other behind a man Elena's sleepy mind couldn't place. Maybe Capo Pesci or Gallo? If she had seen him before tonight, it can't have been more than a passing glance.

No one paid Elena any mind as she slipped next to Luca. The air was already too tense to breathe. Whatever was happening was deathly serious.

"You realize selling drugs to minors is against my rules?" Don Massimo said harshly. "You know what the punishment for that is, don't you?"

The room dropped silent. No one dared make a noise. Even the night atmosphere had gone mute.

Until a gunshot exploded through the quiet and cracked near Elena's ear. She heard rather than saw one of Massimo's men fall to the ground.

Chaos erupted. Bullets and blood went flying before Elena could even register that more men had drawn their weapons.

Instinctively, she ducked her head and squatted low to the ground. She needed to find a place to hide.

No sooner had that thought crossed her mind than Elena felt rough hands grabbing her. She was forced back up to a standing position.

She tried to struggle, to catch a glimpse of her attacker, but she stopped the second she felt the muzzle of a gun to her temple. It was still warm, like it had been recently fired.

Her blood ran cold. She was frozen to the spot.

"This your girl, Don Ferraro?" Her captor screamed. He looked around the room wildly for the mafia boss. "She must be important to be here so late, so why don't you call this shit off and—"

A bullet hit the man's skull before he could finish his demands. His blood splashed onto Elena's cheek. It was warmer than the gun, warmer than she expected human blood to be.

New arms grabbed her from behind. This time though, they felt steady instead of suffocating. Elena turned to see Massimo holding her tightly.

He shifted her against his chest with one arm and cocked his gun with the other before shooting another opponent down. His ruthless efficiency and cold demeanor perfectly fit the job he had to perform tonight.

Elena let herself get lost in the sounds of fighting and death. She dimly registered that she had to be experiencing shock from witnessing such a horrific event, but that couldn't bring her numb body and mind to act. She focused on how Massimo's long black hair almost glowed in the light of each gunshot's spark.

Before she knew it, the war was over.

The entire fight couldn't have lasted more than three minutes. Three minutes to kill a small mafia family.

Elena couldn't feel too bad about that. They had been selling drugs to children after all. Besides, her body was too full of nerves to think about complicated mafia politics.

Instead Elena's glazed eyes took in the scene. She made herself look at the destruction and register it. This was why she needed to get out of the mafia world.

She couldn't stay in such a dangerous, callous life.

When Elena saw the state of Massimo's men, she finally understood why she was called here. These men would suffer serious injuries tonight, maybe even lose limbs or their lives if they weren't treated immediately.

Elena would have a lot of patients tonight. But first, she should check on her boss.

He was, after all, right next to her.

Suddenly remembering their close proximity, Elena stepped back abruptly. She cleared her throat awkwardly.

Massimo only squinted at her.

"Sit down please," she said, suddenly grateful that she remembered to grab her medical go-bag. It would be hard to gather all the supplies she would need otherwise.

"Why?"

"Your leg?" Elena answered in confusion. How could he have forgotten about his most recent injury? "I need to check if the wound reopened."

Massimo followed her instructions and sat on the floor. Elena leaned over him and rolled up his pant leg to get a better look.

She sighed in relief. The stitches had held.

Massimo suddenly invaded her space. He hooked his hand around her necklace, more specifically the ring pendant.

He grasped it tightly as he asked, "You're married?"