

Chapter 5

Elena jerked back from Massimo, a hand defensively on her necklace. The ring, of course, was from her husband. Well, it had been given to her by Mr. Fabio on behalf of her husband a day or so after he dropped off the marriage certificate.

Mr. Fabio had shown her a tight smile and asked for her patience as he handed her the little ring box. "He's a good boy, when you can drag him away from his work." He promised her husband would be over soon.

Despite still having never seen the man, Elena didn't want to treat the ring poorly. It was beautiful and delicate, and Mr. Fabio had looked so pleased to present it to her. It seemed rude to just leave it in a box on her dresser and never open it.

After all, Elena had decided, all on her own, to marry and escape her former life. It felt right to wear the symbol of that choice.

Unfortunately, Elena really wasn't supposed to keep anything on her hands while caring for patients at the hospital. Not only would it get dirty, but the metal of her ring could cause her plastic gloves to break if she had to perform a surgery. So Elena had borrowed one of her roommate's necklace chains and strung her ring on that.

Wearing it as a necklace seemed like the perfect solution.

Until this moment.

"Yes," Elena gritted out. "I have a wonderful husband—what does that have to do with me treating your leg? With me doing my job at all, in fact?"

For a moment, Elena feared the rumors of Massimo being uninterested in women were wrong. A man in his position could easily hire women to receive "favors" for the kind of generous salary he offered. Should she have been more careful before accepting his job offer?

And fighting him off would cause a new slew of troubles. The dead mafia men all around her clearly advertised how bad of an idea it was to make an enemy of the Ferraro.

But, if push came to shove, Elena would burn this golden bridge if she had to.

Massimo let his hand drop, freeing Elena from his clutches. "Relax. I have no interest in women of your ilk."

Elena bit back the insults forming on her tongue. She didn't have time for her boss's chauvinistic antics. There were plenty of people who needed her help.

And, luckily for her, Massimo wasn't one of them.

Schooling her expression, Elena rose and took charge of the scene. She instantly started sorting people based on their injuries—who could wait and who couldn't. She opened up her bag of medical supplies and got to work.

As she started treating a more severe patient, she shouted orders to those mostly unharmed to help out with simple tasks. Disinfecting wounds, applying burn creams, and wrapping bandages could be done by those without any training with simple guidance. Elena found her rhythm quickly as she settled into her duties.

Digging out bullet casings and making stitches on conscious men without anesthetics was nerve-wrecking but also calming. Elena knew what to do here, and she wouldn't doubt herself. Even when Luca brought her extra supplies, she didn't halt her work.

"Thank you," Elena said, continuing her stitch work and not looking up. "Could you check on that man over there? Let me know if his friend managed to staunch the bleeding or not."

Massimo watched his new personal physician with interest. The fact she could ignore the dead mafia traitors on the ground and stay focused was unexpected. Even if she was a woman.

In fact, Elena had adapted to her role better than Massimo would've expected a male doctor to. Even emergency responders tended to freeze up when thrust into a crime scene. But the woman he hired performed admirably.

Still, Massimo was wary of her. He had been wary the moment she had pitched herself as the perfect candidate.

"My father is a capo to Don Morello, but I share nothing with my family aside from my name."

That's what she had told him, and looking at the calm woman in front of him, he knew there was some truth to the statement. Only a girl who had grown up in the mafia world could stand a chance at adjusting to this kind of situation so quickly. Massimo wondered briefly just how involved in the criminal underbelly Capo Vitale's daughter had been.

Or how involved she still might be.

That wedding ring had set off a police station's worth of sirens in the don's head. It was a tasteful rose gold band with round-cut diamonds wrapped around it like leaves on a branch. It looked like a more modern take on Massimo's dead mother's wedding ring.

The piece of jewelry no doubt would look delicate and beautiful when worn on a proper woman's finger—and it was no doubt insanely expensive.

If Elena really was struggling financially, if it was true she needed a salary advance to not let her student loans default, then there was no way she would have kept such a pricey piece of jewelry. Not when a quarter of the diamonds would pay her loans off outright. Elena struck him as too practical to pick a lump of metal over her future.

Though was that also an act? How much could Massimo really say he knew about Elena Vitale?

When Massimo sent his second-in-command to dig into his new doctor, Luca confirmed the inherently tight ties between the Vitale and Morello families. There were even rumors that Don Morello was going to marry Elena one day.

"At the very least," Luca had told him, "she must've been promised to him at some point. When I asked around discretely, the don brought up that she belonged to him."

Massimo frowned at the memory. Women really were a distraction, if not a complete liability. He'd be a fool to ever trust someone besides his second-in-command or grandfather.

He didn't want to be too hasty though. He'd wait for Elena to slip up, just like the Pesci family did tonight. Then he'd have the proof he needed to act.

But there was one problem he could act on right now.

Massimo stepped over the bodies. He checked his hands for blood and found none, so he took out his cell phone and called his grandfather Fabio.

"Grandfather, I need my wife's phone number—"

"Oh thank god," Fabio cut him off immediately. Though Massimo couldn't see him, he was sure the old man was grinning like a loon. "I'll send you the number right now!"

Fabio started talking about things like manners and the many ways a husband should impress his new wife—and a lot of other advice Massimo wasn't in the mood to hear. So he hung up.

For once, that spurred his grandfather to actually do what he promised. While Massimo had also wanted to pick his predecessor's brain about the likelihood of female moles, he resolved to get the information elsewhere. He could also make Luca look into it if he needed to.

It was better this way. Massimo didn't need his grandfather's advice to know he couldn't trust strangers, whether they were his wife or his doctor. And while he needed one of those right now, he sure didn't need the other.

The don punched in his wife's number. Fabio might've handled the marriage process, but Massimo could handle the divorce all on his own.

As Massimo waited for his wife to answer, Elena's phone rang from the opposite side of the room.