

## Chapter 10 No.10

Elena Vitiello POV

The Gulfstream kissed the tarmac at JFK, settling with a heavy, expensive finality.

I looked out the window.

New York rose up to meet me in shades of steel and concrete. It didn't look welcoming. It looked like a fortress.

Good.

I was done with soft things.

The flight attendant unsealed the hatch, and the cabin pressure equalized with a hiss. The wind whipped my hair across my face as I stepped onto the stairs.

A phalanx of black SUVs waited on the tarmac.

Men in dark suits stood like statues by the doors. They weren't slouching. They weren't checking their phones. They were soldiers. Real ones, eyes scanning the perimeter, hands hovering near concealed holsters.

In front of the lead car stood a man.

He was tall. Imposing.

Broad shoulders filled out a suit that cost more than my tuition. He wasn't wearing a coat, despite the biting chill. He seemed impervious to it, as if the cold didn't dare touch him.

His hair was dark, swept back, revealing a face that was all sharp angles and hard lines.

Dante Moretti.

The Capo of New York.

My betrothed.

I walked down the stairs. My arm throbbed in its sling. Every step sent a jolt of pain radiating through my shoulder, but I kept my spine straight.

I reached the bottom.

Dante stepped forward.

He didn't smile. No softness marred the brutal elegance of his features. His eyes were dark, intelligent, and terrifyingly focused. They swept over me, dissecting me, cataloging everything.

The sling.

The pale skin.

The lack of fear.

"Elena Vitiello," he said.

His voice was a low rumble, dark and textured like gravel grinding under a heavy boot.

"Dante Moretti," I replied.

I didn't curtsy. I didn't offer my hand to be kissed. I met his gaze head-on.

A flicker of something passed through his eyes. Respect? Amusement?

"Welcome to New York, principessa" he said.

Then, he moved.

He reached out and opened the car door for me himself.

His men didn't move, but I saw their eyes widen slightly before they disciplined their expressions. A Capo didn't open doors. Not unless he wanted to make a statement.

"Thank you," I said.

I slid into the leather seat. It was warm. He must have had the heat running waiting for me.

He got in beside me. The door closed, sealing us in a heavy, soundproofed silence.

"Your father sent your files," Dante said as the car began to move, gliding smoothly onto the exit ramp. "But he left out the details of your injury."

He looked at my sling.

"A burn," I said.

"Accident?"

"Betrayal."

Dante turned his head fully toward me. The air in the car grew heavy, charged with a sudden, violent potential.

"Names?" he asked.

"Irrelevant," I said, keeping my voice steady. "They are in the past."

"Nothing is irrelevant," Dante said softly. "Especially not when it marks what is mine."

A shiver went down my spine.

It wasn't fear.

It was the sudden realization that I had traded two boys who played with guns for a man who was the weapon.