

Chapter 11 No.11

Elena Vitiello POV

The penthouse was situated near the Columbia campus, a fortress of glass and steel overlooking Central Park. It was modern, cold, and impeccably secure.

Dante carried my bags in with an effortless grace, setting them down in the foyer.

"The master suite is yours," he said, his voice echoing slightly in the vast space. "I have a place across town, but I will stay in the guest wing for the first week. To ensure you are settled."

"You don't have to babysit me," I said, though the protest lacked heat.

I started to take off my coat, reaching for the buttons with my good hand. Immediately, I winced. The movement pulled sharply at the stitched skin on my shoulder, a reminder of the fire that hadn't yet faded. I hissed through my teeth, the sound sharp in the quiet room.

Dante was there in a second.

He didn't grab me. He didn't crowd me. Instead, he hovered, his hands inches from my shoulders, waiting for permission.

"Let me," he said, his tone leaving no room for argument, yet soft.

I nodded, dropping my hands.

He carefully peeled the heavy wool coat from my good arm first. Then he moved to the left side. His movements were not just careful; they were surgical. Precise. Terrifyingly gentle.

He slid the coat off, revealing the silk blouse I wore underneath and the stark white bandages that peeked out from the collar.

His eyes narrowed, darkening instantly to pools of black ice. He reached

Elena Vitiello POV

The penthouse was situated near the Columbia campus, a fortress of glass and steel overlooking Central Park. It was modern, cold, and impeccably secure.

Dante carried my bags in with an effortless grace, setting them down in the foyer.

"The master suite is yours," he said, his voice echoing slightly in the vast space. "I have a place across town, but I will stay in the guest wing for the first week. To ensure you are settled."

"You don't have to babysit me," I said, though the protest lacked heat.

I started to take off my coat, reaching for the buttons with my good hand. Immediately, I winced. The movement pulled sharply at the stitched skin on my shoulder, a reminder of the fire that hadn't yet faded. I hissed through my teeth, the sound sharp in the quiet room.

Dante was there in a second.

He didn't grab me. He didn't crowd me. Instead, he hovered, his hands inches from my shoulders, waiting for permission.

"Let me," he said, his tone leaving no room for argument, yet soft.

I nodded, dropping my hands.

He carefully peeled the heavy wool coat from my good arm first. Then he moved to the left side. His movements were not just careful; they were surgical. Precise. Terrifyingly gentle.

He slid the coat off, revealing the silk blouse I wore underneath and the stark white bandages that peeked out from the collar.

His eyes narrowed, darkening instantly to pools of black ice. He reached out and lightly traced the edge of the gauze with one finger, a ghost of a touch that sent a shiver down my spine—not of fear, but of electricity.

"Who did this?" he asked again.

His voice was quiet, but it vibrated with a leashed violence so potent I could feel it in the air between us.

He stepped closer, invading my personal space until he towered over me. He smelled of expensive cologne, clean cotton, and something metallic—like the barrel of a gun.

"You are under my protection now, Elena. That means your pain is my insult. An insult to me. An insult to my house."

I looked up at him, searching his face.

Luca and Matteo had watched me burn and then bought flowers for the girl who held the fire. But Dante Moretti looked at the bandages like he wanted to burn the world down simply for existing on the same planet as my scar.

"It was a firework," I finally admitted. "At the docks."

"And your guards?"

"They were... distracted."

Dante's jaw tightened, a muscle feathering in his cheek.

"Incompetence is a disease," he said, his tone icy. "I don't allow it in my city."

He stepped back, giving me space to breathe.

"Rest. The doctor will be here in an hour to change the dressing."

"I can do it myself."

"You can," he agreed. "But you won't. You are a Queen here, Elena. Not a soldier."

He turned to leave, his strides long and purposeful.

"Dante?"

He stopped at the door, his hand on the frame.

"Why?" I asked. "Why agree to the marriage? You don't need Chicago's money."

He looked back at me. His eyes were dark pools, unreadable and bottomless.

"Power isn't just about money, principessa"

He looked at my bandaged arm, then back to my eyes, holding my gaze captive.

"It's about having the things no one else is strong enough to keep."

He walked out, the door clicking shut softly behind him.

I stood alone in the silent apartment. For the first time in weeks, I didn't feel cold. I felt seen. And I felt dangerous. Because now, I had a monster of my own.



Our ads aim to provide better support for authors.

