

Chapter 9 No.9

Luca Rossi POV

The waiting room at Mercy Hospital was finally empty.

Sofia was fine.

The doctors said it was mild whiplash, nothing permanent, but she was wearing a neck brace that looked three sizes too big. It swallowed her whole, making her look like a fragile doll that had been carelessly tossed aside.

"I'm so glad you came," she whispered, her fingers tightening around Matteo's hand. "I thought I was going to die."

I checked my watch.

It had been four hours.

My stomach tightened. We missed the dorm move-in window.

"We should go check on Elena," I said, the guilt already itching under my skin. "She's probably pissed we didn't show up to help unpack."

"Buy her flowers," Sofia suggested weakly. "She loves lilies." 

We dropped Sofia off at her apartment with a nurse and drove straight to the University of Chicago. We stopped at a high-end florist and bought a massive bouquet of white lilies. They were crisp, pristine and ridiculous. The kind that said I'm sorry I'm an idiot, please forgive me.

We pulled up to the main residential gate, the engine of my car purring impatiently.

"Call her," Matteo said, staring at the brick buildings.

I dialed her number.

The number you have dialed is not in service.

I frowned, pulling the phone away from my ear to stare at the screen.

"Service is down," I said, though the bars on my screen were full. "Let's just go in."

We walked up to the security booth.

"Delivery for Elena Vitiello," I said, flashing my winnysmile—the one that usually opened doors. "Freshman dorms."

The guard typed into his computer, his face bored.

He frowned.

"Vitiello?" he asked. "Spell it."

"V-I-T-I-E-L-L-O," I said slowly, leaning in. "Daughter of the Underboss. You should have her flagged as VIP. Check the donor list if you have to."

The guard shook his head, unimpressed by my tone.

"I have no record of an Elena Vitiello enrolled here."

My stomach dropped straight through the floor.

"Check again," Matteo growled, slamming his hand against the window ledge. "She transferred her enrolment months ago."

"I'm looking at the active roster, son," the guard said, turning his monitor slightly away. "She's not here."

We didn't wait for him to finish. We ran back to the car.

I drove to the Estate. I broke every speed limit, weaving through traffic like a madman. Something was wrong. The silence from her phone wasn't just anger. It was absence.

We screeched up to the iron gates of the Vitiello mansion, tires smoking

The family guards were there. Armed. They stepped in front of the car, rifles raised in a way that wasn't ceremonial.

"Open the gate!" I yelled, leaning out the window. "We need to see Elena!"

The head of security, a man named Rocco who had taught us how to shoot when we were barely tall enough to hold a gun, walked up to the driver's side.

His face was stone.

"Turn around, boys," Rocco said.

"Where is she?" I demanded, my voice rising. "Is she inside?"

Rocco looked at the flowers in the passenger seat. He looked at them like they were garbage.

"Miss Elena has left the state," Rocco said.

The world stopped spinning.

"What do you mean left the state?" Matteo asked, his voice cracking under the weight of the words. "For how long?"

Rocco adjusted his grip on his rifle.

"Indefinitely."

"Where did she go?" I screamed, slamming the steering wheel.

"Not your concern anymore," Rocco said coldly. "You are not welcome on Vitiello land. Turn around. Or we open fire."

We turned around. We drove to the registrar's office in the city, the only place that would have her records. Matteo dragged the clerk out of his chair by his collar.

"Check it again!" Matteo roared.

"She withdrew!" the clerk squeaked, terrified. "Months ago! The transcript request was sent to... here!"

He pointed at the screen.

I looked. The words blurred for a heartbeat, then sharpened into a nightmare.

Columbia University, New York.

I felt like I'd been punched in the gut.

"New York," Matteo whispered, his face draining of color. "Luca. That's Moretti territory."

It wasn't just a different school.

It was a different world. It was the lion's den.

The New York Famiglia and the Chicago Outfit had a truce, but it was as thin as ice. Soldiers didn't just walk into New York.

And Elena... Elena had walked right into the arms of the enemy.

"She belongs to us!" Matteo roared, kicking the heavy oak desk.

"She did," I said, staring at the screen where her name blinked next to a city that felt a million miles away.

"Until we chose the rat."