



## Chapter 15

Christian groans, glaring at his cousin and then storming into the kitchen, pulling a phone out of his sweatpants pocket on the way. He leans against the counter with his back to me, murmuring furiously to whoever is on the other line.

"What's up!" Frankie's voice calls out from behind me, and I spin to see the brown-haired young man stretching his arms above his head as he comes out of the second bedroom down the hall. I grin when I see him – I can't help it. "Are we getting this breakfast party started?" he asks, looking around, sleepy but eager.

"Nope," I reply, pointing to the couch. "Nico's in trouble."

"Awesome," Frankie breathes, grinning at me and putting his hands on his hips. "I love it when that happens."

"Shut up, Frank," Nico grumbles.

"What'd you do?" Frankie asks, going to peer over the back of the couch.

"Forgot to cancel the maid," Nico sighs. I move to the couch too, likewise looking down at Nico.

"We're canceling Yolanda?" Frankie gasps, spinning and looking sadly at the door. "Oh nooo, but she tucks in the sheets so nice and tight..."

"I cancelled the chef too," Nico says, his voice full of dread. "Boss's orders."

Frankie groans louder, turning away as if it's a true disaster. I have to laugh at this. "What," I say, looking between the two of them. "Two big tough guys like you can't cook and clean for yourselves?"



"Ask me that again," Frankie says, looking over his shoulder at me like I've betrayed him, "only after you've had Francisco's cheesecake, Bambi. Then you will know the true devastation that I now feel."

I can't help it again – I burst into laughter at Frankie's anguish.

"Enough," Christian snaps from the kitchen, sounding exhausted. We all turn to him, Nico sitting up fully now. "I took care of it. It's cold cereal instead of omelets for a little bit, but we'll all survive."

"Don't remind me about the omelets," Frankie murmurs, burying his face in his hands like he's experiencing a true loss.

Christian just ignores him, turning his gaze to me.

"Is this..." I say, taking a step towards him and looking around. "Did you do this all because I'm here? Why?"

"Because," Christian says quietly, his voice a little dangerous now. "Bonetti is still looking for you, Iris, and while our service staff is vetted, I'm not taking any unnecessary risks of a leak."

"What?" I breathe, taking a few more steps towards him. But I stop dead in my tracks when I realize that...

That I'm not going to class today, am I? If Christian is cancelling his help, not letting anyone know that I'm here...that means he's keeping me – maybe for a long time.

Christian sees me comprehend and gives a slow nod, letting me see that I've got it right.

I just stand there, staring at him, realizing that this is who I am right now.



Not a homeless stripper.

Instead...the captive of the Mafia King.

God, how long is this going to last?

"Do we even have anything to eat?" Frankie asks, breaking my dark train of thought as he pushes past me and into the kitchen. "Is there even any coffee?"

"Whatever Francisco left for us last time is what we've got," Christian says, pushing off the counter and starting to walk back to his bedroom. "Pull something together, Frankie, and put in an order for whatever's missing."

Christian strides into his room, pushing the door shut after him.

"What is he...doing?" I ask quietly.

Frankie glances over his shoulder at me as he peers into a cabinet, starting to pull out some boxes of cereal. "Getting dressed," he says with a shrug, as if it's obvious.

"Why?" I ask, still standing in the middle of the room. "Where's he going?"

"Out," Nico says, his voice closer to me than I expected. I jump a little in surprise as he, too, moves past me and into the kitchen. "He has a job to do, after all. He's an important person. Is there seriously any coffee, Frank? I'm going to die if there's not."