

## I've always been in danger, Luca

Marabella's POV

Luca led me out of the villa towards a black Mayback. "Nice", I commented, nodding my head, impressed. Luca chuckled, "This is the car I use for business", he said. "You have a separate car for business?", I asked. Of course he does. Cal opened the back door and Luca held out his hand for me to use as leverage to get in. "Yes, it makes taxes easier. Tax credit and all", Luca smirked. I took his hand and climbed into the backseat. I nodded in understanding, as I took in the leather interior and different buttons. You had control of the radio, AC and interior lights. The seats also had a tray that folded down to be used as a table.

"Have I told you how beautiful you are?", Luca asked softly. I looked at him and blushed, "You have", I uttered, looking back out the window. Luca gently gripped my chin and made me look at him. "Don't hide your adorable blush from me", he ordered in a whisper. I felt my face heat further and a sexy smirk crossed Luca's lips. He leaned in and placed a gentle kiss on my lips. "Better", he uttered. "What are you doing to me?", I asked in a low voice. Asking myself really. Luca grinned and slightly shook his head, "I was wondering the same thing, prezioso (precious)", he murmured. His thumb slowly stroked my jawline. We sat in silence for a few moments before I spoke, "You said this place has tenants, right? Is it a house or an apartment?", I asked.

"It is a house, three bedrooms, two baths, on half an acre. A family of four lives there. A father, mother, and two young children", Luca explained, handing me a real estate le.

"This has all the specs of the house, including all the inspections and pictures of the house before the tenants moved in", Luca said. I looked through the le, taking in the photos and reading over the inspection reports. Luca was right, according to the inspectors from last year, the house was up to par.

In fact, the house was in immaculate condition and had recently been remodeled. All of the electricity was up to code, along with plumbing. The foundation was found to be in perfect condition, as well. I could not see how any structural damage could have been done to it unless there was a storm. But, there haven't been any storms here recently. None that would cause structural damage to this house.

Luca's soft touch on the back of my neck pulled me from my thoughts, and made a shiver pass down my spine. I looked up at his stormy gray eyes. He looked over my face before looking at my neck. He started to lean in but Cal's voice stopped him. "We're here boss", he said. Luca's eyebrows furrowed, then he leaned in and placed a soft kiss on my lips. "Let's try to make this quick", he whispered, before opening his door. Luca stepped out rst, then held his hand out for me and helped me from the car.

A man in khaki's and a collared shirt walked up to us with an angry scowl. "There you are Mr. Barelo. It sure did take you a while to show. I should have this place condemned for its state", the man said, angrily. "Then why haven't you?", Luca deadpanned, as he laced his ngers with mine. The inspector gaped at Luca. His mouth opened and closed, like a sh out of water. "Sir, please show us the structural damage you speak of", I said, gesturing to the house with my free hand. The inspector nally looked at me, his eyes trailing over my body. Luca growled and pulled me behind him. I rested my hand on his side and caressed it gently, in hopes of calming Luca down some.

"Of course, just be careful of your fancy clothes", he said, with an eyeroll. I could tell Luca was close to losing his temper. His body was rigid under my touch and his breathing was labored. "What is your name?", Luca asked, his voice was deep and lled with fury. I squeezed his side, trying to remind him to stay calm. "Trevor Davis", the inspector piped off, not realizing that he had just given Luca everything he needed to have this guy killed. "Trevor Davis, I advise you to watch the tone you speak to my wife and I in. I don't much appreciate your attitude", Luca said so calmly that a shiver traveled through my body.

Trevor kept quiet the rest of the walk to the front door. He knocked on the door and waited for someone to answer. Luca wrapped his arm around my waist and pulled me ush against his side. The stiffness of his body made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. Something wasn't right. I placed my hand gently on Luca's chest, immediately feeling how fast his heart was beating. I looked up to be met with the sight of his clean shaved throat and chin, as he looked around. As if sensing my stare, he looked down at me. His eyes showed concern and apprehension.

Trevor knocked on the door again, then rang the doorbell impatiently. An almost inaudible click sounded behind the door, followed by a very faint beeping. I thought I was the only one who heard it because Trevor knocked on the door once more, drowning out the sound. But, I wasn't, because I was immediately spun around by Luca and shoved towards the car. "F\*\*k", he uttered. "Run", he instructed. I could feel his hand on my back, ushering me forward, before a loud explosion raddled the earth. Luca wrapped his arms around me, as we were thrown to the ground by the blast. His body was protectively shielding mine, as he covered my head.

My ears rang from the explosion, but I didn't feel any pain, Luca's body slowly uncovered mine, before I was ipped over and was being checked for injuries. "Are you okay?", he asked, cupping my cheeks, his voice was mued by the ringing. I stared at his face momentarily, before looking over his shoulder at the house that was now ablaze with re.

"Marabella, bambina (baby girl), are you okay?", Luca's mued voice brought my attention back to him. I grasped onto his wrists and nodded softly, looking back at the house. "No. I need words, piccola (little one)", Luca's warped voice demanded.

"There were kids in that house", I uttered, dumbstruck, not taking my eyes off the ame. A pained expression crossed Luca's face. "Bambina (baby girl)", he muttered softly, drawing my gaze back to him. A woman's scream pierced through the air, making me jolt to my feet and take off towards the blazing heat. I only got three steps away, before a large forearm wrapped around my stomach and lifted me off my feet. "No, Marabella", Luca's deep voice commanded. "Yes! They are alive in there, Let me go", I screamed, as I ailed in Luca's arms. "No, Mara", his voice was stern, as he drug me away. "Let me save them!", I bellowed, trying to free myself. "You can't, bambina (baby girl)", he said atly, before I was spun around and thrown over Luca's shoulder.

"No, Luca. Please", I begged, as I tried to hold back my tears. Luca didn't speak, as he nished carrying me to the car. He set me on my feet and I immediately started pushing on his chest to try and slip past him. He rmlly grabbed my hips and pinned me to the SUV. "You can't save them, bambina (baby girl). I am sorry", he said, his voice stern, but also holding sympathy. "They were kids", I stuttered, as tears welled up in my eyes. "They are dying, Luca", I said, pushing on his chest. Luca's face contorted in pain, as he cupped my face. "They are dead, Mara, listen", he said roughly, making me freeze. "Listen", he repeated softly. I closed my eyes and slowed my breath, listening to the re sizzle and pop. Silent tears fell down my cheeks, immediately being caught by Luca's thumbs.

"We have to stay", I whispered, my eyes still closed. "We will, piccola (little one)", Luca said, placing a kiss on my forehead. I wrapped my arms around his torso and buried my head into his chest. Luca wrapped his arms around me, using one hand to hold my head to his chest. "Boss, Mr. Davis is dead", Cal's voice oated from behind Luca, making him turn his head. I felt Luca nod, "I want to know who was behind this", his deep voice commanded. "Yes, Boss", Cai nodded, before walking to the front of the vehicle to make a phone call.

Sirens wailed in the distance, alerting us that the re department was on the way. Luca pulled back, cupping my cheeks once more and looking over my face. "I'm so sorry, Mara. Are you sure you're okay, gattina (kitten)?", he asked softly, concern etched into his handsome features. I nodded my head softly, "Yeah, I'm okay", I whispered. Then it hit me that Luca had thrown himself on top of me during the blast. He would be the one hurt. "Are you?", I asked, worriedly, as I grasped the sides of his neck with my hands. Luca smiled, "Yes, gattina (kitten). I'm okay", he uttered, resting his forehead against mine. "Careful, though, sweetheart. I may start to think you actually care", he teased softly, rubbing his nose against mine.

I smacked his chest and frowned, "Of course I do", I whispered. Luca smiled as he leaned into place a gentle kiss on my lips. I melted into his embrace, needing this from him. "I'm sorry, piccola (little one)", he murmured, as he buried his head into my hair. I tightened my hold on him, making him hiss. I immediately pulled back with a scowl on my face. "You aren't okay. Where does it hurt?", I asked, feeling on his stomach and sides. "I'm okay, bambina (baby girl). It's nothing we can't treat at home, sweetheart. Trust me", Luca said, running his hands up my arms and shoulders to hold my neck.

I frowned, "But-", I started to protest. "Don't argue with me, gattina (kitten), please", he interrupted, as he placed his thumb rmlly over my lips. Every ber in my being told me to 'shut up', so I did. Though, the frown remained plastered on my face. The sirens could be heard getting closer and closer. "Good girl. Thank you", Luca uttered, before placing a soft kiss on my forehead. "Just let me do the talking, okay? Then we will be on our way home as soon as possible, okay?", Luca whispered. I nodded my head, even though all I wanted to do was check him for wounds. "Good girl", he uttered.

A re truck pulled into the yard and remen began jumping from the truck. They immediately hooked the hose to the nearest re hydrant, so that they could begin their battle with the blazing inferno. Four squad cars ew in, right behind the re truck. Policemen began questioning the crowd that had now formed around the burning home. Luca laced his ngers with mine, gripping my hand tightly, before pulling me through the crowd toward a detective in a navy blue suit. As the detective looked up and made eye contact with Luca, he scowled momentarily before masking it.

"Mr. Barelo", the detective said in montone. "Detective Marx", Luca acknowledged in the same dull voice. "I assume you have business here and can shed some light on the situation?", Detective Marx asked with an arched eyebrow. "I owned the building. Mr. Davis had called me to inform me of structural damage that needed repair. So we showed up", Luca began to explain. "We?", Detective Marx asked, his eyes cutting towards me, suspiciously. Luca took a half-step in front of me in a protective stance to shield me. "My wife and I", Luca almost growled. Detective Marx inclined his head in acknowledgement. "Tell me about the explosion and how you and your..wife.. walked away unscathed", Detective Marx sneered, spitting the word 'wife' with disdain. Luca squeezed my hand as he growled under his breath. I placed my free hand on his bicep and stroked it gently. An action that didn't go unnoticed by the detective.

"After Mr. Davis knocked the rst time and no one answered, I knew something was off. My instincts told me to run. Which I did. As I led my wife away, the house exploded into ames. I shielded my wife's body with mine", Luca explained simply, trying to hold back his dislike for this man. "Hmm", Dectivitce Marx hummed suspiciously. "This is the second building of yours in the same number of weeks to go up in ames. Doesn't that seem a bit suspicious to you?", Detective Marx asked. "Yes. Which is why I would greatly appreciate it if you were to do your job and catch the fucker doing this", Luca hissed through gritted teeth.

Detective Marx's face contorted in anger before he smirked. "You and I, both, know that your men can catch him faster", he said with disgust. "You and I, both, know that you don't want my men and I to get involved", Luca growled, as he took a step toward the detective. Luca's shoulders were squared and rigid as he stood toe to toe with Detective Marx. "Detective, we got the re put out", the chief reman said, interrupting the silent standoff between the two men. "I'll come see you if I need further information from you. Don't leave the country", the detective said, not breaking eye contact with Luca. "I didn't plan on it. But, I do plan on taking my wife home. You know where I live and have my number", Luca informed him.

"Detective", Luca nodded, before turning around to lead me back to the car. "Mr. Barelo", Detective Marx nodded back, venomously. Luca placed his hand on the small of my back as he led me away from the, now, crime scene. I was silently dumbstruck by two things. The hate that seeped from the two men and the fact that this has happened twice now. He told me I would be in danger, but I guess I didn't realize it meant he was already in danger.

"Are you okay, gattina (kitten)?", Luca whispered gently in my ear, as he pulled me into his arms. I must have been on autopilot because we were already in the car and on our way home. I nodded softly as I laid my head down on his chest. "You know you can talk to me, right?", he asked, as he stroked my arm tenderly. "Mhmm", I hummed and nodded. "Mara", Luca sighed, "Look at me", he commanded softly. I looked up, his eyebrows were furrowed in concern. "Yeah, I'm okay", I answered softly, as I rested my hand over his heart. "Would you tell me if you weren't?", he questioned, quirking an eyebrow at me. "Yes, I would", I answered, with a soft grin. Luca frowned slightly before sealing my lips with his. His lips against mine were soft, yet his hold on my neck was domineering.

When Luca broke the kiss, I nuzzled back into his chest and he rested his head onto mine. "I'm sorry that you were already put into danger, amore (love)", Luca apologized in a whisper. "It's okay", I uttered, as I stroked his side. "No, it's not", Luca apologized in a seriously injured or worse", Luca said, choking up at the end. I looked up at him once more, being captured by his gray orbs. "But, I'm not. I'm ne, thanks to you", I explained.

"You wouldn't have been in danger if it wasn't for me", he frowned. "That's not true", I uttered, my frown matching his. "How do you gure?", he asked, the crease in his eyebrows deepening. I sat up and turned toward Luca, so that I could face him head-on, much to his displeasure, because he looked at the distance before he and scowled before he tried to reach for my arm. Which I pulled away, only pissing him off more. "Mar-", "I was in danger last night, Luca", I interrupted him, a little pissed off that he had already forgotten. Luca froze, his face morphed into confusion, "No you weren't-", he began, before stopping himself as realization struck him. "I've always been in danger, Luca. Being your wife doesn't change that", I said, a bit calmer. Luca took a deep breath, his face softening tremendously. "I'm sorry, baby girl. I don't know why that slipped my mind. I'm just worried that something will happen to you. It'll be my fault and I won't be able to forgive myself", he said, his voice pained.

"Luca, I'm not scared to die, and I wouldn't blame you", I said honestly. Luca's hands shot out and gripped the sides of my neck and face, drawing our faces close together. "I am and I would", he growled through gritted teeth. "I can't lose you. Not since I found you", he uttered, the side of his nose was pressed at against mine, our eyebrows touched and lips brushed. "Luca", I whispered. "Uhn-uh", he mumbled, before closing his mouth over mine. His lips roughly claimed mine, as if he feared if he let go I would disappear. I recuperated his kiss as best as possible, it being dicult to keep up with his fast pace. My hands gripped his sides, letting him feel my presence to try and calm him.

Luca only released me when the car door was opened by Cal, signaling our arrival at home. "Come, pricipessa (princess)", Luca said, as he slid from the car and outstretched his hand to me.