

The trust

"Mariya"

As soon as the plane landed in New York, Domenic's phone started ringing.

But I was worried as all my stuff was left in Paris. I did not get time to take anything when we rushed to the airport because Domenic insisted we should leave Paris immediately .

I was hurt and shocked. How could he force me to come with him? Still, I composed myself and remained calm because of Nic. The child was very adorable. He had my heart the moment I met him.

Nic was still in shock. He didn't even go to his dad when Domenic asked him. But he remained in my embrace all the time, holding me tightly as if I would disappear if he left me. It touched my heart so deeply.

Now how could I leave him knowing he depended on me?!

"It's your dad!" Domenic mumbled as panic arose on his face. "Miss Leonardi, please don't tell him anything right now. Please give me a chance. Let me explain it to you rst, then you talk to your dad and tell him whatever you want. But please, not now," Domenic pleaded.

Of course, if my dad knew about it, what Domenic did to me, and how he pushed me in the mouth of my death, my dad would kill him.

Domenic answered the call.

"Yes, Mr. Leonardi. She is ne. I will...." he paused, listening to my dad. "No. You can talk to her. She is ne. Trust me. Nothing happened to her," he said over the phone and again paused, listening to what my dad was saying.

"I won't. Okay. Yes. I know. Yes." he was giving only one-word answers, and I could imagine my dad threatening him.

After talking for a while, he handed me the phone and mouthed 'please'.

I glared at him. Ironically, he didn't know I wasn't a heartless person like him and I would do it only for Nic.

I talked to my dad and assured him that I was okay and Domenic saved me by risking his life.

Dad wanted me to return to Florence as he was coming to get me. But I told him that Domenic's son was not well, so I would return to Florence after I was sure he was doing well. Fortunately, Dad agreed.

The plane landed in New York, and we exited the airport. Domenic led us to a Mercedes. I was stunned because it was again the latest model.

I looked over my shoulder and found four people following us. This made me more confused. I knew bodyguards could get paid highly because of their work. But still.....

What was he hiding from the world, or was it only me? However, I must admit, his mysterious and dark personality only added more stars to his charm.

The car pulled up before a posh building. Domenic ushered us to the private elevator that took us to the 25th oor. He unlocked his penthouse and led us to his bedroom. His bedroom was big, emitting all the masculine aura. The shades of cream and grey were prominent in this room's calmness, giving me a vibe as mysterious as the owner of this room was.

He left us in the room alone after Nic fell asleep. I didn't know where he slept, but he gave me privacy.

I took his phone and talked to my mom, Rosa, Maximo, and Vincenzo because I knew they were all worried. I had already talked to Dad. But he again joined them.

"Mariya, you okay, honey?!" Mom sounded sad. I knew she might be crying.

"I am ne, Mom," I assured her. "Domenic saved me."

"Thank God, Mariya!" She sighed. "When are you coming home?"

"Very soon, Mom. Actually, Domenic's son, Nic... He is not well, and he is my big fan. Nic wants me to stay with him for some time. So I am staying here with him until he feels good," I informed her. It was half true, though.

"Okay, honey," Mom was convinced. I exhaled with relief.

"Mariya! Are you staying at Domenic's house?" Maximo's annoyed voice came through the phone.

"Yes, Max, and I guess you heard my reason," I mumbled, rolling my eyes.

My twin brother was over-protective.

"I am coming to take you home," he declared, and I panicked.

He was stubborn and could do anything.

"No! Max. I don't need you to come and pick me up. I will return when I feel like that. However, I can work on some projects while I am in New York," I reasoned.

"I don't know anything, Mariya. We need you home. That's it, and the discussion ends. You were attacked. Anything could have happened. I just don't believe anyone and can't leave you alone," he declared sternly. Max was not going to be convinced so easily.

"I am not alone. Domenic... is here," I hesitated. After all, he was the one who took me to the kidnapper. How could I trust him? "So you chill. I am safe here at his place."

Safe?! I was not sure, though. But I was just trying my luck because of my precious little fan.

"Max, when Domenic is with Mariya, she is safe. I know he can not let anything happen to her. I am condent," Rosa's voice came. Rosa was Max's wife.

"Riya, will you be here next week?" Rosa asked me.

I knew her birthday was next week. Of course, I wouldn't miss her birthday. After all, it was her rst birthday after her marriage. I had already planned to throw a grand party to welcome her into our family and celebrate her birthday.

"Yes, Rosa, I remember, and I will be there for your birthday party and Max's announcement party," I promised.

"Princess, are you okay?" Dad asked. It seemed my whole family was sitting around the phone, waiting for their turn to talk to me.

"Yes, Dad! Don't worry about me so much," I giggled.

"How can a father not worry about his daughter?!" Dad sighed.

"I love you, Dad, and I am ne," I whispered, feeling bad for hiding the truth from him.

"I love you too, princess," Dad murmured meekly.

"We love you!" My family chanted in unison.

"I love you all," I laughed.

Then I talked to my grandparents.

After I assured my family that I was ne and would be staying here only for Nic, they seemed relaxed. Now, I could sleep peacefully.

When I woke up early in the morning, I found Nic sleeping soundly beside me. I gently pushed his hair back from his face and kissed his forehead softly. This kid was adorable. Domenic still hadn't come into the room, so I stepped out to nd him. I went down the hall and spotted him standing in the kitchen before the coffee machine. He looked hot in that hoodie and sweatpants. I had never seen him in anything other than his formal black suit. Everything about him used to scream perfection when he was on duty.

But right now, his hair was messy, and his demeanor was so casual. He looked normal. I snorted.

Domenic turned. His dark eyes trailed over me. Oh, I was wearing his shirt, and it was so big it covered my knees.

God! In fact, his shirt was huge, like a tent. Three of me could t into it.

What was he?!

A giant?!

So tall and broad!

I was engulfed entirely in his extra-large shirt. But I wasn't wearing anything under his shirt and wished he couldn't see through the fabric.

"Good morning, Miss Leonardi!" He smiled.

Oh, so he could smile too.

It was again for the rst time I saw his smile. Otherwise, I was used to seeing his scowls and frowns.

"Good morning, Umm... I borrowed your shirt without your permission because I couldn't sleep in my dirty clothes," I just informed him, and I didn't apologize for not taking his permission before using his stuff.

After all, it was his fault that I didn't have my clothes.

"It's alright," he waved me off. "Want coffee?!" He asked, his voice sounding deeper and huskier than ever.

"Heck, yes. I need it," I replied, rubbing my scalp.

He turned again, giving me a good view of his back and ne ass. I strode over and stood across from him. He looked so hot in the kitchen making coffee for me.

Mariya, you are angry with him. I reminded myself.

"So.... your penthouse is quite big and luxurious. I mean... it's beautiful and pricy," I remarked sarcastically, glancing around.

He chuckled.

"Some generous clients like you pay me really well, so I could afford this luxury," he shrugged. His focus was entirely on the coffee machine as if it was more interesting than me.

I smiled at him. I knew he was lying.

What were you hiding, Mr bodyguard? And why?

"What time is Nic's doctor's appointment?" I asked, taking a glance around his kitchen.

It had all the latest types of equipment. I wondered if he used to cook here or... who would be cooking for him and Nic?!

"In the afternoon. I thought it would be good if Nic had a good sleep," he replied as he turned to me with two cups of coffee in his hands.

I nodded.

"Thank you, Miss Leonardi, for... staying with Nic," he whispered hesitantly, biting his lip as he handed me my coffee. I held the cup. Our ngers brushed slightly. I shivered at the innocent touch. My eyes snapped at his. He looked away instantly.

"No need to mention it. Of course, I had to stay. I could not leave him alone when he was ghting with his fear. He is a very brave boy, just like his dad," I smiled. But then I remembered.

"Did you talk to Nic's mother? When is she coming?" I asked as I remembered how much Nic was missing his mom. He kept mumbling her name until he fell asleep.

Domenic hesitated for a moment.

"She is not coming. She is busy and does not have time for her own son," he replied, grimacing.

"That's strange!" I blurted out loudly.

Because I remembered how she had been ghting Domenic in public to meet her son, and now she did not have time for him when he needed his mother. I shook my head at her selshness. But my heart cried for the poor kid. Suddenly, I remembered I had something else to ask him.

"So what do you say about whatever happened yesterday?" I challenged, raising a brow.

I hopped, trying to sit on the counter, but it was a little high.

Domenic saw me trying. In two long steps, he was before me as his large hands grabbed my hips, his ngers sinking onto my skin through the fabric of his shirt, and I gasped as he lifted me without effort, placing me on the counter.

"Hey, you don't have to do this. I can help myself," I snapped, frowning.

I quickly pulled the corners of the shirt as it drifted up to my mid-thighs. I panicked. He would have seen I didn't have panties if it rode a little more.

But why was he acting like a gentleman when he was almost a douchebag for me for the last few days until today?

"I know. I was just being a nice bodyguard and helping my client," he replied with his usual expressionless face, so hard to read.

"You are not my bodyguard," I announced, looking away.

"You red me?!" He choked, frowning and staring at me.

He rested his hands on either side of me on the counter as he leaned forward. The position seemed so intimate. I furrowed, and placing my hands on his chest, I pushed him away. He straightened himself and took a step back, creating some distance, and I could breathe.

"I don't need a liar," I tilted my head, giving him a challenging stare. He sighed.

"Look, I am sorry. But I was helpless, as I have told you already. He kidnaped Nic and wanted me to take you to him in exchange for Nic's freedom. I know this excuse can not justify what I did, and it doesn't make my actions right. But as a father, I did it only to save my son," he murmured faintly.

He paused, but I didn't reply, waiting for him to nish what else he had to say.

"I am sorry, Miss Leonardi. It will never happen again, I promise. Let me stay by your side. The main culprit is still alive and free. We do not even know him. Your life is still in danger," he insisted desperately.

Why would he bother whether I live or die?

Was it his new game? Because as far as I knew him, he had never talked to me politely.

"By the way, you have seen the kidnapper. Do you know him?" He suddenly asked, his dark eyes searching mine. I thought for a moment.

"Umm... No, I have never seen him before," I answered, shaking my head.

"You sure?!" He asked again.

"Yeah! I am sure. I used to meet a lot of people daily, but I as sure as hell I never met that guy," I replied rmly, placing my hands on my thighs, covering them with my small palm. I was never ashamed of nudity as a model, but with him, it felt a little.... different.

"Then it proves only one thing, that he is not the mastermind," he pronounced rmly.

Nevertheless, he was so full of overconfidence.

"How can you be so sure?" I snorted, and the intensity of his narrow eyes increased as he looked deeply into mine.

I closed my mouth and pressed my lips tightly. He could be intimidating.

"I have plenty of experience," he smirked, and I was dazzled.

Oh, his smile was even more charming!

He looked away, and then I realized I was gawking at him. I awkwardly cleared my throat.

"Good! But listen, I am here only for Nic," I declared before he thought otherwise. "And I will leave after he feels better. However, I don't need you as my bodyguard. When someone breaks my trust once, I can never trust him again," I declared.

I didn't need an apology or reason. I was done with him.