

Knight In Shining Armor

"Mariya"

Champagne was owing. Attendees were air-kissing, embracing in delight. Whispers of who was wearing what were drowning the sound of stilettos clicking on the steps of the vast hall. All the rich and famous people were there for the very popular New York fashion week. Paparazzi clamored for shots of celebrities, models, wealthy sponsors, and guests.

And I was apprehensive.

I sighed and looked around. It had been so many years, but I still felt nervous amongst the crowd.

The anchor on the stage enthusiastically introduced the next model, and the crowd went crazy for the supermodel Niki. The anchor described how incredible Niki's journey of success was in the modeling world, how perfect her gure was, and how pretty she was as if it was not scucient for the night that she got the best outt. I rolled my eyes after hearing him. I knew how she managed to get the best opportunity every time. I just couldn't be like her.

Suddenly starting to feel suffocated, I just wanted to leave this place as soon as possible.

I had already walked onto the stage and was waiting for the show to end. Glancing around and searching in the crowd, I found him: my PR, Daniel. I gestured to him that I would return after a few minutes. He showed me his expensive wristwatch and tapped it with his nger as if warning me to return on time. I rolled my eyes and exited the room.

But before leaving, I promptly grabbed a long jacket and wrapped a scarf to cover my face. So no one could recognize me. I learned that becoming famous was not easy and came with a price.

No matter how insecure and scared you were inside, you had to smile and look condent on stage, before the camera, and among the people. Although this glamour world looked enchanting and glittering to the rest of the world, it was very lthy and shady inside. People were desperate to push you down just to up themselves, and they could go to any limit to destroy your career.

I had also faced many obstacles, and people wanted me to compromise or do as they wished. But it only helped me to become stronger, and I was who I was because of my talent. Not because of someone's favor.

Coming out, I breathed in the cold night breeze, my eyes enthusiastically glancing around the street. It was so beautiful and peaceful outside. Though it was not so crowded, I felt safe. No one knew me or could recognize me in disguise.

New York was a really gorgeous city, and the night was enchanting. I walked a little further, exhaled happily, and smiled calmly. There were no annoying questions and ridiculous shining camera lights. No pressure of performance and jealousy. No insecurities dispersed into the atmosphere, making me choke with nausea. It was only calm and peaceful around me.

Stretching my hands and tilting my head toward the sky, I breathed in the fresh air deeply. I felt like I was ying into heaven at that moment.

"Excuse me?! Are you the supermodel Riya?" A sweet voice startled me and drew me back to the earth.

My gray eyes met the twinkling dark orbs. I found a small boy looking at me, astonished.

"Hey!" I grinned, and I crouched down to his level. "You know me?!" I was amazed he recognized me in disguise.

"Yes, I am your biggest fan," he said and extended his tiny hands, showing me how big my fan he was.

"Aww! I am so attered. Thank you, honey," I said and kissed his cheek.

His face turned pink as he smiled brightly.

"Can I have your autograph, please?" He said, holding out his tiny hand.

"Of course! And how about a sele?" I suggested and was pleased to see his smile becoming brighter.

"Really? Wow! You are so nice, Riya," he was stunned and happy. "I think I love you," he professed.

I giggled, looking at my little admirer.

"I love you too, handsome," I irted with my little fan.

"What is your name, champ? I need it to write a love message for you," I winked and found a paper tissue and a pen in my tiny diamond-studded clutch. After all, my little fan wanted an autograph. I would give it to him on paper so he could keep it with him forever.

"My name is Niccoló Mancini. But you can call me Nic," he grinned.

"Nic!" I whispered, smiling as his name sounded so cute.

I wrote him a sweet message with an autograph and took out my phone to click some seles.

The kid was so adorable. But I was worried because he was alone there.

"Where are your parents?" I asked, looking around as I had to return to my show.

"I came here with my dad," he answered, stretching himself on his toes, looking at a restaurant having a long waiting line outside it, and searching for his dad in the crowd.

"I wanted to eat tonight at that famous and my favorite restaurant," he pointed to the restaurant. "But there was a long waiting queue, so Dad went in there to try if we could get a table for two tonight. He instructed me to wait for him outside, but then, I spotted you and couldn't stop myself from taking your autograph," he briefed.

"Oh, okay, give me your dad's number. I will call him to come and pick you up because I cannot leave you alone here," I asked and unlocked my phone. My ngers stilled on the dial pad.

But before he could give me his father's number, a loud bang came, and I dropped the phone, instinctively held the kid, and ducked. I turned back and found the pole behind us had a dent as the bullet hit it instead of us. I heard a commotion. People were startled, shouting and running.

My bodyguards, Will and Mike, immediately covered and ushered us to the safe corner. Suddenly, a Jeep zoomed through the road and stopped at a distance from us. Five men holding rief jumped out of it and dashed toward us while ring from their guns.

"Ma'am, get inside the building and go to the security. I will stop them here," Will instructed, and I nodded.

I glanced at Nic. He was startled upon seeing all that. I hugged him tightly in my arms and picked him up.

"Shhh! Here only shooting for a movie is going on. Do you also want to participate in this? Just keep listening to me," I coaxed him.

He nodded, looking at me with his dark eyes that grew bigger in horror.

"First, we have to leave this place immediately," I murmured as I ran toward the building, holding Nic in my arms. It seemed like an oce building as the area only had commercial buildings. So it could be empty as it was past oce time.

Will was my bodyguard for two years and was one of the best. I never used to listen to anyone, but this wasn't the time to tell him not to order me. I quietly listened to him and went to the building to look for security. Will and Mike must need help to ght ve goons. What if more were coming? I hurried toward the building. It was still far, but I kept running.

Suddenly, one goon jumped before me with a gun in his hand.

My mind became blank as I stared at him in horror. My breathing hitched when I thought about Nic in my hands. He was hiding his face on my shoulder, trembling severely.

My widened eyes darted toward the goon's ngers as he pulled the trigger.

The bullet got red instantly, and before the shot could reach us, a large body covered Nic and me, pushing us to the side.

We fell to the ground. I looked at my savior, and everything disappeared at that moment. The time stopped as I blinked at a very handsome Prince Charming before me. His dark eyes met mine, and I forgot to breathe.

Was this a dream?

No!

So how can such a man exist in reality?!

Oh sweet Jesus, he was so frigging hot, as if he had come out of GQ cover. In that crisp white shirt clinging to his muscled body, dening his bulging biceps and perfectly toned torso, and that dark denim tugging tightly at his thick thighs and strong legs, he could make any girl's imagination go wild. He looked like some steaming hot male model with the strength and speed of a superhero.

I was distracted in that moment and didn't realize it when he held my hand and pulled me to my feet. He took out his gun and shot the man before us. He took Nic from me.

"Are you okay?" He asked Nic, and Nic nodded.

Glancing around alertly, he grabbed my hand and made us run inside the building. Once inside the building, he handed Nic to the other man.

"Take him home safely," he ordered in his deep throaty voice.

Then he turned to face me. I was still stunned and staring at my gorgeous savior.

"What's your name, Miss?!" He asked me coldly, but I could only focus on his tempting full red lips.

He repeated the sentence, furrowing. Then I came out of my trance, paying attention to his words.

His dark eyes were void of emotions and looked even colder than his voice.

"Riya... I mean Mariya Leonardi. I am a model and came here for the fashion show in the next building," I informed concisely.

He nodded.

"Miss Riya, who were those men ghting the goons?" He inquired sternly.

"They are my bodyguards," I replied.

"They got killed," he announced abruptly, making me gasp.

I covered my mouth to stop myself from whimpering in sorrow.

Will and Mike were dead. They got killed while saving me.

"I have informed the cops, and they will be here anytime, and until then, I will be with you," he assured me.

My heart melted by his sweet, caring gesture.

We heard footsteps coming closer. He motioned me to keep quiet, and we slowly moved toward the other corner. The whole building was vacant. He grabbed my arm and dragged me with him.

I couldn't help but shiver as sparks and tingles burned in my skin where his hand touched me. He was so close that his manly scent, mixed with some expensive cologne, made my head dizzy.

Umm... He smelled so... good.

The strangest thing was, I had never been so attracted to a man. Hell, I hadn't found anyone even worthy of my attention, and here he had all of it without even trying.

I was so busy checking him out that I didn't know when he pulled me behind him, and, holding out the gun, he red to take down one more goon.

I trembled with the loud sounds of guns ring. Clenching his rm, strong back, I hugged him from behind. This man was so powerful. He literally oozed strength and dominance. His aura was overpowering, and I couldn't help but feel some pull toward him. I felt him stiffen for a moment before he was back in action.

He again grasped my hand tightly and began running while he red behind at whoever was coming for us.

He took me to the rear side of the building that opened to another side of the lane, where I saw some cops. Handing me to the cops, he talked to them.

I heard he had to kill all ve goons to save me. Then he turned to face me, and his eyes lingered on mine brieiy. I smiled and was about to thank him.

But turning his back abruptly, he left without saying anything.

Ouch!

That was so rude of him. I couldn't even get the chance to thank him properly. I couldn't get his name or... number.

The thing remained a mystery.

Who was he?