

Chapter 17: Desire

Nora woke up with a pounding headache and an urge to vomit. As she opened her eyes and tried to move, she found herself tangled in blankets and let out a sigh, trying to control her breathing to settle her stomach. She struggled to decipher how she had gotten home and why there were now multiple blankets on top of her. The last thing she remembered was going out for drinks with Isabella, who had convinced her to try the 'pleasures' of alcohol before she left. They'd only had one drink...

With a groan, Nora clutched her head in her hands, feeling the aftermath of the beer she had tasted before bidding her friend farewell. And then, inexplicably, she had lost control.

She had actually returned to the bar and continued to drink.

As she massaged her throbbing head, she recalled another scene – two men attempting to persuade her into accepting drinks from them. She remembered herself asserting that she had a possessive husband and that he would bash them up if they did not leave her alone, and then... nothing.

Sighing deeply, she pushed aside the quilts and surveyed her surroundings. Squinting, her gaze landed on a bottle of hangover medicine, and she gulped it down. It was clear who had left it there and who had brought her here. She would need to express her gratitude to him for his assistance last night as well. With a sigh, she looked at the now ruined dress that she had adorned. She really was unsuitable for wearing such things if she was going to ruin them.

Nora couldn't help but shake her head. Demetri Frost was incredibly kind. From picking her up at the hotel on the night of her wedding to this morning, he had been a constant source of help. She knew she had to find a way to repay his kindness since the list of things she had to thank him for seemed to be growing exponentially.

As Nora went about her morning routine, pondering ways to express her appreciation to Demetri, the 'kind' man was preoccupied with dismantling a company he had recently acquired.

She went out, expecting the man to have left for the day, but she stopped short when she saw him sitting at the table. Uh oh. It wasn't enough that she had embarrassed herself in front of him but now she had to now face him in her threadbare t-shirt and shorts.

"Um, I apologize for not being dressed up. I thought you had already left," Nora apologized hurriedly before realising that she wasn't supposed to do that. So what if she was dressed like that? Who said that she had to be dressed to the nines at all times?

Demetri's response was a shrug, "This is your house as well for the next three years so..."

"Ohh. I... ah... Anyways, I wanted to thank you for everything."

This time the man did not acknowledge her and instead gestured for her to sit opposite him. As she moved to oblige, an impulsive notion struck her, similar to the one when she had caressed his face in Grandpa William's office. Acting on the impulse, she hopped onto the kitchen island, sitting there as she awaited Demetri's words.

It was only later, in hindsight, would Nora realise what a mistake she had made. She had forgotten that the man was intimidating and directly challenged her.

Rather than speaking, Demetri rose from his seat and approached her deliberately. Although it was a mere few steps, time seemed to stretch for Nora. When he was almost within touching distance, his hand gently landed on her knee, moving it sideways. His touch moved with a hint of a caress, and he stepped between her open legs. Nora sat there in frozen silence, her eyes wide like a deer caught in headlights.

Catching her chin between his fingers, he tilted her face upwards and spoke unhurriedly, "You are my wife."

She nodded her head slowly in affirmation while his thumb slowly traced her lip. "I have given you time to gather your emotions."

Another nod. Nora's nervousness made her lick her lips, acutely aware of his intense gaze fixed upon them.

"Your reason for the marriage was to secure your inheritance and get away from under your mother's thumb."

"Yes..." Nora whispered in confusion. Her confusion not about his statement, but about the bewildering sensations coursing through her. What was happening with her?

"It's time for you to fulfill your end of the contract, yes?" He continued.

"Yes," Nora whispered breathlessly. Why was she breathless? Had the oxygen level in the house dropped? Was the air suddenly thinning?

Abruptly, his hand left her face, and she watched as he drew closer. It was then that Nora comprehended what was unfolding. All those tantalizing, heart-pounding kisses she had read about in novels were about to possibly become her reality.

But the anticipated kiss didn't happen. Instead, he paused near her and commanded, "Kiss me."

And she knew she had lost her sanity because at that moment she did. She covered the hair's breadth distance between them and placed her lips against his and closed her eyes, waiting for him to take over. After all, she had little experience...

When he made no move, she opened her eyes slowly, and met his heated gaze with a confused one of her own. Did she need to part her lips? Her panicked eyes stared into his calm ones and she hesitantly opened her lips, moving cautiously against his.

Their lips moved in sync, and Nora felt herself losing control. Her hands rested tentatively on his shoulders as he deepened the kiss, taking control back from her, his tongue brushing against her lips. A shiver coursed through her as she realized her own desire.

Abruptly, panic surged within her. Everything was progressing too rapidly. Her hands trembled as she debated whether to draw away or not. Why was her body reacting this way? Why did she yearn to be closer to this man who was unfamiliar to her? Why had she never felt this sensation with Antonio?

As if attuned to her inner turmoil, Demetri began to withdraw. In a haze of yearning, Nora leaned forward, unwilling to sever the connection.

