

## In Love With My Evil Stepbrother Chapter 15

Chapter Fifteen There's a deathly silence. From the corner of my eyes, I can see how astonished both Alex and my mom are. Sure, Eason didn't do things like giving me a French kiss or grabbing my ass, but his behavior was still outrageously inappropriate. Who would rip off a tag using his teeth?! "Let's go." I said sharply, trying hard to suppress the anger in my chest.

Alex follows me out of the yard, as I can feel his eyes are tracing me, apprehensively. I have a strong feeling that he's going to ask me what happened between me and Eason, and I don't blame him for that, but I internally pray that he would just let everything slide. The first 3 minutes of the drive is nice and quiet, with both of us wrapped up in our own thoughts. Then finally, he opens his mouth, "Nat, what's wrong with—" "Nothing!" I cut him off, before he can finish the sentence. Irritation flares up in my heart. Great, now my ball night is officially ruined. I know Alex's curiosity is not the one to blame, so everything's on Eason. He knows this would happen, and that's precisely why he pulled that off in front of Alex and my mom.

To deliberately sabotage my life.

"Oh...well." Alex shifts nervously in the driver's seat, his eyes still on the road. "If you don't want to talk about it. That's fine."

"It's not that. I just don't know where to start-it's complicated." "Well, we have plenty of time. It's going to be a long drive."

I open my mouth, but no words come out of it. I do want to talk about it, how evil, manipulative, and inappropriate my stepbrother is. Yet I can't do that without going into details and exposing some shameful memories that I've desperately wanted to forget.

"...sorry Alex." And that's the only thing I can say.

There's an awkward silence, then he speaks up in a strained voice, "That's fine. No worries."

And that's the end of my last shred of hope for a wonderful ball night. We keep our mouth shut for the rest of the drive, and when the car finally pulls into the student lot, I'm even a bit relieved to escape this confined space with Alex.

We get out of the car and join the crowd of students heading towards the Great Hall. Everyone's so dressed-up in elegant nightgowns and suits that subtly hint at their designer origin. One would easily mistake this gathering as a fundraising gala than a school homecoming party.

Upon arrival at the entrance, Alex suddenly pulls me to a halt. "Wait, Nat. There's something I want to give you..."

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a corsage, made of a fully blossomed red rose. Embarrassment flits across his face, as he clears his throat and says, "Well I know it's not a prom and it's probably stupid. But-anyway I had this for you, and I want you to have it."

I'm totally astonished by his kind gesture. I've only been in one serious relationship with Zack, who turned out to be a pretentious and self-centered asshole. Guess I'm not used to be treated nicely. "Wow," I gulp. "I mean, thanks! A lot!" He smiles at me sheepishly, "don't you think it's a bit cheesy?" "No. Well, yeah, kind of. But it doesn't stop me from loving it." His smile grows wider, and then steps closer to help me put on the corsage. But right at this moment, someone suddenly calls his name from behind.

"Hey Alex!"

We both spin around to find a tall black girl rushing towards our direction. She's dressed in a

tube-top, bright yellow gown, wearing silver stiletto. Unlike my clumsiness, she's able to move swiftly with great poise even in those heels.

Alex's eyes widen in surprise. When she gets to us, he bursts out eagerly, "Andria, what are you doing here?" "Hey I promised to go to the ball with you, remember? Wouldn't miss it for the world." "But what about college?" "I flew back for weekends and is just in time for this." She pauses, then turns her gaze on me. "Unless I'm interrupting something?" Alex seems overwhelmed by the situation as he vaguely introduces us, "Andria, meet Natalia, my friend. And Natalia, this is—" "Andria, his ex-girlfriend," Andria reaches out her hand to me, "I'm a year older, so we probably never met before. Unless you are new to this school?" I take her hand and shake it. The strong feeling that the corsage brought me has now faded away, replaced with a surge of sadness and embarrassment. From a peripheral look, I can see Alex nervously look at us, probably having the hardest time processing the situation. It's now disconcerting to wear that corsage. So I take it off me and hand it back to Alex. "Alex, you should go with Andria."

"But—"

"Don't worry about me," I try to smile the best I could. "She flew a long way home, just here to see you. Just go. I'll be fine."

Then to save all of us from further awkwardness, I turn around and walk away. Since Alex agreed to come to the ball with me, I've thought the worst thing that might happen is we don't hit it off and therefor have a lousy time. But reality is a bitch, always hits you harder than you could possibly imagine. Guess I can't escape the fate of being a loner.

The Great Hall is already full of people. I quickly spot some familiar faces: there's Valerie and her gang standing by the beverage section, currently elated by the attention of a group of boys. They are like animals, always travel by herd.

Then I see our headmaster Ms. Dave talking to Mr. Ramirez beside the stage. I should probably come forward and say hi, but I'm so emotionally fucked up to mingle. So I quickly grab something to drink and start looking for a secure hide-out point.

Finally I have my eyes on the empty space behind the ceiling-to-floor velvet curtain. It's far away from the dance floor and food bar, so no one would ever come here. Well, I probably need to defend my territory from drunk teenagers who want to make out, but I should be gone long before that. But when I pull open the curtain, to my surprise, the place is already taken.

The boy sitting on floor snaps his head up, looking like a frantic bird. Yet then he narrows his eyes at me, "Natalia Moore?" "...Eddie?" That's when I recognize him as the person I talked to in the Front Office on the first day of school.

"Yeah that's me!"

He hurries to scootch over and make some room for me, as I close the curtain behind me and sit cross-legged on the floor beside him. "What are you doing here?" I ask. I thought he had found his place in this high school.

"My date ditched me. Or maybe she wasn't my date, I don't even know now," he says with gloomy bitterness. "She smiled when I asked her, so I took that as a yes...but maybe she was just laughing at me, you know, sarcastically." "Bummer," I reply dryly. "You gotta be sure next time." Guess isolating me and treating me like trash aren't a good entrance ticket into this high school anyway.

Then we spend the rest of the time sitting on the floor in darkness, listening to everything behind the curtain. I heard Mr. Ramirez give his speech, which was so beautifully delivered. A tidal wave of applause broke out when he finished, as I couldn't help myself join the group and clap.

"Your stepfather is really something!" Eddie yells at me beyond the applause, and I nod. Yes he's a wonderful guy. But why would he have such a nasty son? After the speech, finally there comes the music. The ball just officially began. "Hey... Natalia?"

I turn around to see Eddie staring at me nervously. He licks his dry, cracked lips and finally after a few seconds asks hoarsely, "maybe, maybe you want to dance with me?"

I almost roll my eyes at him. "No. Not really. And that's a clear no."

"Oh come on! I'm sorry, ok? I shouldn't treat you that way when we first met. But we can still go out there now and dance as a sign of protest. How does that sound?"

“Not so good,” I sniff. “No one cares about you and your stupid protest. Plus, you will become the next target. Hashtag, stupid loser rocking the dance floor with the school freak. Do you

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really want that?”

But weirdly he wasn't terrified at my words. Instead, he sits up even more and says hastily as if to prove some points: “That doesn't scare me. In fact, I've seen clearly now, whom to be friend with. I chose the wrong side at first but now want to correct that.” I frown, looking at him in the eyes. A few seconds later, I shrug and then stand up from the floor, dusting the bottom of my gown. “Fine.” “Really?” His eyes light up immediately. “One dance. And it doesn't mean that I've forgiven you or on board of your protest plan. It's just a waste of time sitting here with the music on.”

He jumps up from the floor, nodding continuously with an eager look on his face. I suppress a smile. He looks like a stray dog who has suddenly found his way home.

“Well, let's go.” I take his arm and pull open the curtain. Yet before I even get a good look of the dance floor, someone blocks my view.

I look up and find Eason staring at us a few steps away. His gaze is grim and cold, fixing on my face and then gradually traveling downwards till it finally rests on our wrapped arms.

Then his lips slightly parted, letting out a few icy words. “Natalia. A word?”

The way he looks at us sends a chill down my spine. But I shake my head, nevertheless.

“No. I have done talking to you.”

The corner of his lips curves up and forms a sullen smile. Then he directs his gaze on Eddie.

“Leave us,” demanded him. Maybe the tension triggers the last shred of chivalry in Eddie, as he suddenly decides to step in between me and Eason. “She said she doesn't want to talk to you!”

That's a terrible move. And Eason's expression immediately grows colder at that. A muscle twitches in his jaw. He looks at Eddie through the bottom of his long eyelashes, as if the boy is a piece of trash.

He does resemble Mr. Ramirez a lot at this moment. Powerful and intimidating, I sign internally and tap on Eddie's shoulder. "It's fine. You can go." Better send this poor boy away before he pees his pants.

"But-"

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"It's fine," I repeat, a bit more strongly. "Just go." Eddie shots me a worried glance, but eventually decides to walk away. After he disappears into the crowd, Eason suddenly grabs my shoulder and pushes me back in to the curtain. Without hesitation, I raise my hand and hit him hard across the face, giving him a red and clear slap mark. But he doesn't seem to mind that at all. Still looking at me intensely, his lips

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twitch up into a crooked smile. "Alex and then that pathetic loser? Nat, you've degraded yourself a lot." "What do you want?!" I boom out, losing my temper at once. "It's none of your fucking business who I choose to go to the ball with! It's none of your business who I talk to, who I like, who I kiss! Can't you just STAY THE FUCK OUT OF MY LIFE!!" His iron grip on my shoulder tightens, hurting greatly, as I see a salvage fury flits through his eyes. "It is my fucking business! You already walked away from me once!! You think I'm going to let that happen again? I'll destroy every one and single person who dares standing in our way!"

I'm completely lost. What the hell is he talking about? When did I walk away? Has he totally lost his mind??

"Get away from me!" I yell and try to push him away. But he's way stronger than me. Holding up my wrists on top of my head with one hand, he grabs my chin with the other and presses his lips hard on mine. The kiss is rough. He ravages my lips, tongues licking my teeth harshly looking for a way in. I bite him, the copper taste of blood immediately fills out mouth, but even that can't stop him. The next second he's already prised open my clenched teeth and kissed me even deeper.

Gradually, I find my strength leaving me. Not only because of his aggressiveness, but more importantly, because I'm drawn to him, helplessly. Even though I keep telling myself that he's my stepbrother and a well-known fuckboy who might take all of these as a simple game, I still can't help myself. Everything has changed this time we met.

I can't resist him now. He's toxic to me.

My eyes gradually become wet, as I feel his hot breath leaving my lips temporarily, tracing my cheekbone upwards to my ear. Then he bits my earlobe, whispering a hoarse voice into my ear: "Nat...why can't you just admit it. That you want me too?"

I take in a shaky inhale and flatter my eyes shut. Deep inside, I know he's right.

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