

Madly Yours

Chapter 14

Nora nodded. "Understood."

"Second. The Lancaster family is complicated. Do not ask questions that don't concern you, and stay out of family politics. If anyone gives you trouble, you come to me."

"Alright."

"Third," he paused, turning his head to rake his intense gaze over her face, as if searing her reaction into his memory. "Keep your private life clean. I don't care what you did in the past, but from now on, do not let me see anyone I shouldn't see, or hear anything I shouldn't hear."

His demand was blunt, carrying the ruthless authority of a man used to total obedience.

Nora met his stare, her own voice hardening. "You don't need to worry about me. Since I agreed to this arrangement, I will play by the rules. I only hope that you will do the same."

Hudson arched a brow, seemingly amused by her defiance.

He stared at her for two long seconds before a ghost of a smirk played on his lips. "Naturally."

With the terms set, the cabin fell silent again.

Nora watched the familiar roads of Azure Bay approach, her heart picking up speed.

She was about to meet the Lancaster matriarch—the legendary woman who pulled the strings behind the city's most powerful family.

Meanwhile, back in Northampton.

Edmond stared at his disconnected phone, his face livid.

He had tried calling from three different numbers, only to be met with the automated voicemail message.

"Damn it!"

He hurled his phone against the wall, shattering the screen into a spiderweb of cracks. The private VIP booth went dead silent.

His friends exchanged nervous glances before someone carefully offered him a drink. "Take it easy, Edmond. You know how Nora gets. Give it a few days, she'll cool off and come crawling back."

"Yeah, she's obsessed with you. It's not like she's actually going to leave."

Edmond knocked back the whiskey. The burn slid down his throat, but it did nothing to extinguish the rage boiling in his chest. He yanked at his collar, suffocating under the tension.

Just then, someone scrolling on their phone whistled. "Looks like Mr. Lancaster of the Lancaster family in San Francisco is getting married at the end of the month."

"Hudson Lancaster? I thought he was on his deathbed. He's getting married?"

"It's one of those superstitious things to ward off bad luck. He's marrying the eldest daughter of the Reed family, some girl named Jade Reed. Hey, Edmond, doesn't Nora have some connection to the Reeds?"

Edmond's grip on his glass tightened.

Jade Reed?

Nora's stepsister?

"Since when did the Reeds get their claws into the Lancasters?" someone scoffed. "The Lancasters are old money. Next to them, all the rich families here in Northampton look like a joke."

"No kidding," another agreed. "Rumor has it Hudson took over most of the empire when he was eighteen. He practically owns the city. A guy like that..."

The voice trailed off in absolute reverence.

Wealth and power were nothing new in Northampton. But the Lancasters were different.

They were titans who had ruled San Francisco for generations. Through wars, recessions, and shifting eras, their empire had only expanded. And under Hudson's reign, their power was absolute.

"Well, Edmond," someone joked. "Doesn't that make you family now? You'll have to put in a good word for us next time we're on the coast."

Edmond forced a tight smile but stayed quiet.

"Wait a second," someone else chimed in. "If Nora's been MIA for days, do you think she flew back for her sister's wedding?"

Edmond frowned sharply. "Ferris, look up Nora's flight records for me."

"I'll have my guys on it right now," Ferris Quinn replied.

Ten minutes later, Ferris hung up his phone and turned to Edmond. "Got it. Nora flew out to San Francisco today."

Edmond swirled the liquor in his glass. Remembering the deep male voice he had heard over the phone earlier, a dark scowl crossed his face. He downed his drink in one shot. "Book me a flight to San Francisco."

Nora was clearly holding a serious grudge this time.

If he flew out there just to bring her home, surely she would forgive him, right?