

Madly Yours

Chapter 18

The dog immediately leaned into her touch, its eyes rolling back in pure bliss as its tail went into overdrive.

“What’s his name?” Nora asked, looking up at him.

Hudson stared down at her.

She was crouched on the stone path, her white dress spilling around her like a flower. Her hand rested gently on the dog’s massive head, and her bright eyes sparkled under the garden lights.

Bane practically vibrated with joy, shoving his bulky frame against her legs and looking ready to roll over for belly rubs.

Hudson’s lips tightened into a thin line. “Bane.”

“Bane? He’s quite intimidating,” Nora laughed, scratching behind his ears. “I think he likes me.”

The dog’s tail slapped against the concrete excitedly.

Hudson stared at the agonizingly cute scene for a few seconds before barking an order. “Arthur.”

“Mr. Lancaster?”

“Find a crate and lock him up.”

Arthur’s jaw dropped. “What?”

Bane always had free roam of the estate. Hudson had never crated him. Why start now?

Especially when the dog was acting like a total angel for Nora?

Hudson didn’t offer a single word of explanation. He just leveled his assistant with a dead-eyed glare.

Arthur shut his mouth instantly and rushed to leash the dog.

As he was dragged away, Bane kept looking back at Nora, letting out high-pitched, heartbreaking whimpers.

Nora couldn't help but giggle. "He looks so betrayed."

Hudson grabbed her hand and hauled her inside. His thumb dragged slowly over her wrist as he spoke, his voice dripping with ice. "He's wild and untamed. It's best if you keep your distance."

The interior of Cloudwater Estate was aggressively modern and minimalist.

The sweeping living room boasted floor-to-ceiling windows framing the dark courtyard. The furniture was sharp and sleek, broken up only by a few priceless art pieces.

The air smelled of crisp cedar-the exact same intoxicating scent that clung to Hudson.

"Our bedroom is on the second floor," Hudson said, dropping her hand and gesturing to the spiraling staircase. "First door on the left."

Nora's heart hammered in her chest. "Our... bedroom?"

"Where else would you sleep?" Hudson raised a brow. "I already told you. I have needs."

Cloudwater Estate's master suite was terrifyingly massive.

The entire back wall was glass, overlooking the private beach. The distant ocean waves caught the moonlight, sending faint, rhythmic crashes into the quiet room.

The lack of furniture only drew more attention to the massive, imposing king-sized bed draped in dark gray silk.

Nora shoved her suitcase into the corner of the walk-in closet, suddenly remembering her phone was still off.

The second she powered it on, it violently vibrated in her palm.

Dozens of missed call notifications flooded the screen-over fifty in total.

Most were from Xavier, her half-brother.

Ever since she followed Edmond to Northampton, she and Xavier had drifted apart. It was rare for him to call her more than three times a month.

Why was he blowing up her phone? Was something wrong?

Panic gripping her, Nora dialed his number.

It rang twice before an unfamiliar man answered. “Hello? West Precinct. Am I speaking to Xavier Reed’s family?”

“Yes, this is his sister.”

The officer gave her a quick rundown of the situation. Nora nodded frantically. “Okay, I’m on my way.”

Hanging up, she rubbed her temples, her fingertips turning ice-cold.

She spun around, and the closet sensor lights flickered on, illuminating the towering figure standing right behind her.

Hudson leaned against the doorframe, lazily unbuckling his watch. His sleeves were rolled up, exposing the hard lines of his forearms and the pale, luminous glow of his skin in the dim light.

He looked up, his dark eyes pitch black in the shadows. “What happened?”

“That was the police.” Nora bit her lip. “My brother got into a fight and was taken into custody. I have to go get him.”