

Chapter 47

The second the words left her mouth, the last thread of Harding's sanity snapped.

He let out a low, guttural groan that vibrated deep in his chest. He dropped his head and crashed his mouth against hers.

Suddenly, Harding stopped.

He pushed himself up on his forearms, his chest heaving violently. Sweat glistened on his forehead. He looked down at her flushed face, his eyes burning with a terrifying intensity.

"Anissa," Harding rasped, his voice shaking with the effort to hold himself back. "If we do this... the contract is dead. You are mine. I will never, ever let you go. Are you sure?"

He was giving her one last chance to run.

Anissa looked at the man who had saved her, protected her, and given her the power to destroy her enemies. She felt a profound, overwhelming surge of absolute certainty.

She reached up, her fingers tracing the sharp line of his jaw. She pulled his face down and pressed her lips softly against his throat, right over his racing pulse.

"I'm sure," Anissa breathed against his skin.

Harding let out a ragged breath. He crushed his mouth to hers again, and the storm finally broke.

The bright morning sun pierced through the curtains, warming Anissa's face.

She slowly opened her eyes. She blinked, confused. She wasn't in the dark guest room. She was lying in the center of the massive master bed. She was wearing a fresh, oversized white t-shirt that smelled strongly of cedarwood. Harding had cleaned her up and carried her back to their room while she slept.

She turned her head.

Harding was sitting in the velvet armchair by the window, wearing loose

gray sweatpants. He was holding a steaming mug of black coffee. He looked completely relaxed, the harsh tension permanently erased from his shoulders.

He saw her open her eyes. A slow, devastatingly handsome smile spread across his face.

He set the coffee down, walked over to the bed, and leaned over. He pressed a soft, lingering kiss to her forehead.

"Good morning Mrs. Snow," Harding murmured, his voice thick with sleep and satisfaction.

The title wasn't a legal term anymore. It was a brand. It was real.

Anissa's face flushed bright red. She pulled the heavy white duvet up over her nose, hiding her face. Harding laughed, a deep, rumbling sound that vibrated in his chest. He reached out and ruffled her messy hair through the blanket.

"Get up," Harding said softly. "I made breakfast."

Anissa smiled under the covers. She felt incredibly light.

Ten minutes later, she walked into the dining room. Harding had actually cooked eggs, bacon, and fresh toast. She sat down, picking up her fork.

Suddenly, her cell phone, resting on the edge of the glass table, began to vibrate violently.

Anissa glanced at the screen. The name Lorraine Roy flashed brightly.

The warm, fuzzy feeling in Anissa's chest instantly vanished, replaced by a cold block of ice. She picked up the phone and swiped to answer.

"Anissa," Lorraine's voice came through the speaker. It sounded tight, laced with a venomous kind of desperation. "Listen to me. The Roy Family's annual children's charity luncheon is happening today at Le Bernardin. Your father was supposed to be the honorary chairman. He's still in the hospital, and his absence is causing a panic. If you don't show up to represent the family, the foundation's major donors will pull their funding by this afternoon. Hundreds of sick children will lose their medical grants because of our family feud. The press is already sniffing around. You have to come. Just for one meal. No fighting. Just a public display to save the foundation."

Anissa stared blankly at the wall. It was a masterful, disgusting trap. They didn't care about sick children; they were using them as human shields for moral kidnapping. They knew she couldn't risk the PR nightmare of letting a children's hospital wing collapse on her watch as



the new Mrs. Snow. Harold wouldn't be eating rich French food at a Michelin-star restaurant if he actually cared about the charity.

Across the table, Harding saw the shift in her expression. His jaw clenched. His eyes darkened, silently asking if he needed to intervene.

Anissa shook her head slightly at him. She pressed the phone closer to her ear.

"Fine," Anissa said, her voice completely devoid of emotion. "Twelve o'clock. I'll be there."

She hung up the phone. She was going to walk right into their trap, and she was going to burn it to the ground.