

## Chapter 2: The Reception

With the exception of the bride being replaced by Sara, everything else continued to be the same. As Sara vowed to stand by her husband's side forever, the guests couldn't help but feel sympathy for Nora. The man she had been about to marry today was now marrying her own sister. However, beneath the composed facade, Nora carried a hidden secret, shielding her true emotions.

Ignoring the sympathetic glances coming her way, Nora continued to stare straight ahead. When the priest asked if anyone objected to the marriage, the church remained silent, and the wedding vows proceeded. Nora's heart ached, but she masked her pain with determination. Everyone assumed that she had only just learnt of the betrayal. But the truth was...

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Isabella, sensing Nora's turmoil, held her hand in sympathy. She wanted to express her anger towards Sara and Antonio but was held back by her loyalty to her friend. As Nora gently squeezed Isabella's hand, she looked at her with concern, uncertain of Nora's intentions. However, Nora offered a small, enigmatic smile and winked at Isabella, leaving her bewildered and wide-eyed.

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Staring at her friend in astonishment, Isabella wondered if Nora had lost her mind due to the shock. Why would she give such a mysterious gesture at a moment like this? Urgently, Isabella tugged at her friend's hand, seeking an explanation. In response, Nora leaned closer and whispered softly, "There will be a show later. Don't worry."

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The wedding reception hall buzzed with chatter and laughter, the sounds of celebration filling the air. As Sara posed for the wedding portraits, everyone

soon forgot about the big change in the event. To most people, this wedding would be relegated to gossip, scandal and entertainment.

Nora smiled sardonically as she eyed the people who claimed to be her family. After the initial pitiful glance, everyone ignored her and was making merry. Not that she had an objection to that. She had already changed out of her wedding gown to a simple sheath dress and was counting down the minutes until she could leave without being subjected to even more pity. At least with her presence here, these people would not have much to gossip about.

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As she sat wondering if she should eat some of the delicious food or continue her pretence as the heartbroken jilted bride, an older gentleman approached her and sat next to her. "Grandpa William. Why are you not dancing?"

The older man grinned and shook his head, "Silly child. If I try to dance at my age, they will have to carry me out of here on the stretcher! It is a wonder if I can walk all the way from there to here. Now if it were thirty years ago, when I was still in my twenties, all these people would have been left behind in the dust. Now, let's talk about your marriage registration..."

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From the corner of her eye, Nora watched her mother making their way towards them and smiled at Grandpa William as she said, "Grandpa William, if Sara is in love with Antonio then I could not stand in their way..."

Before the old man could say anything, Nora's mother had reached them. Holding her daughter's hand, the woman quickly enfolded her in a hug and asked with concern, "Are you alright? I cannot imagine how difficult this must be for you, my dear. It has taken me a few hours to wrap my head around all this. But don't you worry, everything happens for a good reason?"

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As the older woman patted her daughter's hand, the older man snorted in derision and commented, "Of course, everything happens for a reason Lara. And if that reason suits the results you want then it is all the better, isn't it?"

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Lara threw a disapproving look towards the older man while Nora moved to quickly diffuse the situation as she insisted, "Mom. I am fine. Please do not worry."

But the older man was not so willing to let go. Instead of letting matters rest, he goaded, "Nora, your mother has always had a soft spot for Sara and has spoiled her. Now you are following her footsteps and doing the same thing? Is that good for you?"

Lara scoffed at that and ignoring Nora's attempts to diffuse the situation, glared, "I am not in the mood to listen to you, Uncle William. And what is so wrong with doting on my youngest? It doesn't mean that I do not love or care for my other daughters. Now, if you will excuse me..." As Lara was about to turn around and leave, she stopped for a moment before turning back and saying, "I will of course be calling you to discuss... things."

But Grandpa William was not so happy about letting things go. "Lara, I am not happy with the way all this has turned out. As for your parents' will, I have already made my stance..."

Throwing a sharp glance at Nora who was looking between the two with confusion, Lara spoke, "Uncle, this is not the time or the place for this discussion! I will be calling you and fixing an appointment." Having said her piece, Lara Anderson left without a backward glance.

William Doughby sighed and shook his head as Nora sat down beside him, "Grandpa William... does my mother's hatred for you have something to do with my grandparents will?"

For as long as she could remember, Lara had always been barely civil to the old man. Today was the first time she had mentioned her parent's will and finally, Nora could guess the reason.

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"Yes and No. I watched your mother grow since she was a little child, Nora. And I am well aware of all her flaws. And she doesn't like that. In the eyes of the world and your deceased grandparents, she was the perfect woman and the perfect daughter. But because of her youth, I had discovered her secrets. So she always felt animosity towards me. And then later, when her parents passed on everything to you and your sister and made me the guardian, she

has always felt that I usurped her right. So the will is not the reason for her hatred but it did act like fuel to an already raging fire."

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Nora shared a glance with Grandpa William and sighed. 'Soon, that fire was going to turn into a volcano and erupt when her mother discovered what Nora had done. Sigh

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