

Chapter 3: The Betrayal

A few weeks ago...

Nora walked towards her home in a whirlwind of emotions, unaware of her surroundings. She had just finished finalising everything with the caterer but the woman's passing comment had shaken her somewhat. Even though the woman had only casually pointed out that she was too young and had no worldly knowledge, Nora had been unable to give a suitable reply. How did age matter when it came to loving someone? She and Antonio loved each other. They would learn about the world together.

2

But now doubts started to creep in and she could not help but feel a bit insecure, and she questioned whether they were rushing into this decision too hastily. They'd been together for so long and they could continue to be together in the future as well without the need for giving a specific label to their relationship.

Thankfully, her logical side chimed in, reminding her that she and Antonio had known each other and there was also no need to prove anything to outsiders. Since Antonio was ready to take their relationship to the next level, she had no problem with that.

1

Why should it matter whether they got married now or later? After all, they were going to the same university for their further studies, and being officially wedded wouldn't change that. She was probably feeling all this because she had not been in touch with him since the past week.

Pushing aside her doubts, she dismissed them as wedding jitters and took a calming breath to clear her head. She needed to remind herself of all the good times they'd had. Of how they had cheered each other through the years over small wins and failures.

She smiled softly when she thought of how he had asked her out. He'd been shuffling on his feet, unable to look at her even as he gave her the simple rose

before burying his face into the history book. Maybe she should give him a surprise.

What if she recreated the scene where he had proposed to her? She had the keys to his house. All she needed was the textbook and the rose. And then she would ask him out on a date. As the idea struck her, Nora nodded to herself and happily started to plan everything.

First, she needed to go get the spare key from her house, and then

Soon, Nora stood outside Antonio's house, her heart fluttering with nervousness. As she saw the house's upper floor illuminated, she wondered if she was late and he had already arrived. It was only as she had been making preparations that she realised she only knew Antonio's date of return and not the time.

She wondered if her surprise would be ruined but then grinned. She would simply have to change things up a bit. Inserting the key, she opened the door and slowly sneaked in, excitement running through her veins.

However, she had barely taken a few steps when she heard the sound of someone crying loudly. Nora paused midstep. There was a woman in Antonio's house and she was crying. Had Aunty Kimaya returned with Antonio? But why would she be crying? Antonio's mother was a jovial person who was always calm. Only something drastic would cause a reaction like this. Maybe it was a friend of Antonio's who needed help. After all, Antonio loved to play the Knight for everyone.

However, before she could calm herself, Nora recognised the voice that spoke the next words, "Antonio, please you have to tell her."

Nora froze on the spot. It was Sara's voice. Sara, her little sister was supposed to have gone to her best friend's house for group studies. Her heart pounded in her chest as she stood frozen, listening to the devastating revelation unfolding before her. Her mind struggled to process the truth

Through the thin walls, she heard Sara pleading, "Antonio, you have to tell her. We can't go on like this, hiding our feelings. She deserves to know the truth, and we need to be together. I want to tell the entire world that we are in

love. I want to be by your side rightfully and not like some dirty secret. Please Antonio..."

1

Whatever excuses she had been trying to come up with for Sara's unexpected presence here disappeared. She stilled and waited for Antonio's reply. He would refuse Sara, she knew. He would deny loving her and tell her that it was all her imagination.

But then, "Sara, it's not that simple. Breaking up with Nora will hurt her so much, and I can't bear to see her suffer."

Nora's heart sank even further, realizing that Antonio was not only cheating on her but also conflicted about whether to end their relationship. Her breath caught in her throat as the weight of the situation bore down on her.

"I see. Antonio, I have already told mother everything. She is willing to support us. Only you need to come clear with Nora....Antonio, you can bear to hurt me and watch me suffer, the girl you claim to love but..."

Antonio's silence spoke volumes and in that moment Nora understood. He really did love Sara and not her. and he was hesitating because of her. "Sara, give me some time..."

Nora stepped back and wiped away her tears. She needed to leave this place and get away from the painful reality. All the memories of their time together that she had shared with Antonio seemed to be mocking her now.

Turning on her heels, Nora quickly left the house, the things she had brought for the surprise still clutched tightly in her arms. As the cold air outside hit her face, Nora only felt suffocated. The pain of betrayal, the confusion and heartache made her disoriented.

Aimlessly, she wandered the streets, wondering how she had been so clueless. Hadn't Antonio always said that he loved only her? He'd vowed to always stay by her side and yet, he had let whatever feelings she had for him crumble under the weight of her deceit.

She was so foolish. She should have remembered that no one would love her. After all her own family...

As she would have spiralled under the negative thoughts, her ringing phone broke through her thoughts. Distracted, she pulled out the phone and looked down at the caller...