

LOVIN' YOU CRAZY by Nora LeDuc

EXCERPT

Soft classical music was playing. He'd had her listen to one of his favorite songs during an online get-together. He'd explained opera was his first love, and he wanted to share it with her. She hadn't had the heart to tell him the wailing drove her to wish for earplugs. The whimper of the dog, Picasso, at the other end of the foyer redirected her musings. He paced by an open doorway three yards away. His tail hung between his legs.

"Are you okay?" A prickle of warning shot through her. She whistled to the dog. "Come." Picasso stiffened.

That wasn't good. "Arturo! Please, answer me." She hadn't locked up. Any four-or two-legged beast could enter. Maybe she should leave. As she turned, she spotted the foil-wrapped chocolates. The sweets trailed down the corridor and curved into the room by Picasso.

She smiled. Aha, Arturo was teasing her. Yesterday, he'd joked about a path of rose petals leading her to him. She'd told him she'd rather have candy.

"I get it, Romeo," she said loudly. "Cute." He might not think the nickname was so funny after she flung her accusations at him.

She followed the goodies to the dog and stopped on the threshold of a chamber to her right. The space was poorly lit by a lamp on a huge wooden desktop. The chair was pushed against the bookshelves. Nobody was there.

A sad melody floated to her. "Arturo?" She squinted into the shadows. Where was he?