

Benefits 131

Chapter 131: Found Her...maybe

"It's like chasing a ghost, sir!" The person looked at the two signals on the GPS tracker and was tempted to pull at his hair. The first signal kept moving unpredictably while the second signal remained still. Their teams had already divided into two. One tracked through the forest while the others dived into the lake.

He wanted to tell Demetri Frost that maybe the kidnappers had discovered both the GPS trackers and thus gotten rid of it but the man seemed adamant that his wife was here. How could she be in the middle of the lake, he had no idea. But telling that to the Demon Frost would be a waste of time. As far as he could judge, there was only one way Nora Williams could be in the lake. And that was if she was already dead. However, he dared not say that to that man.

Just then, he heard the sound of large trucks rumbling in and looked at the man with a tough question.

A man who looked much like the Demon Frost himself rushed up and said, "Demon, the submersible and floating pumps are here. We also have the dredgers and the weirs. The engineer is also on the way and the environmental specialist is already checking the site. Once we have his clearance, the lake can be emptied within a couple of hours."

The policeman widened his eyes. Demon Frost was not just efficient but also scary. Since he believed his wife was somehow in the lake, he was going to empty the entire place. The next thing he knew, the man would cut down the forest to track down the other GPS.

Just then he received a communication from his other team, "Sir, we have discovered the first tracker. It was a decoy. They planted it on a small mouse and released it into the wild."

The inspector marveled at the ingenuity of the kidnapped and looked at Demon Frost, "Sir, they've already used a decoy. This too could be a way to waste our time here. It's already been a few hours and we have already been looking around in the blind. They could have long taken her from here."

But the man shook his head and answered, "What about the wall that Sara told us about?"

There is indeed an old wall that opens up but it is simply like a small closet. It's like from the old times when they would make servant quarters. There is no passage there. They must have used the wall to hide Miss Nora there for a while. It is empty now. Also, it has been sprayed with a lot of disinfectants so even if we were to bring sniffer dogs, it would be useless."

Demon frowned and narrowed his eyes, thinking carefully. Nora should have found a way to escape by now and establish contact with him.

As the loud sounds of the Dredgers and the hydraulic pumps echoed in the air, the officer winced and shook his head, "This noise is as loud as one of those thundering fighter jets..."

It was indeed loud, Demon thought passively but as the comment registered in his mind, his eyes widened and he made a call, "I need details to any old underground bunkers that were made in this area."

"I might just allow you to escape!"

Before she could say more, she felt a powerful kick in the small of her back and she fell face down. However, she was prepared to fight Nora. Instead of fighting her in directly, she pulled out something and sprayed it in the air quickly. Nora moved back as her eyes were directly sprayed with pepper and she felt them burn. Thankfully, she had been a bit further away and was only met with a little of the spray...

Enduring the burn, she once again fumbled in the darkness and screamed, "I will not let you get away."

But Lara was not scared. She crawled backwards and laughed, "That threat would work only if you were able to get out of this room. But you will never find a way out. Even if your dear husband searched the earth from end to end, he will not be able to find you!"

Nora squinted her eyes slowly and this time, she withdrew a dagger. Her intent was clear. She was going to kill or maim this person.

"So be it. If he cannot find me alive, he can find me dead. But I won't die alone. I will take you with me."

With a scream, she raised her hand and jumped the woman, her dagger moving towards her with deadly intent. However, her attack was blocked by something even worse. Nora had thought that Lara was acting alone but there was someone else with her. Someone who shot her from the back...

As Nora fell to the floor, her arm hurt and the dagger slipping out of her grasp, she saw the silhouette of a man walking closer to her and Lara. The man threw the gun away and helped her mother. Nora tried to see the face of the man but couldn't.

She tried to stand, even as she bled, the adrenaline in her nerves, making her forget the pain, and once again tried to lunge at Lara and the man however, the man blocked her way and easily kicked her aside, "You are not worthy of touching my woman or my daughter. Die!"

Nora could only watch helplessly as a door on yet another side was opened and the two people left the room.

However, before the man left the room, he smiled harshly and threw something into the room, "I won't be as merciful as Lara and let you live or give you a chance to escape. This bomb will go off as soon as we are out of its range. And then you will be able to pass on quickly. In your next birth, don't think of coming to me Lara."

The doors soon started to close behind him as the two walked away.

Chapter 132: The Blast

"Did you hear about the loud blast at the lake house that we went to last week? Isn't it great that the police discovered the bomb threat on time and had us evacuated?", a young student whispered in the freshman class.

"You bet. I mean I'd been cursing the officers from the moment they pulled me out of the room! Dam* it! I'd been about to go to the final base with my girlfriend and was caught literally with my pants down!"

"Ha! Imagine dying in that position! They saved your life."

As the students teased each other, another one added, "But it's too sad what happened with Nora."

"Hmm. It seems she was the nearest to the bomb when this happened."

"It should have been that Sara who should have been there! I can't believe she was so vicious."

"What did Sara do?" another clueless classmate asked.

"Sara is the one who did everything! Do you remember that news about how Sara had jumped in front of that feral dog to save Nora? It was all fake."

"How can that be fake? Many of the students saw that..."

"No! That is the thing. Sara actually drenched her clothes in vinegar and moth, knowing it would irritate the dog. She then arranged for the dog to be brought here to school. And then she made it a point to stick close to Nora. When the dog smelled her and got agitated and aggressive, Sara was right behind Nora. The dog was running towards Sara. The plan was to not let Nora escape. If Nora had run away then the dog would have directly attacked Sara. But if she threw Nora in its path, then she would have had time to make her escape."

"You mean she was holding her tight not to protect her from the dog but so that she would not run away from the attack?", the horrified student asked.

"Yes. Sara was also responsible for Max's death...And Sara is also the one who locked Nora in the old corridor that night. And then she messaged from Nora's phone to say that she had returned to her room and not to await her. She wanted Nora to suffocate and die or be traumatized. So when the police arrived, they took us from there but Nora was left there. "

"I had no idea that her beauty held such cruelty. Is Nora... even alive?"

A moment of silence passed between the students and then someone spoke quietly, "From what I heard, she is not in a good state... We all know how bombs can disfigure and maim people..."

"Do you mean that she could have become handicapped or ugly?"

"We don't know yet! I mean come on, it's not like she has been coming to the university. And no one knows where she lives."

"Its a pity for her, isn't it?"

"Hmmm... So where is Sara? Is she with the Police?"

"Uh huh. No one knows that too. But she should be punished for life after all the evil she has done."

As the others agreed, the professor entered the class, and the discussion was snuffed out.

"Who are you?" a young girl sat against the couch and looked up at the man who had just come through the door.

The man raised an eyebrow at her and slowly walked towards the girl, going to stand behind her. Demetri slowly caressed her head and started to comb through the long strands, tugging slightly.

"Are you the nurse here?" she asked carefully.

"You know that is not going to work, Nora. No matter how much you wish, you cannot give yourself amnesia."

Nora sighed and closed her eyes, " But I want to Demetri. I want to forget what happened in that underground place. I want to forget what would have happened if you had not understood and rescued me in time..."

Nora thought back to those moments of desperation... She could still hear the man's voice echoing in her head, "I won't be as merciful as Lara and let you live or give you a chance to escape. This bomb will go off as soon as we are out of its range. And then you will be able to pass on quickly. In your next birth, don't think of coming to my Lara."

The desperation that she had felt when the doors had started to close through. The pain when she had scrambled to stop the door from closing. How she had fought against the mechanism with every breath of her body until she had almost been crushed by the push of the heavy mechanism on the door...

Even as she'd fallen to the other side, she'd only turned to look behind her once. The remains of her father had been left there. She'd even had an older sister she had never known about...

Demetri gently tugged at her hair, bringing her back to the present and said, "What is the point of forgetting? What you forget will make you weaker, Nora. Your memory will be your strength."

Nora looked down at bandaged hands. It was true what he said. In that dark bunker, she had almost given up on life and been willing to die when Demetri had dragged her out. In the past, her heart had been set on wanting to live a peaceful life. Naively, she had assumed that once she was away from her grasp, that woman would forget about her and let her live peacefully. But now she knew that this was not possible. In this world, either Lara Anderson could live or she could.

As long as Nora was alive, Lara would not rest peacefully and as long as Lara Anderson was alive, Nora would have no peace.

Demetri, who observed every micro-expression on Nora's face sighed in his heart. He'd wanted to protect her from this fire of vengeance, knowing that it would only burn her from the inside, yet he had failed miserably... Something that he was not happy about...

Chapter 133: The Circle Of Revenge

In the sterile confines of her isolation, Sara's wild eyes darted around the bare room, pupils dilated with paranoia. Her hands shook uncontrollably as she pressed them against her ears, as if trying to block out the imaginary growls of the unseen hound. A phantom scent of vinegar lingered in the air, tormenting her senses.

"I can't shake it off, it's everywhere," she muttered to herself, voice quivering with a disconcerting blend of fear and frustration. The whispery echoes of her words seemed to bounce off the white walls, emphasizing her isolation.

Her movements were erratic within the confined space. Every step carried the weight of an invisible menace, with Sara's shoulders hunched defensively. Demetri observed her through a small observation window, the glass separating them from the unpredictable patient inside.

Sara's gaze fixated on the corners of the room, as if anticipating an imminent threat. She moved with jittery energy, pacing back and forth like a caged animal. The doctors had stripped her environment of anything that could become a weapon, leaving only the stark emptiness that mirrored the desolation within her own mind.

At times, her actions became more frenzied, fingers clawing at the air, a desperate attempt to fend off the unseen assailant. "Stay away! Stay away!" she shrieked; her voice bordered on hysteria that ricocheted off the sterile walls.

The doctors exchanged concerned glances and looked at the man who stood amidst them, "The patient has been like this since she was brought here. If she was acting, she could not have held on for so long. Mr Frost, we think that she genuinely believes that she is being attacked by a dog. We understand that she is a criminal but no court would deem her sane and imprison her. The end result is going to be her winding up here. She is not going to be able to provide you any more information."

As Demetri left the hospital, he ordered, "Spread the news about Sara's insanity. They want to kill my Nora and hide? They will first have to rescue their daughter..."

Ian followed Demetri out of the hospital with his brows raised. He'd understood a lot of things about his brother and Nora's relationship during the rescue and come to one conclusion. Demetri and Nora had not married because they were madly in love with each other. It was some sort of an arrangement. He'd been thinking of questioning Demetri about this but had not had a chance yet. However, seeing his brother now, he had his doubts again...

"Your Nora? Demon, I never expected you to be so possessive and devoted the way you are to Nora. You now look like a man in love."

"Ian, you need to get your eyes tested. I will recommend a good ophthalmologist."

Ian frowned and questioned, "What do you mean? Are you saying that you are not in love?"

Instead of answering the question, Demetri accelerated the car, making Ian feel his heart coming to his throat. The car sped through the empty freeway, a metallic beast devouring the asphalt beneath its wheels. Ian, his knuckles white against the edge of the seat, glanced at Demetri with a mixture of confusion and apprehension.

The tension in the car hung thick as Demetri's eyes glittered with mischief unseen by Ian. Ian's frown deepened, and he questioned Demetri even as his heart thumped against his ribs, "What do you mean? Are you saying that you are not in love with Nora? Is that why you are speeding up and not answering?"

Instead of offering a straightforward answer, Demetri pressed the accelerator, causing the car to surge forward with newfound ferocity. The world outside blurred into streaks of light, and Ian's heartbeat matched the rapid rhythm of the engine.

"Demon, slow down!" Ian's voice betrayed a mix of fear and frustration as he gripped the armrest, his mind racing with thoughts of impending doom. The wind howled against the windows, drowning out any attempts at conversation.

Demetri, however, seemed unfazed by his brother's distress. The corners of his lips curled into a wicked grin as he navigated the car through the lengthy expanse of the freeway.

Ian's imagination ran wild, conjuring images of a tragic end to their escapade and raised his hands in surrender, "Fine fine. I won't question you again!"

Then, as abruptly as it had begun, the acceleration slowed, and the car gradually came to a stop. Ian let out a breath he didn't realize he'd been holding, his shoulders relaxing with relief.

Demetri turned to Ian, a sly smile playing on his lips. "Scared you, didn't I?"

Ian glared at him, still processing the adrenaline-fueled rollercoaster of emotions, "What was that about? Are you insane?"

Demetri's grin widened, and he reached over, giving Ian an affectionate bop on the head. "Nah, just trying to get you to see things more clearly, my dear brother. You really need to get your eyes tested. I've been head over heels for Nora for ages, and you're just catching on now."

Ian looked at Demon in a daze as the man continued to smile. Finally, unable to understand if he was dreaming or not, he pinched himself gently before poking at Demetri, "Have you been possessed by a ghost?"

Demetri shook his head and turned his head to look at Ian seriously, "Ian, your suspicions about my marriage with Nora might be true but there is one thing I want you to always remember in the future. It doesn't matter what I do or say, whether the marriage is real or not. Whether it survives or not. Even if the world believes that I am her biggest enemy. Even if she believes I hate her, she is going to be the only person whom I hold in my heart."

"That little girl wiggled into my heart and made a place for herself when I wasn't looking. And it took the loud thundering blast of that bomb to wake me up to this truth and accept it."

Chapter 134: A Change

Nora looked gently at the man working in the kitchen as he continued to whip up something that smelt delicious. There was something different about Demetri Frost that she could not pin on. And she had no idea what it was. Maybe it was because he had been taking care of her since she was injured or it was the way he seemed almost... relaxed these days... something that she had never seen in the past.

Even though this change wasn't much or anything that made her wary, it continued to bother her in a way that she could not explain. It was like a mystery... A dark mystery that needed to be solved.

Another thing that was getting to her was that the man somehow seemed to be getting more handsome by the day. Obviously, Demetri Frost had already been drop-dead gorgeous, the dark and dangerous type but somehow, he seemed to have picked up the boy next door personality as well. It was disconcerting to say the least.

He'd been working from home these few weeks and she could see that mean personality still there when he would almost scare the people on the video conference and then there was this one, the laid-

back rolled-up sleeves cooking thing. It reminded her of the mangas she had read. The main heroes were Tsundere or Oranyan.

They came across as chilly or harsh at first but were totally marshmallows later. That gave an image of a Demetri looking like a giant marshmallow and she almost giggled. Using both her hands she instead covered her lips. The snort that escaped her however caught the man's attention and he raised an eyebrow, "What is so funny?"

Nora shook her head. There was no way she was going to tell him that she was imagining him as a giant marshmallow. But she needed to say something as he continued to look at her patiently so naturally she blurted out the next (totally inappropriate) thing that came to her brain, "I am wondering how you would look like cooking wearing only an apron."

Demetri paused in the action of cutting and gave her a look that almost scorched her and she realized what she had blurted out. "I did not mean it like that! I..."

"Then what did you mean it like, hmm?"

Putting down the knife, Demetri slowly came around the island as Nora tried to think of something to cover her gaffe. What was this? It would have been better to say he looked like a marshmallow! Stupid brain! And her stupid mouth.

As he closed the distance, his hand was placed gently on the inside of her thigh as he nudged her knees apart. "That is your signature move. It is totally not fair!" Nora complained making Demetri pause and throw her a confused look. Closing her eyes, she covered her mouth with her hands and mumbled, "I need to tape my mouth shut. The filter has fallen off."

A small smile played on his lips as he looked into her eyes, "This is intriguing. What is my signature move?"

Nora opened her eyes a bit and peeked through the lashes, "This... The way you always place your hand there and step between my legs..." she stammered, trying to downplay the intensity of the moment.

He chuckled softly, his fingers tracing a light pattern on her thigh. "Ah, I didn't realize I had a signature move. I must be slipping."

Just as Nora was about to die of embarrassment, Demetri stepped away from her and retreated behind the island, as he resumed cutting his vegetables, "So, you get hot for my 'signature' move and for chefs with only aprons on? Hmm... I guess I could start a TV cooking show if I have to ever resign from Frost Industries "

"Hey! Who said anything about your signature move? I did not say I was hot for it! Also, please, they would never put you on daytime television."

"Why not?", asked Demetri pretending to be angry.

"Brooding and Hot chefs are more suitable for nighttime watching."

"I did not ask about that kitten. Why does my move not make you hot? I do it only with you."

Nora blinked as the atmosphere was charged up again. There was something definitely wrong with Demetri today. He was not one to tease like this. Usually, he'd have already forgotten all the conversation and taken her to the bedroom. But instead, he was playing some kind of push-and-pull game whose rules she had no idea about.

Since he seemed to be in a mood to be playful, she answered, "Well, it is your signature move so it is kind of expected..."

"So my moves are expected, hmm? It seems like I have taught you too much... Then why don't you tell me about this fantasy of your kitten? Maybe I'll entertain you..."

"What fantasy?" Nora quickly pretended ignorance, however, next minute something landed on her face and she could only hold it.

Uh oh... hot guy alert. She clutched the t-shirt in her hand and stared at the man's naked torso, blinking rapidly.

The man actually winked at her as he raised an eyebrow and said mischievously, "Is this move surprising enough?"

Dam* it! She must have definitely landed in some parallel universe when she wasn't looking.

"Hey! I'm standing here shirtless for you and you are not even paying attention? What is this, Nora? my kitten, are you trying to make me feel bad?"

As Demetri turned away, Nora had a wicked idea of her own. Using this chance, as he washed the rice, she carefully slipped off her chair and walked behind him as she slowly wound her arms around his waist, "Uh huh. I was actually wondering how best to taste this beautiful dish that you have presented me with..."

Demetri caught her wrist as it slowly slid upward from his stomach, caressing his abs and instead questioned her, "Are you sure? Your injuries..."

In answer, she lightly scraped her nails over his torso as she muttered, "You know for yourself that all my injuries have healed..."

Chapter 135: The Chat

Nora: I need dirt on Demetri.

Ian Frost read the latest message in the group and almost spit out the coffee he had just sipped, wondering if he was hallucinating.

Seb, the one who lived on the edge, actually dared to question, "What kind of dirt are we talking about?"

Ian quickly closed the chat box and shifted to a private chat, "Are you tired of living? Why would Nora be asking for dirt on Demetri? It must be Demon checking out loyalty."

Seb: Do you really think that Demon is so free that he will do something like this?

Ian: It's been a while since you have interacted with Demon. He's become more dangerous.

Group chat Lucien: "Demon has no dirt, unless you count rumors about him playing for the home team."

Ian and Seb: "..." Lucien is brave...

Nora: Ha! Lucy, you are the best. Those rumors are baseless... I think. Let me go confirm with Demetri if he plays for both teams...

Ian and Seb: Their sister-in-law is brave too.

His fingers moving along swiftly on the screen, Ian messaged: Don't do that! If you want dirt, the best person to ask about is Demetri himself.

Seb: But my dear sister-in-law, why exactly are you looking for dirt on the big brother? Did he offend you? Do tell us.

Gabe: Are you offering to kick his ass if he did?

Seb: Of course not! I will simply sympathize with my dear sister-in-law. I can even arrange for some ice creams or send some blankets for Demetri's couch.

Ian: Focus, people. Nora, does Demetri know you are looking into his past? And have you tried asking him directly?

Silence. Ian almost bit his nails while he waited for a reply. Instead he and the others got a private message from the man himself warning, " If any of you dares to put ideas in my wife's head about my preferences, I will make sure that their next assignment is in a place where there is no light or air."

Ian did not hesitate to be honest to his brother and threw the youngest under the bus without hesitation: Lucy did it!

Nora grinned at the sudden silence in the group and then looked at Demetri. "It is very rude of you to actually read my messages and then threaten your brothers."

"And it is very polite of you to ask for dirt about me, isn't it?" Demetri teased as he drew small circles on her arm as she chatted with his brothers.

"Well, then we will call this even. Next time, I'll ask you directly and you will not read my chats. So, I was thinking something..."

Demetri raised an eyebrow at that. "This sounds dangerous."

"Hey! It is not. Since you were so kind as to fulfil my fantasy and be the naked chef, I wonder if you will entertain me about my other fantasies as well..."

"No." Demetri answered firmly, his tone brooking no argument.

"Hey! You did not even hear my fantasy! How can you be this mean?"

"Fine then. As long as said fantasy does not involve anyone me and your very delightful self, I will not be indulging you."

Nora giggled. He had really guessed accurately that she was going to tease him.

"You are too astute.", she complained.

"Yes. And you are very dangerous." Demetri complimented.

"So, why are you engaging in this shoddy detective work about finding the dirt in my past."

"It is not dirt per se that I am looking for. Mostly what to look out for as we get into the next part of our plan. The biggest threat that I had previously considered was Arabelle but Gabe is taking care of that. So, do you have any other suitors who are going to attack me once I enter the society as your wife."

"Anybody who values their life will not dare to create trouble for you."

Nora giggled and patted Demetri's arm in return," Are you a split personality by any chance. Just now you were all relaxed and lazy and now, I can actually feel your muscles stiffen as you look ready to attack."

Demetri made a deliberate effort to relax and Nora smiled up at him," I'd still like to know."

"Fine. I will ask Assistant Ma to share the file with you."

"You have an entire file? Are you a player Demetri Frost? Dam* it! I should have remembered that still waters run deep! Of course, you look all quiet and calm, the epitome of a gentleman but you are sensational in bed. That cannot be without some practice."

"Are you complimenting me wife?" Demetri teased as he brought her closer, pecking her nose.

"How is being a player a compliment? I am simply berating myself over my bad judgement."

Demetri kissed her nose again and tried to pacify the little cute riled up kitted," Relax babe. There are not too many notches in my bedpost. The file will be of all the people I have been out with, the length and depth of my involvement and those who have been rejected by me. I think you will have to pay more attention to those people."

"Hmm. By the way, how did the rumours about you playing for the other team come into play? Tell me, I am curious."

"It's because I refuse to have a female assistant."

"And why do you not have a female assistant. I mean you do have a secretary."

"It doesn't matter if the assistant is male or female. I did get a few female assistants in the beginning. They were not able to handle my temper. Later I got Ma, and he is very efficient. I don't need to look for anyone else."

"So you were very satisfied with Assistant Ma and that is why..."

Nora grinned and this time, stole a kiss herself as she said, " Poor assistant Ma. How did he not resign! He was attacked from both sides! He had to handle your temper and the rumours."

"And what about the rumours that I had to handle?" Demetri mock- scowled.

"Poor baby! We'll work hard to dispel the rumours. Don't worry I will convince everyone that you are into women.

Chapter 136: Confess

"So, when are you going to confess to her? Do you need suggestions on ways to confess?" Ian continued to pepper Demon with questions about his future plans as soon as he had a chance.

When Demon had previously told him about him falling for his wife, Ian had been so shocked that he had totally forgotten to ask questions. But now that he knew what he knew, his curiosity pushed him to know more. Hence, he'd gathered the courage to badger his brother.

Demon gave a glare to his brother that might have previously shut him up but this time Ian simply shook his head and said, " Your glare has become a bit wuss because of your head-over-heels expression. No point in trying to intimidate me now."

Demon shook his head as he pointed out, " You were never intimidated in the past as well. Don't think I don't know about the shenanigans you got up to behind my back."

"Ha. Of course, you know. You are, after all omnipotent. But do not try to threaten me with my shenanigans and change the topic. When and how are you going to propose to Nora? Is it going to be on the cruise, or do you want to book the entire hotel or something else."

"We are already married, Ian." Demetri helpfully pointed out but was waved away by Ian's enthusiastic response as he said, "All that is secondary. Knowing you, you have never confessed. So, how do you plan to confess. Look, if you have any problem with confessing, me and Seb can help..."

"I am not going to confess, Ian." Demetri finally abandoned the file he was trying to concentrate on and looked up at his brother.

"No? You mean you are not going to confess now? Fine, if you need more time to make preparations..."

"No, I am not going to confess, ever." Demetri sighed.

For the first time Ian looked at his older brother as if the man had no common sense.

"Do you think Nora is some kind of a mind reader and will be able to know that you love her without you saying the words?"

Demon rubbed his forehead and looked at his brother askance, "She does not need to know my feelings. She is too young for all this."

This time, Ian was almost sure his jaw had dropped to the floor, "Let me get this straight, she is not too young to marry, she is not too young to have consummated said marriage but she is too young to have a love confession, is that what you're telling me?"

"Yes. That is exactly what I am telling you, Ian."

Ian continued to sit there and stare at his brother wondering what was wrong with the man. Demon was someone all of them had always looked up to since they were kids but why had they never realized that somewhere along the way, the man had lost his marbles?"

Demon gave a long-winded sigh as his brother's thoughts continued to reflect clearly on his face and decided to explain himself on this rare chance, "Ian, a confession would mean expecting her to return or at least acknowledge my feelings. And that puts a burden on her. She is a strong girl and even though

she seems to be dealing well with the emotional trauma that she has been suffering, she does not need anything more added to her plate."

"Just because I have unintentionally changed the rules of the game does not mean she has to adhere to the rules of the game. We agreed on a few things at the beginning of our marriage, and we are going to continue with that. At the moment, my marriage to her is like a cage, it will keep her imprisoned, but it will also protect her from the dangerous elements outside. However, she needs to fly out someday and experience the world, and in such a situation, my love would act like chains around her wings."

As Demetri said this, Ian could only quieten down. Suddenly, he looked at his brother in a new light. Hadn't Demon done the same thing with all of them? On the one hand, he felt that Demon was indeed right but on the other, he felt that there were some flaws in his thinking.

The marriage need not be a prison for Nora but a safe haven where she could return to safely after every flight. He agreed with Demetri on this point, however, that confessing at this time might be burdensome to Nora, but what about his own burden? There were so many things that Demetri kept to himself always never sharing.

"And what happens when she has taken flight? When her wings are strong enough? What then, Demon? Will you not confess to her even then?"

By then, she might not welcome my love...

Demetri thought these words but never said them, instead looking at Ian and answering, "We'll get to that when the time comes."

"Dam* it, Demon! You are always doing this! Do you always have to be like this? You are right. You will never confess to her and only keep protecting her all your life, because that is who you are. Can't you see, you are doing the same thing for us? We were young when you took over the Frost Industries and protected us but now all of us are right here, by your side, ready to share the burden. But you still insist on keeping us protected. Your love is not a burden and I really hope that Nora will be smart enough to show that to you."

"We know you were hurt after Erasmi died and that is something we cannot change. But we are also your brothers even if we are not Erasmi. Demon, let go a little of that sadness that holds you. Do you

know why all of us accepted Nora so quickly? Because we saw a hint of the old Demetri when you were with her. A bit of that light that we thought was extinguished returned to your eyes and we do not want that to disappear again. I will only say this, when the time is right, tell Nora everything."

Chapter 137: A Hint Of The Past

Ian looked around in concern as he pulled into the parking lot of the medical facility to find Gabe already waiting there. Gabe nodded to him in acknowledgement and as expected the others also pulled in next.

All four brothers looked at each other with a similar degree of concern and trepidation until Gabe broke the silence, "I assume, you three also received the same message from Demetri, telling you to come here."

Ian, Seb and Lucien nodded and continued to scan the surroundings. "Do you think something is wrong with Demetri? Is that why he has summoned us here?" Lucien questioned.

Gabe shook his head, "I looked up this place. It is for people who have a long recovery road ahead of them. It's a care facility with a rehabilitation center for those who had been physically weakened."

"Why do you think he summoned us here?" Ian questioned. He could not help but think to the conversation in Demetri's office when he had told him that they were old enough to stand by his side. The unfathomable way in which Demetri had looked at him, made him feel apprehensive.

Ian's thoughts were spoken by Seb as he said, "This sudden message is making me uneasy. I tried calling Demon on the way, but he didn't pick up. Something serious is afoot."

Just then, a nurse approached them and asked for their names. After confirming their identities, she informed them that Demetri was in a consultation room and would see them shortly. The siblings exchanged a final glance, a mixture of anticipation and anxiety, and followed the nurse down the corridor, bracing themselves for the unknown.

The air in the consultation room felt heavy. The nurse had asked them to wait there. Usually, there was hardly a moment of silence as the brothers gathered but somehow, each kept quiet today, affected maybe by the sterile walls or the feeling of impending sadness that they kept feeling. While each was occupied in his own thoughts, the door to the consultation room swung open.

All four turned in unison towards the door, expecting Demon to come in. Instead, a wheelchair was wheeled in. The men's eyes widened as they saw the frail figure sitting in it. The man in the wheelchair bore a striking resemblance to Demetri, but he looked terribly weakened and fragile. A collective gasp escaped their lips as they took in the sight before them.

The shock on their faces didn't go unnoticed by Demetri, who observed them from the other side of a glass wall. He wanted to gauge their reactions, to see how they would respond to the unexpected sight of the weakened person in the wheelchair. His hands clenched on the side. They wanted him to share the burden. Now they could.

Gabe was the first to overcome his shock. He approached the wheelchair slowly, as if afraid to disturb the fragile figure. Kneeling next to the man, he tentatively called out, "Erasti?"

The man seemed to be lost in his own world, staring blankly in one direction, unresponsive, not even acknowledging the presence of someone he knew. Gabe gently took the man's slightly cold hands into his own, searching for any sign of recognition in Erasti's eyes. The room was filled with a heavy silence as the others watched, their faces a mix of confusion, disbelief, and concern.

Ian, Seb, and Lucien approached cautiously, forming a semi-circle around Gabe and Erasti. The room seemed to shrink as the weight of the moment settled in.

After what felt like an eternity, Gabe's turned to look at the mirror, knowing Demetri stood there. His eyes mirrored the myriad of questions as he looked in that direction.

Demetri, unable to keep the suspense any longer, entered the room. His gaze shifted from one brother to another, measuring their reactions.

"Demon... this..." Seb broke the silence, unable to even form a question.

Ian also looked at the brother he had presumed dead and questioned, "When did you find out about Erasti? How did he reach this state?"

Demetri closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them, "I owe you all an explanation. The accident..."

"The accident in which we all presumed he died. You mean, he has been like this here from the beginning. Why did you not tell us" Ian asked with shock.

But it was Gabe who hit the nail on the head," So, Erasmi is the knife that Grandfather's been holding to your neck all this time, to make you do his bidding?"

"Yes."

"Was it grandfather's idea to declare him dead?"

"To grandfather, Erasmi is already dead. The only reason he had not yet buried him was because he wanted to control me."

"What happened to him?" Gabe asked slowly.

"In the beginning, after the accident, there was a swelling in his brain which affected his motor skills..."

As Demetri explained the entire process of how their lively and strong brother had reached this state, the brothers could only listen in shock. All these years, they'd remained neutral and never openly sided with Demetri but never had they dreamt that this was the battle that he was fighting with the old man. His own twin's life.

The weight of guilt and sorrow hung in the air, intertwining with the unspoken questions that lingered among them. All these years they had moaned about the death of their brother but never questioned the circumstances. They had never questioned about why they had not been brought back for the funeral..."

Gabe consciously tried to move in front of Erasmi's eyes while Ian's hands remained clenched on the side, trying to conceal the hurt he felt. Lucien, stood quietly, absorbing the harsh reality that unfolded before them.

Finally, Gabe looked at Demetri and questioned, "Why did you reveal this now, Demon? All these years, you have kept the truth to yourself, so how come you are willing to trust us now?"

Demon glanced at Ian for a moment before turning back to Gabe, "Because there has been some development in Erasmi's condition now and I've been told that all of you are old enough to share the truth.

Chapter 138: The Picture On The Phone

Gabe, Ian, Seb and Lucien sat silently in the conference room as they tried to figure out what to do next. As if by mutual agreement, all of them had driven off in a daze from the medical facility and driven here. On the one hand, they wanted to storm into their grandfather's home and question the old man about his decision to declare a living man as dead.

However, all of them had seen the vegetative state Erasmi was in. Wouldn't he have been better off dead? Another thing that burned their mind was the most recent fight, Demetri had with their grandfather, to wrestle Erasmi's medical power of attorney from their grandfather. With Demetri's decision to release more public shares, all of them had indeed wondered, if only for a moment, whether Demetri was doing all this to protect his wife. But this...

Lucien cleared his throat and asked the questions that had been hammering at each of them since they made the startling discovery, "Demon said that as of now Erasmi's brain function is perfectly normal. But then, why is he not showing any reactions? Did he not ask us all here to induce a reaction from Erasmi? However, I doubt that Erasmi even recognized us. I mean I understand him not recognizing me but the rest of you..."

It was Gabe who quietly spoke, "But he did have a reaction, Lucy. None of you noticed because it was negligible... Erasmi's fingers clenched thrice. First when I held his hand and he recognized us. I thought I was mistaken in my excitement but he repeated the motion two more times after that as if he wanted to add something. The second time was when Demetri mentioned the car accident. When that happened, I started to observe Erasmi. I could feel the rage in his eyes at the mention of the accident as well as the helplessness. The emotion disappeared when Demetri talked about the other person's death. The third time was when Lucy questioned Demetri if Nora knew about this."

That made Ian frown. Why would Erasmi know Nora? As he thought this through, Ian came to a disturbing and chilling realization. A picture that he had seen in his grandfather's study a little while ago...

Hurriedly, he started to look through his phone's photo gallery, looking for that thing. At that time he'd been in a hurry when the small picture had fallen out of the book in the library. When he had seen Demetri's picture, he had been surprised but because of the lack of time, he had simply clicked the picture and then totally forgotten about it. After all, other than Demetri looking younger, it was a normal picture with Nora...

Finally, he found the picture and stared at it, making sure he was not mistaken. Zooming in, he showed it to others, "I found this picture in Grandfather's study a while ago. Do you think this is Demetri or Erasmi?"

Gabe and Seb both leaned closer to the picture, frowning. Because they had long become used to seeing only Demetri, they had almost forgotten how to differentiate between the two identical twins.

It was Seb who finally spoke, "This is Demetri...I think"

But Gabe shook his head and pointed out, "No. This is Erasmi. Erasmi was right-handed while Demon is left-handed. It is why Demon wears his watch on the... right hand...but this person is wearing a watch on the left. Ian, where did you get this picture? It should be around the time of the accident. Who is in the picture with him?" Since it was clear that someone else was there in the picture, Gabe looked at Ian curiously.

Ian felt his stomach clench. It was indeed Erasmi. With a dreadful feeling in his stomach, Ian moved the picture so that the zoomed-in picture of the woman could be seen. He hoped that they would be able to give a reasonable or logical explanation but

Seb: "F*ck! What the heck is this?"

Gabe: "This... Ian, are you sure this is not photoshopped? It was in grandfather's office after all."

Lucien: "Why is Nora in that picture?"

And just then Lucien came to the same conclusion that the others had come to... The woman in the picture was Erasmi's girlfriend who looked a lot like Nora. The woman's features were sharper and a bit different, but they resembled Nora to a great degree.

It was Seb who tried to think of a way out, " Maybe it is a coincidence..."

Ian shook his head and added, " I don't think so. There are too many coincidences... for me to believe this. Do you think Demetri never met Erasmi's girlfriend? That he would not have noticed the resemblance?"

Gabe nodded, " Demon said that Erasmi has only recently started reacting. The last fight that Demon and Erasmi had before the accident had been about Erasmi's girlfriend. And then the accident happened. In the accident, Erasmi's girlfriend passed away and Erasmi never recovered."

Ian nodded and continued where Gabe left off, " And then after so many years, Demetri suddenly marries a woman who looks almost exactly like Erasmi's dead girlfriend. And no one knows how Demetri even met Nora..."

"You mean Demetri purposely found Nora to use her to cure Erasmi? That sounds even more far-fetched." Seb pointed out.

But it was Lucien who spoke the bitter truth, " However it is more likely. Erasmi has started to respond recently. And that response is most probably because of Nora's resemblance."

Gabe rubbed a hand over his face. He'd wanted to discuss his own plan to handle Arabella so that he would be able to take her from here but instead Demetri had thrown this smoke bomb at them.

"What is Demetri planning to do with the woman who tried to kill Nora? Have they found her?" Gabe questioned Ian.

Ian shook his head and answered, " There is something weird going on over there. Demetri has shut me away from that suddenly and has ordered everyone to not tell any of us anything."

Everything was way too messy for their comfort...

Chapter 139: The Girl In The Picture

"Did you like meeting with everyone, Erasmi? Hmm?"

Demetri silently pushed the wheelchair as he took Erasmi back to his room, chatting on the way, "They were very surprised to see you, weren't they? Don't worry, they did not make much of a noise because of their shock. Once they have recovered, you are going to have very little time to stare ahead blankly at those white walls you seemingly love. Knowing them, Lucy and Seb are going to be here tomorrow, latest by the afternoon."

"I'd like you to try and get rid of them. Lucy is an expert at making pitiful faces, I've been told. He won't let you get rid of him. Gabe is a bit occupied so I think he will be here sometime later in the week. While Ian... he is going to be a bit apprehensive and curious. I'm going to have to handle him delicately. He is like you..."

Inside the room, Demetri moved his brother from the wheelchair to the bed and slowly walked around the room, talking about random things. It was at this moment, that Demetri realized something and paused. From the window's glass, he casually moved to the left and realized that Erasmi's gaze was following his movement. It meant he had improved eye movement control.

Curbing his joy, he moved back to the television and turned it on slowly before turning on something on his phone which he then played on the television.

In the video, Nora turned to stare at the camera as a voice from behind spoke, "I am recording your progress. Say Hi."

Nora smiled at the camera and raised her gloved hands, waving at the camera before she moved to punch and kick the punching bag hanging in front of her. The cameraman moved away from Nora so that he could show her entire body as she trained for self-defence. Her kicks were quick and powerful while her punches were direct and strong.

Demetri had watched the video multiple times before he'd convinced himself that she could take care of herself when she offered herself as bait. But fate had shown him, no matter how prepared you were, some things were out of our control.

This time, he did not look at the video but looked at Erasmi. In fact, he had originally thought to use Nora to invoke a reaction from Erasmi but the recent discoveries had shown him a different way.

"She looks a lot like your Nellie, doesn't she?" Demetri spoke slowly.

He was glad when Erasmi's eyes moved towards him at that, even though it looked as if Erasmi would rather kill him. "I know you blame me for the accident. Until recently, I had blamed myself too. But I've found things..."

"I'll tell you about them, Erasmi. First, let me tell you about my Nora. You are curious. Why does my wife look like your woman? Because she is... your Nellie's younger sister."

"Are you shocked? I was too, when I first saw her. Do you remember Nellie had introduced us to an older gentleman who stood in as her family? Attorney William Doughby? I kept in touch with him all these years. He is the one who introduced me to Nora."

"William does not know that you are alive. When Nellie passed away and you were in this state, that old man helped me take care of Nellie's burial procedures, giving her a resting place. You never knew, did you? Because you never cared to ask me..."

"Grandfather had been on my back about marriage so I asked the old man to find me a wife. Who would have thought he would bring Nora to me? At first I was against the idea of being with her, but then I thought I might bring her to you so that she could pretend to be Nellie. But the girl is very different from Nellie. Even in this state you can recognise the difference, can't you? It is why you are only giving me some movements but not everything?"

"But what if I tell you that Nellie's death and you being in this state are not my fault? Will you believe me then? Or are you going to continue sitting here in this safe world that you have ensconced yourself in?"

Demetri paused and continued to stare at Erasmi who looked back at him. He could see that he had his brother's undivided attention. He almost told Erasmi everything that he had discovered. How Nora's recounting of the events of Nellie's grave had jolted him into looking at the accident so many years ago from a different direction.

All along, he had never thought to question whether everything that had happened had really been an accident or a premeditated plan. But as he realized the depths that Lara Anderson could go to, he had

quietly started investigating. And that had uncovered something unexpected. The accident had indeed been staged.

Lara Anderson had not just desecrated and vandalized her own daughter's grave but also been responsible for putting her daughter there. He could not control the anger that passed through him at the thought that such a woman was even now outside, free in this world. It was because of her, that his brother had been destroyed while Nora had suffered such emotional wounds.

Inhaling deeply, Demetri spoke, "Nellie was murdered, Erasmi. The girl you loved, the one you were willing to die for, the one you have been mourning for years was murdered. What happened that night was not an accident. And the person who is responsible for Nellie's death has not been punished yet. Do you still want to continue like this? Does it not enrage you..."

Before he could say more, Erasmi's already pale face seemed to have turned even more sallow and his eyes rolled back into his head. Quickly, Demetri pressed the bell for the doctor who had been on standby as they attached him to the many machines in the room to monitor him.

Chapter 140: The Annual Ball

As the grand ballroom doors swung open with a hushed anticipation, a ripple of murmurs cascaded through the opulent gathering.

So this was the girl who had taken the most eligible bachelor off the market. Tonight was the annual celebration of the Frost Industries and the only topic had been the young wife of the CEO. Those who had seen the lady swore that she was an immortal fairy who had graced the earth with her presence while those who had not scoffed at the exaggeration while simultaneously looking down at her in their heart. A young girl in university standing next to the most accomplished man in the country?

She could only be a sugar baby or a trophy wife. An accessory that could be changed any time.

The lady had been introduced a couple of months ago at the old Chairman's birthday party and soon disappeared after that. It was said that she was already on her way out. It was because of this that rumours grew about the bad blood between the Foster family and the eldest daughter-in-law.

Already people were waiting for the news of the break up of the couple and the subsequent drama that would take place. After all, pre nuptial or not, the girl would not easily leave the man so easily.

Many whispered that Demetri's marriage had been an effort to save face since his long-time fiancé had been snatched by his own brother. But why the man would marry a little no body with no accomplishments to show was beyond them. There were many other eligible and outstanding ladies in their society. Many who had actually overcome their fear of the man and even thrown themselves at him. Maybe they could not compare to the outstanding Arabelle Winthrop but they could definitely overpower a little trophy.

While others whispered that the man had reached middle age and was trying to re-live his youth through his new and younger wife.

Either way, no one believed Nora Frost would dare show her face at the annual ball for the Frosts. After all, she could already be old news.

However, standing now, at the entrance was Nora, the epitome of grace and sophistication as she stood with Demetri. Her presence and aura matched that of her husband, shocking most of the gossips into silence. Those who believed that the accounts of her beauty were exaggerated could not believe their eyes while those who scoffed at the CEO for falling off the pedestal could only stare.

Nora looked into the sea of people who stood there amid elegant dresses and suits and whispered to her husband, "This is the part I am going to hate the most. Do I look like a goldfish in a bowl. They are all staring at us as if they have never seen a woman."

Demetri sent her an ironic look and whispered, "You were the one who wanted to come out and flaunt so that Lara Anderson would not be able to sit still. I am already willing to go home and grow some plants."

Nora rolled her eyes at him. "While I am eternally thankful for your green thumb, I need you to accompany me in this fish bowl so you can be the big fish and I can cower behind you."

"That won't work, kitten. You do not know how to cower."

"Are you people going to stand there all night feeding people dog food?"

Demon and Nora turned their heads simultaneously as Ian stood there smirking up at them. Nora's smile widened and she quickly walked forward to greet Ian before stepping back to Demetri's side and continuing, "Well, it would serve these people right. If I was not worried that Demetri's reputation would be harmed, I would have done just that. Let him dote on me all evening."

Ian grinned, already imagining his brother being a wife slave and took the opportunity to instigate, "I don't know how mistaken you are about his reputation. I mean, you do know he is called a Demon. And Demons are not very friendly. But if he 'dotes' on you, it will probably be good for his image. Make people think that he is more human."

"Hmm, that is what I am talking about. If everyone sees him as human, all those women who are eyeing me enviously now will throw themselves at him and try to seduce him. Its better if I let them keep a healthy fear of him."

Ian stared at her illogical but somehow sound reasoning and offered, "Don't you trust Demon to not cheat on you?"

Nora shook her head and grinned mischievously, "I totally trust your brother. After all I don't want to be responsible for loss of innocent lives." She then beckoned him close and spoke softly, "And isn't everyone gossiping about how I am too young for him and he is an old man? Well, since I am so young, he can barely keep up with me... How is he going to have the stamina..."

The implied meaning caused Ian's ears to turn red as he excused himself while Demetri shook his head, "It seems you have figured a way to outsmart Ian by embarrassing him. But this won't last long, Soon, he will be onto your game and then he will be the one teasing you mercilessly."

Nora grinned up at Demetri cheekily as she said, "Its his fault. He is a known playboy but he blushes like a schoolboy because he totally does not expect me to make such outrageous remarks! I'll think of something else by the time he figures this out."

Demetri pulled Nora closer, "Hmm. So I am an old man who is not able to keep up with you, hmm? Let's see who has trouble keeping up with whom?"

Nora bit her lip wondering if she had shot herself in the foot and threw him an innocent look, "Of course you are not an old man. Who would dare say such a thing to a man in his prime..."

