

Benefits 161

Chapter 161: A Game

Erasmi Frost quickly put the car into gear, well aware that the move he had just pulled was too dangerous. He could feel the girl's confused gaze on him. They'd barely been together for a few minutes and already she was looking at him quizzically. He had not expected that.

He had been carefully studying Demetri's body language for the past years and was sure that he was able to fool everyone. He'd not dared to test his theory with any of their brothers because they were too close to each other, but he hadn't expected this girl to also get suspicious of him.

He cast another glance at Nora William and hardened his heart. He's already seen pictures of her and even observed her video clips a few times. He'd expected her to look like Nellie but seeing her up close, she could have passed as her twin.

It made his heart ache to see her like this. Nellie William was the woman he loved and hated with every particle of his soul. That should have made it easier for him to carry out his plan. And everything had been going great until he asked her to come out of that room and she followed him so trustingly. Nellie would never have done that. She was always wary of everyone around her.

He shook his head. Now was not the time to think of her. He could feel the suspicion in her gaze, and he needed her cooperation until they were out of here.

"Demetri?" Nora asked questioningly. She did not know why but she felt surer by the minute that this was not Demetri.

The man continued to drive in the opposite direction, ignoring her. Erasmi cleared his throat and gave her a strained smile, knowing that he needed to reassure her, "Its okay, honey. I'll tell you everything soon enough."

Even though the man spoke soothing words, Nora froze. This man could not possibly be Demetri. Her eyes searched for any signs of make-up or mask that someone might have donned to pretend to be Demetri but she could not find any such signs. This was Demetri but he wasn't. For one, Demetri would not have given her fake platitudes, instead, he would either explain the next step in his plan or wouldn't have said anything.

Slowly, her hands inched towards the car's door handle. She'd already decided to risk jumping out of this car, regardless if this man was Demetri or not. However, Erasmi was already sensitive to his surroundings. Nora's silence had already revealed to him that she was doubting him. When he saw her move, he seized his chance.

He swiftly turned towards Nora, his hands a blur as he executed a precise martial art move on her neck. She slumped forward, unconscious, held in place only by the seat belt. Erasmi's pulse raced as he realized he had succeeded in incapacitating her without much struggle.

Soon, the gates of the private airport loomed closer and he knew that once he was out of here, he would be able to reach his destination safely. However, they were barely a few hundred meters away when the open gates were pushed closed and a line of guards blocked his way.

Instead of slowing down, he pressed down on the pedal, going at the people in full throttle.

Suddenly, he heard the ring of a cell phone and glanced around. The little device lay there inconspicuously on Nora's side.

Ignoring the ringing, he watched in satisfaction when the guards jumped out of his way and the gate was re-opened just before he could crash into it. He knew it. Demetri would have realized by now that it was him who had taken Nora and would not do anything to harm him.

Once clear of the gates, even though he could already see cars in pursuit, he was relaxed. Grabbing the cell phone, he smirked as he saw the name saved and answered, "Demetri..."

He could hear Demetri sucking sharply as the man accepted that he had indeed woken up. "Erasmi, brother..."

Erasmi's eyes hardened as he heard the words. "Tell your people to stop pursuing me or your wife will be dead."

"Erasmi, listen to me! I don't know what is going on in your head. But you need to bring Nora back."

"I will bring her back. Once I am ready. I can promise you that on the condition that these people disappear quickly. Come on Demetri, trust your brother and get rid of the people."

He watched in the mirror as the cars chasing him disappeared slowly. However, the phone remained connected and soon, Demetri's voice sounded again from the speaker phone," Erasmi, what are you upto? When did you recover? Why did you hide it from me?"

"You have a lot of questions, little brother. But I don't have any answers to give you today. If I am in the mood some day in the future... maybe I will tell you. Now, I need to disconnect and get rid of this phone so that you wouldn't be able to track me..."

"Erasmi! I won't use the GPS. At least tell me where you are taking Nora. Please do not let harm come to her. She is already in danger."

"My baby brother is concerned about his little wife? Well, from what I have read about you, no one would believe that you were so caring."

"Erasmi..."

"Stop nagging me, Demetri. I've already told you that I will bring her back when I am ready. I don't wish to talk to you anymore."

Having spoken his words, Erasmi picked up the cell phone and threw it out of the window.

With Nora unconscious in the passenger seat, Erasmi continued driving until he reached his destination a few hours later. As he parked the car, he couldn't help but feel a wave of guilt wash over him. Nora was an innocent pawn in this dangerous game and he had no business interfering with the girl.

Opening the car door, he gently scooped her out of the seat and carried her into the small house that he had recently bought for himself. Swiftly, he placed her in the large chair, tying her hands behind her back, before walking out and closing the door behind him and getting back into the car.

Once done, he pulled out his own cell phone and made a call," Mr Frost. Your brothers have taken Sara and her father hostage as per their original plan and Lara Anderson has already been alerted of this. She will soon make a move to negotiate.

"Very good. Then it is time to inform her that we have something she wants. Let her negotiate for Sara and that man with Demetri. She can have Nora to bargain with him."

The man agreed but then couldn't help but question," That would completely ruin Demetri Frost's plan, wouldn't it?"

"Yes. So?"

The man bit his tongue saying nothing and quickly got to work, contacting Lara Anderson while sharing the video feed that Erasmi Frost had forwarded to him of Nora tied to a chair. As per their plan, they would invite Lara to meet them here to help her get her lover and her daughter. That woman was too conniving and had been responsible for so much harm.

As Erasmi waited, he received a confirmation message that the woman had already left for the meeting point that he had arranged. A slow sinister smile crept across his face. Tonight he was going to use Nora to get rid of two preys.

Leisurely, he then typed a message with his location and forwarded it to Demetri," If you want to continue keeping her safe, then bring Sara and the man here."

Soon, Lara Anderson emerged from the shadows as he watched. She was a formidable adversary, and he knew that even now, she would not have come unprepared. Years of vendetta and rage gnawed at him as he watched her approach him carefully.

He smiled when she glimpsed at him in horror and stopped. Of course, he knew why she was horrified. She had come here, expecting to meet someone who hated Demetri and had thus stepped in to help her and put a wrench in his plans. But instead she was confronted with Demetri's face.

Lara stepped back, ready to flee as she spoke, "You are Nora's husband. What is going on?"

First, she received a message from Demetri Frost that she needed to surrender herself if she wanted to save Nora. And then another man contacted her that he could help her get rid of Demetri as well as Nora if she would come to the appointed place. But coming here. Had she walked into a trap?

The man raised his hand and shook his head, "I am someone who has the same face as him. But I am not him. Do not worry. This is not a trap."

Chapter 162: Not A Trap?

"This is not a trap. We have the same goal."

As Lara stood there, unsure of the man with Demetri Frost's face, Erasmi spoke calmly, his tone oozing confidence, "I know you must have many questions, but do you really need the answers? We have a common goal. You want to end Nora and I want to end my enemy. Only then can I get my rightful place back. So...trust me."

Lara Anderson hesitated, her distrust warring with her desperation. Her mind raced as she considered the implications of this unusual alliance with this strange man. She'd already guessed his intentions to replace himself with Demetri once the man was dead.

This also meant that this alliance could be useful in the future as well. Later, she could force this man to cooperate with her by threatening him that she would reveal his real identity.

In the end, the urgency of the situation and the possibility of future gains swayed her and she conceded, "Fine. But you better not be lying to me."

Erasmi nodded, his cold eyes never leaving Lara's. He could see the madness in her eyes and wondered how she was even able to live among normal society for this long. "I'll prove my intentions. Let's go to where Nora is, and then we can work together."

Demetri looked down at the phone in his hand, his happiness warring with intense pain. Never had he imagined that the day he had been waiting for over a decade would come in such a way. Should he be happy that Erasmi had recovered or should he curse the fates for his untimely return? And to think that the moment he had returned, he'd gone straight to Nora. It was what made him even more worried.

Quietly, he drove the car towards the location that had been sent while everyone's voices echoed through the phone's speaker since they had now been updated of the situation and were already gathering information about when Erasmi had recovered to this extent.

Ever since finding his existence, they'd all been visiting him every week and though they were sometimes sent back after being told that he was not in a good condition, they had seen him sitting motionless for a long time as well.

The question here was not just when Erasmi had recovered but why had he hidden everything while continuing to fool them.

"Demon, have you tried calling Erasmi on the number from which you received the location?" Gabe spoke quietly.

"No. He's already disposed off the number. But it doesn't matter. Nora's GPS is showing the same location so she is definitely there."

"Demon, Erasmi's condition is too delicate, and we have no idea of his intentions. Are you sure it is a good idea for you to go there alone without assessing the situation?"

"I don't have a choice, Ian. That is what Erasmi wants."

"I don't think Erasmi will hurt Nora. He is our brother... He won't, would he?"

Lucien's hesitant question was met with silence.

"Demon, we can deal with Erasmi's intentions later. For now, we have to focus on rescuing Nora. Even if you have to let these people escape, do it, Demon. We'll catch them again." Seb spoke quietly, echoing Demetri's thoughts.

"That is the plan for now. I am about to reach. I'll contact you later."

As they ventured deeper into the dense forest, a growing sense of unease washed over Lara. She had agreed to trust this man, but the feeling of uncertainty continued to gnaw at her. Finally, she couldn't bear the silence any longer and broke it with a question.

"How far is Nora from here?" she inquired; her voice tinged with anxiety.

"Not far now. We're almost there," he replied smoothly.

Lara eyed him with suspicion, her instincts warning her that something was amiss. Her gaze narrowed, and she decided to confront the man whose face mirrored her enemy's. "Why do you hate Demetri Frost so much? What has he done to you? And why do you look like him?"

"I don't hate him. I just hope to take him out of the picture. What about you? Why do you hate your daughters so much? You've done everything to kill the elder two while doing the opposite to save your youngest. It cannot have just been money. And what about the man? Sara's father? You are a widow why is he not with you openly?"

Lara looked at the man in alarm. He knew too much about her life. This man was too dangerous. Her brain warned her that instead of planning to help him get rid of Demetri, it would be safer for her to kill him right now, once she had Nora in her grasp.

"Those two girls are the ones responsible for ruining my life! They are sentences of my life imprisonment instead of my flesh and blood! Because of Nellie, I had to marry that man and stay with him. And then just when I found real true love and would have left that odious man, he forced me into having Nora, so that our marriage would be saved! As if I would let him hold me captive! Nora should never have been born! I tried so much to kill her but she is like a fox with a hundred lives! My Sara on the other hand is a result of my love. My lover was my husband's accountant. When my husband discovered our affair, he put him behind bars under false charges. He was only released a few years ago..."

Erasmi listened to her words carefully, his expression inscrutable. He understood the depth of Lara's bitterness, and also how that bitterness had consumed all her rationality.

Soon, she could see a small light glowing in the distance and this time, Erasmi gestured her towards the door," Your gift is there."

As he said that they marched forward, the glow of a moving light in the distance letting them know that a car was heading towards them.

"It seems like you other gifts are also here, Miss Lara. Would you like to see your beloved daughter first or get rid of Nora first."

Chapter 163: A Trap (Edited to correct the layout)

Lara hesitated before making a firm decision. " I want to see that b*tch first! This time I am going to make sure she dies!"

Erasmi gestured for Lara to go ahead and walk into the cabin, as he muttered," A bi*ch will definitely die tonight."

As the door of the cabin closed behind Lara, his mouth kicked up and he leaned against the fence. It was time to see his brother.

Erasmi smiled when he noticed Demetri stop the car with force. The man jumped out of the car before it had even been put into park mode and started to walk towards him forcefully.

When he was only a few feet away, Erasmi spoke sharply," Stop right there, Demetri."

Demetri stopped mid-step and stared at his brother. He had tried everything to bring him back to his side but now that he had finally returned to the world of the living, he had chosen to stand against him.

As he looked into his brother's cold eyes, he did not hesitate before speaking," Erasmi. Are you sure that you are doing the right thing? There are so many things you do not know."

"I know all the important things, brother mine. You need not worry about me. Now let's get to the point. Did you bring those two people?"

"Of course. Erasmi... What are you doing?"

Erasmi's eyes hardened and he threatened, "If you wish to save your dear Nora then I suggest you stop asking questions and do as I say. Pull out those two people and bring them here..."

Demetri looked at his brother scrutinizingly before he too shook his head, "I am not giving them to you until I know for sure that she is safe. Where is Nora, Erasmi? Show me to her and we'll exchange our two captives simultaneously.

"You do not set the conditions, Demetri. I don't care whether the people in the car live or not. The same is true for your Nora. But you do care, right? Whether she lives another day or dies today. It's up to you."

Demetri hardened his heart against his brother's words and pulled Sara out of the car. Dragging the tied and unconscious girl, he threw her at Erasmi's feet before marching back and doing the same for the other man.

"Now, where is Nora."

Erasmi grinned at that and quickly handed Demetri a note, "You'll find her here. Go now, before I change my mind and change her location."

But Demetri made no move to go away and instead stood rooted to the spot, "Nora is here. I know it."

Erasmi paused and turned back, looking at his brother with narrowed eyes. "No, she isn't. The GPS tracker that she was wearing is here, but not her. Go look for her and don't waste time for her. After all, animals can also attack her and she would not be able to defend herself. Go."

Demetri looked down at the handmade map, pointing him westwards and quickly marched in that direction. At this moment, he had no choice but to heed to Erasmi's conditions.

Erasmi opened the door to the cabin carefully, a thick mask covering his mouth and nose as he walked in. His eyes glittered in the dark as he looked down at the woman laying slumped on the floor. Slowly he dragged the unconscious Sara and the woman's lover into the cabin, before opening the windows to let the smell of medicine dissipate.

The idiotic woman really thought that she had gained an ally in him. This was his revenge. Lara Anderson was responsible for everything that he had lost, for everything that he had suffered and she would pay.

And he would be the one to extract payment. No one else. Not even Demetri doing the deed would give him the satisfaction until he watched with his own eyes as life bled out of this woman. Only then would he be able to forget Nellie's lifeless eyes staring at him as they lay there in the debris of their accident?

Slowly, he walked to the kitchen, picking up a gallon of petroleum and started throwing it around the cabin.

As all the surfaces of the cabin were drenched and dripping with petrol, Lara and the two other people started to come around opening their eyes almost at the same time.

Lara was the first to react as she raced to Sara and hugged her tightly, "My daughter! Are you alright? Please forgive me! I should not have entrusted your safety to anyone else!"

Sara hugged back her mother but soon, an offensive smell assaulted her senses. At the same time the other two people also senses something and quickly started to look around.

And that is when Lara met Erasmi's gaze and let out a small horrified scream, realising that everything around them was drenched in petroleum while the man who sat on the chair held a lighter in his hand.

As she looked around in panic, she then realised that she too was soaked in the foul liquid.

"You set out a trap! You lied to me. You said that you wanted to get rid of your enemy."

"Hmm I did say that I wanted to get rid of my enemy. You assumed that Demetri was my enemy. It is you I want to get rid of from this world."

"Why? What have I done to you?"

A dangerous smile filled his face as he said happily, " Ah I forgot to introduce myself. I am Erasmi Frost. I was your older daughter Nellie's lover."

Lara felt her heart tremble in fear at the words.

"No this is not possible. How can it be you?"

" But it is me, Lara Anderson. However, you can consider me your death. I will be the one you will die with tonight. I promise you that."

"No! No! I won't let this happen! I won't die so easily I am telling you." Before anyone could react, Lara stood up and ran toward the door.

Chapter 164: The Trap(2)

Panic-stricken and desperate Lara lunged toward the door of the cabin, her hands trembling as she grasped the doorknob. She twisted it with all her strength even as her fingers struggled to grasp the cold metal, but the door remained firmly shut.

Sara looked at her mother and tried to move herself but she remained tied up and begged with tears welling in her eyes, " Mother save us also! Mother! Please..."

Lara looked back at her daughter and then turned to look at the man seated there. With a quivering voice, she pleaded, " Please don't do this, whoever you are. You don't have to do this! Let us go, and I promise I'll do anything you want. We can talk it out, and I'll make amends for whatever you think I've done. I am not responsible for Nellie's death; I swear I didn't do anything to her. I had nothing to do with it."

Erasmi remained seated, his eyes fixed on Lara, his fingers toying with the lighter. He had no intention of letting her escape, but he was in no hurry to carry out his plan.

Seeing his unrelenting face, Lara continued, her voice growing more desperate by the second, "I confess I tampered with her grave, but it was my dementia, my mental illness, that made me do it. I couldn't control my actions. You have to understand, Erasmi. It was a terrible mistake, and I regret it deeply. I really do! You can even ask my doctors about how I cried when I did that to her grave..."

"I told you that my husband is responsible for all this! He made me like this! Don't punish me for his sins!"

Erasmi leaned back in his chair, pretending to contemplate her words.

Lara, seeing a glimmer of hope in his silence, pressed on, "Erasmi, if you let me go, I promise to make amends. I'll help you find out what really happened to Nellie. I am sure it was an accident. I'll confess to whatever wrongs I've committed and hand myself over to the law, and we can put all of this behind us. I'll even leave Nora alone."

Finally, Erasmi smiled a little and placed the lighter in his hand aside. Lara felt a glimmer of hope as she saw this and quickly knelt on the ground ready to kow tow to him and thank him for his kindness.

But then the man looked at her and his gaze gave her a chill. "Lara, it's not that simple. Nellie's death is a wound that can never fully heal. I've waited a long time for this moment, and I need to hear the truth from your own lips. Confess to your misdeeds, Lara. Confess, and maybe, just maybe, you'll have a chance at redemption. But if you continue to lie, don't blame me."

Seeing that there was no way out, Sara tried to save herself as she sobbed, "Let me go, please. I have no idea who Nellie is. I just wanted to live happily with the man I love. But he too hates me. I simply want to leave this country and never return. I don't want to be burnt alive. Please let me go."

"Of course, I can let you go. Your mother simply needs to confess to her misdeeds and apologize."

Sara turned to her mom and begged, "Please tell him everything mother! Please. Only then can we get out of here..."

Lara continued to sob as she watched her daughter beg her and felt the hatred in her heart grow. It was all because of Nora. She had lost everything because of that man first and then this woman. Nellie had not been as troublesome as this girl."

She would never apologize for everything she had done! She was proud of it! She'd worked hard to rid the world of all these useless people.

But as Erasmi Frost picked up the lighter again, she raised her hands in surrender," Fine! I did everything! I murdered them all! How could I not? My parents loved me all my life, spoiling me incessantly! But then that man came into my life! Suddenly I was not worthy of their love! He is the one who made me pregnant, but I was the one who was worthless! So what if he was suitable to run their business? So what if he increased their business and made them more money? He did not make me happy! And if money could make them happy, then it could make me happy too! So I killed them all, my parents, my husband, Nellie and everyone else!"

"I just want to be happy and loved! What is so wrong with that? I would have had everything once Nora was gone but she was intent on ruining that! See, now I have a husband who loves me and a daughter. All Nora had to do was step aside and I would have the money to live happily with my family."

Erasmi watched as she broke down in tears even while she grinned with madness. This woman had no sense of right or wrong. How would he extract revenge from such a person? He finally pocketed the lighter and stood up, walking toward Lara. He towered over her, his expression unreadable.

Erasmi stared at the woman and spoke in a low, menacing voice, "Lara, I have what I wanted – your confession."

Making a move towards the door, he watched as Lara thought her plea had worked and crawled to the cowardly man on the floor and her daughter.

As he reached the door, however, he was also aware of one thing- this woman would not let Nellie's little sister live.

Seeing her today had been like seeing his Nellie. Of course, he would need to save her... Looking back at the people hugging each other, he turned the doorknob in his hand, opened the door and as he stepped out of the cabin, the lighter clicked and fell out of his hand...

Chapter 165: A Rescue

In the dark cabin, Nora's senses slowly returned to consciousness and she came to the realization that she was tied back. She opened her eyes carefully, trying to listen for any sounds, to judge where she might have been brought this time.

Panic surged through her when she spotted the silhouette of a man rushing toward her, heart pounding, and fear etched across her face wondering if she was going to be killed the moment she opened her eyes.

Relief was the first emotion as she recognized the man, followed by fear as she remembered that it was Demetri's look-alike who had brought her here and fooled her. Her eyelids fluttered, and she recoiled, instinctively frightened.

"Nora," he whispered, his voice trembling with worry. As he knelt beside her, he gently began to shake her awake, his touch tender yet urgent. It made her realize that this was probably Demetri who was here to rescue her. She wanted to ask how he found her so quickly but could not speak a word.

"Shh, it's me," he murmured, his voice quivering with emotion. He moved closer, wrapping his arms around her, and his familiar scent enveloped her. "I'm here, kitten. You're safe now."

As Demetri untied her swiftly, she realized that she had in fact not been tied too tightly just loosely secured to the chair. Nora looked around at the empty cabin in confusion and then outside the window where it was already night...

As questions raced through her mind, she moved to ask Demetri but he beat her to it, "Nora, you are safe here in this place. It belongs to my brother. Ian and the others are going to be here soon. Until then, I need you to stay here. Will you be alright?"

Nora nodded her head shakily, unsure what Demetri was speaking about. Why would someone go to all the trouble of impersonating Demetri, then kidnapping her and ultimately putting her in a Frost brothers' house? And what about Lara, Sara and Arabelle? But before she could ask any of this, Demetri had already run out of the cabin.

Shivering, Nora hugged herself and stared around the empty place. Where was she and who did this cabin belong to? As she moved around carefully, trying to grasp her emotions, she looked out of the window and frowned.

The soft glow of flickering flames in the distance caught her attention. The night sky seemed to glow red and thick plumes of smoke billowed into the night, climbing high into the sky and obscuring everything. Her breath caught as she realized what was happening. There was a huge fire some distance away. Some cabin like the one she was in was probably ablaze.

But what made her tremble was that Demetri had probably run in that direction. A sinking feeling settled in her chest and she knew that she needed to go and check out this situation.

With a surge of determination, Nora sprinted out of the cabin, intent on finding Demetri. However before she could have left the cabin, her way was blocked by the arrival of Ian and Seb.

They exchanged a quick, alarmed glance, their faces etched with worry.

"Nora, are you alright? Where are you running off to? What's happening?" Ian questioned directly.

Gasping for breath, Nora urgently explained, "There's a fire! The cabin in the distance is on fire, and Demetri ran in that direction! We need to find him!"

Ian and Seb exchanged another glance, their expressions filled with dread. Demon had only messaged them this place, ordering them to come and pick Nora and that she was safe. But he himself had run away from here instead of staying to console her? It could mean only one thing. Demetri had gone to Erasmi.

Without wasting a moment, they followed Nora to the scene of the inferno. The night air was filled with the acrid scent of burning wood, and the heat from the blaze was intense. Panic set in as they scanned the area, desperately searching for any sign of Demetri or Erasmi.

And then, their worst fears materialized. A figure engulfed in flames stumbled out of the burning cabin. Nora let out a horrified scream and would have run there blindly when a man appeared in front of her, catching her and shielding her from the gruesome sight.

Tears of relief came to her eyes as she looked into Demetri's eyes, realizing that he was safe.

Just then, another man came to stand next to them and she turned her head, looking into the eyes of the man who had kidnapped her. Her hands clenched and she pointed a finger at him as she said, "You..."

Demetri turned her head, hiding her face in his chest and hugged her close to him, "Hush... You'll be fine, kitten. I'll explain everything."

Feeling faint, she jolted as she came to another realization, "Is that..."

"Don't think, Nora. Just come with me. The fire truck is going to reach here any minute."

As he spoke, they could hear the sirens of the fire engines in the distance and with tacit understanding, Demetri took away Nora.

However, Ian and Seb chose to stay with Erasmi as the man continued to watch the horrid site. The two men each stood beside Erasmi in silent support.

They would never have thought to bring someone to such a gruesome end. But now that the deed was done, they would stand beside Erasmi, come hell or high water.

The flames reflecting in Erasmi's eyes were a testament to the fire he had held in his heart all these years. It was this fire that had held him incapacitated all these years. He had hoped that he would find relief when he watched these people suffer but even as every scream echoed in his ears, his heart felt nothing.

It hung there in a state of indifference and he realized that he should have simply stayed inside. Now that he was alive, he would never be the same. Almost instinctively, he took a step towards the fire... but was stopped by Ian and Seb.

Chapter 166: Wake Up

Four Months Later:

Sun's rays filtered through the curtains as a person tiptoed into the room. Holding a plate of hot steaming pancakes and a cup of hot chocolate, the person looked down at the sleeping bundle with a smile.

Gently, the tray was placed aside and a voice called out, "Time to wake up, sleepyhead."

The dishevelled bundle of blankets stirred, and a hand reached out to pull the blankets over her head, a few muffled words could be heard, probably saying to let her sleep some more.

"Are you not going to come out?"

Another muffled groan.

"I've got you the perfect breakfast."

"Hmffh rii fewe"

"I do not understand your sleep language. Fine. Since you are not coming out, I'll come in."

Tugging at the blankets, Isabella Ruffalo quickly slid into bed with Nora while the latter continued to protest sleepily. Throwing a leg over her girlfriend, Isabelle laughed near her friend's ear, "I'd like to see you try and sleep now!"

Nora, who had been pushed to the edge of the single bed by her roommate, opened one groggy eye, giving Isabella a death glare, "How can you ruin my sleep and still call me a friend!"

Isabelle grinned down at her friend while patting her arm consolingly, "I brought you breakfast in bed. That makes me your girlfriend, sweet chums."

Nora raised her head off the pillow at the mention of breakfast but quickly buried her self back in and groaned, "I don't feel like eating. I want to sleep."

"You cannot miss the most important meal of the day, sweets! Come on wake up! We have things to do!"

"I did things last night, alright! I have nothing to do but sleep! Go away."

"Ohhh! What did you do, sweetie pie? Tell me... Did you sneak in a boy last night because I was not around? You naughty little girl. Come on spill the beans. Who did you do? Was it a famous hunk or a handsome nerd?"

Her sleep flying away by the minute, Nora complained, "Why did I ever think it would be a good idea to room with you? I think you have Noctispectophobia¹. And if you must know, I slept with Spivak."

Isabelle scrunched her face as she heard her words, "There is no word called Nocti...." And that is when the last part of her words registered and she jumped up in bed, "You slept with someone? Who? When? Who is this Spivak? Why did you not introduce him to me? How could you do this? Wake up and tell me everything!"

Nora finally sat up in bed slowly as she glared at her friend. There was no way she would get any sleep now. But because Isabella had woken her up, she deserved to be tortured by her, "You are well acquainted with him."

With that cryptic line, Nora quickly ran towards the washroom, locking Isabella out. However, she could still hear her squealing and grumbling about who Spivak was.

Grinning, she finished her business at a leisurely pace enjoying Isabella's agitation as the girl was possibly tearing a hole in the carpet with her pacing while knocking incessantly on her door.

As she brushed her teeth, another idea for a prank entered her head and she took out the phone. Opening a chat, she quickly typed out, "I slept with Spivak! This is what you get for throwing your wife away into a different country."

After spitting out, she checked her phone for a reply but when the phone remained silent, she made a face at the mirror and casually walked out. Breakfast in bed was all well and good but she could not possibly eat without brushing.

She'd barely stepped out of the room when Isabella stood in front of her with arms crossed and eyes narrowed, "I am holding that breakfast hostage until you tell me who sneaked in last night! How can you do this? How could you cheat on your relationship?"

"You are the one who is always telling me to cheat and get rid of Demetri, Isabella! And why are you so angry? Don't tell me you are worried about Demetri?"

Before Isabella could reply, Nora's phone chimed and she looked down at the phone. Unexpectedly, Demetri had replied, "You can hook up with Baby Rudin next."

Showing the chat to Isabelle, Nora grinned, "See, you do not have to worry about Demetri as well. He knows who I slept with and has even suggested someone for future hookups."

Isabella glanced from the phone's screen to her friends' mischievous face. Narrowing her eyes, she grabbed the phone from her hand and quickly jumped her so that both girls fell on the bed and quickly asked, "You better tell me who these people are! And by cheating I meant me! How could you cheat on me? I trusted you so much! I even left my previous roommate just to be with you. And this is what I get..."

Quickly shoving aside her friend, Nora raced to grab her breakfast while Isabella lay on the bed, staring up at the ceiling, giving the most dramatic poses and sounds ever.

Finally, when Nora had devoured the breakfast, she decided to re-introduce her friend to her sleeping partners.

"Come on. I'll introduce you to my last night's partner and Baby Rudin."

Isabella quickly stood up, ready to march out of the room, but instead of going out, Nora walked to the side table and handed her the two big fat books.

Isabella looked down at the heavy books in her hand and then at her friend in confusion. She read the title of the first book... Calculus by M. Spivak...¹ With a groan and almost guessing what to expect next, she placed down the book and read the others' title... "Principles of Mathematical Analysis" by Walter Rudin²... The book was often referred to as Baby Rudin...

"You slept with calculus yesterday and fooled me. And you tried to fool Demetri but he was onto you." Isabella slowly muttered with the realization, recognizing once again how these two were totally suitable for each other. Then why were they living separately and refused to speak to each other on the phone, only communicating via text messages?

"Our Math exam is in two days, of course, I am sleeping with the textbooks. Now, would you care to tell me why you were so intent on waking me up at the crack of dawn?"

"It's not the crack of dawn. And... we have to plan your birthday party! Your birthday is in three days!"

Nora paused in the middle of sipping her hot chocolate. It was her birthday in three days... and her wedding anniversary in thirty-three days...

Chapter 167: Exam Day

Isabella emerged from the exam hall with a frown on her face, her heart still pounding with the anxiety of the exam. She, too hated mathematics with a vengeance like her best friend and while Nora was smart enough to excel in it after some learning, she was really hopeless.

And yet, Nora would be able to drop the subject next month while she would still be stuck with the subject because she needed to inherit the family business in the future! Why couldn't her brother run the business alone? She had no idea!

As she remained lost in thought, her eyes fell upon someone leaning against a car, a little further away. Even from the distance, her hot guy radar had been activated immediately.

"Ooohh hot guy+ hot car. I can almost taste the romance in my near future." Almost rubbing her hands in anticipation, Isabelle made her way towards the person, ready to introduce herself and make a new friend.

However, she barely reached the person when she paused. This person looked familiar. Had she seen him somewhere? Scowling since she couldn't remember seeing such an eye candy earlier, she stared hard. Maybe he looked familiar because he was dressed like the classic bad boy with those tight-fitting jeans and that jacket. Even though it wasn't the traditional leather jacket, she had to give credit to the man for pulling off that dangerous look.

And that is when it struck her! Dangerous... Dam*! This was Demon Frost in the flesh. Oohh. She thought all those suits made him look sweltering but right now, she could curse the person who invented suits. It was a crime for her brother-in-law to wear anything other than such jeans.

"No wonder that girl would not look anywhere else. She's already bagged this specimen of man..."

With a grin, she decided that it was time for revenge from two days ago. The Lord was kind, presenting her with such an opportunity. Perfect.

With a mischievous glint in her eye and a playful smirk on her lips, Isabella decided to seize the opportunity to tease Demetri and make him feel a little uncomfortable. She sauntered over to him, her stride oozing confidence, and her brown eyes locked onto his.

"Hey there, Mr. Frost" Isabella purred as she approached Demetri, her voice dripping with seductive charm.

Demetri looked up surprised at being recognized. His brows furrowed when he did not recognize the woman, so he simply nodded politely.

Isabella inched closer to the man, invading his personal space with a playful, teasing grin. "You know, I've heard so much about you, Demon Frost. But we've never had the chance to meet until now."

Erasmi Frost raised an eyebrow, clearly understanding the circumstances now. So he was being hit upon by this beauty because he had been mistaken for Demon? But the only girl who would be familiar with Demetri's identity should be Nora's best friend...Erasmi frowned, trying to think of the name something called Isa... Isabella!

Grinning, he answered back, "I've heard about you too, Isabella," he replied,

Isabella's fingers traced a nonchalant path up his arm, her body language inviting him into the playful exchange. "Really? What have you heard, Demetri? Is it all bad?"

Erasmi could almost feel his eyebrows disappearing into his head! A lot of things had changed over the past decade but this was the first time he had been approached by a woman so directly. And the fact that the said woman happened to be assuming he was not him but her best friends' husband? Man... This was all kinds of screwed.

Erasmi narrowed his eyes. Since he was here to officially meet Nora, he might as well expose her friend's true colours.

"I hadn't heard anything bad... but if you want to tell me, I am all ears." Erasmi leaned forward, bringing his ear close to her lips, almost shocking Isabella.

This was not what she had expected! Demetri Frost should have shrugged her off! Or he should have done what he was famous for, frozen her off? But this shameless man was actually flirting right back with her, despite knowing that she was Nora's best friend! Dam* it! She should have known that Nora was not a good judge of character and shouldn't have trusted her judgement about Demetri being a decent man! The man was a decent ba*tard!

Since she had been given the opportunity, she would expose this man's true colours. Her poor Nora was going to be so heartbroken! And that too, just before her birthday! Scu*bag! In her heart, she muttered a few curses against the man which may or may not have included him stepping on a banana peel and breaking his legs.

But outwardly, she kept her coy smile and leaned closer to his ear. The man had beautiful ears! He should be fed to the dogs!

Surreptitiously, Isabelle turned on her phone to the recording mode and continued, and her voice turned sultrier as she spoke, "You know, Demetri, I've always found you... intriguing."

Erasmi couldn't help but feel a growing sense of amusement at the situation. He had been mistaken for his twin brother many times, but this encounter with Isabella was certainly one for the books.

"Is that so?" he replied, his voice dropping to a low, suggestive tone. "And what is it about me that you find so intriguing, Isabella?"

Isabella's heart pounded as she felt herself drawn further into the playful dance of words and desire. She bit her lip, her eyes locked onto his, and whispered, "Well, it's your confidence, your mystery, and... your undeniable charm."

Isabella's eyes sparkled with mischief as she shot back, "Flattery will get you everywhere, Demetri. But what else do you have up your sleeve?"

Erasmi chuckled softly, his eyes twinkling with amusement. "You're quite the charmer yourself, Isabella. But I must admit, I'm flattered by your compliments."

Isabella felt her heart flutter and she almost forgot that she was supposed to expose this scumbag! She could feel the chemistry sizzling in the air and was ashamed of herself. How could she feel attracted to someone like that. Angry, she pulled away from the man and glared at him.

Just then a voice spoke up, "What is going on?"

Erasmi leaned in even closer, his lips almost brushing against Isabella's ear. "Well, Isabella, I can't reveal all my secrets just yet. Some mysteries are best left unsolved."

Chapter 168: The Misunderstanding

The glint of amusement disappeared from Erasmi's face as he heard the voice and he straightened. As he was about to paste on a cordial smile and greet Nora, however, he was rooted to the spot by her vision. This... How was that possible? He needed to talk to Demetri about this...

Assuming that the man was caught red-handed and was hence tongue-tied, Isabella scoffed and spoke, "Nora, sweetie, see what your husband is up to? Here you are being all loyal to him and he is flirting incessantly! Even knowing I am your friend; he did not stop his shamelessness!"

Getting over his shock at seeing Nora, Erasmi realized what he was being accused of and quickly raised his hands in surrender. "Miss Isabella, you're mistaken. I wasn't flirting with you. That was your husband's brother."

Isa's eyebrows shot up in disbelief. She glanced at Demetri, then at the phone in her hand that was still recording and shook her head in disbelief. "Your twin? Seriously, Demetri? What kind of fools do you think we are? I only came onto you to make you uncomfortable and tease you to exact my revenge on Nora! But you actually started flirting with me! And that too so shamelessly! And now you have the audacity to say that your twin was flirting with me? Where did this brother of yours appear from?"

Erasmi shook his head as Isabella almost shoved the phone at his nose and stepped back. He was very sure that the girl would have whacked him on the face with that phone if Nora had not started laughing at that moment and Isabelle had not turned to see her friend worriedly.

"Oh sweetheart. You must be so hurt to have seen this. I am so sorry. If I had known that this man was such a flirt, I never would have thought of this prank..."

Nora shook her head and glanced at the gob-smacked man, shaking her head. She couldn't blame Isabella for this. It was difficult even for her to tell the difference. The last time she had seen him was when he had kidnapped her. And then he had been in the hospital while Demetri had unceremoniously carted her off to this country.

She too would have thought that he was Demetri if Erasmi had not messaged her in advance, inviting her to share a meal with him so that he could officially introduce himself. Despite knowing that Demetri was not here, her heart had fluttered for a moment when she had seen Erasmi and thought it was Demetri.

Seeing that her silence was agitating Isabella even more, Nora finally sighed and spoke, "Bella! It is you who got pranked. He is right. My husband's brother was flirting with you just now."

Of course, Isabelle did not understand what was going on and her scowl deepened as she looked at Nora worriedly, "Sweetheart, don't fool yourself for such a man."

Finally, Nora held Isabella's shoulders and looked into her eye, "Bella. Look at me. Do I look sad to you? This man is not Demetri. He is Erasmi. Demetri's twin brother! He is older than Demetri and less handsome. And as you can see more of a flirt."

Erasmi, who had already been judged unfairly, straightened and protested, " Hey! Get your eyes checked. I am much more handsome than Demon and the word you are looking for is charming not 'flirt'."

Nora grinned, " Try telling that to Seb and Ian who keep complaining how there is a shortage of girls now for them to flirt with because you have single-handedly taken over that department."

Erasmi felt himself blush when he realized those two had been blabbing and complaining about him and tried to defend himself, " It's just that most girls have discovered their shallowness and hence they find themselves without dates."

Isabella finally realized that she had been made a fool of and scowled but soon, her sense of humour got the better of her and laughed heartily. This was one way of shooting oneself in the foot! Her laughter distracted Erasmi and he turned to look at her and quickly apologized, " Please forgive me. Just like you thought that I was Demetri and wanted to expose me, I thought that you were a fake friend to Nora and wished to protect her. I hope you won't hold it against me."

The man smiled quickly as he looked at her with dimples flashing in his cheeks. This man was totally lethal. Quickly she nodded first and then shook her head, " Well, I guess I learned my lesson. No more messing with strangers. You never know when they might have an identical twin ready to stir things up."

Erasmi and Isabella looked at each other and chuckled again as they once again realized the comedic situation. Nora looked on at the scene with raised eyebrows and was about to interrupt when a person called her over, " Nora. Come here soon. Professor Mason is getting hyper now."

As the three people stared, Nora quickly spoke to Erasmi, " I thought we were supposed to meet in the evening. I just have to go to this professor soon or her temper will go through the roof. Isabella can entertain you until then. I hope that is okay with you. Bella baby! Take care of Erasmi. I'll see you both later!"

Nora hurried away, but Erasmi quickly snapped a photograph of Nora and sent it to his brother, " DEMETRI FROST! YOUR WIFE IS PREGNANT AND YOU HAVE LEFT HER TO DEAL WITH IT ALONE?"

As Erasmi sent the message he finally calmed his trembling hands, his shock over Nora's appearance finally settling. He could barely believe that Demetri would be so irresponsible. Could it be that Nora had not even told Demetri that she was pregnant?

Yes, that could be it. But then should he delete the picture he had sent? After all, maybe Nora was waiting to tell Demetri. But the girl looked ready to pop! Demetri had sent her here about six months ago so she had to be pregnant then...unless... his brother had been gifted with a green hat

Chapter 169: A Shock

While Erasmi waited for Demon to reply, Isabella was worried about spending time with the handsome hunk whom she had almost beaten up for being a cheating sc*mbag. She could still feel herself flushing with embarrassment. Well, she would make up to the man by entertaining him for a while.

She cleared her throat and began, "Alright, Erasmi, let's get started with the tour. First, I'll show you our beautiful library. It's a great place to study and spend your free time."

Erasmi, who had been jolted by Isabella, widened his eyes as he was shown around the campus. She sounded like a guide trying to tell him to get an admission into this school. Heck, he could recommend the University to make her the Uni's Public relations officer.

As Isabella droned on, about the history of the library, Erasmi kept glancing at his phone waiting for Demetri. Thankfully, the virtues of the library lesson came to an end...only to be followed by a lesson on the importance of food as the girl started dragging him around towards the cafeteria.

Erasmi looked down at his wrist which was still in Isabella's grasp and wondered if he should remind her to let go of his hand. She seemed to have forgotten she was holding it.

And when Demetri had yet to see his message, Erasmi wondered if he should gather more information about Nora's state.

Stopping abruptly, he tugged his wrist out of Isabella's grasp and questioned her, "How has Nora been doing these days? Has she been alright? Is she in too much stress?"

Isabella frowned at the sudden question and looked at the man consideringly. Since they were already in the canteen, she gestured for him to sit and sat on the opposite chair. She knew that Nora already

shared a good rapport with her brothers-in-law. She'd seen her grinning and laughing at random times since they kept exchanging memes.

And that made Isabella happy. Even though she did not understand why that Demetri Frost had suddenly transferred Nora here, she was happy with what the man had provided her friend with.

But she had never heard from Nora that Demetri had a twin. And the man was never in the news like the other Frost Brothers. So she wasn't sure what to make of him. She knew that Demetri's grandfather did not like Nora. What is Erasmi Frost was also like that. He hadn't been exactly warm when he met Nora just now. And he'd even come earlier than the anticipated time. Did he come to find ways to break up Nora and Demetri? Why else would he ask her such questions?

Time to put on an act! Closing her eyes, she sent a silent thought towards Nora, "The things I do for you my sweetie...." and then opened her eyes, revealing all the worry she had in them... Taking a hold of his hand on the table, she spoke, "I am so thankful you asked. Nora has... not been well. She is under too much stress. And she constantly misses her husband. She even calls for him in her sleep. She doesn't eat well and she doesn't sleep well. You saw her just now and you must think that she is looking normal. But did you see that she had make-up on? She never used to in the past."

"All that make-up is to conceal her sallow pallor and the dark circles under her eyes. Nora is only putting on a brave front for Demetri. I am telling you, she is just counting the days until she can go back to him and be with him!"

Erasmi heard everything and felt saddened for Nora. He did not understand why Demetri had to insist that she stay away from him. Demetri was more than capable of protecting her without having to separate himself from his lover. She was a young girl but Demetri himself said that she was very smart. She would have been able to handle everything...

While Erasmi was cursing his brother and sympathizing with his depressed sister-in-law, the girl was having the time of her life as she stood on the stage and bowed while the audience loudly cheered for her.

She was the lead protagonist for today's play about the struggles of being a teenage clueless expectant mother and made the audience cry their eyes out. She considered that a total success. Bowing with the entire team once again, she waited for the curtains to close before making her way to the locker room.

On her way, she was stopped by Professor Mason, who commended her, "You really are a natural, Nora! I am so proud of you. All the judges are very impressed. And I like your dedication. You actually donned the entire costume before the exam and that helped in delivering the play on time! Keep up the good work, Nora."

Nora entered the washroom with an even wider grin, basking in the praise and the extra credits that she had bagged. Stopping short, she stared at her bulging belly in the mirror. Standing sideways, she placed her hand on her stomach and cocked her head, "So this is what she would look like if she were pregnant?"

Shaking her head at her own whimsy, she carefully undid the pregnancy belt and pulled it downward, letting her stretchy dress back in place to show her slim trim self. Glancing in the mirror one last time, she decided that her heavy make-up could stay in place for now. Erasmi had already been with Isabella for almost two hours now. That guy might have reached his limit.

She checked Isabella's text, letting her know they were in the uni's cafeteria and quickly raced there. She'd already made a booking for a private dinner at a local fine dining restaurant.

Chapter 170: Waiting

Gabe reclined in the large armchair with his eyes closed. His bag had already been placed on the side and a glass of wine sat on the small tray table next to him. Even though the man had seemingly lost weight, at the moment he exuded an air of peace as he waited for the others to settle.

Ian on the other hand, sat opposite Gabe with a travel magazine in his hand. Him and Gabe had been the first to reach and so they had no option but to wait for the younger and noisier ones. Since he had taken an official vacation, he was dressed casually in jeans and a comfortable T-shirt and poring over the magazine. Tomorrow, they were going to surprise Nora for her birthday but later, he would escape and explore the place.

Glancing at his watch, Ian wondered if he needed to call Lucy and Seb to remind them, when the two devils entered, arguing with each other. While Seb complained that Lucy was using this as an excuse, Lucien simply shrugged everything and simply threw himself in the first available seat with a thump, his carry-all bag lying at his feet.

Seb snorted and kicked his brother's leg, moving him as he handed his bag to the wait staff. "You're pi**ed off because I spoke the truth, Lucy. Get over it."

"You speaking the truth? That will happen when pigs fly! Actually, you might not be able to be hones even if pigs do such a feat!" Lucien snapped back, thoroughly irritated.

Gabe, still keeping his eyes closed, chimed in without even looking. "Oh, you two, already at it again? We haven't even left the ground, and the entertainment has started."

Ian on the other hand, cooperatively put down his travel magazine and gestured for the staff to bring them some popcorn. What did one need when travelling? Food and entertainment. The entertainment had arrived. So the food should too.

Unfortunately, his two brothers were not glaring at each other and not speaking a word. Where was the fun in that? He needed action... "Care to tell me what you two are fighting about? Maybe I can help resolve the issue."

Lucien turned his glare on Ian for a moment, snorted in derision and turned away to look out of the window at other planes. The day Ian would solve an argument instead of adding fuel to it would also come after pigs became experts at flying.

Seb, on the other hand, had no problem laying out the cards on the table," Well, I just gave him a simple suggestion that could solve all our current troubles in a jiffy. We've been dealing with the Winthropes' and Grandpa's tantrums for months now. While we are not going exactly bankrupt, our liquid funds have indeed suffered great damages. So, I said that one of us needs to get into a traditional business marriage with an heiress and get some funds."

Gabe opened one eye at that. Of course, he knew very well that while Arabelle's parents had been trying to create trouble, they had not suffered that greatly to sacrifice themselves on the marriage block.

But Ian grinned and did something true to his nature, and questioned," So you suggested Lucien marry an heiress?"

"Of course! He is the only one among us who is innocent, sweet and kind. Demon is already off the market, Gabe is pining away and you and me have too bad a reputation for any parent to hand their daughter to us!"

"So you decided to sell me to some heiress? Well, think about this, it is more weird to think that I am innocent when I am in my mid twenties." Lucien pointed out with a scowl.

This time Gabe's lips lifted in a smile and he inserted smoothly, " Lucien is right, you know."

All three brothers looked at Gabe in shock. Lucien felt touched that someone was finally standing up for him on his side while Ian and Seb looked thoroughly betrayed. Their only mission in life was to torture their younger brother after all.

But then Gabe continued, " You cannot sell Lucy to any young mistress. You need to ask him if he wants to be sold to an young and beautiful heiress or a handsome and rich young master..."

Ian and Seb broke into loud laughter while Lucien tried to kick his brother... rather unsuccessfully. The staff that stood at the back, waiting for orders to fly, looked at each other in wonder. They had heard of the formidable Frost brothers, each as cold as their name and an expert in their field. But these people sounded more like college-going bantering students than exclaimed businessmen...

After a while, Lucien was finally able to get his back when he grinned and showed Nora's message to Ian and Seb, " Your plans to find girlfriends here might be ruined. Erasmi has already charmed half the girls on campus here."

Both the men quickly took out their phones to protest this while exclaiming that they were not coming there to look for girls but to celebrate their favourite sister-in-law's twentieth birthday!

"I am your only sister-in-law, much to my disappointment. You guys need to look for women whose lives you can ruin..."

Lucien crossed his arms with satisfaction as he read Nora's messages roasting his brothers. She was the one who could handle him.

While everyone was engrossed in their phone, Gabe could not help but frown and look at his watch. They should have closed the doors by now and be ready to fly?

He turned to the steward to question the man about the cause of their delay when suddenly Demetri stood there at the entrance.

This caused all the brothers to be shocked as Demetri had been adamant about not going to meet Nora. They's tried to do everything to convince him until he had them thrown out of his office. And yet here he was now, looking like a Halloween ghost.

Before Ian could gloat that he had been right about their brother, he caught a look at the man's white face. Was something wrong? However, Demetri simply ignored them all, barked at the people to, " Fly." and marched past them to the private room."