

## Benefits 171

### Chapter 171: A Shocker

Gabe and Ian walked stared at the door, which had just closed behind Demetri and exchanged a glance. The man seemed whiter than the white paint of their cars. Was something up? They would soon find out...What the four brothers did not know was that they had missed the most memorable scene of their lives. If only they had been in the office an hour ago... they may have had the chance...to witness...

An hour ago:

Demetri rubbed the bridge of his nose as he looked down at the message that Erasmi had sent. On the one hand, he totally wanted to ignore the message, knowing his brother must have sent him some other totally Un-hilarious meme. Ever since rejoining the world, Erasmi seemed to have made it his life's mission to scroll through every meme ever created.

And he seemed to think it was his moral duty to share the thing with him. However, he also knew that Erasmi was to meet Nora today. And he was yearning to see the girl. Only he knew how difficult each day was for him. How he had to stop himself from walking out of the office and flying straight to country N to meet with Nora.

However, when he opened the message and read the Bold capital words, his eyes widened. Was this some kind of a sick joke? Quickly, he tapped on the screen to download the picture and saw Nora, looking wonderful but also wonderfully pregnant. Her hand was on her small bulging stomach as she walked away...Just the way women instinctively walked when they were pregnant.

In an instant, Demetri's typical stoic demeanour shattered into a thousand dramatic pieces. He let out a gasp so exaggerated that even the office plants seemed to lean in for a better view. His chair toppled backwards as he leapt to his feet, sending papers flying in every direction.

"Woah!" Demetri exclaimed, his arms flailing like a windmill in a storm. "This is... this is... absolutely mind-blowing!" His voice reached an octave he didn't know he could achieve, causing the office windows to rattle. "Nora, pregnant? I can't even! I mean, I can, but how is that...how is that possible? No no, that is not the point. Of course, it is possible. Condoms are not 100 per cent effective. Useless people... those rubber producers.. But that is not the point...the point is what do I do next?"

"I need to call her. No, she should know by now that Erasmi would have told him. She will definitely not answer. Then... he needs to go there himself.

Grabbing his phone and a box from his desk, Demetri walked out of the office like a mad man, barking orders in random directions.

The employees all stared at their usually composed CEO running out of the office with his clothes disheveled and hair sticking in all directions, they could not help but wonder if there was a catastrophe taking place somewhere in the world...

Back To The Present Moment:

Demetri lay on the bed, staring up at the low ceiling of the aircraft as many questions pondered through his head. Why had Nora not told him about this. Yes, he'd told her not to call him unless it was urgent and he had not heard her voice for more than 183 days but being pregnant would definitely come under the banner of 'something important'!

Was she angry that he had carted her off to country N without any explanation? Or that he'd forbidden her to return to the country or to call him? But it had been necessary. Especially in light of what he had uncovered after Lara's death.

It was his fault. In his bid to keep her safe and let her have some peace after Lara Anderson's death, he had thought that sending her to her best friend would be the best option. But instead, he had abandoned her when he needed her the most.

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Outside the small cabin, Ian, Gabe, Seb and Lucien were sitting quietly, each enjoying their vacation time while occasionally throwing frowning glances at the closed door.

First, the man had refused to go and wish his wife a happy birthday, considering the fact that they would be celebrating Nora's birthday together for the first time. Then, when they had said that they would go, he had even personally arranged a small vacation for all of them! And now, he'd jumped into the airplane and seemingly hijacked it!

"Do you think he is angry that we took him up on the offer to go and celebrate Nora's birthday?" Lucien asked hesitantly.

Ian nodded his head in agreement, "It is possible. After all that man has been off his rocker since Nora went away."

Gabe continued to keep his eyes closed, and sighed, "Even if he is not playing with a full deck, there is nothing he can do. The flight has already taken off. If he wants to get rid of us now, he will have to throw us out of the plane."

"You do realize that he is Demon and quite capable of doing something like that! Don't speak nonsense lest he get ideas!" Seb cut in with a sigh. "He has been torturing everyone at Frost Industries by being over productive since Nora is gone. Maybe he is finally crashing. I tell you, if this trip means Demon returning to his old self, I would be really glad."

Lucien shuddered at the words and added his two-pence, "A year ago, if someone had told me that I would wish for Demon to remain the same, I would have laughed in their face. But now, I totally agree with you, for a change."

"I have just one question though..." Gabe once again added lazily.

"What?"

"Did anyone see Demon bring in any bag? He is going to be stealing our clothes, I think, unless he plans to go to the birthday party in that shirt. And he is not even carrying a gift for his wife..."

Chapter 172: Uh Oh! Too Late

As Nora walked towards them, Erasmi was thoroughly prepared to question her about her decisions and life choices. What he had not expected was that the girl would return in the same clothing but with no baby bulge...

"Did she have an abortion? was the first question that entered his mind. But he quickly discarded that thought. Why would she do something like that?

As he kept staring at her mid-waist while she walked down the corridor towards them, Isabella could not help but frown. She clicked her fingers in front of his eyes and hissed, "Are you staring at her br\*asts? How can you be such a jerk? She is like your sister..."

Erasmi, who was already confused, coughed sharply at the accusation and turned his head to glare at the woman by his side, "Has anyone told you that you need to have a filter in your mouth and not just speak anything that comes into that empty head of yours?"

"I speak what I see! You were staring at her." Isabella protested rudely.

"I was staring because her appearance has changed from when I saw her a couple of hour ago."

"Changed? Changed how?" Isabella frowned, not noticing anything different about her friend.

Irritated, Erasmi hissed out the truth, "She is not pregnant anymore." as he showed her the picture on his phone from the chat that he had sent to his brother.

Isabella couldn't contain her laughter as Erasmi showed her the picture he had sent to his brother. He'd even yelled some words at the man. Before she could read the message, Erasmi quickly tucked in his phone and with irritation muttered, "Tell me the truth, quickly."

"Why would you think she's pregnant?" Isabella asked, still struggling to stifle her giggles. "Maybe she just ate a lot and had put on weight? Why did you not think that?"

Erasmi frowned. Who cared about their pot belly like that? But she was clearly not pregnant now...

Sheepishly, he put his phone away as Nora reached their table. Erasmi looked at her face, trying his best to not look below her neck as he stood up and greeted her with a peck on the cheek.

Since Nora was already used to the brothers' quick warm greetings she simply hugged Erasmi back and stepped away, not noticing anything. Isabella, however had noticed Erasmi's concentrated effort to not look below and could only laugh harder, clutching her stomach.

Erasmi shot Isabella a glare while Nora looked at her friend in confusion. Did Isabella drink after the exam or take something? She was laughing uncontrollably while her face was flushed.

She moved her hand to check her forehead for fever but the girl simply leaned back and pointed at Erasmi, "Check him! He thought you were pregnant..."

Nora's expression shifted from confusion to surprise, her eyes widening. "Pregnant?" She looked down at her flat stomach, clearly puzzled and then as Erasmi looked away in embarrassment, the confusion cleared, and she laughed out loud. Nodding she patted his hand and spoke, "I was indeed pregnant in the morning! I am so sorry! I've been practising being a natural with the baby bump, so I did not even notice I was still wearing the bump when I met you in the morning..."

That was when Erasmi realized that Nora had been ready for a play and her pregnancy was part of her costume... Uh ohh.

He would need to contact Demon to clarify the mistake. Even as he took out his phone to call him, he did feel a twinge of regret, he'd already been thinking of baby names for his niece or nephew in the back of his mind...

Clearing his throat, he prepared to apologize to Nora first but the girl already anticipated and chuckling, waved away his apology.

But Isabella did not wish to stop the fun. Erasmi Frost looked like a cute big bun when he was embarrassed. She even wanted to pull his red cheeks. So of course, she had to tease him more, "Do you want to bet that Demetri is going to be here tomorrow?"

Nora frowned. 'Why would he be here? He's already confirmed that only Lucy, Seb, Ian and Gabe are coming and Erasmi is already here.'

But then Erasmi grimaced. He expected the man would have already teleported here if he could. Demon had already read the message but not replied. It was clear that meant he would give his reply in person.

And then Nora realized. With a sinking feeling, she shook her head and looked at the man with hopeful eyes, "Tell me, you didn't..."

"I did." Erasmi confessed.

Nora shook her head and lightly banged her forehead against the table, "This is going to be so embarrassing..."

"It is going to be entertaining! How can you say that? I mean this is your golden chance to prank him!" Isabella offered but Nora shook her head, "There's no need to cause him unnecessary stress. I'll call him and tell him that it was a misunderstanding."

As she dialled Demetri's number, however, Erasmi spoke up, "I'm already trying for the last five minutes. His phone is switched off..."

"I'll message him..." Quickly Nora opened the chat box and typed straight forwardly, "I am not pregnant."

The message showed sent but undelivered. Nora could not help but frown as she realized that her friend was probably right and Demetri might already be on the way to see her.

And the butterflies that were not fluttering in her stomach suddenly made her realize how disappointed she had been when he messaged that he would not be coming. Patting her stomach, she gave a wide smile to Erasmi, her new favorite brother-in-law. Because of him, she would be able to see Demetri after so long...

In the entire confusing fiasco, they totally forgot that they were supposed to be going out for a meal and instead enjoyed the cafeteria food which was usually bland but somehow tasted the best just now...

## Chapter 173: Birthday Wishes

Nora stared at the empty bed on the opposite side of the room and made a face. What kind of a best friend disappeared on her friend's birthday, leaving her alone to welcome the day.

Let Isabella come back. She would revoke her best friend privileges and not help her cover up with her homework at all! So gaming all night was more important than her.

Nora pouted and stared out of the window. Bringing her knees to her chest, she laid her head on her knees and hugged herself. She really couldn't blame Isabella. Until last year, she'd barely been allowed to go out of the house to 'celebrate'. And then last year she had spent the entire day waiting for the celebration that Antonio had promised her.

She'd been over the moon but also a little apprehensive when Ian had insisted that they would come here to celebrate her birthday with her. She'd thought of countless excuses that they might come up with to excuse themselves later. But that was really not the case. Erasmi Frost had already arrived here and the rest were already on the way.

But she'd been the happiest when she had thought that Demetri would also be joining her here. It had been so long since she had spoken to him... But when she had messaged him for confirmation, he had already told her he would not be able to join.

Nora pouted. Well, served him right if he did not read her message about not being pregnant and come here directly. Heartless man. It was because of him that she would be celebrating her birthday with so many people and he wouldn't be joining. Let his birthday come and...

She froze at the thought, realizing that she had absolutely no idea when his birthday was. She'd ask Erasmi tomorrow. The clock showed that it was already 11.59 p.m. With a sigh, she thought it would be better to simply close her eyes and pretend to be asleep than to sit and stare outside, feeling lonely.

Quickly, she fell back on the bed and pulled the covers over her head, wishing herself a quiet happy birthday before closing her eyes. However, in the next moment, she heard the sound of the doorknob turning and narrowed her eyes. So, the girl did have some conscience and knew to return at the right time?

Nora was tempted to get up and scare her but knowing that Isabella's scream could shake the foundations of the dorm, she decided to abstain. It was better to let her think that she had succeeded in surprising her than to let Isabella scream and get caught for entering past curfew time. Soon, the door opened and closed and she heard the quiet footsteps coming towards her.

But after that there was nothing. No sound. Nora frowned, regretting pulling the blanket over her head now. She couldn't even take a peek... It would be really hilarious if she was waiting here and instead of wishing her Isabella had fallen into a drunken stupor.

When still there was no movement, Nora could not help but relent. Slowly, she moved the blanket from her head, intending to look around.

The next minute, she almost let out a scream and was so startled that she fell off the bed.

The next moment, she got up and jumped onto the bed before throwing herself at the man standing next to her bed. Demon barely had time to brace himself when the warm girl landed in his arms and kissed him square on the mouth. With a thump, he caught her around the waist and kissed her back with equal fervor. It had been so long since he had held her.

Demetri's hands roved over her back, settling on her thighs as he bent over, letting her fall on the bed while he followed. As a low moan escaped her and she pushed herself closer, Demetri almost tore off her clothes before remembering his reason for being here.

Dam\* it! He was not here to sleep with her! Regretfully, he broke the kiss and leaned back. Carefully, he gave her a once over and was satisfied when he saw her. She had not lost weight and just like her message indicated, she was most certainly not pregnant.

Of course, he was disappointed that she wasn't pregnant, but he would not linger on that. They had all the time in the world...

Catching his glance and interpreting it correctly, Nora grinned, "What do you think? Have I put on additional weight?"

"No. I think you are starving yourself from missing me." Demetri immediately replied.

Nora rolled her eyes, "As if I would miss you! So, what brings you here?"



At that moment, she realized that Demetri was inside her dormitory- an all girls dormitory in the middle of the night. The big Demon lord had sneaked in to wish her.

Demetri shook his head and casually tapped her nose, "I am here to wish you a happy birthday of course. Happy birthday, kitten. Here is your gift."

Nora snorted and narrowed her eyes, "Really! Liar. I know for a fact that you had no plans to come here, and you only came because of the misunderstanding your brother caused. He's been here for less than twenty-four hours and already caused a few let me tell you."

As Nora stared at the elongated box, she could not help but frown and complain some more, "See! This proves that you are lying. Did you pick up a generic gift for me? The box looks clearly like it would have some bracelet. Did you even get it or did you ask Assistant Ma to pick it up?"

Even as Nora pretended to complain, she was secretly overjoyed. It did not matter if Demetri had not put much thought into the gift and simply bought some random bracelet. What was important was that he had actually come here at this hour to give it to her! However, as she opened the box, her words were caught in her throat, "It's not a bracelet..."

Chapter 174: Liar Liar

Demetri leaned back on the bed, straightening his legs on the bed as he watched her face transform. His lips curled up as he watched her face glow as she looked at her gift and complained, "So, you still think Ma got this for you?"

"It's so beautiful..." Nora looked up at Demetri with shiny eyes and questioned, "Did you make it yourself?"

"Of course, it is not that difficult to make you know."

Nora made a face as she looked at Demetri and clutched the clear resin bookmark to her chest, "I don't know whether it is difficult or not. What I do know is that you are a liar Demetri Frost!"

Demetri raised his eyebrows, "How am I a liar?"

However, he was ignored as Nora continued to admire her gift. It was so pretty...Gently, she ran her fingers over the smooth surface, almost able to touch the pretty flower petals and leaves that had been pressed into the bookmark. It was a delicate mixture of all the greens. She narrowed her eyes and looked through carefully. It was like having the small terrace garden in his house in her hands.

"You've used the leaves from the house?"

"Hmm."

Demetri watched as her eyes sparkled with delight, and her radiant smile made his heart swell with happiness.

"So, I give you a gift and then you accuse me of being a liar?" Demetri reminded her.

"Heh! You always planned to come here for my birthday, didn't you? And you lied to me that you would not be able to come here. And yet, you've long prepared such a gift."

With a sigh, Demetri pulled Nora onto his lap, cuddling her so that her back was against his chest and his arms around her stomach. His hands spanned her small belly as he rubbed there affectionately. Closing her eyes, Nora leaned back into him, feeling him surround her.

It was a feeling that she had forgotten and yearned for over the months. Demetri too, closed his eyes, savouring the moment of being able to hold her in his arms again and sighed, "Not really. I actually am too busy. I just came here because of what Erasmi said. I planned to send this gift to you. I need to be there tomorrow, so I'll be leaving in an hour."

Nora pouted as she heard the words. An hour is too little. Did you really come here just to confirm if I was pregnant or not?"

Demetri smiled and gently patted her non-existent belly, "Mmm. But we'll say that I came here just to wish you a happy birthday."

Nora cocked her neck to the side, giving him greater access, as Demetri placed gentle kisses on her shoulder and neck.

Nora cast him a glance and hit his arm as if in protest to his words but simply felt herself melt into him as he continued to kiss her.

She marveled at the thought that she did not mind that he had been truthful that he had really not intended to come. It was better than having flowery words.

"Demetri..." Nora moaned his name softly as he gently bit her neck before lapping at it with his tongue.

"Are you also my birthday gift?" Demetri smiled against her skin and gently bit her ear, "You think I should have gift wrapped myself for you?"

"Nah. That would be too time consuming. The clothes you are wearing are already too many..."

While Demetri was stunned for a moment, Nora grinned and quickly lifted herself up and turned while still continuing to straddle him. Only this time they were face to face.

Demetri felt his heart thump as he looked into her eyes and quickly pulled her closer to him, "You've become a naughty girl, hmm? You know what naughty girls get..."

Nora grinned and shook her bottom as she let him know with her actions what naughty girls got as she whispered, "I don't know about other girls but this girl gets a demon..."

"Are you really going to use our precious together time to do this..."

"Yes..." Nora grinned and quickly caught his lips in a kiss before he could waste any more time in talking.

"After all she needed to have some benefits of a husband.

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"When can I come back?"

Demetri stilled at Nora's question before leaning back his head with a curse. Though he did not curse out loud, he could only blame himself for his lack of self-control when it came to her. Seeing her and holding her after so many months had made him a weak man. But her question had jolted him, quickly bringing him back to the present with a thud.

Inhaling slowly, Demetri asked, "Are you not happy here? Do you have some problems?"

"You know I don't have any problem. But I want to come..."

Nora paused as she realized what she had been about to say. Ever since she had come here and started to miss Demetri she had come to a shocking realization. She'd forgotten that they were going to be divorced in another two and something years. She had started to consider his house as her home. And she had been about to tell him that she wanted to come home.

"I want to come back to the country, Demetri. I'd never been away. I miss everything about there. The hot days and the cold days. The sweat and the chattering. Everything! Even the air here in country N is too fresh. My lungs are missing the pollution." She mumbled quickly so that he would not focus on her near faux pas.

Demetri smiled and answered, "Well, you can come home for the holidays. But not this year. Things, right now, are too turbulent."

"But why won't you tell me what it turbulent. I think I have a right to know. And you know I can handle everything."

"I know you can do it, Nora. But this once, let me do it. I will tell you everything once the time is right."

"I don't care when the time is right. I won't be kept in the dark forever Demetri. I've waited patiently and trustingly all this time, but I won't wait much more."

"Yes, my kitten. I know. Thank you for your patience. And I will not argue with you today so just come here and let me hold you." Demetri quickly diverted the topic. They'd already had a major argument when he'd unceremoniously sent her here. He was not about to have a repeat of that.

Even though none of the thousand questions she had in her mind had not been answered, Nora decided to let it go. She'd waited for so long. Another night was not much. She would soon find the answers step by step.

#### Chapter 175: Best Gift

Nora sat back and watched in amusement, her eyes glittering with amusement as the four brothers each bickered and debated about whose gift was the best. It had reached a point where they were all ready to open their gifts themselves instead of waiting for her.

Behind them, the party was in full swing with loud upbeat music making everyone let go and enjoy. Isabella had totally thrown herself into throwing a party for her, inviting almost everyone to the party. Nora shook her head. She did not even know half of these people who were dancing.

"Break it up kiddos. Just give her your gifts and stop acting like babies who want to be praised. You're here for the party."

Ian rolled his eyes at Erasmi and spoke, "That's because your gift must be as boring as you Erasmi and you don't want to be ashamed. But we've bought fun gifts!"

Erasmi straightened his back and snapped back, "You are the one who bought a boring gift! Mine is unique and naturally Nora is going to love it so I have nothing to prove!"

Nora, looked at Erasmi in surprise. Did these guys have no limit to their competitiveness? Just now, he was lecturing them to not look for praise but the moment they said something against him, he was ready to jump in. Shaking her head, Nora finally spoke, "Fine fine! I can see all your gift boxes so don't tell me who brought what. I'll open them and tell them which one I love the most. I'll even try to guess who got what."

Satisfied, the brothers all nodded and quickly made themselves scarce. They had not forgotten their original goal for being here... There were so many beautiful girls... Thankfully, Nora's friend had kept the party away from the college so there were older-young ladies as well. That is older than nineteen or twenty. Even though their brother had stolen a kiddo, they were not going to do the same.

Nora watched as the brothers soon disappeared into the crowd, dancing with the many female who approached them. She could not help but shake her head. They were all too handsome and charming. She'd noticed every woman in the club glancing their way and then staring daggers at her. It was her birthday and she could still feel her life almost shortening by a span.

As they went, Nora rubbed her hands and looked at the four boxes placed on the table thoughtfully.

Erasmi noticed her expression and could not help but ask, "Do you think you can really guess who has brought what gift?"

"Of course. You want to bet?"

Erasmi looked at the girl thoughtfully and nodded, "Sure. I'll bet. So which one do you want to open first?"

Nora pointed to the smallest box placed on the table and thanked Erasmin when he passed it to her. "Let's see then."

Nora opened the gift carefully, placing the wrapping paper to the side and opened the box and took out the gift. She laughed at that and was about to place the piece back into the box when Erasmi spoke incredulously, "One of these morons gave you socks as a gift?"

Nora grinned and showed the pair of customized socks to Erasmi. It was a caricature of Demon with horns on his head and a quote that read, "My Queen. Your Demon is here to keep you warm."

Erasmi made a face at that. The gift would have been funnier if the caricature had not looked like him. That was another disadvantage of having Demon as a brother. Whoever had made this gift deserved a good beating.

"So, who do you think has given it?" Erasmi asked.

"It was Gabe, of course." Erasmi raised an eyebrow at that. Are you sure?"

"Uh-huh. I am very sure. Ask him."

Taking out his phone, Erasmi quickly messaged Gabe questioning him and sighed when the man actually replied, "Socks. So she can watch all over him"

Nora looked at Erasmi smugly and then picked up a bigger but leaner box while Erasmi quickly messaged the others what they had given. Instead of some fancy packaging, the gift was a mishmash of newspapers.

"I can already tell you that this is from Lucien."

"Lucy? That boy is so meticulous. You have to be wrong."

Nora shook her head, "Uh-huh. He is meticulous because of all those numbers he has to crunch. And also because of that he would not have given much thought to the wrapping."

She looked at the mug inside and grinned. It announced that she was the world's 'okayest' waitress... On the mug was a picture of her and Lucas when she had started working at the cafe. She showed the picture to Erasmi, raising an eyebrow.

He raised his hands in surrender and watched as she quickly moved onto the third box. But inside he was thinking carefully. She really did understand his brothers well. Demon had chosen well. He'd been apprehensive about her but he shouldn't have been, he realized. Demetri had keen eyes to differentiate between right and wrong even all those years ago.

Nora could only stare at the next gift with wonderment. She was genuinely confused if it was Ian or Seb who could have given this. Erasmi leaned over to peak at the gift and laughed out loud. "I don't know if they like you more or hate Demon more. Who do you think has given you this wonderful toaster which will imprint Demon's face on your toast for you to devour?"

Nora grimaced at the customized toaster and made a guess, "I think it has to be Seb..."

"Seb and not Ian?"

"Uh huh. He would not dare to give me something that I can use against him... If I have to eat Demetri why would I do it on a toast when I can do it directly..."

By the time Erasmi even understood the very naughty meaning of the words, he could only cough! No wonder Ian had given her a simple gift if she was teasing him with such jokes...

"You are right again, ma'am! This is indeed a gift from Seb..."

"So what did Ian get me?"

Nora finally picked up the biggest box placed on the table and opened it carefully. It was a virtual reality headset... with a note that said, "For when you miss family."

Slowly, Nora put on the virtual headset and turned it on... It was indeed family. Ian Frost had somehow obtained pictures of them all and created them into some virtual reality home...

Erasmi smiled as he saw the winner of the best gift. The thought that each of them had put into bringing the gifts showed how much they cared for her.

As such, Erasmi could not help but ask, "Nora, are you still going to divorce Demetri when your contract comes to an end?"

Chapter 176: Huh?

"Are you still going to divorce him after the contract is up?"

Nora looked at Erasmi in surprise. She had not expected Erasmi to know about the contract. How did he find out? Did he investigate her? She had no idea how she would feel after that.

Erasmi grimaced and said, "I did not do anything sneaky, alright? It was Demetri who told me. Of course, he doesn't know that I remember it. He mentioned it during the time I was sick..."



Erasmi trailed off. He had not been supposed to blurt that out. He'd been avoiding discussing the last ten years with anyone, including his therapist but here he was blurting out the truth like a leaking water tap. It must have something to do with Nora looking so much like Nellie.

Nora looked at him curiously as she questioned, "Do you remember everything from that time?"

Erasmi had a faraway look in his eyes as he answered, "Not really. Actually, I remember nothing from the past decade. My memory is all hazy and dark. I do recall some snippets from here and there over the past few months though. Mostly Demetri's voice and not what he had spoken. But other than that, not much. This information was from one of those snippets. So, are you going to tell me? I think he told me when he married you. But he did not talk much about you after that."

Nora nodded, "Yes. That is the plan. We will divorce once the time is up."

"Do you not have feelings for Demetri?", Erasmi asked with astonishment.

"Of course, I do. Other than Isabella, Demetri is my best friend. How can I not have feelings for him? I respect him and care for him."

"But you do not love him?"

Nora rolled her eyes at Erasmi's confused face, "I do love him. What are you trying to get at Erasmi?" Nora knew of course what he wanted to know but she deliberately pretended to be obtuse as she let him think of a way to question her.

Erasmi scowled and directly spoke, "If you love him why would you divorce him?"

"What does loving him have anything to do with remaining married to him?" Nora asked again.

This time Erasmi understood her game. She was deliberately trying to avoid the topic. "Fine, then what will your relationship be after you are divorced?"

Nora bit her lip and then spoke mischievously, " Well, he is my husband with benefits at the moment. Later we will be friends with benefits. That would be fine, won't it?"

To say Erasmi was shocked would be an understatement. He could only shake his head and wonder what she was thinking. What was even this thing called husband with benefits? There was something like Husband without benefits also?

But before he could question her further about her intentions, Isabelle broke in, " You old man! Why are you hogging my friend and trying to turn her into a wallflower? She's young and chic! She needs to be dancing."

As Nora was dragged away to the dance floor, Erasmi leaned back in his seat, his eyes glittering as he watched the two girls dance. He watched as the boys soon flocked to the two girls, surrounding them like flies. He wondered if he would need to intervene but soon his own brothers had already enclosed, driving away those with ill intentions.

Erasmi could not help but watch Nora. It wasn't just her face or her voice that was like Nellie. Even her mannerisms, the way she looked when she was excited, everything was like Nellie.

It made him worried and sceptical. If she turned out like Nellie.

Erasmi shook his head. Even then, Demetri had been able to see through to Nellie's thoughts and her craftiness. Of course, if Nora was anything like that, Demetri would know. But Demetri was in love. And he knew very well how love could make a person blind.

He needed to find a way to stay here and keep an eye on this girl. If she was really going to do something to hurt Demetri, then he would prevent that.

Even as Erasmi continued to stare at Nora, he failed to analyze his own reasons. Not once did he doubt that he may be staying here because Nora looked like the woman he loved.

But someone else did. Gabe had already left the dance floor and was now sitting at the bar, as he watched the emotions flitter across Erasmi's face. He was glad his older brother was back, but he was also worried that he was not fully recovered mentally. Knowing Erasmi, he would definitely not return

with them tomorrow. So, either he would have to find a way to keep Erasmi away from Nora or he too would be staying here close to them.

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Nora who was unaware of everyone's intentions, continued to dance with Isabelle, having the best time of her life. Isabella was a great dancer and she kept her on her toes, while twirling her across the dance floor. As Isabella extended her hand, Nora quickly grabbed her and pulled her towards herself while moving their bodies in sync.

"I don't know if I should hold you closer or run away, sweetheart. All those handsome Frosties are staring here. While I am sure, they are keeping an eye on you for their brother, I have a feeling that they are staring at me as if I am prey and they are hunters." Isabella spoke into Nora's ear as the music's tempo lowered a bit.

Nora grinned and quickly twirled Isabella around, "Stick close to me then! Once you are away, you'll be fair game!"

"Ohh, baby! I am already fair game! The question is which hunter should I choose. The old man is the most handsome, but he looks too much like Demon so that would be just icky. And that Gabe. He looks like he would totally melt me into the bed with all his brooding looks. But he hasn't given me a second glance, kind of lighting up the fire in me."

Nora shook her head at Isabella's words and tried to leave the dance floor, but Isabella was adamant in making her dance and drink until Nora was ready to collapse.

#### Chapter 177: The Past

The cozy cafe exuded a warm ambiance, with soft jazz melodies playing in the background, and the aroma of freshly brewed coffee wafting through the air. Dimly lit, the place seemed like a sanctuary for contemplation. Nora sat alone at a corner table, her fingers nervously tracing the rim of her cup of hot chocolate. The muted buzz of conversations and the clinking of cutlery formed a comforting backdrop to what she was about to try and pull off.

Her eyes were fixed on the entrance. She needed answers and the only way she could get anyone to reveal anything would be to catch all the Frost brothers separately. If she questioned them together or directly, she would never know.

But first, the person she needed to see the most was Erasmi. As she waited for him, she could not help but wonder if what she was about to do was right or not. Demetri had of course already told her that there was no need for her to dig into the past, but she was curious.

She had no one who could tell her much about her father. But there was someone who could tell her about her sister. Even if she did not remember her, she wanted to know about this family that she'd had. According to grandpa William, her sister had planned to marry Erasmi Frost and then legally adopt her after fighting for her custody.

She grinned at that. If things had indeed turned out that way, Demetri would have ended up as her uncle. Ewww... A se\*y uncle but an uncle nonetheless.

She also sensed Demetri's reluctance in answering her questions. It was clear that he did not like Nellie much. And that was the source of her apprehension. First, she did not want to hurt Erasmi's feelings and hurt him by talking about her and secondly, Demetri's extreme dislike for Nellie.

Demetri was an astute person. If he hated Nellie, then there must be some problem with her...

As Erasmi entered the cafe, Nora could not help but stare at him. He did look exactly like Demetri but there were subtle differences in their gazes. Demetri looked like he owned the place when he entered a room but Erasmi looked as if he hated everyone. But she didn't think it was always like that. Then was this because of what had happened all those years ago?

Soon Erasmi spotted her, and a warm, genuine smile spread across his face. He approached her table with a confident stride, his presence commanding the attention of the other cafe patrons. He pulled out the chair opposite her and sat down, his eyes never leaving Nora's. "I did not expect to be summoned so quickly."

"Also, before you accuse me of anything, I did not forward that picture of yours and Isabella to Demon, alright? That was Seb and Ian. They were envious of you because they wanted to dance with Isabella."

Nora offered a faint smile in return, though her mind was racing with questions and uncertainty even as she shook her head, "More like they wanted her... as if I wouldn't warn her off against them and their ways."

Erasmi grinned and soon started a conversation about their plans to explore this city before the rest of the brothers left to go back. As a lull in the conversation appeared, Nora took this opportunity to question Erasmi, " I would like to know about my sister. Can you tell me? If it is not too painful to you..."

Erasmi's smile waned slightly as Nora mentioned her. His demeanour shifted, revealing a hint of sadness in his eyes. He gazed into his coffee for a moment, lost in thought, and then took a deep breath.

"Nellie... she was something else, Nora," he began, his voice tinged with a mixture of nostalgia and regret. "She was the happiest and most easy going person you could come across one minute and the next she could be like the Yama himself, cutting down a person with her wit and sarcasm."

Erasmi continued, "We met in college as you know, and it was like a whirlwind romance. Nellie was full of life, always looking for the next adventure. We were inseparable, and I could not help but fall for her. And then there were the similarities..."

"Both of us had grown up without parents under the tutelage of strict grandparents. We yearned to explore the world and spread our wings. For the first two years of our college, we were always together, every moment of every day. Finally, I gathered the courage and proposed to her in our final year fully expecting her to accept me. She refused."

"I just could not understand why she would do that. I told her that she wanted to explore the world so she could do it with me. We could be companions. But she said she only dreamt of roaming the world. However, after completion of her studies, she needed to settle down and marry someone so that she could take care of her younger sister."

"That was totally unexpected for me. I am ashamed to say that I almost lost my head then. I felt betrayed. For the two years we were always discussing how we wanted to rove all those places. We'd even decided on a special place where we would not go without one another. It was a pact we made that we could roam anywhere in the world, but we would not go there without each other."

Nora listened intently, her heart aching with curiosity and emotion. She wanted to know more about Nellie, to fill the void in her memory with her stories and experiences that she had missed.

Her heart ached for her sister, for the love and dreams that had once been shared with Erasmi. And it pained her even more that her sister had been willing to give all that up for her while she had no memory of Nellie.

When Erasmi stopped, without saying more, Nora nodded in gratitude and spoke with glittering eyes, "Thank you for sharing that."

Chapter 178: But What?

They were both silent, each lost in their own thoughts after the disclosure. The truth was that Erasmi had not told her everything about Nellie. He was not too sure if he should. After all the truth would not make much of a difference when the person was already dead. But knowing the truth, it would definitely hurt Nora.

She had never known any kindness in her family. So, if she believed that her sister was a good person, it would not harm anyone. So, he silently sipped his coffee. And then he grimaced to himself. He was supposed to be here to keep an eye on Nora and instead, he was already ready to protect her. No wonder all his younger brothers doted on her. There was something about her quiet strength that made them want to protect her and not let her use the strength.

"Is it too painful for you to tell me the rest?" Nora asked quietly.

Erasmi looked up in surprise. "What rest? I've already told you everything."

"Demetri did not like her. That was the reason the two of you fought, wasn't it? Before your accident that is. So, wither Demetri was wrong about her or you were. And the fact that you have not told me anything to indicate his dislike for her, you must be hiding something."

Erasmi raised an eyebrow at her perceptiveness. "You are quite smart."

Nora shrugged her shoulders at the comment and waited for Erasmi to expand. Erasmi rubbed his forehead and answered slowly, "When I came to know about Nellie's intentions, I was adamant that we could adopt you and take care of you ourselves. I would be with her and help her and then we would take our trips at intervals instead of taking a year off together, we'll take one trip at a time."

"So, what happened?"

Erasmi sighed, "It is not important."

"It is to me, Erasmi. I don't want to know a fake person. Tell me the truth."

Erasmi inhaled sharply and spoke a bit harshly, "She never planned to be responsible for you. The only reason she wanted to adopt you was to have control over the little things that had been left to you. And because she wanted to spend her life in leisure, she planned something different. The goal was to marry, claim her inheritance. Then 'we' would adopt you."

"And then she would divorce you and claim child maintenance because you legally adopted me."

Erasmi grimaced. How foolish had he been? Even Nora could see through the plan.

"Don't blame yourself. You could not have expected something like that. But after learning everything my mother has done to claim the money, I can guess. How did you finally discover the truth?"

"I didn't. It was Demetri. He felt that she was too saintly to be true. And when something is too good to be true, it usually means that it is not real. He insisted, he begged, he fought and threatened me to ask her to sign a pre-nuptial agreement. But everything failed and I continued to refuse him, blind in my faith in her."

"Was that what you fought about before the accident?" Nora asked softly. No wonder Demetri had always been ridden with guilt if they'd had a big fight before the accident. Of course, she was already guessing because he'd barely told her the bare facts before...

"No, we fought because when I continued to refuse him, he impersonated me one day and approached her with the idea of signing a prenuptial agreement."

"And that must not have felt right..."

"Let's just say Demetri had a way of goading the truth out of her. He made her so angry that she blurted everything out. I was quite shocked. Later, when I confronted her she said that she said everything out

of anger because she had felt I did not trust her. She was also willing to sign the prenuptial agreement. We were actually going there when the accident happened..."

"So, you never were going able to ascertain the truth."

"Hmm. What do you think I should believe, Nora? I want to remember only the goodness in her. But every time I think of her, somehow it reminds me of all that she said to Demetri. And I cannot help but wonder if I was mistaken. What do you think I should do Nora?"

Erasmi looked at Nora and questioned her directly. He had asked this question to Demetri as well after he had woken up. Demetri's answer had surprised him and confused him even more because it was the opposite of what he had expected. He wondered if Nora would also feel the same.

"I... you loved her with all your heart. Then you should remember that love. If you hold the anger in your heart then you won't be able to live in the future. You've come among the living after a long time, so naturally, you should cherish the good only."

Erasmi smiled. "You think too much like my brother. He also had to say the same thing. Cherish the love. It is interesting, isn't it? I would have expected him to say that I should forget her and move on. It would have been what he said in the past. But I think he now understands what love is."

Nora paused as mid-sip, as she stared over the rim of her cup, staring at Erasmi, saying nothing.

"I think he has always understood what love is. Look at the way he has always treasured his family. I really admire him for it."

Erasmi grimaced. He really would have to question her directly," Forget about Demetri. I think I am going to be direct with you. Are you in love with my brother, Nora?"

Nora coughed at the question and stared incredulously at the man. Why was he still stuck on that? He's asked this of her previously as well.

"Why are you so intent on knowing that?"



"Why won't you answer me directly?"

## Chapter 179: Unravelling a Secret

Alexander Sterling sat behind his behemoth desk as his assistant stood before him, anxiously holding a dossier. The opulent penthouse office of the man was adorned with floor-to-ceiling windows that offered panoramic views of the city skyline but neither men paid any attention to the surrounding.

Robert cleared his throat, his voice quivering slightly as he began to report on a matter of great sensitivity. "Mr. Sterling, I have been following the developments regarding your late brother's daughter. There seems to have been some problems that we have found."

Alexander's eyes narrowed, his patience waning. "And?"

Robert hesitated before clarifying slowly, "Your niece... I mean Sara Anderson passed away in a fire. It seems she was there with her mother and another man. The entire instance has been ruled as an accident but there was indeed foul play. I have collected surveillance videos from a few places where it is clear that tied up and taken there. However, that is not all... There is something even more disturbing that the investigations have found out... We believe that your brother and his wife Lara had two daughters- Nellie and Sara. But there is another daughter..."

Sterling's sharp blue eyes bore into the man as he hurriedly reported, "As you know, Nellie died a few years ago but the other girl Nora..."

Slowly, the man explained everything he had discovered about the girl's existence unravelling a great deception. Once done, a lethal silence echoed in the room, making Robert even more scared to breathe.

"So you are telling me that, all these years, the girl who visited me, who I doted upon is not my brother's daughter but his wife's lover's daughter? That woman had us all fooled?"

Even though that was the truth, Robert dared not nod his head. At the moment, he felt that it was a good thing that woman was already dead, or she would have been buried alive. And the way she died painfully, she deserved it.

Finally, when the silence in the room turned so oppressive that Robert could feel himself having difficulty breathing, the older man spoke, "I want to see this girl. This Nora...Bring her to me."

The words resonated in Robert's chest like a bullet. He had been most afraid of that. "Sir..."

"What is the problem? That bi\*ch is dead, isn't she? So you can bring my niece to me. Don't tell me you do not know her whereabouts!"

Robert shook his head quickly and spoke, "Well, sir, I managed to track her down, but it's not as simple as reaching out to her. Her husband is a man of considerable influence in that country. He's been keeping her secluded and away from prying eyes. In fact, he has been a step ahead of us ever since he discovered our people."

Alexander nodded. Of course, he'd sent a few people over the years to randomly check on Sara to make sure she was safe. And she always had been. But this time, his people had reported that she had been institutionalized. He had been enraged. How dare someone do that to his brother's daughter. She was the Royal daughter of country E! His brother might have abdicated the throne and chosen to live like an orphan all those years ago, but he was still of Royal blood! Lineage could not be changed!

But now he had been informed that Sara was not even his brother's daughter. He did not doubt Robert's claims for a moment. The man must have done a DNA test. And that meant whoever had done the DNA test all those years ago on Sara had betrayed them. He would look into that also. But first...

"What do you mean he has been a step ahead of us?"

"Before we could even confirm whether Sara Anderson or Nora Williams was your niece, the man had sent Nora away somewhere else."

"Where did he send her?"

"I don't know, sir. Every time we think we have a lead; it turns out to be a fake one. It's like we've been going around in circles. Finally, we were contacted by the man himself and he threatened that we approach him directly before attempting to contact Nora again. He's concerned about her safety and

the intrusion into their lives. It seems he values her privacy, which makes sense, given the circumstances."

Alexander Sterling leaned back in his chair and turned it around, staring at the skyline that had been behind him. A niece with a powerful husband. Now that was too inconvenient for his future plans.

"Who is this man who is capable of tricking our Intelligence force and thinks that he can threaten us?"

Robert looked down at his feet before looking up, "Demetri Frost, CEO of Frost Industries. He's not just influential; he's connected to some very powerful people in the world. He has his own security network, and they are not to be underestimated. At a time like this if we were to anger the man..."

Alexander's eyelid twitched as he heard the name. The man was indeed a formidable opponent, and their country was currently not in a state where they could treat a threat lightly. His jaw tightened, his thoughts racing. After a moment, the man finally spoke, "Set up a meeting with Demetri Frost. I'll go personally. But be discreet, Robert. We don't want to escalate the situation. I want to see my niece, but I don't want to put her in any danger."

"I'll arrange the meeting at once, Sir." Relieved that he had survived this entire ordeal unscathed, Robert quickly made his way out of the office.

As his assistant left the room, Alexander strategized his next move. A husband was not included in his future plans. He would have to be careful in what he did next. First, he would assess the situation and then when the time was right, he would find a way to get Nora back here to Estania while getting rid of her husband at the same time.

#### Chapter 180: Brothers

"I thought you were staying there a few more days..." Demetri looked up from his scattered papers as his identical twin, Erasmi, barged into the small office unceremoniously.

Erasmi shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly and answered with a casual grin, "Well, I had something to do. Now it's done, so I'm back. Don't worry. I won't be staying here for long. I think I am going to go on a world tour by bicycling around the world. The truth is, I'm already tired of Ian and Seb whining. How did you even raise them? They whine more than abandoned dogs and gossip more than old ladies! Also, how do they have eyes all over the city? I can't meet a single person- man or woman without them

discussing it in that phone group! Can't you give them some work so that they would stop chattering away like magpies?"

Demetri chuckled at Erasmi's remarks but said, "We are all the same and you know it. Given a chance, you would not let them have it easy also, E. So, no use complaining. Just remind them they will someday be on the other end of the stick."

Erasmi rolled his eyes before turning silent as he looked around Demetri's office. Demon had already offered to divide the upper floor into two parts so that Erasmi could have his own office but after living inside a room for a decade of his life, he had no desire to be stuck between these four walls.

Where there should be anger and envy that Demetri stood in the place that rightfully belonged to him, he was actually thankful to him. If Demetri had not handled everything back then, it would have been impossible for him to survive in this new world.

"So, now you trust my judgement?" Demetri asked casually, letting his brother know that he was well aware of Erasmi's motives.

Erasmi raised his brows and leaned back in his chair as he pretended to be innocent, "What are you talking about?"

Demetri stopped and put down his bed, "I am talking about the fact that you'd decided to stay behind to get to know more about Nora, make sure what her intentions were towards me..."

Erasmi grinned. "I did stay behind to do that! I should have known that you'd see right through me... Hmm. I think she is quite an honest person. So, I did not have to beat around the bush much. I asked her directly about how she felt towards you."

Demetri nodded and looked back into his file pretending to not be interested in what Erasmi had to say. But instead of continuing to tell him about this talk he had with Nora, Erasmi continued to tell him about his plans, "I think I am going to explore country A first. I'd quite like to explore the desert there and look at some kangaroo's while I am there, have a few affairs with pretty women."

Demetri looked up from his work with a frown on his face," What is the hurry? You can spend some time here first. So, what did you discover about Nora's intentions?"

Erasmi gave his brother a sly glance as he raised his chin and leaned back, looking down his nose at him," Nothing actually. She has no intentions towards you. I want to say that you've been friendzoned but you are already married... In her own words, you are her Husband... for as long as you are married and then you will go your separate ways..." Shaking his head, Erasmi taunted," My dear brother you've been -husband zoned..."

While Erasmi clicked his tongue, pretending to be sympathetic to his brother's plight, inside he was dying of laughter. So his brother wanted to pretend to be unaffected, heh? That will teach him. He'd been so confident in his ability to woo his wife, that he'd even sent her to live in a different country! And now he wanted to use him to know Nora's feelings.

Of course, he wasn't going to tell him what she actually told him. Instead, he was going to sow some discord," It's a new special word that I've created for your situation. See, you are already husband and wife but she is not in love with you. And you became her husband first and then her friend followed by becoming her lover. So... you are in the friends-with-benefits zone but will firmly remain in the friendzone...hence Husbandzone. When she is ready to find love, she will definitely look outside this zone...

Demetri almost crushed the pen in his hand as he heard Erasmi's words. Dam\* it! What did Nora say to him that the man was actually sitting here and spouting this nonsense?

What look for love outside the husband zone? What was even this zone thing? He'd already made plans for wooing Nora once he was done with making sure that she was safe and secure...

But Erasmi was not done adding vinegar to his brother's mood..." You won't have to wait much longer until she tells you about the love of her life also. See, before I left to come here, I met this really handsome fellow over there...He is her co-star in that theatre play that she is doing. Their on-stage chemistry is really good so I can imagine it won't be much longer till it spills into real life..."

The air around Demetri seemed to turn into ice. It took all of his self-control for Erasmi to control his laughter. He was willing to bet everything that his brother would be on the airplane to be with Nora within the next hour...

However, what Erasmi had not expected was what Demetri would do next. Instead of rushing away mindlessly, Demetri apologized to Erasmi, "E, I am sorry, my brother. I'll definitely make it up to you... But we've done this in the past so we can pull this off again."

With that Demetri rushed out of the office without another word, leaving behind a perplexed Erasmi. It was only after he received a message from Ian and Gabe letting him know that they were available for assistance at all times did he realize what had happened! While he successfully goaded his brother into leaving his responsibility and running to his wife, the man had turned the table on him and now he was expected to pretend to be Demetri for... no one knew how long!

"Dam\* it, Erasmi Frost! You took a shot at Demetri but ended up hurting yourself!" Erasmi muttered to himself...