

Benefits 181

Chapter 181: Arabelle Is Dead

The sun was setting over the vast rolling landscape of the farm, casting a warm, golden glow on the tranquil scenery. Gabe's car approached the gates slowly, the turn of lights grabbing the attention of the girl who sat on the porch.

As she spotted the familiar vehicle, she couldn't contain her excitement. With an ecstatic grin, she sprinted across the field, her long hair trailing behind her like a comet.

"Gabe!", she called out his name happily as she reached him and leapt into his arms.

With a laugh, Gabe caught her effortlessly and wrapped his arms around her. Holding her close, Gabe looked into her sparkling eyes and kissed her forehead, "Ari, you are positively glowing! I've missed you so much!"

Arabelle swatted at him and pouted, "Liar! I missed you more! If you missed me, you wouldn't go away on all these boring business trips only leaving Jay with me for company."

"Well, I can prove that I've missed you a lot! I've already arranged for most of my work to be transferred here. So, I won't have to go on any trips for the foreseeable future and I can spend all my time serving my princess Ari."

Ari grinned up at this and squealed in delight, "My Gabe is the best! Then we will have time to plan our wedding!"

Ari clasped Gabe's hands and walked towards the house, her hands clasped in his naturally. "I've been designing a dress for the wedding. Even if it's going to be just the two of us, I want to make a pretty dress. I've even designed one. Let me show it to you. By the way, do you want some tea? There's a fresh pot brewing..."

Gabe sat and watched Ari with a fond smile, admiring the way she moved with grace and an air of carefree innocence. Her body language was a testament to her simple joy and unfiltered love for life. She skipped around the room, her enthusiasm infectious, and set about making tea with an array of colorful tea cups. This was the Arabelle of the past and yet not.

His heart ached to see her like this without her ingrained arrogance and pride. And yet, he treasured the carefree happiness on her face more. She was Arabelle and yet she was not. Here, she was Ari... a woman he had created from the mess that was left of Arabelle.

He turned his head away and closed his eyes. The world now believed that Arabelle was dead and they were all right. This woman in front of him was only a shell of Arabelle. He looked down at the sketchbook that Ari had left with him.

The designs in the book stunned him and shook him. Ari was dressed in a simple frock-style dress which was nowhere near the way Arabelle would dress. But these designs with their instinctive sense of fashion were pure Arabelle. He remembered that she'd wanted to be a designer when they were younger. She'd even given a presentation in school.

How much of herself had Arabelle lost to her obsession and how much had she gained from this path of treatment that he had taken her on.

Placing the cup of tea in front of him, Arabelle continued animatedly, "I think the first dress will look the best on me! I am going to stitch it myself and use Ivory lace. I already told Jay to order it for me. Also, you won't believe how much fun I had with Furface. The little rabbit is getting naughtier by the day..."

Gabe listened attentively as Arabelle continued to talk about her day with the small family of rabbits that she tended to on the farm.

After realizing that her plan to get rid of Nora had gone bust, Arabelle had lost the little sanity that she had left, leaving her totally unaware of her surroundings. But finally, he had been able to give her a peaceful and happy environment.

At least here and now, she did not have to be tortured with her obsession for Demon. So what if her parents blamed him for everything? He couldn't care less!

As Arabelle beamed at him, he could not help but lean forward and kiss her forehead again.

Surprised at his sudden kiss, Ari quickly moved forward and kissed his forehead as well as she said, "I can't wait for the day till we are married and we can be together forever! I love you Gabe."

"And I love you, Ari..." Gabe quickly replied even as his heart ached for the woman he loved.

After tea, Arabelle quickly caught his hand, wanting to stroll with him. As the sun dipped low casting an orange glow in the sky, Ari and Gabe walked hand in hand, strolling around the farm. Eventually, they reached a small pond and the couple sat close to each other, enjoying in peace the silence around them.

As Arabelle stared at the reflection of stars shimmering over the pond's still water, her eyes had a melancholy look. Sometimes there were memories of the past that kept trying to intrude on her, as if whispering that she should not be loving Gabe. That she hated him.

It made her feel horrible and guilty towards her love. It was Gabe who was always by her side whenever she needed him and yet her mind had to play such tricks on her against him.

With a sigh, she leaned closer to him and closed her eyes. She was not going to let her happiness with Gabe be affected by these petty thoughts. They loved each other and that was enough.

"Gabe? We're going to be as happy in the future as we are now, aren't we?", Arabelle asked, her eyes searching for reassurance.

Gabe nodded with a smile, "Hmm. We are going to be the happiest. I will make it happen, Ari."

Arabelle was content at that and hummed, "I believe in you, Gabe."

Chapter 182: Uh Oh!

Isabella stared at Nora with a hopeful look, her voice laden with enthusiasm. "Come on, sweetheart. You have to come! This is the first time we can be together without the threat of that woman hanging over your head! It will be a lot of fun! And don't you want to be with you hottie husband? I mean he was here last week and your glow has yet to subside! Let's go back and you won't even need any spa days or facial for the entire month..."

Nora's expression flickered as she cursed in her heart! It was because of that man that she couldn't go back. Her husband had actually warned her to not return or else he would lock her inside the house! As if! That had been the biggest motivating factor for her to return and let him try grounding her but she'd given in at the last moment. It just wasn't worth it to get into a fight with him. Instead, she would stay here and pretend to be agreeable while trying to gather some ammunition.

Though that attempt too had almost proven to be a failure. None of the Frosties knew what it was that Demetri had been hiding. Sighing, she shook her head, "You know I want to come. But I cannot. I need to catch up with the extra classes. The 'perks' of enrolling in the middle of the term! Come back soon Bella baby and we can have fun here."

Isabella's shoulders slumped, but she nodded understandingly. "I get it, Nora. But you'll be missed back home."

Quickly Isabella caught Nora in a bear hug as if she was leaving forever...Before Nora could protest that she was having trouble breathing, Isabella stepped back and cursed.

Frowning in surprise at the sudden string of curses escaping Isabella's mouth, Nora stared at her but the girl was looking somewhere else. Following her line of sight, Nora felt her mouth fall open too.

"Isn't that Erasmi? That jerk! He actually told me that he was leaving the country and now he is still here three days later! That liar! All he had to do was take me with him on the private plane, but he lied to me! Let me go give him a piece of my mind!"

Before Nora could stop her, Isabella was already marching towards him. Nora stared at the man whose back was to them and tried to wonder why Erasmi would lie to her? And what was he doing here at the airport today? Her gaze fixed on the man, she stared intently when the man turned their way.

Sh*t! This was not Erasmi! This was Demetri! What was he doing here? Quickly Nora started to make her way to him and that is when she realized that Isabella was going to jump onto him. Literally, pounce on him! Uh oh! She needed to save Isabella before the girl...

Too late. Suddenly everything seemed to happen in slow motion as Nora watched Isabella as she was already running towards him full speed. As she jumped to throw her arms around the man, Demetri

seemed to have realized that someone was approaching him. As expected, the man was quick on his feet and jumped out of Isabella's way while Bella had no way of stopping her momentum.

Her face contorted and she closed her eyes, unable to watch her friend diving onto the ground. Unexpectedly, Demetri slipped the leather bag in his hand under Isabella, cushioning her fall.

Nora opened her eyes and watched as Demetri quickly helped Isabella straighten up, his expression so dangerous that she was sure the world around him would freeze. But Isabelle remained unaware and ungrateful towards Demetri for saving her.

"How could you step out of the way when I was about to jump on you?"

Demetri raised an eyebrow at the girl who had almost accosted him. What did she think he would do? Stand there and let her hug him? What a crazy girl. With a shake of his head, he ignored her and looked around. Where was the cab that he had booked?

Just when Demetri was about to step away, Isabella muttered, "Erasmi Frost, you now dare to ignore me! I am going to make toast of...."

Demetri who had paused at the sound of his brother's name watched as his wife raced forward and covered the girl's mouth with her hand. "You need to be quiet babe! This is not Erasmi."

Isabella's face paled and her eyes widened as she stared at the man's unsmiling mouth she looked between the man standing there and Nora and nodded slowly.

Quickly, Nora made introductions, "Demetri, this is Isabella. Bella baby, this is my husband, Erasmi's twin- Demetri."

Demetri raised an eyebrow as he heard Nora's name for her friend and nodded, "Miss Isabella Ruffalo, a pleasure to finally meet you."

Isabella flushed at her mistake and smiled awkwardly, "Nice to meet you too. I am so sorry for the misunderstanding. It seems I am fated to mistake you and your brother for each other." Demetri was

about to respond but before he could say anything, Isabella had turned to Nora and was questioning her," Nora sweetheart, how do you even tell them apart! They look too alike."

While outwardly he remained calm and watched the two girls bid each other goodbye again, inwards Demetri was already seething! Baby? Never ever had Nora called him by any sweet name and here she was throwing it around like confetti! She even called him 'Mr Husband' while her best friend got called baby? How was that fair?

Was it too much to ask that his wife call him something sweet like that? Was it too much to ask for a 'honey' or a 'darling' or even a 'sweetie' now and then? He called her kitten lovingly, did he not? Shouldn't she have reciprocated?

Of course, Demetri who had just been doused in vinegar failed to consider that he had not thought of this before and all his thoughts just now were because he was jealous...

Chapter 183: So?

With Isabelle now gone, Nora ignored Demetri and turned back, ready to return. Just then Demetri called out," The cab is here, Nora. Let's go."

Nora narrowed her eyes at him," So? If your cab is here, you can go..."

Demetri frowned at that. Was she angry at him? Why? Shouldn't he be the one that is angry? After all he wasn't going around calling other people 'baby' and answering to someone else calling him 'sweetheart'!

If Nora could have heard Demetri's thoughts, she would have known that the man was drowning in vinegar. Without a word, he walked towards her, picked her around the waist and before she could even protest, stuffed her into the back seat of the cab.

"You! You! You..." Nora sputtered at being manhandled by D suddenly and tried to threaten him but he simply caught her mouth in a quick kiss and moved back ordering the driver, "The Ritz, please."

"Let me off first!" Nora spoke quickly, even though her face was an adorable shade of red at being kissed so suddenly in company! Demetri held her wrist and once again ordered the driver," Please drive."

The driver hesitated before he questioned, "Miss, are you alright? Do you need help?"

Nora narrowed her eyes and was about to ask the kind driver to beat up her husband before she shut her mouth. There was no need to involve some poor man in her troubles.

"Thank you, sir. This is my husband and I am simply infuriated with him. Don't worry about it."

Even though Nora spoke the word- 'husband' as if she was spitting, Demetri was pleased with her response and sat back contentedly. The driver carefully looked in the mirror, making sure that the woman was not being threatened or answering out of fear. Once assured that there was no threat, the cab started to drive forward.

Nora harrumped and turned her head to stare out of the window, thoroughly ignoring the man. Demetri rubbed his forehead and remarked, "You are angry with me."

Nora shot a scathing glance his way as if to say, "Duh. Happy realization." before turning her head back to face the window. Demetri sighed.

"I don't know why you are angry. I've just come and we haven't even spoken about anything."

"You are here for business and don't even think of informing me. What do you think I should be happy about? You are going to dictate everything about where I go and what I can do but there is no need to communicate with me?"

Demetri narrowed his eyes and spoke dangerously, "This is communication? That is rich. I actually came here to be with you, kitten and what do I get to hear? Bella baby? Nora sweetheart? Never have you ever used such sweet names for me! And you are one to complain!"

"As if I can call you baby? Can you imagine the sheer torture the younger Frosties would put you through if I were to call you baby? You are not someone I can call baby alright"

The driver, who had been shamelessly listening in at the couple's cute fight, quickly added in Nora's support, "That is true, sir. You do not look like a man who could be called 'baby'."

It was at this moment that Nora and Demetri realized that they were actually fighting over something so childish! Nora blinked at Demetri while he blinked right back at her before the two simultaneously broke down into laughter.

Never in her life, Nora could have imagined that she would be angry with Demetri about not informing her before coming over. She did not need to analyze the reason for her anger though. She had actually thought that Demetri would avoid her and that is why he had not told her of his visit to country N?

Demetri on the other hand was ready to bury himself in his own garden as fertilizer. He had not been so embarrassed even when he had confessed his love for his teacher in first grade. He'd all but begged Nora to call him baby.

The atmosphere in the cab turned a bit awkward but the cab driver was not fazed by it. He watched the entire by-play with amusement and said, "You must be newly married. Only newly married ones would fight for such ridiculous reasons! Me and my woman have been married for 25 years but I still remember how we fought all those years ago! Oh! How good it is to be so in love..."

Both Nora and Demetri remained silent while the cab driver continued to reminisce about his own journey of love as the cab wove through the bustling streets.

The cab finally pulled up in front of the grand entrance of The Ritz. Nora and Demetri stepped out and Demetri quickly marched out with Nora trailing behind him. Both had already taken the time to compose themselves and anyone looking at them would not have thought that these two people had been fighting childishly just now.

Clearing her throat, Nora turned to Demetri and asked, "So, what brought you here to country N so unexpectedly? Did something happen? Are you finally ready to tell me everything?"

Demetri was relieved that Nora had not caught on about his gaffe just now and quickly shook his head, "No. Actually, Erasmi said something that had me coming here quickly."

Sh*t! Nora wanted to smack her face. She knew she should not have been stupid enough to answer ERasmi's questions about her feelings for Demetri! Now the man had gone and blabbed to Demetri. No

no no no no! She needed to divert Demetri's attention so that she could call that betrayer and question him about how much he had told Demetri!

"Really? What did he say, sugarplum?" Nora asked with a straight face.

Demetri, who had just taken a sip of water, coughed and spluttered as he stared incredulously at Nora, "Sugarplum?"

"Hmm. You wanted me to call you something sweet, right? I think Sugarplum sounds good. Don't you think so? Then what about...cupcake?"

Chapter 184: Bakery

While Demetri shuddered at the names, Nora was enjoying his expression. His face looked green. So she tried to out a few more names, "You don't like cupcake? I think it's sweet... But if you don't like it let me think... How about sweet dumplings? Or Honey muffin? Or...."

Before Nora could come up with more ridiculous names to throw on him, Demetri quickly walked forward and covered her mouth with his hand.

Demetri raised an eyebrow, his eyes narrowing playfully. "Sugarplum? Cupcake, sweet dumpling, honey muffin? Are you secretly opening a bakery or looking for a name for me?"

Nora mumbled something behind his hand, her eyes twinkling mischievously. Demetri removed his hand and looked at her with resignation while she grinned at him.

"Maybe I am going to open a bakery!! Who wouldn't want a mouthful of sweetness?" Nora chuckled, her laughter bubbling like a playful melody. "But I have actually changed your name on my phone so you need not worry."

Demetri looked at the screen as Nora showed him the phone... It was still Mr Husband... but she'd added a possessive adjective to it..." My Mr. Husband..."

He shook his head even though he was quite pleased with the adjective. It was... not bad... he didn't mind at all.

Nora grinned at her successful diversion and offered, "Well, I've thought of a few more names...I can call you Frosty Darling or Sweet snowman..."

"I think I'll stick with Demetri, thank you..." Demetri shook his head and cut her off lest she stick him with any of those ice cream shop names.

Nora pouted playfully as she sat on the couch, batting her eyelashes. "But Demetri, imagine the joy of being known as Frosty Darling! It's like a winter fairytale romance, don't you think?"

"No thank you. That name would make me feel like I need to have a carrot for a nose."

Nora giggled as that image appeared in her head while Demetri watched her with an indulgent look, his eyes glittering. The silly nicknames that she came up with might be cringe-worthy, but they were a small price to pay for the joy brought into his life.

Will she still look at him the same way if he told her that he was head over heels for her... Sigh.

Turning away, he discarded his jacket and started to unbutton his shirt. He'd come here all the way but now that he was here, he had no idea what he was going to tell her or how. It was quite unlike him to do things without thinking. But he should be used to it now when it came to her. He'd married her without thinking, hadn't he? He'd actually believed that he would never fall in love! And now here he was, ready to eat his own words...

On one hand, he simply wanted to blurt out the truth while on the other, he wanted her to feel how special and precious she was to him.

As Nora leaned back on the couch, her eyes widened when she saw him unbuttoning his shirt. "What are you doing?"

Demetri frowned at the panic in her voice and looked at her. What was he doing? He was preparing to go for a shower...

At this point, he realized that while he had been thinking of confessing to his wife, her mind had wandered towards something else... He'd created a monster when he introduced her to the pleasures of the body?

"What am I doing? You can't tell?"

"Uhh... I thought you wanted to tell me something but now you are disrobing..."

"Disrobing?" Demetri raised an eyebrow, "You've been reading a lot of historical romances these days? But you are right. I am indeed disrobing. It is what one does when they need to take a shower..."

"Ahh..." Nora blinked at that. He wanted to take a shower. And here she was thinking that he'd want a repeat of the last time...

Demetri could read her like a book of course. He walked or rather prowled towards her slowly and leaned down. Nora leaned backwards on the couch as he came closer, blinking rapidly. Placing his hand on each side, he inched even closer. Nora tried to keep her eyes on his face but the shirt had already parted and her eyes were rather thirsty.

As she feasted her eyes on his abs, Demetri gently kissed her lips before leaning close to her and whispering, "I would do that if it's your wish, but I'd been in the office for a few days and then travelling...Also, I'm here for the foreseeable future...so there is no hurry, hmm... We can spend the next few days in here. Steam things up a little bit... a steamy romance is much more successful than a winter fairytale one, I assure you."

Nora blushed a bit at that and quickly stood up before her mind could conjure up anything else that would make her prone to his teasing. "Who wants to write a steamy romance? Ha! A fairytale is the best! Oh gosh! I have to run, Demetri! You did not tell me you were coming! I still have a theatre performance in the evening! I'll... I'll uh call you to make plans! Bye..."

Before Demetri could respond, Nora quickly slipped out of the room, leaving him with a bemused expression.

As she raced out, Demetri called out, "I'll come there to pick you up for dinner, Be ready, kitten!"

Nora muttered under her breath as she escaped her husband's room with her heart threatening to beat out of her chest. First thing she needed to do was call and interrogate Erasmi Frost! Just what had he gone and said to Demetri that the man had come here so suddenly?

She should not have confided in him! It was a wrong choice. Her confidant was too close to the enemy... She thought back to their conversation when Erasmi had questioned her directly, "Do you love my brother?"

Chapter 185: Her Confidante

A few days ago

"Do you love my brother?" Erasmi asked Nora pointedly.

Nora looked away, unable to say anything. She actually was unsure about what she felt. She looked at Erasmi carefully. Even though he looked exactly like Demetri, she could feel he was different. So if she were to theorize that she was only attracted to Demetri's good looks, this vetoed that theory. Erasmi felt more like a brother...

"What is love Erasmi? I've never felt love. So how would I know if I love him or not? My only understanding of love comes from romance novels and I am not so foolish to think that those things exist in the real world."

Erasmi stared at Nora and sighed, "Nora, do you know when I first regained my senses, I hated Demetri?"

Nora looked at Erasmi in surprise. Erasmi hated Demetri? Why?

"Shocking, isn't it? But its not that far-fetched."

"Because you blamed him for the accident?"

"Yes and No. At the time, every feeling that I had felt for Demetri, for Nellie seemed like it was just yesterday. I only had broken information that I had received over the years. None of my other brothers or family ever visited me."

"I was the one who had been groomed for taking over the Frost Industries. Yes, as brothers we had always been competitive over everything but the position of the CEO was to be inherited by me. To all of us, it was as if everything was set in stone. I would lead my brothers. So imagine my shock when I realized that while I had been in that place, my entire existence had been erased. No one was even aware that Demetri had a twin brother. I wanted to hurt Demetri so bad."

"Imagine my surprise when I learnt that while everyone had moved on from my so called death, the only person who had been fighting for me had been Demetri. It was like a slap in the face. The man I wanted to hurt was already hurting. Demetri, my younger brother had grown into a man while I was still stuck somewhere in the past."

"Nora, my brother already has you in his heart. And if you do not love him, then..."

Nora looked away from Erasmi before looking down and repeating, "I don't know. Erasmi. What is love? Is it that when he is away from me then I cannot function properly? Then I am not in love? Because I can. I miss him but does not mean that I cannot live. But does the thought of never seeing him hurt me and is that love? Then yes, I love him."

"Does love mean that I have to trust him with everything, then yes I love him. But does it mean that I have to agree with everything, then I don't love him. Can I live without him? Yes. Do I want to live without him? No. So tell me Erasmi, is it love or not?"

"You've already answered your own question, Nora." Erasmi spoke with a smile.

Nora frowned and looked at Erasmi with disgust. He had no answer to her questions and so he was only confusing her further!

Erasmi rolled his eyes and held, Nora's hand, "Who said that love has only these parameters? Love is a multiple-choice question with multiple-choice answers. The brain will always question things. But it is the heart that will have all the answers."

"Ask yourself that... There is no language of love, no parameters. Caring is also love. Trusting is also love. So is respect and so is yearning. So is protecting. Its all the little things and it's all the grand gestures."

Silence reigned between the two of them. She had never imagined that she would have such a conversation while sitting in a cafe with a man she knew the least.

She'd gradually come to accept that maybe what she felt for Demetri was indeed love. It was unlike the love she read about and yet it was exactly like that. But now she had another question... Would Demetri love her?

After all, the person who was supposed to love her the most had never loved her. She knew of course that Lara Anderson not loving her had never been her fault but even so, she'd tried to hard to make Lara love her. Could she do something like that for Demetri? Could she woo him and make him fall for her so that he would reciprocate her love?

But if she failed to get his love, then what? As she was lost in thought, she realized that she'd reached the hotel's lobby already and needed to book a taxi.

As she fumbled for her phone, she was approached by a concierge who quickly bowed, "Mrs. Frost. Your car is already here."

Nora frowned at that. "My car? I never ordered one..."

"We just received a call from Mr Frost that you would need transportation. It's already arranged, ma'am."

Nora blinked at that. He'd already taken into account that she would not get a cab here and arranged for conveyance. Her heart stumbled at that. Arranging a car was a little thing. All he'd done was pick up the phone and made a request. And yet, Erasmi's voice echoed in her ears, "It's in the little things and the grand ones..."

Feeling lighter than air, Nora quickly followed the concierge to the car. IT did not matter what Erasmi had told Demetri or not. She was going to take this chance and woo her husband. It was a risk. But

marrying him had been a risk and it had paid off so maybe if she took a risk where Demetri was involved, she might have a higher chance of succeeding...

Nora settled into the plush interior of the car, her mind buzzing with newfound determination. Now she had a clear aim in mind... Mission: Win Mr. Husband's heart. She just needed to formulate a plan to conquer it. Easy peasy lemon squeazy...

Chapter 186: Helpful Brothers

Erasmi stared down at the message that he had written, wondering if he should do this or not. Demon might actually attempt to kill him if he did... As this thought occurred in his mind, Erasmi made up his mind and pressed the send icon.

Erasmi: *asking for a friend* Need to woo a girl but the man has been friend-zoned. Give ideas to come out of that."

Sebastian: "E, Why did you create a separate group chat for that? You want to hide it from Nora? Is it that hot friend of hers? The one you had been eyeing all night on her birthday?"

Ian: "You just got out of the 'sleep' zone and you've been friend-zoned already? Also, please stop going after young girls! What is wrong with you and Demon? Going after young girls. What is wrong with an older and hotter woman? Is this some twin thing?"

Gabe: "When did you get a friend? And where? Who are you asking this for?"

Lucien: "You just need to be sincere..."

Seb: Why would you create a new group for romance advice and add Lucy? He has no experience in these things.

Gabe: "Actually, if we were to see age wise, while Erasmi is the eldest he has been stuck in the past so mental age-wise, Lucy is older than him. Maybe that is why Erasmi added him. E, even if you were not functional in the past decade, you have more experience than Lucy.

Lucien: "..."

Lucien frowned and typed furiously: "Why are you all attacking me? Erasmi has added Demon also. How does Demon have more experience?"

Ian: ...

Gabe: ...

Seb: ...

Demetri: "?"

Demetri: " I am the only one who is married. Of course, I have the most experience."

Lucien: Since when is marriage a pinnacle of romantic experience?

Erasmi shook his head in exasperation! These guys were just too...

Switching tabs, he messaged Demetri:

Erasmi: You have the most experience? Ha! I actually created this group to help you. So, what have you planned to do for Nora to court her with your vast experience?

D: I am taking her to dinner.

E: And then what? You will talk to her? And then take her home and make love! D! You've already been doing all that! You have to woo her. You need to 'do' something! Like a grand gesture!

D: I don't do grand gestures...

E: Well, you need to do it this time! I've already vetoed a few ideas for you. You cannot arrange for balloons or huge flower bouquets. They are too cliché. So is bringing her favourite food from somewhere. Proposing on the Eiffel tower is too common and arranging an amusement park for only the two of you is too movie-inspired. Thus, you need new ideas. So don't try to brag in the group. Be humble and get ideas."

After scolding his twin in the personal chat, he switched back to the group chat!

Erasmi: "All of you are as helpful as a teapot! Stop talking nonsense and give me ideas! My friend is desperate!"

Demetri raised an eyebrow. He was desperate? He'd had no idea...

Seb: That is not good. He needs to relieve himself before going there. How will he please the woman if he is desperate?

Ian: Hey! Not everyone's like you. Get your head out of the gutter.

Seb: It's not in the gutter. It was actually between two very beautiful legs before you all interrupted me...

Gabe: Are you feeling nauseous, Seb?

Seb: Huh?

G: Well, why else did you put your head between your legs?

Ian: I bow to your roasting powers Gabe... P.S. His legs are not beautiful...

Erasmi was tempted to throw his phone against the wall. These guys...

Erasmi: "Do you guys have the attention span of a gnat? Instead of answering a simple question, all of you are going on blabbering nonsense!"

Gabe: Just ask your friend to arrange something memorable that the girl might enjoy.

Erasmi sighed. At least this one was some semblance of a suggestion. They would simply need to narrow down what Nora might enjoy. But...

Erasmi: "What if it backfires?"

Gabe: "Then it will be a memorable disaster instead of a memorable experience. Either way it becomes memorable. So?"

Erasmi could almost imagine his brother shrugging at this point and sighed.

Seb: "Just make sure whatever you plan is legal..."

Ian: "Be yourself but add some mystery to yourself."

Seb: *eye roll emoji* How do you suggest he add some mystery? Should he wear a cape? Or maybe a fedora and a Zorro mask?"

Ian: If he wants to. Just make sure not to trip over the cape...

Erasmi finally face-palmed himself and wrote angrily, "You're all impossible. I'm starting to regret seeking advice from you."

Seb: Don't regret it, embrace it. You're in the company of love experts, after all.

Lucien: You can serenade her? Sing her favourite song? Or your friend can write her a love letter expressing his feelings.

Ian: "Are you trying to recreate a 19th-century romantic comedy movie?"

Seb: Yup. All those suggestions are so last decade!"

Erasmi shook his head and stabbed his fingers at the screen and quickly removed them all from the group chat! He had a group of monkeys for brothers! Useless the lot of them.

Finally, he messaged Demetri, " Are you sure about this dinner plan of yours?"

Demetri replied with a single affirmative word but Erasmi was still worried," And about the after-dinner part..."

"I've got that covered, E. Thanks for all the non-help."

Finally, Demetri turned on the silent mode on his phone as he continued to dress up for dinner. The entire discussion just now had made him realize how little he knew of Nora. The only things that he knew she enjoyed was reading novels. And maybe swimming... But what else? He needed to work on that project and do some research on Nora...

Suddenly the simple dinner date that he had envisaged had taken on a rather sinister turn, making him extremely uncomfortable...

Chapter 187: Great

"Great. Just great." Nora stood in front of her rather empty wardrobe with her hands on her hips and muttered to herself. She did not have a single formal dress! Suddenly, she missed her fully operational wardrobe that Demetri had arranged for her. Why had she been so stubborn and not brought a single dress with her? Now her anger had come back to bite her in the a**.

And why did she never invest in a pretty invest? Now that they were going to dinner tonight, was she supposed to wear her tracksuit and sneakers while he would be dressed to the nines looking like James Bond while she would look as if she was going to the gym? That would make him interested in her alright. He'd think he was going to dinner with a kid!

She picked up her phone. She should definitely ask him where they were going. Or at least suggest that they go somewhere casual... And now Isabella was also not here to help her save the day.

Isabella! Quickly, Nora squatted and searched through the bottom-most drawer. Bella had given her a pretty party dress when she'd first come here! She's just pushed the box to the back, not expecting to ever wear it. Finally, she found the box and pulled it out.

Grimacing, she looked at the dress before deciding that it would work, even if it did look suspiciously look like a wedding dress... Quickly, Nora changed into the little white dress, thankful that at least her and Isabella's shoe size was same. Dressed up, Nora gave herself one last look and nodded. Well, she looked pretty and yet different from the previous times when she had dressed up formally.

Instead of tying up her hair, she'd let it curl around her face and while she might break a bone in these sky-high heels it would be worth it... As she dabbed the lip gloss, she heard her phone ring... indicating that Demetri was here.

Demetri pushed a hand through his hair feeling distinctly uncomfortable. It reminded him of the time when he had just taken over the company and every director on the company board had been against him. Heck, even then he had not been nervous but quite confident in his ability to handle those old coots. But now, he was standing here, just below Nora's dorm room like a nervous little student.

It was all his brother's fault. So what if Nora was so much younger than him? Why did he have to dress younger for her? He'd taken good care of his body and did not look old if he said so himself. Why then was he dressed here in a casual jeans and sweatshirt was beyond him.

"It's your fault for falling for such a young girl. There she is surrounded by young doves and then she has to come home to a pigeon like yourself..." Even now he could practically feel the smoke coming out of his ears as Erasmi's voice echoed in his head.

With a huff, he leaned against the car, holding the small box in his hand as he waited for her arrival. And what was wrong with bringing her flowers? Just because they were cliché did not mean that she would not enjoy them! They were cliché for a reason! Stubbornly, he took out the small bouquet of pale pink roses that he had hidden in the car and waited patiently.

He glanced at the entrance of the dorm and then back at his watch. What was taking her so...

The beauty descending the stairs was Nora... As he glanced at the stunning vision in white, he felt his stomach drop. And not solely due to her breathtaking appearance...Yes he was casually dressed while she was formally dressed but suddenly he felt as if he was standing at the altar waiting for her. There might as well be wedding bells playing in the background.

The white body-hugging dress accentuated her curves and stopped just above her knees but the back was longer, falling over her hips and resembling a train for the dress. He felt his knees go weak and wanted to check his watch. Maybe a church would be open and they could hold a wedding.

When Nora first descended the stairs and looked around the place, she could not help but frown. Demetri had not yet arrived. But then, withing a moment, her eyes caught the man leaning against the car and she almost jerked to a stop. Thankfully she had been holding the balustrade or she would have fallen head first to the floor. Why was he dressed so casually?

How did she make such a mistake? She should have called him and asked him if they were going to a formal place or a casual place. Now here she was dressed to the nines while he stood there in his casual clothing. She had to remind herself that she'd seen him dressed down at home several times. However, this was very much different. He looked... so much younger and almost carefree. Even his hair looked a little different.

As she stood frozen on the last step, Demetri quickly strode towards her. As he stood in front of her, the heel and the step made her slightly taller than the man.

At a loss, she bit her lip and spoke softly, "I am overdressed. I'll just go and change..."

Demetri shook his head slowly and handed the bouquet to her, "You look prefect. These are for you."

Nora looked down at the pretty bouquet of flowers in his hands and accepted it with a thank you, feeling pleased. It was so pretty. Softly, she caressed the petals and looked up to thank him when a sudden flash blinded her.

Nora widened her eyes as Demetri lowered the camera in his hand and shook a small paper in his hand. Smiling, he handed the camera to her and said, "I got this Polaroid camera for you as well. But I had to capture this moment..."

"You clicked my picture? Show me?"

Demetri shook his head, playfully, "Uh huh. This is mine. Now come on, let's go..."

Nora looked at him again and then herself... They still ended up dressed as differently as they could... "Where are we going?"

Demetri grinned and caught Nora's wrist gently tugging at her as he said, "We need to find a church of course."

Nora did not know if she tripped because of the heels or because of his words but the next moment, she was in Demetri's arms...

Chapter 188: A Date

"Where are we headed?" Nora asked as she tried to quell the fluttering butterflies in her stomach as the car slowed at the red signal. However, Demetri turned toward her gradually, and instead of answering, he swiftly leaned sideways, capturing her lips in a kiss before just as swiftly pulling away.

Before Nora could fully grasp what was happening, Demetri had already retreated, and the car was back in motion. It wasn't until they came to a halt at the fourth red signal that she comprehended the pattern. Every time their car stopped, Demetri would lean over, bestowing a kiss upon her...

It was only after they were met with every red signal repeatedly that Nora caught onto the reason why her husband was driving at the speed of a tortoise...

"Are we playing some kind of red signal game that I'm not aware of?" she asked, a playful smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

Demetri chuckled, his gaze lingering on her face. "Maybe we are. It's a game of slowing down and stealing a moment when the world pauses. I want to do that with you, you know. Pause everything and steal every moment."

Nora could not help but feel warmth at this and quickly looked away and answered with a blush, "I think I quite like this game of Red signal..." As the signal turned green, she quickly moved forward and kissed his cheek. When he looked at her in surprise, she blushed red and spoke, "Well, its because we can be together even when everything is unpaused."

Demetri smiled at that and continued to drive towards their destination. It was quite a while later that they reached the place he had chosen and Nora could not help but look around curiously before she said, "We've come for a drive through movie?"

"Hmm. You've never been to a drive through and you wanted to give it a try..."

Nora did not know why she was surprised anymore. This man had the memory of an elephant. She'd only casually mentioned this and yet here they were. "Come on, lets move to the back so that we can walk it comfortably. We are almost late."

Nora rolled her eyes and made a face, "And whose fault is that? You could have been arrested for driving too under the speed limit!"

Demetri quickly stole another kiss from Nora as he grinned wolfishly, "I regret nothing."

As the moved and settled into the backseat, Nora could only shake her head at the detailed planning he'd done. The blankets, the plushies, it was as good as watching it at home.

"So what movie are we watching?" Nora asked, trying to look outside to see if there were any posters.

Once again, Demetri did not answer her and instead pulled her close, asking with consternation, "We are watching the movie?"

Nora: ".."

Casually, Demetri held up her hair, carefully draping them over her other shoulder and dropped a quick kiss, "You do know that drive-ins are not about watching a movie but all about making out..."

Nora blinked at Demetri and he simply stared back at her before grinning and stepping back as he gestured for her to look towards the screen. Nora quickly turned her head, as the title appeared on the large screen set up outside...

"We came to watch 'Harry Met Sally'? It's a classic movie! Wow!"

Demetri watched Nora's face as she looked at the screen outside with shining eyes.

Before the movie could begin, it was inundated with advertisements, but Nora was agitated not because of that. She could feel Demetri's gaze roving over her slowly and it made her extremely conscious. She wanted to turn her head and ask him why he was staring but felt too shy.

Tonight, Demetri seemed to be in a mood. Or maybe he himself was a mood. Every glance, every word seemed to be dripping with double meanings and anticipation as if waiting for the climax.

"Nora... I need to ask you something..." Demetri finally spoke when she resolutely continued to look at the screen, avoiding his gaze.

"Hmm?"

"First look at me," Demetri ordered with a soft sigh.

Nora looked down at her hands and shook her head, feeling too shy, though she had no idea why she was feeling this. It wasn't as if they'd never been together... Maybe it was because of her own feelings. The previous many times they had been together, Nora had not known that she was in love with Demetri. Now everything seemed different.

Internally, she scolded herself. So what if she was in love with him? Did that mean she had to be so shy? Silly her! Frustrated with herself, she took a deep breath and looked up at him boldly and questioned, "What is this important question you want to ask me?"

"It's really a profound question. Just be sure to answer it carefully so that you don't regret it later..."

"What?"

The butterflies that had settled down seemed to be spreading their wings again and Nora gulped waiting for him to speak and he finally did, "The question is: butter or no butter on your popcorn?"

Nora blinked... That was his profound question.

"Popcorn?" Nora repeated the word incredulously, all the butterflies in her stomach dying a painful death...

Demetri nodded solemnly, a playful glint in his eyes. "Absolutely. It's crucial information for a successful movie night. Our future movie nights depend on this choice."

Unable to suppress her happiness at the thought of the future and his serious expression, Nora replied, "Okay, Mr. Serious about Popcorn, I choose... butter. Extra butter. And maybe some more butter."

Demetri feigned shock, "Extra butter? Are you sure about this life-altering decision?"

Soon, there was a knock on their window and a large tub of piping hot buttered popcorn was to her and they were soon settled into the cozy backseat, surrounded ready to enjoy the classic movie. Demetri casually draped his arm around Nora, and she snuggled closer, feeling a warm sense of contentment.

Chapter 189: An Idea- Oh No...

Late in the night, Nora and Demetri walked hand in hand along the pier, enjoying the fresh breeze, their steps in sync. Nora could not help but sigh. She'd already accepted that she'd fallen for this man and yet, seeing this romantic, laidback and funny side of him made her fall deeper. All day she'd been thinking on how to woo him and make him fall for her but instead, she was the one falling deeper and deeper.

And somehow she felt as if she did not have to make him fall for her. Her heart seemed to be sure that no matter how impossible it felt, how ludicrous it could be, maybe just maybe, Demetri also was in love with her. And that stupid belief made her want to confess her love to him right at this very moment. She trusted him that he would not break her heart

Taking a deep breath for courage, she opened her mouth to confess when suddenly a rowdy group of drunken youngsters stumbled out of a nearby shop, their laughter echoing like a cacophony of chaos. Demetri pulled her out of their way and as she heard random words and what they were talking about, Nora had a whimsical idea...

Like Nora, Demetri too had been gearing up to confess his feelings to Nora. He turned to watch the noisy spectacle and cursed in his heart, their romantic moment interrupted by the unexpected intrusion.

As he shook his head at the loss of a moment, he continued to walk ahead only to have his hand tugged at by Nora as she stood motionless.

He turned to her; eyebrows raised inquisitively. She wore a mischievous smile that warned him that she was up to no good... As Nora waggled her eyebrows and tilted her head in the direction that the rowdy people had gone to, as she made a pleading face...

"Do you want to start a brawl with those drunkards?" Demetri asked, half-serious, half-teasing.
"Because I must say, that's not the best idea. Drunk fights never end well."

Nora rolled her eyes and poked him in the arm, "I am not looking for trouble. Didn't you hear what they were talking about? I want to do that."

Demetri frowned, trying to think if he had heard them say anything specific... But nothing... Shaking his head, he tried to divert her attention, "I have no idea what they were talking about. But whatever it was, drunk ideas are never good. So, let's not..."

As Demetri reluctantly turned in the direction of the crowd, letting her pull him along, he could not help but sigh. He should have confessed immediately instead of waiting to walk down further. Now he had no idea what she was up to.

But Nora shook her head and started to pull him along. It was the midnight hour so of course it was alright to indulge in a little madness. Finally, she stopped and looked up at the shopfront that the people had entered. She could still hear them all talking loudly.

Turning to Demetri, she announced, "I was thinking of getting a tattoo."

D's expression shifted from mock horror to genuine surprise. "A tattoo? Seriously? What brought this on?"

"Nothing. I just want to get something!"

As they entered the tattoo parlour, the buzzing sound of the tattoo machines filled the air. Demetri looked around at the vibrant artwork on the walls, feeling a mix of nervousness. Nora, on the other hand, seemed to be on a mission. Before Demetri could stop her and ask her to reconsider, Nora had already walked to the counter and was in an earnest discussion with the man.

The man glanced at Demetri and then leaned in conspiratorially. Curious about what she had decided so quickly on, Demetri walked forward to try and dissuade her, but Nora quickly waved to him and followed the girl who called her inside the small place.

With a grimace, Demetri shook his head and settled into the chair ready to wait for a long while. He only hoped that the girl would not regret this later.

Inside the room, Nora felt as if she was on pins and needles wondering if this was going to be painful. She listened carefully as the girl designed a tattoo on paper for her to approve first while telling her about the later care instructions for the tattoo, etc.

Since the designs were extremely small, it was done relatively quickly and as Nora looked at it, she was pretty please with what she saw. She'd chosen a ring tattoo, intrigued at the idea. She and Demetri had never had an official wedding ring so this would be too good and she'd be able to surprise him.

Taking the paper, she nodded with a smile and extended her hand to the artist who quickly fired the gun to life. Soon, the words 'Mr Husband' were drawn like waves around her finger. And then she was soon ready for the second tattoo...

Outside, the man who had guided Nora inside stared at Demetri continuously while being ignored. Finally, the man decided to approach him and spoke in a straightforward manner, "Do you want to get a tattoo?"

Demetri raised an eyebrow at that but before he could categorically refuse, the man said, "Your wife is getting something for you? Maybe you want a matching one?"

Sighing, Demetri paused at the words. She was getting something for him? Then maybe he could...

He paused thoughtfully, contemplating the thought of getting a tattoo. He'd never given something like this a thought but maybe...

"Fine. I'll tell you what I want."

Soon, Demetri had a small tattoo on his wrist while Nora returned excitedly.

Demetri slid down his own sleeve to cover the bandage while glancing at her indulgently, "What did you get?"

Nora made a face at him and said, "You will know what it is when I am ready to show you, Mr Husband."

Hand in hand the two walked out of the place, excited at the spontaneous surprise that each had prepared for the other...

Chapter 190: I'm Seeing Things

Nora sat cross legged as she munched on sunflower seeds, surfing the television as she spoke to Demetri who was busy on his laptop.

"It's already been a week you know."

"Hmm?"

Nora rolled her eyes at his standard non-answer and glared at him playfully, " One would think that you are not interested in your wife anymore and that is why are avoiding sleeping with her."

Her answer was another humming sound from him.

"My Mr. husband! It's been a week since you are here, I've practically abandoned the dorm room and am living with you here, I'm this room . We've explored the entire city and then some but we are still sleeping separately! Have we had a fight that I am not aware of? Do I need to throw you into the doghouse?"

As Nora stabbed the remote control in frustration, Demetri finally turned to her and spoke, "One might think that you only want me for my body..."

Nora widened her eyes in innocence and replied, "Of course I want your body. Why else would I drool over an old man like you?"

Demetri paused and threw a look at her, " are you sure you want to call me that? Have you forgotten last time?"

Nora blushed at the thought of the previous time she had called him old and shuddered. She did not like not being able to sit comfortably. So she gave her most clueless reaction ever and pointed at herself, " Me? What did I say?"

Demetri shook his head in exasperation and said, "You are lucky that I have this urgent work."

" Well, at least I should know why you are avoiding me like I am the pla...did you sleep with someone else and have now contracted some dirty disease? Is that why you are not coming close to me..."

Shaking his head, Demetri walked up to her and kissed her mouth before she could utter something dramatic again.

Finally, when he was sure that her mind was not running haywire, he moved back and spoke, "Be good. You'll get your wish soon."

"How soon?"

Demetri shook his head and moved back to the laptop as his phone rang.

With a dramatic sigh, Nora slumped back on to the sofa and continued to surf the channels. These seven days had been the best ever and the most frustrating ever!

Finally, she stopped on a news channel and closed her eyes. Since there was nothing interesting to see, she might as well listen to the news...She'd almost fallen asleep when a few words caught her attention, "We are now in a live chat with the CEO of Frost Industries to discuss the future markets for the finance and hospitality sector..."

Nora opened one eye and watched as Demetri appeared on television and soon started answering questions posed by the news anchor... Her eyes widened and she sat up straight as she turned to stare at Demetri and then spoke up, " Demetri! I think these sunflower seeds are spiked with some drug. I'm seeing things in two..."

Demetri sent an ironic glance her way and shook his head, " You are only seeing me in twos. Nothing else."

Nora pouted. "Fine fine. Would you care to tell me why Erasmi is pretending to be you?"

"He's been doing that since I came here. With all the work obligations, it would have been impossible for me to have any free time so Erasmi's taken my place."

"You've given a new meaning to cloning. I can't believe you would do that to Erasmi..." Nora accused dramatically.

"Would you rather that I be there instead of being here with you."

"Hey! I did not say that..."

"Good then. Now, I think you need to go out and check the few dresses that have been sent for you... Tomorrow is my final night here and then I am going back, so we are going to spend tonight and the rest of the day tomorrow..."

"I want to come with you, Demetri. At least tell me why I can't come. I know you've been hiding something from me. And I know it has something to do with me..."

Demetri sighed, "I'll tell you everything tomorrow. Nora, do you know what day it is tomorrow?"

"What kind of a pathetic attempt is that to change the subject? Of course, it is Sunday..."

While Nora looked at Demetri smugly, he spoke with disappointment, "And then people accuse of men forgetting birthdays and anniversaries..."

Nora's mouth felt open as she realized what he'd said... It was their wedding anniversary tomorrow. How could that have slipped her mind... But she knew how, of course. She'd never even paid attention to the date before...

"Who said I've forgotten? You only asked me what day it is. How was I to know that you were referring to our anniversary? You should've asked me what special day it is today and I would have told you!"

Demetri nodded his head, his expression clearly telling her how much he did not believe her attempt at covering herself.

"What? Do you not believe me? You tell me then; how can I forget the day when I became Mrs. Old man at a tender young age? Tell me, is it not our anniversary tomorrow?"

"Alright, I believe you. Now go and check out those dresses. We are staying out tonight and your wish will be fulfilled."

As Demetri threw a heated glance her way, Nora quickly jumped off the couch and would have raced out to check the dresses, when Demetri called out, "Kitten, you do know I am good at keeping accounts, don't you?"

"Huh?"

Seeing her confused look, Demetri gave her a smile that made her shiver in fear and thrill, "I'm keeping a tab. I'll have you pay me back for every time you call me an old man..."

Nora stomped her feet and moaned, "This is not fair! You are not allowed to be so petty. Demetri Frost! Just wait..."