

Benefits 221

Chapter 221: The Royal Family Drama

Once the meeting had been adjourned, Queen Rosalind walked out of the room, followed by Princess Eleanora and Minister Alexander Sterling. While the other ministers flocked to the Queen or to congregate among themselves, Alexander Sterling caught Eleanora's elbow and quickly took her aside.

Eleanora looked at the man in confusion, but he quickly whispered, "Eleanora, I've heard you often go to the Queen's gardens for strolls?"

Eleanora frowned and looked at her uncle uneasily, "How did you know that?"

"I have my ways. Eleanora, I want you to go to the garden this evening around 6pm. You will enter the labyrinth and continue to take every left till you reach the centre. Don't tell anyone you are meeting me. Go now. Until then, if anyone asks you about your opinion about ascending to the throne, give them vague answers but remember their faces or names."

Eleanora nodded and watched as the older man left, and slowly turned to walk away. What was going on? Why did she suddenly feel that she had descended into a political drama? And she had no idea if she was supposed to be the villain or the female lead. She had a feeling though that she had been relegated to the role of a villainous.

Queen Rosalind walked to her apartment in a huff! As the door closed behind her, she unleashed her anger on her son, "Alexander! I told you that bringing her here would be trouble. All my life, I was so careful to keep Lara Anderson away from here. Even though that woman pretended to be elegant and virtuous, I saw her for what she was. She fooled us for years with her pretending that Sara was a Sterling!"

"Mark my words, this Nora is carved from the same mould as her mother, whether she has her memories or not! The moment she saw the opportunity to gain power, she pretended to not want it but did not refuse it as well! Stop being such a coward and get rid of her!"

"Mother! Mind your words! Do you think it is so easy to get rid of her? Also, she is also a Sterling so how does it matter whether Evangeline ascends to the throne or Eleanora?"

"How can you say that, Alex? I worked all my life to make you the Crown Prince but in the end, you gave that up to appease your father without taking me or my sacrifices into consideration! And now you want to do this same injustice to my granddaughter? You ask me what is the difference between Evangeline becoming the next ruler and Eleanora. The difference is that Nora comes from trash while Evangeline is my bloodline!"

"Mother! Why do you not understand that there are others who do not want to support us? They are using this ambition of yours to create a rift between the family so that they can roust us! I gave up the throne all those years ago to control those people! They are not your allies."

"How can you..." Queen Rosalind tried to protest but her son cut her off.

"Queen Rosalind, tell me one thing. Was it your idea to attack Nora?"

Queen Rosalind raised her chin and nodded, "Yes."

"Think well, mother. Was it really your idea or were you a puppet in someone else's hand. They want you to use you to get rid of Eleanora and Evangeline."

"No. That is not..."

"That is enough. Let me make this one thing clear. You will not interfere in these matters anymore. I will take care of everything while making sure that Evangeline takes her rightful place. But if you try to interfere, I will make sure that the only way you can see this is from the heavens. I will not let your greed foil my plans."

Queen Rosalind opened her mouth to protest but closed her mouth when she saw her son's threatening look. Her usually soft-spoken son, resembled her ferocious husband at the moment, almost frightening her.

"Alexander, are you really threatening me? Your own mother?"

"I am threatening the person who can ruin years of my hard work because she has been blinded by her bias. Consider this my last warning, Mother."

Queen Rosalind frowned as she watched her son walk out of her house, scared by his threat. She knew that her son was mild tempered but she also knew that he could be ruthless when needed. And this time, if he'd warned her then there were chances that he would make true on his threat.

Alexander Sterling walked to his office with a pounding headache. Some things were going well according to his plans while the others were making a mess.

However, the moment that he had been preparing for all his life, was almost here. But now that it was here, he was worried about this plan. He was simply following his father's vision all these years and the plan he had laid out.

"You are playing too dangerous a game, Mr Sterling."

Alexander Sterling stiffened and turned around. Standing there was the man, he had almost come to fear. Demetri Frost. The most perilous and variable element that had ended up being brought to Estania due to his mother's foolishness.

"Mr. Frost. If I didn't know better, I would really believe that you are not a human but a Demon like your name suggests. You've been able to get through without alerting my security detail again."

Demetri leaned against the door and crossed his arms in front of him, "You need to train them better. You've been avoiding me, Mr. Sterling. I don't appreciate it."

"I was unavailable previously. But I still have no answers for you, Demon. You've already appeared in front of Eleanora and still her memory remains lost."

"Is that why you brought Antonio to Estania?"

"Antonio was brought here as a diversion! If I need to protect Eleanora I have to pretend that I am against her. You understand that!"

"I understand that you are playing from both teams, Alexander Sterling. What I have yet to understand is which side your heart is on."

Chapter 222: All For A Family

"What I have yet to understand is which side your heart is on."

Demon's question seemed to ricochet off the walls of the otherwise silent office.

Alexander Sterling stared at the young man in front of him. Knowing the girl that was Eleanora, he could not believe that girl was in love with this man. However, he remembered the first few days after she had been brought here. Her mad screams for her husband still seemed to echo in his ears at night.

For the first time, in his life, he had felt guilt towards someone. How did he end up miscalculating so grievously? Thankfully they'd been able to save Demetri in time or else he would not have been able to look himself in the mirror.

"I am playing with fire, Frost. I am bound to get burnt."

Demetri raised an eyebrow at the words, saying nothing. He did not need to. "How did she escape being influenced by Lara Anderson. If it were not for the resemblance, I'd never believe that she would be so different from her."

Demetri sighed. They'd worked hard to suppress what Nora had suffered at Lara's hands. "Lara Anderson hated Nora. She'd made her life a living hell. Ultimately, Nora grew to hate everything Lara valued. It is why I advised you to avoid bringing Nora into this mix when you first approached me. Since everyone believed that Sara was your brother's daughter and she too was dead, you should have let things be."

"How could I have done that! Nora is also a part of our family! How could we have let her live like an orphan?"

"Living like an orphan would have kept her safe, Mr. Sterling! You need to warn her what she is about to face. Because of your secrets, my wife has already suffered enough!"

"None of my secrets have affected her!"

"Yes. They have! When we first met, Nora was tucked away safely in Country N. You personally came to me and told me that you would withdraw people who were keeping an eye on her in exchange for me arranging a meeting with her. You wanted to understand her opinion would be about inheriting the throne. If you had warned me that there were other people who had stakes in this, who might meddle, I would have made sure that she was not exposed to the threats!"

"I miscalculated. I agree." Alexander said with a sigh. "But you must understand, I never anticipated the extent of the threats she would face. My intentions were to unite the family and protect her, not expose her to danger."

"The past is the past, Mr. Sterling. What are your plans for the future."

"I am going to take your advice. I'm going to tell Eleanora the entire truth this evening."

Demetri stiffened. "And what does the doctor have to say about your decision?"

Alexander sighed, "The doctor thinks that Nora has become like this because she believed that you were dead. So, her brain erased all her memories to protect her. So while we cannot force her to remember the past, I can tell her what she may have to face in the future."

Demetri nodded at that while he cocked his head and questioned, "Why does your family wish to give up the Royal position?"

Alexander Stirling stiffened. Demetri Frost was too astute. All these years, he and his father had been carefully shifting the balance of power from their own hands to that of democratic ways. His father had

always been fearful of his brothers trying to usurp the throne, unable to feel familial love. And since then he had decided that he would not let power ruin his family. It was why him and his brother had both abdicated the throne.

However, giving up the throne would mean endangering their lives because those insecure in their position and saw them as a threat would naturally want to eliminate their family.

"You really are an astute man, Frost. And you understand what is happening. But you have always assured me that Eleanora is a strong girl...

"Who has suffered enough? Its time to openly deal with things, Mr. Sterling. I'd like my wife back with me, out of danger, at the soonest."

"You have a plan." Sterling asked cautiously...

"Yes... This way the shift in...."

Alexander Sterling listened with wide eyes as Demon outlined the plan. It was ruthless and effective, highlighting why he himself had failed all these years.

Demetri Frost had made a plan that would ruin those people in a way that they would never be able to rise up from the ashes again. No wonder Lara Anderson had been unable to get her hands on Nora.

Finally, when Demetri had outlined the entire plan, Alexander nodded and spoke carefully, "I'd like to think this over if it's okay with you. And discuss it with my daughter. After all, it is important to her future as well..."

As Alexander walked to out of the office, he could not help but thing, the plan Demetri proposed was drastic, and while it could ensure the safety of his family, it also meant exposing every dirty deed to the public. It would cause a war-like unrest in Estania which would in turn mean an economic downturn that could threaten the very backbone of this country. But like he said," It was time to put their cards on the table."

Outside, Alexander Sterling sighed and ordered his assistant, "Tell Evangeline to come back. Also, contact our allies. And Dora... send her to the hostel that I marked out for her..."

"Sir... is it time? Its too soon."

"It's already too late Robert. The time to be cautious is gone with the way the enemy has been aggressively attacking us. At least Dora will be safe..."

"Why not let Princess Evangeline also go there..."

"No. Evana has already proven herself. Throwing her away now would only mean insulting her. Let her come back. It is time for her to lead now."

Chapter 223: All Because Of You

Eleanora harrumphed as she walked down the path, not even daring to look up for fear that she would see the wretched man somewhere. Gaia the gardener had become the bane of her existence. In her waking moments, she would always end up being around Gaia and then embarrassing herself and now in her sleep moments, she would always end up being in embarrassing moments with him! And those were getting worst.

At least in her past dreams and nightmares, the man's face had been blurry. But now, it was always Gaia. She'd been tempted to refuse her uncle when he asked her to come here but then she would not have had a reasonable explanation.

With a frown, she kicked a pebble in her path and frowned. Hopefully, she will escape meeting him right now. She'd sent Dora here in advance to keep the man away from the Labyrinth.

Just as she was about to feel happy and smug, she saw the man in front of her squatting among the bushes, tending to some flowers. Dam* it! Why was he here? Where was Dora? Her sister had failed her.

As her face took on a sullen expression, she failed to see the small pots blocking her way and stumbled. Her arms flailed as she tried to maintain her balance only to fall face-first into a hard chest.

With his arm around her waist, Demetri had already picked her up and brought her out over the row of pots, carefully placing her on her feet.

Eleanora blinked at the sensation coursing through her while her hands clung to his shoulders. Slowly, as the shock subsided, she felt her cheeks heat up and a dismayed expression covered her face.

Quickly, she tried to push him away but forgot that he'd just saved her and almost fell backwards in her haste to get away from him.

Once again, he helped her stabilize herself, raised an eyebrow at her and commented, "It seems you are not happy to see me, Princess."

Eleanora frowned and tried to give a nonchalant response but failed miserably as she burst out, "Why are you always around?"

Demetri raised an eyebrow at that. What was with the mood? "Excuse me? Did you say something to me Princess?"

Eleanora looked at the man who was looking at her as if she was the one who was being foolish and wondered if she should simply shake her and walk away. But her mouth opened before her brain could order it to calm down and she spoke, "Yes. I am talking to you! Why are you here?"

"Uh. This is my place of work..." Demetri spoke with bemusement.

"I am not talking about that! I mean why are you always running into me!"

"Again, you were the one who ran into me... or rather over me, just now."

Eleanora stomped her foot. He was being deliberately obtuse! She could see from his smug face.

"You don't understand! You need to stay away from me, or things are going to get worse!"

Demetri was totally confused and felt foolishly asking, "What is going to get worst?"

"You making love to me!"

As she shouted out the words, Demetri wondered if he was having a daydream. What was the girl even talking about?

"Excuse me?"

Eleanora looked at his expression and realized what it was she had blurted out. Turning crimson, she quickly turned back, "I... I need to go."

Before she could run away from him, Demetri quickly caught her by the waist, lifting her by the air, "Not so easily, kitten. First, you need to explain what you meant."

"What I meant! Mr. Gaia! You are a married man. How dare you hold me like this!"

Demetri slowly let her down and raised his hands in surrender but not before warning, "Do not even think of running away without an explanation."

Eleanora, who had planned to do exactly that, froze in place before looking away. Pointing a finger at his chest as if she trying to poke a hole in him, "See. This is what I am talking about! You talk to me as if we are more than an employer- employee! As if we are more than mere acquaintances! And then you have the audacity to invade my dreams also!"

"What do I do in your dreams?"

"You do something that you shouldn't!"

Demetri looked at her blushing face and it did not take a genius to know the reason for her fluster.

"So, I make love to you in your dreams?"

Eleanora widened her eyes as she looked at the man! How had he guessed? What had she done?

"How? What? What are you talking about? You are totally wrong!"

"I think I am right in my guess. So, Princess Eleanora is angry at me because I have invaded her dreams and she does not like it? What if I try to not make love to you in your dreams? Though I cannot really control your subconscious mind..."

Eleanora blinked up at the man, trying to understand what he was saying.

"Are you a mind reader?" she questioned in confusion. How was he able to read what was going on in her head so easily. It felt as if she had a comic bubble erupting over her head and he was able to read everything.

Demetri smiled and tapped her nose, "I am a man of many facets. But I assure you I am not a mind reader... Though..."

Casually, the man traced his fingers over her neck, bringing it to her chest, where her heart was beating rapidly, threatening to jump out. Slowly, he tapped once with his finger and said, "I do know many secrets..."

With that, the gardener winked at her and walked away, leaving her stumped.

Just as Eleanora was about to be outraged at his actions, her hand went to the place where he had tapped. He knew her secret. He knew that she had a tattoo there. How else would he have... How was that possible? She needed to find out...

But before she could go further, her path was blocked by someone...

Chapter 224: Someone Lost

"Uncle Alexander.", Eleanora almsot winced at the high sound of her own voice and gave him a strained smile. Had the older man heard the entire conversation? That would be so embarrassing...

"Eleanora. I thought I was late. Good thing, I found you here. Let's go. I've heard the labyrinth is beautiful and there might be treasure if we reach the end of the maze."

Eleanora grinned widely, relieved that the man had not heard her making a fool of herself and placed her hand on his arm, letting him guide her. She actually liked this man out of all the Sterlings after Dora of course. She was incomparable. But her uncle... Even though Alexander Sterling rarely visited her and only ever asked about her health, he made her think of a father. This is what her father would have been like. Or had been like and she did not remember.

"Yes. But we won't be able to get to the treasure because it is being guarded by leprechauns and they will only drop some gold to lure us before taking away our money as well." Eleanora answered the man seriously.

Alexander Sterling laughed indulgently and shook his head, "So, Dora has been messing with you as well. She has quite an imagination, my little girl."

Eleanora smiled at this, "It's not messing, uncle. I like Dora the most."

"The most? I would think Dora would be the only one likeable in our family with Evana always being catty, your grandmother rude and your aunt is so caught up in trying to maintain peace that she hardly ever has time for anything else."

Eleanora smiled at the apt description agreeing silently but still shook her head, "I don't think you should say that, uncle! That is very rude of you!"

"Honesty is sometimes rude."

"So, how is your memory? And your dreams? Are they still torturing you? What did the doctor say?"

"You already know, uncle. The doctor told me at the very beginning that even though we would have patient-doctor privacy, she would be reporting my health to you."

"Hmm. She's told me that you should not be rushed."

Eleanora nodded. That was what the doctor had been telling her as well. Finally, they'd reached the centre of the maze, and Eleanora could not help but gasp while even Alexander Sterling could only look around in awe. Dora had been talking about the beauty of the place but even he had not expected this.

No one could have believed that Demetri Frost, the man known for his ruthlessness would be able to create something like this.

"Uncle Alex, it's really like a treasure. I think we need to take Dora more seriously now."

"You are right." Alexander Sterling agreed as he stared in a particular direction.

Finally, Eleanora, who'd squatted down to study the pretty flowers closely, asked, "So, what did you want to talk about, Uncle? You even stopped me at the meeting... and then told me to come here"

Alexander Sterling smiled and glanced at the girl on his side, "You are an astute girl. And quite direct. While I miscalculated today."

"Miscalculated? How?"

He sighed, "Eleanora, you've been living here for almost a year with no memory of the past and no warmth in the present. Your cousin has kept her distance from you only taking jibes at you when you do meet, your grandmother made no move to welcome you, always trying to make you feel inferior. I had thought, foolishly but quite wrongly, as I now know, that you would want to take the chance to ascend to the throne if the possibility arose. If not out of greed then out of anger towards those people who have wronged you."

"That really was foolish of you, Uncle Alex. I barely can take care of myself, why would I want an additional burden? Besides, I've been listening to Dora and she adores Evana always talking about her

achievements and how she never has time but is always kind to her. I can't blame Evana for not warming up to me when I have made no such effort either. However, I've heard and read enough to know that Evana would make a great leader to Estania. So why would I contest this?"

"There you go. Being perfectly logical. But politics and logic do not go hand in hand. There are people who want to disrupt the balance of power here in Estania. And since they have not been able to do this directly until now, they need someone who would be the face of their rebellion. And you coming to Estania has been a blessing and a boon to them."

"So, they want to use me to protest Evana's ascension to the throne? And you..."

"I'd like it if you would seem agreeable to this proposition... so that..."

"So that those rats would come out of their hiding places and approach me? And then you would have a clear idea of who is on which side."

"Yes. Eleanora, are you sure, you do not have your memory?" Alexander Sterling asked sternly while Eleanora smiled and answered, "Uncle, I've lost my memory not my mind."

However, even as she said this, she turned away, hiding her thoughts. So, she was to be used as bait to lure the bad people out. But what after that? She was already losing hope that her memory would return. How then would she find her husband...

"Uncle Alex?" Crossing her arms in front of her, she looked down at her gloved hand and questioned, "Once those people have been discovered, will you let me go to where I came from?"

"Eleanora, you are not a prisoner even now. I know your movements are restricted but that is because of threats to you. However, you can go wherever you please. Tell me where do you want to go? I will arrange it right away."

Eleanora turned back to her uncle and sighed, "I don't know where I want to go. That is the problem."

As the older man nodded, Eleanora finished in her heart," All I know is that I need to find someone... that I have lost..."

Chapter 225: An Intruder

As Demetri Frost jumped into the balcony of the large house, he could only shake his head. He might as well become a professional burglar with how adept he'd become at climbing the drainage pipes. Carefully, he looked into the bedroom, only to stop short in surprise. It was already past midnight and Nora was not in bed... Hmm... He'd need to change his plan. But first he needed to find her.

Slowly and silently, he treaded through her room towards the other place that he could guess where she was at. The green room that he'd prepared for her to sit in when she needed to rest or think.

Demetri shook his head at the lack of security in the house and shook his head. This old mansion was too dangerous for Eleanora and the task that she was about to undertake. He'd have to talk to Sterling for additional security patrols.

Carefully, he opened the door to the room and as he'd expected, found her asleep on the chaise lounge. Seeing her like this made him pause in Nostalgia. This was how he'd see her when he usually returned from work, all surrounded by her text books or her novels. He'd never thought that this would be one of his most cherished memories.

He hid behind the door immediately as he was her move before shaking his head. He actually needed her to be awake so why was he hiding?

Slowly, Demetri walked to his wife's side, looking down at her thirstily. Nora. Soon you will return to my side...

Suddenly her eyes snapped open and she looked at him directly. He expected her to scream, already prepared to stop her by covering her mouth. Instead she frowned at him and muttered, " Oh dear Lord. Not again..."

Well, that was interesting. He raised an eyebrow at her reaction and realised that she was only half awake. She looked at him through half-lidded eyes and was sure that she was dreaming.

"What do you mean by not again? hmm?" He whispered the words.

She pouted and complained, " You're in my dreams again. You promised me that you wouldn't invade my dreams..."

"I also said that I do not have control over your subconscious..." Demetri pointed out slowly.

She harrumphed. "Fine. Do what you want so that I can wake up then..."

"What should I do? It is your dream..."

Eleanora narrowed her eyes, " As if that has even mattered to you before. Now, kiss me fast and start..."

Demetri's smile widened as she turned her head away and closed her eyes, waiting like she was ready to be martyred.

Raising his finger, he took it near her face and slowly traced her cheek, touching her soft skin and yet not.

Her eyes snapped open again and she frowned.

"What happened?"

"Something seems different..." , she murmured slowly.

"Does it? How different?"

"I don't know. It feels more real.."

"Hmm?"

"Your face is clearer instead of being shrouded in shadows."

"And?"

"And..." Eleanor's trailed off as she felt the warmth of his hands. His hands were warm and his breath was on her cheek...

Holy.... "Aaahhhhhhhh....ummmmmm"

Eleanora stared at the man who'd covered her mouth and was now wincing as he covered his ear.

"You almost burst my ear drum, kitten."

"WHhwhehe wHwhw dodjtt gereje?" She mumbled.

"What am I doing here? I came to see you." Demetri mumbled as he slowly moved his hand. She sucked in a sharp breath, ready to scream when he covered her mouth again, "Are you going to scream?"

Irritated, she caught his wrist and poked her long fingernails into his skin, making him wince as he moved his hand, "I think I should scream. Since you are in my house in the middle of the night! Why are you here, Gaia?"

Demetri moved back from Nora, with great regret and shook his head, "I am here to see you. I understand that you've agreed to Alexander Sterling's plan?"

Eleanora's eyes widened. "How do you know? Are you some kind of a spy? Are you one of those people who are planning to cause a rebellion here in Estania?"

"Stop overthinking, Princess. Do you really think Mr Sterling would have taken you to the maze if he'd doubted me? I created that place. I am actually on your side."

"My side? You mean Evangeline's side, right?", she asked hesitantly.

"No. Your side. Whatever you choose. First things first, this is a ring. You can wear it under your gloves. For now, most people believe that your hand is charred and that is why you keep it covered. With this plain band under there, no one will notice anything and any conversation you have will be recorded. Also, I am going to be around you more often."

"You are going to be my bodyguard?"

"Kind of. I'll be around you all the time. Let people believe that we are having an illicit affair."

"We are having an affair?" Eleanora asked wide-eyed.

"Hmm. An illicit and secret one. That will give the people who want to use you something to hold over your head. The Princess Likes the Help. What do you think of this title?"

"How can you say that! You are a married man and you want to do this? How can you even... No. I won't be with someone who would misuse their position and their wife's trust..."

The playful expression on his face vanished and he spoke calmly, "Trust me, I've never broken my wife's trust. And I never will. I came here just to let you know. I will often be sneaking here by the way so, if possible, leave the main door open. I don't want to be climbing pipes each night..."

Eleanora watched as the man tapped her nose again and turned to walk away. It was at this moment, she realized something and called out, "Wait!"

The man stopped and turned around in question. Narrowing her eyes, she questioned him, "How do you know about my tattoos?"

Nora had already suspected that he knew from last evening and then just now, the band he gave her..."Its my job to know everything about you..."

Chapter 226: Lucifer's Angel

Evangeline's breath caught in her throat as Lucifer pulled her close, his hand settling firmly on the curve of her hip as the dance music began to play in the background. She could feel his heat even through her clothing, the distance between their bodies evaporating.

With expert movements, he guided her along the beat, their hips swaying in synchronized beats. For a moment, she worried about her security or someone clicking her picture and sending it to her family, but all that was soon forgotten as his hand moved over her back, tracing the line of her spine to the lower back. With a firm but gentle hand, he twirled her body away from him, before pulling her back in.

Soon, Evangeline was lost in music, forgetting everything else. The last five days had been the best in her life and she did not want them to end. But tonight...

The music heated up and Lucifer pulled her closer still, his eyes staring into hers as if challenging her to try and move away from him. As if she could. He was like the pied piper and she could only follow him.

As the music slowed down to a melody, Lucifer slowly stepped back. The intimacy between them might have disappeared but she could still see the heat in his eyes. Without a word, he led her away from the dance floor, his fingers entwining with hers.

They reached the crowded bar and Evangeline could not help but frown as she spoke into his ear, "There's no place here to sit..."

But instead of answering, Lucifer dragged her towards a barstool at the far end. She looked at the barstool and then at him, waiting for him to pull it for her. Instead, the man sat down himself as he placed the order for their drinks.

Confused over his sudden lack of manners when he'd been a gentleman all these days, Evangeline was about to question him when he growled, "Why aren't you sitting." Before she could reply there was no place, the man pulled her between his spread knees, caught her by the waist and the next moment, she was sitting on a rock hard thigh...

Even before she could assimilate to the new 'seating arrangement' and wiggle off his thigh, he tapped her hip in a warning and Evangeline froze.

However, once she's settled down, he simply continued to trace little circles over her hip as he stared broodingly at some thing behind the bar.

Meanwhile Evangeline felt as if she was going to hyperventilate. Five days since she had met Lucifer and he'd kept her on tenterhooks. The man seemed to be enjoying this game that he was playing.

She stared at the side of his face, taking advantage of the fact that he wasn't paying attention and sighed. It was like staring at a statue. He had the perfect chiseled face and his hair was somehow always messy, falling over his forehead, adding to that dangerously laid back feel he exuded.

"You're staring, angel baby." The man commented, without even turning his head. Evangeline blushed a bit but quickly raised her chin, "So? I like what I see... I'm going to continue looking."

The man made the corner of his lips lift up and he finally turned his head to look at her. His finger gently traced just under her chin as he said, "If you do that, then you'll fall in love with me. I can't have that..."

Evangeline's eyes widened and she almost blurted out that it was too late for the warning. My gosh! She would probably never see him again if she said that.

"As if I'd fall so soon... You are the one who has fallen..."

"Me?"

Lucifer cocked his head and looked at her, making her want to look away. There was something in the way he stared at her that made her feel uneasy.

"I meant you are the fallen angel, Lucifer..."

The man laughed at that and even his laugh made her feel something...

"You are right. You are a fallen angel's Angel..."

As she heard this, Evangeline wanted to say something but before she could their drinks had arrived.

She looked at the iced tea in front of her with dismay. The man already knew she liked iced tea and she appreciated that, but she needed something more tonight. Something stronger. After all, she HAD to seduce this man...

Evangeline licked her lips slowly as she wondered how to do this. With the way he was, she'd assumed that they would be spending every waking moment on bed but the man had been teasing her mercilessly unable to sleep at night because of him. Tonight, she needed to get him inside her so she could get him out of her system! She grimaced at the bad pun in her mind but knew it was the truth.

She'd never been attracted to anyone else in her life. Whether it was the lack of interest or her focus on her work, she'd had no relationships. But with Lucifer... She'd felt a connection that first time and now, it seemed to be getting stronger with each passing day. And now she had stupidly started thinking that it was love...

Suddenly, she felt a slight sting on her lower lip and she looked at Lucifer with wide eyes. He'd bitten her! Just enough to sting but still...

The man then rubbed his thumb over her lip and shrugged his shoulder, "I don't like you ignoring me..."

Evangeline felt those words rush all over her and she finally threw caution to the wind. She watched as he sipped his own whiskey and leaned in, whispering, "I want some of that."

Taking his lips with hers, she kissed him hard, biting his lip the way he had her. She tasted the slightly bitter taste of his drink before she forgot everything as he took over the kiss.

Panting, she leaned back and whispered, "We need to go upstairs Lucifer..."

Chapter 227: Beware What You Ask For

A week ago, she would have done anything to spend some more time with Gaia. He was great eye candy (totally drool-worthy), smart, knowledgeable about plants, and even comfortable to talk to or just be with. And now, a week later, she would do anything at all to get rid of the man! T

The reasons? Because he was a great eye candy, smart, knowledgeable about plants and comfortable to be with! And he was married! To someone else. She did not like this feeling of being a home wrecker one bit!

She stared at the silent man and sighed for the nth time.

Demetri looked up with a smirk, "Are you aiming for a world record in sighing? Or preparing for some melodramatic play?"

"This is not funny! I just don't find this acceptable. Why do I have to spend my days here, inside your home? You can come there and we can sit in different rooms. That way, we have proof of our affair without having to spend the day staring at each other!"

"There are too many eyes and ears in your home. If we were there, we would have to do more than just sit and stare at each other..." As he trailed off on the inneundo, Eleanora could only sigh once more.

Irritated, she looked around the small house once more and could only sigh. Where was this wife. At least he should have a picture of her.

"Are you really married?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"You do not have a wedding ring. And there is not a single thing in your home that would indicate that a woman lived here. Also, no pictures..."

"I never said my wife lived here. Me and my wife... we are separated for the time being.."

"Separated? As in you are going to get divorced?"

"No. Just that we have been forced to stay away from each other for a while due to special circumstances..."

"Special circumstances? Did she leave you because you flirt with other women?"

Demetri cast a glance at Nora over her snide voice and remark but said nothing. He could actually see that she was jealous that he had another woman and angry that she was lusting over someone else's man. It was so cute. She was actually jealous of herself and intent on not acting on her attraction so that she would not wreck her own home.

"You are quite a hypocritical man!" She finally burst out.

Demetri looked at her and leaned back easily, "And how did you come by that conclusion?"

"Well, tell me, what would you do if your wife did those things that you've been doing with me."

"I'd like it very much. I'd quickly carry her to the bed," Demetri answered seriously.

Eleanora looked at him with irritation and clarified, "With another man! If she flirted with another man, what would you do?"

"I'd go and hug that man..."

Eleanora opened her mouth and closed it, imagining things that she had no business imagining. "Uhhh.., excuse me? You would hug a man who would flirt with your wife?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I need to know how wide a hole I need to dig in the garden to bury him of course.", he answered nonchalantly.

"You... you... you..." Eleanora had no idea what to tell this man! "That's what I said! Hypocrite!"

"Well, I did not deny the accusation. I was simply curious about how you came about it..."

Eleanora looked at the man with exasperation as she sighed once again. What did she see in this man. Despite him being a big red flag, she was still feeling attracted to him! Did that not make her as much a hypocrite as him?

With a sigh, she resolutely turned away from him and would have marched upstairs when suddenly, he pulled her to him and pushed her onto the couch. Before she could scream, he whispered urgently, "There is someone outside..."

Wide-eyed, she curled her fingers on the couch, trying to figure out what he had heard or seen to have come to that conclusion. Understanding her thoughts, he pointed to a mirror on the side. As she looked carefully, she noticed the slight movement of someone spying on them through the bushes...

"What do we do now? Should we go catch them now? Let's do one thing, I'll crawl out from under you and go..." She whispered urgently in his ear.

Demetri smiled and shook his head, whispering in her ear, "No need. Those are just small fish. If we catch them, we'd simply be losing our bait."

"Then what do we do?" she asked urgently. "We can't just keep lying down here, doing nothing..."

Demetri leaned back a bit and looked at her mischievously and suggestively, "Well, we don't need to do that... We can do something..."

Catching onto his meaning, Eleanora smacked his arm and glared, "Be serious!"

From the corner of her eye, she noticed the man in the bushes hurrying away and poked his arm, "Look, he is getting away! You need to do something! Move move move!"

Demetri caught her wrist in his hand, catching her before she continued to hit him and moved away slowly and reluctantly," Don't worry. The small fish is now going to lead us to the bigger one. They've taken the bait that your uncle threw out the other day...to use you to get rid of the Royal House of Estania. Very soon, you will find someone approaching you with an offer to collaborate..."

"Are you sure?" Eleanora asked dubiously, as she sat up and straightened her clothes. Next time, she would wear some thicker clothes to prevent this man's heat seeping into her. These clothes were too thin.

Unaware of her thoughts, Demetri nodded reassuringly," Yes. After all, alexander Sterling has already cast the net far and wide. He just needed the right bait to catch all the fish in one go and you happen to be that..."

Chapter 228: The Enemy

"Sir, I think Princess Eleanora will fit our purpose. You were right. But there is one problem."

"What?", the man leaned back in his chair and questioned the advisor.

"We are unable to find anything about her past. Prime Minister Sterling has hidden it too well. It's almost as if she appeared out of nowhere. To add to that, she has no memory of her own past. All the maids have tried to probe her in case she is acting but it doesn't seem like it..."

"So that is one more problem added to the ones we already have! It wasn't enough that I had to wait to get rid of the entire Sterling family to ascend to the throne but now, another person has been added to the mix! For years we have been trying to find a way to dethrone them, but it has been useless! And now that the old King is dead and the heiress Evangeline seems to be some kind of angel who never makes a mistake. Tell me, have you been able to find anything?"

"And now, Sterling digs up his niece from somewhere and right in the middle of all this! Adding one more obstacle in my path to the throne!"

The advisor cleared his throat and tried to explain, "Actually, we do have some dirt that might help get us rid of the Sterling girls. I've been informed that there is no love between the two girls. We all know Evangeline has always expected to take the throne but now she finds herself faced with a competitor who is not even worthy because she doesn't even have a memory! Queen Rosalind has already

expressed her dissatisfaction and tried to get rid of this step-granddaughter...Meanwhile, Eleanora seems to be interested in taking the throne..."

The man narrowed his eyes as he heard this, a sinister plan forming in his mind, "If we play our cards right, we might be able to exploit their strained relationship. Make it appear as if they are both unfit to rule. Very good."

"Yes, sir. Also, there is more... It seems the esteemed Princess Eleanora does not have high standards like Princess Evangeline..."

The adviser slowly placed a cell phone on the man's desk and stepped back," She is interested in gardening... and the gardener. Perhaps some leaked rumours, carefully crafted whispers that suggest scandal. That way, we can find a way to tarnish their images without them pointing back to you."

The man leaned forward, fingers tapping thoughtfully on the desk. "We'll need a reliable source to leak the information. Someone inconspicuous, someone who won't be traced back to us. Find me a trustworthy informant within the palace walls."

"I already have someone in mind, sir. Just need a little more time to make sure this person will help us. And if anyone tries to trace they will find themselves at Queen Rosalind's door."

"Start with rumours of Princess Eleanora's questionable past. Emphasize her mysterious arrival and the lack of memory as signs of a troubled history, but be careful while you are at it and find the truth of her past as well. I don't want any nasty surprises later on."

"Yes, sir. What about the gardener?"

"We'll save his news for later. The ace in our cards. Until then, keep an eye on them. What about Prince Augustus? What happened there?"

"Queen Rosalind wanted Princess Eleanora to marry Prince Augustus so that she would no longer qualify to be an heir to the throne, conflicting duties and all. But Princess Eleanora's lover got rid of the Prince by scaring him senseless."

The man laughed loudly at that. "Princess Eleanora is quite smart to have been able to get rid of that man so easily and effectively. Be careful of her. She is unpredictable."

"Yes, sir."

Alexander Sterling stared at the pictures of his daughter on his desk with a scowl on his face. Evana had always been so careful. Why then would she take such a risk at a time like this?

"Is she having an affair with this man?" Alexander asked with a frown. When the girl had begged him to let her extend her stay there, he'd agreed because his girl hardly ever asked for anything ever.

However, seeing her like this... the girl might throw away everything that she'd worked all her life was. The man in the picture looked like a miscreant, local gangster! He shuddered to think what would happen if those people got their hands on these pictures. It would ruin her!

"What is her security doing? How dare they let such a person loiter around her and approach her?"

"Sir, the princess is the one who approached the man. She seemed to know him from the past. Also, our investigation team tried to find out about this man, but no one is willing to talk about him. Even his stay in the hotel is unmarked. There is no entry in their books."

"Tell Evangeline to stay away from him! I told you already to ask her to come back here."

"She is refusing to cooperate. The Head of Security tried to tell her, even threatened to bring her back forcefully, but she just wouldn't budge. Also..."

"Also what?"

"She's been spending every minute with that man and avoiding her security detail.. And, last night they were together... Mr Sterling, if I may be so bold... every child has a rebellious stage. Maybe this is

Princess Evanageline's. She has always avoided relationships out of fear... So, if she is trying to explore this, it might be good for her. And we can always control the damage."

Alexander Sterling sighed, "I know, Robert. But if this is a phase, then the timing could not have been worse. I fear this man might have been sent by them to ruin her.... Try to find out more about this person. And keep this news under wraps as much as possible."

"I will, sir. Maybe you could try talking to the Princess..."

Chapter 229: Angel's Lucifer

Evana woke up slowly to the soft snores of the man sleeping beside her. Turning around, she raised her head and stared at him with sleepy eyes. A soft sigh escaped her as she stared at him. Her fingers itched to caress his face and tug at his soft hair. He looked cute even when he snored. Gently, she traced his cheek and murmured, "It's a good thing you're adorable when you are snoring. Otherwise, snoring is a total turn-off..."

Rolling onto her back, she sighed in melancholy. She would not be able to put off returning to Estania any longer. She played with the thoughts of asking him to prolong their relationship... But they did not even have a relationship...

She looked down at their intact clothing and shook her head. They'd not even 'slept' together! In the very beginning, he'd warned her that he was in this only for the physical relationship. But they hadn't even done that. If she had not felt his desire against her and the way he would look at her, she would have doubted that he was interested in her.

But he kept on holding back. And that gave her butterflies. Did he feel the same pull towards her that she felt for him. Was that why he was restraining himself because he did not want their time to become some meaningless entanglement? She told herself that she was overthinking things but her heart kept fluttering at odd times.

Rolling back onto her stomach again, she placed her chin on his chest and stared at his face, "I can't believe you actually put me to sleep with a story about accounting! Do you really have such a boring job? Balance sheets and all that?"

Last night, when she'd finally gathered the courage to ask him about his personal life, ready to back off if he refused but then he had answered her after a pause. However, that answer had been so unexpected

that he might as well have told her that he did not want to tell her. She'd expected him to tell her something like he was a racer or something dangerous and adventurous. When he told her that he was an 'accountant' she'd been sure that he was pulling a fast one on her.

A boring job for a person like him! Her Lucifer looked as if he would not even be able to sit behind the table, let alone sit with boring numbers all day long. All that energy he had contained inside him. But then, he'd started talking numbers and made her fall asleep.

As she reminisced, a giggle escaped her. She was thinking of him as hers already...So foolish of her.

As her small laughter died down, she realized that everything seemed to be especially silent. Her eyes slid to his and she grinned up at him, "Good morning, sleepyhead."

Lucifer gave her a half-hearted reply before pulling her upwards and into his embrace as he threw a leg over her hips and pulled him close to her, before snuggling into her embrace.

Evangeline blinked at the intimacy of the situation feeling herself go hot. His face was buried in her neck and she could feel his warm breath caressing her while his morning member made itself known against her stomach.

Carefully, she patted his back, "Lucifer, we need to wake up."

He hummed against her, pulling her closer instead of letting go before snoring again. Feeling all soft, she could not help but hold him close to her and smile again. So what if they did not consummate their relationship or give it a name, she would always be able to keep these beautiful memories and cherish them.

Time might be slipping away but these shared moments would always be hers.

Just as she was about to fall asleep again, a sudden knocking on the door surprised her. She tried to ignore it but the person seemed to be persistent. Irritated, she moved slowly, ready to slip out of his embrace but the man would simply not let her go...

Finally, the knocking on the door subsided and she lay back down, only to see Lucifer staring at her.

"What are you looking at?"

"You."

"Me?" The butterflies in her stomach fluttered again and she could only look away from his intense gaze.

"You are beautiful Evana. More than you know." Lucifer's deep voice made her insides quiver even as she denied his words.

"Okay, stop trying to flirt with me, Lucifer."

"I am not, Evana. Evana...angel, we need to talk."

Evangeline looked at him with wide eyes. She'd always heard that this sentence was too ominous in a relationship but disregarded it. However, listening to him say this, she could only help but worry.

Pushing away from him, she tried to get off the bed as she said, "Fine fine. We can talk about whatever it is you want after we've had breakfast. Also, remember what you promised me. We are going to spend the day together in here."

"We need to talk, Angel. Let's do it now..."

Even as he said this, he let her go and suddenly she felt abandoned...

Looking at his sombre expression, she felt a heaviness in her stomach. What did he want to say. Whatever she was, she somehow instinctively knew that she did not want to listen to it...

When he reached for her hand, she stepped back. "Lucifer, I am scared suddenly. What is this about? Is it something I am not going to like..."

He looked away and she could see the regret in his face.

"Let's not talk about whatever it is you want to say, Lucifer. I am leaving for Estania today. Please. Until then. Don't ruin these moments."

"You might regret this later on, Evana. Listen to me..."

She shook her head stubbornly, "No. I cannot listen. I will not. Don't talk anymore Lucifer. Just order some breakfast..."

"Evana..."

She heard him call her name but she had already run away from there, her heart in her throat.. No. Please no. Don't let everything be ruined...

Chapter 230: Who Is Deemtri?

"Go Kitten! Go fetch!!!" Demetri glanced at the two girls who were playing with the exuberant little dog and shook his head. He should not have named the little dog as Kitten...

The dog quickly fetched the ball that had been thrown, wagging its tail excitedly, enjoying the play and the doting the two girls were showering on him.

Also, why did he think that Dora had been a good idea to be the third wheel on that Prince Augustus and Nora's date? Now, Nora was using Dora similarly for them by bringing Dora to avoid being alone with him! Though he did not mind the little girl, he missed having the chance to tease Nora.

As he dug through the soil, he continued to watch Nora from the corner of his eyes, still as smitten with her as ever. However, his distraction soon caused him heavily as the shovel slipped from his hand and....

Eleanora could feel the man's gaze on her from the minute she started playing with Kitten and Dora. It made her aware of her every movement and consciousness, making her want to hold his attention. She was almost tempted to turn to him and give him a good show...

Just as Dora threw the ball away, running with the dog to fetch it, she suddenly saw something from the corner of her eye and whipped around in time to see...

Time seemed to stretch into a slow reel as she watched in horror, the shovel slipping from his hand as he slipped in the wet mud, his head hitting against the wheelbarrow...

"Demetri!" Eleanora screamed in panic, his name slipping out involuntarily, as if the urgency of the moment had stripped away everything else.

The sound of him hitting his head was followed by that of the shovel thudding against the ground, which was followed by the man.

Running to him, Eleanora knelt down in panic to see him lying there in a pool of blood, his eyes closed.

For a moment, everything turned blank as she looked down, trying to move him, only to have her own fingers bloodied... Her vision started to turn black and a whimper escaped her mouth, "No... Demetri..."

Just then Dora and the dog raced back. While Dora was a little slow to catch on, the dog quickly became aware of the tension in the air and smell of blood, racing to its master.

The sudden arrival and frantic barking of the dog, jolted Nora as she stood up hurriedly, "Dora, go and fetch the doctor quickly!"

As she looked around frantically to help turn him around and stop the blood flowing from his wound, she heard him calling out faintly, "I am alright, Nora..."

Eleanora quickly turned around to see him in a sitting position. Hurriedly, she sat next to him, "Why are you sitting up? Lie down till the doctor comes here... Let me check where it is hurting? Do you need stitches?"

Demetri winced at the pain shooting through his head but caught her hand, "I am alright. It's just a little bump. Don't worry..."

However, as he touched her, he realized that she seemed to have gone ice cold. Her skin had turned clammy and he could feel the tremors racking through her frame.

"Nora, I'm fine. Everything is fine!" He whispered urgently. But she seemed unable to hear him as she stared at his face with a blank stare.

Suddenly, she jerked her wrist away from him as a loud scream tore through the otherwise silent garden. Standing up, she moved around, trying to fight the unseen forces before she stumbled and fell to her knees shouting repeatedly, "NO! NO!"

Agonized to see her like this, Demetri tried to stand on his feet, the pain echoing in his body paling in comparison to everything else.

Slowly, he walked to her, taking measured steps to keep himself from falling as he tried to hug her, taking her shivering body in his arms, "Easy there, Nora. Everything is alright. You're fine. I'm fine. Take deep breaths..." His hands rubbed her back soothingly, as if trying to calm an agitated wild horse.

She rejected his touch as she screamed again, as if trying to reach someone in the memory, her hands extending in front of her. "Demetri!" Her voice had already turned hoarse from screaming and she could only try to escape from him.

It was a struggle for Demetri to hold onto her but still he continued to try while she continued to struggle, "Nora, I am right here with you. Nora... I am here.."

As Dora returned to this chaotic scene, followed by the doctor, she could only look on, scared and worried. What had happened? When she ran away, Demetri was hurt but now...

Seeing Demetri covered in blood, the doctor tried to check on him but Demetri growled at the man, "Check on her first."

The doctor did not waste time arguing as he could already sense the man's resolve. At a glance, he could assess that the girl was having a panic attack and was hyper ventilating.

Quickly, he opened his bag and pulled out an injection. Taking hold of her wrist firmly, the doctor pushed the calming drug into her body. Slowly, the fight seemed to slip out of her, as her body turned limp. When Demetri would have questioned the doctor, the man quickly answered, "She'll be fine in a few minutes. But I believe that you being hurt is what triggered the attack in the first place. So, get treated faster if you do not want her to relapse as soon as she wakes up."

The threat worked on Demetri who quickly let the doctor check him up. Once it was clear that he would only need two stitches and a bandage, Demetri complied with the doctor's instructions. As the doctor tended to his head injury, Dora stood by, her eyes wide with concern.

Quietly, Demetri asked the little girl to come to him and consoled her, reassuring her, "Your sister is going to be fine... Don't tell her about this, okay?"

Dora nodded and quickly hugged him, "You will be fine too, Gaia?"

Patting the little girl's head, Demetri nodded, keeping an eye on Nora who was already stirring...

"Gaia? Who is Demetri?"