

## Benefits 281

Chapter 281: Scared Me

"We need to divorce in the next few months according to our agreement..."

Nora raised her head from Demetri's shoulder and narrowed her eyes at him. Did he just say what she thought he did?

Demetri smiled and gently placed her head back on his shoulder and pulled her closer before she unsheathed her claws and continued, "Of course, the terms have already been breached, since we were not supposed to fall for each other."

Nora giggled at that. That was true. She was not supposed to fall for him and he wasn't supposed to fall for her. That leaves only one option open to us."

Guessing where this was going, Nora nodded her head as she waited for him to continue whatever it was on his mind... And continue he did, "So that leaves us no option but to dissolve this contract..."

Nora narrowed her eyes, ready to pinch him when he continued, "And sign a new one. A lifetime one. And this time the terms have to include not remaining in love, no everlasting adoration, etc..."

"Ha! Who would adore you! Now if you were the dog..." Nora teased, only to squeal when her bottom was pinched in retaliation.

Sitting up, she quickly straddled his stomach and placed her long nails on his chest, scraping lightly, "Demetri Frost! Is this your idea of a proposal?"

"Proposal? Who proposed to you? This was a proposition for the renewal of a contract..."

Nora narrowed her eyes and poked a finger at him, "I see. Because if this was a proposal... I'd refuse you for sheer non-creativity."

"So, I am not creative? And here I was planning all fireworks and an airplane with a banner..."

Nora giggled at that, "Hà! As if! Being over the top is so not your style! And if you do get the airplane with the banner, Ian and Seb are not going to let you live it down. Your reputation forever will be ruined. Also, you need to up your game if you want to renew the contract! Or I am going to refuse you. Getting kidnapped spontaneously is not going to help your cause!"

"You talk as if I am the only one who has been kidnapped. You were taken away from me twice! Almost three times in fact. Also, kidnapping was just plan A. If I did not go with those goons, they would have come after you or someone else."

"So, you went there and..."

"And handled Alpin Jr for us. I thought you wouldn't meddle and let me handle this." Nora spoke quietly.

Demetri sat up, moving backwards with her still in his lap, and leaned against the headboard. Gently, he caressed her face, "Is that what you want? For me to back off?"

Nora would have said yes without hesitation a minute ago, but as she looked into his eyes, she realized that she wasn't sure she wanted that. It wasn't that she wanted him to back off but she did not want him to be endangered. And yet, now that she'd experienced first-hand the powerlessness of your loved one being taken away, it made her realize how difficult it had been for him.

Leaning close to him, she hugged him, laying her head against his chest as she sighed, "I don't know, hubby. I... just don't want to lose you again. It's like losing myself."

Demetri wrapped his arms around Nora, embracing her tenderly. His fingers traced soothing circles on her back as he whispered, "You won't lose me, Nora. I promise. This time, I will handle things so that we can be together forever. Nora, I know you can handle everything, but this time, I hope you will give me a chance to protect you. I want to go back to our home as soon as possible, keeping you safe."

Feeling the warmth of his reassurance, Nora tilted her head up to meet his gaze. Their eyes locked, conveying unspoken emotions. Slowly, Demetri leaned in, his lips meeting hers in a sweet, comforting kiss.

As their lips met, Nora felt a sense of calm wash over her. This time, she was going to sit back and watch the show. Even as the thoughts washed over her, she was distracted by Demetri deepening the kiss.

Slowly, her hands moved away from his shoulders, entwining in his hair. The outside world stayed forgotten, as Nora surrendered herself to his desire.

Her hands moved down his body, tracing the contours of his muscles, while Demetri's hands pulled her closer. Soon, the small reassuring kiss turned even more passionate, and this time, their lips met even more urgently.

They both moaned at the desire for each other mounted, "I want you, kitten. I want to f\*ck you until you forget everything."

Nora moved away from him, looking into his possessive eyes. "Then make me forget everything but you. Mark me so that nothing can make me forget you."

She felt the heat in his eyes and quickly moved downwards. Getting on her knees, she met his gaze as she hovered over his hardness. His hands quickly cupped her a\*\* as he tried to pulled her downwards, pushing into her.

Their moans echoed in the now silent room as their lips met again.

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It was a long time later, that Nora lay slumped on him that she finally could muster the power to open her eyes. She moaned again as she felt him move inside her and she could not help but complain, "I'm going to start calling you Demon as well. And anyone who asks me is going to know that you are a se\* demon!"

Demetri opened an eye and smiled at her, quickly pulling her for a kiss, "It's only for you kitten..."

Gently, she pinched his ni\*\*le, "Well, it better be only for me, husband. Or else, I am going to make you an impotent demon..."

Laughing, Demetri pulled her close again, kissing her slowly again. After all, he needed to show her what she would lose out if she threatened him...

### Chapter 282: The Spy

"Who is the man that Alexander Sterling has been colluding with?"

The man looked at Alpin Banfi Sr and sighed. It was a guess that he was making, but he couldn't be sure.

"I believe the man is Demetri Frost, but I cannot be sure."

"What do you mean you cannot be sure? You've been by Alexander Sterling's side for years! Don't forget I've paid you for years without asking for any information, only for you to be able to win his trust! And now when I need crucial information, you are giving me these vague answers! You wouldn't be where you are, living this comfortable life if I had not paid off those goons whom your father had sold you to! It is time for you to pay me back Robert!"

Robert sighed as he looked at the man in front of him. All these years, as he'd worked for Alexander Sterling, he'd dreaded this day. The day he would have to show his loyalty to the man who had saved him from he\*\* at the cost of harming someone who had helped him make his life what it was today.

But a promise was a promise. And he knew once he had given up this information, his time here in Estania would be up. He only hoped that the man who was behind all this would be able to stop Alpin Banfi Sr from doing what he wanted.

With a sigh, he spoke, " Mr. Banfi. You've contacted me almost too late. Do you remember I sent a warning to you last year, when Princess Eleanora was brought here? I told you that you shouldn't have interfered with her."

"Of course I remember. But I don't need those warnings? What has she been able to do even after coming here? Even if she has been of no use to me like I planned, she has been of no help to that Sterling. At least she has made some trouble for that man!"

"But it is not Eleanora that you needed to fear! It was the Demon behind her!" Robert spoke harshly. This foolish man. He'd tried his best to warn him against the upcoming storm but he'd ignored the warning. And now that they were in the eye of the storm, he wanted to look for a way out.

"Stop talking in ridiculous riddles and be straight!"

"Eleanora was married to a man called Demon Frost! When your people attacked the private yacht, and followed your orders to get rid of him, they invited trouble for you!"

"Frost? Demon Frost? He is the CEO of the Frost Industries, isn't he? The ones that Sterling is collaborating with? Is that why the Frosts are being so nice to Estania? Why did you not tell me directly?"

"Because I wasn't sure. I'd accompanied Alexander Sterling to the meeting with Demetri Frost but I wasn't privy to what they spoke about. And then when Eleanora was brought here, she'd lost her memory and there was no talk of Demetri Frost I thought he'd really perished. But there was no news about him also."

"Later, I went to a business meeting and saw that man at a conference, giving an interview. I thought that maybe he'd gotten rid of Eleanora and thus there were no talks."

"But I was mistaken. It was only recently that I discovered that there is someone else who is pretending to be Demon Frost while the real Demon Frost has been in Estania since the beginning. And Eleanora has regained her memories for a while."

Alpin Banfi stilled as he heard this. As far as he knew, that man had been shot at least twice. He'd not just survived death but he'd been here.. Eleanora's memory had returned..."Dam\* it! That gardener is Demon Frost? The man who beat up my son?"

"Yes. He has established connections here while Eleanora was recovering and now as far as I can tell, he is not one to make useless moves. Even his own kidnapping had been at the hands of the young master could be a part of his plan."

"That bast\*\*\*! I'll kill him! How dare he stand between me and the throne. Robert! Listen to me..."

"No. Please listen to me carefully, Demon Frost or any of the Frosts are not something that can be easily dealt with. I've discovered some things..."

"Robert! Tell me directly! You've also taken a habit of being like that Sterling after being his assistant for so long! Just out with it! Can't you give me all the information in one go?"

"I am unsure of the truth behind this! But according to my sources, Nora was tried to be harmed by a few people in the past as well. One of them was later found at the bottom of the sea, a few of them were burnt alive and another one has turned insane and is living in hiding to save herself from his wrath... And Lily? The maid- Lily, that was supposed to be passing information to you, wasn't she? She slipped and hurt her leg yesterday! She won't be able to walk for at least six months!"

Banfi felt a shiver of fear as he heard this. If what Robert was saying held even a grain of truth, then they would...No. He would not accept defeat so easily and let go of his right! He had the right to that throne and to rule Estania and he would have it.

"Robert, you've already said what you wanted to. Now, listen to me carefully..."

As Robert heard the plan, his eyes widened. This man wanted to commit suicide but also wanted him to be killed. "This is too dangerous not to say foolish! If anyone catches me or something happens..."

"Nothing is going to happen! I won't let anything happen! Listen to me well, Robert! I won't let anyone stand in my way to the throne! I've been patient all these years. Even if you are scared, your life is already in the balance. If you don't follow my plan, I will kill you. If you do follow and can escape without getting caught, I'll consider us even and help you leave Estania."

### Chapter 283: Scary

"Psss..." Evana gently nudged Lucien as she tried to get his attention and whispered close to his ear, "Does he have to wear this kind of expression? Half the people in here are ready to sh\*t their pants."

Lucien glanced at the man sitting at the head of the table and leaned towards Evana, inhaling her sweet scent as he informed her, "That is his amiable expression, angel. They're foolish to be scared of that."

"Amiable? Looks more like a storm is brewing on his face," she quipped, almost shaking her head. She could not help but look around the large table and sigh again as she glanced at the screen. His plan was foolproof and she could not help but glance at the man again. If her father had been half as ruthless as him, things would have been too different.

She glanced at Nora who was sitting on the side and could only shake her head. She'd finally seen the difference between the way the man treated her and the rest of the mere mortals. And even though Nora had an impassive face at the moment, she could see her staring at her husband with starry eyes.

As she looked at her sister's expression, she felt a pang. Dear God! Did she look at Lucien with such a besotted look?

"Yes, you do," Lucien whispered in her ear.

Evana's eyes widened and she whipped her head to look at Lucien. Did she ask that out loud? She was sure that she did not...

"What are you talking about?", she asked, ready to deny anything he might have overheard.

Lucien gave her a knowing smile before quickly standing up to take over from where Demetri Frost had outlined the plan for the political annihilation of the Banfis'.

Before she could pester him for information, a few of the men who'd loyally stood by her father's side asked uncomfortably, "Is all this really necessary? Can we not..."

This time it wasn't Demetri who answered but Lucien, "We can of course look for more kinder ways, but haven't you all been doing that for years? But you haven't been able to suppress the man, instead letting him rot the inside of Estania slowly. What you interpret as unnecessarily ruthless is actually being kind to this man. Please remember he might not show this same kindness to you were you in his place."

Evangeline listened to Lucien talk about the pros and cons of the plan, considering every aspect that they could have doubts over and felt her admiration rise for him even higher. He almost sounded like an expert. And she just knew that she would have that horribly besotted goner expression on her face if she looked at him. And she would die that be caught like that.

Schooling her expression, she concentrated on the handle of her chair, hoping it would strike her with some inspiration. Thus, she failed to notice when Lucien had stopped talking and was now looking at her

expectantly. Dam\* it! She had no idea what their topic had shifted to. She cast Lucien a desperate glance for help or hint but that horrid man ignored her plea!

Thankfully, her father came to the rescue and continued, "Very well. We can do as you say. I will soon organize a grand national celebration, introduce everyone to Eleanora and announce the council's decision to name Evana as the next crown princess of Estania."

Evana widened her eyes at that. She was going to be declared the crown princess just like that? They couldn't be serious could they? All these years, her father had drilled into her that she would have to fight long and hard to even remain a princess. And yet, the entire game plan had been changed.

The people in the room slowly dispersed and she turned to her father ready to question him about this but even he seemed to be avoiding her and made a quick escape. She was perplexed to say the least.

As she gathered her wits, she was soon caught by Nora who looked at the two of them with sparkling eyes, "Come on! I've got a surprise for you both."

With quick speeds, Nora entwined her arm through Evana's and pulled her along. Not giving her a chance to even question her what it could be.

That is why when they entered Nora's home, she did not expect to see different versions of Lucien. The room was filled with testosterone and Evana could only blink. The Frost brothers seemed to have been made with some fine material.

She watched as Nora was quickly hugged by the four men in the room, her feet almost not touching the floor as she was passed into hugs. The men then flooded Demetri Frost patting him on the back and giving quick side hugs.

Soon, she found herself looking at a person who was like an exact older version of Lucien. She knew his name of course but could not for the life for her remember. Suddenly, she had the urge to hide behind Lucien so that the man would back off but he quickly caught her in a hug and patted her back as he said, "Welcome to the family! Our sympathies are with you for the chaos that you've invited into your life."

Like Nora, Evana was also hugged and patted on the head by the brothers as if they'd been doing it for years. She was pretty sure that she should feel uncomfortable with all the manhandling from these men but she realized that she did not.

Standing at the sidelines as an observer, she could not help but admire the rapport between all the men and the easy camaraderie.

Finally, it was Lucien who asked the question that had started forming in her head, "What are you doing here?"

She watched as the brothers exchanged glances among themselves before the bespectacled one- Ian was his name?- shook his head and announced, "We are here for your wedding of course."

Chapter 284: Your Wedding

"We are here for your wedding of course."

Ian's announcement hung in the air with Evana looking almost ready to faint. Worried that Ian might scare his girlfriend away, Lucien tried to remain calm and questioned Ian, "Wedding? When did this happen? And why do I know nothing of this?"

Seb: Because you are always clueless, Lucy!

Ian: You know nothing because you haven't even proposed yet. But don't worry, you can leave the wedding arrangements to us and focus on wooing Evana.

Gabe: Boys. Don't scare Evana. At least look at her face. She's gone pale at the mention of marrying Lucy.

Nora: Hey! Stop bullying my sister all of you! First, you gate-crashed her imaginary wedding and now you are bullying her."

Nora, standing beside Evana, couldn't contain her laughter anymore and continued with the fun, "Come on, Lucien, you didn't tell me us about this! At least the bride should have known."

The brothers chuckled, thoroughly enjoying Lucien's discomfort while Evana finally caught on. She turned her head to Lucien who was wearing a shocked look himself and realized that he looked too cute! Her heart fluttered as she saw her 'bad boy' wearing an innocent look. It gave her a chance to protect him.

"Hey! Who said I did not know? You guys are late. We eloped to Gretna Green and wedded there last weekend."

The silence that followed her statement was deafening, broken only by the surprised gasps of the Frost brothers as they directed their accusatory gazes at their youngest brother who had the audacity to actually let them miss his wedding.

Evana waggled her eyebrows as Lucien shot her an even more horrified look, making her finally lose her composure and laugh.

"What? You think only you guys can organize an imaginary wedding?" Evana fired quietly.

In the next instant, the brothers burst into laughter, and Lucien couldn't help but crack a smile as well. Seb, wiped away an imaginary tear and patted Lucien on the back, "Our Knight in distress has finally found his damsel in shining tiara."

"Knight in distress?" Lucien asked with a weird look but was ignored as the brothers all surrounded Evana and quickly carted her away before he could say anything, leaving him standing behind.

Nora grinned as she saw the scene and quickly pattered Lucien, "Don't worry. She is in safe hands."

Lucien threw a look Nora's way as if to say that it was the 'safe hands' he feared.

Evana found herself unexpectedly surrounded by the warmth of the Frost Brothers and as she observed the camaraderie between the brothers, she couldn't help but be drawn into their infectious energy. Each brother had a unique charm that added a layer of entertainment to the room.

As Nora and evana made their way out of the room, leaving the brothers at each others mercy, Evana could only shake her head and breathe a sigh of relief as she glanced at Nora, " My gosh! Those men are all something. Are they always this chaotic?"

Nora grinned, " Believe me they've been containing themselves in front of you because you are meeting for the first time."

"I see my visions are going to be broadened in the near future," Evana murmured as she looked back with a smile.

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Dora swayed on the swing as she watched her two little dogs running around in circles. she chuckled at the little pups antics. This was so much fun rather than waiting all day for her mother or sister to come and play with her. Kitten and Gaia had become her best friends. As she sat there suddenly, Kitten's playful demeanor changed and she let out a low growl, even scaring away Gaia who'd come to play with her.

Quickly, the young dog, stood protectively in front of the little girl, confusing her. "Kitten? What happened to you?"

As Dora looked around, a person entered the garden where she was playing. Scared at first, she almost screamed before catching a glimpse of the man who had come. Quickly, she raised her arms and waved at the man, " Hello, Uncle Robert! How are you doing?"

She patted the growling dog on the neck while saying, " Relax, Kitten! This is Uncle Robert."

Seeing that the owner was not very concerned, the dog slowly backed off but remained alert. Dora smiled at the older man, "Uncle Robert? Are you here looking for Daddy? But he hasn't come home yet? Or did he forget something and sent you to bring it to his office. Wait, I'll go and ask mummy..."

No need, Princess Dora. Your father indeed asked me to bring something back from here. But thankfully, I don't need to look for the Lady. Because you are right here."

Dora widened her eyes at the older man's tone. Why would her father summon her? Did it have something to do with her pets? But she'd been training them diligently with the trainer.

"Why does he want me to come? Am I in trouble? Uncle Robert you have to tell me! "

"I don't know, Princess Dora. But I'm sure you are not in trouble. Your father did not have an angry expression when he told me to bring you. Now let's go. He is waiting. Its not good to keep him waiting."

Dora quickly nodded and placed her hand in the older man's as she said, "Let me go and tell mummy. I'll be back."

"No need, Dora. Lady Cordelia already knows. Now come quickly."

Dora nodded and skipped away with Uncle Robert, leaving the two dogs behind with a murmured order to stay.

Robert looked down at the little girl's hand in his and felt a pang of remorse but it did not stop him from taking her away. As he walked further and further, he consoled himself that at least the Princess Dora was safer with him than anybody else.

What the two people failed to notice was that the dogs did not stay still for long. One dog had already retreated while the other was following behind slowly, making no noise, eyes fixated on the two people before her.

#### Chapter 285: Another Kidnapping

Dora skipped alongside Uncle Robert, her innocent chatter filling the air as they moved through the garden. "Uncle Robert, do you think Daddy has a surprise for me? Dora asked, her eyes shining with anticipation.

Robert managed a weak smile, unsure of how to respond and answered, "Well, Princess Dora, your father will explain everything when we see him."

As they walked through the halls of the grand gardens, Robert grew increasingly uneasy, glancing around as if expecting someone to appear. He could feel himself sweating and was wary of even the

smallest sound. This was his last mission. Once Dora had been delivered to Alpin, he'd take the first flight out of Estania. He patted his pocket, making sure his documents were still safe. He would be gone from here in a few hours.

Dora, oblivious to his tension, continued chatting happily. "I hope Daddy isn't upset with me. I've been a good girl, and I've been training Kitten and Gaia really well! I've also been studying diligently and my grades have improved."

He spotted the car in the distance and heaved a sigh of relief. A few more steps and he would be free. Absentmindedly, he looked behind him and suddenly felt a shiver of fear. The little puppy was following them. Dam\* it! The dog could be dangerous, after all it had been gifted by that Demon Frost... He needed to get rid of the dog.

Stopping abruptly, he turned back and tries to shoo the dog away. Dora too had turned around due to the sudden pause and was surprised to see her little dog following her. Delighted by the dog's antics, she beckoned the dog close and called out, "Come here, kitten! You're so naughty to follow me like this!"

As the little dog came closer, Dora clapped her hands, "Do you want to come with us to Daddy's office? Uncle Robert? Let's take kitten too. She won't be naughty and daddy won't mind."

Robert shook his head and tried to explain, "No princess Dora, we cannot take the dog there. Ask her to go away."

"But uncle," Even as Dora tried to argue with the man, the dog positioned itself closely to her master, taking a protective stance. Irritated with the child and the dog who were creating trouble for him, Robert delivered a swift kick to the dog, causing the little creature to be thrown a distance away and mewl in shock and pain.

Dora gasped, her eyes wide with shock as she ran to her little dog, "No! You can't hurt Kitten!" Tears welled up in Dora's eyes as she scolded Uncle Robert. "You're a bad man! I'm not going with you! I'll tell Daddy everything and then he will punish you."

Before she could get to her dog, Robert had grabbed her by the collar," Princess, I'll apologize to you. I made a mistake but we are getting late. I'll send the servants to bring him to the hospital. Come with me quickly please."

Dora jerked away from him and crossed her arms, her defiance evident. "No! You hurt Kitten, and I don't like you anymore! I want to go back!"

Robert knew that his time was running out and any minute now the guards patrolling the grounds would be alerted to the princess' shout. He tried to make her calm down but the girl was getting hysterical by the minute as she continued to scream," You are bad man! Bad man! Daddy will definitely punish you."

Frustrated and desperate, he reached out to grab Dora who evaded him again. Infuriated, he finally grabbed the girl while covering her mouth with his hand to stop the screaming.

The dog had recovered by now and seeing the situation, quickly growled and bared its teeth trying to intimidate the man. Robert attempted to kick the dog away again as he walked towards the car but the dog dodged the attack this time and instead lunged at the man's leg, biting the man's calf.

Dora, displaying unexpected courage, bit down on Robert's hand at the same time. The sudden counterattack from both Dora and her fearless dog caught Robert off guard. He stumbled backwards, releasing Dora from his grasp. The little girl wasted no time, running a short distance away from him, tears streaming down her face.

With a snarl, he attempted to snatch Dora once more, but the determined girl broke free. "Run, Kitten! Run!" she cried, sprinting in the opposite direction.

Enraged and embarrassed, Robert tried to compose himself. "You little brat! You'll regret this!" he seethed, clutching his bitten hand. His initial plan of a smooth extraction had unraveled into chaos.

Ignoring the pain in his leg that throbbed from the dog's bite, Robert raced behind her. Noticing the direction she was taking, he quickly diverged from his path, using a short cut and soon jumped in front of the little girl. Once again, he tried to calm her down," Princess Dora. We are going to go to your father. You are free to complain to him. I'll even confess my mistakes. But don't go running. What if you hurt yourself? Come on. Come with me. Minister Sterling is waiting for you."

The sudden counterattack from both Dora and her fearless dog caught Robert off guard. He stumbled backward, releasing Dora from his grasp. The little girl wasted no time, running a short distance away from him, tears streaming down her face.

"You're mean! You're mean!" she cried, her voice shaky but determined. Kitten, having successfully defended her owner, stood by Dora's side, growling menacingly at Robert.

Enraged and embarrassed, Robert tried to compose himself. "You little brat! You'll regret this!" he seethed, clutching his bitten hand. His initial plan of a smooth extraction had unraveled into chaos.

Dora, however, wasn't about to back down and go with him. She wiped away her tears, her small face set in a determined expression and stepped away from him. "I won't go with you! I want my mommy and daddy! You can't take me away!" she declared defiantly.

Unfortunately, as she stepped backward, she slipped over a small rock, falling backwards.

#### Chapter 286: A Discussion

Ian glanced at everyone who was engrossed in the get-together lunch before slowly slipping away into the kitchen. As expected, he found Demetri waiting there and sighed, "Demon."

"What has you worried, Ian?"

Ian shook his head, a rueful smile playing on his lips. Demetri had an uncanny ability to sense the underlying currents. How he always managed to pick up on these things remained a mystery to him.

"Demon... Grandfather is sick."

He watched as Demetri stilled. So, his brother did not know this as well. Ian sighed and continued, "It's quite bad. The cancer has spread all over and the old man has refused treatment. The doctor gave him few months, but it's already been more than a year. He's been using pain killers to suppress the pain and keep up appearances, but it's becoming increasingly difficult for him," his voice filled with frustration.

Demetri's expression shifted, "I see. Some things make more sense now..."

"Some things?" Ian asked perplexed. What things made sense?

But Demetri shook his head and caught the crux of the matter. "Is that why Erasmi has been seething last few days? He knows?"

Ian shook his head, "No one knows. The old coot doesn't want anyone to know. He is intent on making our lives difficult but he won't tell us the reason for it. I can't help but wonder if he doesn't fear that we won't give him a proper funeral if he continues like this."

Demetri gave a small smile and shook his head, "Of course, he doesn't. He's raised us all too well to fear that."

Ian nodded at that. It was true. Though they were always at loggerheads with the old man, they all loved him, even Erasmi... the current reason of the worry.

"I'm going to honor his wishes and pretend that I know nothing. But he said something the other day that has us worried for Erasmi... Demon... Is there a chance that Nellie might have survived the accident?"

Ian had hoped Demetri would know what he was talking about but he seemed just as clueless so he explained how Erasmi had been fighting their grandfather over the blind date and then the old man had said something that seemed to hint that the past was not as it seemed.

Demetri frowned as he heard this. "Grandfather had indeed been the first person to reach the accident spot and the hospital. I got the news almost an hour after he did. However, I don't think Nellie is alive. Because I was the one who organized the burial on Erasmi's behalf. And then when we discovered that Lara Anderson had exacerbated the graves, we did a DNA test. It isn't Nellie."

"Then was there someone else in that car?" Ian could not help but ask.

"There's only two people who can answer that, Ian. Erasmi himself and grandfather."

Demetri crossed his arms, deep in thought. "If Erasmi doesn't believe it's Nellie in the grave, we need to have this further investigated. It's time to clear the air about everything – the accident, Nellie, and Grandfather's health. We can't keep dancing around these issues. Ian, put the investigator to the task."

"Already done that. But since it's been so many years, the investigation is going to be even slower. And the two people who might know things are being stubborn a\*\* fools." Ian muttered.

Before either could say more, the door to the kitchen opened and Nora strolled in, "What are the two of you discussing?"

Demetri and Ian exchanged glances, knowing that any discussion about Nellie might turn out to be a sore point for Nora as well.

Demon just shook his head and answered, "It's our grandfather. He has cancer and is not taking treatment."

Nora heard this and could only shake her head. The old man really was too much.

"And did you try talking to him about his reasons for not doing that?"

"He's been hiding the diagnosis from everyone. Ian stumbled over the secret by chance. So of course no one has spoken to him."

Nora nodded and looked at Demetri with concern, "Do you need to go back? Talk to the old man and get him admitted into the hospital so that he would be treated?"

Demetri shook his head, "It won't help but yes this increases our urgency to get things done here and go back as soon as possible."

Nora was about to speak up when Demetri's phone suddenly started to ring. As Demetri noticed the caller, he could not help but frown. With a curt, "yes?" he answered the phone but soon stiffened when he heard the caller say, "Gaia. Dora has wandered off somewhere with that little dog you gave her. They were playing outside a while ago but now the other dog has returned. Has she come to you?"

Alarm bells ringing in his head, Demetri answered, "Not yet. I'll call you back in a moment, Lady Cordelia."

Both Ian and Nora looked astounded at the sudden shift in Demetri's tone and stepped closer to Demetri as he started to open an application on his phone. As the live feed started, the three people watched in shock.

Swearing, Demetri quickly got to the tracker application and raced out of the kitchen, followed closely by Nora and Ian. Their hurried movements caught the eye of the others who were chatting outside and with no questions asked they hurriedly started to follow the trio.

As the anxious group followed Demetri, they reached the spot where Dora's little Kitten lay in a lifeless pile. With a small scream of agony, Nora rushed to the little dog followed by Seb who quickly started to check the dog.

The place appeared empty, and a knot formed in his stomach. "She's not here," Demetri muttered, his worry deepening. The group exchanged concerned glances, realizing they'd probably lost Dora...

It took a moment for Evana to gather her thoughts and she quickly stepped forward and started to make a call, "Nothing can happen to Dora. I'll call uncle Robert and tell him to trace Dora's location..." However, she was stopped by Demetri who handed her his phone.

#### Chapter 287: Another Kidnapping (2)

As Evana started to anxiously call her father's assistant, Demetri interrupted her, pushing his phone into her hand, "You might want to see this before you make that call."

Pointing to the small camera attached to the lifeless Kitten's collar, he gestured to let her know that they already knew the identity of the kidnapper. Heart pounding, she took a deep breath and accessed the recorded footage. As the video played, a shocked gasp escaped her lips.

Her eyes widened and her hands trembled as she clutched Demetri's phone. "Uncle Robert..." she began, her voice faltering.

Demetri shook his head, "Not now. We need to act fast. Seb, Ian, take the dog to the hospital. It's been only a few minutes at most that he's taken her away."

Seb and Ian nodded, gently lifting the small dog and rushing towards the nearest veterinary clinic. Meanwhile, Demetri turned to Evana. "Call the authorities. We need to involve law enforcement. They can help us track Dora down."

Evana, still in shock, nodded and dialled the emergency number, quickly ordering them to come over. She dared not to say anything on the phone that might get leaked or worse harm Dora in some way. Next, she dialed her father's number to let him know that his assistant had turned traitor.

Lucien noticed the cameras around and quickly started to check the surveillance videos only to sigh. The man had been well prepared to keep his identity a secret. All the cameras had been disabled. He'd need to check into the public surveillance cameras which would take time.

"Evana noticed what Lucien was doing and shook her head. Uncle Robert has access to all the surveillance videos. He can disappear without a trace.

Lucien nodded agreeably but explained, "I'm sure he would be taking precautions. But he cannot have expected that we would not just discover Dora's kidnapping quickly but also his identity."

Demetri nodded and agreed, "Nora, contact the people that we've hired and tell them to keep an eye on all ways out of the city and the country."

"I can tell daddy..." Evana muttered but Demetri shook his head, "We don't know who else might be involved in this plan and be in collusion with Robert. For now, let's keep the fact that we know the identity of the kidnapper a secret."

"I'm going to start checking on the man's background and interview to guess where he might have taken the girl," Erasmi added as he walked away. It was a good thing that they'd started establishing connections the moment they discovered Nora's presence in Estania. Now their network might be of help in finding the little girl.

Soon, the group dispersed with their respective tasks, ready to meet in the maze labyrinth in the next few minutes, once he'd updated the prime minister himself."

The news of his daughter's kidnapping had already reached Alexander Sterling as the man raced towards the labyrinth. He'd tried to contact his assistant but to no avail. Eventually, he'd run to meet Demetri himself.

However, as he reached Demetri and watched the video, his own eyes widened in shock. How could Robert betray him? The man had been his loyal assistant for more than a decade...

For a moment, silence hung heavy around them. "Robert?" he finally uttered, his voice barely above a whisper. "Are you sure? What could be the reason for this betrayal? could it be that it is someone who looks like him?" Sterling asked a little hopefully.

But looking at Demetri and Nora's grim faces, he could only collapse onto the bed as he put his face in his hands, " I trusted that man implicitly. What did I miss that made him betray me in such a way? Was I so blind to his intentions all these years or is it only now that he has changed loyalties?"

Demetri sighed and held the man's shoulder," Minister Sterling, right now, you are the person closest to Robert that we know. Can you give us some information? Where could he have gone? Any close friends, relatives?"

Alexander frowned in thought before shaking his head," He doesn't have any friends. Never did. He said his father always scared them away. And later, it was too late. His family is all dead. No girlfriend that I know of."

Just then, Minister Sterling's phone buzzed. Glancing at the unknown number, he hesitated before answering decisively.

As he put the phone to his ear, "Minister Sterling," a disguised voice on the other end of the line spoke, "You have something we want. If you want to see your daughter again, come alone to the abandoned warehouse on Elm Street. Be there in one hour."

Sterling clenched his jaw, his fists tightening. "What do they want?" he demanded, desperation evident in his voice.

The voice on the phone continued, "We want you, Prime Minister. Alone. No law enforcement, no tricks. Or else you will only get your daughter's coffin."

"Why are you doing this? Whatever you want, can you not negotiate openly? How can you call yourself a human if you would kidnap a little innocent girl!"

"I can do much worse, Sterling, so be prepared. And if you are not there in an hour, then I'll assume you've already said goodbyes to her."

"No! Do not harm my daughter! I'll do as you say. At least let me talk to my daughter?"

"No need, Minister. You can talk to her when you get there."

Before Sterling could say more, the kidnapper had disconnected the call.

"I need to go Demon."

Demetri nodded and stepped forward ready to help the man when the man shook his head, "I am going to do as those people say. I can't take such a risk Demon."

"Minister Sterling, we are already tracing the call. We'll find another way. Going alone is too risky."

Conflicted but determined, he shook his head. "I can't take that chance with Dora's life. I have to do this."

#### Chapter 288: Robert's Mistake

Alpin Banfi paced the room as he waited for Robert's call. He'd just received the news that Robert had abandoned the car he had arranged midway and taken the girl away. He could not help but wonder if the man was playing him.

But if he was, then why did he even kidnap the girl. Once again, he called the man and this time the man answered, " Robert! Where are you? I am warning you if you double cross me, I will..."

"I have no intention of betraying you, Mr Banfi. I have done things as you asked and taken the little Princess away. You can call them and ask for ransom. Once things have been settled, I'll arrange for Dora to go back to the palace.

"What do you mean you will arrange? You were supposed to bring her here!", Alpin Banfi roared at the top of his voice! Bring her here to me and then leave like I told you to! Escape the country and you can live freely!"

"You promised to return Dora to Prime Minister Sterling." Robert pointed out quietly.

His statement was followed by a pause, where the other man said nothing. Banfi had lied of course. He had no intention of leaving anyone from the Sterling family a chance to survive and cause trouble for him in the future.

"Of course, I have promised you, Robert. Bring her here!"

"No. Since you've promised to not harm her, it makes no difference if I make the arrangements to return her or keep her. Of course, I will cooperate with you and not hand her over until Prime Minister signs the motion to put you on the throne and gets the others to sign as well."

"You ba\*\*\*\*\*! How dare you play these games with me? Have you forgotten what I did for you? How I saved you from being sold off to pay your father's debt?"

"I have forgotten nothing! You might have saved me but you were also the reason for the state my father was in. You introduced him to the loan sharks, did you not?"

"How did you..."

"I'm not a kid anymore, Banfi. I've done what needed to be done to repay your debt but I will not abscond from here with the guilt of having harmed a child."

"Call me when you've succeeded. Until then, Dora will remain with me safe and sound.

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Holding the little unconscious girl in his arms, Robert sped quickly towards his destination, having gotten rid of Banfi's car, a little further away. Finally, he stopped outside a large hotel and looked around.

Carefully, he stepped into the lobby and marched straight towards the elevators. No one would be able to guess that instead of hiding Dora away, he would bring her to the most luxurious hotel in Estania. But he knew, only if he hid the girl right under these people's noses, would he be able to keep her safe.

Once at the top floor, he quickly nodded on a silent door. A young woman opened the door and quickly squealed in surprise, "Mr Robert! What are you doing here? And who is this child? Is she sick?"

The lady quickly moved forward to check the child but Robert shooed her away and spoke, "She is sleeping. Miss Olivia, I need your help."

"Help? What help?" Olivia asked with suspicion.

Robert gently placed the little girl on the bed and gestured for Olivia to follow him to the living room.

"Mr. Robert? Who is this girl? What kind of help do you need?"

"Miss Olivia, this is Princess Dora. Her life is in danger and so is mine. I trust you to take care of her for a little while. Please take her to her father only after I tell you to. I need to go now."

As Robert would have rushed away, Olivia stepped into his way, "Mr Robert! I am here on holiday and just because you've been kind to me a few times, you cannot do something like this! If the little girl's life is in danger, then the safest place for her has to be with her father.

"No! He's surrounded by enemies! You cannot take her there or contact him or his enemies will be alerted. Miss Olivia, on account of the help that I have extended to you, please help me with this. You are the only one I can trust. By now, they will already be looking for her in places that I visit or could have any friends at.

No one will suspect that the child is with you since you are persona non grata to them. The child can stay safe here. You've been a guest at Estania and enjoyed the hospitality here. So, this time, can you please help with this?"

Olivia looked away before sighing and nodding her head. Robert acknowledged her agreement with a word of thanks and quickly started to walk out of the door, "Thank you Miss Olivia. I need to go now and cannot stay here longer or it would be risky for you. I'll get in touch with you when the time is right. Please remember, do not trust anyone with the little girl's safety and do not return her until I ask you to."

Olivia had a troubled expression on her face but she nodded reluctantly, worried that a small child's life might be in danger.

Carefully, she returned to the bedroom and looked down at the little girl. Gently she caressed the little girl's head as a thought struck her. Pulling out her cell phone she opened the chat and typed in the words, "I have Princess Dora with me. What do you think of my luck?"

A small smile surfaced on her face as she wondered if she could even believe her luck. Of all the things she had expected when she'd come here, this was the most unexpected blessing that she could have received. And she was going to use this opportunity to the fullest.

#### Chapter 289: Step Out

Alexander Sterling stood in front of the decrepit building, his eyes looking around desperately for where his little girl might be. He swallowed, clutching his phone in his hand, as he looked at the dark interiors of the building. The place smelled of rotting garbage while the windows and doors barely hung on their hinges.

The place was quiet and he could not help but wonder why he would be called here. Since the kidnappers had not asked for any money, he knew of course the only other reason for summoning him here could be they needed his power as the Prime Minister.

The place remained deathly silent, the only sound of his shoes against the floor making him realize painfully that his Dora was probably not here. They must have used her as bait to bring him here. He only hoped that once they had him, they would leave her alone.

Suddenly, two masked figures emerged from the shadows, blocking his path as he felt the press of a cold metal against his neck. The man who stood in front of him opened a bag and ordered, "Get rid of the phone, watch and everything else that might be used to track you. And if you try to act smart, remember your daughter will suffer the consequences."

Without a word of hesitation, Alexander threw the phone in his hand into the bag, followed by his watch and rings and even the belt. He knew that if these people even had a moment's doubt that they were endangered, he might never find his daughter.

Once he'd put everything inside and raised his hands again, the other man who had yet to speak, stepped forward and frisked him, looking for any other devices. A blindfold was then placed around his head, and he was pushed in another direction. Disoriented, he let the guards lead him realizing that he too had been essentially kidnapped. And they would not risk meeting him in a location that he might have shared with his security.

Soon, he was placed in a car where he lost any sense of time or direction as it rode around in circles before finally coming to a stop where he was once again taken out and pushed in random directions. Finally, when the blindfold was taken off, Alexander found himself in a dimly lit conference room.

As his eyes adjusted to the new light, Alexander watched the two masked men standing on the opposite side, staring at him intensely. Looking around, he realized that Dora was not here as well and asked hoarsely, "Where is my daughter? I want to see her?"

"Sign the papers, and you can see your daughter," one of the masked figures demanded, their voice devoid of any compassion.

Soon, a thick file of papers were thrust in front of him and a pen was pushed into his hand.

Alexander Sterling's gaze hardened, and he resolutely placed down the pen in his hand, "I won't sign anything until I have seen Dora and ascertained that she is safe. Bring her to me first."

The second man who had been silent all this while, stepped forward and picked up a remote that Alexander had not previously seen there. As he did, a grainy picture flickered to life on the screen, showing a sleeping little Dora unharmed.

"Happy now? Sign the papers," the man urged, his impatience evident.

Left with no other choice, Alexander picked up the pen with trembling hands and scanned through the papers. As he did, he finally realized how much Alpin Banfi hated him. Until now, he had been unsure of Demetri's plan to annihilate the Banfi family. After all, the old man he had always treated with the respect of an elder had planned a deep web of deceit. And even if he were to win today with these papers signed, he had no intention of sparing them.

The papers were not just transferring all political and monetary assets to him but also taking the blame for different charges of money laundering, bribery and even human trafficking. If he agreed to this confession and this was made public, forget serving the country, their entire family might be beaten to death right here.

"I cannot sign this. There has to be another way," he pleaded, his voice desperate.

The two men however remained unmoved, offering no response as they exchanged glances before the one who had been speaking until now said, "We have no other options, Minister. This is not a negotiation. Sign the papers, and your daughter will be safe," a cold finality in his tone.

Alexander rubbed his forehead as he looked at the papers again. Signing the papers was like signing the death warrants of his entire family. They would be torn to pieces and have no way of returning to Estania.

Desperation etched across his face, Alexander looked towards the screen where the image of his peacefully sleeping daughter lingered and held the pen tightly. On one hand, was his daughter on the other was the country he had dedicated his life to.

Just then, the door creaked open, and a figure stepped into the dimly lit room. The man looked down at the person who was hesitating and snickered, "You really are useless at making decisions Sterling. How can a man like you lead the country when he cannot even protect his own daughter and has to think whether or not to save her?"

Alexander looked up at the man who had entered and all the worry and suffering that he had felt through the years, made him glare at the man," Alpin Banfi. You have finally come out into the open? All your life you've only played tricks to gain the upper hand and even now, you fallen this far to get what you wanted. My daughter looks upto you like a grandfather and this is what you do! You want to use her to ruin me and the entire Royal family."

#### Chapter 290: Wronged

"Royal Family! You are the fake Royal family! The mighty Sterlings! Have you forgotten that your father was the younger son? That he had no right to the throne? Estania has always passed the rule to the older in the family, regardless of it being younger or older. The Banfi family opened their treasures to help you the so-called 'Royal' family to bring the country out of the drudges! And in return, we only received fake promises from you! You are not even worthy of being a commoner!"

Alexander Sterling's eyes blazed with defiance as he stared back at Alpin Banfi. "Your twisted sense of entitlement blinds you, Banfi. The throne was never promised to your father. The Sterling family has a legacy that stretches back generations, and Estania's people have chosen their leaders based on merit, not on some false promises made in the shadows. You talk as if you suffered losses when the truth is something else. The money was not a charity but given as a loan, the interest of which you have never failed to collect and the profits which you have received over the years while having to do nothing but twiddle your thumbs!"

Alpin Banfi scoffed," You think The Banfi family could not have earned profits in any other way? We were already rich, Sterling! The only reason everything was agreed upon was that the Banfi family could receive the esteem of becoming royals! But they only received deception from you instead of honor! So, all I am doing is taking it back. What a Sterling daughter could not do back then, will do today! Your grandfather was willing to watch his daughter suffer in the name of protecting the country, are you going to do the same?"

"You will not harm my daughter! I swear to the heavens, if even a lock of her hair is harmed, I will..."

"You will do nothing because you will never find her! Sign those papers Sterling and get out of here. I have already been magnanimous by not killing you here and now!"

The room crackled with tension as the two men locked eyes, each standing firm in their beliefs. Alexander took a deep breath, trying to find a solution that didn't involve sacrificing his principles or his family.

"There has to be another way, Alpin, without ruining everything! All these crimes, help me put the real culprit behind the bars and we can do..."

"The real culprit? You fool! I am the real culprit. I have done everything here but you are going to take the blame and I will rule with a spotless record." Alpin Banfi's laughter echoed through the dimly lit room as he continued, "Your sentimentality is your greatest weakness, Sterling. You've always been a fool, and now you're paying the price. The throne belongs to me, and I'll use whatever means necessary to take it back."

"Now, make it quick! I do not have all day! The palace is waiting for me!"

Alexander picked up the pen, ready to sign the papers. The moment they had his little Dora, they'd already won and he'd lost. Closing his eyes, he sent a silent apology to his father for failing his duty, and signed his name on the papers.

Banfi laughed and applauded him for making a right choice as he said, "Well done! Go now. Your daughter will be sent to you soon! I will give you two hours to leave Estania and take what you can. After that, the news of your misdeeds will be announced to the world and the council will hold an urgent meeting. Go! Go."

With a gesture of his hand, he ordered the two men to grab the papers but before the men could take them, Alexander caught them close to his chest, "No! I will not give you these papers until you give Dora to me."

"What do you mean? Just give the papers and I'll send the girl to you!" Banfi screamed.

"No! I will not hand them over until I have Dora."

"You seem to think you still hold some power, Sterling! Guards! Take the papers!" Banfi roared.

Before the guards could reach him however Alexander Sterling stepped backwards pushing a chair between them and shot out, "No! If you take a step close I will tear these papers! Bring me Dora."

With a curse, Banfi ordered, "Keep an eye on him."

Walking out of the room, he kicked the door before pulling out his phone and dialling the useless man Robert.

After a few rings, the call was answered and he barked into the phone, "Robert! Send the girl back to the palace. And we are even after this."

As he would have disconnected the call, however, a languid voice spoke up, "I wouldn't call it being ever, Banfi. Our grudges are only just beginning..."

Listening to the sinister voice on the phone, Banfi was shocked and asked, "Who is this?"

"You don't need to worry about my identity, Banfi. Go inside the room and see for yourself if the tables have turned."

Wildly, Banfi barged back into the conference room, his demeanour a striking contrast to the previous victorious one. As he looked around, he realized that while nothing had changed, the two guards and Alexander were staring at the large screen. There, instead of Dora's picture that Robert had sent over, was the picture of a hospital room.

Soon, the feed shifted and a bandaged head appeared on the screen with a gun pointed at his temple, "Little Alpin, say hello to your Daddy. Come on! Don't be shy."

Alpin Banfi's face contorted with a mixture of fury and disbelief as he bellowed in the room, "What is the meaning of this? Release my son immediately, or I swear, I'll annihilate everyone who dares to play games with me! You won't escape the consequences of this treachery! Guards! Catch this Alexander Sterling and decapacitate him! Cut him into so many pieces that the children will think he is a jigsaw puzzle!"