

Husband With Benefits

chapter 29-35

- Chapter 29:Bewildered

[1,080 words]

Chapter 29: [Bonus Chapter]Bewildered

Demetri Frost opened the door to his house and paused on the threshold, momentarily doubting if this was indeed his own home. Firstly, loud music was blasting from the speakers. Secondly, his usually odorless home now carried the fragrance of a vanilla-scented bomb explosion. And thirdly, his normally empty and serene living room was a complete mess!

Sitting right in the heart of this chaos, her face buried in a book, was his wife. Unaware of his presence, she was cursing in a manner that would have made a sailor blush.

Casually, he walked over to her and peered over her shoulder, curiosity piqued about what had compelled the typically reserved woman to curse in such a manner. Usually, upon his return, he would find her curled up on the couch with a novel in hand.

If not for laying eyes on her, one would hardly know she was there; she was an expert at being invisible, and this suited him just fine. He cherished the quiet and did not have to regret marrying her.

She stiffened as she felt his closeness but did not move. Turning her head a bit, she looked up at him with wide eyes before quickly turning back to her work. He peered down at the jumble of formulas she had used to solve her assignment and raised his eyebrows.

Without a word, he extended his hand and held hers. Taking the pen from her, he quickly wrote down the correct formula, marking her mistakes.

As he moved closer to finish the entire solution, Nora stood there frozen. She could feel his heat surrounding her and she already had goosebumps all over her.

She felt his other hand move around her waist, and she was even more startled as it settled on her hip. Gently, he nudged her closer to the kitchen island and pointed with his other finger, "Here, this is not how this is calculated. For this function, you need to imagine that you are driving on a curvy road, and you want to know how fast your speed is changing at a specific moment—basically, to calculate change. But if you use this formula..."

Even though Nora remained hyperaware of him, his hand still on her hip, she was even more engrossed in what he was teaching her. This was the most basic problem, but the way he explained it... wow. She was actually understanding this! As he finished solving the entire problem and was about to step back, she quickly grabbed his wrist, peered through the scattered books, and pulled out a few sheets of paper stapled together, pointing at them. "Help me with this, please! I am totally hopeless with all these calculations! I just don't understand why we have to do all these calculations! I just want to start a small business in the future! It's not like I am going to need derivatives and integers for that!"

"Derivatives are essential in understanding rates of change, which is crucial in economics, finance, and decision-making within businesses. They are used in areas like calculating marginal costs, analyzing demand curves, and evaluating investment opportunities. If you want to have your own business, then you need to understand them."

Stepping away from her, he held the sheets in one hand and pulled her towards the couch. Sitting down, he pulled her onto his lap. Holding out the papers in front of the two of them, he then questioned, "When do you have to submit this paper?"

"Uhh... next week," Nora almost squeaked, her voice betraying her nervousness. The syllables hung in the air, pregnant with a mix of anxiety and something she couldn't quite put her finger on. She had never, ever in her life, found herself in a situation like this — sitting in someone's lap. The experience was surreal and she struggled to make sense of it.

Subtly, she shifted her weight, attempting to reposition herself, but her movements were hesitant and awkward. Her mind raced, inundated by an overwhelming whirlwind of thoughts. What if he misinterpreted her fidgeting, mistaking it for some sort of subtle advance? What if he assumed she was attempting to seduce him?

She watched his hands as they turned the sheet, her gaze fixed on them as if utterly fascinated. Finally, she sensed his nod of approval. "Learn all these formulae. Tomorrow morning, we will finish the first page, and in the evening, the second. We'll start with the basics, and if you have any doubts, don't hesitate to ask me."

"Okay." The words came out with a mix of relief and anticipation. She wished to request permission to move, to ease the discomfort that was slowly settling in from sitting in the same spot for so long. Yet, before she could voice her thoughts, she felt a faint vibration beneath her, a subtle tremor that sent her heart racing. Reacting instinctively, she leapt up as if startled, her actions mirroring that of a frightened rabbit. Demetri extended the phone to her, his tone authoritative. "Tell the person that I am busy now and not to call me. I'll come later."

Using the phone as an excuse to create some distance between herself and the man whose lap she had occupied just moments ago. It was as if the universe had conspired to offer her a timely exit strategy.

As she answered the call, a voice on the other end began to speak urgently, "Come on, Demon. Thank God you answered the call! You have to come here and save us from the..."

Swiftly, Nora interjected, her voice clear and concise, "Demetri is not here. He asked that you call him later. Goodbye." With the message swiftly delivered, she hung up, her fingers returning the phone to Demetri with a restrained smile.

Walking away, Nora couldn't help but feel a sense of relief mixed with the lingering traces of bewilderment. She had escaped.

Behind her, Demetri's mouth kicked up in a small smirk. He'd already accomplished what he needed. His brothers had heard her voice and he could already smell her scent clinging to him. Now was the perfect time to visit the old man when the rest of his family was there. And his 'fiancée as well

On the other end of the line, Demetri's clever ruse had plunged three individuals into shocked silence, their minds struggling to process the unexpected turn of events.

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Elijah Frost gazed down the table at his four grandsons, observing how they devoured their meal as if starved for days. With a disapproving harrumph, he reminisced about a time when he might have resorted to starvation to teach them a lesson. Alas, those days were long gone. Now, he was limited to mere threats.

"Sebastian Frost, you assured me your brother would join us! Dinner is nearly over. When will he arrive? Call him." Elijah ordered.

Sebastian Frost, the youngest of the Frost brothers at twenty-five looked up at his grandfather and mumbled with his mouth full, "Mfmmph, he shtaid he'llmmph come l-later. Annmmph, phone's ded, ash lan."

Suppressing his frustration at the boy's lack of manners, Elijah glared distastefully at his youngest grandson and turned to Ian who hastily intercepted, "There's no need,

grandfather. I told you he will miss dinner, but he will come. Disturbing him will only delay his arrival."

The three boys almost snickered at Ian's words. The girl with the sexy voice had said that Demetri was busy. Just what could the man be doing that he would let someone else answer his phone, they'd all made their wild and completely inaccurate guesses.

As the old man would have burst out to say something, a soft voice chimed in, "Great Uncle Elijah, please enjoy your meal. Everyone knows Demetri is occupied. We can wait for him, especially when he's making time at the last minute. It's not like he knew I was coming; otherwise, he would have hurried here."

"Arabella, you are a sweet girl. But you've travelled so far. I don't want you to tire yourself out. If he does not come on time, I'll have one of these boys send you home. And Demetri will clear his schedule tomorrow to take you around."

Just then a butler arrived and announced, "Master Demetri has arrived."

Arabella's face lit up, eagerly awaiting Demetri's entrance. Ian, Seb, and Lucien focused intently on their food, deliberately ignoring their brother's arrival. Meanwhile, Gabe toyed with his meal, fixated on Arabella's delighted expression.

As Demetri entered, Arabella sprang from her seat and rushed toward him, arms outstretched in excitement. Swiftly, Demetri caught her elbows, nudging her aside before proceeding. Instead of approaching his grandfather, he headed to the table's opposite end, taking a seat after a curt acknowledgement. "Grandfather."

The old man stared down the table at his grandson's blatant disrespect or rather minimal show of respect and snidely taunted, "I thought you were not joining for dinner."

"Your thought was accurate. I'm only here because you summoned me," Demetri replied, waving away the butler's offered plate.

"Summoned you? I invited you to dine with the family!" the old man retorted.

"Yet outsiders are present," Demetri shot back.

While the old man looked ready to burst a nerve, Arabella who had almost frozen on the spot after hugging Demetri, seemed to come to life, "Demetri! You can't blame great uncle for that. I was the one who decided to surprise him today."

She walked back to her chair which had been placed on the right side of the old man and patted his hand, "It is not good to argue, great uncle." She then turned to Demetri and pointed out gently, "I did not realize that you do not consider me family." Her face showed a pained expression, but it disappeared in the next moment.

With a bright smile, she said, "Next time, I'll make an appointment. I hope you won't be petty about this and let me enjoy with you all this time. By the way, have you changed your aftershave recently?"

Amid coughs from Ian and Seb, Demetri paused mid-sip. He responded with a monosyllabic "No," raising an eyebrow.

Gabriel, on Demetri's left, turned incredulously, "Are you a scent hound?"

Arabella blushed under his gaze while explaining, "No, when I hugged him, I smelled a feminine fragrance... I thought it did not suit him."

Lucien, the most innocent of the bunch, stood and nudged his brother, saying, "I don't think Demetri changed his aftershave... It must be because he was with a woman..."

Gabriel tugged his brother's arm, interjecting firmly, "Sit, Lucy! Try this pasta! It's delicious..."

"But I already did..." However, Gabriel had already stuffed pasta into his brother's mouth...

The rest of the dinner was a silent affair, as had been the norm in the presence of their grandfather and brother. All the Frost brothers had grown up under the strict care of their grandfather who was known for having a bad temper when someone did not follow discipline. However, things had not been so severe until a few years ago...

Demetri, who always had a cold face on but had always been approachable by his brothers letting them know that they could come to him with their troubles. However, Demetri's icy exterior seemed to multiply when he faced their grandfather, a chilling force that warned off anyone who dared approach. No one knew why Demetri held animosity toward their grandfather or why the old man favoured him. Yet, neither man's reasoning was questioned.

Finally, the dinner concluded, and Elijah bid Arabella farewell, her promise to return the following day hanging in the air. Gabriel had been tasked with dropping Arabella home since Demetri refused to take any hints from their grandfather.

However, the moment the girl exited, Elijah's voice reverberated loudly off the walls. "Demetri Frost! How dare you disregard your fiancée! She's returned after so long, and you don't even greet her properly!"

"I do not have a fiancée."

"Well, I have already asked for her hand in marriage, so she is..."

"She's your fiancée, then, Grandfather!" Demetri interjected. "I wish you all the best in marrying a young girl like her. I'll even show respect by addressing her as Grandma."

The remaining three brothers exchanged wide-eyed glances at this statement. Ian's mouth was slightly agape, Seb blinked rapidly, and Lucien's innocent features contorted into a half-smile of disbelief as he seriously wondered if Arabella was going to become their grandmother. She was younger than him...

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As the temper of the two men continued to rise, Ian, sighed in his heart. He would need to find a way to diffuse the situation.

Clearing his throat, he turned to the lesser of the two evils, their grandfather.
"Grandfather, please calm down..."

"Calm down! Tell your brother to calm down! Look at all the non-sense he is spouting! How dare he utter such blasphemous things! Arabella is like a granddaughter to me! She is the daughter of my Godson! The granddaughter of the man who gave his life to save mine! And I promised him that she would marry into my family!"

"You have many others who are a part of your family, Grandfather. I don't see why you need me to make the sacrifice. I am sure if you order Gabriel, he will do his filial duty and marry Arabella." Demon added smoothly.

It was an open secret among the brothers that Gabriel had carried a torch for Arabella since they two were in school together. While Demon was a few years older than Arabella, Gabriel was the same age as her.

"She doesn't like Gabriel! She likes you!" Elijah Frose roared.

However, his roar might as well have been a simper because it made no difference to Demetri who casually sipped the scotch in front of him. "Well, too bad for her that I am not a toy that can be given to her. I do not like her. And under no circumstance will I marry her."

"You will marry her and make her happy because I said so! And tomorrow you will take the day off and take her shopping!" Elijah Frost spoke the final word and banged his walking stick on the floor, indicating the conversation was over.

"You have long lost your ability to control me or order me around, grandfather. I suggest you accept the fact. Goodnight."

"Is that how this is going to play out, Demetri? Because I can promise you that I still have an ace up my sleeve." This time, Elijah Frost did not speak in anger, but his voice was calm and insinuating.

Ian, Seb and Lucien stilled at this point as Demon paused in the act of leaving.

From there ensued a staring contest between the two men that made the onlookers break out in a cold sweat. Finally, it was their grandfather who backed down and said tiredly, " Ian, Seb and Lucien, you boys go home. I need to have a discussion with your brother so I will not see you off."

"With murmured goodbyes, the three men left, however, once outside the room, their speed slowed to a crawl as they tried to eavesdrop.

"Demetri, if you do not take Arabella out shopping, then that person..."

"You will not dare to..." Demon spoke in a low voice, but the small thread of fear in his voice was still detectable to the old man.

"I can and I will. That person is no use to me. You are the one who still keeps clinging to the past."

"And that suits you just fine because it gives you a leash on me."

"Of course. You are a wild animal that needs to be trained. And if that person is your weakness, then so be it. I am, but a businessman, Demetri. I need to take any opportunities presented to me."

"You are correct, grandfather. I am wild. So, it would do you good to remember that you can try to train me but don't pull the leash too hard. Or else I know very well how to bite back."

"You can only bite back if I let you, Demetri. And like I said, as long as that person is with me... you have no choice."

This time, Demetri did not reply and simply answered, " Of course, you are right, grandfather. Then, as you wish, I will take her shopping tomorrow. But I suggest you start looking for another groom for her."

With that Demetri left the house while Elijah Frost's eyes glittered with delight. He knew perfectly well, how to manipulate Demetri. Tomorrow, he would take her shopping and then three months later at the Centenary celebrations of Frost Industries, Demetri would be engaged with Arabella.

Outside the large mansion, Demetri walked towards his car as if he was about to finish it off. Ian, Seb and Lucien had all scampered when the butler had shooed them away, preventing them from eavesdropping. However, they'd been waiting outside and were relieved when their brother walked out. Even though the man was angry as hell, at least he was relatively unharmed. And since there was no screaming coming out from inside, it seemed their grandfather had lived to see another day.

As Demetri angrily kicked his car, Ian stepped forward, "Demon, you know you can count on us for help. If, grandfather is blackmailing you..."

Demetri's lips lifted in a small smile and he patted Ian's back, "There is nothing the old man can make me do without my consent. Don't worry. For now, let him believe that everything is under his thumb."

Ian watched as his brother drove away before drowning thoughtfully. It seemed the animosity between his brother and their grandfather would soon reach its climax, causing the smouldering volcano to finally burst. He only hoped that the side effects of it would not be too much.

Walking back to their own car, he sighed, "Let's go brothers. Gabe is meeting us at Mike's bar for a round of cards."

After driving a little down the road, Demetri parked his car on the side and made a phone call. The other party answered swiftly and without a greeting, Demetri uttered, "Status Report."

"Sir, there have been no significant changes in the current situation. However with the pictures you've sent us, there has been some movement. How much these can work, only time will tell but for now, we are still in the same position and hoping for improvement."

"Hurry up. My patience is running thin. I want answers and not these platitudes."

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Demetri's jaw clenched as he walked beside Arabelle into the shopping mall. He had never been a fan of shopping, and adding the company of a person he did not like had only made it more difficult for him.

Arabelle seemed oblivious to his anger and smiled up at him with sweet gratitude, "Thank you for accompanying me today, Demetri. I know what a busy man you are, and yet you made time for me."

Demetri only gave a nod of acknowledgement while he paused in the large courtyard of the mall. His good looks and aura earned him second looks from the shoppers; however, he remained unaware of it, standing still, looking straight ahead. If not for his expensive clothing, one would think that he was a security guard accompanying Arabelle.

Arabelle stepped closer and made a faint motion to link her arm with his, but Demetri subtly but smoothly shifted his arm, evading her attempt at getting closer to him. Before she could move again, he said, "Where do you want to go?"

Getting over the awkward moment, Arabelle smiled up at him and said, "I need to shop for everything. I haven't shopped for a while, and everything I own is either last season or totally unsuitable for the approaching winters here. Let's go."

Saying so, Arabelle led him through the mall to a large boutique on the top floor. As they walked into the large store with racks and racks of clothing standing like art installations, Arabelle chatted, "I think I am going to start with a few casual wear dresses and then formal wear."

As she said this, she moved forward to check out the dresses. As she pulled out a delicate white dress, smiling at how it looked like a wedding dress, she turned to get his opinion, "What do you think..."

However, she trailed off when a young saleswoman stood in front of her instead of Demetri. Scanning the store, she noticed that he was speaking to someone on his phone as he sat in the luxurious waiting area of the store. Quickly, she gathered a few dresses and suits to try on.

Today, he'd come shopping with her, so naturally, he would have to help her choose clothing. She'd like to see then how he would remain unmoved when he saw her beauty.

Excited with the beautiful dresses she had found, Arabelle quickly moved to the trial room, trying on the white bridal-like dress. It fit her perfectly, highlighting her slim waist and long legs. Her faded excitement returning at the look, she quickly slipped out of the dressing room, ready to seek his opinion. However, she was dismayed again when she found two new faces in the waiting lounge.

It was clear there were his subordinates from his work. Since Demetri seemed to be engrossed in his work as he gave instructions to the other two people who were taking notes, Arabelle felt like a fool standing there, waiting for his attention. However, her determination was not to be underestimated.

Taking a deep breath, she cleared her throat, her voice carrying a hint of determination as she approached the man immersed in his work. "Demetri, I'm done with the first dress. What do you think of this? Doesn't it look like a..."

Before she could even finish her sentence, Demetri lifted his head just enough to glance at her, his focus already slipping back to his file. He spared her a fleeting nod, his words clipped. "Just ask my secretary for assistance. Nina, help her."

Arabelle felt a mix of disbelief and irritation bubble within her. She had hoped for a moment of connection, for Demetri to notice her. But his response was dismissive, a jarring contrast to the vision she'd held in her mind. Clenching her jaw, she suppressed her frustration, her polite facade never wavering.

Turning towards the female secretary, who seemed to have no sense of fashion in that boxy suit of hers, Arabelle mustered a tight smile. "Could you please help me with these dresses?"

Nina quickly nodded and carefully directed a fuming Arabelle away from the lounge back to the fitting room. Other than the dresses that Arabelle herself had chosen for trying, Nina also walked around the store picking up dresses that she thought were good and passing them to Arabelle for trying them on. By the end of the hour, Arabelle's patience was wavering, and she put a stop to the shopping.

"I've had enough for now. Thank you, Nina. Let's head back."

As Arabelle approached the lounge area, she realized with dismay that Demetri had already disappeared. Feeling angry and ready to lash out at the secretary for wasting her time, she almost dropped her facade when she noticed Demetri walking away from the cashier.

"You didn't have to pay for my shopping. I have my own money, Demetri." Arabelle smiled up at him, even though she was pleased with his move. So, what if he had not helped her choose, at least he had been thoughtful enough to make the purchases for her. It would have been too embarrassing for her to come with him and then make the payment herself.

"Demetri, let me treat you to dinner to thank you for this shopping?"

"You don't have to thank me. Let's go."

"No. Let me treat you to a meal to thank you, or I am not taking any of these."

Shrugging, Demetri answered, "Fine. You can ask my grandfather out for a meal. He is the one who has gifted these dresses to you. They will be sent to your home. I've already made arrangements."

Before Arabelle could burst out, Assistant Ma, who had been standing behind Demetri, spoke up, "Miss Arabelle. As for now, Ian, Seb, Gabe, and Lucien are meeting us for a meal. They wanted to make you feel welcome on your return to the country."

Demetri glanced at his watch and nodded at his two employees, "One hour."

As Assistant Ma and Secretary Nina quickly scuttled away to prepare the rest of the materials since the boss would return in an hour, Demetri gestured for her to come with him, and Arabelle could only sigh in frustration as she tried to think of something else that would make him spend time with her. Follow current novels on

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Arabella found her chance to spend time with Demetri when they left the store. As they walked out of the mall, she spotted a small shop and quickly placed her hand on Demetri's arm. "Demetri, it is Great Uncle's birthday soon and I have been thinking about what to get for him."

"Look at that storefront. They have antique Golconda diamonds. Maybe I could buy something like that for him? He likes collecting those thick rings with stones, doesn't he? And I know it will be difficult for you to make time for me again, so please come there with me. It will only take a few moments, and I am sure no one will mind. Please? For Great Uncle?"

Demetri sighed but gave in. He had already avoided her as much as he could and was about to pass her on to his brothers. With this gift for their grandfather, she could not voice any valid complaints. With a nod, he indicated that she should move towards the jewellery store.

Inside, the saleswoman was ready with her pitch as soon as they were seated. "Ma'am, as you may know, the Golconda diamonds are known for their higher degree of transparency. We have only two pieces in the Golconda diamonds at the moment... This is an 80-carat pale blue tablet diamond set-up..."

"Demetri, don't you think Great Uncle would love this?"

Demetri looked down dispassionately at the ring and shrugged his shoulders. Assuming that to be a positive, she beamed and ordered the salesperson to pack it up for her.

She turned to Demetri, once again expecting him to offer to pay, but the man had already moved on, his eyes fixed on another display. She looked at the beautiful diamond necklace in the transparent case that he was looking at and quickly made her

decision. There was no woman in Demetri's life, and if he was looking at a necklace, then it would be for her.

Demetri had never been very expressive with words, but his actions had always spoken loud and clear. He hadn't forgotten that she shared her birthday with Great Uncle Elijah. Her ruse had worked perfectly. He was already looking for a gift for her. She would not be responsible for ruining his surprise for her.

She quickly slipped away to give him a chance to complete the purchase. At the same time, the saleswoman took her chance and approached the silent man, ready to begin her pitch. "Sir, this is the Heart of Light diamond..."

Demetri raised his hand to silence the woman and spoke, "This necklace and that bracelet, second from the right."

As the woman blinked at the order and looked at the black card extended towards her, she quickly realized that today was the best day of her life. Three exclusively crafted pieces! Wow!

"I'll hand these two to Madam right away..."

"Send them here," Demetri instead ordered, writing down the address on a piece of paper and handing it to the saleswoman.

With both individuals having accomplished what they needed to, Demetri and Arabelle stepped out. Arabelle had already discreetly peeked and noticed the empty case on the way back and sighed.

She had chosen a blue dress for her birthday party, but Demetri had chosen the necklace with the pale pink tear-shaped diamonds. She would have to change her dress. But that was alright. Anything for him.

Smiling brightly at him, she said, "Shopping makes me ravenous. So, Demetri, what have the brothers planned? Are we having a hotpot or barbecue, or something else?"

At the mall's entrance, Demetri opened the car door for Arabelle before answering, "'We' are having nothing. You are having Japanese with the boys."

Before Arabelle could even understand that she had been effectively abandoned, Demetri had already driven away.

Disappointed but also excited about the gift that Demetri had arranged for her, Arabelle quickly resolved to win over her brothers-in-law. Anyone who knew Demetri would know that he placed a high value on his brothers, and she knew that if they all liked her, it would be a point in her favor when he was ready to announce their marriage.

However, Arabelle was once again set for disappointment as Ian, Seb, and Lucien had all been called away. She gave a strained smile to Gabriel, who had been a witness to Demetri's behavior towards her last night and today.

As expected, Gabriel raised a mocking brow at Arabelle when she sat down. "I thought Demon was accompanying you?"

"Yes. He was. But he had to leave for some office work..."

Gabriel's smile turned mocking, and he sighed, "You call yourself his fiancée, and you do not even know that Demon does not work on Saturdays?"

"You are lying. Everyone knows Demon is a workaholic." Arabelle scoffed.

"And everyone knows that Demon does not work on Saturdays, as he takes time off for personal reasons, personal reasons which are of course unknown to everyone."

However, instead of feeling sad, she triumphantly pointed out, "Then it is an even bigger statement of his care for me that he took time out for me to take me shopping."

"Delusional," Gabriel pointed out, saying nothing more. What Arabelle did not know was that they had all been ordered by Demon to organize this luncheon so that he would be able to leave earlier. Seeing that Arabelle had delayed her arrival, the others had found this chance to escape, leaving him alone with the girl. He did not mind being with Arabelle, but her insistence on pretending to be the love of Demetri's life had already gotten on his nerves.

And he hated that even though Demon clearly despised her, he would bend to their grandfather's will, leaving Arabelle with hope every time she was able to get some alone time with him.

He wondered if he should confront Demon but knew that there was no point. What would he even say to him? Demon had shown time and again his disinterest. Finally, as the food was brought to the table, Gabriel thought of the girl who was probably with Demon. In the picture on the phone and at his house.

Could it be true that Demon had a girlfriend that they knew nothing about? A girl who had been able to penetrate his locked heart and make a place for herself? And just like Arabelle, he too held a glimmer of delusional hope. For only if he completely broke her heart would he be able to help her mend it.

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The passage you've provided seems well-written for the most part, but I've made some minor corrections and suggestions for improvement:

The lecture hall buzzed with chatter as all the students waited for the arrival of the professor. Soon, Professor Thomas strode to the front of the room, his stern expression hinting at the seriousness of the situation. He cleared his throat, commanding attention.

"Good morning, class," he began, his tone dripping with a mixture of authority and frustration. "I've just finished grading the derivative assignment, and I must say, I'm not surprised by the results. Like I told you previously, this assignment was only to test your level of aptitude and skill, to understand where you stand in terms of your grasp of mathematics. As expected, most of you have fared badly."

The room quieted as he projected a slide showing the grades. However, most students were surprised. While they seemed to have hardly gotten a question right according to the marks, the professor had given them passing grades. It was unexpected.

While the others looked on, Nora squinted her eyes, trying to find her name on the long list. But it seemed to be curiously missing.

Soon, the professor clicked a button, and the slide changed, this time showing three names. Nora stiffened as she read her name and grade at the bottom of the list with an F grade. Meanwhile, Antonio and Sara seemed to have scored a perfect score.

"Now, all of you must be wondering why I have these three names separated from the rest of the class. Now, Antonio and Sara are already acknowledged math geniuses. So, it was only natural that their grades reflected their perfect scores on this assignment as well." A round of applause broke out in the entire class for the favored couple who stood up and bowed to everyone for their cheering.

Professor Thomas quieted down the class and clenched his jaw as he continued, "The third person on the list also had a perfect score on her assignment. However, she has been given an F. I am sure you are wondering why that is."

Again, chatter arose in the class as everyone heard this shocking announcement. While no one could guess, the professor continued, "Despite all your pathetic attempts at trying to solve the assignment, I gave you passing grades for your honesty. But Miss Nora Williams here decided that she wanted to get good marks with no regard for integrity and no effort on her end. And so, she cheated on the assignment. This grade is to make an example out of her. I would advise all of you to be wary going forward when submitting assignments in the future. Remember, honesty will be rewarded justly. Now, let's continue with the class."

"Excuse me, sir? I have a question." A clear voice cut through the quiet of the class as the professor turned back to the students.

With a raised eyebrow, he spoke, "Yes?"

"Sir, do you have any proof that Miss Williams cheated on the assignment?"

Professor Thomas narrowed his eyes at the young girl and instead questioned, "And who might you be?"

"I am Nora Williams, sir."

The professor fixed his gaze on Nora before saying, "Miss Williams, if you have anything to say about your despicable methods, please say so after the class and do not waste the precious time of students who do wish to study."

Nora clenched her hands under the desk as she felt the entire class giving her the stink eye. She reminded herself that she had handled much worse and raised her chin. "No, sir. I have been falsely accused of cheating in front of the entire classroom, so I will be challenging this accusation in front of everyone as well."

This time the professor paused and spoke slowly, "Miss Williams, I understand the need to clear your name, but I have seen your previous grades. I can assure you that with your standards, you cannot even get a single question right in the assignment that I gave you. So, instead of trying to argue with me, why don't you accept your mistake and apologize for it, and I might give you the benefit of the doubt and a passing grade this time."

"Why should I apologize for something I have not done?" Nora spoke loudly.

The professor sighed angrily and shook his head, "Fine. Have it your way. But let me be very clear, Miss Williams. If you are not able to prove yourself right now, I will not just give you an F, but I will throw you out of my class and bar you from taking this course."

"I am willing to accept this, Sir. So, could you please show me proof of my cheating, sir?"

Professor Thomas interlocked his fingers on the podium and smiled, "Miss Williams, your own past test results are proof of your inability."

"Professor, with all due respect, that is not evidence; simply an assumption. Just because my past scores were not what one would call shining examples, it does not mean that I cannot improve over time with hard work and guidance. Professor, whoever has complained to you may have malicious intent."

Nora watched as the professor cast a glance over the class. This was something Demetri had told her to do – to give the professor an 'out'. By pointing out that someone had filed a complaint, it gave the professor a way to save himself from humiliation.

Professor Thomas was also a smart man. Since the girl had already guessed that he was acting based on a complaint and she seemed confident, he gave a nod. "There is a simple way of proving that you have not cheated, Miss Williams."

Turning around, he walked to the board and wrote down a question, "This question is almost on the same level as the ones in your assignment. You can come here and solve this. If you are able to do it, then I will believe you. But, if not..."

"Then you won't ever see me in your class again, Professor," Nora spoke quietly.

As the professor invited her to the front to solve the question, he ordered, "The rest of you can try this too. If any of you are able to solve this, I will give you all an easier assignment next time."

Immediately, the sounds of pages rustling could be heard, and the professor started to walk between the rows. Meanwhile, Nora stood in front of the board with her eyes closed. These last few days, Demetri had taken the time to explain everything from the basics, and she had been fairly confident about her understanding of the subject. The man had made her even dream of derivatives as he'd given her question after question to solve. However, as she stared at the question in front of her, why did this seem so difficult again?

When five minutes had passed and everyone continued to scribble in their books, Professor Thomas sighed in disappointment. The girl's confidence had actually given him hope that she was not a cheater. "Miss Williams, if you are unable to solve it, you are free to pack your books and leave. Please do not waste the time of the entire class."

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Chapter 35: Happiness

[1,017 words]

Chapter 35: Happiness

Demetri sighed as he entered the quiet house. Exhaustion tugging at his every step, his fingers automatically moved to the knot of his tie. He had a splitting headache and his grandfather's constant harassment was not of any help. was far from helpful. The old man seemed convinced that Frost Industries could prosper independently, leaving Demetri's sole responsibility to be marrying Arabelle, keeping her happy and making babies.

In the past, he had hoped that his grandfather would understand his aversion to the woman eventually, but now, he knew that it was not of much use. He'd even tried to make the man see that there was someone else in the family who liked Arabelle but again, Elijah Frost was acting like a blind horse, charging ahead without a care.

Even before he could completely loosen his tie, the rapid pitter-patter of footsteps reached his ears, approaching him in a hurry. Perplexed, he turned just in time to be embraced by a whirlwind of warmth and energy. A surprised grunt escaped his lips as his arms automatically steadied the person crashing into him.

He barely had time to adjust his stance before he found himself pressed back against the door, the force of the impact greater than he had anticipated. It took him a second to regain his balance, his hands resting lightly on the small of her back as Nora clung to him.

"Demetri I am so so so happy! I could not have asked for a better teacher than you! Do you have any idea what happened today?"

Demetri blinked, his tired brain trying to catch up with the sudden turn of events. Slowly, her words penetrated his mind and he understood...

Almost instinctively, he rubbed her waist, as if soothing an excitable pet, and inquired, "What happened?"

In a rush, Nora recounted the entire event to him, including how the professor had presented her with a trick question. The professor had intentionally omitted a part of the question, not anticipating her to identify the error.

"Later, after I had pointed out the mistake, the professor nodded approvingly before providing me with the complete question to solve. I almost wish I could've captured Antonio and Sara's expressions to show you when they realized that not only had I solved the question but solved it faster than them! For the first time in my life, I felt like a math genius!"

As she said this, Nora unexpectedly took charge of untying his tie and then undoing the top button of his shirt.

Demetri's lips kicked up in a semblance of a smile before his expression turned serious again, but even so, his voice was amused as he gently pinched her waist, "Miss

Williams, you've cornered me against the door and now you're attacking my clothes. Is your mind still on consummating? You should be more shameless, shouldn't you?"

At that moment, Nora's eyes widened, her cheeks flushing with embarrassment as she realized their compromising position. She was fairly certain that her fingers had grazed his shoulder, but thankfully, he hadn't commented on it. Why did he always bring up consummation? Nora wanted to stomp her foot in frustration.

Stepping back, she quickly apologized, "I'm sorry. I overstepped my boundaries. I was just too happy."

Demetri acknowledged her apology before carefully moving her aside by the waist and excusing himself.

Swiftly recovering from her embarrassment, Nora decided to reward herself for her hard work by picking a book from her 'To Be Read' pile. After selecting a novel, she made her way back to her spot on the couch and settled in.

Somehow, the couch with its view of a balcony adorned with plants felt like the most comfortable place in the house—well, at least the part of the house she had explored. Besides the kitchen and her own bedroom, she had only been in this living room. There was something about the arrangement of the plants that created a soothing ambience.

Whether she was studying or unwinding, she had come to regard this nook as her personal haven. Of course, she was sure that the Husband also felt the same. Typically, he would recline on the other couch, quietly gazing at the plants. At first, she had considered striking up a conversation, but it soon became apparent that he would have preferred conversing with the plants than with her. She had let him be and was grateful for this shared sanctuary. She often glimpsed him asleep here when she called it a night.

It was in those moments, that Demetri Frost resembled a human and not an intimidating ice sculpture. Well, there were other moments, like when he kissed her on the kitchen island, he was all hot human. And then when he'd pulled her onto his muscled thighs when he had promised to teach her... And then today, when she had almost 'mole*ted him. She was quite certain now that he had been teasing her.

As expected, Demetri emerged from his bedroom, dressed in a dark T-shirt and pyjamas, and settled onto the couch. Nora quickly hid her face behind her book, but her attention kept drifting toward him. She noticed that he appeared more restless than usual. She could not help but frown in concern.

Rising from her seat, she inserted a bookmark into her novel and addressed him, "Do you have a headache?"

Demetri met her gaze and then closed his eyes, sighing in affirmation. Nora shook her head and approached him. Gently tapping his forehead with the back of her finger, she instructed, "Raise your shoulders."

Though he scowled at her, Nora persistently prodded and nudged him until he shifted and laid his head on her lap. She began massaging his head slowly, targeting pressure points. Initially taken aback by her audacity, Demetri was about to protest, but as he felt her fingers applying pressure, he sighed and closed his eyes.

As her fingers intermittently brushed against his hair almost caressing, Nora felt a tenderness towards this man whom she called husband.

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