

Benefits 291

Chapter 291: Liv

Evana looked at Lucien who was working diligently on his laptop trying to look for the car in which Robert had escaped. As she watched the scene with all the Frost brothers rallying around and handling things without saying anything, it made her finally realize what Nora meant when she said that they were an unstoppable force. While each one seemed formidable, together, they seemed to overpower everything around them.

And another thing that made her appreciate them was that they already treated her as their own. Only Demetri and Lucien had met Dora but the others were just as concerned for her as anyone could be.

Dora. She just hoped that her sister was not harmed. How could uncle Robert have done this. He was her father's most trusted man. For him to take Dora...

As she sat there, rubbing her arms, her eyes swam with tears. Dora, the little kiddo, she'd tried so hard to run away from him. She could still hear her scream at Uncle Robert that he was a bad man.

She turned her head to look at Demetri who was talking on the phone and then to look at Erasmi Frost had gone to her mother and was taking care of her. Even the little dog was not left alone as Seb Frost gently patted the little dog who had suffered multiple injuries in trying to save Dora. It was like they had formed a protective barrier around them all, vowing to keep them safe.

Just as she was about to ask them about her father and if they were still able to track him when the door of the large room suddenly opened. A young woman walked into the place followed by Ian who had disappeared after bringing the dog back.

As she wondered about the identity of the woman, trying to think where she had met her, the girl called out, "Lucy."

She watched as Lucien turned suddenly with a frown of irritation for being disturbed but then his expression cleared and he quickly stood up, "Livi!" She stared as the girl ran into his embrace with a familiarity. A strange surge of jealousy ran through her. Why did she have to keep watching girls running into his embrace? And then he had the gall to tell her that he'd never been in a relationship in the past.

The feeling of jealousy intensified, as the hug lasted longer, threatening to overshadow her concern for Dora. She bit her lip, fighting the urge to confront the situation as she remembered the embarrassment of the last time she had jumped to conclusions.

She decided to take a different approach. She stood on the sideline, her expression carefully neutral, attempting to hide the inner turmoil. No need to make a fool of herself repeatedly.. Her attention needed to be focused on Dora and Dora only.

Just then, Nora came to stand by her and cocked her head," Well well... What is this? How does Lucien know her...No... He used to come there when he met me?"

It was those words that made her remember who the girl was. Finally, the woman let go of Lucien. Why did the hug have to last so long? And how did he know her?

The woman was Olivia Brown. The owner of the cafe where Nora used to go as a teenager to study and help out at the cafe. She had been invited here by her father along with Antnoio to 'misguide' Nora. However, they'd never had the chance to use her. How did these two know each other?

Before she could question anyone, a young voice called out from the door, "Evana!"

Evangeline turned around and watched in wonder as Dora raced inside, straight towards her. Barely able to believe her eyes, Evana hurriedly caught the little girl in her arms and hugged her tight," Dora."

Tears streamed down her face as she hugged Dora tight. Finally, the little girl wriggled out of her embrace and ran to Nora, receiving a hug from her as well, followed by everyone else as well. Finally, after she'd been reassured that she was safe, Dora started to cry," Uncle Robert almost made me into a movie of Finding Dory! Uncle Robert is a bad man. We have to tell Daddy to punish him and fire him!" Her eyes welled up again as she continued, "Uncle Robert hurt my Kitten, and then he hit me. I lost consciousness. And then I woke up in a strange place. I was so scared."

Then realizing that she had not seen her dog, she started to cry in earnest," My kitten! He killed her! Gaia! You have to..."

"Your Kitten is safe, little Dora.", Seb interrupted, trying to calm the girl.

Dora paused at the person who spoke up, realizing that she did not know them, "Who are you?", she asked shyly.

Seb's eyes sparkled as he kneeled down and smiled at the girl, "I am Gaia's most handsome brother, Seb. And I have a surprise for you. You see, your brave little kitten is safe, though she is in a lot of pain and she will need you to give her some extra love. I just took her inside. Come with me."

Wiping her tears, Dora quickly held Seb's hand and started to follow him, peppering him with questions about her dog and his medicines. With the resilience of a child, Dora was already ready to move on from the trauma she had suffered.

Finally, with Dora out of the room, everyone's eyes turned to Olivia who was standing there. Evana and Nora both watched as the other Frost brothers, finally greeted the young woman.

She heard Nora whisper, "Dam*. Olivia knows them all? Is the world too small or what?" as Demetri too went forward and hugged the girl. Finally, the girl turned towards them and came forward to meet Nora and her. First she hugged Nora, asking after her well being and then she came to hug Evangeline. Still perplexed about the woman's relation to the Frost brothers, Nora and Evana continued to stand there, perplexed until Olivia herself explained, "Sisters-in-laws! We've met in the past but under different circumstances. I am Olivia. I have suffered alone all these years with the testosterone-filled brothers as the only sister. I am so glad to have you both join me! Soon, we'll be able to overpower these males!"

Chapter 292: Olivia Brown

Evana heaved a sigh of relief as she finally understood the relationship and almost patted herself on the back, complimenting her self-control. It was a good thing she had not overreacted or else she'd have made a fool of herself again. Sister! Even Nora had been unaware that they'd had a sister.

Her smugness did not last long, however, as Lucien soon slithered over to her and whispered in her ear, "Don't think I did not notice those blazing eyes when you saw me hug Livi. I almost expected a repeat of being poked at. You jealous little angel."

Covering her mouth with her hand, she whispered back, "You've been hallucinating. I did not even react at all. What jealousy. I already know what a playboy you are."

"Ha! You were so jealous I could almost see the smoke coming out of your ears. Be honest, Angel. You feel possessive of me."

"I do not feel..." Evana tried to deny it but was interrupted by Lucy who whispered, "I like it. I like that you are possessive of me."

Evana shut her mouth at that, her face turning hot. Quickly, she turned to Olivia, wanting to understand what had happened and how Dora reached her.

"How did you get Dora?"

Olivia sighed and threw a glance at Demetri who remained quiet! It was all this man's plan and he should be the one explaining it! But no! It had to be her.

"Demetri needed someone to pass on information between here and the others back home. So, he suggested to your father that I be the one to be invited here along with Antonio. He used Antonio to get rid of Queen Rosalind's plan of having her engaged to Prince Augustus. And I was the ruse to try and delay the plan."

"Later, when he found a way to get rid of Queen Rosalind, I was handed into the care of Robert who's job was to take care of me and keep me safe until I was of use. I've been enjoying a long vacation here since then and since I'd been keeping a distance from everyone and my point of contact was only Robert, I thought we'd formed a friendship."

"Robert barged into my hotel room this morning carrying an unconscious Dora and begged me to take care of her. I was shocked. He seemed to be in a hurry and I tried to stop him, trying to understand the little girl's identity, but he said he was leaving the country. Once he was safely out of the country, he would call me."

Olivia finished off with a shrug. So, Olivia Brown had been brought to Estania by Demetri who thought this far off. Of course, he had not expected Robert to trust Olivia, but he'd brought another hidden piece amidst them, without anyone being the bit wiser. It was too sneaky of the man.

As this layer was peeled off, Evana realized that Demetri Frost was too far thinking and insidious. He'd been here a year... how much had he already done...

Shaking her head, she tried to focus on the task at hand," So, Robert has escaped the country, and Dora is safe. Thank you Olivia!"

Olivia smiled as she accepted her gratitude before sighing," Unfortunately, you are wrong about one thing, Evangeline."

"What do you mean? Is Dora still in some kind of danger?"

"Nah! Dora is safe. Its Robert. Because he was being so jittery and not answering my questions properly, I might have over reacted."

"What do you mean?"

"I tasered him." Olivia replied with a small look.

Evangeline's eyes widened as she tried to confirm," What did you do?"

"Tasered him? Its something you do with a Taser gun? Incapacitate the person temporarily...He is with Ian at the moment."

"You keep a taser gun with you?"

"Of course. Don't you know what an overprotective lot they are? If I don't keep something and am unable to protect myself, they will surround me with bodyguards. So, for my own peace of mind, I carry a gun at all times. Since I was not allowed to bring that into Estania, I purchased this one here."

Evangeline nodded in understanding, admiring the woman in front of her. Jsut then she remembered another thing and turned to Lucien who was once again typing away something on the laptop," We need to inform Daddy that he needs to come back and not go to that meeting."

"It's too late for that, angel. Your father has already established contact with the kidnappers and his phone and other tracking devices have been discarded. The place where he went to, has already been emptied."

Evana felt alarm bells go off in her head. "What did you mean empty? Have they taken Daddy away now? Has he been kidnapped?"

Lucien quickly sent Evana a comforting look and answered, "It's okay, Angel. He is safe. You don't need to worry about him. He will be safe. We've already taken precautions."

"What kind of precautions, Lucifer? Tell me everything."

"We've done what Alpin Banfi has been trying to do. He kidnapped Dora to force your father's hand. Well, we are doing the same thing."

Looking at her blank face, Lucien sighed. He knew she would not be able to comprehend what he was saying since she was too honest. He'd have to put it bluntly, "Angel, we've kidnapped Alpin Banfi Jr."

Evangeline coughed and stared at Lucien as she choked on her own saliva. Finally, catching her breath, she looked at him and asked, "What did you say? You've kidnapped Junior?"

"Not exactly kidnapped. More of a hostage situation." Lucien tried to parry.

"Hostage?"

"Uh huh. Alpin Jr is in the hospital right? We've taken control of the man's hospital room. That is it. I've already intercepted Banfi's location and sent him a video of his son. See, he is screaming like a pig who has been tied for slaughter."

Evangeline could only stare in horror as Lucien then explained their next plan. Her eyes had been opened to an all new world as she finally realized that there was no black and white in this world. Both Banfi and the Frosts had kidnapped a person, a crime, but their motives made all the difference...

Chapter 293: A Scandal

"Cut him into so many pieces that everyone will think he is a jigsaw puzzle!" As the guards came rushing in on Alpin Banfi's orders, a grim voice spoke slowly, "I wouldn't be so hasty, Banfi. Every cut on that man will find a mirror image on this man here. Would you like a demonstration?"

Even though Alexander Sterling maintained his composure outwardly, his hands under the table clenched. Demetri Frost wouldn't really harm that boy, would he? He just couldn't be so sure.

He watched as a knife glinted against Junior's neck and then turned his head to look at Banfi who was staring at the screen in horror. The knife slowly nicked the man's neck and a small drop of blood emerged.

Alpin Jr screamed as he felt the nick of the knife against his flesh, uttering foul language as he sat there scared stiff, shouting threats, "Do you think you can get away after doing this! I am the next ruler of Estania. Once I am on the throne, I will hunt you down and teach you all a lesson! I will start with that who*e of yours! I will..."

In the next minute, a gauze was stuffed into the man's mouth while Demetri spoke, "Mr Banfi, the best course of your action would be to walk out of there and confess to your crimes publicly and beg for rightful punishment.

"No! No. Kill him if you want. I don't care! I have other children who can take the throne. But the Banfi's will be the next rulers of Estania, come what may! Guards! Don't just stand there! Seize this man and make him sign those documents and then kill him!"

As the guards closed in around Alexander, Banfi spoke sinisterly, "Your time has come, Sterling. You thought you could outsmart me, but you underestimated the power of the Banfi family. This time you won't escape!"

Instead of trying to dodge the guards who were now closing in on him, Alexander continued to sit there with his composure, as he finally spoke, "Do you know something, uncle? You've always underestimated my power. It is your biggest downfall."

"Downfall? What downfall? It is time for me to rise. And underestimating your power? You have no power, you fool. Only an illusion of power. I did all sorts of things right under your nose and you couldn't

even get a single piece of evidence against me...I laundered money. Millions of it. I created a network of shell companies, siphoning off funds from Estania's treasury. I silenced opposition, and controlled key figures in the government. I created an illusion of prosperity while lining my pockets, but you remained unaware in your cocoon."

"You used my mother's trust in you to further your own goals." Alexander spoke sadly.

"Of course! There are no friends or relatives in politics! Only allies who are with you for mutual gains! I was the puppet master, pulling the strings to ensure the Banfi name would be revered. And I will continue to be the puppet master even as you will be buried deep into the ground. After that, I will call back all those loans that those poor people in Estania have taken to invest in the project proposed by the Frosts before getting rid of them. I'll make sure that people will curse the Sterling name for generations to come!"

"And now, I've talked enough. Get rid of him already!"

As Banfi uttered those words on his way out, his mind was already on the riches he would soon enjoy while witnessing the downfall of the Sterling family. It was why he was even more irritated when Alexander called out leisurely, "But your plans have crumbled. And the people of Estania will know the truth!"

Scoffing at the man's dreams, he reached for the doorknob when he felt a sudden power shift. It almost seemed that everyone in the room was watching him. He looked back to see that the guards were now surrounding him.

Confusion and disbelief washed over his face. "What is this? Have you all gone mad? I gave you a direct order!" Banfi Sr. shouted, his voice echoing through the room.

The guard who had been silent throughout as he had brought Alexander Sterling to this place, raised his chin and spoke defiantly, "We do not follow the orders of a criminal."

Realization dawned on Alpin Banfi Sr. as the gravity of the situation sunk in. His own guards had turned against him! Those that he had paid to be loyal to him for years! "You can't do this! I am the rightful ruler of Estania! You will all pay for this betrayal!" Banfi Sr. spat, his composure slipping away.

"I did tell you that you've always underestimated me. Yes, you were able to rob us of millions but we will get that all back and more from you. You placed Robert by my side and fooled me by using him to take Dora. While I placed my most trusted soldiers around you, fooling you into thinking that they were your own personal army."

"But what is even more interesting is that your pawn did not stand by you. Robert may have followed your orders but he could not bear to harm my daughter. This is the end, Uncle Banfi. This is the last time I will be calling you that. After today, you will be known as a thief all over Estania."

"No! That is not possible. This is not the end, Alexander! I will return. Even if you have won over me with deceit, I will return with my power. You do not know the power of money..."

"And you do not know the power of the people Banfi. Whatever you said just now, in this room, has already been broadcast live all over Estania. The people are probably already marching towards your house to tear you apart."

Banfi stilled and watched in horror as Alexander Sterling took out a small device from the inside of his shirt. The screen in the corner changed to a newsreader playing a clip of him confessing that he had laundered money.

Chapter 294: A Proposal

"Will you marry me?" Nora looked down at the man sitting on his knee as he proposed and frowned before shaking her head, "Is that a proposal? Its the most boring one I've ever heard."

Ian too popped some chips into his mouth and added, "I've seen more excitement in a library."

"Of course, there is more excitement in the library. Especially when there is a hot librarian. Take her to the library, bro." Seb added his two cents.

Nora frowned and stared at the two brothers with narrowed eyes, "If you cannot be helpful. Then run away! Shoo!"

But Ian simply shrugged and answered, "Well, it's not our fault that you did not receive a good proposal."

"Oh please! I did not need a proposal. I'm so in love with my Demetri..." Nora deliberately put on her most doting expression as she stared at the others, making them moan in disgust.

Ever since they had witnessed that tattoo on Demetri's wrist, they'd been horrified that their brother would be such a sentimental fool!

"Can we please focus on the task at hand please?" The man who was still on his knees asked with irritation.

"Oops Sorry! Got sidetracked. Please do propose again. And add something more personal okay?" Nora quickly rushed back and took her place, ready to be proposed to again.

The man nodded and Nora waited anxiously for the proposal. Finally, after waiting for a few minutes, he looked up and caught her hand in his. "I love you with all my heart. Will you marry me?"

"No. And if she says Yes, I'll bury you ten feet under the ground."

Lucien turned his head to look at Demetri before bowing down. Could Demetri have a worse timing?

Nora giggled at Lucien's predicament and went to sit back down on her chair as Lucien looked at her hopefully, 'Opinions?"

"You're still asking her for an opinion? Demetri, this is what you have done to Lucien by pampering him as the youngest! He even dares to propose to his brother's wife!" Ian added fuel to the fire immediately.

Seb played along and added, "Do you think that Nora will say yes to your proposal when she has Demetri? He's the most handsome brother, after me, of course."

"Hey! Stop that you two! What's so great about Demetri? He did not even propose to me. Weren't you guys just saying that I should dump him for someone who would give me flowery words?"

Ian and Seb stared in horror at Nora who had easily turned the tables on them and then turned to their brother who was now staring at them with his arms crossed in front of his chest.

"Your wife is too cunning! She wants a formal proposal from you and is using us as cannon fodder!" Ian pointed out, casting a pitiful glance at Nora.

Seb nodded along and added, "I think you should ask her to wed you formally, Demon. Take an skywriter airplane and have a proposal written in the sky."

"I've already proposed to her. I can get on my knees again when we are alone... of course."

"Eww! We'll have to bleach our ears now!" Even though the words were said inconspicuously enough, the way Demetri looked at Nora who turned red, was enough to let them know what was done when he was on his knees.

Picking up a cushion from the chair, Nora picked it up and aimed it at Demetri's head, "Go from here. You all are no help! We need to help Lucien propose to Evana!"

"You can't blame us for not being helpful! We've already given so many ideas!"

"Ideas! What ideas! Flash mob? Skywriter! Fireworks! They are all cheesy and so over the top! Evana needs something more personal! Something that is unique to them! And if Lucy thinks that getting on his knee is the best way, then we need to help him make that unique!"

"Then he can tell her this, Evana, ever since you've come into my life it has been brighter. Like a supernova. You are my constellation in the vast, dark sky of life. Will you make my universe complete and marry me?"

Nora burst into laughter again, "Supernova? Constellation? Ian, he's proposing, not giving a TED Talk on astrophysics!"

"He can say something like, 'Your eyes are like... like two perfectly cooked steaks under a starry night?'" Seb added with a shrug, earning scathing looks from everyone in the room.

"What! Steaks look beautiful..." Seb defended himself.

"I think, I'll stick to a simple proposal. Nora, please stand there for the last time." Lucien almost begged. He wanted to propose to Evana before the New Year's ball tonight but somehow he found himself at a loss for words.

Things had finally settled down in Estania with Banfi exposed and news about him being handled well by the public relations. Evana had already succeeded in recovering much of the stolen funds, establishing her own position in Estania. It was almost time for him to return home but before going he wanted her to know that he would return to her soon. He'd already discussed things with Demetri about working from Estania.

Now the only problem was being able to propose. He'd been trying to do that for the last many days but every time he tried to propose, he would find himself tongue-tied. Finally, out of desperation, he'd asked Nora to help him practice. Only to be caught red-handed by Ian and Seb who were not about to miss this opportunity.

Sighing, he fumbled in his pocket and pulled out the ring, raised it towards Nora who had taken her position and asked, "I love you with all my heart. Will you marry me?"

Nora giggled again, while Ian and Seb roared with laughter. Even Demetri could not suppress his smile, causing Lucien to feel completely deflated until Demetri finally spoke, "It would be perfect. But I hope you are not planning to propose to her with that napkin and have bought a ring."

Lucien looked down at his hand and realized that instead of pulling out the ring, he'd accidentally pulled out a crumpled napkin... Well at least now he would know to remember to not carry anything else but the ring in his pocket... lest he propose to her with something else...

Chapter 295: A New Years Ball

Nora stood straight, almost not daring to move as she watched in the mirror, Demetri walking towards her slowly. She knew of course, that she shouldn't tease him, but she just could not resist. Even now, she could feel the butterflies in her stomach as she wondered what he would do next. It was the highlight of her day, her week, her month and her entire year, to see his reaction when she did something unexpected.

She felt her breath catch as he placed his hands on her shoulders. Breathlessly and quite daringly, considering his mood, she quickly reminded him, "We'll be late for the ball. Let's get ready fast."

Instead of answering her, Demetri gently moved her hair forward, revealing the curve of her neck. Ever so slowly, he traced his fingers from there down the length of her back, leaving goosebumps on her skin, as she waited in anticipation. Slowly, he eased the zipper upward, the sound almost drowned out by the rapid beating of her heart.

As he reached the top, he leaned in, his lips brushing against her nape. "You know, my kitten, you can't escape that easily," he whispered with a playful growl, sending a delicious shiver down her spine.

Her eyes sparkled with mischief as she turned to face him, feigning innocence. "Escape? Who said anything about escaping?" she teased, a mischievous grin playing on her lips.

"I'm waiting to be caught. Why do you think I've been doing all this?"

The fire in his eyes gave her a thrill. She'd been teasing and evading Demetri all day, playing cat and mouse, just for this moment. Every time, she felt herself burn for him, she'd tease him, happy to see that he burnt just as much.

With a mock scowl, he shot, "You want to miss the ball today? All you have to do is say the word..."

Widening her eyes at his threat, she shook her head quickly, trying to escape him, "No no no! We can't miss the ball! I want to make a grand entrance. Let's go!"

Before she could escape, however, Demetri caught her by the shoulders, "Not so fast, kitten. Let me mark you, first..."

Hurriedly, Nora moved to cover her neck, as she protested, "I am not going to the ball with a love bite."

Demetri's mischievous chuckle echoed in her ears, as he whispered, "What a perfect idea. But next time...It was at this moment, that she realized her foolishness. She watched as he pulled out a long

chain with a small briolette diamond hanging at the end and fastened it around her neck. "This is so pretty..."

His fingers brushed against her collarbone, leaving her momentarily breathless, and distracting her from the sparkly diamond. "There, now you're properly adorned for the ball," he remarked with a smirk, his tone carrying a hint of satisfaction.

With a final lingering touch, Demetri gently kissed her cheek and tapped her nose, "Now, let us go make that grand entrance of yours."

Nora swirled the amber liquid in her glass and sighed for the nth time. The entrance was grand. The decor was grand. The party was grand too... grandly boring!

If someone came to express their condolences over the loss of her mother one more time, she would upend her glass on their head. Her mother had been gone from this world for good and she did not need to be reminded of her. Even her husband had been 'kidnapped' by those who wanted to talk business.

It was going to be the new year in a few hours, and all these people could talk about was politics. How sad this and how sad that! Maybe she should slip away to a corner and do some reading. She'd found this amazing book on NovelFire... At least she'd find some romance until Lucien came out to propose to Evana.

She looked around for him in the huge ballroom and saw him talking to someone while Evana stood chatting next to him. She sighed. What a perfect couple they looked like. Astonishingly, Lucien did not look nervous at all. She just wished that he would offer her the ring only when he proposed and not something else.

As she slowly slipped away from the crowds, her wrist was suddenly grabbed. Alarmed, she was about to scream and attack the person when she looked up to see Demetri who was leading her away from the crowd.

"You're here? Where are we going in such a hurry?" Nora asked in amusement, as Demetri swiftly cut his way through the crowd, his aura warning off from anyone approaching them.

"Are we going for a secret rendezvous?"

"Something like that."

Gasping, in true Victorian fashion, Nora raised her ungloved hand to her mouth and protested, "Sir! Please be a gentleman! If we are caught, it will be a huge scandal. My reputation will be in tatters."

Shaking his head, Demetri finally reached the edge of the crowd and added to her theatrics, "You wound me, my lady. I would never do anything to tarnish your impeccable reputation. I just hope to wish you a happy new year."

As they reached a secluded balcony, hidden from the buzzing ballroom, Nora breathed a sigh of relief.

The cool night air brushed against her face as Demetri turned to her with a smirk. "Here we are, my lady, away from the chaos. No scandal, just us."

Walking her to the balustrade, Demetri stood behind her, his hands coming around her to rest on it. With a sigh, Nora leaned against his chest and grinned, "You are the best, My Husband. Rescuing me from the clutches of boredom."

"I'm glad. I have no intention of spending the new year with a bunch of money-minded people." With that, Demetri gently kissed her shoulder as the two looked outside, the noise and the chatter left behind.

As Nora closed her eyes, she was assured that she could spend all her life like this. Closing her eyes in contentment, she wondered if she would even need anything else. Before she could say more, he suddenly said, "Nora. I have something for you."

Chapter 296: A Proposal

Nora looked at the shining stars in contentment as she sighed, "The fireworks are going to go off on the other side of the palace, aren't they?"

"Hmm."

"And we are here so we'll miss out on seeing them..."

Demetri nuzzled her neck and asked, "You want to go there to see them."

Nora shook her head, leaning a bit sideways to let him nuzzle close to her, "Nah! I'd rather be with you. Create our own fireworks."

Demetri smiled, his warm breath sending shivers down Nora's spine. "Our own fireworks, huh?" he whispered playfully as he tickled her stomach.

Giggling, she caught his fingers and intertwined them with hers. "It's going to be midnight soon."

"Yes."

As they heard the distant countdown to the end of the year, Demetri turned her towards him, gently taking her lips in a gentle kiss. As the kiss deepened, Nora could only help but think, 'They' started to kiss the same. It was as if she knew just what he was going to do next and she could welcome him or parry with him.

Slowly, the kiss came to an end and Demetri moved back. Touching his forehead to hers, he whispered with a smile, "Happy New Year, Kitten."

"Happy New Year, husband." Nora whispered back. She went up on her tip toes, wanting to kiss him again when he gently nudged her shoulders, making her turn back. His hands came to rest on her stomach as he whispered, "I have a surprise for you."

"A surprise?"

"Hmm. Look there." As she looked at the place where Demetri pointed, she heard a soft click. She watched in astonishment as the darkness below them vanished. Strings of fairy lights came to life, intertwined with the clusters of beautiful white moonflowers to form the words, "Marry Me."

"This..."

Nora found herself at a loss. The sight before her was too magical to her. She'd been sure that she did not need a proposal. She was happy to have Demetri's love. But that was before Demetri really proposed to her. He always knew what she needed even when she didn't.

Her eyes moistened as she took in the sight before her and she turned into his arms, burying her head in his chest, her hands clinging to his shirt at the waist.

She felt him hug her back and held on tighter, never wanting to let go. As minutes passed, Demetri could only helplessly pat her head, "Are you going to give me an answer."

"No," came the muffled reply.

Demetri smiled and looked at her, "Really? You are going to refuse me?"

"No."

"Then are you saying yes to marrying me?"

"No."

Demetri's chest shook with silent laughter and Nora looked up at him with big wet eyes, "This is too big a surprise. I want to say yes, but my makeup has probably been ruined and I don't want you to think a panda is saying yes to your marriage proposal."

"I'll take the cute little Nora panda anytime. Also, I know you are my kitten. So, no worries. Say yes, Nora?"

Nora pursed her lips and was about to say yes, when an impatient voice called out, " What the hell? Are you not going to marry him, Nora?"

Surprised, Nora looked up to see- Ian, Seb, Erasmi, Lucien and Evana looking down at them and glared at Erasmi who'd broken the moment and revealed them there.

Ian shouted, " No! Don't you dare to say Nora! If we have to deal with the old Demon again, I'll die and haunt you forever!"

Seb nodded, " Yes! I'll haunt you forever too, say Yes, Nora."

"Just put the ring on her so that she doesn't escape, Demon!" Erasmi called out again, making the others cheer loudly.

Laughing, Nora turned back to the beautiful vision, holding it close in her heart, not wanting to miss out on any detail before calling out, " I'm not saying, yes."

The silence that followed her announcement could make a pin drop and using this chance, Nora quickly threw her arms around Demetri joyfully and spoke softly, " Yes yes yes, I'll marry you."

The moment Nora uttered those words, the silence shattered into a chorus of cheers from their unexpected audience. The people peering down from the balcony above erupted in ecstatic jubilation, clapping almost louder than the fireworks.

Erasmi, ever the troublemaker, shook his head and hollered, "Took you long enough, Nora! You almost gave us a heart attack up here!"

Ian added, "If you had said no, we would have disowned you as our honorary sister."

Seb chimed in, "I've already started planning the bachelor party. It's going to be legendary!"

"I can't believe you were spying on us! And are now going to be shameless and continue to stand there."

"As if you would not have done the same, if you knew." Lucien replied knowingly. Of course, he'd been charged with the responsibility of finding out if Nora had any dream proposal, hence the entire charade of him wanting to propose to Evana. And of course, if he had been proposing, Nora would definitely have wanted to be there."

"I'm here under duress! I would never be so gossipy as this lot!" Evana called out. But then raised her camera and added, "And unlike these people, I've captured the entire moment for you. So you have to forgive me!"

Not wanting to waste anymore time, Demetri quickly caught her chin and turned her towards him as he slid a ring, that matched the pendant he had earlier given her, onto her finger.

Nora sighed slowly, as she looked at the ring glinting over her tattoo, "Oh wow, Demetri, it's beautiful. It's like having my very own fireworks..."

She couldn't tear her eyes away from him and whispered. "It's perfect. Thank you," she whispered, her voice choked with emotion.

Unknown to the couple, the audience slipped away as quietly as they had come...

Demetri cupped her face and gently caressed her cheeks, whispering slowly, "Thank you, Mrs. wife."

Chapter 297: So beautiful

Evana stepped into the bubble bath, slowly sitting down, letting the warm bath pull away the tension inside her. She sighed contentedly and leaned back her head as the stress melted away.

She smiled softly with her head leaning against the edge as she thought of the romantic proposal she had just witnessed. Never could she have imagined that the man known as

Demon would have such a soft side to him. When Lucien had whisked her away, just before midnight, telling her that he had something better to show than fireworks, she'd been amused.

And when those words had lit up... she shook her head at her own foolishness. Thank goodness she'd frozen for a moment, giving the others a chance to get there or she would have said yes. And that worried her. She wanted to say yes. If he really asked, she would jump at the chance.

This worried her even more so than before. Each minute that she spent with him, she wanted to hold onto as if it was the last. Soon, it would be time for him to return. What would she do then? Would he want a long-distance relationship? Would she?

Her inexperience worried her. Tomorrow, on the first day of the new year, she would ask him. She needed to stop burying her head in the sand and discuss the future. He'd already told her he liked her so how far did this liking stretch?

As the warm water-cooled, Evana reluctantly decided it was time to come out. She reached for a plush towel hanging on the side. As she tied the towel in a firm knot enjoying the immediate warmth it provided as she stepped out, only to hear her phone ringing in the distance.

Hurriedly, she raced outside and the caller id had her grinning widely. "Lucifer." Quickly, she answered the call, placed the phone on the dresser, and prepared to change into her nightwear as she spoke to him. It would be good to get into bed with his voice in her ear.

Quickly, she skipped towards the dresser, to grab her clothes when she heard a sharp intake of breath and Lucifer's voice as he cursed. Surprised, she turned back only to notice his face on the screen, peering at her intently.

And then he spoke, "I never would have thought that I'd be jealous of a towel in my life someday."

With a small scream, she rushed to the phone and disconnected the call while shaking her head at her stupidity. Why was it a video call? Why had she answered without checking!

Placing the phone face down, she ignored its existence as it rang again and hurried to get her clothing on. Suddenly she wanted to wear her most comforting old T-shirt and shorts instead of the silky ones. Pouting, she grabbed her most ragged T-shirt and slipped it on but a naughty little thought stopped her from wearing anything beneath that.

Grabbing her phone, she quickly slipped under the covers and decided to call him back, whispering shyly, "Hello?"

"Hi yourself." His voice came back, a bit breathlessly.

Disconcerted at his voice, she looked at the phone and frowned, asking, "Are you running in the middle of the night? Why are you breathless?"

She heard him curse and mutter something under his breath before he spoke, "Angel... do you have any idea how hot you looked just then? With that 'caught' expression, the towel offering to slip down at any moment, and those water droplets clinging to your shoulders... First you give me fodder for a thousand fantasies and then you cut me off? What do you expect me to do?"

Evana blinked at his words. He'd seen so much in a few seconds. Even the water droplets on her... "Then...tsk tsk, are you playing with yourself?"

She blushed as she asked the question, feeling naughty and powerful at the same time. However, the shameless man replied audaciously, "Of course not! Why would I settle for my hand when I could have yours."

Just then she heard a small sound go off and turned to look at the security screen on the side wall, which had lit up as he spoke, "I am here, angel."

She watched as the man keyed in her passcode and entered her house as if he owned it. It barely took her a few minutes to put on her clothes and he'd run all the way here? What the...

"No no no! Don't come. I'm already asleep. Go away."

She heard his chuckle and quickly grabbed the soft pillow toy herself and hugged it, burying her face in it as she closed her eyes, throwing away her phone. She was going to be sleeping when he came.

The quiet opening of the door had her nails clutch the toy tighter and she cursed herself again. She should have made sure that she would have some vision at least. Now, she had no idea what was going on. She could hear him step into the room and the door closed soon, with a soft click.

"Ahh, Are you pretending to be asleep, angel? That's alright. I'm sleepy too."

She felt the bed dip from the side and realized that he was getting into the blanket from the other side. Unexpectedly, his next move had her jumping and her eyes going wide. The man directly caught her toy, slipped it out of her grasp, and took its place. His hand was on her thigh, just near the edge of the t-shirt, making her acutely aware that she had nothing under that.

"Are you ignoring me, angel?"

She mock glared at the man and would have said something when his hand, slid under the t shirt. The grin on his face widened and he looked essentially like a wolf as he slid closer to her, taking hold of her thigh and placing it on his hip, "My my! I found treasure... It is going to be a good year for me."

Chapter 298: Brothers In The House

Lucien grinned as he looked at his phone, while a sleepy Seb walked into the kitchen, rubbing his forehead, as he complained of a headache. Both Ian and Lucien snickered at the sight of him, causing the man to look at them questioningly.

"What's up? Are you guys still drunk?"

Ian suppressed a grin, "No sleeping beauty, we are not."

However, he was not able to say that with a straight face and broke into laughter, causing Lucien to laugh too.

Seb shook his head at the two's antics and turned to grab a bottle of water, almost screaming when he caught sight of himself in the refrigerator. The two brothers roared with laughter even more, causing Seb to narrow his eyes threateningly, "Which of you dared to do this to me?"

The two causally pointed at each other and laughed again. Seb rushed to the bathroom and washed off the makeup that his face had been painted with. Which of these two knew how to do such makeup! He's almost seen a female version of himself! And to think he'd actually slept through that entire session of eyeshadow, lipstick and blush being applied!

Never again would he drink. Could one not be assured of their safety in their own brother's home. Of course, it was not his home but the guest apartment of Estania! He would need to threaten these two to come out with the truth! And erase any evidence they may have gathered of what he had been through last night.

With a curse, he searched for his phone outside, while the two idi*ts in the kitchen continued to laugh at him.

However, finding his phone did not help improve his mood, but only worsened it as he noticed that the culprits had already made their move. The fire in his heart burnt hotter, almost causing smoke to come out of his ears as his brothers took their chance to roast him.

Erasmi had messaged, " Our in-house sleeping beauty. We need to find a prince for you."

Gabe, the b*tard had added, "I can already hear the birds chirping and see the forest creatures gathering around to witness the awakening of our Sleeping Beauty. Maybe Lucien and Ian can play the fairies!"

Ian, the bas*ard who was now standing there laughing at his face, had added, " Nah! You need true love's kiss for him to wake up. I don't think anyone can truly love Seb. He is totally unloveable."

Gabe: There is that... unless it is You Know Who.¹

Erasmi: You are mixing up the stories, Gabe. That's in Potter. And he could not love... so... oh... you could be right...

Snorting, Seb, angrily typed in, " Very funny, guys. Just wait until one of you is in my shoes. Then we'll see who gets the last laugh."

The reply caused all of them to reply with the 'scared' emoji, mocking him.

Shaking his head, Ian called out, "Stop pouting. Come and have something to eat."

Seb stalked to the table and glared at Lucien who simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Just you wait."

"Hey! Stop threatening me! I cannot claim credit for this work of art. I only shared the results because this is how you were when I did the walk of shame."

"You went out last night?" Seb asked sharply while Ian stared at him.

Lucien blushed but quickly stuffed a boiled egg into his mouth to stop himself from saying more. After all, he had seen someone else doing the walk of shame when he had come in. But he would not be naming names.

Seb turned his accusatory gaze to Ian who raised his hands and said, "Bro! I was more sloshed than you. And there is no way I can do that. I'm no makeup specialist."

As he said this, he placed the three plates of pancakes on the table and ordered, "Let's eat."

While Ian and Seb wolfed down with gusto, Lucien stared at the breakfast in horror.

"What is it? Why are you not eating?" Ian asked.

"Who died?" Lucien asked softly.

Ian stopped mid-bite and turned to look at him, while even Seb paused and looked at Ian in horror.

Ian looked at the two of them in confusion and asked, "What? Why are you guys staring at me?"

"You only make these pancakes when you are stressed.", Seb spoke softly.

"Or when you want to talk about someone's death. The first time you made these for me was when my fish died and you buried it."

Seb shook his head and added, "Yes. Though I think Lucy is old enough to know that his fish did not die naturally but had been the first sacrifice on the altar of love as I gifted the fish to my first girlfriend's cat."

"You f*cker!" Lucien glared at Seb before the two turned in unison to Ian who shook his head and sighed, "And here I was thinking how to broach the topic with you."

"Out with it." Seb muttered, his mood for the breakfast gone.

"We'll have to return sooner than planned." Ian started.

"Does this have something to do with Erasmi leaving in the middle of the night?"

"Yes." Ian sighed before blurting out, "Grandfather has cancer. He's been hiding it from us. He doesn't have much longer to live. He was hospitalized last night. He's asked all of us to be there. Wants to talk to us in person."

Both the brothers cursed at this and shared a glance, "No wonder the man had been getting crazier and weirder by the day. I'll get to it and inform Demon..."

"Demon knows. We'll leave in the afternoon."

Seb nodded and gathered the plates to do the dishes while Ian looked at Lucien meaningfully.

Lucien nodded and finished the breakfast quickly, knowing it was time to come clear with Evana. Whether their relationship could continue or not, it would be put to test soon.

"I'll go and arrange things for the business."

"Demon is already taking care of that Lucy. You need to handle matters on your end. Let's have a word for now."

This is in reference to Harry Potter series where You Know Who is the main negative character and does not have the ability to love.

Chapter 299: A Question

Outside, in the foyer, Ian stared at Lucien who was jittery and asked directly, "You love Evangeline Sterling?"

Lucien looked surprised at the direct question but nodded without hesitation.

Ian accepted the affirmation with a nod of his own and stated, "You know that she is going to be tied here, so you might have to move here. There is also the fact that you might have to turn a silent supporter of her political career. I've seen the care she holds for Estania. You might have to compete with an entire country for her time. Have you considered all that?"

Lucien sighed, "Yes. I know that well enough. And believe it or not, I actually like her ambition and her care for Estania. I've already discussed this with Demetri. I'm going to work on setting up an office here for Frost Industries and shift here permanently."

"That is good. And have you discussed these plans with Evangeline herself?"

"Not yet. I'm not too sure where she stands with regard to her feelings. I know she likes me, but does she see me as a life partner yet or I'm just some kind of a thrill from her otherwise too-organized life, I don't know."

"And now, you don't have much time to find since..."

"Since I don't know when I can return. Don't worry, I am going to talk with her before leaving."

"Good. Communicate well with her. Let her know your intentions and give her time to think. Also, there is one other thing that she needs to know..."

"What?"

"Tell her that you once liked Nora. Before you came to know that she is Demon's."

Lucien frowned. "Why? Its not like there was anything between us. And not like I was holding a torch for her, it was a passing crush... I've had crushes previously."

"None of those crushes that you had previously are still in your life. Also, Nora and Evangeline are sisters. Its better that Evangeline know about this from you, instead of finding out unintentionally and misunderstanding. Tell her as is."

Lucien frowned, "What if she misunderstands?"

"Then you explain it to her Lucy so that she doesn't misunderstand. But if she finds out from elsewhere first, you'll already have lost a lot of ground. Get it?"

"I guess you are right. I'll tell Evangeline about my liking Nora in the past." Lucien nodded with a smile.

Evangeline trudged back towards her house with a heavy heart. The revelation about Lucien's past crush on Nora caught her off guard. She couldn't shake off the feeling of disappointment and confusion. What was this? Lucien liked Nora?

As she walked, she kicked a rock and cursed, "It was right when they said that it was not good to eavesdrop. You never heard anything good. Instead of hiding and waiting for the brothers to finish their conversation, she should have made some noise and interrupted them instead of hiding."

Now that she thought about it, however, it made sense. Out of all the brothers, why did he come out to seduce her? Shouldn't Ian or Seb, both known as man who*es have been the better choice? It had been Lucien because he had been the most worried for Nora.

As she turned the corner, she could not help but think about other things that she'd not paid attention to in the past. Someone had remarked at the ball yesterday that she and Nora looked like real sisters, could it be that Lucien took her as a substitute to Nora?

Only one person could answer that... Did she want to talk to Lucien about this. Would she trust his answer if she did confront him? She needed to trust him though, didn't she? The last time she had refused to give him a chance to explain. This time, she would not repeat her mistake. She just hoped that whatever he told her did not end up breaking her heart.

After all, she had not heard the entire conversation. Maybe they were talking about liking Nora as a sister-in-law and she was overthinking things. She'd seen Nora and Lucien interacting and they were like friends. Even Lucien did not seem to have any undercurrents about Nora, she would have sensed those.

As her thoughts cleared, she made up her mind to confront Lucien about this matter and ask him why he did not come clean. Unexpectedly, before she could turn back to ask him. she almost walked into a wall. She was stopped suddenly by the said wall jumping out of the way with a curse.

Evangeline looked up and thought to apologize, "Demon. I'm sorry. I did not see you there."

Demetri looked intently at the crying girl in front of him and simply passed her a tissue, without uttering a word. She looked at the tissue and then at Demetri's face and blurted out, "Did you know that Lucien likes Nora?"

Demetri raised his eyebrows at her sudden blurting of the fact while Evangeline was scandalized with herself. Why would she say something damaging like this to Demetri? What if she ended up creating trouble for Demetri and Nora? Or Demetri and Lucien.

Slapping a hand over her mouth, she stared at him wide eyes and said in a muffled voice, "I said nothing. You're just hearing things. Just forget it. It's the season for everyone to go crazy. Must be something in the air. Bye..."

However, he simply stared at her and crossed his arms letting her know that she wasn't going anywhere until he had a full confession.

"I..."

"Is that why you are crying?"

Evangeline hesitated. Should she confide in Demetri? She'd already made a mess of things, maybe Demetri could help her resolve this. Taking a deep breath, she confessed the ugly truth, "I overheard Lucien and Ian talking. Ian said that Lucien should tell me the truth. So that if I discovered it unprepared, then there might be trouble..."

"But you discovered it in a wrong way despite this." Demetri completed the sentence for her.

Chapter 300: Confession

"But you discovered it..." Demetri completed her sentence for her. Evangeline bit her lip and nodded before apologizing, "I'm sorry. I should not have blurted out something like this. I don't mean to create trouble for you and Nora."

"Nothing can create trouble between me and Nora. As for you, why don't you take a walk with me?"

Without giving her a chance to say yes or no, Demetri walked away. For a moment, she thought to ignore him but then, something made her turn around and walk back towards him. They walked in silence for a moment, before Demetri spoke up, "Why did you not stay there and question Lucy?"

"I...don't know." Evangeline blurted out. Yes. Why did she not stay there and talk to Lucien? Why did she run away?

"Could it have something to do with your feelings last time when you did not want to listen to him?"

"I don't know. But I was not going to run away this time. I was already deciding to confide in him and question him when I almost walked into you."

Demetri nodded with an approving half-smile. "Good. It is important to stay and fight things out than to run away."

"You knew Lucien liked Nora?" Evangeline asked curiously.

Demetri smiled and instead of answering her, instead questioned her, "Do you know who helped me plan the proposal from yesterday?"

"Who?"

"Lucy. I tasked him with finding out if Nora had ever had any dream proposals. She's too much into those romance stories."

Evangeline smiled at that. Ever since the girl's memory had returned, she had seen at least two novels around her. She could agree with Demetri's assessment. Nora was totally addicted to romance books. In fact, she'd taken to coaxing her to read them as well.

"And yesterday, I returned to find Lucien kneeling in front of Nora, proposing to her..."

That sentence effectively erased the smile off her face and she turned pale. Confused, she failed to see the slightly malevolent look in Demetri's eyes and turned around.

Demetri suppressed his smile and continued, "Of course, it was a pretense. He was trying to find out if Nora needed me to go the traditional route for her, or anything else."

Evangeline could almost imagine the scene when she suddenly realized something, "Aren't you supposed to be telling me that I should trust Lucien? Or that I don't have to worry, as everything is in the past? Why would you say something that would confuse me even more? Or at least counsel me that I should talk to Lucien and resolve these matters. Instead, you are adding to my fear...You can just tell me that I need not worry!"

"Why would I do that? It's Lucien's job to do that. And if you doubt him then what can I or anyone else do. Its up to him and you to make you feel secure. " Demetri's shrugged response gave her an unexpected shock.

Already she had been preparing arguments in her head, regarding what she would say if Demetri tried to defend her or tell her that the past made no difference to the present. But instead, he'd refused to try anything to reassure her or even say a word to make her worry less.

She glared at Demetri. The man was totally unsympathetic to her plight... but, he'd helped her see things objectively... And by not defending him or trying to argue for Lucien, he had expertly helped her sort things.

With a look of enlightenment, she turned to Demetri in wonder but before she could thank him, he looked behind her and called out, " Lucy. there's someone here to talk to you."

Wide-eyed, Evangeline looked around in shock to see Lucien walking towards her with a large smile. God Dam* it! This man was even more devious that she had considered. He'd not just helped clear her head, but he had not even let her dilly and dally or leave any chance for self doubt, bringing her back to Lucien, immediately.

Lucien walked to her and quickly grabbed her in a hug as he whispered, "I was about to call you. But this is better. Come on, lets go."

Holding her hand, Lucien took her back towards her own home as he spoke, " I want to take you inside but Seb and Ian are inside. And those two are not going to give us a moment of peace. I need to talk to you alone."

"That's okay. We can go back to my house. So do you want to talk about something?" Evangeline probed gently.

"Yes. Something very important."

Evangeline nodded, feeling a bit relieved. So, Lucien was already willing to talk about his past. It was a good sign, wasn't it? If he was not trying to delay telling her, then he must not want anything to harm their relationship, right? And he did not want her to misunderstand.

"Alright, let's discuss things over a cup of coffee."

Mentally, Evangeline prepared herself to put on a surprised and understanding expression. Turning her head, she looked at Lucien's worried expression and squeezed his hand in understanding. "Lucifer, you know you can tell me everything. You seem troubled. We can face everything together."

Lucien threw a surprised glance her way and nodded in gratitude. Maybe he really was worrying over nothing.

Once they'd settled in the private room, Evangeline brought out the coffee and sat opposite him, waiting for him to confess about his past.

Unexpectedly, when he spoke, it was not what she had expected, making her freeze.

"I am going back today, Evangeline."

"What did you say?"

"I have to return home today. The trip has been cut short. My grandfather is sick and needs us..."

Evangeline barely heard the rest of the words. He had not come here to clear the matter and save their relationship but to break up with her.

Hurriedly, she stood up, her flight or fight instinct kicking in, while Lucien looked at her in confusion.