

Benefits 371

Chapter 371: Forever Together(2)

As Ari nodded however, a shift overcame her expression as she said, "I can do that, Gabe. But what do I do? I don't want to."

Gabe, who was focused on assessing the situation, missed the shift and frowned as he kept an eye on the rescue team getting to Nora and starting to walk towards them. Frowning at her answer, he turned to her, "What do you mean, you don't want to..."

He trailed off as he watched in horror the door on the driver's side open, Ari's foot out hanging in the air.

"Arabelle!"

Slowly, she brought her leg back inside and raised a taunting eyebrow at him, "What are you so worried about? You've saved Nora, haven't you? Then you should have no problem giving me my 'forever'."

"Arabelle. Please. Death is not the solution. Please don't gamble with your life. The rescue team is here and soon, they can rescue you. When the time comes, you slowly shift here and get off the car safely."

Arabelle sighed and looked at Gabe carefully questioning him, "Are you saying that even after everything that has happened, you want me to come there and let the rescue team save me first."

"Of course." Gabe answered the question insitintively, his focus still on the rescue team who was setting up equipment to temporarily stabilise their vehicle. He just needed to keep Arabelle focused.

When there was only silence in the car, he suddenly felt fearful and whipped his head to look at Arabelle, fearing the worst. However, she sat there, still as a statue, staring at him with wide eyes.

Gabe was confused as he tried to discern if the person in front of him was Arabelle or Ari. However, he knew they did not have much time. The wind seemed to be picking up and as the open door swayed wildly, he knew a single forceful bang might be the end of them.

A lone tear slipped down her eye as her hard exterior seemed to crack, revealing a vulnerability beneath.

She took a shaky breath, trying to hold back her emotions, but the dam broke, and she couldn't suppress it any longer.

"I never expected... after everything I've done, after all the chaos I caused," Arabelle's voice quivered with a mix of regret and disbelief. "Why are you still trying to save me, Gabe?"

For the first time, Gabe felt as if he was finally speaking to the real Arabelle. The one who was not embittered by losing her obsession and unburdened by the madness that her brain surrounded her with. The real mix of Arabelle and Ari. Not two different personalities.

Shakily, he extended his hand to her, wondering if she would hold him. With a soft gaze, he watched as she placed her shaky hand in his and he whispered, "Because I cannot stop loving you, Ari."

Arabelle, her tears now flowing freely, whispered, "I've hurt so many people. I've hurt you, Gabe. Why do you care, Gabe?"

The only answer he could give was a soft smile to her as he rubbed her wrist in an attempt to soothe her.

She sniffled, wiping away tears with the back of her hand like a little child. "I never thought... I never thought anyone would still care about me without wanting anything in return."

Just then, Gabe felt the car being locked in place and looked outside to see the rescue fighters signalling for him to slowly come out.

Slightly, he tugged at her hand, making her look at him, "Come here, Arabelle. It's time for us to return."

Arabelle's hand tightened in his and she started to inch towards the central console. As she shifted her weight over it, she turned and instead faced him, sitting on his leg, looking into his eyes. As she sat there, she could see the rescue officers signaling frantically and knew that time was short.

Cupping his face, her lips met his in a bittersweet kiss, a mixture of sorrow and affection. Gabe, in return, offered a reassuring kiss, his hand gently patting her back.

Slowly, Gabe opened the door on his side and broke the kiss, "Arabelle," Get off. Its time to go to safety."

But instead of complying, Arabelle leaned in, her lips brushing against his ear. She whispered something that had Gabe widen his eyes.

And then...

Before he could react, Arabelle pushed him out of the car with unexpected force. Gabe stumbled sideways, desperately reaching out to grab onto something, but it was too late. He watched in shock as Arabelle, with a haunting expression, slipped back to her side and out of the other side, into the deep abyss.

For a moment, everything seemed quiet as Gabe sat there, a mixture of shock and grief. His ears echoed with the fading whispers of Arabelle's last words, the weight of which settled in his chest like a heavy stone, leaving him paralyzed.

The rescue team and Nora, approached Gabe cautiously, their expressions a blend of sympathy and concern. Carefully, Nora placed a hand on his shoulder and hugged the man who seemed to be lost suddenly.

As the reality of Arabelle's fall sank in, grief seized Gabe's heart, and a torrent of emotions overwhelmed him. His hands trembled, and tears welled up in his eyes. Just then, Demetri and the others reached the site, only to see their brother sitting there alone. Only a glance at his expression was enough to let them know as they quickly surrounded him, as if to shield him from the reality.

A century seemed to have passed for Gabe but suddenly a force grappled within him and he quickly scrambled to his feet. He would not give up without a fight. While the others tried to ask him, he screamed, "I have to go after her!" Gabe shouted, his voice desperate and determined.

Ignoring the restraining hands, he rushed over peered over the edge, his eyes searching the vastness below as if willing Arabelle to reappear.

Chapter 372: Never Together

"I never would have believed that I'd be risking my life for Arabelle, of all people. Hoping to find her alive." Seb commented as he slouched in their makeshift camp, holding the coffee mug in his hand.

Demetri and Ian exchanged quiet glance, their silence in agreement with Seb. They would have preferred to single handedly send Arabelle ten feet under and not leave her a way to come back. But with the way she had died, leaving a wound in Gabe was not what they wanted! Dam* it! Gabe had been crazy with guilt and worry.

Ian did not even have the heart of exposing Arabelle's reception anymore though he hoped that Gabe was not going to be too sad for the non-existent child. Despite wanting to kill her themselves, the three of them had been working relentlessly with the rescue team, hoping to either find her or at least her remains.

The lead officer walked to them and sat down as Ian offered him a cup as well. "How is your brother doing?"

"Not great, actually. So, when are we going back to look for Arabelle?"

The man looked troubled as he looked at the weary but determined faces of the three men. He was well aware of their identity and had believed that they would be an obstruction to their task. But surprisingly, these men had proven themselves. So he decided to answer truthfully, "I don't know if we will be going in again. We've looked intensively all day today and..."

Demetri stared at the captain and raised a brow, causing the man to fidget under his gaze, "She fell from a great height. The chances of her survival are already next to none. However, even if she was alive somewhere, the night animals won't even leave a carcass...The rescue teams are volunteers and need to return to their work."

Ian and Seb winced at the imagery, but Demetri nodded, adding, "I understand. Would you ask if any one is able to continue the search for us if we compensate for their time?"

The captain hesitated. He knew of course many of his team members would be willing to do that. But the reality was, "Mr Frost, it would be a waste..."

"It won't be to us. My brother needs closure. For that, I want Arabelle- dead or alive."

The captain thought back to the man who'd had to be restrained by so many of them and then tazered to calm him down and take to the hospital. He knew, even now, Gabe Frost was in shock and being kept under medical supervision.

"Then, I'll ask them to look for another day."

In a dimly lit hospital room, even though his eyes were open, Gabe lay still, staring at the ceiling. Despite his physical presence, he seemed to be haunted by a flickering emptiness. The steady beep of the machines provided a rhythm to the surrounding stillness.

Staring sightlessly, there was only one thing that continued to play in his head. Arabelle's last words were going to be with him forever. "I love you, Gabe Frost. But I hope I never meet you in my next life. We should never be together. Never. Goodbye."

He should have reacted faster when she said goodbye. Instead he'd been too stunned to even make a move. But his inaction was not caused him to feel guilt. It was what he felt after that. That feeling when she fell into that vastness... the feeling of being unburdened and liberated.

His eyes frowned and he wanted to scream at himself. How could he do that? How could he feel free when Arabelle had just jumped to her death? The paradox of feeling unburdened yet burdened left him trapped in his own thoughts.

Outside the room, Lucien and Nora sat in silence, each quietly thinking of the future when Elena arrived at the hospital in a mess.

She straightaway went for Nora and quickly grabbed her, "What did you do to my daughter? Where is she?"

When Nora pushed her away, and rubbed her arms in pain, she turned to Lucien, trying to scratch his face as she screamed, "You won the battle today, didn't you? I surrendered. Then why did you go after my daughter? Couldn't you show some sympathy to my little girl?"

As Elena continued to rant and blame the two and their silence only seemed to fuel her rage as she continued to scream, "You think you can just waltz anywhere and ruin everything? My daughter is missing and you're here acting like nothing happened! That Gabe acted like he would do anything for her! If he is so concerned for her, why isn't he looking for her now? Why is he in that room comfortable while my daughter is nowhere to be found?" Her eyes ablaze with fury.

Lucien sighed, choosing his words carefully, "Aunt Elena, I understand your anger, but we're not responsible for what happened to Arabelle. Blaming us won't change the situation. We're all trying to find her."

Elena scoffed, her nostrils flaring, "Find her? She's gone! And it's because of you all!"

Nora stepped forward, attempting to diffuse the tension, "Elena, we didn't cause this. And you know it!"

Looking at Nora seemed to trigger Elena even more and she lunged at her, attempting to harm her once more. Nora quickly restrained her while the hospital security arrived quickly, pulling Elena as she kicked and screamed curses as she promised that she would avenge her daughter's life by making sure that they would soon bury someone they loved as well.

Finally, the security was able to drag them away as Lucien and Nora leaned against each other in relief at the silence that followed.

Nora shook her head and sighed, "I don't know how Gabe is going to react when he wakes up. I just hope that he is able to handle himself... Things are not looking so up right now..."

Lucien sighed as well. "I know. But Gabe is stronger than that." However, only Lucien knew that this might not be the case this time...

Chapter 373: House Invasion

Gabe pulled his car into the driveway and sighed. Finally, it was time to be alone and... think about things. He closed his eyes and sighed. He'd done everything he should have and now it was time to let things go.

Arabelle's remains had been located, and he entrusted them to Elena for a proper farewell. He wondered if he should just go back to the farm instead of going into the house. Of course, if he ran away from here, he would probably be besieged by all the Frossts before he could step foot off the place. They'd been hovering over him like bees over honey.

Better to reassure them first before leaving. Before he could get off the car, his thoughts seemed to have conjured them all up. His car door was opened and Ian, Seb, Nora, Lucien, Demetri all stood there forming a line, waiting for him to alight.

Gabe stared at them and shook his head with a grimace, "What are you people doing here?"

"Waiting for you. Please welcome Mr Frost. We are at your service."

Nora clasped his hands and pulled him outside while talking, "See, we know you are grieving. So we thought to help you some grief councillors. If you want someone to talk to and kisten only, Demetri is here. If you'd like some sarcastic comments while talking, Ian is at your service. Erasmi is available on video conference in case you want to deal with your rage and if you wish to avoid all that and need to get physical, Seb has volunteered himself to be the punching bag."

While Seb made a noise of protest, Gabe raised his head and couldn't help but chuckle despite the heaviness in his heart. "You guys are crazy. I do not need councilling."

"Uh huh. Says the one who is ready to be crowned the King Of Wallowing over the last week.

Before he could say more, he was practically dragged into his own house where everyone proceeded to treat the entire place as their own. Ian and Demetri wandered into the kitchen, carrying bags of groceries while Seb quickly slouched onto the couch, grabbing the remote control.

As they walked towards the house, Gabe felt a strange mix of annoyance and warmth. The Frosts had an uncanny ability to invade his personal space, but at the same time, their unwavering support was undeniable. While he'd done things like this in the past, he accepted that it was not bad to be on the receiving end of this love as well.

Soon, Ian walked out back from the kitchen, holding a large bag of cookies, "Who's up for a cookie eating contest?"

Gabe shook his head and grabbed the packet from Ian, "You'd lose miserably and then take out your frustration on our dinner. Not happening. Think of something else."

"Hey! How can you say that? Let me tell you I am the Cookie King! I won the contest last time."

"You were competing with yourself." Seb added as the bag of cookies was thrown at him. Just as Gabe was about to join Seb to let himself get lost in a game, the bell rang again.

Wondering who else could it be, he opened the door and then stepped back with a sigh. "Can we come in?"

"Of course, the more the merrier."

Soon, Isabelle walked into the house stuffing more snacks into his arms followed by Olivia who leaned up and kissed his cheek, followed by Evana who did the same and finally a young girl who stood in front of him, staring at his face.

Smiling, he looked down and gasped, "You must be Princess Dora."

The little girl crossed her arms in front of her and raised an eyebrow at him, "Its Princess Isidora, actually. But I'll let you call me Dora because you are handsome. And I'm sorry to be invading your house but I've been tasked to babysit Evana so I can't help it."

Gabe chuckled at that and bowed his head, "That is quite a big task. But you're welcome to my house. Come on in."

Taking that as her cue, Dora walked in before spotting her favourite person and raced towards him, "Lucy!"

Gabe sighed and watched while everyone got to work, setting up board games and a poker table. Any thought of finishing dinner and getting rid of them was now gone. There was no way these people were going to leave anytime soon.

Resigning himself to his fate, Gabe decided that he could at least reassure them and join in on the games, giving them peace. As for his thoughts? They were always going to be with him so he could always take them out later to torture himself.

"Alright, everyone! It is now time for the AFCT." Ian announced as he clinked the glass.

Gabe raised an eyebrow at him, "AFCG?"

"Annual Frost Championship Games"

"We have something like that? And it's Annual?"

"From this year it is." Ian said proudly before placing an ugly little sculpture on the table, "And this is the trophy."

"Mr. I, that trophy is so ugly that I'd rather lose all the games." Dora pointed out from the side.

Ian chuckled and added, "You're right, my princess. But then you would get the trophy. You see this little beauty will go to the one who loses the most games. So, are you ready?"

As Ian rubbed his hands together, everyone laughed, ready to let the competition go on.

As the night progressed, the living room echoed with laughter and friendly (and sometimes not so friendly) competition. Gabe found himself caught up in the whirlwind of activities, forgetting his troubles, at least momentarily.

As he found himself gobbling up cookies, for the cookie eating contest, Gabe realized that this is what he'd been willing to give up for Arabelle, only to have it all thrown back in his face. Never again would he make this mistake of leaving his family.

Chapter 374: Nora's Kidnapping

As Demetri and Nora reached their house, Nora quickly raced to the bedroom, ready for some sleep. They'd been up all night and while everyone else had crashed there, her Mr Husband had dragged her back home. She knew of course, the reason behind it. After all, she'd been avoiding him for that reason.

Before she could get away, however she was caught by the waist and lifted into the air by a pair of steel arms and dragged to the couch, where Demetri had her sit on his lap.

"Stop struggling and sit straight." Demetri warned her.

"Nooo. I need to sleep. Please lets go." Nora gave a big yawn to show him how sleepy she was before trying her best to make puppy eyes at him.

Demetri smiled and quickly covered her eyes, "I'm immune to that look now. So, come on spill."

Nora rolled her eyes behind his hand and raised her hand in the air, counting, "Fine. The wedding preparations are going great. I'm already done with the cake tasting, the flower decorations, etc. We are only suffering for the fittings and dress for the bridesmaids and my...

Demetri's hand moved from her eyes to her mouth as he growled, "Nora Williams Frost. You know that is not what I am asking. So..."

Nora grimaced and shook her head, "I don't want to say it. You'll be angry."

"It would have been nice if you'd thought of that before you went to find Arabelle and ended up almost killing yourself."

"I didn't go to find her! And I was kidnapped."

The only reply she received to this claim was a raising of an eyebrow, letting her know clearly that he did not believe her.

Nora pouted, "Fine fine. I'll tell you...It all started on a dark and rainy night... the streets were quiet and there was no one..."

Her words were interrupted when Demetri smacked her hip, causing her to jump and try to get off his lap.

"Let me go! I am not sitting on your lap anymore. I'll sit on that chair there and talk."

"Why would you sit anywhere else when you can sit on my lap? Hmm? Now, are you going to start talking or do you want me to see how long it takes for me to turn you a** red?"

Nora slumped, "Its all in the past, Demetri. Can't you let it go?" Her guilty plea was met with silence as Demetri stared at her.

"Fine fine. I did go to meet her. But I did not expect..." Nora trailed off, not liking the disappointment in his gaze.

"See. This is why I did not want to tell you. You are giving me that 'dad-like' look."

"You'd promised me that you wouldn't go looking for trouble and let me handle everything."

"And I didn't! I swear I didn't. I was minding my own business when I received a message from Gabe to come see him behind the campus. I did not doubt its authenticity because the message mentioned that I should inform you as well and let you know to come there. But I knew you were in that meeting with Mrs. Winthrope. I thought it would be fine. I didn't think that I would end up meeting Arabelle."

"Why then, did you not confirm as the message had said? She wrote that so that you would trust her. And you fell for her trap."

"I'm sorry. I did. Can you forgive me?"

Demetri smiled and in answer tapped her hips again, a little harder this time, causing her to jump again and rub her hip as she glared at him, "What?"

"You expect me to believe that you did not doubt the authenticity of the message? That your ever present instincts ditched you at that moment?"

"Would you believe me if I said that?" Nora asked doubtfully.

Her answer was only a look from Demetri and she slumped, "I hate it that you are so astute. And I hate it even more when you use this silent language, letting me know from just a look, what you are thinking. I hate it when..."

Nora sighed, "Fine. Yes. I did doubt that it might not be Gabe and I did think that I might be able to handle Arabelle. I just never thought that instead of talking to me she'd straight away make me go unconscious and kidnap me."

The anger on his face was enough to worry Nora who quickly snuggled and leaned more into his body, tucking her face in his neck as she whispered in a small voice, "If it's any consolation, I regretted it the moment I woke up in that speeding car."

Demetri sighed, "You have any idea what would have happened if you'd not been saved? Do you? Promise me that next time, you will not put yourself in danger. Promise me."

Nora heard his heart race and the slight quiver in his voice, "I promise you that I will not take unnecessary risks, Demetri. But...if danger comes our way, then I won't back off. And you can't blame me for that. I'm only following your own example of not running away from danger."

A long sigh escaped Demetri as he sat there with her in his arms, relieved that she was there. The last week, his own mind had been a mess as he continued to think what could have happened if things had not gone as they had. Even tonight, as he'd looked at Gabe, trying to maintain a brave face, he knew that his brother was much stronger than him. He, the so called 'Demon' would not have been able to live without his wife.

And even as Gabe grieved the loss of his beloved, he was infinitely thankful for her death, hoping that never again, would they be burdened by anything that might threaten their peace and their life.

Nora tightened her grip on Demetri, cherishing the warmth and the silent reassurance of his embrace while trying to let him know that she was here with him.

Chapter 375: Uh Oh

Ian glanced sideways at Isabella who was looking at him red faced, with half closed eyes. "The girl looked good enough to eat," he thought to himself. If it had been anyone but her in that moment, he might have simply pushed back his seat, gallantly assisting her with the removal of that delicate lace top, and then...

"What are you thinking?" Isabelle asked in her low voice. Dam* it! She had the same voice when she'd been drunk that night. He didn't quite like it. It did things to his libido, that had no business being involved here.

"Nothing." he answered shortly. He should not be thinking about Isabella, he told his brain firmly. Only for it to play pictures of her in a loop! Dam* it! He'd forgotten that you could not tell your brain to not do something!

The way she laughed when she took that trophy or the way the beer had slipped down her top when she'd been doing the beer pong. "You are not a randy teenager, Ian. Stop thinking about her 'assets'. She is Nora's friend and your assistant."

"I won't be your assistant much longer, right?"

Ian coughed as he choked on his own saliva. Did he think the last thoughts out loud? Her small hand came to pat him on the back but he could only cough some more as he moved to stop the car on the side of the road.

Finally, when he was able to catch his breath and turned to look at her, he noticed her expression of concern and was pretty sure that he'd not been thinking things out loud. Carefully, he asked her, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, now that Arabelle and Elena Winthrope have been handled..."

"So? I've already sent Miss North on her way."

"But...won't you need someone more competent?"

"You want to resign, Miss Ruffalo?" Ian asked directly, raising an eyebrow at her.

Isabella looked down and shook her head, "No, sir. But...I misplaced your papers the other day. And then booked a wrong appointment."

"So? This is your training time. I am pretty sure, once you understand everything, you'll be fine. If you're alright with it, I'd like for you to continue to be your assistant."

The smile she sent his way was too much for him and those lips calling him 'sir' evoked memories of putting her over his desk and...

"Let's go." Ian started to drive again, vowing that he was not going to look sideways again. Nope. Not if he needed to maintain his safety.

For a while, there was silence and Ian thought that maybe she'd fallen asleep. Feeling relieved, he turned to check on her, only to find her eyes fixed on him.

"What is it?"

"Do you think Gabe will be alright?"

Ian sighed. Unfortunately, he had no answer to that. They'd tried their best tonight and would continue to do so in the future but whether Gabe would come out of the trauma and how soon, depended only on Gabe. "We can only hope, Isi. But we're going to do our best."

Isabella smiled at that, " This is why I like you Frosts so much. You are exactly how brothers should be." Her smile faded slightly as she thought of her own brother, murmuring under her breath, "Unlike mine."

Ian clenched his teeth at that, even as he wanted to tell her to go and kick her brothers' backside. But instead of hurting her more, he turned towards her apartment, pretending to not have heard her.

Her eyes had finally started to close and he could see the tiredness in them. As he turned the corner to her house and slowed down, however, he caught a glimpse of 'that' man. Her esteemed brother. Turning to her and noticing her closed eyes, he made a decision.

There was no way he was going to leave her her tonight, in this vulnerable state. Nope. Without stopping, he proceeded to go on his way, ignoring the presence of the man who stood there.

Finally, they reached his place and decisively, he stopped the car, got out of the car and carried her to his house. He would put her in the guest bedroom and explain things to her tomorrow, when she was well enough.

As he picked her up, he noticed her top had slipped a bit, providing a delicious glimpse of the treasure underneath and quickly looked away reminding himself, 'Don't look there. Don't look there.'

Her eyes opened a bit when he entered the house and she asked in confusion, "Sir?" That would have been enough but then she did something even more audacious. She snuggled into him and purred, "Mmm. You're so warm. If only I could have a warm blanket like yourself."

"Stop that, Isabella."

"But I want to feel warm. I like it." Her hand roved over his shoulders before slipping under his shirt.
"Mmm. So nice. You're like the male lead from my favourite drama. Those actresses are so lucky, they get to feel such muscles as part of their job..."

Ian almost dropped the girl as she pinched him slightly. Instead he let her stand against his body and gently pushed her against a wall. "Don't tempt me, Miss Ruffalo. Now... you want to take your hand out?"

Isabella pouted and raked her nails over his skin, "I really want to explore. I've never had a chance to..."

Muttering a curse, Ian quickly caught her wrist against his skin and growled, "Fine. But don't move your hand."

She looked up at him with her watery eyes and flushed face and Ian could only groan, "Thats it! You're not sleeping along tonight."

With that, he quickly took her mouth in a searing kiss, pushing his tongue into her mouth as he explored and conquered her mouth. Her fingers curled against his chest, leaving little moon-like marks as she moaned into his mouth, trying to get even more closer to him until she was carried in the opposite direction of the guest room...

Chapter 376: Uh Oh (2)

Once again, Isabella realized that she was not home as she woke up with a searing headache and winced as the bright light hit her face. But that was not what jolted her as she moved. It was the presence of an arm around her middle, pinning her to the mattress. And as she slowly moved her head to look at herself, she realized that she'd lost her top somewhere else as well, and was only clad in her undergarments.

Quickly she closed her eyes. No. No. No. Did she lose her half- V-card to some random stranger at the bar? But then her slow mind pointed out that she'd not gone to a bar for sometime now. And the last thing she remembered was going to the Frosts gathering and coming back with Ian.

Then was the arm around her Ian's? Shucks! That was even worse than losing the half- V-card to a complete stranger. She'd gone ahead and slept with the boss. Who had clearly stated that he did not sleep with employees. Yes. He did not sleep with employees so it couldn't be with him.

Did she sleep with some other Frostie? No! She hoped not. That would be too bad.

Before she could gather her courage, she felt the hand on her stomach exert some force and turn her around. Now, as she tried to control her heart which was threatening to jump out of her throat, she felt a familiar smell surround her and a silky voice murmur, "Are you going to keep your eyes closed all morning?"

Her eyes snapped open and she immediately regretted that as they came to a direct view of a lean and not overly muscular chest. Just like she liked it. So, she closed her eyes again and nodded. Yup. She was going to keep her eyes closed.

The man laughed at her and his hand on her back, continue to rub circles over her panties while his finger seemed to be slipping under the waist band with every movement. Slowly, she opened her eyes and looked up at his familiar face, "Did we sleep together?"

Ian Frost smiled and raised an eyebrow at her, "Well, since we woke up together, and I'm sure that neither of sleep walks, then I'd say that is a yes."

Isabella closed her eyes again and cried in her heart. Why did she have to have drunk se*? And that too with Ian Frost.

Once again, the man moved her with a turn of his body, so that he was now leaning against her, his chest, crushing her breasts. She could feel his breath over her face as he leaned closer and she closed her eyes tighter as his mouth traced her ear. "But if you mean to ask that did we have se* last night, then no."

Her eyes snapped open at that as she looked into his amused eyes. "You mean we did not sleep together?"

"We did sleep together, Isi. But we did not have s*x. or f*ck, etc."

"Why?" She blurted out the question before immediately trying to cover her mouth which was no good at holding her thoughts inside.

Ian laughed at that and rubbed his nose against hers, "Well, because I don't sleep with drunk women. I believe I mentioned that the last time too."

"Oh. Oh. Yes. You did. Then, thank you. Umm... Can you move?"

"No." Ian answered firmly, as he buried his head near her face, on the pillow but too close to her.

"Why won't you move?" Isabella asked trying and failing to push the immovable wall that was him.

"Last night, you threw yourself at me. Do you know how difficult it was for me to restrain myself and stick to my principles of not messing with a drunk woman?" He accused in her ear.

"Then? Thank you?"

She felt him smile and say something but was distracted as his hands moved to the side of her breast, under the strings of her undergarment.

"What did you say?" She asked, trying to control her breathing, even as her body seemed to be melting under his touch.

"I said... that you're not drunk now... so you can make up for molesting me last night."

Wide eyed at that, Isabelle involuntarily arched under his touch and her hands were at a loss whether to pull him close or push him away.

He caught her hands in his and slowly restricted them with his large hands, before tying them to the back of the bed. Her eyes widened as she felt her hands being restrained as she realised that the man had some kind of a scarf at such a strategic position. Before she could come to terms with this new development, Ian moved back, admiring his handiwork, "You look exquisite. I've been wanting to eat you for a long time now. I like my breakfast served like this."

Isabella's eyes widened as he moved to the side and soon brought out some kind of a jar... and she could already guess his intentions. She closed her eyes and waited for the liquid that never came. As she slowly opened them again, Isabella looked at Ian in confusion who was still there in the same position.

"Quietly, he asked her, " Isabella? Do you want this? There is no going back after this."

She knew what he meant. This was her last chance to ask him to stop.

"No, sweetheart. If you want me to stop, all you have to do is say. I'll stop. This is your last chance to decide if you are really not drunk..."

"I want you, Ian." Isabella spoke breathlessly and closed her eyes as she offered herself to him. With a triumphant smile, Ian tilted the bottle of caramel sauce and got to the task of devouring his breakfast of the best 'cupcakes' in the world. As his tongue tasted every inch of her, Isabella could only surrender herself to the pleasure...

Chapter 377: BWB

As Isabella stood there staring at the man in the kitchen, her face was furrowed in a scowl instead of the usual appreciation she had for handsome men. As she crossed her arms in front of herself, she shook her head in exasperation, muttering to herself, " If only I was a judge I would..."

Once again, she glanced at him and sighed. There really needed to be a law against men looking so good in those floppy ponytails on the top of their heads! It's unfair, really. Those were supposed to be reserved for cute chubby babies!

As her gaze continued to linger on him, her scowl deepened. There also should be a law against men rolling up their sleeves for cooking. Seriously, does he have to make cooking look so effortlessly sexy? If you knew you are going to cook, just wear something short sleeved. She would definitely draft a petition for a law against such a blatant display of attractiveness.

"If I hadn't felt you tighten around me a few times, I would have definitely thought that you were angry at me..."

Isabella coughed as the man's soft voice washed over her and his words penetrated her brain fog.

She watched, frozen as Ian turned off the stove and walked to her slowly. Catching her by the waist, he quickly lifted her up for a quick kiss before setting her down, as he lightly pinched her a**," Good morning, sweetheart. You must be hungry after the workout."

The man grinned, showing off his dimples while her scowl returned full force. "Workout? It has definitely been that! The man was a beast! He'd tortured her so much that she'd been unable to think straight. Even now she had a brain fog! And here he was, cooking as if this was a normal occurrence. As if he not just spent the entire morning, f*cking her brains out."

"It had been for him, Isabella. A normal occurrence. Can't you tell how experienced he is unlike your bumbling half virgin self." Her inner snide Isabelle commented in her head, bursting her bubble quickly. Yup, she reminded herself. While Ian had rocked her world, he was not like herself. This might be a regular occurrence for him.

Those bedposts and that scarf were already there. As her mind reminded herself, she seemed to have fallen off the clouds and she carefully straightened her expression. There was no need to show him just how rocked her world was. And.."I'm not a half virgin more. Not after this morning." She reminded her inner self.

As she went to sit at the table, she looked at the large spread of breakfast on the table and gulped," How do you eat like this and stay in shape?"

Ian looked at her and winked," Exercise, sweetheart. Didn't I just show you?"

Isabella snapped her mouth shut. Exercise? He'd treated her like his own personal plate at a buffet, adding difference things and then licking them or eating them off her. She was red all over her body, covered in little hickeys and teeth marks. She'd have to bathe in her concealer if she wanted to hide them!

As she stabbed at her piece of egg, the fork was suddenly taken out of her hand as she was pulled back against a hard body," Something on your mind?"

She clenched the knife in her hand, ignoring the way he was leaning over her shoulder and nuzzling her neck and said stiffly," Please stop, Ian."

Whether it was the tone of her voice or her request to stop, Ian seemed to freeze before he stepped back. She felt the sudden loss of his warmth and tears threatened to fall. She took a deep breath and looked up to see Ian standing far away, looking at her carefully, his gaze guarded. The look made her feel even more vulnerable and she quickly turned her eyes back to her plate.

The man standing opposite her was different from the playful person she'd come to brfriend and the intense lover that she'd experienced. This was the look he usually wore as the boss.

When she said nothing, Ian sighed and questioned her again, this time without any coaxing but directly, "You have something on your mind, Isabella. Tell me."

"I... its nothing much. I think I just need time to think about things that happened this morning. Everything was so unexpected and then there was..."

Isabella looked up at him as she tried to explain but was at a loss of words, unknowing how to say this.

"Isi? Are you telling me that you were unwilling?" Ian asked quietly.

Isabella gave a horriied gasp and shook her head vehemently, " No. That's not what I meant. Just that...you're too much, Ian. You're too attractive and too expereinced for me. And I don't know what the proper protocol in such situations is. Should I call a cab and leave after breakfast? What should I do?"

Ian sighed and relaxed as he watched her face in confusion. Instead of answering her, he gently cupped her face, " First, there is no way, you are leaving this house with only this little shirt to cover you."

"But you tore off my clothes..."

Ian grinned at that, " Well of course I did. Now, hush and listen. I cannot do anything about my experience. It is what it is. See, you are considerably younger than me and I am the prosmicious kind. But I can assure you that I am clean, I can have the blood work for it and we used protection. For reducing my attractiveness to you, I am willing to do as you say so that you would not be distracted by it."

"You're making a joke out of this..." Isabella started to point out but was interrupted by Ian who continued, "I told you to listen. As for protocol and stuff, it is whatever the two of us are comfortable with. If you don't want to stay here, then we part ways here and I can drop you home, after getting you some clothing of course."

Isabella nodded carefully at that, still feeling a bit lost. After all, she had more questions the most prominent one being... was this morning a one time thing or were they going to be more... Was he her Boss With Benefits?(BWB)

Chapter 378: Be Mine

Isabella sighed as she finished the last bit of her breakfast or rather lunch. Ian Frost was really something else. He had an extreme wit that made people put down their guard and be at ease. He'd sensed her emotional state and quickly changed the conversation topics effortlessly, making her forget her trepidation. It was only as she sat now while he cleared the table that she realized this.

One moment, he would make you feel as if you were totally naked and the next, you could be naked and he wouldn't know. And that question which was niggling at the back of her mind...was now making her angry.

He was no fool. Then why was he not making things clear? Was he deliberately pretending or keeping her on tenterhooks for the fun of it? "Alright, Isabella. Time to get rid of the brain fog from the amazing se*. Return to your old self." she told herself while grimacing about how to do that. She needed to get clothes.

"Ian? Can you go now and bring me some clothes?"

Ian turned around and gave her a once over, shrugging his shoulders, "Why?"

Isabella crossed her arms and glared at him, "What do you mean why? Do you think I'll keep wearing this all day? You tore my top and my... other clothes! The only piece of clothing I have is this shirt of yours that I have borrowed!"

"Believe me, I know you're not wearing anything under that."

Isabelle shut her mouth. There was something infinitely wrong with the way he said those words. She looked down at the black shirt, making sure that it wasn't revealing anything. It wasn't. The biggest reason she had chosen a dark and loose shirt...

He grinned and winked at her, "You do realize, my doll, that I dropped my spoon at least thrice just now when we were eating. Do you think I am that clumsy?"

Isabella's eyes widened as she looked at her lap and then where he'd been sitting as she glared at him, "You perv!"

Ian grinned unapologetically and even added, "Well, I loved the view."

Isabella narrowed her eyes. This man was too hot for her and his own good. And she might just have the perfect way to fix a fox like him. After all, a fox needed a vixen. Time to channel the inner Isabella.

Jumping off the chair, she walked over to him, and watched as his shoulders stiffened as he sensed her approach. However he did not turn around, focusing on washing the pots and pans. As she approached him, she found the perfect thing on the kitchen countertop.

Swiftly and silently, she delicately cut the back of his shirt from hem to collar, leaving him momentarily stunned as the fabric fell away. Before he could turn around, her hands moved around his own waist as she traced the lean muscles there, "Then, I guess I should get something in return, shouldn't I?"

Deliberately, she placed a small kiss in the middle of his shoulder, "I like this view much better. Continue with your chores, Hot Ian. I'll go and enjoy my view."

With a slight smirk, Ian flexed his back muscles to let her have her wish. After all, it would be fun to have some revenge.

Isabella, however, knew that this was only temporary. Even as she admired the perfect symmetry of the man's body, she would have to be on her toes to handle him and not let him have the upper hand. Looking down at herself, she had the perfect idea.

Stealthily, she tiptoed out of the room, back towards his room and looked around, finding the perfect thing.

Ian turned around after finishing the dishes and stilled as he saw the vision in front of him. Hot dayum. He'd died and gone to heaven. Could a person die from lust while doing the dishes? He probably had... When he'd heard her scurrying towards his room, he'd thought that he would find her fully clothed, and have to peal each layer. He'd been prepared to do that... But this...

Her eyes met his and she gave him the most innocent look as she widened them. The 'look' was completely different from the rest of her. The seductress had unbuttoned the top three buttons of his shirt and the bottom three, making it gape from the top as well as the bottom, where she knelt on the ground, in the most submissive position. The only thing that kept the shirt in place was his belt around her waist...

As he continued to stare at her, he felt his heart race. In this moment, he accepted he was probably a fish... who fallen hook, line and sinker... She might be literally on her knees but his heart was begging. A girl who could blush like a rose one minute and then challenge him the next... pushing his boundaries and hers.

Ever so slowly, he walked towards her and raised an eyebrow, "What are you doing, doll?"

"Me? I'm just sitting..." Isabella drawled slowly before adding, "...sir."

"And what makes you think that I might like this... submissiveness?"

"Am I being submissive?" Isabella asked with her raised chin, " or making you submit."

The slight rebelliousness and challenge in her eyes was like an aphrodisiac. She was Aphrodite herself...

Slowly, he knelt on the ground before her, his finger tracing along her collar bone as he slowly pushed the two halves apart, baring her shoulders.

Carefully, he placed a butterfly kiss, in the hollow of her neck, tracing with his tongue, upwards towards her ear. "Do you know what I want to do the most right now?"

Isabella shook her head, but the anticipation in her eyes was like a fuel to the fire within him. Ian smiled slowly, holding her gaze as he leaned close to her, his breath on her neck, "I want to mark you... as mine."

He expected her to turn away, to refuse or atleast be angry at the idea of being marked. He did not thinks she would turn her head away and challenge him slowly, "Why don't you try to do it then?"

It was as if every restraint he had was broken away as he quickly brought her close, the little distance between them disappearing.

Chapter 379: Pursue

Nora raised an eyebrow as she stared at Ian standing on her door with a mischievous grin on his face. Narrowing her eyes, she looked at the large bouquet of flowers in his hand and leaned against the frame, "You playing delivery guy for Demetri now?"

Ian frowned, "Huh? No."

Nora frowned then, "What is with the flowers then?"

Ignoring her question, Ian reached into a pocket and pulled out a small box, presenting it to her with an exaggerated flourish. His grin widened, and Nora couldn't help but shudder playfully, taking a step back.

"Who are you?" she quipped, trying to close the door in his face.

Ian, undeterred, stuck a foot in the doorway, preventing her from shutting him out completely. "I come in peace, bearing gifts!" he declared with mock seriousness.

Nora burst into laughter, unable to resist his infectious enthusiasm. "Alright, delivery guy with a twist, what's in the box?" she asked, genuinely curious now.

Ian winked and replied, "Well, you'll never know unless you invite me in for a cup of coffee. It's a mystery box, Nora!"

Nora graciously stepped back, welcoming Ian into her space but not without establishing some ground rules. "Well, I'm not making coffee. I hate the smell. I can offer you tea or hot chocolate."

Ian made a face, pushing a small bouquet of flowers her way while reluctantly accepting her terms as he spoke in a disgruntled tone, "Fine, I'll take the chocolate... none of that poisonous 'green tea' water. And I know for a fact that Demetri drinks coffee every morning, does that smell not bother you then?"

Nora, unfazed, shrugged it off with a playful smile. "I like it better when the smell is mixed with him." Her answer was Ian's disgusted grimace.

Nora grinned as she placed the flowers strategically, "Well, while I love flowers like every girl, you bringing them screams danger. What are you up to Ian Frost."

"What? A man can't bring flowers for his sister?"

Nora placed the cup of hot chocolate in front of him and sat on the opposite side with her cup, "Hmm. But not you. You are up to something, for sure. What are your intentions?"

Ian rolled his eyes and drank the hot chocolate, pushing the small box towards her, "We'll get to that later. First take this gift."

Nora pulled the box in front of her with a grin before playfully trying to find what it might contain, "Are you planning to declare war on Demetri? You brought me flowers and chocolates for no reason. Your brother is not going to like that."

"You can't threaten me with that. I'll talk when I am ready to. And those are not chocolates. In fact, Demetri might just enjoy the gift more than you."

"Not chocolates?" Bringing the box to her nose, Nora sniffed it and frowned, " Well, they smell like chocolates." Tearing the small tape on the side, she quickly opened the box before snapping it shut and glaring at Ian, "You! You... You..."

Ian, trying to suppress a mischievous grin, leaned back in his chair, enjoying Nora's reaction. "Well, well, Nora. I thought you might appreciate something a bit more... adventurous. But I did not expect you to lose your words... And I think I deserve a pat on the back for finally getting one over you and making you go red!"

Nora snapped the box shut with a cheeky grin and narrowed her eyes, " ou really do know how to stir up trouble, don't you? You think you can just drop something like this at my doorstep without consequences?"

Ian chuckled, unabashed. "Consider it a gift to spice up the routine. Demetri won't mind, will he?"

Nora shook her head, " You know it! How can you even..."

Ian shrugged, " I had no option. I needed to tell you that I am going to be pursuing your bestfriend so I needed you off guard."

Nora, who was busy thinking about the contents of the box simply murmured with a sound, making Ian relax for a moment.

"Well, that was easy..." he thought to himself.

However, a few minutes later, an ear-piercing scream shattered the quiet and Nora glared at him, " Did you just say what I think you said?"

Ian raised his hands in surrendered immediately as he said, " If you think I said that I am going to pursue your best friend then yes."

Standing up, she glared at Ian and looked around, " Where is my knife? I ought to castrate you! I warned you to stay away from my friend! Do not play with her heart!"

"Hey hey! Lets not go to extremes alright? Nora, I am not playing with her heart! Did you not hear me carefully? I am going to pursue her! Marriage on my mind!"

Nora, still holding a furious glare, halted in her search for the nonexistent knife, her eyes narrowing at Ian. "Marriage? You mean..."

"You need me to give you a crash course on what marriage entails?" Ian quipped, still maintaining a cautious demeanor.

Nora dropped into a chair with a thud, her eyes fixed on Ian as she carefully probed, "Let me get this straight. You're willing to part ways with your cherished bachelor lifestyle to marry my Bella baby?"

Ian responded with unwavering determination, "Yes." He held Nora's gaze, emphasizing the sincerity of his words.

"Yes." Ian answered without hesitation as he looked at Nora.

"Does she love you?"

Ian grinned. Of course, that was the most important question, wasn't it? If it had been anyone else, they would have asked him if he loved her. But Nora understood the crux of the matter and the Frosts better than anyone. "Not yet." He answered truthfully. "Hence, my intention to pursue her."

"I see."

Silence reigned for a few moments as the two stared at each other. He could see that she wanted to say something but kept hesitating. So naturally he decided to wait. It was why he had come here.

Chapter 380: Pursue (2)

As Nora and Ian sat there in silence, Nora finally seemed to have found her words as she sighed and began, "Ian, you've been the rogue of the Frosts for as long as I can remember. This is a colossal change, and I need to be sure you're not just caught up in the moment and that you are thinking with the right head."

Ian nodded, acknowledging the gravity of the situation. "I understand, Nora. It's a big step, and I'm not taking it lightly."

"But there are things that you don't know... Look, I know I warned you off but I do not want you or her to get up hurt."

"I might know more Nora than you can guess." Ian added meaningfully.

Nora understood the hint and asked cautiously, "She's told you about her family?"

Ian's jaw clenched as he thought of the people he'd encountered in the hospital. "I know in bits and pieces. I met them in the hospital the other morning. I've met her brother a few other times."

Nora sighed and looked away, "You'll have to be very careful, Ian, if you really intend to have her spend a lifetime with you. She won't accept things easily. She's been hurt too much by people she trusted."

"Her family doesn't love her as they should. I know that Nora." Ian spoke quietly.

But Nora shook her head, "You're wrong Ian. Her family used to dote on her. Her mother still tries her best. Bella was the apple of their eye. She just had to say something, and her parents would get it for her. She was not allowed to get hurt. Even a scratch and they would be there for her. It was why I was attracted to her in the first place. She had love to give in abundance because she received it from her doting parents. However, all that slowly changed, until her 'long lost' brother returned. about a year before my and Demetri's marriage and Isabella decided to leave this country. I.. I won't tell you everything since it's not my story to tell but I'll give you a warning."

Ian stayed quiet, knowing that whatever Nora said might change everything for the future. "She's become good at protecting herself. Like a Rose... She'll prick you first if you try to get to her emotionally..."

"Thank you for the warning, Nora. Don't worry, I don't mind a few pricks."

She believed that. The Frost brothers might come across as playboys but she could say from experience that if Ian had decided to take this further, there was no going back for him. He wouldn't have come to her if he had doubts. Nora looked at Ian with even more consideration, "She's not very experienced." Nora blurted out next, knowing that she might need to warn Ian because Isabella was quite good at pretending otherwise.

Ian grinned and corrected her, "She's not very inexperienced anymore."

Nora stared at Ian as the meaning of his words sank in before groaning, "Ew! Do you have no limit? I don't want to know about your escapades! I meant in relationships! Not.." Nora waved her hands in the air as she completed, "Not se*! Don't talk about that!"

"Ha! More like you don't want to know about them from me. If this was Isabella telling you, I'm sure those popcorn would have been here now."

"Well, that would have been girl talk and I'd have added some wine and dessert, but this is... nope.. Unless you want to talk about handsome boys that you've seen or bra troubles you might be having, I do not want to discuss this with you."

"Are you sure? I might have a few embarrassing stories to tell about your dear husband... you do know he was never this straight laced as he is now, right?"

Nora narrowed her eyes, watching the man's triumphant expression and clenched her hands. Nope! She wasn't going to fall for this.

"You think you can tempt me with this?"

Ian raised an eyebrow while Nora finally decided to sacrifice her pride at the altar of love and asked, "Fine. Tell me. But I am warning you, if I don't find it worth my time, I will not let you go near my Bella baby."

Ian grinned and beckoned her close, "Uh huh! Then listen up."

"Do you know your husband went to a strip bar when he was in University?"

Nora rolled her eyes at that. "Really? That is a juicy secret? I'm pretty sure every guy has done something like that during their younger days."

"Uh huh. But do you know the rest? He was supposed to get a lap dance for his birthday but..."

"A lap dance?"

"Uh huh. He's even chosen the girl himself. A petite one with the cat accessories."

"But before he could get the lap dance..." Ian trailed off and stood up.

Frowning, Nora urged him, "Don't stop there! Tell me the rest quickly."

"Very curious, aren't you?", a silky voice questioned.

Nora widened her eyes and quickly whipped around to look at her husband standing there. "What are you doing home early?"

"Listening to you gossip with someone who should be at the office." Demetri answered, turning to stare at his brother who was now getting ready to escape.

'Hey! I just came to deliver these pretty flowers. It is your wife who was pestering me for dirty details about you. I'll go now! I have a breakfast meeting..."

"Ian Frost! You liar!"

Nora was about to explain herself when she suddenly spied the box on the table and decided to throw the 'liar' under the bus.

"Demetri! Look, this is what Ian brought for me. He said I should give you a surprise with this and when I asked him, he insisted on telling me about the strip club..."

Demetri looked at the small unopened box in front of him and grinned, "Nothing happened there. I went, but the police came and closed down the place before I could get the lap dance. Ian has good taste, hmm? These are perfect. I think he wanted you to know the story to help you fulfill my wish..."

Walking forward, Demetri leaned forward and quickly kissed Nora before stepping back, "I'll thank you in advance for fulfilling my unfulfilled desire..."