

Husband With Benefits

chapter 41-50

chapter 41

As the events of the morning settled within her, Arabelle had difficulty controlling her emotions which threatened to burst out of her like a volcano. The scene had hit her like a tidal wave - the man she had grown fond of, the only one who had ignited a spark within her, was already entangled in the clutches of another girl. Anger surged through her veins, a hot mixture of resentment and disbelief.

Arabelle had remained silent all through the journey as she had tried to compose herself. Once checked into the hotel room, she threw her purse onto the bed as furious tears rolled down her cheeks. Just then her phone started to ring and she answered it with a cry, "Can you believe this, Mom?" she seethed, her voice laced with a bitter edge. "All this time I've been investing my emotions, my thoughts, into him, thinking we had a connection. And what do I find out? He's got a mistress, someone else holding his attention!"

Her eyes blazing with anger, she told her mother the entire scene that she had witnessed and continued, "It's absurd! How can he not see that no one else but me deserves him? I mean, who does that w*ore think she is, swooping in and claiming what should rightfully be mine?" Her fists clenched as she vowed, "He should be with me, Mom. It's crystal clear. Our chemistry, and our understanding - it's unmatched. This other girl doesn't know him like I do. It's an affront to me, mom. You have to help me find her identity! I want to fight her and teach her a lesson!"

Arabelle wiped her tears as her mother slowly explained things to her about how rich men liked to keep mistresses on the side. Arabelle closed her eyes tightly as her mother advised her to continue being with Demetri as if nothing had happened. Once they were married and she had a foothold in the Frost household, she could make sure that Demetri would not stray.

Calm after her mother's repeated assurances, Arabelle slept peacefully. As she woke up, she had already forgotten the incident of last night.

Fueled by a newfound determination, Arabelle decided to take her mother's advice to heart. With a mind focused on a plan of action, she set her sights on getting closer to Demetri as she had originally planned.

Humming a small tune, Arabelle donned a demure pink bikini under her sarong, tying her hair up in a casual knot. She'd already asked Great Uncle Elijah to send Demetri to

her room to escort her and show her around the place. This hotel was Demetri's pride and joy and she knew that he had fought hard to buy this place when he first became the CEO all those years ago. She was pretty sure that he would want to share this place with her.

As she waited, she imagined him coming over and seeing her like this. Maybe he wouldn't even take her to the hot springs and simply push her onto this bed. She'd protest a bit before surrendering herself to him. As her daydreams spun further and further, she imagined him declaring his feelings for her. And then they would get married. She imagined how Demetri would discard the mistress that he had hugged at the airport until slowly a small smile covered her lips, and the woman at the airport had now morphed into her. Demetri would declare her as the love of his life one day soon...

On the other end of the phone, Elijah Frost was trying to be patient with his grandson. While Elijah was used to having his way, he had also come to acknowledge that his power was declining while that of his grandson and expanded exponentially. He'd been using all means to get Demetri to adhere to his wishes, but the boy seemed to have become as slippery as an eel. No tactics seemed to work on him.

Of course, he still had the Ace in his hand, but he did not want to use that card too often or it would lose its value. Already he had the feeling that the Ace was not going to be useful for long.

"Come on Demetri, it's a beautiful city! You should take that lovely girl out and show her around. Take her to those natural hot springs and show her around.

Demetri sighed impatiently, "I came here for work, not to be a tour guide."

The old man sighed deeply and spoke, "Work will always be there, but these moments, won't wait forever. Trust me, showing her around and spending quality time will leave a lasting impression. She is your future wife."

Demetri could already feel a headache coming on and sighed, "Goodbye Grandfather."

"Demon? Demon? Now you listen to me, if I come to know that she was not shown around..." The phone had already been disconnected before Elijah could complete his threat. Elijah Frost ordered the butler to call again but the phone had already been disconnected and switched off.

As Arabelle continued to wait, she started to feel sleepy. For a moment, she wondered if she should go out and explore the springs herself but eventually her pride won out.

No, Demetri had to come out with her. Today, she will make sure that everyone sees her with him so that they would know that she was indeed his fiancé. Then and only then would she be able to warn off those who would try and use their viles on him.

Thankfully there had been no paparazzi's at the airport and no one had recognized Demetri with the h***y today or she would have been so humiliated.

Just as she was about to fish out her phone to call great uncle, the doorbell rang. Quickly adjusting her clothing so that her figure was displayed to the best effect, she opened the door with a smile.

"You look beautiful...Shall we?"

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"You look beautiful...shall we?" As Gabriel Frost stepped into the opulent room, he placed the small bouquet of roses on the table with a smile and turned to Arabelle, who stood there frozen.

Raising an eyebrow in her direction, he questioned, "Are you pretending to be a statue, sweet Arabelle?"

The smile on her face evaporated and she questioned with a frown, "Why is it you?"

Familiar with her ways, Gabriel shrugged nonchalantly and explained, "Sorry to disappoint, but Demetri got caught up with something last minute. He asked me to take you to the hot water springs instead."

"But..."

"But... what?" Gabriel quickly grabbed the small bag that Arabelle had prepared and caught her wrist, "Let's go."

"You don't even work for the Frost Hospitality Group! How can you know this?"

"Just because I do not work for this part of the Frost Group does not mean that I am not aware of the best places. This is one of our prime properties so of course I am well acquainted with it. Now, are we going to stand here and chat or would you like to come along?"

"Let go of my wrist and I'll do it."

Arabelle ordered curtly and when Gabriel did as told, she quietly followed him out. As they walked down the corridor, she thought of something and wondered if it would work. Demetri was a possessive man. She'd always looked up to him and admired him. What if she pretended to fall for Gabriel instead?

He wouldn't like to lose her affection and might confess to her directly. She knew that Gabriel liked her and she would be using this to her advantage. With her plan in mind, she looked sideways at Gabriel and smiled, "Thanks for stepping in Gabriel. I did not expect you to be so... nice."

Gabriel directed a puzzled smile in her direction but nodded, "Happy to be of help, Arabelle. You know me, I am always happy to be of help to you."

On the way to the hot water springs, instead of avoiding conversation like she usually did, Arabelle asked Gabriel about the places around Country B, his reason for coming to the country, etc.

While she continued to talk to him as if they were friends, Gabriel could not help but feel confused. Ever since Gabriel had playfully confessed to her during their teenage years, Arabelle had given him the cold shoulder. So what could be the cause of her sudden change in attitude?

Could it be because of what she had witnessed? After all his reason for coming here had been that Ian had messaged him about her having witnessed the shocking scene of Demetri with another woman. He'd been so worried about her that he'd even taken a commercial flight to come to country B instead of waiting for their private plane.

He'd been expecting her to see crying or even throwing herself at Demetri. But unexpectedly, Arabelle was behaving normally. Well, as normal as she was with others. He glanced at her hand on his arm as she talked about something, and he felt his stomach coil. This was his chance. If she had really given up on Demon, then this could be his chance to make a place for himself in her heart.

As they reached the hot springs and both separated to change into their swimsuits, Arabelle was happy with the results. Her flirting was working on Gabrielle as she'd expected. She decided to take her flirting up a notch as she discarded the sarong but did not step into the warm water instead preferring to sit on the edge with only her toes dipped into the water.

She watched as he stepped out and got a good look at her. His eyes roamed over her from top to toe, taking in every inch of her exposed skin. Pretending to be unaware of his scrutiny, she stood up and extended her hand to him, "Come on inside then. I was waiting for you."

Gabriel sauntered forward and held her small hand in his, stepping into the water and then helping her.

Arabelle gave him a grateful smile as she stepped down the natural rocks, however, she had barely taken two steps when she slipped and lost her balance, falling against his chest. Flustered at this unexpected and unplanned contact, Arabelle pushed away from Gabriel and promptly fell into the water with a splash.

And because Gabriel was still trying to hold onto her to help her, he too fell into the water. As the two came out coughing and spluttering, Arabelle and Gabriel looked at each other and laughed out loud.

"Well, that was an interesting way of getting into the spring," Gabriel commented.

Soon after the scene turned quiet as the two people leaned against the edge and soaked in the relaxing atmosphere.

As Arabelle started to doze off, she remembered her plan to flirt with Gabriel but wondered if she should or shouldn't do it now. No one was around to watch them flirt so it would be pointless to do so. She would just have to endure for now and then make it so that she would be able to flirt in front of Demetri as well.

Opening his eyes, she looked at the man in front of her and purred out, "Gabriel."

Gabriel's eyes snapped open, and he looked at her questioningly.

"Why are you so quiet today? Did you forget your naturally chatty self somewhere else?"

"I thought you did not like me talking?" Gabriel asked with confusion.

Arabelle shook her head and straightened, walking closer to Gabriel. She watched as he stilled while she approached him. It made her feel powerful, and she basked in her knowledge of his adoration. A dangerous look entered his eyes and she hesitated for a moment, wondering if her plan to make Demetri jealous would really work. However, in the next moment, Gabriel had covered the little space between them as he stared at her intently.

"What are you up to now, Arabelle?"

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Nora was happy today. Though she was always trying to serve with warmth, there was an extra sparkle in her eyes and a noticeable spring in her step as she moved between

tables, taking orders and delivering food with radiant happiness that couldn't be contained.

As she approached the waitress station to pick up another order, Lena couldn't resist teasing Nora. "Nora, you seem happier than a kid in a candy store today. What's got you in such a great mood?"

Nora's eyes sparkled as if she had a secret and Lena, the effervescent gossip, leaned forward and questioned, "Come on, spill the beans, Nora. Did you get a new boyfriend or win the lottery?"

Nora giggled at that and also leaned forward, as if about to tell a secret. And as Lena waited with anticipation, Nora said, "I aced the Math pop-up test! All straight A's!"

Lena could not help but roll her eyes at that and chimed in, "Are you sure this happiness is the result of Math and not romance? Because I heard that when someone suddenly becomes this happy, there's usually a secret romance involved."

Nora pretended to ponder but played along, "If there is a secret romance, then it is a secret to me too!"

Lena burst out laughing but continued in a whisper, "Well, all you need to do is go and sit on that table and your romance will bloom. Your not-so-secret admirer is here again!"

Nora rolled her eyes but did not glance back towards the table where Lena had gestured. There was no need to see. The man who had first interfered when she had been confronting Antonio was now a regular in the coffee shop. Though he had never asked her to sit with him or even talked much to her, he made it a point to sit at the same table and expected only her to serve him.

But since the man was nothing but polite, she could not help it...

"What would you like to have today?"

The man looked at the beautiful girl in front of him and was almost blinded. She was beautiful but today she seemed to be glowing. So much so, that he forgot what he was going to order.

Nora raised an expectant brow when the man continued to stare at her with a blank face. "Would you like to place your usual order?"

The man frowned before her words sunk in and nodded, "Yes. The usual would be great."

Nora nodded and turned around to place the order when he finally called out, "Miss Nora, you look especially radiant today. May I ask what has brought this extra glow to your smile?"

Since Nora was still happy, she did not put her usual guard up and answered readily, "I aced the Math pop-up test."

The man smiled at her answer and immediately, "Congratulations. From your tone, it seems that you've worked hard for it. From what I remember, your ex threatened you with failure in this subject right?"

Nora nodded happily, reminded of Antonio's devastated face when he realized that she had scored the same marks as him, competing with him for the first place.

"Yes. And now, I'll go get your order."

Nora quickly turned around from the customer, unaware that he was still staring at her back, wondering why he had failed to introduce himself to her...again. However, the man consoled himself that at least she had held a conversation with him about something other than food today.

Once back Lena couldn't help but tease Nora, "So do you need a break? You were chatting with your admirer just now? You planning to give him a chance?"

As Lena wagged her eyebrows suggestively, Nora rolled her eyes and pointed out, "I only had a friendly conversation which does not equal romance and marriage! And stop calling him 'my admirer'!"

Lena guffawed at that and said, "Then you need to tell me his name, sweetheart! I cannot very well call him 'Hottie' can I?"

"I think Hottie is still better than being addressed as 'your admirer'," Nora muttered under her breath as she grabbed the order for another table and swung away. As she did, she suddenly felt an eerie unsettling sensation. It was one she had been feeling often lately. The feeling of someone watching her.

Casually, she tried to look around but found everyone to be either engrossed in their food, phones or conversations. She tried to tell herself that it was nothing but her own paranoia, the feeling was happening too often. And she also could not disregard those innocuous-looking notes.

As she stood there with the order clutched in her hand, the customer rudely called out, shaking her out of her stupor. Pasting a smile on her face, she quickly apologized to the customer and placed their order, before returning to take out the next order.

Before she could, Lena stopped her, questioning with concern, "What happened there?"

Nora shook her head and spoke, "I think I just got distracted."

Lena stared at her thoughtfully before shrugging and walking away.

"Here's your espresso and doughnut." Nora said with a strained smile before quickly turning away, "Nora. Are you not celebrating your Math result? I would like to invite you for coffee..."

Nora shook her head and declined once again, "I am too busy to take a break."

"I did not mean now or here. I meant on one of your days off." The man quickly interrupted.

Nora bit her lip as she tried to think of a way to refute it while the man took the opportunity, "Wait. Before you answer, let me apologize for not even introducing myself before I ask you out."

Extending his hand for a handshake, the man smiled at her, "My name is Lucien."

Nora blinked at the man but shook his hand, "I am Nora."

His smile widened and Nora noticed that Lucien even had dimples on his cheek as he nodded, "I know."

Nora realized her silly mistake when she realized that he already knew her name and quickly changed the topic, "I am sorry, but I am too busy on my days off. With all the work... Maybe some other time. I need to go now, Lucien."

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In the evening, as Nora lounged in the house, staring at the pretty plants, she could not help but sigh. That unsettled feeling seemed to come over her more and more often. Whether it was in college or at the cafe or even when she was travelling, she would suddenly feel as if someone was watching and then that feeling would disappear.

The only time she seemed to feel safe was when she was in this house. It could be because the house was in a gated community and thus whoever was keeping an eye on her had been unable to follow her here. But it still sent a shiver down her spine. What if there really was someone sinister following her around?

She shook her head and concentrated on the small balcony with all its pretty greenery. It soothed her and made her calm. But it also made her think of the man who had been away. Sigh. Demetri Frost might be as mute as a block of ice on most days, but his presence on the other couch was something that she had gotten used to. And as her eyes continued to go back to the empty couch, she realized that she was probably missing the man.

There was something about the man that always seemed to bring her reassurance. Maybe it was that quiet strength within him. He did not need to posture or show off like other boys her age.

As she thought of him, she could not help but also think of that kiss at the airport. As her cheeks flushed, she quickly shook her head and thought to herself that she needed to get acting lessons on how to act without getting her reality muddled. How did all these actors go around acting in love with different people without letting themselves be affected?

Like always, her thoughts jumped from one topic to another, and she glanced to her side with a small mischievous grin. Getting her cell phone, she opened a new chat with her "Mr. Husband."

"Hello. I need your expert advice. Would you please be so kind as to help me?"

She waited for a few moments and saw that the message had been read, but there was no reply... As she waited some more, she sighed. It would be foolish to expect the man to message when he was so stingy with his words. Since he had not messaged a denial, guess she would treat it as an affirmative.

Holding the phone with both her hands, she typed out, "Okay, this might not be your expert field of subject but really, I need someone who can help me. Also, I am going to be discreet so help me choose who I should take to bed with me."

This time there was a ping sound and Nora punched the air in excitement. She had received a reply! Ha! She knew it. Eager to know what Demetri had written to her, she quickly opened the message only to be deflated like a balloon. There was only a question mark.

Sighing, she typed, "Okay, here goes, I'm not too sleepy and I've got three options to choose from as bedmates. I think they are all good and will be able to do good work in tiring me out and putting me to sleep. Fiscal is funny and flexible. Statute is a bit boring, but they do say that people who are boring turn interesting in bed...while Derivatrio's personality seems to be growing on me. So, who should I sleep with?"

As she made her words more ambiguous, she could not help but wonder if Demetri would give her a reply.

While Nora seemed to be grinning in anticipation, the peaceful atmosphere in the conference room in the large Country B hotel seemed to have suddenly turned ice cold.

Just a few minutes ago, almost all the plans had been approved and the directors were about to give their closing presentations. However, suddenly, Demetri happened to glance at his phone and paused the conference with a raised hand, causing the man to stop mid-words. Ian was almost tempted to lean over and peep to see what it was that had caused Demetri's mood to turn so foul.

The man was staring at his phone as if the thing had done him some mortal harm.

However, somehow a minute later, his expression seemed to clear, and he typed something on the phone. Ian's eyes almost fell out of his eyes when he saw Demetri typing. His brother knew how to chat. Well, of course, he knew this was an exaggeration, but this was Demon Frost! No one ever dared to message him...

Nora looked down at the message on her phone and laughed, clutching the phone to her chest. Demetri Frost really was a genius!

"Sleep with Fiscal. It will give you gains. Derivatario's an ex. And Statute is boring in or out of bed."

Nora glanced at her three books of Economics, Math and Law and shook her head. Well, her husband had advised her to study Economics. "Demand and Supply curves, here I come!"

Ian glanced at his brother repeatedly as they drove towards the hotel, Demetri finally growled with irritation, "Speak."

Ian sighed but did not reign in his curiosity. Those who did not ask questions remained dumb forever! "Did you receive sister-in-law's text when we were at the conference just now?"

"Mm." was the reply.

Well, that was encouraging. Excited, Ian asked hurriedly, "What did she say to make you angry first and then calm down."

"She wanted to choose who she should sleep with."

Ian blinked as he heard Demon say the words. He was pretty sure that he was hearing things. The mysterious sister-in-law, the woman Demon seemed to have fallen for was asking for his advice in choosing another lover. Ian subtly pinched himself, wondering if he had somehow unknowingly fallen into some alternate universe and winced when he felt the pain.

Uh huh. He was not dreaming and probably in the same dimension, so he gulped and asked, "Ahem... She sent you options to choose a lover for her?"

"Hmm."

"Then... what did you do?"

Did his brother order a hit on the girl? Would he see his sister in law as a dead body before he could meet her alive?

However, Demon's answer made her wonder if he would be the one who would have died..." I chose for her of course."

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Chapter 45: Jealous

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Chapter 45: Jealous

"What are you up to now, Arabelle?" Gabriel asked softly.

Arabelle hesitated, biting her lip as she replied, "Um, I'm just..."

Gabriel sighed and took a step back. "I know what you saw at the airport, Arabelle."

Arabelle felt a moment of panic as she realized that Gabe would, of course, know about Demetri's mistress. Had he already discovered her plan? Humiliated that her scheme had been exposed by this man who always looked down on her, she prepared to argue with him when he added, "I know you've liked him for a long time. But using me to forget him isn't going to be too helpful, hmm?"

Arabelle had been about to snap at him when she realized what he had said. Her plan had not been discovered! Gabe had assumed that she had let go of her love for Demetri because of that mistress and was now using him for a rebound. Well, that was good, wasn't it? She had not lied to him. He was the one who misunderstood.

"Gabe! I have a right to do what I want! If you don't want me to be near you, please feel free to leave."

With that, Arabelle turned around and swam away, refusing to look at him. Gabriel sighed and followed Arabelle slowly. "Hey! It's not like I am saying that I have an objection to being your rebound."

A triumphant smile graced her face as she heard him call out to her. But she did not stop and instead let the man restlessly call out, "Arabelle, wait! I didn't mean it like that. I just want you to be happy, and I was worried you might be rushing into something..."

His voice trailed off as he reached her, treading water beside her. Arabelle stopped, reluctantly turning to face him. Her expression was a perfect mix of frustration and embarrassment. "Gabe, you can't just assume things about me. You don't know what's going on in my head."

Gabe felt guilty under her accusing gaze and sighed contritely, "You are right. I should not have ruined the moment by jumping to conclusions."

Arabelle nodded curtly before swimming to the edge and ignoring Gabe as she checked her phone.

"Next time do not be a judgmental jerk, Gabe." The words were spoken mockingly but Gabe knew in that moment that Arabelle had forgiven him...

Happy that she was not going to hold a grudge against him, he sidled closer to her and offered, "What would you like to have for lunch? I can arrange something to be brought here or we can..."

Arabelle turned to him placed a finger on his lips and smiled, "Be quiet for now and come here."

Arabelle stepped back so that her back would be leaning against Gabe's bare chest and raised up her smartphone, getting a candid picture of the two of them which she then posted on her social media pages.

Smiling as she turned off her phone, Arabelle smiled, "Gabe, let's swim some more. We can have lunch later. It's been so long since I have relaxed..."

The atmosphere was now serene and peaceful as Arabelle leaned her head back against the edge and closed her eyes, letting the warm water soothe her. Gabe too was content to sit there and watch her.

He knew Arabelle could be spoilt and troublesome many times, but he knew he could handle her tantrums. In fact, he would like to handle them from her. He did not know why Demon did not approve of Arabelle.

Even though he was grateful to the fates that Demon was not in love with Arabelle, he also understood that Demon did not like Arabelle... And he did not understand why.

He knew his brother was an astute judge of character but why did he get mistaken when it came to Arabelle? Now that Arabelle was willing to let go of her feelings for Demon, Gabe had two tasks ahead of him, one was to woo Arabelle and the other was to convince his brother that Arabelle was a good match for him.

With a smile, Gabe let go of his own thoughts and looked at the dainty beauty in front of him with admiration.

It was at this moment that someone else stepped in from the small opening of the spring. Gabe was instantly on alert, ready to tear into anyone who dared to invade their time, but he frowned when he saw the person.

Arabelle, too was shaken from her peace as she looked up at the man standing there. Smiling, she said, "Ilan. How come you are here? Would you like to join us?"

Ilan Frost smiled at Arabelle and then spoke, "Sigh, if only I could, I would jump into this spring at the drop of a hat, but I work for a slave driver. He won't give me the day off."

"Then are you here to ruin our mood?" Gabe called out testily.

Ilan ignored his brother and called out, "A small lunch has been arranged for you at the hotel to welcome you to country B. I came to invite you for that."

Arabelle smiled and nodded, accepting the invitation easily as she said, "I'll change and then accompany you. I was getting hungry..."

As Arabelle walked away to a concealed changing room, Gabe jumped out of the water and questioned, "What is this thing about the feast?"

Ilan shrugged his shoulders and answered, "I'm just the messenger. Demon arranged it."

Arabelle, who had paused at the door smirked when she heard this answer. Yes! She'd known that this plan would make Demetri jealous! She'd only added a picture of her and Gabe, and he'd sent Ilan to not just intrude on their time together but also arranged a

feast for her. Well, she was going to make sure that she used this opportunity to her advantage. Slowly, she closed the door and thought of her next plan of action...

Meanwhile, Gabe stared hard into the distance before sighing, "What game is Demon playing? Either he is following Grandfather's orders, or he is rebelling! Why does he have to create so much confusion?"

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Nora looked around the classroom which was empty with only the chairs and desks scattered around. She'd been worrying about those notes that she was receiving and the only solution she could think of was to come to class early and either escape getting a note or at least catching the person red-handed.

However, as she unpacked her notebook and pens, her heart skipped a beat when a folded piece of paper fell out from her desk and fluttered to the floor.

The room was eerily quiet, the only sound being her own nervous breathing. Nora felt her heart skip a beat. She tried to convince herself that it may be a rogue piece of paper and nothing more. Maybe someone was playing around and left it on her desk. But she knew she couldn't fool herself.

Looking around, she started to have trouble catching her breath as she slowly picked up the note. Who could it be who had sneaked up here and slipped a note? Could it be they had left here last evening after the end of the classes? But the janitors would have taken it away. Could it be that the person was still here, watching her and waiting for her to pick up the note?

She jumped in fear when someone suddenly entered the class which also scared the other person. The classmate gave her a puzzled look before nodding at her in greeting and going to his own desk. Soon, students started to stream in, and Nora felt a bit comforted in the crowd while continuing to stare at the note in front of her. She had yet to gather the courage to open it and see the contents of the note.

She stared at the plain, white sheet with her name written on it in neat handwriting. She swallowed hard, her mind racing. This was a first. The person had actually written on it...

Her heart pounded in her chest as she read the few written words: "You're doing good, Nora. And I can see that you are eager to meet me. I see the way your eyes scan the

surroundings when you receive my notes. We'll meet soon and then I can tell you in person how great you are."

On the surface, the message seemed positive. But Nora couldn't shake the feeling of dread that had settled in her stomach. These anonymous notes had been appearing in her life almost daily now and she was getting more and more frightened.

She'd tried taking these notes to the police but they had refused to do anything about it since there were no threats in the note. The officer had even laughed it off saying that she probably had an admirer who was not brave enough to come to her. And then told her that she should come to them if there were any threats in the notes. In short, the police had dismissed her fears, suggesting that she was overthinking things.

The hum of conversations and the shuffling of desks drew her attention away from the note, and she carefully folded it back up and slipped it into her bag. She couldn't afford to let her unease show; not when that person was always watching her.

After what felt like an eternity, Nora finally calmed herself determined to put the note out of her mind. But as the lecture started, she couldn't help but glance around the room, her eyes darting from one face to another, searching for any sign that someone was watching her.

As the long day finally ended, Nora was on tenterhooks. She considered talking to Grandpa William or Demetri Frost but feared that they too might dismiss her fears. The weight of the notes and the constant fear that someone was watching her had taken a toll on her mental and emotional well-being.

Even as she was surrounded by thousands of people, as she walked away from the campus, she could not shake off the feeling of being watched.

It was only as she reached the cafe and hurried into the closed changing room that she felt relatively safer. But as she stepped out into the main room, in her uniform, she could not help but wonder if the person leaving her notes was there and she was interacting with him as well.

Nora's eyes welled up with tears as she realized that she couldn't continue to live like this, constantly looking over her shoulder and second-guessing every interaction, she had to talk to Grandpa William. He might be the only one who could help her. Maybe he could pressure the police into looking into the notes. If anything, that would scare the person who was trying to manipulate and scare her like this.

As the previous waitress was relieved, Nora quickly concentrated on her work, reassuring herself that soon, she would be able to get out of his problem. Grandpa William was not one to disregard her thoughts so easily. He would help.

The rest of the shift passes easily with her finally putting her worries to the back of her mind. It was actually Lucien, her new friend who had eased her mind by making jokes so mindless, that she could not help but laugh.

However, she could not have expected that her fear would return to the fore so soon. As she bid goodbye to Lucien, a delivery boy carrying flowers rushed straight to Maya at the cash counter. She did not pay much heed to it as this was a common occurrence here in the cafe.

However, as the rush dwindled, it was time for Nora to leave, Maya summoned her into the small office at the back. As Nora entered, she could not help but notice the large bouquet on Maya's desk and complimented her, "This is such a pretty bouquet."

Maya nodded and spoke, "It's for you. I thought it was inappropriate for you to receive it when you were working, so brought it here. You can take it."

As Maya left the office, she failed to notice Nora's paleness. Nora extended her trembling hand and stared at the note. The handwriting on it was very similar to the one on the note from the morning. Slowly, she opened it and stared at the words, "I don't like the new friends you make. Don't talk too much to your customers. It makes me sad."

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The Private Investigator stood in front of Elijah Frost with his hands clasped in front of him and his head bowed as he reported, "There is indeed someone in young master's life, but we have not been able to find out who."

"Of course, there is! Would my God-daughter lie to me about seeing Demetri with another woman? I have not asked you for confirmation! I tasked you with the responsibility to find out the identity of this woman! How difficult can it be when you already know that the girl threw herself at my grandson in the middle of a busy airport! Do you not know how to check the CCTV footage?"

The investigator hunched his shoulders, suppressing the urge to step back as the older man shouted louder than ever.

"We've already tried to check the footage. But that is not possible because there was a virus in the airport's system that day. All the recordings from that particular day were deleted. In fact, not just the cameras, the flyovers and paths leading up to the airport also experienced the anomaly and lost all footage."

Elijah Frost frowned at the report. It seems he had underestimated Demetri. The boy had actually deleted footage of entire days and caused such problems to protect the identity of this woman.

He should have expected it though. Demetri was like a labyrinth of thoughts that twisted and turned like a river through a dense forest. From a young age, he showed a propensity for seeing beyond the obvious, and for thinking steps ahead of the others. He should have known that Arabelle seeing him with another woman would not be a simple coincidence but a well-thought and deliberate move on his cunning grandson's part.

He would have expected Arabelle to report this news to him and in turn, he would investigate. Demetri had left breadcrumbs for him to trace while shrouding his real intentions well. Elijah looked at the investigator and sighed. "Traceback. As far back as the beginning of this year. I am sure he would have made a mistake somewhere." ordered Elijah. He needed to get to know this woman and cut off before his grandson fell prey to some scheming bi*ch. This time he would not let Demetri suffer.

Once the investigator had left, Elijah turned to his trusted butler and inhaled deeply, "I am going to have to be real patient with this boy. But he needs to understand what is good for him. And Arabelle is perfect for him. The girl loves him dearly and would go to any lengths for him. He needs that love in his life."

As Elijah contemplated his next move, he couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt. The incident from many years ago still haunted him. He had interfered in his grandson's life once before, and the consequences were still reverberating through their relationship. He was determined to make sure that Demetri would not suffer anymore.

The butler cleared his throat and tried to reason, "Master, do you not think it would be useless to try and coax the young master? After all, the incident that happened so many years ago..."

Elijah Frost threw a sharp glance at the butler who trailed off mid-sentence, keeping his thoughts to himself. However, having devoted many years of his life to working for the old man, he could not help but think to himself that the old man was making a mistake again. Once, Elijah Frost had tried to interfere in his grandson's life and they were still suffering the consequences of that fateful time.

At the time, they had been able to do some damage control because the younger grandchildren had been away in the boarding school. All the Frost brothers may have had different personalities, but they were fiercely opinionated and loyal to each other. More so to each other than their grandfather.

"How long has it been since I visited that person?" Elijah Frost asked quietly, a little while later.

The butler did not have to ask whom the old man was referring to. After all, he too had been thinking of that person just now.

"It's been at least three years now, sir."

"Has it really been so long? I never realized..." Elijah Frost murmured softly, his voice laced with guilt.

"You have been busy, sir." The butler tried to comfort the old man's guilt.

"Have I? Hmm? Has Demetri been visiting?"

The butler hesitated before answering. The old man would only blame himself more.

"Tell me, Alfred."

"Master has visited diligently every week. When he is not in the country, he makes it a point to schedule a video call..." The butler replied slowly.

Another sigh escaped Elijah Frost and he muttered, "Why will the boy not let go of the past? Why does he insist on clinging to it? I wish that person would just die."

"Master! Please do not wish ill on others." The butler actually said this because he did not want Elijah Frost to get this idea in his head. The man was fully capable of executing this if he got it stuck between his teeth. Already the relationship between the grandfather and grandson was hanging by a thread. If Elijah Frost killed the one person whom Demetri valued the most, it would mean a disaster.

Once again silence reigned in the small room before Elijah Frost sighed and stood up. "Ask the driver to prepare the car. We are going there."

The butler once again hesitated, wanting to stop him but this time he kept his peace, remembering his place.

Elijah Frost knew he had to face the past and confront the person who had played such a significant role in shaping Demetri's life. It was a journey into memories he would have preferred to avoid, but for the sake of his grandson, he would have to go to that person.

Maybe if he let go of his pride and begged that person to release his hold on Demetri, there would be a chance for Demetri to live a happy life with Arabelle.

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"You b*tch! Whom did you marry? Just how conniving can you be that you would scheme against us all! I had no idea I'd been raising a snake all these years!"

Lara Anderson had been waiting outside the Cafe waiting for Nora to come out. These days, she had tried to catch Nora outside the university, but the girl was too quick at evading her. And so, after ten days of trying to follow her and catch up with her, she had finally forced Sara to give up this girl's location! Foolish girl!

When Sara had been willing to fall in with her schemes, Lara had thought that she'd finally been blessed with a good daughter, who understood what was right or wrong. Who would have thought that the girl was a love fool? Sara had only agreed to all her plans because she had been crazy for Antonio.

It wasn't as if Lara had a problem with Antonio and she would have been happy if the two were married but now Antonio, who had claimed to love Lara was hemming and hawing about going to the registration office to make their marriage official.

In a bid for desperation, Lara had bribed a secretary to let her see a copy of the will so that she would be able to look for a loophole. Unexpectedly, she had not even been able to get her hands on the will's copy but also discovered that the will was being executed in Nora's favor. According to the conditions of the will, Nora should have been married for the execution to begin.

Who did this girl marry? And when? But that information was unavailable from the lawyer's office. Desperate, she had made her way to the civil office hoping to get her information from there. However, she had failed there miserably. She'd even been forced to offer her 'services' in exchange for information.

Lara was at the end of her limits! For so many years she had tried to get her hands on something that was rightfully hers but all in vain! First, it was her husband who blocked her path, then her own parents followed by that Watchdog attorney and now this Nora. That girl was her blood and she had raised her! So of course, she would have to listen to her!

Lara knew what she had to do, of course. All she needed to do was find Nora and make her give up the name of the man she had married. Then she would force the girl to divorce. Once she was divorced, Nora would be excluded from the will by default.

But that girl was really elusive suddenly. It was only after she almost tortured Sara that the girl blurted out this location.

Nora tried to push away her mother who was holding her firmly, but the woman was used to handling her. Since Lara had immediately slapped her across the face when

she saw her, Nora could already feel the side of her face throbbing. Slowly, blood trickled down her face as she had also been scratched across the face by the woman.

However, though Lara's attack had taken Nora by surprise, she had been training diligently in self-defence. She was not very powerful, but she was able to push Lara away. At this time, many people had already gathered around the two women and were watching in fascination.

Seeing that Lara Anderson had slipped and fallen onto the ground, Nora quickly considered if she wanted to retaliate or escape from here.

Of course, if it had been her from the past, then she would have quickly retreated and hidden somewhere until her mother's temper calmed down and she forgot what it was that had angered her. But now she had already come to accept that hiding would only delay the inevitable.

But she did not want to engage in this battle. Her mother was wild and had no concern for where she attacked. She could not be the same and attack her mother similarly. Raising her hands in front of her, as if to ward her off, Nora spoke slowly, "Mama, please calm down."

The words seemed to incense her more and she tried to attack her even more wildly, "You wh*re! How dare you tell me to calm down! You are young but you plotted against your own mother! I should have killed you when I knew of your existence. Or even better I should have thrown you out to rot when you were born!"

"Ha! I did throw you out but even then, you were saved! That was when I should have realized that you would be nothing but a bane to my happiness!"

The few brave passers-by who had been trying to restrain Lara had initially been sympathizing with her assuming that her young daughter had cheated her. However, when they heard these words, they were so shocked that they loosened their hold. Sensing that she was no longer being held back, Lara ran with all her might, and grabbed Nora's hair, "Tell me! Tell me whom did you marry? You will come with me this instance and divorce that ba*tard who helped you lay claim to the will."

As the public tried to pull Lara off Nora, Nora seemed to be in a trance. The reason Lara had been able to grab her again was because of what Lara had just revealed that she had indeed tried to abandon Nora when she was a child.

Anger, grief, misery and hatred for everything that she had suffered all those years bubbled inside Nora and she used all her might to push Lara away. In the next instance, she used all her strength to slap Lara across the face as police sirens started blaring in the background.

As the police arrived at this scene, Lara used all her acting skills to cry to the police about how her daughter had been torturing and abusing her while Nora stood there, still in shock.

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"I want you to leave me alone." Nora scowled at her 'mother' who had acted so convincingly that even she was sure that it was her fault for abandoning her. As the nice policeman tried to play the mediator, Nora was tempted to band her head against the desk inside the room.

She grimaced as she thought of the nice bath she had been dreaming of and tried to reason with the officer, "Look, sir, I do not want to press charges. But I also have no intention of reconciling with her. So what exactly are we doing here?"

On point, her mother's breath caught and soon tears streamed down her face, "See, officer. This is what I am talking about. She is so unreasonable that she would rather fight with me than talk." And that is when she started to weep pitifully again while the policeman sent her a reproachful look.

Nora knew she could get up and leave anytime but knowing her mother, the woman would just follow her and harass her until she had her way. And for the moment, her objective was to find out the identity of her husband.

Lara was trying to get her to guilt into revealing her name. If push came to shove, Nora was not about to back off, but she was also unwilling to take the easy route. The woman was really relentless. While her mother's crocodile tears were a nuisance, she had more pressing matters on her mind like the warm bathtub at home. With a deep sigh, she pushed her chair back, scraping it loudly against the floor. "Enough of this charade. I have no intention of reconciling with her. Let's not waste any more time."

She turned to leave, the room's stifling atmosphere becoming unbearable. But as she reached for the doorknob, the policeman hurriedly rose from his seat, blocking her path. "Miss Nora. I understand your unwillingness but please understand these things need to be resolved."

This time Nora's eyes narrowed as she questioned, "Is the police so free these days that you have taken up playing councilor for disputes within families?"

Nora stared at her mother's confident look and suddenly had an idea. She had assumed that the police coming there had been the doing of a concerned citizen. but it looked like this too was a part of her mother's plan.

Nora's jaw tightened as she glared at the officer who still had the gall to look righteous.

The officer glared back at her and insisted, " If this is not resolved then I will add a charge of creating public disturbance and not cooperating with the police during the investigation. Miss Lara may also file charges against you for assault."

Nora threw a glance at her mother's face where there was barely mark and then back at the officer, " Are you blind. Half my face is swollen that I am having trouble opening my eyes, there is dried blood on my face and you think I", Nora pointed to herself and then to Lara, " assaulted her?"

The officer shrugged and answered, " That was self defense."

Nora shook her head and spoke, " Fine, Arrest me if you want. And we can see how things proceed from there. But until you do, I am not sitting here."

The officer moved to grab her arm and tried to restrain her but, Nora whose patience was wearing thin, jerked her arm from his grasp and tried to step out again.

But the officer was unwilling to give up, yet " You will be arrested right away. What do you think the University will do if they find one of their students has been arrested for multiple charges. You can bid goodbye to your career. Even if you are able to extract yourself from this situation, you will be tainted."

"Are you threatening me officer?" Nora asked softly.

"No, I am an officer of the law, I wouldn't dare threaten you. All I am doing is trying to make you aware of the consequences of your rash actions."

Nora sighed and spoke, " Fine. I'd like to make a phone call to a friend, please. I cannot do this alone."

While Nora was finally able to escape the dim room, she quickly dialed a number and explained a few matters before being reassured that the matter would be resolved.

Inside the room, the officer caught the older woman's hand and spoke, " What did I tell you? Helping you would be no trouble at all."

Lara Anderson patted the man's hand before slowly extricating hers, a look of disdain in her eyes. Once she had what she needed she would have to get rid of this old smelly man.

Once Nora was inside the room again, the two women continued to sit quietly, without feeling the need to talk to each other.

Lara's gaze showed her triumph and having pushed Nora into a corner while Nora kept staring at her mother quietly. Did her mother really have no bottom line? Did she hate her so much. Her words of how she had tried to abandon her as a youngster echoed in her head and she felt her heart break all over again. All these years, she had tried to win her mother's love, believing that she did not like her. And then she had given up when she discovered her treachery.

But now, she had to accept that her mother did not just not love her, but she hated her.

Just then the door to the police station opened and a man strode through. Lara's eyes widened as she stared at the man while the energy in the room shifted in response to his entry. Lara Anderson could not help but throw a glance at her daughter. Did Nora marry this man?

As the man's sharp gaze roved over the three people, he ignored the officer and the older woman, moving straight towards Nora...

Nora smiled up at the man softly, " Thank you for coming. I am sorry to be disturbing you..."

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"Mom, I am so happy right now! You won't believe it, but my ploy actually worked!" Arabelle bubbled happily later in the night as she called her mother, singing a completely different tune than she had been just that morning.

"What did you do, my sweet child?" Her mother asked curiously.

"Mother! When Demetri sent Gabe to show me around, I was just so unhappy! But then I thought that I could use this to my advantage! I flirted with Gabe and then added a few of our pictures to my Insta story. You saw that, didn't you? I think Demetri saw the story too because, within an hour, my date with Gabe was interrupted, and I was invited to have lunch with him!"

The older woman frowned as she heard this. Demetri, that cold block of ice who was rightfully known as Demon, interrupting her daughter's date because he felt jealous? Arabelle might have delusions about the man, but she had seen the boy grow up, and

she did not have any such delusions. Carefully, she probed," Did Demetri personally interrupt your lunch date?"

Arabelle leaned back onto her pillows, relishing the feeling as she glanced fondly at her other hand... the one he had touched.

"Of course not, Mom. That is Demetri. Do you really think he would stoop low enough to do that, no matter how much he likes me? In fact, if he had done that, I might actually not like him so much! Demetri's main attraction is his dangerous aura and the challenge of subduing him. Anyway, he sent Ian to invite us both for lunch."

"And how did you reach this conclusion that he knew about your Instagram story, and the lunch was a reaction to that?"

"Umm, he passed me the plate of food and then told me to 'sober up.' Isn't that him caring for me? Also, how would he know that I'd been drinking when I had not even had anything to drink yet? The only way that was possible was he had seen the wine in her picture's background.

"Arabelle, sweetheart, none of this constitutes that he was jealous or wanted to woo you. I know you have him in your heart, and I won't stop you from pursuing him, but you need to be careful, baby. I do not want you to get hurt. And do not try to use Gabe against Demetri... It could be dangerous."

"Relax Mom. There is no need to worry so much! Gabe is harmless. Once he knows that he helped his sister-in-law to get his brother, he will get over it. And I don't have to worry about Demetri; he can harm anyone, but he cannot harm his own brothers."

"Arabelle, listen to mom..." However, Arabelle had already disconnected the phone as she tried to explain that it was not so easy. She knew, of course, that there was no point in talking to her daughter as she was already on a set course of action, and the only thing she could do was to try and protect her. Her daughter was the most precious thing in the world to her, and she would not let any harm come to her.

Arabelle, on the other hand, was lost in her own dreams as she caressed her hand, which had been touched by his fingers when he passed the plate to her.

"Gabe, come on, since when did you become a masochist?"

Gabe glared at Ian who was questioning him and then at Demetri, who was ignoring him.

"What do you mean that I became a masochist?"

"Well, you are well aware that she does not like you but Demetri. She insists she is his fiancé. She came here to chase him. And what are you doing? The moment you came

to know that she'd come here, you followed her here like a dog wagging his tail at its owner, and then you offered to take her to the private family hot spring."

"So what? How does that make me a masochist? I am trying to chase the woman I like, and what is so wrong with that?"

"Nothing is wrong if she would not string you along and try to use you against your own brother. Gabe, did you throw your brains somewhere over the ocean while flying here?"

"You can't be sure of that, Ian. We had a good time tonight. Usually, Arabelle would only fight with me, but today... I felt as if I had a breakthrough with her. If you had not come..."

"If I hadn't come, she would have kindly rejected your invitation to join lunch and continued to chase Demon. You saw her behaviour at lunch! One crook of his finger and that girl would have thrown herself at Demon. Look, I also think Arabelle is great and I understand that you like her and would be happy for you if she liked you back but she does not! So, why are you setting yourself up for a fall?"

Gabriel pushed his hand through his hair in frustration as he gave a weak defense, "She was drunk..."

"Yes, she was. Drunk enough to show that the only person you are fooling is yourself, Gabe."

Desperately, Gabe turned to Demon and tried to reason, "Demon, can't you tell her directly that you are not interested in her? Look, I know that you are not leading her on! But I think she needs to hear this from you."

"I've already told her, Gabe." Demon answered, his voice unconcerned.

"I know but can you say it again?"

"When ears are closed, words fall on barren soil. Look in the mirror to see a living example."

Gabriel understood what Demetri was saying, and yet, his heart could not help but ache. It was what made him understand Arabelle's plight. The heart wanted what it wanted. Just like he wanted her, and she wanted Demon.

He only hoped that the coming days would prove to be a catalyst, and things would soon reach a culmination point

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