

Husband With Benefits

chapter 51-60

chapter 51

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

As Nora stood up and greeted the man slowly, Lara Anderson could not help but guffaw, " I can't believe this! Did you stoop so low that you would marry an old man just for the sake of your inheritance? This man must be in his 60's atleast! No wonder you are unwilling to reveal the name of the man you married! He is practically ancient! Girls get sugar daddies but you, you got yourself a sugar grand-daddy!"

Lara was so happy and rejoicing in Nora's misfortune that she failed to notice the man next to her had frozen in fear and was trying to make her quiet down.

The older man sent a sharp glance at the woman with the foul mouth and then turned to stare at his officer, " Would you like to explain what is going on, officer?"

The officer gulped and hurriedly tried to explain, " Sir, this is a family matter. Miss Lara here was trying to talk to her daughter who suddenly turned around and attacked her. They caused a public disturbance, so I brought them here to talk to each other. However, Miss Nora was not being cooperative with the investigation and I did not want to charge her with assault, keeping her youth in mind, so I was just trying to reason with her."

The officer then turned to Lara and hurriedly spoke, " Miss Anderson, this is Police Commissioner Selleck! Please mind your words, he is an honourable family man."

"Miss Williams, were you refusing to cooperate with the police? I hope you understand that it is not feasible to obstruct an investigation."

"And is it also not feasible to also defend myself, Commissioner? I have witnesses where the altercation happened who can testify that I was not the one who started the entire altercation. However, your officer here insists on not only ignoring my words but also retaining here unlawfully."

"Sir, no witness has come forward to record any statements. So, it is only their words against the other."

"Would a video recording of the incident be enough proof?" Nora asked quietly.

"Sir, there are no video recordings available." The officer quickly provided as he tried to change the subject," Sir, Miss Williams here has just called her husband over to help sort out the matter and I am sure that he will be here any minute. Commissioner, you are here so late... is something the matter."

Commissioner Selleck ignored the woman who had now started crying and looked at Nora, instead," Do you have any evidence?"

Nora picked up her cell phone and quietly passed it to the Commissioner. "I've been feeling as if I was being stalked recently. When I tried to file a complaint, however, this officer assured me that I was only overreacting due to my own anxiety. This was a few days ago. As a result, to reassure myself, I started wearing a body camera which is connected to my phone. I have evidence of not just Miss Anderson's attack on me but also Officer Thompson's heavy-handedness."

"This is unlawful! You are not allowed to bring any cameras into the police precinct!"

Before Nora could say anything, Commissioner Selleck directed a sharp glance at his officer and started playing the video that had been recorded on the phone.

As the entire video was played, the officer turned paler by the minute and even Lara Anderson had stopped crying and was listening intently.

Once the video had reached where Officer Thomson tried to restrain her and threatened her, Commissioner Selleck sent a fierce glance at Officer Thompson and roared," You are suspended for now. There will be an internal investigation regarding this and other cases you have handled!"

"Commissioner Selleck, let me explain..."

"Officer! I've already seen your explanation." The commissioner then nodded to his security detail who quickly subdued the officer and carted him away.

Lara tried to speak up, but her throat was choked up as she saw the officer who was supposed to be her helper taken away. She tried to think of a way to talk to the Commissioner who only ignored her and questioned Nora," Miss Williams, would you like to press charges? I am sure that you have a solid case. You can file for stalking, mental harassment and first-degree assault."

Before Nora could speak up, Lara squeaked," Commissioner! Please. I realize that I was a bit heavy-handed, but I was only concerned about my daughter and was trying to get her to talk to me."

The older man ignored Lara's crying and waited patiently for Nora's reply who spoke softly," I do not wish to file charges, Commissioner."

Lara let out a breath of relief. However, the commissioner was not satisfied. He turned to Lara and spoke, "Miss Anderson, you will be charged for creating public disruption. Since this would be your first offence, you will be let off with a warning, but be careful. Next time you are here, you will be looking at long-term charges. Miss Williams, you are free to leave."

Nora nodded and walked out of the room and the police precinct, breathing a sigh of relief as she stepped out into the cold night. It was her mother who had been stalking her! Thankfully she would be able to live peacefully now that the matter had been resolved.

Nora hunched her shoulders and decided to walk to the house when the commissioner invited her to sit with him, offering to drop her at her location. She politely thanked the man for helping her out and made her way on foot. She also had to thank Demetri for helping her out with no questions asked. She'd asked him to help her with a lawyer and he'd sent the police commissioner...

Unknown to her, as she walked out of the place, a pair of eyes was trained on her as they observed her from head to toe. They narrowed as they roved over her face before the person turned and walked away.

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52

Nora woke up with a start, the quiet of her room shattered by an unexpected sound. A faint gasp escaped her lips as she instinctively touched her face. Pain flared through her bruised cheek, and she winced, fingers tracing over the tender, swollen skin. The memory of the brutal attack from yesterday flooded back, and her heart raced.

Rubbing her eyes to clear away the grogginess, she tried to focus on the source of the disturbance. Moonlight filtered through the curtains, casting eerie shadows on the walls. She looked around at the quiet and wondered what it was that had woken her up.

After coming from the police station, she'd had no power to even apply medicine and simply lay down on the bed, surrendering to her overwhelming emotions and tiredness. As she stared up at the ceiling of the room, she breathed slowly, hoping the dull ache in her heart to go away. Her mother had been stalking her to the point that she'd started to worry for her sanity. And now that her mother had been warned, she held onto the hope that Lara Anderson would not appear in front of her again.

Turning her head, she looked at the clock which showed the time 3:59 a.m. Despite the exhaustion that clung to her like a heavy shroud, Nora knew that she needed to investigate the disturbance. As she tried to listen for sounds, all she felt was darkness.

Shaking her head at her own paranoia, she realized she'd woken herself up with a scare and now would be a good time to apply some medicine to her wounds. She could barely feel her side of the face. Slowly, she calmed her breathing and decided to get out of bed. However, she'd barely managed to calm herself down when she heard the sound of something falling from outside the room.

Panic gripped her. The noise that had woken her up was not a figment of her fearful imagination! There was someone really in the house. How could her mother have found her here?

Could it be possible that her mother had somehow followed her here when she left the police station? The idea sent shivers down her spine.

Nora's breath quickened, and she had to suppress the urge to scream. She knew she couldn't hide here, feeling like "a lamb to the slaughter," waiting for her mother to come inside and hurt her. Dam* it! How was she supposed to make the woman leave her alone? As tears came to her eyes, she took careful breaths. She could not afford to have a breakdown at this moment.

Her best chance was to gather her wits and confront and protect herself. She already had a contingency plan in place for a situation like this. Her mind raced as she tried to recall every detail of the plan she had formulated for this very scenario.

Slowly, she reached under her bed and retrieved the baseball bat she'd hidden there after Demetri went away. It was a comforting weight in her hands, a symbol of her determination to take control of her life. Gathering her courage, she slid out of bed, the cold floor sending a shiver up her spine.

As she stood up, the pain in her cheek was a stark reminder of the vulnerability she felt. She had to be cautious, every movement deliberate and calculated. Nora tiptoed toward the bedroom door, her ears straining to catch any sound. The house was filled with an eerie silence, broken only by the occasional creaking of the old wooden floors.

With each step she took, anger replaced some of the fear. Her mother had crossed all boundaries time and again but invading her sanctuary and tainting it with her presence was not something that she was going to let slide.

Gently, she pushed open her bedroom door and peered into the dimly lit hallway. Every nerve in her body screamed for her to retreat, but she refused to give in to fear. Swallowing hard, Nora stepped into the hallway, her grip on the baseball bat tightening even as it threatened to slip from her hand due to the cold sweat she had broken into.

A tall figure stood by the kitchen shelves; his silhouette illuminated by the soft glow of the moonlight filtering through the window. Panic surged through Nora as her mind raced to make sense of the situation. It was not her mother. Then, had a robber broke into the house?

Nora's eyes darted around the room, searching for any object she could use as a makeshift weapon to distract the man. She'd been confident that she could overpower her mother by using the bat in her hand but to handle a large man like the one standing there, she would need to have something to attack from further away before she dared to approach him. She shuddered to think about the consequences if the man succeeded in snatching the bat from her.

Her gaze settled on a small vase sitting on the ledge nearby. It was not much, but it was the best she could find and use in her state of panic without alerting the thief.

With trembling hands, she picked up the vase, took a deep breath and shouted, "Hey you!" before aiming the vase straight at the man's head.

The intruder, still engrossed in whatever he was doing on the kitchen shelves, froze for a moment. Then, with lightning-fast reflexes, he spun around to face Nora and effortlessly caught the vase mid-air, his movements graceful and fluid. Her voice trembled with a mixture of fear and determination as she launched the makeshift projectile, hoping it would give her the precious seconds she needed to assess the situation. Maybe she could also grab the knives on the other end of the island.

"You..."

The tension in the room reached its peak as the vase hung suspended in the air, a testament to the man's uncanny ability.

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Chapter 53: Attacked

[1,034 words]

Chapter 53: Attacked

Demetri had just returned from the flight. The long and almost continuous trip to and from Country B had taken a toll on him. He'd barely walked through the door and gone to get himself a glass of water when he heard Nora cry out, "Hey you!"

He turned instinctively but before he could even register what was happening, a blur of movement caught his eye. Instinct took over and he caught the vase one-handed, an inch before it smacked between his eyes.

On the other side of the room, Nora's breaths came in shallow gasps. Her heart pounded as she slowly registered the scene before her. She had mistaken Demetri for an intruder in the dead of night, reacting on pure instinct and fear. As relief coursed through her nerves, she attempted to speak but managed only fragmented words, her voice broken and tremulous, "You..."

Demetri turned on the light as he quickly realized that Nora had mistaken him for an intruder. Nora winced at the sudden glare of lights and gulped, as the adrenaline began to subside. Feeling weak, she leaned against the wall and tried to think of a way to apologize to him. Hadn't he been in some other country when she called him? Then what was he doing here?

However, as she thought of all these questions, she watched something terrifying. He looked at her with a sudden anger, making her shudder as he walked close to her quickly.

In her heightened state of vulnerability and fear, she winced and instinctively braced herself for what she believed might come next.

Seeing this, Demetri stilled. Seeing the fear in Nora's eyes was enough to make him stop in his tracks.

Demetri slowly raised his hand in a gesture of surrender and extended it towards Nora. It was as if he was trying to calm a frightened wild animal.

His eyes never left hers as he gently motioned towards the baseball bat she clutched tightly. Nora, still trembling, glanced down at the bat and then back at him. Slowly, she let go of her makeshift weapon, allowing it to lean against the wall.

Without a word, Demetri approached her, reached out and took her trembling hand in his.

As they reached the kitchen island, he lifted her by the waist, as if she weighed nothing and placed her there gently, so that they would be at level height. Leaving her there, he turned around and Nora watched him leave, unsure what to do next.

She did not have to wait too long as he soon returned, with a first aid box and a cold compress. With light touches, he began to clean her wounds, and Nora winced at the

stinging sensation. Demetri noticed her discomfort and leaned closer, his warm breath brushing against her face as he blew gently on her wounded skin to soften the pain.

After cleaning her wounds, Demetri carefully applied a band-aid to each scratch before placing the cold compress on her bruised and swollen cheek. Every step was done without a show of emotions and yet, Nora felt herself falling apart.

Gratitude swelled within her, but as she tried to express her thanks, her voice quivered, and tears began to trickle down her cheeks. She fought to hold them back, not wanting to reveal her vulnerable side to him. She did not want him to pity her.

"Th-thank you," she managed to stammer out, her voice breaking as she attempted to convey her appreciation. Her eyes glistened with unshed tears, and she could sense Demetri's concern and kindness washing over her. Before he could say anything in response, Nora, overwhelmed by her own emotions, hastily jumped down and rushed away from the kitchen retreating into her room and closing the door behind her with a soft click.

Alone in the safety of her own space, she finally let her tears flow freely, allowing the pent-up emotions to pour out. As she hugged the pillow in her room, soaking it with her tears, she allowed herself to acknowledge the fear and pain she had been suppressing.

Once Nora was inside, Demetri wasted no time. He pulled out his cell phone, regardless of the time and called the Police Commissioner. The phone was answered quickly and Commissioner Selleck greeted quickly, "Mr. Frost. What can I do for you?"

Demetri Frost had never ever called him to pull strings and so the first time he did, Commissioner had raced to the police station, no questions asked. Now there was a second call within twenty-four hours...

The man's voice was brisk and curt, "Update."

"We've reviewed the evidence from Miss William's body cam. It's pretty damning, Mr Frost. It managed to record the whole attack by her mother. However, Miss William refused to press charges and asked that we only give her a stern talking to.

Demetri scowled at this, his eyes going to the closed door. The girl was simply unpredictable. If she'd recorded the evidence, then she should have made sure to go all the way and punish the woman, getting rid of her effectively.

"Send me the video." With that order, Demetri disconnected the call.

Commissioner Selleck looked down at his phone and sighed. Legally, he was not allowed to share evidence but this was Demetri Frost. He was as good as the law himself.

He wasted no time in forwarding the video to Demetri's phone. Demetri watched it in silence, his expression darkening with each passing moment as he witnessed the assault on Nora. After the video ended, Demetri clenched his jaw and made another call, his voice like ice.

As the call connected this time, there was no greeting from either side as he barked an order, "I've sent you the video. You know what to do..."

The night turned quiet again. Demetri quietly walked to the couch on the side, lying down, as he stared at the greenery in front of him, trying to calm his mind.

However, as the silent night turned to a peaceful morning, Lara Anderson was not very lucky as she met with an accident that left her facial bones broken...

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As Lucien walked into the cafe, his face harried, he looked around and his eyes met Nora's who smiled and waved at him. Her smile made him feel as if the sun had come out from behind the clouds on this dreary day.

Waving back at her, he made his way to his usual table but stopped when he noticed that it was already occupied. Sighing, he looked around and was gratified when Nora gestured to him, holding an empty table for him.

Rushing there he murmured a grateful thanks and quickly got to work. It had been a few days since he had come here, he'd been so swamped with work. The only reason he had managed to escape today was he'd threatened his assistant in trying to schedule anything for him. With Gabe playing hooky these last few days, everything had fallen onto him, and Lucien was tempted to call out his older brother and give him a stern talking to.

But he had no time to do that as well! He vowed that, once things eased a bit, he was going to challenge Gabe to a match and make the man grovel for mercy!

As he quickly powered up his laptop, he wondered what he should order today. His brain was actually too tired to even look at the menu. Just then a tray was placed in front of him and a delicious fragrance wafted from it.

Surprised, he looked at the usual dose of caffeine that he had taken and then at the chicken risotto in front of him. "This..."

Nora grinned and shrugged her shoulders, "I can get you something else if you want, but this is what you usually order when you come in with that long face."

Lucien grinned at that and nodded, "You are quite observant! Risotto is like my comfort food, so whenever I am under stress, I prefer to eat Chicken Risotto."

Nora grinned, "Enjoy your meal then. Let me know if you need something else."

Lucine smiled back and called out, "How are your studies going? Any more pop-up tests?"

Nora grinned and nodded excitedly, "Well, they are going well. I have an excellent teacher for Math, so it's never a problem now. And how is the world of numbers treating you today?"

After their second conversation where he had congratulated Nora on acing her test, Nora slowly started talking to him instead of just talking in monosyllables or to the point.

Ever since she had come to know that he worked in the finance industry, she had teased him about being her mortal enemy because he loved numbers and equations. However, Lucien did not mind and enjoyed those few minutes of chatting with Nora.

With a chuckle, he answered her question, "Well, the numbers are playing hide and seek as always. But I'm determined to find them."

Nora chuckled as she answered, "Ahh, the eternal War Of Numbers. Are you in a standoff with spreadsheets?"

Lucien nodded gravely as he spoke, "Of course. And it's always a fierce battle. But I can't let my guard down. The moment I do, they start plotting their next financial crisis. I could write a book called Lucy's Number War Strategies!"

Nora laughed at that, a sound that made Lucien blink up at her with stars in his eyes. She shook her head and questioned, "Lucy and Not Lucien??"

Lucien flushed a bit as he realized his mistake and spoke a bit shyly, "My older brothers call me Lucy since we were children. Actually, it was my mum who started it. She wanted a daughter after having my older brother but then I was born. And I was fair and dainty when small and could pass off as a baby girl, so..."

Nora smiled again and made a sound of pity, "I can only imagine the suffering you would have endured through high school.."

Lucien shook his head and spoke, "Not really. According to my brothers' only brothers are allowed to bully each other. If an outside tries that, they will simply team up and teach them a lesson."

Nora gave a wistful smile as she heard that and said, "You are lucky to have such brothers then Lucy. And now, I must return to my work before Lena or Maya come looking for me."

Lucien watched Nora walk away, her grace and warmth leaving a lingering impression. As he returned to his work, he couldn't help but appreciate the small moments of respite and camaraderie that the cafe and Nora provided in his hectic life. It was a bright spot in the daily grind.

He wondered if it had been enough time for her to get over her previous break-up. After all, she seemed to be smiling more and appearing more carefree these days. His stomach knotted as he considered the idea of asking her out. However, he hesitated, not wanting to disrupt the easy rapport they had built. He didn't want to rush into anything, preferring to let their friendship naturally evolve.

As he observed her interacting with other customers, her warm and friendly demeanor struck him. She had a way of making everyone feel special with her easy smile. It dawned on him that to her, he might be just another regular customer. The thought of potentially making her uncomfortable or changing the dynamics of their interactions weighed on him.

Maybe the best course of action would be to continue down this course with only easy conversations. Once he was sure that she considered him more of a friend, he would try and ask her out.

With that thought in mind, he turned back to his work, still stealing the occasional admiring glance at Nora as she worked.

As he sat there in the cafe, his phone started to buzz with messages in the group chat: "We need to have a meeting today brats. There has been too much silence in this group with only occasional news about Demetri!" Ian had messaged in the group while tagging them all with a place and time for them to gather together.

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The pulsating beat of the music enveloped the VIP floor, casting a vibrant, rhythmic spell over the night. Ian, Seb, Gabe and Lucy, sat at a plush, crescent-shaped booth, their presence commanding attention amidst the kaleidoscope of lights as they each nursed their drinks.

Seb leaned back against the plush upholstery, his dark hair slicked back, a sly grin playing on his lips. His eyes scanned the room, catching the appreciative glances from the ladies in the vicinity.

Ian, also in the mood to wind down, tapped out a rhythm on the table with his fingers, while winking flirtatiously at a woman who'd caught his eye.

Lucien, on the other hand, seemed impervious to the attention that his boyish charm and disheveled blond hair earned from the ladies.

Gabe was the most reserved of the bunch, his finely tailored suit and calm demeanor setting him apart. He took a sip of his scotch, studying the dance floor with a discerning eye. "You guys are drawing quite the crowd tonight," he remarked, his voice carrying a tone of amusement.

Ian rolled his eyes at Gabe as he remarked, "It would have been better if the two of you would not have become such party poopers! We are here tonight to enjoy and yet, you are sitting here with a long face about Arabelle ignoring you while Lucy here is mooning over some crush like a schoolgirl!"

Lucien blushed and objected about having a crush, but his face belied his denial. Seb and Ian exchanged amused glances. "Looks like someone's got it bad," Seb teased causing Lucien to glare at his brother and turn away his head. He needed to quickly divert his brother's attention or they would tease him for the rest of the night.

Trying to shift the focus away from himself. "Speaking of crushes, what about our elder brother? He's been awfully secretive about his mystery woman. Have you discovered anything more, Ian?"

Ian grimaced and chucked the rest of his beer. "Not yet. Other than the stunt Demon pulled at the airport, the girl still appears to be a figment of our imagination. And that reminds me, you will all be summoned by grandfather soon. He has discovered the existence of this mystery girlfriend and is intent on finding out her identity. So be prepared to be grilled.

Seb rolled his eyes. First off they knew nothing about the girl. Secondly, their grandfather seemed to have forgotten that they would never rat each other out. So what if Demon was not the same person he used to be? He would always be their big brother, their first role model. And they were all well aware of their grandfather's intention in trying to identify the woman.

As the night progressed, the men found themselves surrounded by even more intrigued women, drawn to the magnetic charisma of their group. Laughter, music, and conversation flowed seamlessly, making it easy to forget about broken hearts and secret crushes as all four enjoyed their time out.

While the four brothers enjoyed their playtime, Demetri and Elijah Frost were engaged in a battle of wills.

"Do you really think that you can marry Willy and Nilly? I am warning you, Demetri, if you try to bring in some trash through our door, I will handle it accordingly. Until now, Arabelle is the only one worthy to carry the title of the daughter-in-law of the Frost family."

Demetri shrugged and pointed out, "I've already given my opinion on that. She can marry Gabe."

Elijah thumped his walking stick against the floor and pointed his finger angrily at Demetri, "Gabe is not the eldest! He is not the heir to my empire!"

"So?" Demetri sipped the water in front of him, being deliberately obtuse to what his grandfather was trying to imply!

"Demetri! Are you trying to anger me to death? I have already promised Arabelle's mother that Arabelle would be the CEO's wife!"

"The solution is simple. I'll resign tomorrow and Gabe can be the CEO."

Elijah sucked in a sharp breath, his arthritic hands trembling with the force of his hands while the nerves in his forehead bulged, "Demetri! The Frost brides have always been chosen based on their status and upbringing! And this tradition will be continued, or else..." As the old man left the threat hanging in the air, a chill permeated the room.

Finally, when Demetri said nothing, Elijah spoke again, "Get rid of the woman you have on the side or I will do it for you!"

"The way you did ten years ago?" Demetri cut straight to the point.

Elijah stared at his grandson, trying to read him but the man gave away nothing. Hoping that he was actually threatened, Elijah nodded forcefully, "Yes. Exactly like I did all those years ago."

"Then you would be inviting trouble, Grandfather. All those years ago, I was powerless but there is a vast difference between then and now. Your power has declined while mine has peaked. If you insist on harming my person, then I will simply get rid of the person you want to put in my life."

"How dare you? How can you even think of harming an innocent girl? A girl who has grown up admiring you? Have you really turned into a Demon?" Elijah Frost shouted angrily.

Demetri placed the heavy crystal glass in his hand on the table with a loud thump as he fired back, "Did you think before you harmed an innocent girl? What was her fault? That she loved your heir apparent? You are my first teacher, Grandfather. And I'd like to think that I have learnt well."

Demetri stood up with that and walked away leaving the older man shocked. However, he paused at the door and turned back to throw one last look at his grandfather as he said, "Also, I do not have a mistress. I have a wife."

The clash between Elijah and Demetri Frost had reached its peak and as each insisted on upholding their choice, the future of the entire Frost empire hung in the balance.

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Chapter 56: Honeymoon

[1,020 words]

Chapter 56: Honeymoon

Of all the things that Nora could have expected to witness when she woke up in the middle of the night, this was the most unexpected. Pleasant but unexpected. With her glass of water clutched in her hand, she could only blink and let her gaze wander down the beautifully sculpted back of the man in front of her.

Even in the dim light, she could see the sweat glistening on it. The play of light and shadow accentuated his well-defined muscles that moved with fluidity as he shifted. She'd definitely felt those shoulders under her hands when he had kissed her but this was... The man did not just have a perfect face but also the perfect body with those broad shoulders and the inverted triangle physique.

The pants he wore also hung low on his hips and she could see the waistband of his underpants sneaking out. Nora could feel her mouth dry up like a desert as she felt the sudden need to feel his muscles under her hands. He was not overly muscled and his otherwise perfect back was marred by only a large scar that stretched diagonally around his back. But even then, the scar only highlighted the beauty of this man.

As she tried to remind herself to breathe, he turned his head and she forgot to even breathe. Their eyes met and she could only stare into those magnetic orbs. She needed to say something she reminded herself instead of gawking like a perv...

But she had no idea what to say. Should she compliment on his beautiful back? Apologize for seeing him like this? It was too late for her to pretend to be blind, wasn't it. Dam* it! She should have run back into her room the moment she came out. Now she was caught.

She watched as he turned away from her again and her shameless eyes immediately went back to admiring his physique. Her hands had also joined the 'shameless' bandwagon and were urging her to let them know what he would feel like.

Demetri said nothing, but he gave a faint, knowing smile and grabbed a bottle of water. As he unscrewed the cap and poured water into a glass, Nora's eyes couldn't help but wander, urging silently for the lowers to fall a bit more. Were his glutes as sculpted as this as well?

Demetri finished pouring the water and walked over to Nora, passing the glass into her unresisting hands and taking away the empty glass. "Here you go," he said, his voice calm and soothing.

"Thank you," N replied, taking the glass with slightly trembling hands. She took a sip of the water, trying to regain her composure as she belatedly questioned, "How did you know I was thirsty?"

It took a concentrated effort for Nora to look at his face and not stare at the front of his body. She feared it would be as perfect as his back and then she would lose the little ability to think that she had left with her.

Demetri raised an eyebrow and showed her the empty glass that he had just taken from her hands. Nora felt speechless at her own stupidity.

To give herself some time, she sipped the water. She cleared her throat, searching for something to say. Anything, to break the awkward silence that hung in the air.

"You work out?" she asked, her voice still slightly shaky.

Demetri shrugged casually, though his eyes remained fixed on hers. "Helps me clear my mind."

Nora couldn't help but wonder what troubled thoughts he needed to clear from his mind but hesitated to ask. It was a personal matter, and she didn't want to pry unnecessarily just to satisfy her curiosity.

As she sipped the water, trying to find the right words, Demetri interrupted her thoughts. "Nora, pack your bags. We are leaving in the morning."

Her eyes widened in surprise at his abrupt statement. "Pack my bags? Why?"

Demetri's expression grew serious as he explained, "We need to go on our long-overdue honeymoon."

Nora felt a sudden rush of shyness as she absorbed his words while her mind conjured a few X-rated images where she could touch... What was she thinking? She needed to get her mind out of the gutter!

As she shook her head to clear it, Demetri took it to mean that she was trying to refuse and explained, "Someone is investigating the truth of our marriage."

That simple statement helped clear her mind of the dirty thoughts as she realized the intention behind this sudden plan for a honeymoon.

"My lectures... and job..."

"Someone will be there at the cafe to sub for you, and you will receive the notes that you miss out on."

She wanted to ask for more details, but Demetri's demeanour made it clear that she wasn't going to get any answers. But how was she supposed to pack if she did not even know where they were going...

In a mix of understanding and apprehension, Nora nodded again.

As she turned to head back to her room to start packing, Demetri's voice stopped her in her tracks. "Nora, pack a few swimsuits."

Nora blinked in surprise; her curiosity piqued once more. Were they going to an island?

As she closed the door behind her, she felt a rush of excitement and punched the air happily. And as she quickly started to pack, she assured herself that she was thrilled because she was going to go on a vacation for the first time and the butterflies in her stomach had nothing to do with her travelling companion.

It was a long two hours later that she had finally finished packing her bags and yet she couldn't sit still. As the sun rose in the sky, she carefully opened the door to check if there were any more surprises outside. Thankfully the coast was clear, so she quickly placed her bags outside her door and rushed to the couch, sitting there as if not excited at all.

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Chapter 57: Airport

[1,008 words]

Chapter 57: Airport

Nora felt that her IQ had dropped considerably in the last few weeks. She'd never been a very bright bulb to begin with, but now it was going down further and further. Why did she assume that she would know their destination when they reached the airport? She knew Demetri was super-rich, so she should have remembered that he would not travel on a commercial airliner.

The early morning sun bathed the airport tarmac in a warm golden glow, and Nora was momentarily distracted by the sight of the gleaming aircraft with the Frost Long etched on its tail. The sleek, silver plane gleamed like the symbol of luxury and privilege that it was. She noticed a few people standing at the bottom and thought that they were the flight crew. She, who had never been on an airplane before, felt that this was an entirely different world.

As distracted as she was, she stumbled slightly, her heel catching on something, making her lose her footing. Her heart raced as she felt herself teetering off balance, but before she could fall, a strong hand shot out and gripped her arm, steadying her.

Demetri's quick reflexes prevented her from taking an embarrassing tumble, and she quickly smiled at him with a murmur of gratitude.

His hand let go of her and moved to her lower back as if it were the most natural thing in the world. For a brief, heart-pounding second, Nora was acutely aware of his touch through the thin fabric of her t-shirt. Her skin tingled where his fingers rested, and she couldn't help but tremble ever so slightly.

Acutely self-conscious, she looked at him from under her lashes, still finding it difficult to see him in his casual attire. Demetri had abandoned his usual impeccably tailored suits in favor of a simple, dark button-down shirt and neatly pressed trousers. Far from making him look ordinary, they seemed to amplify his charm. She blinked, trying to shake off the unbidden thoughts, but they lingered.

Demetri guided her up the remaining steps and onto the private jet while the flight crew offered welcoming smiles. Nora quickly took a seat, trying to make herself as small as possible. She was not used to this kind of fawning attention.

As they sat, an older man approached them. "Good evening, Sir. Good evening, ma'am. I am Rowllins, your host for today and the First Officer for this jet. We are ready to fly out. The flight plan has been logged and approved. And Passport control is on alert."

They were flying out of the country in a private jet? Why hadn't she realized that this might be the case, Nora questioned herself. However, she quickly consoled herself that she was being ridiculous. After all, she was not used to people whose lifestyle included private jets.

Demetri had already finished his conversation with the First officer, while she had been admiring the lush interiors of the aircraft and was now engrossed in some files as he sat opposite her. Taking this as her cue, Nora quickly pulled out her copy of the novel and applauded herself for keeping the novel in her carry-on, or else it would have been carted away with the rest of her luggage.

Eventually, the plane began its descent, and Nora peered out of the window, her heart skipping a beat as she caught her first glimpse below. The emerald green of the palm trees contrasted against the pristine white sands, and the turquoise waters of the sea stretched out to meet the horizon. It was a paradise that seemed almost too perfect to be real.

As they disembarked from the jet, Nora felt the warmth of the tropical air envelope her, and she took a deep breath, savoring the moment. She'd only read about such places in novels and not even dared to dream of going there.

Soon, they made their way to a waiting golf cart, which carried them towards Demetri's villa. On the way, Nora marveled at the colorful flowers, pointing at each one with excitement as she poked his arm repeatedly to grab his attention. With a sigh, Demetri held her hand to prevent her and simply told her the names of all the flowers that she pointed at.

Finally, they arrived at the villa. It was a magnificent structure with open-air living spaces that seamlessly blended with the natural beauty of the island. The villa was perched on the edge of a pristine beach, and the sound of waves crashing on the shore provided a soothing soundtrack.

Nora gasped as she stepped inside, her eyes widening in amazement. The interiors were elegantly decorated, with floor-to-ceiling windows that framed breathtaking views of the sea. If she had thought that the little garden at home was a piece of heaven, then this was heaven. Demetri Frost had an eye for choosing things that brought peace with nature.

Soon, Demetri showed her to a room on the upper floor and explained that the staff was not allowed there but they would have to pretend to be a couple in front of the villa's staff, some of whom might be on his grandfather's side. "Relax in the pool tonight. Tomorrow I will take you around the island."

As the man left, Nora could only throw herself on the bed and stare up at the ceiling in amazement. She had never imagined she would find herself in such a breathtaking place.

Since she'd already slept and dined on the flight here, she quickly unpacked and pulled on her swimsuit. She was not going to waste a single moment of this adventure. As she stepped out, she promised herself that once she was free of all the traps set by her mother and her marriage with Demetri was over, she would give herself a chance to explore places like this as well.

What she did not realize now was that with Demetri by her side, no one could bind her now or ever.

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Stepping out of the warm shower, Demetri wrapped a towel around his waist and made his way to the balcony. In truth, this was the first official vacation he had taken in almost a decade and already he could feel the urge to go back to work, to prevent himself from losing himself in the turbulent sea of his thoughts.

Clenching his hands, he gazed out into the dark night. However, before he could appreciate the scenery, he caught a glimpse of a lone figure walking towards the pool.

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And somehow, she'd wriggled her way into the small circle of people he felt the need to protect. He'd investigated the woman she called 'mother'.

That woman was not worthy of being allowed to raise skeletons! It was a wonder that Nora had survived with her innocence and happy personality intact.

Unable to stop himself and failing to recognize his own need to be close to her, Demetri walked out of his room. As he approached the pool, his bare feet making almost no sound on the cool tiles, he watched her lean back and look up at the peaceful night sky.

She was oblivious to his presence, lost in her own faraway thoughts. Her hair had been tied in a top knot and little tendrils of it escaped, framing her face softly. Walking forward, he pulled the long pin from her hair, causing it to fall freely and frame her face.

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Closing her eyes again, this time to stop them from roving over him and giving him the side eye, she leaned back to rest her head on her palms and worked on controlling her thoughts. What she failed to anticipate was that this position highlighted her own beautiful shape, causing someone else to have problems with his thoughts as well.

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Finally, after thinking things through, he spoke, "My grandfather is investigating the marriage."

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"I thought it was my mother who must be investigating. After all, she wants to break up the marriage so that she can get the inheritance. Why is your grandfather investigating? I thought you were going to tell him at your company's big event..."

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"Oohh. So that is why you entered into a contract marriage! To escape marrying the person that your grandfather chose for you? Dam*."

He looked at her surprised expression and raised an eyebrow in question. And she explained with a grin, "Well, actually I had a number of guesses why you would want to do that. I mean with your looks it was surprising that you did not have a girlfriend. Then I thought that maybe you..."

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Nora blinked at the hearty laughter and stared at the man who was looking at her with amusement. "So, did you change that theory yet or would you like proof that I can in fact... do it..."

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skimpy swimsuit. But really, it wasn't like I had some lying around at home, since you gave me such short notice. And who is going to know what I wore in the privacy of that villa of yours?"

"We are going to the beach as well. And believe me, there are going to be people spying on us. If you look like a nun..."

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"I'd bought those clothes for you. If you are uncomfortable, I can go and get the swimsuit as well. I just thought you would prefer to buy one yourself since mine might not be to your...choice."

Nora's eyes widened at the implication of what he said. Did he mean that he might choose something too skimpy for her? Shaking her head, she muttered to herself that it was safer to go inside and buy the things herself than leave it to the man.

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After that wonderful experience, Nora was careful before she pulled anything out of a rack. Finally, after browsing for a few minutes, she had gathered a few conservative bathing suits that could be considered right for a honeymoon but also were comfortable for her to wear.

As she moved towards the dressing room, her eyes met his and she raised the things in her hands, and then pointed towards the trial room. He nodded and she quickly turned to go but she had barely reached the door of the trial room when something else was thrown onto the pile in her hand. It was 'the string'! And in white colour.

Face turning red, Nora looked up at him in confusion and he leaned down to say, "There is someone watching. Model a few suits for me."

"But this..."

Nora urgently tried to gesture to the suit on the top of the pile, trying to think of a way to get this out, when Demetri leaned back and picked the bathing suit, passing it to the saleswoman who had been following her, "You can model this for me at the villa. We'll take this as well as the others she tries."

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Pulling out the most conservative suit that she had found, she quickly pulled it on and opened the door. However, before she could say a word, he spoke, "No."

And then the man walked inside, closing the door behind him! Eyes wide, she was about to question him incredulously when he covered her mouth with his hand.

"Sshh..."

Quietly, she watched as he sorted out the suits one by one in two different piles. Once done with his task, he pushed her against the mirrored wall and whispered in her ear, "The ones on the right, are suitable. Discard the ones on the left. Also, time to put on an act..."

With one hand, he pulled the scrunchie from her hair, and then proceeded to tousle her hair, leaving them a bit ruffled. Next, his mouth was on hers and she quickly kissed him back, winding her arms around his neck. The man was an excellent kisser, and she would be foolish to miss this chance.

Slowly, he brought the explosive kiss to a halt and lightly nibbled on her lips, leaving them swollen and red. As each of them tried to calm their breathing, Demetri pulled out a handkerchief from his suit and tied it around his eyes, "Change out of your suit, Nora."

Quickly, Nora tried to calm herself, changing into her dress while trying to be as quiet and quick as possible.

However, as soon as they were outside, Nora made a beeline towards the exit, not sure how she was going to face anyone who had seen her and Demetri exiting from the trial room.

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Sighing, Nora changed into her new 'clothing' and quickly rushed towards the waves, happily dancing and enjoying her freedom. All this time, she had become used to being happy by herself so she did not find it difficult or even odd that she could enjoy this lonely time. Finally, after running around and swimming all day, she threw herself onto the sun lounge and lay down to enjoy the sunset.

And that is how Demetri found her. As he walked down the steps of the villa, he stopped as he looked at the beautiful vision in front of him. Nora reclined on the comfortable sun lounge, her eyes fixed on the pages of the novel she held in her hands. Her hair spilt over her shoulders, and a mischievous grin danced upon her lips while her cheeks were slightly pink.

Demetri sighed. He'd planned to take a long shower and get back to work after the day he'd had but somehow his feet dragged him here. She'd often have such an expression on her face, when she was reading but this was the first time that he was sure she was blushing.

Curious, he walked forward and leaned down to see what it was that put such a look on her face. Incredulous, he read out the words aloud, "*It was totally off the scale! He simply yanked me against himself and swooped in for a kiss.*"

"The yank and the swoop kiss is on scale with the push against the wall and swoop kiss! But it cannot be off the scale!"

"I am telling you it is off the scale..."

Nora, who had frozen when she first heard his voice, so close to her and finally reacted by snapping the book shut.

"What are you doing?" Her eyes shifted from him to the book before her face turned as red as a tomato.

The truth was even though she had been reading the novel initially, after the two women in the novel had started rating the kiss, her own mind had wandered to the way Demetri kissed. While he had not yanked or pushed her against the wall that first time, his kiss could be rated off the scale as well. And then just as this thought had been going on in her head, the man had started reading that...

"They are rating kisses? Do women do that?" Demetri murmured as he straightened and walked over to the lounge next to hers.

Confused, Nora followed him with her eyes and questioned, "Do women do what?"

"Sit around the breakfast table, discussing their various sexual encounters," Demetri asked the question as easily as if he had been enquiring about the weather while Nora almost spewed the small mouthful of her drink that she had just sipped.

What was she supposed to say to something like that? Umm, Isabelle and her would usually just bring up her encounters in passing and Nora always felt that she was a bit incapable in that department because she never felt anything like that from Antonio's kisses. Anyway, she could not possibly tell Demetri the truth right? Taking the fifth and avoiding self-incrimination was the best option. Trying to be neutral, she shrugged and spoke, "Well I don't know, people do all sorts of things. Since the author has written it..."

Demetri shook his head in disbelief as he took the glass from her hand and sipped the drink casually. Before she could point out that drink was hers, it had already been finished and Nora could only sigh.

Silence settled between them for a while, broken only by the distant sound of the waves crashing against the shore. Nora shifted uncomfortably on her sun lounge, acutely aware of what had just happened. She'd just been caught red-handed reading something so explicit. She reminded herself that it was perfectly alright to read such things, she was already old enough, she felt the need to explain herself.

Clearing her throat, she finally spoke up. "I think I am going to take a stroll along the shore."

"You can bear to put down your novel at such an interesting turn? I mean they might give you some pointers about scoring points, like how to judge technique, passion, unexpected swoops, etc..."

Even though everything was said with a straight face, Nora knew that Demetri was teasing her. He was actually having a good laugh at her expense. Crossing her arms in front of her she frowned and snarked, "My gosh, husband! Do you need another drink? Your throat must be dried up by speaking so much!"

With that petty comeback, Nora marched away, with the sound of Demetri's laughter echoing in her ears.

As she walked along the shore, Nora recognized that the water had receded, leaving behind empty shells in the wet sand. Grinning, she bent down and picked up a pretty shell. It was so pretty. As she glimpsed another one a few feet further, she decided that she was going to collect these shells and maybe make something out of this for herself. They were so small and pretty.

Suddenly, Demetri glanced up from the lounge, and felt his heart jump into his throat! Why was she so near the edge? Standing up, he shouted for Nora to move away from the shore but either she did not hear him or chose to ignore him. Quickly, he started to run to her. But before he could reach her, he watched in horror as a large wave crashed over Nora, pulling her under its force.

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Chapter 58: A Swim

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Chapter 60: A Sweet Time

While the sun hung low in the sky, the atmosphere was also very peaceful. After the 'shopping' trip in the morning, Nora had been worrying herself about actually wearing any of those bathing suits. Especially the white one. But instead, Demetri had simply brought her out to the private beach, telling her that she could do what she wanted, and no one would disturb her and she could ring the villa for some snacks. And then the man had left.

Sighing, Nora changed into her new 'clothing' and quickly rushed towards the waves, happily dancing and enjoying her freedom. All this time, she had become used to being happy by herself so she did not find it difficult or even odd that she could enjoy this lonely time. Finally, after running around and swimming all day, she threw herself onto the sun lounge and lay down to enjoy the sunset.

And that is how Demetri found her. As he walked down the steps of the villa, he stopped as he looked at the beautiful vision in front of him. Nora reclined on the comfortable sun lounge, her eyes fixed on the pages of the novel she held in her hands. Her hair spilt over her shoulders, and a mischievous grin danced upon her lips while her cheeks were slightly pink.

Demetri sighed. He'd planned to take a long shower and get back to work after the day he'd had but somehow his feet dragged him here. She'd often have such an expression on her face, when she was reading but this was the first time that he was sure she was blushing.

Curious, he walked forward and leaned down to see what it was that put such a look on her face. Incredulous, he read out the words aloud, "*It was totally off the scale! He simply yanked me against himself and swooped in for a kiss.*"

"The yank and the swoop kiss is on scale with the push against the wall and swoop kiss! But it cannot be off the scale!"

"I am telling you it is off the scale..."

Nora, who had frozen when she first heard his voice, so close to her and finally reacted by snapping the book shut.

"What are you doing?" Her eyes shifted from him to the book before her face turned as red as a tomato.

The truth was even though she had been reading the novel initially, after the two women in the novel had started rating the kiss, her own mind had wandered to the way Demetri kissed. While he had not yanked or pushed her against the wall that first time, his kiss could be rated off the scale as well. And then just as this thought had been going on in her head, the man had started reading that...

"They are rating kisses? Do women do that?" Demetri murmured as he straightened and walked over to the lounge next to hers.

Confused, Nora followed him with her eyes and questioned, "Do women do what?"

"Sit around the breakfast table, discussing their various sexual encounters," Demetri asked the question as easily as if he had been enquiring about the weather while Nora almost spewed the small mouthful of her drink that she had just sipped.

What was she supposed to say to something like that? Umm, Isabelle and her would usually just bring up her encounters in passing and Nora always felt that she was a bit incapable in that department because she never felt anything like that from Antonio's kisses. Anyway, she could not possibly tell Demetri the truth right? Taking the fifth and avoiding self-incrimination was the best option. Trying to be neutral, she shrugged and spoke, "Well I don't know, people do all sorts of things. Since the author has written it..."

Demetri shook his head in disbelief as he took the glass from her hand and sipped the drink casually. Before she could point out that drink was hers, it had already been finished and Nora could only sigh.

Silence settled between them for a while, broken only by the distant sound of the waves crashing against the shore. Nora shifted uncomfortably on her sun lounge, acutely aware of what had just happened. She'd just been caught red-handed reading something so explicit. She reminded herself that it was perfectly alright to read such things, she was already old enough, she felt the need to explain herself.

Clearing her throat, she finally spoke up. "I think I am going to take a stroll along the shore."

"You can bear to put down your novel at such an interesting turn? I mean they might give you some pointers about scoring points,' like how to judge technique, passion, unexpected swoops, etc..."

Even though everything was said with a straight face, Nora knew that Demetri was teasing her. He was actually having a good laugh at her expense. Crossing her arms in front of her she frowned and snarked, "My gosh, husband! Do you need another drink? Your throat must be dried up by speaking so much!"

With that petty comeback, Nora marched away, with the sound of Demetri's laughter echoing in her ears.

As she walked along the shore, Nora recognized that the water had receded, leaving behind empty shells in the wet sand. Grinning, she bent down and picked up a pretty shell. It was so pretty. As she glimpsed another one a few feet further, she decided that she was going to collect these shells and maybe make something out of this for herself. They were so small and pretty.

Suddenly, Demetri glanced up from the lounge, and felt his heart jump into his throat! Why was she so near the edge? Standing up, he shouted for Nora to move away from the shore but either she did not hear him or chose to ignore him. Quickly, he started to run to her. But before he could reach her, he watched in horror as a large wave crashed over Nora, pulling her under its force.