

Benefits 521

Chapter 521: Return

"Sebastian Frost, are you feeling jealous?" Olivia teased, a playful glint in her eye as she observed Seb, who was cheerfully distributing the flowers she had received from James just the day before. Despite their pristine appearance, Seb insisted they were wilting and should be given away instead of being carried home. She couldn't resist poking fun at him, especially when he seemed so preoccupied with those.

Seb cast her a glance at that and finally when the flowers had been distributed among the last of the nursing staff, he looked up and gave her a tight lipped smile, "Lets go, Olivia! Our bags are already in the car. Lets go."

Olivia frowned. What was wrong with him now? She'd pulled the James card yesterday to shock him into accepting his feelings and with the way he'd been behaving yesterday, she'd thought that he would be back to his old self soon enough! It had been a roaring success, raising his possessive instincts. And yet, here he was, back to being this new sadly grumpy being that she did not like seeing. He'd been fine even until a few moments ago before she teased him.

He should have responded to her teasing with that smirk of his and said, "Jealous? As if? That guy has nothing on me since you are totally in love with me..."

Olivia frowned at his response, looking over carefully. Why was he being so hot and cold? The man could be a thermostat at this rate!

As she moved to get into a sitting position, he came to help her up. His hand slid around her lower back to support her, and she couldn't help but stare at his haggard face, "Seb? What is wrong?" Olivia felt a sudden urge of anger at the way he tried to keep looking away from her. As if he were some guilty thief. Either he man up and tell her about his divorce plans or he better get his sh*t in order and get back to the Sebby who totally doted on her and spoilt her. And she knew which one she wanted!

Seb turned his head to and gave her a look but then just as quickly glanced away, "Nothing's wrong. Lets go, Olivia."

"Not until you tell me what is wrong. I don't like this, Sebby." Olivia answered stubbornly.

Seb sighed and as she sat with her legs hanging on the side of the bed, he knelt down. With gentle hands he grabbed her ankle and slipped the sandal onto her foot, "I am jealous, Livi. I am so jealous right now that I don't know what to do with myself."

Her mind reeled at the sudden confession. Huh? What was this? Seb admitting to being jealous... She looked at the top of his bent head, as his fingers dexterously tied up the long laces of the sandals around her calf.

"What? You're really jealous of James?" Olivia's incredulity seeped into her words, her world almost upside down. If there was one thing the Frosts never lacked it was self confidence! What was happening? "Seriously, Sebby? Look at me. I'm swollen all over. I have this large stomach. Do you really think anyone would find me attractive? You have nothing to be jealous of. No one is going to be trying to woo me."

Seb looked up at that and shook his head fiercely, the intensity in her eyes shocking her again, "You are wrong! Anyone would kill to have you. You look like a Goddess. You are glowing. And you..."

Olivia placed her hand on his mouth and shook her head, "Okay okay! But you don't have to be jealous. I've got eyes only for you, Sebby. You know that."

"That is the problem, Olivia! You are blind and cannot recognise a good man when you see one. So, you are stuck with me."

Olivia giggled at that, and used her the toes of her other foot to caress his forearm. Catching her by the ankle, Seb quickly pushed the sandal onto her feet, moving to tie the long laces and Olivia sighed, "You call me a Goddess one minute and a blind fool the next. What do I do with you Sebby?"

Before Sebastian could answer her, she looked at his bent head intently and murmured, softly. "I know what to do with you though. I can only love you."

His head snapped up as if she'd been given an electric shock. As he let go of her legs, Olivia stood up and carefully started to walk towards the door. These days, she was even scared to walk faster, lest she get a scolding from him or the doctor.

Her answer, however, had kept Seb frozen on the floor, looking as if he was a knight swearing his fealty to someone.

Olivia paused at the door and turned back to look at him with a smile on her face. Good. He needed to be off balance for what was going to happen next.

"Sebby? Are you coming?"

That seemed to jolt him and he hurriedly stood up, turning around to face her, "What did you say?"

Olivia frowned and pretended to deliberately misunderstand him, "I said, are you coming?"

Seb shook his head and hurriedly walked to her, "No no. Before that."

"Before that? I said Sebby?"

"No. No..."

Olivia rolled her eyes at that and sighed, "Sebby. Didn't you say that we needed to go? Why are you standing there then? Come on."

Seb nodded and as Olivia walked out of the door, his arm came around her waist to support her. She cast him a quick glance with a soft smile and he was almost dazed. He had definitely not heard wrongly. She did say that she loved him. No no.. She said that she could only love him.

If that was the truth, should he be selfish and hold onto her? Maybe no one would come to stalk him and trouble them in the future. He'd take measures to protect her better... So, should he drop the divorce?

Chapter 522: Who Did That?

On the way back home, Seb was lost in his thoughts. He'd never been shy of being selfish in the past. Of putting himself first. He simply called it self love and self protection. Then why was he hesitating this time? Was it because of what had transpired between Emma and Olivia because of him that had caused

her to suffer so much or was it his own fear of Olivia looking at him the way she had in the past when she had rejected his confession. Look at him without love?

That was the shocking realisation he had yesterday, which had shaken him to the core. Was he fooling himself and being selfish again masking it as his love for her.. He was fearing that she might hate him for making her suffer so he was running away? It was a sobering thought to have about himself. He'd accused her of always running away and he'd been about to do the same...

As he glanced at her resting face, he felt his heart beat faster. He wanted to hold her hand. And keep it in his forever. Instead of fearing the future, he might as well make his confession and get too wooing her.

He felt a smile on his face when he thought of what she had said in the hospital. His ears had definitely not deceived him. No! She did say that she had to love him. So, he would. He needed to start making plans... Before he could think further, they'd reached home.

As they stepped into the house, however, Seb's eyes widened in astonishment. The entire living room was adorned with balloons and flowers, and a huge "Welcome Back" banner hung in bold letters. He glanced at Olivia, whose expression mirrored his.

"Wow," Olivia exclaimed, her voice filled with delight as she turned to Seb, wrapping her arms around him in a tight hug. "You didn't have to go all out like this, Seb. I mean, I appreciate the effort, but you really didn't need to. My gosh, Sebby! There's jealousy and then there is this! I didn't know you were so envious that you would over do it! But I love it."

Ignoring his stupefied expression, Olivia walked inside with a happy grin. Seb looked at the display and gulped. What was he supposed to do about this? Was it one of his brothers who had done this? He had not thought of such a surprise at all. Was he the most unromantic man to walk on earth? Now he would have to confess that he had not done this.. Would she feel even more disappointed in him?

Surreptitiously, he pulled out his phone. He needed to ask which one of his brothers lent a 'helping hand' to him. Before he could click the picture, however, Olivia let out a little delighted scream as a shower of flower petals happened over her. And then the lights were dimmed and a slow song came on...

Holy shi*! This was a proposal. He watched Olivia walk stop for a moment and brush off the flowers and turn to him with a soft smile. His heart would definitely jump out of his chest any moment now. One of these fools had planned an entire proposal or a love confession on his behalf! Were they crazy?

This had to be Ian. That control freak! Was he trying to take revenge on him? That Ian! He will hang him upside down and send him into a bat cave to go hang there! How dare he!

He stirred from his murderous thoughts when Olivia called his name, looking at him expectantly. He looked into her shining eyes and felt himself break out into a cold sweat. What was he going to do? What was he going to say? He had not even practiced saying the words in his heart out loud!! How was he supposed to be so spontaneous?

Before he could muster a single word, she enveloped him in a warm embrace, her arms wrapping around him, while her head settled against his chest.

He opened his mouth to confess that he had not done this when she leaned back to look up at him. In a voice that could melt the hardest of hearts, she raised her chin and spoke huskily, "Kiss me, Seb."

The world fell away in that moment. He really didn't care which of his brothers had done this. He was just glad to have this moment with her. Trembling, he leaned in, and gently pressed his lips against hers. The kiss soon deepened, and Seb pulled her closer. He would tell her today that he loved her. To heck with all his confusion!

As their lips parted, he stared into her twinkling eyes, mesmerized. She cupped his face and he jolted.

Olivia smiled. " I never thought you would look so cute with that confounded expression. Seastian Frost, prepare your heart."

Seb's heart stilled. Olivia had done all this. He could feel his eyes widen and his lips parted in shock. He even missed the click of the camera that captured his comical expression and could only look at Olivia.

"Sebastian Frost. I love you with all my heart. I have always loved you and I don't think I know how to stop. So, can you let me love you forever and forever?"

The grin on Seb's face almost blinded Olivia as he quickly caught her hand and kissed her hard. "Olivia Brown Frost! You can love me forever and forever only if... you let me love you forever and forever too!"

Olivia nodded, "I won't stop you."

"Good. That's good! So we have a deal. I am going to love you and you are going to love me..." Seb started

"Forever and forever." they finished together, laughing and sealing their promise with another kiss.

It was almost a long time later that Seb moved back and shook his head, "I can't believe that I received such a fancy confession... You're too romantic, Livia."

"Come on, let's have lunch. At least I asked Mari to prepare your favourite food."

Olivia grinned and as they walked to the beautifully lit table, she grinned, "Sorry. Today's the day for my surprises, Sebby. It's all your favourite food." Seb could only shake his head speechlessly, feeling too overwhelmed with emotions to say anything...

Chapter 523: Family

"Are you going to start eating or are you just going to stare at it?" Ian murmured close to Seb's ear, as he leaned over his shoulder, jolting him. Seb looked around to see his entire family standing there, their expressions... quite smug... How long had they been here?

Panic surged through him as he tried to remember if he had spotted any of their cars outside... But all he could do was draw a blank. He'd been so lost in thought...

"Ohhh! Look at you. Trying to guess when we came here. You were so lost in Olivia you didn't even see us approach!" Lucy teased as he took a seat on the table.

Ian on the other hand placed his chin on Seb's shoulder and murmured, "Don't worry. We have the perfect snaps for you and Olivia from just now. See..." Seb looked down at the picture on the phone screen that Ian showed and his face turned red, "Ian Frost! I am going to kill you! Instead of taking a sweet romantic picture of us, you clicked this!"

His reaction caused Olivia to peak curiously and she giggled. Ian had caught his stumped look on camera! And the angle! It was so flattering that it could be used for blackmailing Seb.

"Give me! Send that pic to me, Ian."

Ian grinned and tried to send it but his phone was snapped up by Seb who immediately deleted the picture from the gallery and then the back up folder of the phone, before smugly pushing the phone into Ian's hand, "Here! Now, you can forward the other pictures."

"Of course. You think those are flattering? Look at you, preening, even though you were proposed to as if you're the perfect princess."

Seb raised his chin and was about to snap back when Olivia interrupted, " Ian Frost! He is the perfect prince, okay? And that is why he received the proposal."

Ian rolled his eyes at Olivia, turning to her, " Uh huh! And now he is the damsel in distress.. I mean Knight in distress so you're defending him."

"Someone is jealous. Bella baby, be careful. Ian might want you to declare your love for him from the tower top!" Olivia murmured to Isabella who rolled her eyes. Cupping her hands in front of her mouth, she said, " Ian. I love you! I miss you! Come here!"

Pleased with the impromptu love declaration, Ian stopped his teasing of Seb and quickly raced around the table to Isabella, making puppy eyes as he said, " I love you too, my doll."

Seb rolled his eyes as he pulled a chair for Olivia to sit and as she sat, he couldn't help but lean down and press a small kiss to her ear as he whispered, " You're the best Livi."

As Gabe looked around the table, he felt a pang in his heart. Demetri and Nora were already eating but from the way Nora was fumbling, he knew that her other hand was probably being held by his brother, while Ian kept whispering and talking to Isabella. Olivia and Seb sat next to each other but they kept glancing at each other every few minutes. And while Lucy was alone as he dug into his own food, Gabe

could see the contentment in him. He, too, had long settled his problems with Evana. His brothers had their chosen soulmates well.

They were wonderful strong women who cherished their family and relationships while not letting petty emotions come in the way.

Meanwhile, Erasmi had found his son to cherish and become a family with. Caius was a wonderful kid and Ava Mercer was a good woman. While there was nothing between her and Erasmi, he knew that Erasmi had formed a little family of his own.

Never had he thought that he would be the only one left without a significant other or a family. What was wrong with his judgement? Why couldn't he have fallen for someone who would value him and his love.

As his thoughts started into a downward spiral, he could not help but sigh. He should get used to this feeling of loneliness. It was a good thing he was going away for the time being. At least seeing them all would not make him realise time and again, just what a fool he had been.

Suddenly, he felt a stare on him and he moved, startled. His eyes met Demetri's and he couldn't help but look down at his plate. Demetri was the one who held them all together. He'd noticed his melancholy mood.

"Gabe."

Hearing his name had him snap his head up as he looked at Demetri questioningly, while almost praying inside that Demetri would not question him about his mood.

Thankfully, he didn't. "You asked Nina to set up a foundation in Town B, before going there. You planning to take on pro bono cases and set up your practice?"

Gabe nodded, relieved to be talking about work. "Not really. I am more interested in setting up a shelter for those who might need it. I am not going to be practising law though I might pay a retainer in case someone needs help. But this is more like me wanting to give something back to the society. Since I am going to be there for a year anyway, I thought I would oversee the set up as well."

The topic of setting up a foundation for helping the needy and establishing the place, sparked a discussion around the table, effectively making sure that Gabe was not given anymore time to think about his own feelings of sadness. Meanwhile, Olivia could already feel the tiredness creep within her even as she tried to sit straight and hide it from everyone.

Before Seb could get rid of everyone thought, Olivia beckoned Lucien, "Lucy! Come on! Help me up." Seb tried to stand up, but Olivia nudged him back to the chair with a smile as she said, "You sit here."

Lucien quickly approached Olivia and helped her up while casting a panicked glance at his brothers who ignored him. Dam* it! He was in for an inquisition! That was the only reason Olivia would single him out.

The only other person who was slightly worried about Olivia's inquisition was Sebastian who tried to warn Lucy to keep his mouth shut but was quickly distracted by Nora who poked his arm and beckoned him close as she sent a warning of her own, "Seb Frost! Are you still planning to divorce her?"

Chapter 524: The End Or Not

"Seb Frost! Are you still planning to divorce her?"

Seb froze at the question and shot a questioning look at Demon. He didn't doubt that Demon had shared this and betrayed him but he had not expected this..

"Don't look at him. He is an innocent lamb in this."

So shocked was everyone at Nora's question about Seb planning to divorce Olivia that they even forgot to look at Nora in disbelief over her remark about Demetri.

"You were planning to divorce Olivia? When was this? No. That is not even the question. The real question is why? Did you drop your brain somewhere? Or you want to die of a broken heart?" Ian asked incredulously while Gabe looked at Seb with such disappointment that he almost squirmed in his seat.

Before he could explain himself, Nora answered their questions, "He's got the saint complex! Or the martyr one, I don't know! Seb here thinks that he is responsible for what Olivia has been through." Nora explained to the others angrily before turning back to Seb and continuing, "And while I understand that you can feel guilt because of the role you played in bringing Emma to Olivia but other than that you are

not responsible! That is the most ridiculous thing I've heard from you and I've heard some really nonsensical things!"

Seb shook his head and before he could be lectured more, defended himself, "That was just a few days of insanity. Of course I am not going to divorce her."

Nora stared at him while Ian shook his head, "That is good. I was wondering if we'd have to gather a search party to look for your lost senses."

Seeing the sincerity in his eyes, she finally sighed in relief and nodded, "Good thing. It was very brave and quite foolish of Olivia to take the risk of confessing to you when you wanted to divorce, but I dare not tell her that in her delicate condition. You... Seb Frost, you better cherish her and take care of her from now on and don't hurt her."

Seb nodded his head and was about to promise when he realized what Nora had said. Olivia had known about the divorce. How did she?

Nora shook her head and explained, "Now you're wondering who told her, when and why? Those things are not important. But if you must know, it was you who told her."

Seb stilled while the others frowned. How did he tell her if he didn't know he'd told her?

But Seb knew. He gulped, "She was awake?"

While Nora looked at him with pity, Seb was almost ready to rush to her to explain himself. But paused.

"Olivia! I am not going to talk."

"I didn't ask you anything, Lucy." Olivia rolled her eyes at him as she massaged her lower back, while climbing up the stairs.

"I know what you are going to ask me. And I am not going to say. Just know that everything is over and done with."

Olivia did not say anything and simply stared at Lucien. Of course she wanted to know what happened with Emma and Detective Davis. She had tried asking Seb but he had expertly side stepped the question and so had the other Frosties. The only person left was Lucien.

"Olivia. You do not need to know. I promise you."

"I want to know. Whether it is needed or not, I will decide."

"Why don't you torture that information out of Seb? Why me? Just because I am younger than you, you do this..." Lucy began pitifully...

Olivia lightly kicked Lucifer's ankle and rolled her eyes, "Don't try to pull that trick with me, kiddo. I am not going to pity you."

Lucifer chuckled and lightly kissed Olivia's forehead, "You really need to stop worrying. I know you are scared that either of them might return but that is not going to happen. Not when they are buried six feet under the ground."

Olivia stared in shock at Lucien who simply rolled his eyes. "He didn't do it? He was only questioning them and kind of threatening them. The two fought among themselves and ended up killing each other. Emma blames Rachel for not protecting her and Rachel blamed Emma for her foolishness and changing the plan at the last moment. They kind of... You don't want to know... Olivia."

Olivia breathed a sigh of relief, "So, Seb is not carrying any guilt towards them?"

Lucien rolled his eyes and sighed, "Olivia, even if he had done something against them, there is no way he would have felt any guilt. There is only one person he has feelings for."

Olivia blushed at that as Lucien stared at her pointedly. Lucien sighed and gave her a gentle hug, "And he is not going to be doing anything silly towards you as well. Your surprise today has totally healed him, I'm sure. Thats what you are worried about, aren't you?"

Olivia smiled and hugged Lucien back, reassured. She hoped he was right.

"Lucien Frose, you better let go of my wife, right now?"

Lucien rolled his eyes and instead of letting go, turned with Olivia still in his arms and stared at Seb, before hugging Olivia tightly, "What are you going to do Sebby? Olivia, you can't see this but he is practically green now. And I am quite loving looking at his face."

Olivia giggled and hit Lucien's back, "Stop that, Lucy! He's going to come after you, and you know you won't like that."

"Ha! Are you not going to save me? What kind of a sister are you?"

Olivia giggled as Lucien stepped back and she watched as he swaggered out of the room, trying to goad Seb into reacting.

Seb pretended to hit him playfully but the moment Lucien stepped out, the atmosphere seemed to change.

Their eyes met and for a moment everything seemed to come to a stand still. Before either could say anything, Sen fell to his knees.. with his head bowed.

Chapter 525: B Town

It was supposed to be a relaxing drive for a sunny day.. Something fun to look at and do while he drove towards the quiet little B-town. And yet, the weather seemed to be mocking him. He glanced at the GPS and grimaced. Despite the horrible weather, the GPS seemed insistent that he should take a short cut. And maybe drive into a ditch along the way.

Shaking his head, he drove slower than a turtle and watched as his estimated time of reaching the destination from two hours to four hours. Sigh. Was this some twisted hint from fate? That he shouldn't be going here?

He shook his head at his own whimsy. The weather was making him a bit fluffy in the head if he was thinking about things like this. Putting the music on full blast, he ignored the thunder outside and focused on driving. He would stubbornly leave this dark, raging storm behind and consider it as leaving the old dark Gabe behind as well. So that when he arrived in B-town, it would be a totally new him.

Everyone meant to see a new him when they almost twisted his hand to come here, so that is what he was going to be. There was no one here who would be careful about mentioning or rather not mentioning that name. No one who would harangue him to come outside for all sorts of outings so that he would not be a 'hermit'. Atleast this way he would lose the new moniker of 'Crab' that he'd earned behind.

And specially, he wouldn't have to suffer from all that dog food from his brothers and their women folk. So, no love in the air to torture him and remind him of Ara... No. He would not take that name! He refused to even think of her. Even though she seemed to always be in his mind. He would not. Definitely not.

Even as he said it himself, a long ago memory of her laughing as she jumped into the pool reared its head, dazing him. Just as his eyes would have glazed over, from her thoughts, a deafening crack split the air, followed by a blinding flash of lightning that illuminated the darkness outside. Instinctively, he slammed on the brakes, his heart pounding in his chest as the car skidded dangerously on the slick road.

Damn it!" he cursed, his knuckles turning white as he gripped the steering wheel. If this was not a reminder to not think of the past, then he didn't know what was. It was better to look for a rainbow at this moment in time that waste it on the past.

He should spend his time with his eyes and mind focused on the road, while also organizing his thoughts for the next day. He would officially be joining the office the day after tomorrow. So he would begin a search for an assistant tomorrow itself. He wondered if he would get someone as qualified as his previous assistant in this small town, but then shook his head. He didn't need someone that qualified. He was going to be here not as a director but as a simple manager.

Finally, when it was almost midnight, Gabe's car pulled into the restaurant. He looked around the place and could only sigh. Looking around here at the peaceful surroundings, no one would have believed him that there was a storm raging in these parts of the town, just a few minutes ago.

With a weary sigh, Gabe stepped out of the car and made his way to the reception area, where a lone figure sat slumped behind the desk.

The receptionist, an older man with tired eyes, straightened up as Gabe approached with a kind smile on his face. "Welcome to the Whispering Lady Resort. How can I help you?"

Gabe noted the weariness in the man's demeanor and felt a pang of sympathy as well as approval. Despite being tired, the man was a professional. Gabe made it a point to remember this man's name for recommendations and rewards in the future. Something like this was usually rewarded by the Frosts.

"I am Gabe Frost. I would like a key to the manager quarters."

The man's eyes widened in sheer panic and he quickly stammered an apology, "Mr Frost, I'm terribly sorry, sir. We weren't expecting you tonight. With the storm and everything. I'll ask the housekeeping to..."

Gabe waved off the man's apology with a small shake of his head. "No matter," he said. "I'll take one of the guest rooms for the night. I hope those are..."

The man nodded vigorously and quickly looked around for a key, "Of course sir. The rooms are well prepared."

Before Gabe could nod in approval, two hands suddenly covered his eyes from behind, and a hovial voice "Guess who?"

With a smirk on his face, Gabe swiftly caught the wrist of the hand that covered his eyes and, with a practiced defensive maneuver, pulled the man's arm behind his back, turning around as he did, making the man groan in discomfort. "Okay, okay, I give up. Don't go around breaking my hand!"

As Gabe let go, and questioned the man, "What are you doing here?"

The man rubbed his sore arm and sighed dramatically, "How could I let you abandon me? What if a pretty lady picked you up? And then later forced you to get rid of me? I can't take that risk."

Meanwhile, the wide-eyed receptionist slid the key across the counter and cleared his throat nervously. "Um, I'll take you and your guest to your room, Mr. Frost," he offered. Shaking his head, Gabe grabbed the key card and shoved it towards Jack, "It's alright. Jack can take me there now." With that, they started to walk away from the receptionist, not realizing that their conversation could still be heard, "I believe you've already explored this place, if you are here. Jack?"

"Of course I have. I am the perfect workwife..." Jack murmured, unaware that his statement was about to make someone's eyes pop out of his head as they walked away

Chapter 526: Gossip

"Uncle Norman. Who was that angel-like man?" The old man turned to see the young girl who worked as a housekeeper in the resort and sighed, "He is the new manager. His name is Gabe Frost."

"Frost? Isn't that the company that now owns this resort? He is one of the owners?"

The old man scoffed, "I don't think so. Do you think one of the high and mighty directors would come here? He's probably some poor cousin of those rich folks and they must have thrown him here to hide him."

"Hide him? He has the name of an angel and the looks of an angel. Why would they want to hide him?", the young woman commented playfully, making the older man laugh as he said, "You never know with these rich families, Autumn. And, I wonder what your fiance would have to say about you admiring another man, girl."

"What? Who is going to tell him? Not me definitely." Autumn made an innocent face as she looked at the old man who roared with laughter.

"Naughty Imp! Pierce going to have his hands full with you! But in this case, it's okay, even if you admire him. He plays for the other team."

Autumn widened her eyes at that and asked the old man, "Really? How do you know that?"

"I just know. I've seen so many things in my life that I can guess what is going on between two people. Also, the man who just accompanied him, he checked in here yesterday and was flirting with the barman yesterday."

Summer laughed at that and added wickedly, "It is such a sad day that such a good looking man would be batting for his own team. Such a loss to the women folk!"

Norman and Summer laughed at that before Jack shook his head, "Okay. I know you don't gossip with anyone else but remember don't say this to anyone else. It is not good for the manager to know. In this economy, it is very difficult to find a job as it is. And with you readying for marriage and motherhood..."

Summer gave a soft smile to the man and nodded, "I know. Don't worry, uncle Jack. I won't make such a foolish mistake. And I do have some good news to share!"

Uncle Norman smiled, "Of course I know what it is! You're going to meet that Pierce's parents tomorrow night, officially."

Autumn shook her head and sighed, "You seem to know everything! Yes, I am. They'd been a little angry about the adoption part but I think they've come around. I don't know for sure. Pierce seemed a bit distracted when he called me in the morning."

Norman shook his head, "At least the boy had the courage to take a stand. Otherwise, I always worried about you being married to a wimp."

Autumn rolled her eyes and shook her head, "See, Uncle Norman. You don't know everything."

"In this case, I am glad to be wrong."

Autumn grinned and nodded, "Me too, Uncle Norman! Now, I'll go back and clear out the rest of the rooms. In case, Mr Manager decides to conduct a test in the morning."

Norman nodded and watched the young woman skip away, sighing. She'd given up all her dreams and returned to this little sleepy town. He just hoped that she had someone better than Pierce to support her. But the girl had stars in her eyes for that boy. He just hoped that kid would grow up to be the hero she believed him to be.

In the room upstairs, Gabe threw down his bag onto the bed and stared at Jack, "Why are you here?"

"I am your Assistant, boss. Of course I should be here, to assist you." Jack replied seriously.

Gabe snorted, " How did you sell your soul for?"

Jack cocked his head and gave him an offended look, " Do you really trust me so little Boss? I would not sell myself for anything." As Gabe stared at the man, he gave a serious look with a nod and added, " I sold you."

Gabe sighed and shook his head. Of course, he should have known. They would definitely not let him come here alone and send someone to spy on him. He would have done the same with any of his brothers. But that they'd bribe his own assistant to come here and act as the spy, was just too cocky!

"What kind of information and at what frequency do they expect?"

"It's open to interpretation, Boss. I will quote, Mr Seb on this, "Call us if he starts to display Hermit crab-like qualities again." Unquote."

Gabe shook his head. The moniker had to follow him here. "And what does your husband think about this?"

Jack grinned, " He is extremely happy over the chance to have a sponsored honeymoon. He is in the middle of applying for a two month long leave from his job to come here and stay by my side, for the all expenses paid trip."

"You sold me out for a second honeymoon." Gabe commented and Jack laughed and nodded at that. "Of course. It is a worthy cause, isn't it? Though it sucks to be you."

"And you suck." Gabe muttered with a face to which Jack nodded proudly, "That I do. My husband can vouch for it."

Gabe shook his head as he made a face, "TMI, Jack. Get out of here."

Jack grinned and shrugged his shoulders, "Alright. You can rest for now. I've already prepared your schedule for the morning and mailed it to you. You can check and mail me any changes you need made."

"You're a workaholic, Jack. Get lost. I start working the day after tomorrow so don't show me your face before that."

"You're quite rude, Mr Frost." Jack said with mock affront while Gabe shooed him away, "And you're quite a pain in the a**! Good night, Jack. See you later."

Jack rolled his eyes and walked out of the room, with a smile on his face. It was good to have the Boss back.

Chapter 527: Boxing

The rhythmic thud of Gabe's boxing gloves meeting the punching bag reverberated through the gym, accompanied by the heavy panting of exertion. He was in a mood. And being in a mood meant that the punching bag would have to bear the brunt of it. As he landed another punch on the bag, making it shoot backwards, he sidestepped its retreat and grabbed the bottle of cold water on the side.

The gym was also well maintained. Other than running away with a year's worth of their profits, he found nothing that would show the manager in a bad light. Everything in the hotel seemed to be working like a well oiler machine. He was grateful for that but also apprehensive. Things that went your way in the beginning tended to go badly later.

Placing the bottle aside, he went back to hitting the punching bag. That was when he felt someone staring at him. With a frown, he looked around the gym but it was empty. Shaking his head, he called out, "Jack. What's with the ogling? Admiring the view."

His assistant stepped out from behind the door with a grin and leaned against the doorframe, "Oh please. Don't flatter yourself. You're not my type. My husband is much better looking than your lean self. And I like big muscles on my men."

"Hey! How can you hurt my pride like this? What if I get an inferiority complex? Who will pay for my therapy sessions?"

Jack snorted, "The day a Frost would have inferiority complex, the world will probably freeze over. You guys think too much of yourselves to feel inferior to anyone."

"I'll take that as a compliment, Jack. Thanks."

"See. It wasn't meant as a compliment. More like a complaint or even fact. But did you realize that? No. You take things as if they are your due."

"Oohh. Jack seems to be in a mood. You had a fight with your husband?"

"No. I didn't. I'm just... Gabe, you are the one in a mood. Do you not understand what you are doing to yourself? You've hardly slept any time and here you are again. And we may be boss and assistant, but you are more than that to me. Don't you know it?"

Gabe stopped punching the bag and sighed, turning around to look at Jack. The kid looked on the verge of crying. Grabbing the towel, he wiped the sweat off his body and grabbed a tank top from his bag pulling it on a single flick. Before he could say more, however, a loud crashing sound echoed over the place, causing both the men to turn their head to look at the person who caused the mayhem.

Autumn cursed her timing. Dam* it! She'd come to introduce herself to the new manager, hoping to put a good impression on him before she ended her shift. That would hopefully increase her chances of using her good education on something more than cleaning up things. Instead she has stumbled upon him boxing... shirtless. There was no other word for it. Mr. manager was hot... Movie star hot. Totally built like her favourite Jeon Jungkook...

Fearing being caught and guilty towards her fiance, she'd quickly slipped into the locker room, hoping to see him when he was done. There was still an hour for the shift to end. But then she'd fallen asleep. She'd woken up suddenly and realized that thirty minutes had passed since she'd come here. Thanking the fates that she had not been caught sleeping on the job, she quickly grabbed her cleaning cart and moved outside... only to stumble into a love confession... and now, both the men were looking at her.

Dam* it! She bowed her head and hurriedly apologized," I am sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you. I am deeply sorry for ruining this moment. I was about to finish my shift and..." She then turned to the man at the door and apologized again," I did not know you would be confessing your love! I am sorry."

Gabe couldn't help but grin at her assumption and apology while the sadness on Jack's face had turned into horror. Jack's husband was a possessive bas**** and if he knew that someone thought Jack had a thing for him... Sigh...Poor jack. It would be so fun to use this...

Suppressing his chuckle, he decided to alleviate the poor woman's tension. Walking to her, he glanced at her name tag and reassured her," Miss Autumn. There is no need to apologize. You didn't interrupt anything."

Autumn looked up at him then. In that moment, he couldn't help but be taken aback. The woman.. no the girl had eyes like Bambi the deer. Big and innocent. Her cheeks were red from embarrassment and the girl looked as if she'd walked out of a manga. What a little beauty. He felt a little tug at his heart when she looked almost ready to cry.

She lowered her head again and stared at him wide eyed," Thank you,Mr Manager, I mean... Mr Frost. I really didn't mean to intrude. I apologize again."

Such an earnest little thing. He chuckled finally andgently patted her shoulder, " Its alright Autumn. No need to apologize so much.. Now, why don't you go ahead and finish up your shift?"

Relieved she quickly hurried off, her cleaning cart rattling behind her as she disappeared into the locker rooms. Gabe watched her go for a moment, feeling something but before he could check out what it was, Jack finally found his voice," I am not confessing to him! I don't love him. I was just trying to tell him that he is my mentor and saviour so I worry for him."

Gabe laughed at that and teased Jack, " Its your fault for making her misunderstand. Who are you trying to convince now?"

Jack stared at the doorway where the girl had disappeared and accused, " Its all your fault, Gabe Frost! I need to...."

"Its yours! Who told you to be such a worry wart, Jack. Come on. Lets have some breakfast."

Chapter 528: Mister

Gabe dug into his food with gusto. The fresh air in this place and the morning exercise had made him ravenous. And the freshly baked rolls were too delicious while the pancakes could rival Ian's.

Beside him, Jack stared at Gabe and the quickly disappearing food and decided to keep his thoughts to himself. It had been a real long time since he'd seen the Boss eating so well. Maybe he should test the waters, " Hungry much boss? Are you really Gabe or Seb the one with the appetite of a growing teenager?"

Gabe chuckled and shook his head, " I am suddenly famished. At this moment, I could defeat Seb."

"Well, I'd cheerlead for you, Boss."

Gabe shook his head and reprimanded, " See, it is because you make statements like these that people are thinking you are in love with me. At this rate, I won't be able to find a girlfriend, Jack! Everyone is going to think I am taken."

Jack stared at Gabe in amusement and realized that the man had almost changed overnight. Was this the same man who would have punched him in the face if he had even mentioned the topic of getting a girlfriend. This was suspicious. But he couldn't point

Gabe suppressed his smirk as he took in his assistant's confused expression. Ha! They wanted to keep an eye on him by using Jack! This kid! He was the one who had mentored Jack since he was a dandy 20 year old, looking for a job. He knew just what to do to confuse this kid. He was so happy with this little success that when someone poked into his rib from the side, he almost jumped from his chair.

Gabe turned his head to see a little girl, no more than five years old, standing beside him with a determined expression on her face. What a cute little one. Even before she opened her mouth, Gabe was tempted to squeeze her little round cheeks and pull at her pigtails. He looked around and wondered where this little one had come from. Was she a guest here in the hotel? And where were her parents.

Before he could question her, "Excuse me, mister," the little girl piped up, her eyes fixed on the plate of pancakes in front of Gabe. "Can I have some of those pancakes too?"

Gabe's eyebrows shot up in surprise at the unexpected request, but he couldn't help but be charmed by the girl's boldness. "Well, hello there," he said with a chuckling protest. "These pancakes? But these are mine..."

The little girl pouted and gave him a cross look, that made her look even more cuter. " I saw the waiter bring out three plates. You've already had two. And now there are no more inside and you....you are a luton. And being a luton is bad!"

"A luton?" Gabe asked. "What does that mean?" He asked with a confused look on his face.

To this question, the little girl's look was even more cross and she said, " I don't know. I'll have to ask my sister. But don't try to confuse me. Give me those pancakes now."

With her hands on her hips, she tried to give him her most intimidating look. Gabe tried to suppress his laughter so hard that he had to take a sip of water. It would be wrong to laugh at the little girl.

"Alright alright. You can have the pancakes."

The girl gave him a smile so wide that he was almost blinded by it. "Thank you mister! I won't call you a luton now. You're the best."

However, just as the girl was about to take the plate, she frowned and sent him a look. He blinked. Why was he being attacked with that innocent look today. First it was that girl in the gym and now this little one.. It seemed all the girls in B-town had this kind of a look.

"What happened? Do you not want it anymore?"

The girl shook her head and frowned, " I... My mother told me I should not accept things from strangers. They might kidnap me.. Are you going to kidnap me mister?"

Gabe laughed this time and with a hand on his heart promised, " No. I promise that I will not kidnap you. But your mother is right, don't take anything from strangers."

The girl gave him another look with her watery eyes and nodded, " Then I guess, I won't..."

"But we have a way around that problem this time. Next time though you cannot use this solution. You have to promise me that."

The little girl perked up at the thought that she had a chance at eating the pancakes and looked at him eagerly, " Okay. I will not do it again. How can I get those pancakes?"

"I can tell you my name. And you can tell me yours. Then we will not be strangers..."

The girl's eyes lit up and she nodded, " That is a good idea! Tell me what is your name, Mister?"

"My name is Gabriel Frost. And you..."

"And what do you do? Are you a dog walker? Or maybe a Dog groomer?"

Gabe chuckled at that, " Do you like dogs?"

"Yes! I love them! They are the cutest! I want one but until it is decided where I can live, I cannot get one. So?"

"Sadly I am none of those. But I'll tell you what, if I ever have a chance, I'll remember to change my profession. Now, little miss, your pancakes are going to get cold. Tell me your name and..."

The little girl chuckled and picked up the plate, "Thank you, mister Gabriel! We cannot take things from strangers but mama did not say anything about giving things to strangers so its okay, if you don't know me name!"

For the first time, in his life, Gabe was amused and speechless at the same time. However, the amusement was short-lived because a few steps later, the little girl turned around and said shyly, "But I think you are a good one, Mister Gabriel. So, I'll tell you my name. I am Arabelle."

Chapter 529: Arabelle?

However, the amusement was short-lived because a few steps later, the little girl turned around and said shyly, "But I think you are a good one, Mister Gabriel. So, I'll tell you my name. I am Arabelle."

Gabe's complexion drained of color upon hearing the name, his heart sinking like a stone. Jack, who had been silently observing, nearly choked on his juice. He shot a glance at Gabe's pallid face and muttered under his breath. "Damn it! What cruel twist of fate is this?"

The little girl, noticing their reactions but not understanding them, puckered her lips and fixed her gaze on Gabe. "Aren't you going to say I have a pretty name? Everyone always says that."

Jack exchanged a quick glance with Gabe, then cleared his throat, attempting to diffuse the tension. "Well, Arabelle, it's a lovely name, no doubt about that. Now, why don't I take you back to where you cam from before those pancakes go bad? I am Jack by the way."

The little girl looked at him with a frown but nodded, "Hi Jack. I am Arabelle."

"Yes yes. You told me. Lets go now." Jack tried to usher the little girl away.

He'd almost succeeded when they heard Gabe's slightly scratchy voice, "Arabelle."

The little girl turned around and looked at him expectantly. He paused and gave her a smile, "Your name is as pretty as you, Arabelle."

The girl beamed at him for the compliment before waving at him and walking away. Gabe watched the little girl leave and smiled, a bittersweet taste in his mouth. It had been a long time since the name had brought a smile to his face.

Shaking his head to push away the memories, he looked at the table full of dishes and frowned. He wasn't hungry anymore. Soon, Jack returned to the table with a slightly worried look on his face.

"You okay?"

"Yes, my worried Lily. I am perfectly fine. Do you really think I would be bothered by a name?" Gabe replied ruefully, before standing up, "Now, you finish your breakfast and then we have a lot of work to do. I want to take a tour of the entire town and meanwhile you can set up a meeting with the entire staff for tomorrow. After that, you can come to the town and look for some space. I am not living out of the hotel for the next year."

Jack nodded and was already making notes on his phone when his head snapped up, "Next year? I thought this was only a few months."

Gabe gave a thin smile at that and crossed his arms in front of him, "You struck a deal with the demon? You think you sold me? Demon is not one to settle happily for one thing..."

Jack gulped and immediately realized his mistake as he thought back to the conversation. He had been cheated! Demetri Frost had never mentioned any specific period of time. In fact, he'd been careful to not reveal anything. He'd let him assume and made him think the entire thing was his own idea.

As he looked at the betrayed look on Jack's face, Gabriel could only grin, "Now you know how much more you have to learn in this world."

Jack cursed under his breath as he pushed away his empty plate, muttering under his breath about how well deserved Demetri Frost's moniker Demon was.

With a smirk Gabe returned to his room, whistling a happy tune. See, he was getting over Ara.. his past. Even that name had not ruined his mood. B- town was a good place to be.

Quickly, he showered and changed into a tank top, grabbed his phone and was ready to explore the town.

A few hours later, as Gabe strolled through the town, he couldn't help but admire the charming houses lining the streets. It looked so old world and undisturbed by the modern trappings. He eventually found himself at the doorstep of a local estate agent's office, where a friendly woman greeted him with a warm smile.

"Good morning, sir! My name is Bianca. How can I assist you today?" she asked, before continuing excitedly, "Are you new here? I hope you don't mind but I know everyone in this town, so I know you are not from here."

Gabe smiled. Well, it seemed, the small town nosiness and curiosity were not myths or exaggerated rumours but the truth. "Yes. I am the new manager in the big resort there. I am looking for a home."

Bianca's eyes lit up, "You're Gabriel Frost! I guessed correctly. You are as handsome as everyone is saying."

Gabe laughed at that, "There are already people discussing me?"

"Uh huh! A few of the people noticed your arrival last night. And your good looks left an impression on them."

Gabe smiled at that and brought the topic back to the one that he needed to focus on. "I am looking for a house with some character. Something small and homely. Do you have any listings that fit that description?"

Bianca's eyes lit up with enthusiasm. "Oh, we have plenty of homes like that around here. Could you please wait a moment here. I'll go get the files. We actually have a lot of homes around here. The younger people have all moved towards the cities so the houses are kind of abandoned so they might need a little work."

"Thats okay. Just show them to me. I'll sit here and wait."

Bianca nodded and quickly hurried into the back room, fanning herself on the inside." Woah. What a hottie!!"

Outside, as he walked around the place, a sudden collision knocked him off balance, and before he knew it, he found himself catching a young woman who had just raced inside. His arms instinctively wrapped around her waist and he looked into the most beautiful pair of eyes.. that he had seen just this morning. Even as her nails dug into his arms, he helped her straighten up, "Are you alright, Miss Autumn?"

Chapter 530: Conditions

A FEW HOURS AGO

As Autumn stepped into the quaint yard of the house, she felt her heart race. Nervously, she smoothed her dress, making sure it wasn't creased before taking another step forward. The yard reminded her of the many childhood memories with Dave but this time it was something different.

She walked inside with a nervous fluttering and raised a trembling hand to knock. Thankfully, Aunty Pearl did not make her wait and quickly opened the door," Welcome Autumn. Everyone's around the pool outside."

Autumn paused. "Everyone?"

"Pierce didn't tell you? He is so absent minded. All his aunts and cousins are here for the weekend."

Autumn nodded her head,"He didn't tell me. Is it... is it special ocassion?"

The older woman gave her a mysterious smile and said," Yes, it is. And you'll know it soon enough. Come on. Lets go and see everyone first."

As they reached the deck, Autumn felt even more out of place. Everyone was dressed for a pool party and here she was dressed in a conservative sundress. And she could feel every curious eye turn to her as she entered behind. Thankfully, she didn't have much time to be embarrassed as Pierce spotted her quickly and raced to her," There she is! The most beautiful girl in the world."

Autumn smiled as Pierce quickly pulled her into his arms and introduced everyone, "Autumn, these are my cousins! You won't remember them even if I introduce them since they are too many... Just count them with numbers."

"Boo! Pierce! At least introduce us properly!" As his cousins shouted at him, Pierce winked at her and leaned in close, "Ignore them for now. And come to my room later. I have a surprise for you."

Autumn nodded and quickly stepped away when she saw his parents approaching her.

A few minutes later, Autumn found herself in the kitchen, with only Mrs Pearl in the kitchen. As she helped the woman slice the vegetables, Autumn could feel a weird tension in the air. She didn't know why but she had a feeling that things were not going to be the same...

"Autumn?"

It took her a moment to realize that Aunty Pearl had been calling her name.. And from the irritated tone of it, she'd done it a few times, "Yes, Aunty? I'm sorry, I zoned out earlier."

"It's okay, Autumn. You've always been like this. I... I hope you won't mind what I am going to say. Just... your mother was a good friend of mine, Autumn and I've always approved of your relationship and Pierce's. I think the two of you are a great match."

Autumn smiled at that, feeling relieved. The way this conversation had started out, she'd almost prepared herself for a rejection.

"Thank you, aunty." Autumn replied with a grateful look, happy about the reassurance. That was one heartache less for her.

"Don't thank me yet, Autumn," Aunty Pearl said with a solemn expression, her words laden with meaning as she gave Autumn a look.

"I told you not to take offense so I'll be straightforward with you. Things have changed from what they were when your mother was alive. Your mother passed away six months ago and I wanted to give you time to settle before broaching the topic of going back to college for your future studies. But it seems you've dropped the idea and are planning to mother your younger half sister?"

Autumn tried to speak up, but the woman raised her hand, "I haven't finished. When I approved you of being his bride, you were on track to becoming a successful woman. You'd received the design scholarship for studying architecture and design. This would have made me overlook your poor circumstances. My husband and I had already discussed that."

Autumn's heart sank as Aunty Pearl's words sank in. But the woman paid no mind to her pale expression and continued, "I understand your desire to care for your sister, Autumn. But you have your own dreams and aspirations too. And I would have supported you had the girl's father not been alive or been unwilling to take care of her."

Autumn stiffened at the mention of her stepfather. Once again, the woman paid no mind to Autumn and continued, "But that is not the case. You are even dragging this matter to court to fight him for full custody. You are young and don't comprehend the burden that you are taking on. However, I need you to understand something. My Pierce is my pride and joy. I want nothing but the best for him, and I cannot stand by and watch him shoulder burdens that are not his to bear."

Autumn swallowed hard, feeling a lump form in her throat. She knew what Aunty Pearl was getting at, but the thought of what it meant for her and Pierce was almost too much to bear. "Aunty, Pierce has agreed. We love each other and..."

"I know you love each other! That is why Pierce has agreed. But do you think he will be able to love you when your sister is always around you to not give you some privacy? And then what about when you want your own kids?"

Autumn looked away at that. She... She'd expected that when her mother had passed away and her sister had been put into her care. But Pierce had reassured her that he would talk to his parents. Today, when he'd called her over, she'd thought that he'd convinced them.. But instead...

"I know this is a lot to take in," Aunty Pearl continued, her tone gentler now. "And I know the two of you have always loved each other. So, I won't stand in the way of your love." Autumn looked up in surprise at that. What did Aunty Pearl mean?

The woman nodded and continued, "Yes. You heard me right. I am going to let the two of you marry. But if you want to marry my son, there are conditions that must be met."