

Husband With Benefits

chapter 61-70

- Chapter 61: An Accident

Demetri reached the shoreline just in time to see her being swept away. Fear gripped him as he frantically scanned the churning waters, desperately searching for any sign of her. Dam* it, he should have warned her against the evening currents that were known to take away even the best of swimmers!

Panic coursed through him, "Nora!" he shouted, the urgency in his voice unmistakable.

Nora!" he called out again, this time plunging into the waters himself, fighting against the strong current. Every second felt like an eternity as he searched for her, his heart heavy with dread. The sun had already set and as darkness made it increasingly difficult to see, his heart sank as hope started to slip away.

Just as he was about to venture deeper into the water, he glimpsed a flash of peach in the distance.

With renewed determination, he pushed through the waves, his arms and legs aching from the effort. And then, as he drew closer, he saw her. Nora, battered and disoriented, trying to stay afloat.

Demetri reached her just in time, pulling her into his arms with a relieved sigh. Nora clung to him, her eyes wide with fear. That was the last thing he saw in her eyes before she lost consciousness.

Using the last bit of his strength, he swam to the shore and quickly lay her down on the sand, pumping her stomach to get rid of the ocean water she must have ingested. Once she'd sputtered out the water and he'd checked her breathing, he finally raced towards the loungers, grabbing his phone and making the emergency call.

It was a little while later, that the old doctor exited the room quietly, only to be stopped by Demetri. Gulping at the dangerous expression on the man's face, he could only shiver in fear as he spoke, "Mr Frost. Mrs Frost is stable now. Your wife is fortunate that you pulled her out in time. She has not ingested much salty water. She fainted due to shock and fear. She simply needs to stay hydrated and rest well these few days. Also, you need to be on the look out for a fever. Her temperature might spike a bit and she may suffer from cold chills during the night but it should be fine in a few hours. You need to help her regulate her body temperature as her body fights the shock. If the fever persists until the morning you might have to bring her to the hospital for a thorough check up."

Demetri nodded his thanks before gesturing for the man to leave, which the doctor did promptly and happily. How had such an ice block had managed to woo that sweet young beauty was beyond the doctor's imagination. Guess the youngsters these days were too blinded by beauty to notice someone's personality. He'd have to go home and remind his teenage granddaughter to remember to fall for a man's personality and not for his looks.

If Demetri had known what the doctor was thinking, he would not have cared. After all, he was solely focused on the young girl who was now sleeping peacefully after taking a few years off his life.

Demetri sat by Nora's bedside, his worry gradually giving way to relief. He'd only just promised to always protect this girl and already that promise had been about to be broken. Well, he would not let her go so easily.

As the doctor had predicted, Nora's fever spiked in the middle of the night. As he touched her burning forehead, Demetri quickly used the cold compress to help her fight the fever, however not long after, she broke out into chills causing him to worry.

He gently reached out to place the cold compress on her forehead, but she swatted at his hand, her teeth chattering from the cold. Her voice trembled as she protested, "Too cold...". However, the next moment, she'd caught his wrist and taken it to her cheek, rubbing her face against it, "Mmm warm" as a sigh of relief escaped her dried up lips.

Demetri did not hesitate as he finally found a solution. He simply slid into the bed with Nora and pulled her into his arms.

She'd curled into a ball, to protect herself from feeling the cold. However now that she had warmth, she, still shivering, snuggled against him, seeking the comforting heat of his body. She nestled her head against his chest, her hands clutching at the fabric of his shirt as she tried to absorb every ounce of warmth he offered. Her cold feet found their way between his calves, seeking the warmth they craved.

He stroked her hair soothingly, his fingers gently tracing patterns along her back. At this moment, no one would think that this man was the CEO of Frost Industries. The man who was known as Demon and heartless.

With each passing moment, Demetri kept his protective hold on Nora, offering her the warmth she needed to battle the fever and chills.

Demetri's heart raced with worry as he continued to hold Nora close, their bodies entwined to share warmth. The room was shrouded in darkness, save for the faint glow of a bedside lamp, casting soft shadows that danced across the walls. The rhythmic sound of Nora's shivers gradually lessened as she absorbed the warmth emanating from him.

Nora, still fragile and shivering, found solace in the protective cocoon of Demetri's arms. She nestled deeper into his chest, her breaths steadying as the chill slowly ebbed away. Her fingers, once trembling, relaxed their grip on his shirt, and her body began to relax as if reassured by his presence.

Demetri continued to stroke her hair with a tenderness that surprised even himself. The man known as Demon and heartless in the corporate world had transformed into a gentle and caring protector. He held Nora as if she were the most precious treasure, his heart filled with a profound sense of relief that she was safe in his embrace.

As the night wore on, Demetri kept his watchful eye on Nora, ensuring that she remained warm and comfortable. The cold chills gradually subsided, replaced by a sense of tranquility. Nora's fever, once a concern, seemed to relent under the care of her husband, the fluctuations in her temperature becoming less severe.

In the quiet of the night, Demetri reflected on the unexpected turn of events. He had promised to protect Nora, and this evening had put that promise to the test. It was a reminder that life could change in an instant, and he was determined to be there for her, come what may.

As the first rays of dawn painted the room with a soft, golden hue, Nora stirred in her sleep. Her shivers had finally ceased, and she looked more peaceful, nestled in Demetri's arms while Demetri too had fallen asleep sometime during the night.

As she woke up, Nora remembered the events from last evening and shuddered. The arms surrounding her patted her soothingly and Nora looked at Demetri carefully. Her husband was a real hero.

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Chapter 62: Unwanted

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Chapter 62: Unwanted

"Are you not going to even look at me?" Demetri leaned forward and questioned with a coaxing smile. Sitting in the dimly lit room, this man was much different from the CEO

Demon Frost. His brow furrowed at the silent treatment, and he shook his head as he complained, "You. Are. A. Traitor. That is what you are."

His accusation was met with silence again and he once again leaned back in his chair, "Ahh, silence is acceptance, eh? You finally accept that you have betrayed me?"

"Fine. Keep ignoring me. It's not like I enjoy looking at you. I do have better views to see..."

As Demetri carried on a one-sided conversation with the person on the other side of the screen, the door to his study swung open, and in walked Nora as she spoke with relief, "Thank heavens, you are here. I'd gotten lost in this monstrous place..."

She trailed off when she noticed Demetri's horrified expression and then the icy glare that he'd sent her way. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to..."

His jaw clenched and he hurriedly slammed the laptop shut, cutting off the video call abruptly.

Nora, taken aback by the sudden hostility in the room, stammered, "I-I'm sorry, I didn't mean to intrude. I must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. I forgot the way to my room..."

Demetri's voice was like a blade of ice as he replied, his anger simmering just beneath the surface. "You should have knocked. Or had you forgotten how to do that also?"

Nora's cheeks flushed with embarrassment, and she struggled to find the right words, "I...I heard your voice and was relieved..."

Demetri's eyes bore into Nora, his impatience clear. "Just leave. I don't have time for this. And next time, don't wander off if you do not want to get lost!"

Nora felt a surge of anger at Demetri's rudeness, but she managed to keep her voice steady as she retorted, "Fine, I'll go. But you could have been a bit more civil about it."

Demetri's jaw clenched even tighter, and he turned away from her, dismissing her with a curt wave of his hand. Nora stormed out of the room, the door closing behind her with a soft click. Even though he had not said much, Nora felt as if he had scolded her a thousand times.

As she walked away, her initial anger gave way to a sense of hurt and confusion. She'd only entered his room by mistake. Did he have to overreact so much?

Nora rubbed her arms to ward off the chill that she felt from the encounter and walked down the corridor, hoping to find her room. When she'd left the villa in the morning, she'd had no idea that she would get lost when she returned. They had been here for

three days already of which she had spent two days in bed, 'recuperating'! Never in her life had she thought that she would get into a reading slump! She wanted to go out and explore this place not stare at the ceiling.

And finally, she had been able to go out, only to return to the villa from the entrance that was unknown to her. And that is how, she ended up getting lost! 'You should have explored this mausoleum first before going to explore the island'.

Finally, after walking down a few winding turns of the villa, she spied a partially ajar door. She'd found her room!

Going inside, she threw herself onto the bed and let out a sigh of frustration. This single encounter reminded her of her first meeting with Demetri. Over these past weeks, she had forgotten how intimidating she would find him. She'd forgotten that this man had asked her that she should address him as Demon. She couldn't help but replay the scene of their encounter over and over again.

As she lay there, staring up at the ceiling, Nora's anger slowly began to ebb away, replaced by a sense of unease. Demetri had been on a video call with someone, and he had looked genuinely horrified when she walked in. And he had been sweet talking to someone, she realized. His manner of speaking was what had attracted her attention in the first place when she had barged into his room.

Dam* it. The man must have been talking to his girlfriend and would naturally not have appreciated her barging in. She felt a moment of discomfort as she thought of this but then frowned. She'd agreed to this in the contract then why did she feel like this now? As if she had been betrayed?

The answer that she received from herself was not something that made her happy. When she'd agreed to allow physical intimacy with consent, she had already assumed that they would become lovers over time. And her fascination with his kisses had not helped this line of thought.

She did not delude herself into thinking that she was in love with Demetri Frost. But she was definitely in lust with the man and that was totally unexpected.

Nora sighed heavily, trying to clear her thoughts and focus on the situation at hand. She knew she had to be rational about this, even though her thoughts were running wild. Beginning of the relationship, she'd believed that the man only tolerated her out of kindness, but then she had started seeing him as her friend. Her only friend after Isabella. And today, he'd made her feel so unwanted...

Nora knew what she wanted to do. Demetri was an experienced man and their chemistry was off the charts. At least for her. If he was her first lover, then she would be able to feel all those things that the novels described. But he had made no move to deepen their physical intimacy. If Demetri did try to pursue something more than their

present arrangement, she would have to make it clear that the clause they had agreed upon – the "right to have an affair but with discretion" would be invalid.

As Nora realized where her thoughts had wandered off to, she shook her head to clear it! She reminded herself that she was furious at him at this moment! He had no right to scold her specially when she was trying to explain herself and apologize. And she would not 'intrude' his personal space, until he apologized!

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"Pack your bags," he said curtly, his voice devoid of any emotion. "We're leaving."

Nora had hoped for an apology, for some sign of regret in his eyes for the way he had treated her earlier in the evening. But instead, his words sent a shockwave through her.

Whenever they had shared a meal, silence had reigned but it had never felt this stifling. She could not fathom that this man would be so petty and hold something so silly against her. Before she could try to clear the matter again, he placed down his cutlery and left the table leaving her astounded.

Without a word she watched him walk away and stubbornly finished the rest of her meal. He was the one who had brought her here, with no regard for her opinion and now that he was angry, he wanted to leave. Well, she would not object but she would not also dance to his tune! She was going to enjoy this meal and then she would pack her bag.

However, soon, the food that she had been bent on enjoying, seemed tasteless and her eyes brimmed with unshed tears. Standing up, she cleared the table with a huff, dumping the food into the recycle bin and washing the dishes before she marched to her room. She wanted to apologize to him suddenly, try to clear their misunderstanding so that he would not treat her with such indifference.

As she moved to do just that, she was reminded of all the times something like this had occurred with her mother. She would do things for Lara Anderson, hoping that the woman would be happy with her. And she would even talk to her nicely sometimes but then she would be back to giving her snide remarks again, treating her with indifference, leaving her feeling lonely and confused.

Just what she was feeling right now. Unknown to her, tears started to flow and she had to breathe deeply through her blocked chest... No. They were in a different situation now. Lara Anderson had been her mother, someone who was important to her.

Meanwhile, Demetri Frost was simply a contract partner who was in her life during this transitory period for three years. His opinion of her made no difference to her. All that mattered was that he treat her with respect as long as they were a part of this charade.

Silently, she began packing her bags, folding her clothes and placing them in the suitcase with a heavy heart. She'd become complacent. She would have to solidify her defenses and lower her expectations from those around her.

Once her bags were packed, Nora followed Demetri to the private jet. The atmosphere inside the plane was tense, the silence between them suffocating. Nora couldn't bring herself to speak, and Demetri showed no inclination to break the ice either.

The entire return flight from the island was a contradiction to what she had been feeling when going there. She'd marvelled at everything and enjoyed every moment. And now, she saw nothing, lost in her own thoughts.

When the plane landed, Demetri stood up without a word, his body language distant and unyielding. As they stepped off the plane, Demetri's voice broke through her thoughts as he instructed, "A driver is waiting to take you to the house."

She watched him get into a different car and leave without bothering to even look back at her. Disheartened, Nora simply sighed and sat in a different car, letting the car take her to her destination. She simply needed to sleep off this mood and everything would be alright.

Demetri drove towards his destination with worry gnawing in his heart. Even though he had returned after a long flight, he drove quickly, pushing the pedal and accelerating the car without his usual measured finesse. He weaved through traffic with an impatience he had never displayed before.

He had been waiting for this call for years. Over the years, he had visited regularly, hoping for a miracle, for a sign that there was still some hope, but there had been nothing.

Memories of happier times flooded his thoughts, memories of laughter and shared moments, now frozen in the past. He clenched the steering wheel, his knuckles turning white, as he pushed the pedal harder, urging the car to go faster. Finally, today, there had been a response. But the doctors spoke to him cautiously, unsure if this response was a positive sign or a negative one. They dared not give him any hope or false promises.

Subconsciously, he knew that the change that had happened might be a result of what had transpired in his study tomorrow. It was what he had feared when he saw Nora first enter through the door.

Finally, he arrived at the remote rehabilitation facility. It was situated far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, nestled amidst rolling hills and lush greenery. The facility had been chosen for its serene and tranquil surroundings, providing a peaceful environment for the residents, even if they were unable to appreciate it.

As Demetri entered the facility, he was greeted by the hushed tones of nurses and the doctor who hurriedly walked with him to the room.

"Mr. Frost. It happened too suddenly. We've worked hard to keep the blood pressure stable all these years but I do not know what happened to suddenly trigger this attack. Luckily, our nurse was present and quickly noted the change or it could have caused even more damage to the brain."

"Did you inform my grandfather?", Demetri asked icily.

They had reached the door when Demetri asked the question and the doctor looked away, hesitating to answer.

Pausing with his hand on the door jamb, Demetri turned to face the doctor, "What are you hiding?"

The doctor looked away, gulped and answered softly, "Sir, Mr. Elijah Frost has the medical power of attorney, as you know. However, last month, he filled up a Do Not Resuscitate form for this patient..."

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The tension in the air was palpable. On a gloomy Monday afternoon, Frost Industries' office building stood in a state of quiet turmoil.

In the open-plan workspace, fingers tapped on keyboards with trepidation, and hushed conversations crackled like static. "Did you hear about the Demon?" whispered one employee to another, their eyes darting around as though the office held the secrets of the universe. "He's been here since who knows when. No one knows why, but he's not pleased about something."

Another employee, furtively sipping from a Styrofoam cup, ventured, "I heard he's even moved up the deadline for the quarterly reports in all departments. And there have been surprise inspections. He's expecting everything to be flawless, with no room for mistakes."

Yet another person chimed in, "I heard that the boss might be in a new relationship. Could he have had a falling out with the lady boss?" The rumor mill continued to churn as theories and speculations filled the air. Some said it was a personal issue, while others claimed it was a major deal hanging in the balance.

The tension in the office had reached a fever pitch, and every employee was on edge. Demetri had yet to emerge from his sanctum, where he had sequestered himself, but the atmosphere he had created had permeated every corner of the building.

As the clock finally struck lunchtime, employees began to see a glimmer of hope. A beautiful one at that. An elegant woman, dressed in a beautiful wrap-around dress, walked in, a lunch box in hand, "Excuse me," she said to the receptionist, "I'm here to see CEO Frost."

The receptionist, taken aback by the unexpected visitor, hesitated for a moment. Seeing this, the woman smiled and added, "I am his lady. I came here to surprise him. He won't be angry."

The receptionist nodded quickly before picking up the phone to inform Demetri's assistant. With the rumors rampant that the CEO was in a bad mood, if she dared to stop the Lady Boss for too long, she might lose her job. She spoke softly into the receiver, her eyes occasionally flicking towards the beautiful but cold lady. She matched their CEO quite well.

Assistant Ma frowned when he heard what the receptionist had to say. For a moment, he was tempted to tell the woman to call security to throw her whoever the fake person was out of the lobby. After all, their boss was still single. However, he paused for a moment before doing that. Their boss had definitely been seeing someone recently. So maybe it was their future boss lady...

And if a fight with the future boss lady was the reason for what they were experiencing today, then he would risk his life to ask the boss. Sighing and saying a quick word of prayer, he knocked on the door. "CEO, your wife is here to see you."

The news of his wife's arrival stirred a mix of emotions within him, though the predominant one was annoyance. He had not expected her to show up at the office, especially not today when he was already in a foul mood. He thought back to the sour note they had parted on and sighed.

He nodded begrudgingly and muttered, "Send her up." As he placed aside the files in his hand that he had been scrutinizing, Assistant Ma, quickly shut the door and relayed the CEO's message before taking his place at his table. After all, he had not expected such a day to come.

As the doors to the elevator opened, Assistant Ma, Secretary Nina and another few junior assistants were all pretending to be engrossed in their work, while surreptitiously

glancing in the direction of the elevators. They'd already received the news of the arrival of the Lady boss. And that is why when the beauty exited the elevators, all others were enamored while Assistant Ma and Nina had their hearts in their throats.

Ma and Nina exchanged a horrified glance, each trying to tell the other to think of a way to stop this from happening today of all days.

If there was one person that they knew their boss disdained, then it was this woman.

For the greater good of the people working in the office, Assistant Ma sacrificed himself and stepped into Miss Arabelle's path. "Miss Arabelle, welcome. Please take a seat and I will inform the boss..."

Arabelle glared at Assistant Ma for stepping into her way while the juniors looked on in confusion about their senior's sudden death wish.

Before Arabelle could say something, Demetri's voice thundered, "Who allowed her in here? You people can't even handle a simple task? Do you believe every lie that comes your way?"

The statement was followed by a silence so loud that time seemed to stand still. The receptionist, who had followed the woman into the office, was horrified by the turn of events and felt her life flash in front of her.

Arabelle felt her cheeks flushed with embarrassment and she stammered, "I-I'm here to see..." She wanted to say that she was here to see him. She had been confident that he would not humiliate her publicly but now, looking at his face, she suddenly felt scared for the first time in her life.

As her face would have crumpled from shame and the situation threatened to go out of control, the door of the emergency stairwell swung open and Gabriel walked in. He'd already had a rough idea of the situation when he heard the gossip and rushed up to do damage control! Dam* it!

Gabe stepped between his brother who looked ready to commit murder and Arabelle who stood there speechlessly. "There is a mistake, Demon! She is here to see me and not you. Arabelle and I had a lunch date."

Arabelle quickly nodded and her eyes widened with relief and gratitude. "Yes," she affirmed, her voice trembling slightly. "I'm here to see Gabe, not you. I'm so sorry for the confusion."

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Nora trudged towards her class with listless steps, the weight of the heated argument with Demetri still clinging to her like a stubborn shadow. No matter how much she tried to tell herself that what Demetri did made no difference to her, however, she could not help but feel. And it wasn't as if she only felt angry over his behaviour towards her. Unexpectedly she was worried for him.

The man was big on communication. It was an irony about how he rarely felt the need to speak, but he made it a point to inform her about him not returning to their shared house, making it clear that he expected similarly from her. However, since their return from country B, she had no idea where Demetri Frost had disappeared to.

As Nora approached her classroom, she noticed someone approaching from her peripheral vision. Her heart sank as she recognized the familiar face. She had no patience or energy to deal with Sara today!

Sara reached out, attempting to grab Nora's arm, and Nora instinctively pulled away. "Not now, Sara," she muttered, her voice carrying the weight of her frustration.

But Sara wasn't one to back down easily. With determination in her eyes, she steered Nora towards the ladies' washroom, ignoring her protests. Once inside, she shut the door behind them, leaving Nora feeling trapped and uncomfortable. As Nora tried to think of an escape plan, Sara had already blocked her way.

Frowning, Nora crossed her arms and leaned against the sink. "What do you want Sara? I'm not in the mood for your drama. Please leave me alone. How many times do I have to tell you that?"

Sara hushed her with an urgent expression, her voice dropping to a whisper. "Nora, I need to know if you're okay. How have you been?"

Nora eyed her suspiciously. "Why do you care? You've never shown any interest in my well-being before. If anything, you would be celebrating if I was hurt."

Sara took a step closer, her eyes filled with a strange mix of concern and unease. "Listen, I saw something strange when you were absent. Someone was lurking around your desk, trying to leave a note. They were wearing a hoodie, and when I called out, they ran away. I thought it was strange but did not worry too much. But the next day, I saw your desk. It was a mess, with vile words graffitied all over it. The university replaced your desk and put up a warning that there was no need for further discussion about this and that they would investigate it themselves and inform you."

Nora felt a chill down her spine, reminded of the feeling of anxiety she had been feeling previously. But hadn't it been her mother who had been stalking her? She looked at Sara who was looking at her with concerned eyes and felt skeptical. It was possible that

this was some new ploy from her mother. Narrowing her eyes, she questioned, "Why would you care about what happens to me?"

Sara sighed and spoke, "I don't care if you trust me or not. I just thought that it was messed up and you should know. The university will probably try to suppress this as a small matter, but I am not too sure it is so small."

Nora nodded slowly, wondering if she had indeed been mistaken. She was reminded of the time in the police room when her mother had insisted that she had not been stalking her. She's assumed Lara Anderson was scared that she would be criminally charged and hence had been denying it. But now, she considered the possibility that she had simply assumed her mother was the culprit because it was more convenient.

But as she made her way to the classroom, Nora was still doubtful. It could still be her mother's plan to rattle her. She had seen how anxious she was that night and wanted to torture her some more.

As Nora entered the classroom, she felt the other students throwing strange looks her way and thought that whether Sara was an accomplice with her mother or not, something had indeed happened when she had been absent from the university.

All her worries relating to Demetri disappeared as the previous anxiety took its place.

As the day came to an end and she walked towards the cafe, she felt distracted by Sara's words, and suddenly that sense of being watched returned, stronger than ever. It felt like a pair of unseen eyes bore into her, dissecting her every move. She shivered, her skin prickling with discomfort.

Was it really her mother, or had she been wrong all along? After that night, she had asked the fates why her mother did what she did. But today, as she felt doubtful that it had been her mother's doing, she was tempted to pray that she had been right about her mother. The fear of the known was better than the fear of the unknown.

Finally, the bustle of the cafe provided her with some respite from her relentless thoughts.

However, her relief was short-lived. As she went about clearing tables, her hand brushed against something tucked beneath a plate. Her heart skipped a beat as she pulled out a folded note. Quickly she tried to look around, frowning as she tried to remember who had been sitting here. However, her memory seemed to have turned blank and she had no idea who had been sitting here. She would need to check this with Maya.

Unfolding the note with trembling hands, her eyes scanned the chilling message: "Did you miss me?"

Nora's blood turned to ice as her breath caught in her throat. The words were unmistakable, the note identical to the previous notes she had received.

With a shaky resolve, Nora tucked the note into her pocket, determined to uncover the truth behind these tormenting messages and the identity of the hooded figure. She couldn't afford to be complacent any longer. It made no difference if it was her mother or not, she would have to find a way to get this person out of her life.

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With her bag tightly clutched, Nora walked out of the police station with a frown on her face. Her footsteps echoed faintly in the night, her heart pounding with unease. It wasn't the first time she had felt this way, the nagging sense that someone might be following her, though her rational mind assured her otherwise.

Why did the police have to keep insisting that this was a prank? Did they think that the stalker would come and give them a confession? With the previous incident between her mother and herself, some even insisted that it must be her mother who was trying to stalk her. She's been tempted to use the commissioner's name but she knew that it was not possible. As far as anyone knew, the commissioner had just made a random stop for inspection.

She glanced over her shoulder every few steps, the streetlamps casting eerie, elongated shadows which scared her more than reassured her.

She couldn't shake the feeling that someone was lurking nearby but there was no one there. Her space quickened and her mind went through all possible scenarios while taking into account every escape move, she could think of.

Suddenly, a cacophony of blaring horns and screeching tires filled the air. Time seemed to slow down as her wide eyes locked onto the headlights of an oncoming car, its grill inches from her trembling body. She'd unknowingly stepped into the middle of the street...

As the car came to an abrupt halt merely a few inches away from her, Nora stood frozen in fear. She could feel her nerves thundering in her ears while her legs almost collapsed under her.

Her breath came in ragged gasps as the driver's door swung open, and a man emerged from the vehicle.

"Are you alright, Nora?" he asked with genuine concern, his voice cutting through her fear. Nora looked up into the man's familiar face and nodded slowly.

Nora finally managed to find her voice. "I-I think so," she stammered, her trembling hand clutching her chest. "I'm so sorry, Lucien. I wasn't paying attention."

Lucien Frost offered her a reassuring smile. "No harm done. But remember, it's important to be careful out here, especially at this hour. Do you need a ride home?"

Nora hesitated for a moment, but the dimly lit street and the earlier anxiety pushed her to accept. "Yes, thank you. That would be much appreciated."

Lucien threw a glance Nora's way and wondered what it was that had her so worried that she would step onto the road, in the way of upcoming traffic. She had even accepted a ride from him. From knowing her these past few days, he'd understood that she preferred to keep a distance from others.

Oh, she was good at chatting others up and talking to them. But she was careful to not mention her personal life. She was an expert at changing the subject at that.

He could not help but worry about her situation. A few days ago, she'd had some bruises on her face, that she'd worked hard to cover up. When he questioned her, she told him that she had fallen onto the pavement. But the anxiety that he had witnessed just now...He could still feel her fear in the car.

Lucien glanced at Nora, his eyes filled with empathy. "You know, Nora, sometimes life throws unexpected challenges at us, like almost getting hit by a car." He chuckled softly, trying to lighten the mood. "But remember, I'm here to make sure you get home safely. Now care to tell me your address?"

Nora managed a weak smile. "Thank you again, Lucien. I can't believe I was so careless. You can go straight from here, it is not very far."

As they drove through the dimly lit streets, Lucien decided to shift the conversation away from the recent scare, "So, how's work been treating you lately, Nora?"

Nora appreciated the distraction and began talking about her job only to stop abruptly as a thought entered her head. Feeling as if she had stepped over a grave, she instead questioned him, "Why is a banker like yourself doing here? Do you live around here?"

Lucien smiled at her question, even though he heard the suspicion in it. "Sigh! Our CEO has been hell-bent on torturing us all. Us poor worker bees are being run into the ground trying to vomit up the honey that he is demanding."

Nora chuckled at the description and turned her head outside. She tried to tell herself that she was being ridiculous. There was no way that Lucien could be her stalker. But,

hadn't she first met him in another cafe? Then he started visiting this place regularly. According to Lena, she had never seen him here prior to that and he always spoke to her when she took his order.

But he had not visited the cafe today so he could not have left the note...

As they approached her luxurious gated community, Nora's anxiety surged once more. She knew she couldn't let him know where she lived. And she had to keep her composure in case he realized that she was suspicious of him.

She dimly heard him ask if she lived here and she shook her head. " I am house-sitting for a friend. She is on vacation." Nora cleared her throat, her voice trembling as she said, " You can drop me off here. I'll go inside myself."

As the car came to a stop, Nora jumped out of the vehicle and raced towards the gates without a backward glance, leaving with only a mumbled thank you.

As Lucien watched her leave, Lucien couldn't help but feel a growing concern for Nora as he watched her hurriedly disappear into the gated community. He knew there was more to her story than she was letting on, and he couldn't shake the feeling that she was in trouble. He could enter this community easily since he owned a house here, but he knew that this offer would not have reassured her.

Taking out his phone, he typed out a message...

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Chapter 67: Messages

[1,027 words]

Chapter 67: Messages

Nora found solace only within her house. She leaned against the door, locking it firmly, and sighed with relief. Her belongings landed on a nearby table, and she gracefully sank onto the couch, closing her eyes. She breathed deeply, savouring the house's familiar scent, until exhaustion overcame her, and she succumbed to sleep.

However, the sleep was not peaceful, as she woke up fitfully a little while later. Struggling to compose herself, Nora fished out her phone from some hidden crevice of the couch trying to see the time. But as she saw the time, she also saw a few notifications from an unknown number...

As everything that had happened rushed back over her, Nora sat up on the couch, hugging herself, her hands rubbing her arms as they tried to ward off the chill. She looked around the house for a sign that Demetri was around. But he wasn't and hadn't come home since their return.

Her hands cold from fear, she held the phone and slowly unlocked it. Reading the multiple messages.

"Hi." Read the first message.

"Are you surprised to see that I have your number?"

"I know so much about you, a phone number is no biggie."

"Where did you go these days? I missed you."

"Did you not miss me? I left you a note and you did not even answer me?"

"Why would you go to the police station? Are you angry with me?"

"You were hurt, and I did not want you to feel conscious when you met me. Don't be angry. I'll come to meet you soon."

"I want to meet you at your home so that we can have some privacy."

"Why did you have to live in such a high-end place?"

"Are you not going to reply to my messages? Did you fall asleep, baby?"

"Alright, I won't message you anymore. Don't be angry now. I'll come to see you soon. Sleep well and dream of me, baby."

With a loud clang, the phone fell from her hand, and Nora shivered from fear as she stared at it. He had her phone number and knew where she lived. Could it really be Lucien? He'd picked her up a little away from the police station, he knew where she worked. And today, he had even given her a lift home. Had he guessed that she'd lied to him about house-sitting?

As she sat there, staring listlessly, the phone started to ring loudly. She could not answer it. She knew she couldn't. Not after she knew that the other person had her number.

Lying down, she picked up the cushion and pressed it over her ear, trying to block out the continuous ringing. She did not want to listen to this. As tears escaped her eyes and breathing started to become difficult, she tried to tell herself repeatedly that she needed to be strong. She could handle everything that was thrown her way. But no amount of self-soothing talks were able to help her calm herself as all the horrid news that she had read in the past, seem to be continuing in a loop in her head.

A handsome figure smiled down at his phone's screen. He finally had her exact location. Now all he needed to do was get into the community and he would be able to meet her.

The man looked down at his phone, an innocent smile playing on his young face as he imagined her discovering his identity. Would she be surprised that it was him who had been sending her those encouraging words or would be continuing to be angry? She'd been worried about something today. He could see her worried countenance. It was why he had left her the note.

Could it be that she knew he'd acted out of anger and broken her desk? Is that why she was wary? But he had made sure that everyone was warned to not tell her about it. Maybe she was still wary because of her mother?

Rubbing his thumb over his phone's screen, he caressed her picture and assured, "Do not worry. Once you have me, I will get rid of all your problems. After all, I am not just someone that can be messed with. But you have to stop being angry with me. It wasn't my fault. It was yours. You disappeared suddenly without a word. What was I to do, hmm? Now that I have your address, it is going to be so easy. Do you know how difficult it was for me to find your phone number so that I could send the virus to locate your address. If you dare to be angry with me now, I will punish you."

The man placed his phone aside and whistled a happy tune as he drove his car back to his home. On the way back, his own phone rang, and he eagerly threw it a look, hoping that it was his baby. Maybe she'd woken up and checked his messages. She must be as eager to be with him as he was to be with her. However, he was disappointed to see that it was not her. Instead, it was his brother. The man must be ordering him to come to the office for work. Just because he was the youngest did not mean he had to slave away.

Frowning, he declined the call and continued to drive. Even if he had to go to the office, he would take his own sweet time. There was no need to always be a this beck and call. As he continued to think this, he was reminded that he had something to do with his brother and he quickly changed his mind. He would need his brother's help soon.

With a sigh, he drove towards the office building, ready to use his status as the youngest to get what he wanted. As the car stopped at the intersection, he had to

practice his innocent smile so that his brother would not doubt him when he told him his concerns.

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Demetri sat at the head of the polished oak table in the dimly lit boardroom, with Ian, Gabe, and Sebastian sitting waiting for Lucien to arrive. Whatever discussion it was that Demon had called them in for was going to be a major one. They could feel it in their bones.

Demon had been prowling the top floor today and everyone had been jittery in the office building. The last time this had happened, there had been a huge change in the upper management with many being thrown either out of the office or into prison cells for stealing and misusing funds. It was also the time when Demon had just taken over his position.

Ian and Gabe, exchanged curious glances and wondered what this was about while Seb urged Lucien to hurry up. How the boy had the guts to leave the office today when everyone knew Demetri's mood was beyond them.

Finally, the boy entered and apologized hurriedly, "Sorry! I'd gone for a site inspection and it overran..."

Lucien quieted down when all his brothers cast him a glance and quickly took his seat.

D cleared his throat and pushed a set of documents across the table. He met each of his brothers' eyes with a steely resolve. "I've called this meeting today to discuss a pivotal decision for our family and the future of our company. I've already discussed with the board, and we're going to offer another IPO to the public."

Gabe frowned at this as he questioned, "Go public again? Why now? As far as I know, we are not lacking working capital. So why the need to dilute our shares?"

"Also, the majority of the board has to agree to this decision. I am sure, Grandfather will not agree."

Demetri nodded and gestured to the files in front of him, "It is all of you who need to agree. Each of you holds a percentage of shares while grandfather holds 45%. After him I am the largest shareholder with only 15%. With the other shareholder's agreement to this proposal, a vote from the four of you will decide whether we offer another IPO or not. The capital will be used for expansion into new horizons for Frost Industries. We

are looking into Retail and IT. You will find all the necessary information in the documents. Including how this will affect each of your positions in the future."

Ian pulled the files to him and passed the documents as he sent a considering look Demetri's way. So, Demetri knew that Grandfather would oppose the IPO as it would dilute the company's shares. And that it seemed was Demetri's focus.

The Frost family held about 80% of the total shares, with each of them holding a 5% stake, Demetri at 15% and the rest with their grandfather. At the moment, Demetri had less than fifty percent agreement but if all of them agreed to his proposal that would give him more than the required fifty percent agreement.

While the others opened the file and started to read, Ian sighed, "Demon, you are trying to dilute Grandfather's power."

Demetri did not deny the statement and Ian could only sigh and question, "You are asking us to choose sides."

Again, no denial or affirmation but the room seemed to be getting colder with each moment. Seb tried to kick Ian under the table to stop the man from agitating the Demon further, but Ian ignored his younger brother and instead spoke, "Demon. We do not need to read these to know that whatever you have proposed is going to be very profitable to us. And you know that we will always stand by you no matter what."

Ian tapered off, wondering if he should say what he wanted to but Gabe beat him to the punch as he continued, "But all of us here know that this specific move is not for expansion of the business. It is a Powerplay pure and simple. You want to show the old man that he has no power. This is personal more than business. And as your brothers, do you not think that we deserve to know the cause of this war that you are fighting with him? And what has happened recently that has escalated it."

Lucien looked at his three older brothers and added in his two cents, "Demon, you've got our support. We'll even invest our own funds to ensure we maintain the shares we want. But please...."

Lucien also wanted to know the cause of what was happening but could only taper off as Demon looked at him.

Each of them refused to read the document in front of them and waited for their brother's answer.

Finally, Demetri sighed and spoke, "Whatever you need to know is in front of you. Everything you have said is valid and I thank you for your support. This IPO is not just about diluting his shares; it's about regaining control and ensuring our company's future. Other than that, I will not be sharing any additional information. Read the documents

and answer me before you leave. Whether you choose to vote in the IPO's favor or not, does not affect our relationship as brothers."

As Demetri stood and prepared to leave the room, all the brothers exchanged glances once more, their silent communication speaking volumes. Ian spoke for them all, "Demon, we're with you even though we might have reservations. You've earned our trust. We'll vote in favour of the IPO. Just remember that we're here for you, no matter what lies ahead. And we hope someday you will share your burdens with us."

Demetri Frost sighed and nodded in gratitude as he looked at his brothers who offered him unconditional support. He knew he could share the reasons for this war with their grandfather, but he did not want to shatter their illusions about their grandfather. At the moment, they had no idea of the extent the old man had gone to and he knew that if they knew, they too would be as hurt as he had been when he first discovered everything. And so, he was going to shield them as long as possible.

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"I fail to understand officer! Why are you not registering my complaint."

The officer looked down at Nora with a frown and shook his head," It is because it's clear it is a prank! Look, miss, I've already explained to you that this must be a prank. It is quite common for seniors to have some fun with freshmen. Earlier, they were notes and now they are messages. But none of this is threatening. Also, we cannot do anything about the messages as they were sent from a burner phone number."

And anyone who knows you is bound to know where you work so there is nothing to prove that the person is stalking you or even trying to harass you. I would advise you to stop taking things so seriously and ignore it like the prank it is."

"It is not a prank! It is stalking plain and simple! Did I not tell you about the desk incident in the classroom? That is plain abuse! Why are you..."

"Miss Williams, if you are so sure that it is stalking, then why don't you investigate it yourself? We've already contacted the university and they have denied that it was directed at you. There were similar instances in other classrooms as well! So unless you are firm in the belief that the words Wh*re and sl*t were directed at you, please stop insisting on this! I think I have been around here longer than you have been born and know a crime when I see one! So please leave as we have 'real' crimes to solve. And next time come with concrete evidence."

Nora felt her frustration boil over. She was tempted to create a scene but did not want to attract too much attention. The stalker must already be aware that she was here and possibly that the police was not registering a complaint. It made her worried even more.

All through the night, she had tried to talk to herself to be brave her fear battling with resolve. Come what may she was not going to cower and let that stalker dictate her life. With a resolute spirit, she'd blocked the number from which the messages had been sent and walked with renewed hope that this time the police would not be so complacent.

As she trudged out of the police station, Nora wondered if she should hire a private investigator or a security guard.. If there was someone around her, maybe things could be controlled and that person would not approach her and harass her. She'd barely stepped out of the police station when an officer approached her.

Startled, Nora turned around, already ready for a fight. The officer raised his hands in a peace gesture and quickly said, "Miss, you dropped this..."

Nora looked down at the money in his hand and was about to shake her head when the man spoke urgently, "Miss, listen to me carefully. Whoever is stalking you is very powerful and dangerous. There was a freshman girl last year as well, from your university who tried to lodge a complaint. Ultimately she went missing but the matter was suppressed by the university and many people came forward to testify that she had returned to her hometown. But that was not the case. Whoever is behind this is a force to be reckoned with if he has been able to suppress the matter so well. I suggest you either go into hiding for a while or hire a private agency or just move away from here for your own safety. Just be careful. This person is dangerous."

As she walked away from the officer who had warned her, she quickly checked her phone, typing out her university's name for anything related to such a news. Like the officer had said there was indeed such a piece of news. It was only a single article about how the parents of the girl were still looking for her and claiming that she had been worried about something. There were no comments from the university other than a statement that the girl had withdrawn her name from the university citing personal reasons. This time, Nora did not wonder if she needed to hire someone or not.

The last time, she had decided to ask Grandpa William for help but before she could have done that, her mother had created a scene and she had assumed that it was her mother who had been stalking her.

If the other person was someone powerful then she knew for a fact that she would need help. Immediately a person came to her mind but she shook her head. She'd asked for his help last time also. It was not good to keep approaching him. She needed to remember that they were only contract partners and he wasn't obligated to help her.

Grandpa William seemed like a good option, but she knew he would worry about her. He'd also already done so much for her. Maybe she could try to handle this alone. She could try talking on the University's forum or seeking help from the professors. They might have some knowledge about this person.

Suddenly, she felt an ominous sensation crept over her. A sudden rush from behind, the sound of footsteps closing in fast. Panic gripped her, and instinct took over. She spun around, but it was too late.

A figure lunged at her, hands attempting to cover her head. As she struggled to fight the person, she heard the screech of tyres as a vehicle stopped near her. The man stopped trying to cover her face and used brute force to push her towards the car's open door.

She fought with all her might as she jabbed her knee towards the man's leg while trying to loosen his grip on her arms. She screamed loudly for help, as her leg missed hitting its spot. She wasn't very far from the police station. They couldn't ignore a ruckus so near the precinct could they?

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chapter 70

"I will not become a victim again. Never," Nora repeated the mantra in her head as she sprinted through the unfamiliar streets. Panic coursed through her veins, and her heart thundered in her chest.

With a surge of adrenaline, she fought back. Her elbows jabbed, and she fought wildly, using no strategy or specific movements.

Finally, she broke free from the stalker's grip, her heart pounding, her lungs gasping for air as she tried to get a look at the hooded stalker. But the man's face was still covered.

Without a second thought, Nora ran, blindly and swiftly. She had no sense of direction, but she didn't care. She needed to escape, to put as much distance between herself and her assailant as possible. The world around her blurred into a dizzying frenzy of colors and shapes as she fought to put as much distance as possible between herself and the stalker.

Through alleys and across streets, she continued to run. As she looked back, she could see the man running behind her. Her body screamed with exertion, but she didn't stop until she found herself in a bustling public square, surrounded by curious onlookers. Hoping to get lost in the hustle and bustle, she slowed down her steps, still on the lookout for anyone or anything coming too close to her.

She'd barely caught her breath when she noticed the car, the white van that she had almost been pushed into. Wide-eyed, she hid behind a pole and looked on as two men stepped out of the car...in police uniforms! Her blood ran cold.

How could this be? Was the man who had been stalking her a police officer? Any hope that she had of receiving help from passersby was extinguished. If it looked as if the police were chasing her, she would have no way of escaping.

As frantic thoughts raced through her mind, she looked around carefully, hoping to find a landmark that would tell her where she was. Her breath escaped raggedly as she peeked at the two men, looking around. She was in the opposite part of the town. The only way she could reach Grandpa William was if she hailed a cab.

Once again, she peeked around the pillar to get a sense of the stalker's location and nearly jumped out of her skin when she found neither man around the van. Had they spread out to look for her?

As someone passed her by, she heard someone mention Frost Industries and looked up with renewed hope. Yes. This was downtown, and Demetri's office was probably located in this locality. If she could reach him... hurriedly she searched the location on the map. Her breath released in a whoosh when she realized that she was barely a few meters away from the headquarters of Frost Group of Industries.

As a group of people passed her by, chatting animatedly, she tried her best to escape unseen by merging with them. Thankfully, she was able to turn the corner unseen. And right there was the one place she knew she would be safe. With urgent trembling fingers, she called Demetri while continuing to walk briskly towards the large skyscraper.

When her repeated calls went unanswered, Nora tried to drop a message. Even if the stalker was able to kidnap her at least someone would know she was in danger. Almost crying, she recorded a message, "Demetri, someone is stalking me. I am outside Frost Industries headquarters. Please come..." Her voice broke down at the end as she finally sent the message.

Her destination was now close. Once again, she scanned her surroundings, in case she was being followed and quickly began to walk across the road. She'd barely reached the curb when her phone rang again. Feeling relief that Demetri had called her back, she quickly answered, "I am right at the door of Frost Industries. Please come soon." Nora pleaded breathlessly, her voice quivering with fear.

But instead of her husband's reassuring voice, an insidious whisper greeted her on the line. "Baby, I knew you were a good girl. Why did you have to run so much? I'm coming to you. Don't worry."

Nora's blood turned to ice, and her heart dropped like a lead weight. Oh Heavens! What had she done?

Panic surged through her veins as she glanced around, realizing that she had already disclosed her location to the person she was hiding from. Nora looked at the guards standing at the door and knew she would not be allowed inside. She just hoped that Demetri would check his phone soon or try some other way to enter the building.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Nora stammered into the phone as her eyes continued to scan all around.

A sinister chuckle echoed through the line. "You can call me whatever you want, baby. When we meet again, I'll let you decide what you want to address me as."

As she reached the glass doors of the skyscraper, her way was blocked by a guard as expected. As he questioned her about the purpose of her visit, she heard someone calling her name from the inside, "Nora?"

Her fear turned to horror as her eyes met the man she had been suspicious of. Lucien was indeed her stalker. And he was inside the building. She needed to escape from here.

As she turned around to make another run, her eyes met that of the policeman across the street who was looking at her sinisterly. He turned his head and she followed his gaze to see a man closing in on her. His face was still covered but his eyes were blazing at her. She was trapped from all sides!

Nora's breath quickened, and her heart raced as panic closed in. Desperation and fear fueled her determination as she looked for any possible escape route. And just then, the security guard stood between her and the man in the hooded jacket as he said, "Miss, are you alright?"

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