

Benefits 611

Chapter 611: Allegations

The courtroom erupted in a mix of gasps and murmurs. Mr. Bennett, shot up from his seat, his face flushed with anger as he shouted, "Objection, Your Honor!" Mr. Bennett shouted. "These are baseless, outrageous allegations! Mr. Pierce's testimony is not only irrelevant but also an attempt to slander my client without any proof."

Judge Holden raised her hand to silence the courtroom, her expression stern. "Order in the court!" She turned her gaze to Gabe, her eyes narrowing. "Mr. Frost, these are serious allegations against Mr. Savoy. You are aware that such claims must be substantiated with concrete evidence?"

"I am well aware of this, your honour."

The judge was clearly troubled by the turn of events and cast a glance on the other side where Gregory Savoy seemed to have paled and in pain while the attorney seemed angry. "Mr. Bennett, your objection is noted. However, given the serious nature of these accusations, the court must investigate further."

"Your honour, but this...", the attorney tried to speak up but was cut off.

"Mr. Frost, you may proceed, but be prepared to present any and all evidence to support these claims."

"Mr Pierce, please continue what happened after that?"

Pierce gulped and shook his head, "I don't know... but after that, Autumn went away to study, then there was talk of Mr Savoy and Mrs Savoy's divorce and then those rumours."

"Just before the recess, you mentioned believing that Autumn had been involved with her step father. What about that?"

"I...I wanted to believe that because remembering this incident reminded me of my own cowardice. After that night, even though I and Autumn continued a long distance relationship, everything else changed. Everytime I looked at her, I was reminded what a fool I was. I don't even know if I saved her that night or if it was too late..."

Gabe nodded then and stepped back, "I don't have any other questions for Mr Pierce, your honour."

"Your Honor, I insist that these allegations are a desperate attempt to malign my client's character. Until proven otherwise, we must treat them as such. Please reject Mr Pierce's testimony."

Judge Holden's stern gaze shifted to Mr. Bennett. "Mr. Bennett, your objection is noted. The court acknowledges the gravity of these allegations and the need for substantial evidence. However, dismissing Mr. Pierce's testimony outright would be premature. We will continue to hear all relevant testimonies and evaluate their credibility."

Mr. Bennett clenched his jaw, clearly frustrated but nodding in compliance. "Understood, Your Honor."

Judge Holden turned back to Gabe. "Mr. Frost, you may call your next witness."

Gabe nodded. "Thank you, Your Honor. Next, I would like to present a video. It is a recording that the late Mrs SAVoy left for her daughter in a USB. Unfortunately, we were able to recover a part of the video and not the entire piece, until now. It was this video that let us know that Mr. Pierce was also aware of this entire incidence."

"Autumn, I sincerely hope that you never have to use this video or even see it. But if you've found it, and need to use it, then do it without hesitation. Be strong my girl.. I am sorry that I did not..."

This is the video we were initially recovered but later, the experts were able to take out more..."I'm sorry that I was not stronger to protect your reputation and was blind to the truth of the man I wanted you to accept as your father. This video, has the truth inside it. I recorded it with the intention of proving your innocence but have now hidden it shamefully because I am going to have a little baby. A baby that belongs to Gregory and I fear what will happen to her if her father is exposed... I'm sorry, Autumn. I don't know how to do right by you. I shudder to think what would have happened if Pierce had not come that night..."

"Objection, Your Honor! This video could easily be fabricated or AI-generated. We cannot take this as credible evidence without proper verification! In today's digital age, video evidence can be manipulated. How can Mr Frost substantiate the authenticity of this recording?"

"Your Honor, we are fully prepared to have this video examined by forensic experts to verify its authenticity. We believe it will hold up under scrutiny."

Mr. Bennett scoffed. "And in the meantime, my client's reputation continues to be dragged through the mud based on what might very well be a fabricated piece of evidence. I demand that this video be dismissed until it can be proven genuine. Your honor, Autumn Frost claims that she has Arabelle's best interest in mind, but dragging her biological father's reputation like this and sending wild allegations is too underhanded and proves the lengths she is willing to go to get her way."

Mr. Bennett, while I understand your frustration, the court has a duty to thoroughly investigate these claims given their serious nature. Mr. Frost, you will have until the end of the next court day to present your video to court appointed forensic experts. In the meantime, Mr. Bennett, you are welcome to gather counterevidence or expert opinions to challenge the authenticity of the video."

Mr. Bennett's face hardened. "Understood, Your Honor. We will prepare accordingly."

Judge Holden banged her gavel. "This session is adjourned until tomorrow. I expect both parties to come prepared with substantial evidence."

As the court emptied, Gregory Savoy cast a threatening glance at the two people before walking out of there. Did they really think that they could use this move to check mate him? They were fools then. He knew exactly how he could get out of this. But first he needed to handle that Pierce and Bianca.

Gabe walked to Autumn then, knowing that she would have been shocked by all this. But when she looked up at him, he did not expect to see the anger in her eyes as she bit out, "I don't want to do this."

Chapter 612: Against Wishes

Gabe walked to Autumn then, knowing that she would have been shocked by all this. But when she looked up at him, he did not expect to see the anger in her eyes as she bit out, "I don't want to do this."

Before he could question her about her abrupt statement, Autumn stood up and rushed out of the courtroom, leaving him standing there askance.

Silently, he packed the files in front of him and followed her home, knowing that is where she would have gone. As expected, he found her sitting in her room, hugging herself. He cursed himself then. He should have given her more of a warning. "Autumn?"

She said nothing, sitting frozen as if she were a statue. "Autumn, I understand..."

She shook her head vehemently then, turning to look at him accusingly, "You don't understand. If you did, you would not have..."

Gabe frowned. What was this about? Hadn't Autumn been prepared for this? "Fine, what is it that I don't understand?"

She looked at him again, her expression guarded, this time. "I don't want to do this," she repeated, her voice barely above a whisper. "Arabelle... When did you get the addition to that video that my mother left me? Why did you not show it to me?"

Gabe frowned at the sudden questioning but shrugged it off, "Because I got it during the mediation and then there was no time. Autumn, talk to me. What is bothering you? Before this you did not mind talking about what happened? It is because Pierce was involved?"

He felt a tightness in his chest as an irrational thought took place. Was she still hung up on Pierce? The thought made him feel uneasy though he knew that it was possible. He shook his head, trying to push the feeling aside. "Autumn, please," he said, his voice softer now. "I need to understand what's going on. We're in this together, remember? I know that the revelation about Pierce..."

"It's not that." Autumn sighed and spoke quietly, "It is not just Pierce, though I never expected that. I always thought that even though I never told him anything, he was always too understanding. I believed him to be mature. I'm not even shocked. It's... what mama said.. I always thought she kept quiet because she somehow loved Gregory and didn't want to harm him. But that is not the case. She did it because of Arabelle..."

"If I get up on that stand and say that he tried to rape me multiple times, that he molested me every chance I got? That he almost succeeded in ruining me the last time, then... who will suffer the most because of it? It will be Arabelle. People in small towns can like this one... they can be cruel. They will judge her, blame her for being his daughter. They'll destroy her childhood, Gabe. I don't want her to

grow up with that. I cannot do that to Arabelle. I... can you not look for another way? I can't stand there and... I want him punished. I want him to suffer more than anyone else. But I can't sentence Arabelle to something like this..."

Gabe frowned as he heard this. "Autumn, blood is not everything. Yes, Arabelle is biologically related to him but that does not mean she will have to live in his shadow. And you forget, once we have custody of Arabelle, we still have the option to move away. She does not have to live with this. We can let her know when the time is right and she is a grown up."

"But..."

"But nothing, Autumn. That man is a predator and..." Gabe sighed. He could see that it was not going to be easy to convince her..."

As expected, she continued, "Can't we force him to back off with the evidence we already have? Like my mama made him sign the papers? And then once he has given in, we can take Arabelle..."

This time, Gabe felt a surge of anger. Without a word, he walked back and took out the files that Demetri had brought to him. "You want to blackmail him and get Arabelle. I will agree to that Autumn. But before you make that decision, take a look at the reports in these files. Do you think you are the only victim of a man like him? He is nothing but a monster, Autumn. And you want to protect this monster in the name of protecting Arabelle."

Gabe then lifted another file and placed it in front of her, "This file is from the last five years. And this could have been avoided if your mother had exposed Gregory then... Take a look."

Gabe's heart ached. He wanted to protect Autumn. He knew she would feel horrified and guilty. He watched as she moved to pick up the first file and he placed a hand on top of it, "Gregory's actions need to be exposed. If we don't bring this to light, he would continue to hurt others. We need to find a way to do this that minimizes the impact on Arabelle, if you're so worried. Maybe we can talk to the judge about a closed courtroom..."

Autumn shook her head and with trembling hands pulled the file from under his hand. As she read the contents of the file, Autumn felt her stomach rebelling. Barely a few pages in, she snapped the file shut and raced to the washroom to hurl out the contents of her stomach.

Gabe closed his eyes in frustration and sighed to himself. It was time to get rid of that monster...

Autumn returned then with tears in her eyes..."Gabe... this.."

Gabe gathered her in his arms, rubbing his hand over her hair as she buried her face in his chest. "Hush... Autumn, don't think about anything. Just focus on putting that man behind the bars. Rest everything will fall in place."

Autumn nodded. Until now, her focus had been protecting Arabelle. But now, it would have to be on attacking that man...

Chapter 613: Dead

"He's committed suicide."

The words echoed through the silent courtroom, shattering the tense atmosphere that had been in the courtroom while waiting for him to arrive. Gabe stood up from his chair with a jerk, his face a mask of disbelief, while Autumn, gripping the edge of the table, almost fell down. "What?" Her voice was strained, barely above a whisper, wondering what she was hearing.

The police officer, standing with a solemn expression, nodded his head. "Yes, Your Honour. Gregory Savoy has committed suicide. He left behind a note, stating that he is too ashamed of his past misdeeds and cannot live with his guilt."

Murmurs spread through the courtroom like wildfire, but the officer continued, raising his voice slightly to be heard. "His body was discovered early this morning by the river. He was supposed to have been home, but his fiancée reported him missing last night. The note was found among his belongings at his house."

It was Gabe, who questioned the police officer then. This could not be possible. Gregory Savoy was not one to take his own life or accept guilt. In fact, he would rather believe that the man had faked his own death. "Are there any doubts about the identity of the body?"

"At this stage, we cannot completely rule out foul play. The condition of the body suggests drowning, but we are conducting a thorough investigation to confirm the identity and circumstances of his death."

His face is not recognisable due to the bloating so we will be doing a DNA test... We are also going to send the note for authentication."

"Thank you, Officer. Given the uncertainty surrounding Mr. Savoy's death, this court will adjourn until the results of the DNA test and note authentication are available. Until the identity of the deceased is confirmed, I am placing Arabelle in the temporary custody of Autumn Frost. This arrangement will remain in effect until further notice."

As Autumn heard the bang of the gavel, she bowed her head, still in disbelief. Could it all have happened so quickly. She had been prepared to expose everything tonight, to subject herself to all sorts of questions and glances. They'd been preparing for a long and lengthy legal battle which had ended even before it could have begun.

Autumn watched as Gabe hurried to talk to the police officer, talking urgently and felt her own heart race. Gabe returned to her side then, his expression a mix of concern and determination.

"They're going to keep us updated on the investigation," Gabe said, his voice firm, even though he looked distracted. She caught his sleeve then, "Is it really over?"

Gabe nodded and held her hand, "For now, it is. We wait for the investigation result though..."

Autumn's voice dropped to a whisper as she looked around at the now empty courtroom, her eyes wide with a mix of fear and suspicion. "It's a fake, isn't it? He's faking his death. He has to be. But why would he do that? If he's believed to be dead, he would lose all his wealth and power... At least here, he had a chance to keep all that. He wouldn't... something just doesn't add up..."

"I know. It is why I asked the officer. This is also the reason they are investigating. He believes that what Pierce revealed yesterday may have triggered someone. After all, not everyone in the police is corrupt."

"So they think it is someone from the police force?" Autumn asked wide eyed.

"Yes. But they do not have any evidence for the time being."

Autumn looked around and carefully leaned close to Gabe and whispered, "I hope he really is dead. I know that is totally wrong of me, but he deserves that!"

Gabe gave her a look then and shook his head as he gathered her close, "I agree with you, baby. But don't say it here. You know they are going to investigate us too."

Autumn widened her eyes, "They are?"

Holding her hand, Gabe started to walk out of the court, "Yep. At the moment, we are prime suspects as we benefitted the most from his death."

Autumn nodded, "That is fair. So, I believe having a death party when we reach home won't be a good idea... "

Gabe chuckled at this and looked at Autumn carefully. She looked relieved. In fact she looked as if she'd gained a new lease on life. He knew he should warn her that their first guess, that Gregory was faking it could also be true. But he didn't want to burst her bubble

With a hand on her shoulder, he pulled her close and whispered, "I don't know about a death party. But I'm sure we could have a small celebration about having Arabelle placed in our care."

As they left the courtroom, with their hands around each other, they failed to notice that their air of intimacy had caught someone's attention.

He watched the way the man held Autumn close to her side. And sighed. So, she was now over the trauma that night had left on her. She could be close to Gabe Frost. As if nothing had ever affected her. He hated the hand on her waist though. It should not be Gabe who should be by her side.

But he could wait. Once the circumstances were back to what they had been, Autumn would definitely be getting rid of that man. And once she did, he would swoop in take what was rightfully his. For what he'd waited for so long.

This death was a good thing. A good thing, indeed. And he would definitely reap the benefits. As the car left the parking lot, the man whistled a happy tune as his eyes glittered. Killing Gregory Savoy had been painful, but it was just the right thing to do. Now, the next point of action was to handle the investigation. And of course take care of Arabelle. He couldn't let that little girl get in the way of his plan, right.

Chapter 614: Devious

Autumn jumped at the sound of Gabe's voice, turning wide-eyed to face him. "I'm changing the light bulb," she replied, her tone slightly defensive.

Gabe nodded, averting his gaze. Her eyes—startlingly intense so early in the morning—had caught him off guard. Shaking off his distraction, he turned back to see Autumn still struggling to reach the bulb holder, even standing on a chair.

"Why don't I help you?" he offered, stepping closer. Before Autumn could accept or reject his offer, his hands went around her knees and he lifted her higher.

Autumn gasped, instinctively wrapping her arms around his neck for support as she almost dropped the light bulb. "Gabe!" she exclaimed, caught off guard by his sudden move. "What are you doing?"

"Saving you from hanging onto that holder like Tarzan!" Gabe grinned as Autumn tried to catch the light fixture which was now swinging back and forth due to Autumn having hit it when she was picked up by Gabe.

With one hand on his shoulder, Autumn caught the fixture with the other, and once it had stopped moving, carefully fixed the light bulb inside, letting out a breath of relief. Finally, it was inside and she would have light again in the kitchen.

The job done, Autumn looked down to tell Gabe to let her down. Her breath caught in her throat as she looked at him though... Holding her gaze, he slowly buried his face near her belly and slid her down the chair. She tightened her hands on his shoulders, as she looked at him with heat in her eyes. As she reached level with his face, his hands slid to her back. With a sharp move, he pushed her towards him and caught her lips.

The movement was sharp, almost hopeful, but it ignited a passion within her. She closed her eyes and kissed him back, forgetting they were in the kitchen.... She wanted more of him. Autumn tapped with

her fist onto his biceps, wanting more. But before she could speak the words, a startled scream woke her up, breaking the two apart as they immediately realized it was Arabelle who was screaming.

Carefully, Gabe placed Autumn down and the two people hurried towards the room, only to find Arabelle screaming again, her eyes closed. Gabe breathed a sigh of relief as he moved to gently awaken the little girl.

Arabelle's eyes snapped open and she stared wide eyed at Gabe as he gently caressed her forehead and declared, "I had a nightmare."

"Really? What was it?"

"I dreamt that I was hungry and there were no pancakes or hashbrowns in the world!", Arabelle complained with a pout.

Autumn and Gabe stared at the little girl's complain and then at each other before breaking into chuckles, each relieved about the content of the nightmares of the little girl.

"Are you laughing at me?" Arabelle asked with narrowed eyes.

Quickly composing his look, Gabe shook his head and answered gravely, "That does sound like a scary dream for a hungry little girl."

"It was," Arabelle agreed, looking up at him with big, earnest eyes. Gabe shook his head, already knowing what the look meant.

Caving in, he tapped her button nose and squished her cheeks, as he offered, "Then how about we have some pancakes and hash browns for breakfast today?"

Arabelle's eyes lit up and she nodded hurriedly, "yes yes! Can we please? Autumn can help you. I am so hungry!" As she said this, Arabelle rubbed her little belly, making the other two chuckle some more as they nodded, "Then, we'll whip up the most delicious breakfast for you, Miss Arabelle. You just stay here."

"Make sure they're really good!" she called after them, already feeling better knowing that pancakes and hashbrowns were on their way. Feeling like a little princess, Arabelle happily cuddled the little bear on the bed and closed her eyes. She would take a nap for the time being.

As they returned to the kitchen, Autumn paused, remembering what they had been doing here a few moments ago... Blushing, she quickly stammered, "I'll peel the potatoes." And rushed towards the pantry.

Without a word, Gabe started to gather the ingredients for pancakes as he watched Autumn moving around the kitchen before quickly taking up a corner to peel the potatoes. His gaze fell on the cabinet above her head and with a mischievous look in his eye, he called out, "Autumn, can you please pass me the sugar?"

Autumn stood on her tiptoes, stretching her arm as far as it could go, but the sugar remained out of her reach. Just as she was about to give up, Gabe came up behind her. "Wait, I'll help you," he said, his voice close to her ear.

Before she could protest, he lifted her effortlessly. Stunned at being lifted again, Autumn reached out and grabbed the sugar. As Gabe gently set her down, Arabelle's voice echoed in the room, "What are you doing?"

Gabe turned to face the little girl standing in the doorway, a curious look on her face. "Autumn couldn't reach the sugar, so I was helping her," he explained, as he gently placed Autumn back down, while he took the sugar container from her hand.

With a concerned look, Arabelle asked, "Why didn't you take it yourself, Gabe? That would have been easier."

Gabe blinked as he shot a look at Autumn whose eyes had widened with the realization of what he had been upto. Sigh! He was busted.

"Well, I suppose I could have," Gabe murmured before leaning close to Autumn and whispering, "but then I would not have had the opportunity to hold you this morning and just now." With a wink in her direction, he returned to the task at hand, leaving Autumn stupefied.

Yes. He could have done it himself. Instead of picking her up. He could have gotten up on that chair instead of lifting her...He could have taken the sugar... What a devious man!!!!

Chapter 615: Under The Rug

Gabe Frost was a lethal man, Autumn thought as she watched him clear the table. Living with him, she might just lose her sanity. He'd been teasing her relentlessly, keeping her perpetually on edge. Throughout breakfast, he'd casually taken her hand or brushed the back of it, each touch sending a jolt through her. It was like he'd set his sights on her and she was a prey that he meant to devour.

Even as she was lost in his thoughts, she suddenly felt him brush against her and jolted. There it was, the butterfly kind of touch, that made her unsure if he was deliberately teasing her or it was just an accidental touch. Her musings were broken by the ringing of the doorbell and she thanked the heavens for saving her again.

Gabe moved to answer the door, and Autumn let out a deep breath, trying to steady her nerves. She watched as he opened the door to reveal an officer standing on the other side.

"Mr. Frost?" the officer asked, his expression serious.

"Yes," Gabe replied, his voice steady. "How can I help you?"

The officer glanced at his notepad before meeting Gabe's gaze. "I'm here to ask about Gregory Savoy's death. We have a few questions to ask of you and Mrs Autumn Frost.."

"Of course," he said, stepping aside to let the officer in. "Please, come in."

The officer entered, his eyes scanning the room before settling on Autumn. He gave her a brief nod before turning his attention back to Gabe. "Mr. Frost, can you tell me where you were on the night of Mr. Savoy's death?"

"He was here." Autumn blurted out, worried that the Police were going to think that Gabe was responsible for everything.

"I was at home officer in the middle of an international video conference. I can share the time stamped recorded video if you'd like."

The officer nodded, " Yes. Mr Frost. I'd like that."

He then turned to Autumn. "Autumn, where were you on the night of Mr. Savoy's death?"

Autumn crossed her arms, her expression hardening. "I was at work. I can share the surveillance footage if you want."

The officer raised an eyebrow. "Thank you, Mrs. Frost. That would be helpful." He paused, glancing between them. "Just to clarify, what is your occupation?"

"I'm a night shift manager at the hotel," she replied curtly. "You should know that already, given how many times your department has troubled me thanks to Gregory Savoy's influence."

The officer cleared his throat, clearly uncomfortable. "Yes, well, we just need to be thorough. We understand that Gregory Savoy had many enemies, but we need to be sure of everyone's whereabouts that night. It's protocol," he added almost apologetically and continued, "Did you notice any unusual activity or see anyone suspicious near your home or workplace that night?"

"No, nothing out of the ordinary," Autumn answered, still curt. She hadn't forgotten how in the past these people had refused to take her complaints seriously when she'd felt threatened.

The officer nodded, closing his notepad. "Thank you for your time, Mr and Mrs. Frost. I'll get in touch if we have any more questions."

As he moved to leave, Gabe walked him to the door. Before stepping out, the officer cast a concerned glance around the room before leaning in, to whisper something to Gabe.

"Be careful, Mr. Frost."

Gabe paused and raised an eyebrow at the officer. "Mr Frost. The police department is not happy with what was revealed about Gregory Savoy. It raised questions on the entire department, leaving it open to criticism. Not everyone is happy to keep this investigation going. They would rather bury this entire incident under a pile of files. And this might prove to be dangerous to... your wife."

Gabe stilled then, his voice icy, "What do you mean, officer?"

"Look, I am not the enemy here. I'm just trying to warn you. I have never actively hurt Autumn. The inside talk is that Gregory was murdered by someone who seemed to have realized that their loved one had also been hurt by him. But the officers are going to try and suppress this as the suicide it has been made to look. That means that a killer is out on the loose. And..."

"And what?"

The officer gulped, "I was there when they went through Gregory's belongings. That man was a true monster. I don't know how he was able to live without being caught until now. Anyway, the man was obsessed with Autumn. From the po*n sites he had visited to even prostitutes he hired, they looked like your wife. I've seen some disturbing things in my career, but this was on another level."

Autumn's latest picture that Savoy had was in fact from the courthouse on the last day. It was found in his wallet. The photo was ruined so it took us a while to make out. On the back, however, someone had scribbled angrily, "If only you had not kept quiet, others would have been saved too."

It didn't long for everything to fall into place and Gabe questioned, "You mean, there was another victim after Autumn and that person may be blaming Autumn as well."

The officer nodded, "That is what it seems like at the moment. I am going to try my best that they do not succeed in suppressing this file but I am only a junior officer. In case I fail, then... you might have to be extra careful."

Gabe nodded and thanked the officer as he walked back inside. As expected, their days of peace had been numbered. However, even as he returned inside, he couldn't shake off the nagging feeling that he was missing something important.

As he walked inside, he met Autumn's gaze as she stood there still, "What's up?"

"What was he saying?"

Gabe smiled and cupped her face, not liking the new tension he was seeing on her face, "Something we already know. That we have to be careful."

Chapter 616: All over you

"Are you sure we can go back? I mean the DNA results have not yet come in..."

Gabe nodded, "We can go. And it is only for a few days. It will be a good change of pace for you and Arabelle. As for the DNA results, you are going to have custody of Arabelle unless Gregory makes an appearance. So, there is no restriction on you taking her anywhere."

"But what about the work at the resort?"

"Autumn, everyone working at the resort has been given a paid leave for the next month, until the entire place is ready with a new look. What are you worried about?"

Autumn nodded. The truth was that she was not worried. In fact, she was the opposite of worried. She was excited to go and live in Gabe's house. Meet the other Frosty girls again. They'd even messaged her that they would have a get together soon. And something else.

Autumn looked at herself in the mirror, as she watched Gabe walk out of the room, her eyes lingering on him. She'd finally come to a decision. She liked Gabe Frost and wanted him to be with her. She didn't want him to leave her once this entire case was sorted. That was something that she had started to fear. She'd confessed this to Nora on the phone last night and her advice had stuck with her.

"Seduce him and make him fall for you."

She knew of course that she could not make Gabe fall for her. He had a deep love for his dead wife even though he claimed he hated her. Yet, underneath the layer of hatred, she knew there was love.

But even if he couldn't love her, she could seduce him, right? She knew he was attracted to her. He'd made that abundantly clear. There was only one problem, however... She didn't know how to seduce him? She'd tried searching on them, but those things were too wild and made her feel conscious.

So, she would ask Nora and the other women for advice. After all, they were all more experienced than her. They would be able to help. And until then, she could prepare herself mentally as well...

As she was lost in thoughts, a knock on the door had her come out of her reverie. She looked up to see Gabe, holding a box in his hands as he extended it to her, "There's a package here for you. Its from Nora"

She turned away from the mirror and quickly grabbed the package from his hand, wondering what she could have sent. Just then, her phone dinged with a message notification and she read the message, "Sent something for you to start."

"Thank you." Quickly, she placed the box aside and returned to her work.

"Aren't you going to see it?"

Autumn shook her head wildly, "Not now. I'll open it later."

Gabe looked at her curiously first and then at the package, his brows raised. Knowing Nora, there was going to be something in that, which might shock Autumn.

"Do you know what she sent?"

Autumn shook her head vehemently, "No."

That made him pause. Leaning against the door, he cocked his head and stared, "You know.."

"I don't. Trust me!" Autumn widened her eyes and shook her head as she darted another glance at the package.

Gabe's grin widened and as he made a grab for the package, so did Autumn.

"Ahhhh!" Autumn screamed as Gabe caught the package and threatened, "Give it to me!"

Gabe's grin widened as he held the package higher, just out of Autumn's reach. "Give it to me!" he teased, his voice filled with laughter.

Autumn jumped, trying to catch the package, but Gabe was too tall and quick. "This is getting curiouser and curiouser. Uh huh. You're not getting it until you promise to open it in front of me."

Autumn stomped her foot in frustration, "Give it to me or else!"

"Or what are you going to do?" Gabe goaded her. Narrowing her eyes, Autumn moved quickly, taking him by surprise. She pushed him onto the bed with a determined shove. As he landed, she swiftly straddled his waist, using the element of surprise to her advantage, and snatched the package from his hand.

However, her luck was shortlived, because before she could escape, he rolled over, pinning her beneath him. Autumn gasped, finding herself trapped under Gabe, their faces inches apart. They stared at each other, both panting, as they looked at each other, the package on the side forgotten.

Gabe's gaze softened as he looked into her eyes, and for a heartbeat, it felt as if the world had disappeared around them. Then, with a chuckle, he let go, rolling off her and lying on his back beside her, still panting, "Okay, okay, you win."

As Autumn clutched the package to her chest and moved away, he sighed, "I think it has lingerie inside. What I am trying to guess is, what does Nora think I like?"

Autumn almost dropped the package at Gabe's comment and shook her head, "It can't be. Why would she send something? And its for me not for..."

She paused her explanation when she realized what he'd said. "You like? This is for me..."

Gabe gave a mysterious smile at that and showed a message on his phone, "I sent a little bit of 'something' for Autumn. I'm sure you'll like it."

"She sent you a message?" But I really don't know what it has..."

Picking up a pair of scissors, Gabe brought it to her, "Then let's find out."

With trembling hands, Autumn opened the package and shook out its contents...and then wanted to bury herself as Gabe laughed infectiously. Unable to help herself, Autumn giggled too as she saw the contents... it was...It was lingerie alright... With Gabe's face printed on the top two cups and the small triangle...

Autumn's face turned beet red as she held up the skimpy outfit, unable to decide if she wanted to laugh or cry. And then she read the note, "Wear this and he'll be all over you..."

The note caused them to laugh more... Of course he would be on her... at least the pictures would.

Chapter 617: The Police

With their bags packed, Autumn and Gabe, put the last of their luggage into the car and were now ready to leave soon after breakfast.

However, before they could return inside to fetch Arabelle, a police cruiser pulled up as two officers alighted the car. The first one unfamiliar while the second one was the one who'd come to their home previously.

"Where are you going?" The older officer asked directly in an accusatory tone that raised Gabe's hackles. Stepping in front of Autumn, he looked at the officer and questioned, "We're going for a trip, officer. You have a problem with that?"

"Do you have the court's permission to leave? Given the circumstances, we need to ensure everything is in order."

"What circumstances are we talking about? The court has not stated that we cannot leave the town. We've been cooperative so far. We are free citizens, and unless there's something specific you're here for, I don't see why we need to justify a simple trip."

The officer sighed irritably and was about to snap back when the younger officer intervened. "Mr Frost. Before you leave, we need to question you about a few other things as well. The matter is a bit sensitive and we hope for your cooperation."

Gabe's eyes narrowed, but he nodded curtly. "Fine. Let's go inside." Once inside, they led the officers to the living room, where they all took seats.

"Mr. and Mrs. Frost," the younger officer began, "we need to ask about your whereabouts last night."

Gabe exchanged a glance with Autumn before responding. "We had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Norman. We left their place around 9 PM and then returned home."

The older officer then took over, "Can they corroborate that?"

"Of course," Autumn said, her voice steady. "Mr. and Mrs. Norman can confirm it."

"We will be verifying that." The officer harrumphed as he continued, "Also, leave your forwarding address with us. We expect your full cooperation in the investigation."

"Can you tell us why you're asking these questions? What's this about? Why do you need to know about our whereabouts from last night? Savoy has been dead for a while now... Or has there been any progress there?"

The senior officer snorted and shook his head, "You answer the questions. Don't ask them."

"When did you last see Miss Bianca?"

Autumn frowned at this? Why were they questioning her about Bianca? But she shrugged and answered them seriously.

"I saw her at the courthouse last."

"And after that? Did the two of you not meet again? You must have been angry that she betrayed you. Did you threaten her?"

Autumn felt a surge of anger but kept her voice steady. "Of course I didn't threaten her. As for meeting her again, no, I haven't seen or spoken to her since the courthouse. She is the one who has been bothering me! And I don't know what new story she has come up with, but frankly, I have no interest in her drama."

The older officer leaned forward, eyes narrowing. "Were you tired of her drama? Is that why you did that?"

"What did I do? What do you mean?" Autumn asked in confusion.

The younger officer cleared his throat again and clarified, "Mrs Bianca was found dead last night at her home. Witnesses reported hearing someone arguing with her about a man."

Autumn's eyes widened in shock. "Dead? Bianca is dead?" Even as she tried to understand this, Gabe had already reached the conclusion for the reason for this visit.

Gabe's expression hardened as he turned to the officers. "Are you seriously suggesting Autumn had something to do with this? She was with me all night. We were at the Normans' and came straight home afterward."

Meanwhile, Autumn shook her head and cut in, "I would never do anything to hurt her..."

The older officer maintained his stern demeanor, disregarding Autumn's shock. "We need to follow every lead. Witnesses heard someone matching your description arguing with her last night. We have to take that seriously."

"Matching her description? Do you realize how vague that sounds?" Gabe exclaimed, while Autumn spoke softly, "I had nothing to do with Bianca's death."

The younger officer nodded, his tone more conciliatory. "We will verify your alibi. For now, we need your cooperation. Please provide us with your forwarding address and any contact information. We may need to reach you during the investigation."

"You can check with the Normans and review any surveillance footage you need to. But I assure you, Autumn did not leave my side last night. As for the investigation, my personal assistant is going to be here for the next month. You can contact him if you need to reach us."

As the police officers walked away, Gabe noticed the young officer drop a piece of paper on the floor as he walked out. It was only after he saw them out and returned that he realized Autumn had noticed the paper too. And was now reading it, white as a sheet.

Without a word, he took the small chit from her hand and read it, "Gregory Savoy is going to be declared dead tomorrow. But he is not. The DNA tests have been tampered with. The police wants to close the case. Be careful. Also, he probably has help. That person also probably killed Bianca. She seemed to have had some evidence against him. This is my number...."

"What does this mean? Why are they still protecting him?"

Gabe shook his head as he held Autumn's hand. "They are not protecting him. They are covering their own a**es! If they let people know now that Gregory is alive, then many other rotten things would come out. Don't worry, Autumn. My people are already on it. They've been looking for evidence already."

Autumn nodded and moved to get Arabelle so that they could leave her as soon as possible. What she did not hear was Gabe murmuring to himself about the police officer. Why was he helping them?

Chapter 618: Friends

"How can she be dead? No, no. This is not possible." The man shook his head in disbelief as he absorbed the news. Bianca had been his only connection to the outside world, the one who had helped him fake his death and was supposed to ensure he could escape safely.

"That is not all, sir. There is something else as well..."

"What is it now?" he demanded.

"The police are not going to be able to close this case, or yours."

"What do you mean they're not going to close my case? I know for a fact that Bianca already changed the DNA reports. They should be closing it..."

"No. Someone leaked the report that Bianca was killed because she was trying to change the DNA report. The public is very angry and demanding that the DNA test be done again, this time with independent third-party laboratories."

Savoy's ruddy face turned ashen then! Dam* it! All this was because of that Gabriel Frost. If it had not been for him coming and intervening in Autumn's life, all this would never have happened. He'd still be living a cushy life with Autumn and Arabelle at his beck and call.

"What do you mean, someone leaked the report? Who would do that?"

The messenger hesitated before continuing, "There's more, sir. You are now the prime suspect in Bianca's murder. The authorities believe you had a motive to silence her, and with the public's outrage, you're a hunted man."

Savoy's hand clenched as he paced the room! This was not supposed to have happened. He'd made sure to grease every palm and blackmail everyone who could not be bribed. How did it all fall apart, just when it was time for the next plan.

Gregory Savoy clenched his fists, his mind racing. "This can't be happening. I've covered every track, paid every bribe. How did it all fall apart?"

"What about the lady who contacted me? Your boss?", he demanded, desperation creeping in his voice. It was on her advice that he'd done this. If now, she left him with a problem, then he would have nothing left. No way to wriggle out of this problem.

She's asked you to lay low for the time being, sir. She said she will help you move once the dust has settled."

"Lay low? That's all she has to say?" Savoy spat, his voice rising with anger. "I trusted her advice, and now she wants me to hide like a coward?"

The messenger took a cautious step back. "Sir, she believes it's too dangerous to act right now. She said she'd help you move once the dust has settled."

"Settle? There's no settling this! Not when the whole city is against me!" Savoy's mind raced as he tried to think of his next move. "I need more than empty promises. I need action."

The messenger shook his head, "Sir, my boss already has made arrangements. The problem is on your end because someone killed Bianca. In fact, this has created a hitch in our otherside smooth plan. We know for sure, Gabriel Frost is not behind this because we've been keeping his people occupied. But someone has been onto your plan and they are digging about. Someone who has an agenda against you probably and has access to all your secrets. We need to flush this person out first. The one who is stirring up the trouble."

Savoy slammed his fist on the desk. "Find this traitor, and do it quickly. I want them dealt with before they can cause any more problems."

"We're already working on it, sir. We've narrowed it down to a few suspects, but it will take time to confirm. In the meantime, you need to be careful. Trust no one."

"Of course, I won't. What about Autumn? Can we not bring her here? It is safe..." Gregory licked his lips as he said this. It had been a few days since he had seen her beauty.

Even the messenger shuddered uncomfortably as he witnessed the man's lust and shook his head,"
There is no way we'll be able to take Autumn for now. At the moment, Gabe Frost's are keeping a close eye on her and a look out for any suspicious movements.

Savoy's expression darkened further. "So, you're telling me I have to wait and do nothing?"

"I'm afraid so, sir. Any move now would be too risky. We can't afford to draw any more attention."

Savoy gritted his teeth. "Fine. But I want daily updates on her status. The moment there's an opportunity, we take it. I want her with me! I don't care about anything else."

The man nodded and walked out of the room. Once outside, he dialed a number and waited.

"Mrs Winthrop. We have the man and he is being fully cooperative. Also, Gabriel Frost has not yet realized that you gotten in touch with the man.

Elena smiled then." The saying that the enemy of an enemy was a friend, was definitely true."

Now, she would use this man to lure Gabe and his new wife but then have something waiting for them. And when the time came, she would simply place let Gregory Savoy take all the blame with Gabe focused on him. Gregory Savoy was a pawn, a useful distraction for Gabe Frost. With Savoy obsessed with Autumn, Elena could move her pieces on the chessboard without much resistance or warning.

She then opened the file on Savoy and the woman he was obsessed with, before a name caught her interest and she narrowed her eyes. Arabelle...

Her fingers clenched, the name reminding her of her own daughter... She narrowed her eyes and looked at the picture of the child carefully. So, this girl was the reason why Gabe had married Autumn?

She was the replacement of her daughter in Gabe's life. This was fate. She would now take care of those Frosts and this little girl, Arabelle, would replace her Arabelle. She'd have a lovely daughter to raise again...

"Don't worry, Arabelle. Mommy is coming for you."

Chapter 619: Very Soon

"I can't believe Bianca is dead," Autumn sighed once more as she walked out of the room, only to stop short at the sight of Gabe in the kitchen, snapping her out of her melancholy thoughts. She stilled. Holy shi*. This man was too hot. Back home, he usually wore casual clothes or lounge wear. Even when he went to the hotel, he would dress down...

But this was something else entirely...He stood there, in front of the coffee machine, making coffee, but effortlessly commanding the space in a well-fitted suit that accentuated his strong shoulders and a pair of tailored pants that hinted at a physique Autumn hadn't fully appreciated until now. Actually, she'd appreciated it. But she'd never imagined that he would look that good in a suit.

He turned then and his gaze immediately snagged hers. Autumn's knee-jerk reaction was to look away, but something in his gaze warned her to not look away. It would be too much like backing down and surrendering. His lips kicked up in a smile as he watched her raise her chin and stare back at him.

Gabe's eyes traveled slowly from her eyes down to her feet, taking in every detail with an appraising glance that made Autumn acutely aware of herself. The way he looked at her always made her skin tingle, as if he could see right through her. It was both thrilling and unnerving. The air between them crackled with an unspoken tension, amplified by the intensity of his gaze.

Finally, breaking the silence, he remarked casually, "Are you wearing 'that'?"

Autumn blinked at the question and distracted by him walking towards her. Colouring a little, she shook her head just as he reached her. He leaned down and whispered, "Too bad. I want to be all over you, Autumn. Wear it..."

Before she could say something, Gabe leaned in and kissed her softly as she returned his kiss. The kiss felt like a drug these days. She needed them every day. And the more she had, the more she wanted. As she parted her lips to deepen the kiss, she heard the sound of pattering feet and stepped back.

Just then, Arabelle came running in, her eyes wide with surprise as she saw Gabe. She stopped short, just like Autumn had moments before and Autumn felt smug. See! She was not the only one who had been shocked by his overly handsome look. Unlike her though, Arabelle did not pause to appreciate the man.

"Wow, Mister Gabriel, you look so handsome today!" she exclaimed, spreading her hands wide for him to pick her up.

Taking his cue, Gabe picked up Arabelle and quickly complained, "Are you saying I don't look handsome on other days? Is that so Miss Arabelle?"

Little Arabelle, however, was not confused. She rolled her eyes and answered seriously, "You look handsomer today than on other days!"

"There is no word called 'handsomer', Miss Arabelle."

She shrugged, "That is not my problem. You look it!"

Laughing, Gabe kissed her soft cheek and placed her down on the chair. "Well, thank you for the compliment, princess," he said, smoothing a stray lock of her hair. "But I have to get to work now. And I've placed your cereal in the cupboard there..."

Arabelle pouted, her bottom lip jutting out adorably. "Do you have to go, Mister Gabriel? Can't you stay a little longer?"

"Uh huh! I am not staying back today. I know for a fact that you have a full day today..."

Arabelle grinned and nodded, "Yes. I am going to play with Princess Dora today. And the little babies are going to be there too! Auntie Nora is going to come pick me up after breakfast!"

"Ahh! See. Then you will be out and about. And I will be bored at home. But Miss Arabelle, you make me worry? Are you going to forget about me, now that you have so many people to dote on you?"

"Nah! You're still my favourite! We can play tonight, when you come back..."

"Okay then! It's a date, Miss Arabelle. Bye, for now!"

Autumn watched the exchange, her heart warming at the sight. Gabe was like a real dad to Autumn. Her sister was lucky as well. Gabe stood up and turned to her, his eyes lingering on her face for a moment. "I'll see you later, Autumn."

"Bye."

As Gabe walked past her, his hand gently tugged at her, a silent gesture for her to follow him. Curious, Autumn trailed behind him, glancing back at Arabelle who was now happily getting her cereal.

When they reached the foyer, she opened her mouth to ask what he wanted to talk about, but Gabe turned to her and without a word, pulled her close and capturing her lips in a searing kiss. Autumn melted into him, her hands instinctively reaching up to wrap around his neck as his hand captured her head, deepening the kiss as he angled her head...

Gabe finally pulled back, his forehead resting against hers as they both caught their breath. "Needed to give my wife a proper goodbye kiss," he murmured, a mischievous glint in his eyes. "It's a tradition, after all."

Autumn giggled at that and watched as his eyes darkened again, falling to her mouth... "Autumn...Very soon... We're going to be together..."

Her breath caught in her throat as she heard his low voice. The deep baritone, made her shiver and she watched as he opened the door, leaving with a wink in her direction. The words sounded like a promise and a warning, making her tingle inside...

Suddenly, feeling a burst of courage, she opened the door and ran behind him. He'd only reached the car, when he seemed to realise that she was chasing him and turned to look at her questioningly.

As she reached him, she stopped for a moment to catch her breath. And then, she quickly placed her hands on his shoulders, raised herself on tiptoes, kissed him hard on the mouth before stepping back and murmuring, "You're right. Very soon, we are going to be together..."

Chapter 620: Blessings

"Has he been all over you yet?"

Autumn nearly dropped the cake she had just bought as she gaped at the four girls lounging in the room.

Narrowing her eyes, she carefully placed the box on the table before sprinting towards Nora, ready to tackle the ringleader. "You! You are so dead! Do you have any idea how much teasing I've had to endure because of you?"

Over the past few months, she'd come to understand one thing and that was there was nothing private in the Frost family. Everyone was in everyone's business unless it was something sensitive. Then they would back out! But... that lingerie!!!

Nora lunged from the couch, narrowly avoiding Autumn as she shot out, "Hey! Think of all the things I didn't send! I mean, it's Gabe's pictures, I could have used some se*y actors pics! And then he would have been totally jealous!"

Isabella, Evana and Olivia burst into laughter as they watched Autumn running behind Nora, ready to kick her a**!

"Fight Fight!" Isabella called out, as she let out a whistle before shaking her head and leaning back with a sigh, "You are incorrigible, Nora!"

Nora grinned as she stumbled back to her original position, throwing herself with a loud sigh. "That's why everyone loves me! Now, sit down and spill the beans. What's your plan for seducing Mr. Gabe Frost?"

Autumn blushed furiously, waving her hands in protest, even as Isabella and Olivia leaned forward in excitement, ready to listen. "Seduce him? Are you kidding me? He's... he's Gabe! I can't just—"

Isabella's eyes sparkled mischievously. "Exactly! He's Gabe, and you're Autumn, and the sparks between you two are impossible to ignore. I mean, we could see it everytime we met!"

Olivia nodded vigorously. "Seriously, Autumn, anyone with half a brain can see how he looks at you. You just need a little push."

Autumn groaned, burying her face in her hands. "I can't believe we're having this conversation."

"Believe it, sister," Evana said, leaning in with a conspiratorial grin. "We're here to help. So, what's the game plan?"

"She has no game plan." Nora shook her head, pretending to be disappointed.

"Well of course I don't have a game plan! What do you expect me to do? Wear the lingerie with his face all over and stand in front of him?" Autumn asked with a sigh.

Unexpectedly, Nora clapped and nodded, "Yeah! You can do that! Or maybe just stand in front of him naked! I'm sure he would work it out then!!"

"Oh please! We need her to be seduce.. not go to fking directly!" Evana protested, rolling her eyes..."

Nora shrugged her shoulders, "Who cares? The end goal is that, isn't it?"

Memory updated

Autumn finally plopped down on the couch, breathless from chasing Nora. She was about to take a sip of water when Nora pulled out an envelope from her pocket and waved it in front of her face.

"What's this?" Autumn asked, frowning as she snatched it from Nora's hand.

"Open it and see," Nora replied with a smirk.

Autumn carefully opened the envelope and her eyes widened at the sight of a cheque with an astonishing number of zeros. "What the hell, Nora? What's this for?"

Nora leaned back, crossing her arms with a mischievous glint in her eyes. "It's for you, darling. To leave Gabe alone."

The room went silent as everyone stared at Nora, who was grinning from ear to ear. Autumn's mouth opened and closed in shock before she found her voice. "Are you serious?"

Evana leaned forward and took the cheque from Autumn's hand, who was still shocked, "Wow. You're one rich woman, if you're bribing Autumn to leave Gabe alone. So, would you be interested in investing in Estania. We invite foreign investments...

"Shu* up Evana!" Nora winked at her and then turned to Autumn and continued, "I'm dead serious. Look, we all know how you feel about Gabe, despite the circumstances under which you married. But just in case you're in it for the money or something doesn't work out, I thought I'd make it easy for you. Take the cheque, leave Gabe, and you'll never have to worry about anything again."

Autumn's face flushed with a mix of anger and embarrassment. "You think I'd be with Gabe for his money? That's... that's insulting! To me and to him! I thought you were my friends! All of you! I was happy to be here! But this..." With a firm look, Autumn tore the cheque into pieces and glared at Nora, "Even if this was some sort of a test, this is not done!!"

Before Autumn could walk out, the others giggled and Nora rolled her eyes as she handed Olivia and Isabelle, some money. "Dam*! You made me lose the bet, Autumn. Should've just refused the money or taken it. Why tear the cheque? I'll have to write one again!"

Autumn paused, as she looked at them. Was this some sort of a prank? But, why then was Nora writing a cheque again. As Nora extended the cheque to her again, she stared at it and then at Nora who said calmly, "The money is a gift from Gabe's grandfather. The old man left a few of these amounts for me to hand them out to the future Frost brides. If you accept it and leave, then it is 'good riddance' money. If not, then this is your wedding gift from the old man."

"Though I prefer to think of this as the old man trying to bribe you into staying with his grandson."

"I... Nora, I appreciate... whatever this is supposed to be," Autumn began, her voice calmer now. "But Gabe and I are married because of circumstances beyond our control. So, this would be not right."

Before Autumn could have refused, it was Olivia who spoke up," Autumn, Mr Frost left this money in Nora's hands to give it to a woman whom she feels is worthy of standing by Gabe. And he's given all of us girls something. The initial capital for my restaurant also came from him. Though I treated it as a loan and returned it, he left the money to me again. This is the old man's blessing. Just take it."