

Benefits 621

Chapter 621: Bad Jokes

"OOhh! Look what the wind brought inside... A crab..." Ian announced with a smirk.

"A healthy crab at that! Nice," Sebastian added, grinning widely.

Gabe stared at the two jesters and rolled his eyes as he pulled a chair for himself, " This crab can pinch really hard, so you might want to be careful..."

Ian and Sebastian exchanged glances and continued to tease him, " Ahh! Gabe Frost... it seems small town life suits you! It's made you all rosy and pleasant... You even think pinching us is a threat. How cute.."

Seb shook his head at Ian and said, " Nah! This is not the effect of being in a small town. Its Autumn Frost effect.

"But Frost has not been inside Autumn, yet, has he?" Ian asked, earning himself a threatening glance from Gabe over the crude joke while Sebastian simply laughed out loud. They would never have dared to say this in the presence of the women, but this was indeed a good time to tease Gabe.

Before Gabe could actually hit his brother, the door opened and Demetri and Lucien walked in.

"Well, well, what have we here? A family gathering without us?" Demetri said, raising an eyebrow.

"And it looks like we walked in on something interesting," Lucien added, noticing the mischievous glint in Ian and Sebastian's eyes. " What are we discussing?"

"About how Frost has not yet been inside Autumn." Seb said nonchalantly... Lucien coughed as he heard this while Gabe picked up the pen in front of him and threw it at Sebastian who caught it and chucked it back at Gabe.

With a smile, Demetri took his place and murmured, "He hasn't been all over her yet, as well. According to my Nora, that is."

That caused all his brothers to break out into laughter while Gabe glared at his traitor of a brother! "Demon Frost! I will kill you!" Gabe burst out, ready to kick his brothers.

"Okay okay! We won't tease you anymore. Let's discuss the most important topic first."

The brothers dropped the teasing look and were about to jump into work mode, when Seb continued, "Deciding what to have for lunch is the first order of the day and then we need to discuss the New policy of the government and its impacts..."

Ian shook his head and pointed at Seb, "Poor Gabe has been summoned back because of the project and instead of doing that, you believe deciding lunch is more important?"

Seb nodded, "Of course. We can't work on empty stomachs. I'll order crab legs..."

After catching another flying pen from Gabe's direction, the brothers finally moved to the upcoming discussion about expanding to another sector of which Gabe would have to take over...

It was only after a lengthy discussion over the plan of action that everyone returned to work, clapping Gabe on the back, until only Demetri was left behind...

Gabe sighed and sat back down on his chair. Knowing Demon Frost, they were going to have some sort of a discussion...

"You've become quite chatty after marrying Nora."

Demetri shrugged, "She's rubbed off on me. True.. More than I can say about you and your wife."

Gabe glared at Demetri, even as he felt himself shake his head. It felt good to joke around. Even though he was the butt of the joke at this moment.

Gabe shook his head in exasperation, "Fine fine. Tell me."

"I needed to speak about Arabelle."

"About Arabelle? Well, she is a good kid and she is safe. I mean, yeah, she is in danger from that man but other than that, we are okay. She is also a handful, but then little girls are like that..."

There was a moment of silence as Demetri stared at him. It took him a moment, to realize that Demetri was not talking about the little girl...

Before he could question him, though, Demetri continued, "I meant what are your plans after the situation with Arabelle is settled. I know for a fact that you planned to separate from Autumn once the Arabelle situation was settled. But this is going to take longer than you had anticipated. And your feelings about Autumn have changed..."

Gabe paused... His feelings for Autumn... What were they? He had no idea. He liked her? Yes. He wanted to be with her? Yes. He'd been considering making their relationship permanent? Yes. But all that was true. But that had all been in the back of his mind. He hadn't expected to be questioned like this... However, he answered truthfully, "I am still thinking. But I am considering making this marriage the forever kind. I like Autumn and I hope she likes me too. We make a good family..."

Demetri leaned back in his chair, studying Gabe with a thoughtful expression. That expression made Gabe want to almost fidget but he restrained himself until Demetri finally spoke, "You know, Gabe, it's great that you're considering making this marriage permanent. But have you thought about Autumn's feelings in all of this?"

Gabe sighed, running a hand through his hair. "Of course, I have, Demon. I'm not that big a jerk! I don't know how she feels. I mean, I know she is attracted to me but what would be her thoughts on a long term marriage based only on physical attraction and friendship, I don't know. She might want to fall in love some day and all! I know that! But at the moment, she has so much on her plate that I don't want to complicate things further."

"If you really want this to work, you have to be honest with her. Completely honest, Gabe. All of us like that girl. She's done what we couldn't. She's returned the smile to your face. For us, Autumn is already part

of the family. So, even if things won't work out..." Gabe nodded, understanding what Demetri was warning him of. Not to hurt Autumn or they would hurt him. It was a simple threat. And yet he liked it. He was proud of Autumn for having created that space herself in his family.

And yet, as he realized this, he knew that Demetri was right. Autumn had pushed away the darkness that was clinging to him for a long time... Ever since he'd realized how sick Arabelle was and still chosen to be by her side...

"Relax. I'll be honest with her..." Gabe tried to assure but Demetri was not satisfied.. and added pointedly, "Everything Gabe... Things that you've kept hidden from the others as well...even regarding your medical conditions...."

Chapter 622: Wedding

"What kind of joke is this supposed to be?"

Erasmi sighed, feeling the weight of his brothers' stares, and cursed under his breath." Dam* it! All of his brothers together were formidable! But he was the oldest in age, if not in experience and he knew he needed to curb their curiosity right now, or else it would not bode well...

So, putting on his cold face, he raised an eyebrow and glared at them through the screen. "My wedding invitation looks like a joke to you people? At least I invited you unlike a few someones who only let us know after the deed was done!"

"Gabe looked away, unwilling to engage in this, since the accusation was true, while Demetri protested, throwing up his hands in surrender, 'Hey! I told you! It's not my fault your brain was 'faulty' at the time!"

"Telling me doesn't count. Did you tell any of these bozos? No! I am telling you all and inviting you to come to our wedding, next weekend! And don't forget to bring gifts!"

"Erasmi Frost! You cannot get away with that. You will tell us what happened and how you are suddenly engaged to Ave Mercer. If you don't, I swear we will come there and kidnap you! Don't tell me you went Seb's way and got her pregnant..."Gabe snapped, his eyes narrowing at the screen.

Erasmi rolled his eyes at that, "Gabe, you of all people should understand what needs to be done for a child! You've married Autumn for little Arabelle's sake, haven't you? Ava and I are already co-parenting Caius and we've become close friends. So, it was the next logical step. It will save Caius from being shuffled from one house to the other. Or being subjected to useless gossip."

That silenced everyone. They all knew and understood that Caius was the most important thing to Erasmi. In fact, Caius was the reason Erasmi had even come out of the walls he'd built around himself after recovering from his prolonged illness.

Yet, while everyone stayed quiet, it was Demetri who spoke up, "You can't live your life solely for Caius, Eras. We love and care for the boy too. But we want you to be happy."

Erasmi sighed, "And I will find my happiness. I think Ava and I have a lot in common. She's been through so many health issues, but now that she's recovering, I think I'd like to be by her side. I enjoy her company, and I believe she doesn't mind mine too much. At least she didn't chase me away with a broom when I suggested marriage."

Ian snorted, "She ought to have! You know she's out of your league. Poor woman is even stepping down for you." The comment lightened the slightly tense atmosphere. Each of them had their own thoughts about the marriage, but they kept them to themselves. They would just have to trust Erasmi and give him the benefit of the doubt, as they had to each other, to not be foolish and find his happiness.

"Alright. We'll be there before the wedding. Have you made arrangements? At least arranged a surprise for the bride or something?"

"No. This is a practical marriage. We are holding it at home. In the back garden. The only reason we are holding the ceremony is also Caius. So, it's just going to be all of you. Ava has no family so...Anyway, the girls have already started messaging Ava about her wedding dress and what not. It seems Dora and Arabelle are going to be flower girls."

Erasmi read the message on his phone as another beep sounded and looked up at the screen again, "Demon, your wife says to let you know that they will need Gabe to volunteer to drive them halfway to us and Ava will be coming there to a bridal boutique tomorrow."

"Hey! These girls are much faster than us! Erasmi, are you sure you did not spill the beans earlier? Here we are still in shock and they are already organising a bridal boutique visit?"

Erasmi rolled his eyes, "Do I look foolish to you. We decided to do it at the same time. Ava called the girls and I called you all. But now your girls are messaging me nonstop... about being a douche for not giving them time to prepare a proper wedding, whatever that means."

"Hya! We can't let the girls outdo us! Come on, guys, we need to plan an epic bachelor party!"

"Forget the bachelor party for a sec. Have you guys chosen a ring? Are you going to do it? When? Do you want one from grandmother's collection?" Lucien asked, already mentally planning a trip to the bank vault.

Erasmi shook his head, "Nope. I think I'll let Ava choose the ring. Her previous marriage.... that man gave her his mother's ring which she didn't like. And refused to buy her another ring."

"Letting her choose is a good thing. But make sure it's something special."

There was a brief silence as they got off the call and then, Ian looked around and spoke up, "Friendship is a solid foundation, but it's not enough for a marriage. They need more passion..."

"We can help along with the passion..." Lucien added, his thought mirroring Ian's.

"They've been close to each other for almost a year now and there has been no attraction. What can we do now?"

"No attraction because they have not looked at each other like a man or a woman. But more like the other parent to the kid."

"Ava Mercer is a beautiful woman.. We just need Eras to see that." Seb added thoughtfully.

Finally, with all the brothers on the same page, they exchanged a glance and turned to Demetri. He should know best how to get his twin to where they wanted.

With a sigh, Demetri shook his head and nodded, "Don't worry. I'll handle it."

The brothers all grinned at this as they exchanged looks. The last person standing was about to go down!.... How fun...

Chapter 623: Designated Driver

"Why do you guys even need a designated driver, is what I would like to know," Gabe asked as he navigated through the bustling city streets. And why had he been names the volunteer? Did he look like a professional driver to them? Shrugging that off, he continued to question the females, "I mean, it's not like you're going to get high trying on a bunch of gowns."

Nora chuckled, "Oh, Gabe, you underestimate the gravity of the bridal gown mission. It's not just about trying on dresses and gowns okay? There's an art to it. It's a proper ceremony almost. We must have wine to toast each selection, and heaven forbid we don't find the perfect one—it could mean even more drinks and plenty of fretting. Hence, the designated driver."

Gabe smirked, shaking his head in mock disbelief. "Are you people lush? You're going to choose a gown or get drunk?"

"Absolutely not! We would never choose a wedding dress drunk!" Isabella chimed in from beside Nora and continued, "We'll only be a bit tipsy. But imagine us driving around tipsy, trying to debate the merits of lace versus satin. Disaster waiting to happen!"

He glanced at Isabella in the rearview mirror, amused yet wary. "Maybe what you really need is a bodyguard, someone to keep you out of trouble."

Nora scoffed playfully. "Oh please. We're not as wild as you think."

Gabe grinned, eyes twinkling mischievously even as he put on a sad expression. "That's exactly what worries me. You girls are much wilder!!!"

Gabe's teasing remark elicited a chorus of laughter from the backseat, where Nora and Isabella exchanged knowing glances.

"We are not!" Nora snapped to which Gabe shot back, "Are too."

Autumn giggled as she heard the two people bickering like siblings and shook her head. This was a side of Gabe that she had never seen. Arguing like a kid... It was a fun thing to watch.

"Oh please. You would enjoy chaperoning. Trying to keep us in line."

"As if anyone I can keep any of you in line!"

The car finally pulled up in front of an elegant bridal boutique, the storefront adorned with delicate lace curtains and mannequins showcasing stunning gowns. Gabe parked and sighed dramatically, "Alright, ladies, your palace of gowns awaits. Is Ava here yet?"

"She's inside. Come on in Gabe." Isabella said as she jumped down and Gabe shook his head with a look of horror, "You want me to lose my masculinity by going into that place?"

Nora laughed and patted him on the back. "Oh, come on, Gabe. Just think of it as adding 'bravery' to your already long list of macho qualities."

Isabella grinned and high fived Nora, adding, "Besides, we need a male opinion. Who else is going to tell us if we look stunning or just okay?"

"Is there a time, you girls do not look stunning?" Gabe asked with the perfect expression of someone shocked at the concept that the girls would not look stunning. The girls all laughed and nodded, "You're too good, Gabe Frost!"

Just then, Ava walked out of the boutique, her face lighting up as she spotted Nora, Isabella, Evana and Autumn. The girls rushed to greet her, enveloping her in a group hug. Ava's nerves seemed to ease with their warmth and enthusiasm even as she looked a bit nervously at Gabe.

They were all wonderful people, she knew. Caius had always talked about his uncles. She'd met them a few times, but always felt as if she were on the edge. Not a part of the family but forcing her presence on them. When Erasmi told her that one of his brothers would also be coming over, she was too nervous. She didn't know what they thought of this marriage...

"Ava, you look gorgeous!" Nora exclaimed, holding her hands.

Isabella nodded, beaming. "We're so excited to help you find the perfect dress."

Ava smiled nervously, casting another sideways glance at Gabe. "I'm so glad you all are here. I was a bit anxious about this whole process."

Before she could cast him another anxious glance, Gabe walked forward and kissed her cheek, "Welcome to the chaos, that are the Frosts, Ava."

Ava's eyes filled up. She knew then Erasmi had been right. His brothers had really accepted her just because Erasmi had chosen her.

"Thank you, Gabe. This means so much to me." Gabe nodded but before the people could say more, the girls dragged Ava into the bridal boutique, eager to look at dresses, while Gabe followed at a more sedate pace. The different shades of white inside the boutique almost made his head spin, even as he considered the idea of having a similar boutique in the resort since they were planning to make it a go to place for weddings...

Even as he sat back to note down the idea, his eyes followed Autumn who had now somehow separated from the group of chattering girls. But it was her expression that caught his eye. He noticed her hand pause at one particular dress. It was an exquisite gown with a fitted bodice adorned with intricate pearl and crystal embellishments, while the skirt was a flowing train that added a touch of fairy-tale elegance to it... Autumn's hand lingered on the dress, her eyes filled with a wistful longing.

It struck Gabe then, what Nora had said about wanting to have a perfect wedding dress even if the wedding would not be perfect. Autumn, to had not been given a chance to become a bride...

He looked at Autumn thoughtfully, trying to see what she would do. However, before Autumn could take the dress out, the assistant approached her, asking her to probably go into the trial room where the other women had now disappeared. He watched as she gave the dress another lingering look before leaving...

Decisively, Gabe summoned the assistant and as the woman approached him, whispered something in her ear. The woman lit up and nodded as she hurriedly walked away while Gabe sighed and looked at the dress carefully.

Chapter 624: Drive

Autumn and Gabe drove back in comfortable silence after the tiring day. Autumn sighed. The silence was so peaceful that she almost wanted to doze off. But there was one thing that she couldn't get out of her mind. And it was that wedding dress. They'd had a lot of fun making Ava try all those pretty lace and satin gowns. But throughout, her mind had been on the dress she'd seen outside. Wanting to take one more look at it.

That was foolish of her, she knew. What use was a wedding dress to her? She was already married. And even when she'd been thinking of marrying Pierce, she had not felt the need for a dress. Unexpectedly, she had not even been able to take another glance at that beauty when they returned. The dress had been sold!

Leaning her head against the window, she closed her eyes and sighed again as she closed her eyes, almost dreaming of trying that dress on... Before she could doze off, however, her hand was caught by his and she looked at him in surprise.

He threw her a look with raised brows and she looked down, at their hands. He was actually challenging her to take her hand away... but she liked this... so instead of pulling her hand, she folder her fingers so that she was holding his hand too. "Why are you sighing so much?" Gabe finally asked her.

Autumn coloured at that and quickly answered, " Its nothing. I'm just too sleepy."

She saw the concerned look he sent her but turned away, lest he realize that she was not being totally honest.

Gabe considered her for a moment before making a decision. He pulled the car over to the side of the road and turned off the engine. The sudden silence was almost deafening.

"What are you doing? What happened? Why did you stop?"

Gabe unbuckled his seatbelt and leaned over her, his face inches from hers. Autumn's heart skipped a beat, her breath catching in her throat. Autumn blinked. Did he suddenly stop in the middle of the road to kiss her? The thought was enough for the tension to thicken between them. Her pulse quickened and her body reacted instinctively, making her eyes flutter close.

But instead of kissing her, Gabe reached for the side of her seat and pressed a button. The seat reclined, laying her back gently. Autumn opened her eyes in confusion, looking up at him.

Gabe's lips curved into a mischievous smile. "You thought I was going to kiss you, didn't you?"

Autumn's cheeks flushed with embarrassment. "No, I didn't."

Gabe chuckled, a deep, rich sound that sent shivers down her spine. He leaned in closer, his lips brushing against her ear. "Liar."

Before she could respond, he pressed a quick, soft kiss to her lips. It was over before she could even process it, leaving her wanting more. Gabe pulled back slightly; his eyes dark with desire.

"Sleep."

Autumn shook her head, "No. That is not good. I'll try and..."

"Sleep, Autumn. Rest well. You're going to need your energy later."

Autumn's heart raced and her eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

Gabe sent her a look as he the engine roared back to life. " You know what I mean... Autumn... We're going to be alone tonight. Arabelle is with Seb...I don't think I want to wait much longer."

Autumn gulped as she realized what he meant. Tonight, they were going to...

Even as she felt nervous butterflies in her stomach, she accepted that her body's reaction was quite different. She could almost feel her all her nerve endings come alive.

They continued their drive, the silence between them now charged with unspoken words and desires coming alive. Her sleepiness seemed to have disappeared. Autumn tried to focus on the passing scenery, but her mind kept drifting back to the feel of his lips on hers, the promise in his eyes.

When they finally reached the house, Autumn felt more awake than ever almost as if she never would feel sleepy again. Gabe parked the car and got out, walking around to her side to open the door for her. She placed her hand in his and as she'd stepped down, she felt him pull her towards him, his hand on her waist...His fingers caressed her gently as he pressed his lips against her muffling her thanks.

This time, when they broke the kiss, Gabe did not let go, instead walking down the drive way, with is arm around her shoulder. Each step seemed a thousand mile long.

Autumn could feel his gaze so she turned her head and looked up at him, shyly. She could feel his searching eyes, as he asked her, " Autumn, are you sure you're ready for this?" he asked, his voice soft but filled with intensity.

She felt warm at the question. Yes. She was ready. She trusted him. She wanted him...She wanted to know what it felt like, giving herself to him...She moved her head to nod, to speak everything on her mind, but before she could, bright lights turned on from behind them, breaking the peace. Gabe and her turned back to look at the gate, wondering who it could be.

Someone was walking down the driveway towards them. Autumn frowned, trying to recognise the person but the bright glare from behind the woman made it impossible.

But Gabe seemed to have recognized her as he stiffened. She looked up at him, about to ask him if she knew this person. However, just then, a sharp voice cut through, " I'm sorry for breaking up such a lovely scene..."

Autumn watched as the woman finally was close enough to see her features. She was beautiful in a cold way...Who was this...

"Elena." Gabe greeted the woman in a harshe voice.

Elena's lips curved into a mocking smile. "I heard you were married now, Gabe. I had to come see for myself." She extended a small, ornately wrapped box towards Autumn. "A gift for the new bride."

Autumn hesitated, sensing the hostility radiating from Elena and shook her head, "Thank you, but—"

"We want nothing from you," Gabe interrupted, his voice hard. "Take your gift and leave."

"Come on, Gabe. I had to get her something didn't I? The woman who has taken my daughter's place?" Taking her hand, Elena pressed the little box into her hand and walked away...

Chapter 625: Broken

Without another word, Elena walked away, leaving them standing there. In the next moment, Gabe too let go of her and walked into the house. Autumn gulped. Even though she knew that his mood had been ruined, seeing him walk away from her, made her ache. She didn't want him to go away. She didn't know why, but it felt as if he was walking away forever.

She looked at the box in her hand and quickly pushed it into her pocket. She would find a way return this tomorrow.

As she followed him into the house, she winced, hearing his door bang against the door with a bang. She stood there, staring at the closed door for a while before feeling dejected. She thought tonight would be 'The Night'. But that was gone again.

Her shoulders slumped, she walked back towards her own room, giving up on getting any peace or sleep tonight. Her mind was going to be full of worry for Gabe. As she opened her closet, her eyes fell on the parcel that Nora had sent and she felt something in her change... So what if Gabe did not come to her. She could go to him.

She felt a surge of determination. Tonight was the night they would get together. And she would not let the appearance of some old hag change that. Taking a deep breath, she took out a short dress from the cupboard. It was one she'd bought herself... wanting to wear it for him... It was time for her to show him

her heart...she wouldn't let him shut her out, not when they had come so close. She couldn't give him time to change back into the man with cold eyes that she had first met... The one she hadn't even known had slowly disappeared.

She left her room and walked down the hallway, her footsteps soft against the wooden floor. Each step she took seemed to echo her racing heartbeat. As she reached his door, she paused for a moment, steeling herself before gently pushing it open. Hoping that he had not locked it. He hadn't. It was a small thing. And yet, it gave her hope. He'd not felt the need to lock her outside.

The room was dimly lit, but her eyes quickly adjusted to the darkness. Gabe was sitting on a recliner, his legs stretched out, and his arm draped over his eyes. Even from the doorway, she could see the tension in his body.

Without moving, he knew that she'd come inside. But he didn't move his hand to even look at her. Instead murmuring, "Autumn, I need to be alone...I'm sorry. I'll... Please just go for now..."

She didn't answer him, instead walking towards him slowly. She didn't answer him. Instead, she walked softly towards him, her resolve unwavering. She reached his side, standing next to him, feeling the weight of the moment pressing down on her. Her eyes traced his features, his tensed jaw and the way he remained stiff.

She smiled then. He knew she was next to him. She could feel his hands clench-uncinch as he probably resisted the urge to push her away...

With a finger, she gently traced his jaw and was gratified when he only stiffened even more but did not push her away.."I'm not going anywhere."

Inhaling deeply, Autumn gulped and took the next step... It made her heart race... but she did it...With a determined gaze, she climbed onto the recliner, her knee beside his hip. And then she straddled his lap, her knees resting on either side of him.

His arm snapped up then and his eyes opened, almost glittering in the darkness as he realized the intimate position they were in. Slowly, holding his gaze, she lowered her body, so that she was now sitting on top of him.

Gabe's arms instinctively came to hold her waist, as if afraid she might slip. She watched him gulp, and open his mouth... but no words came out... She felt a rush of headiness as she saw him breathe deeply and open his eyes again, "What.... what are you doing Autumn?"

With one hand, she cupped his cheek, her thumb brushing lightly over his stubbled jaw. "If you have to ask, then I must not be doing it well, Gabe... I'm sure you know, I'm trying to seduce you..."

He seemed to come awake then, as he noticed her attire. She smiled as his eyes traced her under the satin and lace dress... to rest where her dress had ridden up, barely keeping her covered from his gaze. His hands tightened on her waist for a moment but then, his eyes dimmed, "Autumn... You're too good for me. You deserve so much better than a broken man like me. Elena's arrival was like a slap that brought me back to the reality..."

Autumn's heart ached at his words, at the pain reflected in them. She moved her hand from his cheek to the back of his neck, her fingers gently tracing the tension there.

He caught her wrist there, making her look into his eyes, "Autumn... I couldn't take care of the woman I loved. How can I take care of you?"

His words, pierced her for a moment... reminding her she was not the woman he loved. But then she shook the thought away... No.. She would not let anything from the past get between them. "I failed to make her happy, to keep her safe. I might fail you too..."

She tightened her fingers in his hair, tugging slightly to make sure that he was looking at her. "Gabriel Frost... There is no way you can fail me... All I ask is that you let me love you..."

He stilled then, a sharp denial on his lips, "No. You can't love me."

Autumn shook her head at that, "I can. I do... I am always going to... I love you, Gabriel Frost.."

With that, Autumn leaned forward and pressed her lips to his, stopping him from making any more denials.

Unknown to her, her simple words had wreaked havoc in his mind. Old memories and new thoughts continued to assail him, a relentless storm that drowned out everything else. He couldn't feel her kisses or the warmth of her body pressed against his. All he felt was a void, a consuming emptiness that threatened to swallow him whole. His hands came up to her arms, gripping her tightly as he pulled her back, breaking the kiss with a sharp, involuntary movement.

He wanted to tell her, to plead with her not to use those words so lightly. She didn't know what she was saying, didn't understand the weight of her declaration. She was mistaken, he told himself. The truth was that she was probably just grateful to him. He had saved her life, after all. She had confused those feelings of thankfulness and companionship for love, misinterpreting her emotions in the aftermath of her ordeal. And yet, even as he gathered his thoughts, preparing to voice his objections, her eyes met his.

Vulnerable, sincere, and filled with an emotion that tugged at the very fabric of his being. His resolve faltered. The words he had been about to speak, the logical arguments he had crafted, melted away under the intensity of her gaze.

"Autumn..." He tried to speak up. To be harsh now and hurt her than let her hurt herself later. She couldn't love him...

Autumn knew he wanted to reject her words, to refuse her confession, but she was unwilling to take it back. So...she ignored him... He'd seduced her so many times, so many ways... of course she could do this too...

Bringing her hands to his shoulders, she leaned close to him, her movements deliberate and unhurried. Her eyes held his, a silent challenge and a plea all at once. She brought her lips near his ear, whispering his name, "Gabe..." She smiled as she felt his breath catch, her lips brushing just below his ear, sending a shiver through him.

"Autumn... Listen to me," he managed, his voice strained.

"I don't want to, Gabe. Tonight... don't think." Autumn pressed a soft kiss to his cheek as she spoke, her voice a soothing murmur. She moved slowly to his other side, her breath warm against his skin. "Just let me love you." She punctuated her words with another tender kiss, her lips lingering just long enough to make his heart race.

Gabe knew he couldn't hold on any longer. Her touch was driving him out of his mind, each caress and whisper unraveling his resolve. He tried to focus, to warn her, but his thoughts kept getting tangled in the rush of sensations. The way she moved on his lap, her hot breath against his face, the short dress highlighting her perfection—it was all too much. He needed to stop her.

"Autumn... get off," he commanded, his voice rough with desperation. She moved back, maybe understanding the warning in his words, but he found himself distracted. She looked beautiful, almost like a siren whose call he couldn't ignore. The confidence in her eyes as she looked at him gave him a heady feeling. She knew he wouldn't be able to resist her, and that knowledge made her even more alluring.

And then she wriggled on his lap, teasing him as he growled, in arousal or protest he did not know...

Autumn felt a rush of exhilaration, knowing he wanted her, sensing his desire despite his restraint. She raised her chin with determination—if he wouldn't move, she would.

Gently, she slid her hands from his shoulders to his chest, her fingers caressing him lightly as they moved over his skin. Still holding his gaze, she undid the top button of his shirt, then the next two. Once his shirt was halfway unbuttoned, she leaned forward slowly, parting the fabric to reveal his tanned chest. Almost hungrily, she kissed the exposed skin, starting with slow, caressing kisses that deepened into longer, more lingering ones.

She felt his control slip as his hands clenched on her hips, his breath hitching with each kiss. Satisfied with the effect she was having on him, she continued, her fingers deftly undoing the remaining buttons. She paused at the last one, which was tucked into his jeans, and tugged at it with urgency until it came free. With a final, deliberate motion, she pushed the shirt off his shoulders, letting it fall away.

"Are you still going to keep still, she taunted, raising her hips now, her knees still on each side of him, but no longer touching. Tauntingly, she traced her hand just over the waistband of the jeans, stopping just above the button. And then, she caught it, letting it slip free.

She felt his hips move then and her eyes close involuntarily. Slowly, she leaned forward and kissed his chest, while her hands slowly but surely, unzipped the jeans...

That was when he lost control, as her fingers brushed against his hardness, he knew he was a goner. He slid his hands over her smooth back, his hands pausing at where those shoestring straps held her dress.

She looked up at him then and he caught her neck, pulling her towards him with a growl as his lips found hers in a hungry kiss, a blend of urgency and longing that sent a thrill through her.

Her hips moved on his hard thigh, and the desire she felt there. Her wiggling seemed to almost anger him as he slowed the kiss and caught her hips, holding them straight. She tried to protest, she wanted more, she wanted to feel him more... And then, he pulled her closer still, as if trying to get rid of the clothing barried between them. Even through the clothes, she could feel his desire..

Finally, he broke the kiss with a growl, as his hand pressed down her hips, letting her feel the dangerous beast he had awakened. "I won't let you back off after this. Escape now..."

It should have scared her.. but instead, she smiled, " It is I who won't let you escape, Gabe..."

Chapter 627: Pleased R-18

Autumn's warning seemed to raise the desire in him even more. To him, she was seduction personified.. She was a virgin* and he knew, he could not just take her.. But he could tease her...

Holding her gaze, he slipped down first one and then the other strap of her dress, letting it fall off her shoulders. Purposely, he then pulled the dress lower, revealing two perfect globes of flesh...

He brought his hands up then, cupping her gently, as he teased her gently tugging, admiring the way her nipples peaked.

Autumn could barely keep her eyes open, the sensations assaulting her too much for her newly awakened body. She thought he would kiss her there, and she sighed wanting to feel his mouth on her but instead, he pulled her toward him so that she was squished against his chest...Her breath caught..alight with sensations as she felt his heat against her...

And then his hands seemed to be everywhere, as he kneaded and fondled her bottom while his mouth peppered her neck and shoulders with kisses. His hands slid under the hem of her dress and stopped when they met the fabric of clothing, that covered her most intimate parts.

She moved her hands then, wanting to get rid of the barrier but he moved suddenly and swiftly... His mouth claimed hers and his hands caught her bottom and she felt him move. Even now, he was carrying her towards the bed.

While she struggled to catch her breath, he tore off the dress, right through the middle and lifted her onto the bed, throwing her there as he followed her there, his weight on top of her adding more to the pleasure as he caught her lips demandingly again. She could barely feel her lips anymore... And yet so roused was she by this treatment that when he attempted to step back she automatically put her arms out to prevent him and stretched up to find that taunting, teasing mouth of his for herself.

An earthy laugh rasped low in his throat as he toyed with her full lower lip and let his tongue plunge deep in an erotically sweet invasion that left her gasping before he really moved back. She felt disappointment as he left her there naked on his bed and yet it only lasted a moment, as he quickly shucked out of his jeans...falling back on top of her, as he continued to kiss her.

He turned his attention back to the inviting fullness of her breasts, coaxing the points to a peak of throbbing sensitivity that made her hips writhe against the mattress.

His hand wandered down there, expertly finding her core, even as she raised her hips, pushing herself against his hand in a silent demand. And then, she felt his finger enter her slowly and stiffened, her eyes looking into his. She tried to speak up but her words refused to form...She knew the feelings that came to her then. The intense pleasure that overcame her.

He'd made her feel this... with his mouth... but that was different.. The slight fullness she felt as his fingers moved in and out of her made her yearn more. She tugged at his wrist, her nails scraping against his thighs.

At the exact instant when the excitement threatened to become an indescribable torment, Gabe shifted over her and slid between her thighs. She felt the iron-hard length of his him push against her entrance and, although she was frantic, all keyed up with eagerness for this, she froze with nerves and the conviction that he was much too well endowed for her made her feel a shiver of fear...making her close her eyes in fear.

He stole a sexy, savage kiss that lifted her lashes, and he gave her a small smile, kissing the corner of her mouth, "Autumn... After tonight... I'm yours..."

Slowly, he pushed himself into her, trying to tell her with his actions if not words that tonight she had something that he had never dared to give anyone- his surrender. As he felt her heat around him, he closed his eyes, resisting the urge to take her in one go.

A startled moan of discomfort was wrenched from her as he she felt him enter her fully. He felt massive. And then, the discomfort changed into a small moan as he broke past the last barrier...

He stayed very still then, allowing her to adjust to the invasion. "I'm sorry... for hurting you..."

And yet, she could only shake her head and raise her hips. She wanted more... That seemed to put him into a frenzy, until he caught her hips, moving faster and harder with each movement, until they came together, falling over the peak.

Sweating, he slumped over her for a moment before pulling her over him, hugging her close to his chest. He closed his eyes then and breathed softly, her scent still as intoxicating as ever.

As they lay intertwined, their breaths slowly steadyng, Autumn traced the contours of Gabe's face with gentle fingers. She suddenly felt foolishly happy. It was his words that echoed in her head.. He was hers...

She hadn't expected them. Not even when she'd confessed her love for him. She'd just wanted him to let her love him... But with those words, he'd given himself to her... And somehow, it felt even more precious than any love confession that he might have given her.

He opened his eyes then and looked at her. Gently, he rubbed her swollen lips and teased, "I see you're quite please with yourself, Autumn Frost."

She grinned up at him, "I am. Pleased with myself and with you."

"You little siren." Gabe teased her then while she batted her eyelashes at him playfully.

She saw then the serious look that entered his eyes and quickly cupped his face, "Gabe Frost, listen to me carefully. I love you with all my heart and I want you to get used to listenign to this! That is all I ask in return, hmm?"

Chapter 628: Cat Thief

"How can you so this? I gave myself to you last night and now you are abandoning me? Leaving me in the middle of the night and escaping like a thief..."

The figure at the edge of the bed froze for a moment, before decisively deciding to walk away. However, as the person tried to get up, they were unable to move. The bedsheet that they were clutching was being pulled at.

Frowning, the person turned back to tug at it and froze... Gabe Frost was lying on top of the bedsheet, pinning it and her in place... And his face was set in a pout that should have been utterly ridiculous on his face but with his tousled hair and deep (morning) voice, it looked totally adorable.

Autumn tried tugging at the bedsheet, her plan to escape while Gabe was asleep now foiled.

"Gabe, let go!" she hissed, trying to keep her voice down despite her face turning red. The man did not even have any shame. He was lying on top of the bedsheet, all naked and...no she wouldn't look there... She tugged at the bedsheet but it wouldn't move an inch...

"Gabe...", she tried again, coaxing him.

"No," he replied simply, his pout deepening. "You don't get to just leave after taking advantage of me."

"Seriously? You're going to hold me hostage with a bedsheet?" Autumn raised an eyebrow, trying to suppress a laugh at his behavious. Despite his lack of clothing, the man somehow managed to look funny and humorous.

Gabe's eyes twinkled mischievously. "It seems to be working, doesn't it? Besides, it's not every day that I find someone trying to sneak away like a cat burglar."

"I wasn't sneaking away..." Autumn tried to explain but Gabe shook his head at her as he gave a sigh of disappointment, "Tsk tsk, you were trying to sneak away... and now you are even lying to me... You, Autumn Frost are a total..."

"Gabe! It's almost dawn. Arabelle can be back anytime. I really need to go back to my room."

Gabe tugged at the bedsheet playfully, his smile widening at her frustration. "If you want to abandon me, fine. But you can't steal my bedsheet."

Autumn turned to glare at him again, "I'll return it to you. Just let it go now."

"Nope! You were already planning to fleece me and run. Even robbing me of my early morning snack and now you want to take my bedsheet away as well. I won't let you do that."

Autumn rolled her eyes, "I had no idea you could be so dramatic! Stop being a drama queen and let me go!!!"

Furiously, Autumn tugged hard at the bedsheet as well, determined to make her escape as soon as possible. Unexpectedly as she put all her weight behind pulling the bedsheet, Gabe swiftly moved, causing the bedsheet to slide from under him and her to fall backwards.

In one quick motion, Gabe reached out and pulled her to him, pinning her under him, his thigh over her legs. His eyes bore into hers, a mixture of amusement and something deeper.

"Gotcha," he murmured, his voice a low rumble.

Autumn squirmed beneath him, her frustration melting into a mix of exasperation and something she didn't want to admit. "Gabe, this is ridiculous."

"Maybe," he said, his tone playful yet serious. "And stop squirming or you'll ruin my late night snack."

Autumn stilled, her breath caught in her throat, when she felt him near her hip before coloring and squirming, "Gabe, let me go. Arabelle will be here anytime, and we cannot be like this in front of her..."

"There's still time. The sun is not even up yet..." Gabe whispered against her ear, his nose nuzzling her neck.

"But, we need to clean up everything..."

"First we need to...." Gabe's voice trailed off as he lifted his head, his eyes locking onto hers.

Without breaking eye contact, he leaned in closer, his lips hovering just above hers. The air between them felt charged, electric. Autumn's heartbeat quickened, her resolve wavering as she felt the gentle brush of his lips against hers. As expected, her eyes closed welcoming his kiss, yearning for it...

The kiss quickly turned from slow and soft to a deep burning desire. With a groan, Gabe shifted Autumn so that she was now lying on top of him...

The next time Autumn woke up, the darkness had already dissipated, and it was bright sunlight outside. She stretched slowly, parts of her aching that never had before and smiled. Never had she imagined that making love would be so...

The sound of voices outside the door snapped her out of her reverie. She bolted upright in bed, clutching the bedsheet to her chest as she recognized her sister's voice talking with two male voices. Gabe and... one of the other Frost brothers! Probably Seb...

Her heart raced as panic set in. How was she going to get out of this without being seen? Arabelle could come looking for her anytime and then...She cursed Gabe Frost! He was a rake! Under all that gentlemanly allure, the man was a perv! He did not let her escape and then tired her out so much that she almost fell into a se* induced coma! And now she was stuck!

She could fool Arabella, maybe.. But what was she supposed to do about Seb? She would be too embarrassed to meet him ever again!

Desperately searching for something to cover herself, other than this bedsheet, her eyes landed on the recliner where her simple sundress and lingerie were neatly laid out. Relief washed over her. At least he had the decency to bring her clothes, considering he was the reason she was in this state.

Taking a deep breath, she slipped out of bed, keeping the sheet wrapped around her as she tiptoed to the recliner and blushed even more. He'd even kept underwear for her... Grabbing them all, she quickly raced to the bathroom...

Chapter 629: Family Time

"Why did you move Autumn's things into your room?" Arabelle asked the question innocently to Gabe while Autumn, in the kitchen, almost dropped bowl of popcorn in her hand.

Gabe had moved her things into his room? When? How did she not know that? They'd been together all day today since she'd come out of the room, expecting to be teased mercilessly. Thankfully, Seb had already left by the time she showed up and she was grateful for it. She didn't think she was prepared for any teasing.. So, did Gabe do that in the mornig?

"Because she is my wife and husband-wife should stay together. Now, Miss Arabelle, should we start the movie?" Gabe asked playfully tickling Arabelle on the stomach.

Autumn walked out of the kitchen then, the bowl of steaming popcorn in her hand. As her eyes met his, she saw him pat the empty space next to him. Nuh uh! She was not sitting there. Their movie nights usually ended up in Arabelle sleeping halfway through the movie.

Gabe Frost had restless hands, as she had discovered since this morning. The man left no chance to touch her or feel her up. So, there was no way she was helping him create those chances. Decisively, she placed the bowl in Arabelle's lap and sat on the other side of the little girl, so that Arabelle was a strategically effective barrier.

She saw from the corner of her eyes as he smiled a challenging smile and leaned forward to grab the remote, beginning the movie. She breathed a sigh of relief. At least for the next two hours, she would have some relief from the delicious torture that Gabe had subjected her to all day.

However, she had barely thought this when she almost jumped out of her skin. In a move so smooth that she had not even seen coming, he placed his arm along the back of the couch while his hand grazed the nape of her neck, sending a shiver down her spine. She squirmed slightly, trying to maintain her composure and ignore the patters he was tracing onto her skin. It almost felt like she was being branded.

Deciding to distract herself and move away from him, without making a fuss, Autumn leaned forward pretending to grab some popcorn from the bowl in Arabelle's lap. And now, when she moved back, she would shift away a bit naturally, so that his hand would not reach her. But just as her hand dipped into the bowl, she felt his hand do the same. Their fingers brushed against each other, and she felt him hook her little finger with his, a playful gesture that made her glare at him.

She tugged her finger but he wouldn't let go, making her frown. She had a feeling that he wouldn't let go if she let him...

Just then, Arabelle spoke up, "Are you guys fighting for popcorn?"

Autumn glanced at Arabelle, momentarily grateful for the interruption. She managed a small smile and replied, "Just a little popcorn tug-of-war, Arabelle. Your Mister Gabe thinks he can steal all the popcorn for himself."

Arabelle giggled, her innocent laughter filling the room. "Mister Gabe, you have to share!"

Gabriel put on an innocent expression and finally nodded, "As you wish Miss Arabelle. Here, have some popcorn."

He then picked up a piece and brought it to Autumn's lips, a challenging and blunt look in his eye. Autumn's eyes narrowed. He was purposely teasing her. She raised her chin. Well, then so be it.. Opening her mouth, she took the kernel into her mouth, but made it a point to take his thumb into her mouth and licking the butter off it, slowly. It was quite gratifying to watch his eyes heat up just like that.

Surprisingly, halfway through the movie, Arabelle paused the movie and turned to look at Gabe. "Mister Gabe, I need to ask you something."

Gabe raised a surprised eyebrow at that and looked down the little girl. She looked so serious. "Of course, Miss Arabelle. Tell me."

"You and Autumn are husband and wife?"

"Yes."

"Then, can you adopt me?"

Gabe blinked in surprise, taken aback by Arabelle's unexpected question. He glanced at Autumn, who looked equally surprised.

"Arabelle..."

"No. No. Listen to me and then decide. You know I am adorable and a good girl. And parents are supposed to take care of the kids. The two of you take good care of me. I know Autumn is my sister and not my mama. But mama is in heaven. However, she wouldn't mind if I called sister Mama. And you can be my daddy. It is not wrong...Aunty N said that I should not address Autumn as her mother otherwise she wouldn't get a husband. But now that she has you, Can I please have you as mama and daddy?"

As she said the words hurriedly, both Gabe and Autumn realized that Arabelle had been thinking this for a long time and it was not something she spoke impulsively.

Gabe kneeled down in front of her and held the little girl's trembling hands. "Arabelle," he said softly, "if you want us to be your parents, we would be honored to have you as our daughter."

Autumn covered her mouth as she felt tears in her eyes, while Arabelle seemed to have gained a new lease of life. Her face lit up with joy and relief. "Really?" she exclaimed; her voice filled with happiness. "Thank you, Mister Gabe! Autumn and you are the best...!"

Gabe stood up and opened his arms wide. Without hesitation, Arabelle rushed into his embrace, her small frame engulfed by his warmth. Autumn quickly joined them, wrapping her arms around both of

them. Arabelle looked up at them with shining eyes, a radiant smile spreading across her face. "Mama, Papa."

To which Gabe smiled and picked her up, feeling immensely gratified. For him, there had been two things in his life that were unattainable to him. Love and a child. But Autumn had given him both...

Chapter 630: Ants

"You've got ants in your pants?" Ian asked as he sat opposite Gabe, tossing the file in his hand over to him with a casual flick of his wrist.

Gabe looked up from his work, a deep frown creasing his forehead. "Why would I have ants in my pants? What's wrong with you?"

Ian shrugged, leaning back in his chair. "Multiple things, but I doubt you'll be able to help with them."

Gabe raised an eyebrow, his curiosity piqued despite himself. "You've come to me for advice?" His tone was incredulous, making Ian shudder before he quickly responded.

"Nope. I've come to offer it," Ian said with a smirk.

Gabe sighed heavily, rubbing his temples. "I don't need any more advice, Ian. I'm actually in a good mood for once, so just scurry away and let me be."

Ian chuckled, unfazed. "Of course you're in a good mood. You're sleeping with Autumn."

The half-smile that had been playing on Gabe's lips vanished instantly, replaced by a stern frown. "I am sleeping with my wife. There's nothing to discuss here."

"Then why do you look so guilty?" Ian pressed, his eyes narrowing as he leaned back in his chair, studying Gabe's reaction intently. "In fact, with that expression, one could almost believe you were sleeping with someone else's wife."

Gabe's eyes flashed with annoyance. "Don't be ridiculous, Ian. You're just trying to stir up trouble where there is none."

"Maybe. Or maybe I'm just calling it like I see it. Something about sleeping with her is troubling you. And making you restless."

Gabe shook his head, returning his focus to the work in front of him. "Whatever you think you see, you're wrong. Now, unless you have something useful to say, get out of my office."

Ian said nothing, only staring at Gabe. This was typical Gabe reaction. First push away, get defensive and then calm down.

As expected, a moment later, Gabe harrumphed and shook his head, " Ian! Just get out, okay! I don't want to discuss this."

"That will keep you restless." Ian pointed out making Gabe look away. " Come on, spill."

Gabe shook his head, " You do know I am the older brother..."

"So?"

"So, I should be the one solving problems for you guys. Not the other way round."

"Oh, please. Since when did we start having discussion based on age?"

"The problem, Ian, is that Autumn believes she is in love with me."

Ian raised an eyebrow. "How is that a problem?"

Gabe sighed, looking away. "You don't understand."

Ian leaned forward, his tone more serious. "Actually, I do. The fact that you think Autumn only believes she loves you and doesn't really love you is an insult to her feelings."

Gabe frowned, a mix of frustration and confusion clouding his features. "It's not like that. I just... I don't want her to be hurt."

Ian shook his head. "Despite you being a total crab, some people can ignore your faults and love you. Maybe it's time you started believing that."

Gabe huffed and shook his head, " Ian! That is not the problem! I am happy and thankful for her love towards me! She has given me a home that I did not even know I was looking for."

Ian blinked. Okayyy.. "Then, what is the reason for your restlessness?"

"I feel guilty for not loving her."

"That is new. Then love her and stop feeling guilty." Ian answered as if Gabe was the slowest person on the planet.

"I can't do that! Arabelle..."

Before Gabe could say more, Ian interrupted, " Of course, you can. You already care for Autumn and love her in your own way. Maybe your feelings are not as deep as the affection that you had for Arabelle, I am sure with time, you will feel differently. Maybe if Arabelle was alive, you would have been conflicted. Just clear up everything that you've hidden from her."

"I know, alright. I am going to tell her! Demon has already warned me about that. Jeez! you guys are total nags."

"Its all for you brother. We want to see you happy."

"Unexpectedly, I am happy." Gabe answered before narrowing his eyes at Ian, "So, what are your problems? Isabelle giving you trouble? Has she come to her senses and realized that she doesn't want you anymore?"

"Shut up! I am going to keep her wrapped up in me forever, okay? She will never have time to get tired of me." Ian snapped with a frown, before sighing, "Isabella, wants kids. After seeing Innocensa and Vincenzo, I can see the yearning in her eyes. But..."

Gabe looked at Ian carefully then, "But what?"

"But I don't know if it's safe for her! What if something happens to harm her? I can't bear to lose her Gabe and somehow having children seems like that will be the result."

"That reasoning is flawed, Ian. Have Seb and Oliiva not come closer because of children. Just talk to Bella. She will understand your wariness."

"And how do I do that when I am not sure about what I want? I am confused Gabe. I would love to have a little baby with Isabella's beauty and brains. But I am not too sure that I want a baby. How did you decide, you never wanted children, Gabe? We are Frosts. Our motto has always been to stay together and protect the family. And not having children somehow feels off. How was it easy for you to get a vasectomy?"

Gabe took a deep breath, leaning back in his chair. "It wasn't easy, Ian. I made that decision during a time when I thought it would be best for Arabelle. You know I've made every decision in life based on her. And, truthfully, I am almost regretting that decision now."

"Forget about having a choice, Ian. If you are Isabelle were never to have children, do you think your family would be incomplete?"

"Of course now. Isabella is my family."

"Then, there is no need to hurry. Discuss things openly with Isabella and you'll have your answer. Don't invite trouble when there is none."