

The Alpha's Bride

#Chapter 931: James' birthday party (6)

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As the cake was served to the guests, people started mingling.

Damon and Talia met with Maddox, Tatiana, Tony, Kalina, Cristian, and Michelle. None of them noticed anything out of the ordinary. It looked just like any other birthday party.

People moved in their usual groups. Luna Layla played a good host by weaving among guests and asking if they were having a good time, music was playing, and people were engaged in chatter over food and drinks.

George found an opportunity to join Dawn, Zina, and Owen.

"I don't see a fly pestering you anymore," Dawn said to George.

George smiled, knowing that the fly in question was Penelope. "I think she found another victim." Penelope was not in sight anymore, and neither was Alpha William.

"You think so?" Zina asked. "She looked quite persistent. Women like those don't give up."

"Shush!" Dawn exclaimed. "Bite your tongue, so you don't jinx it."

Zina giggled and looked at Owen dreamily. She wanted to jump on him and kiss him all over.

"When can we leave?" Zina asked.

Dawn turned to look questionably at George.

George observed the crowd with a small frown on his handsome face. Was it wise to leave now?

"A bit more," George said. James still didn't return, and George could not mind-link the birthday boy. He wanted to ensure that things with James were fine. If Alpha Edward

gets a whiff of the relationship type between James and Cornelia, hell will break loose. Another worrying thing was that Alpha Edward was not in sight.

George mind-linked warriors that were standing guard nearby, and there were no suspicious movements. However, his instincts told him that the situation was unstable.

George wanted to send Dawn and Zina with Owen home, but if there were an ambush, it would be safer for them to stick together. Just in case, George reminded Owen through the mind-link, 'If any trouble starts, I will count on you to take care of Dawn and Zina. I'm going to check the perimeter. If you notice anything suspicious, let me know.'

It was around midnight when it became obvious that guests started dispersing. Not everyone was staying for the night, and some retreated into their rooms.

Luna Layla spent a good half an hour with Talia and Damon, congratulating them on being mates, thanking them for coming, and engaging in casual chit-chat that mostly revolved on the topic of James' training while he stayed at the Dark Howlers pack. The photographer followed Luna Layla, and they took group photos.

Eventually, Luna Layla left to chat with other guests, and Damon and Talia moved to sit at the bar. It gave them a good view of the venue.

Maddox, Tatiana, Tony, Kalina, Cristian, and Michelle were in attendance as well, with people from their packs. They agreed to stay together in the event hall in case something happened.

'Is it possible that tonight will pass without incidents?' Talia asked Damon through their mind-link.

'Let's not relax too soon,' Damon said, gesturing with his eyes toward the left.

Talia turned that way to see Alpha Edward, Alpha Richard, and Alpha William approaching them.

"Alpha Natalia, Alpha Damon," Alpha Edward called. "I apologize for not greeting you in person so far. I was busy with other matters."

"We understand," Talia said. "Alphas are busy, especially when they are hosting an event like this one."

"I hope you don't mind that we hijacked this event to show up officially as a mated couple," Damon said while tightening his hold on Talia's shoulder.

"No harm was done," Alpha Edward said. "If anything, people will talk about this event more. My Luna will appreciate it. I must ask, why were you hiding it so far?"

"I wouldn't call it hiding it," Damon responded. "You saw us together on several occasions. When we met, it was a surprise for both of us. We agreed to prioritize figuring out what it means to our packs."

"I see," Alpha Edward said while nodding faintly. "And what does it mean?"

"We opened the borders between our packs," Talia responded.

"Does the open border policy mean you will accept visitors to the Midnight Guardians pack?"

Talia was unsure where Alpha Edward was going with it. "In due time."

"But you are letting your pack members come out to see how other packs live and to find their mates," Alpha Edward pressed.

Talia didn't want to deny it. "Yes."

"The Midnight Guardians pack is flourishing under your guidance," Alpha Edward said, and his eyes turned toward the group where Owen was with Dawn and Zina. "If you didn't encourage your pack members to come out of your territory, my Lieutenant wouldn't find his mate. I can assume you changed your policies if you are allowing your pack members to settle with their mates outside of your pack."

Talia's brows came together when she realized that Alpha Edward was talking about Owen. Why did he think that Zina came from the Midnight Guardians pack? No, wait! Alpha Edward thought that Dawn was Owen's mate... and there was a misunderstanding of Penelope assuming that Dawn was from Talia's pack. No wonder she didn't see Penelope. That female reported to Alpha Edward what happened in the restroom!

'Zi,' Talia called through the pack link. 'How much does Alpha Edward know about you and Dawn?'

'Uhm... the story is that Dawn is Owen's mate, and I'm Dawn's friend who came for a visit.'

Talia quickly put the pieces together. 'Damon, Alpha Edward believes Dawn and Zina are from the Midnight Guardians pack.'

Damon's jaw ticked. If the story of Alpha Edward being involved in a witch hunt in order to harvest organs was true, Dawn and Zina would be in danger. Maybe not tonight, but they couldn't leave them in the Red Moon pack. Will Alpha Edward believe that George

had Dawn and Zina in his villa without knowing from where they came? This was getting more complicated by the second.

Talia glanced at Damon, and they didn't need the mind-link to understand each other's thoughts.

"I wouldn't say that we changed policies about where my pack members will settle with their mates," Talia said.

"Oh, no need for secrecy," Alpha Edward said. "We are all family here." Alpha Edward's eyes lost focus for a moment, and Owen stiffened on the other side of the event hall.

'George!' Owen called through the pack link. 'Alpha just summoned me to go to him with Zina and Dawn!'

'Don't panic,' George responded. 'He won't do anything drastic in front of witnesses. Alpha Damon and Luna Talia are there. Trust in them.'

Talia watched as the trio approached them, and she could see so many ways this would end wrongly.

"Lieutenant Owen, why don't you introduce us to your mate and her friend?" Alpha Edward asked.

Dawn and Zina kept their heads low while giving their names. It was normal for Omegas to bow their heads in front of an Alpha, and they were standing in front of five. Dawn's wolf protested, but Dawn focused on Talia and Damon.

"Dawn and Zina," Alpha Edward said. "Beautiful names for beautiful ladies. I hear you are staying with Commander George. Is he treating you well?"

"Yes," Dawn and Zina responded in unison.

"It's a pity I was unaware of your special background," Alpha Edward said. "If I knew, I wouldn't let you suffer in his house. Starting tomorrow, the two of you will work in the packhouse."

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Alpha Edward reached below Zina's chin. "Let me see you."

Zina closed her eyes and forced herself not to move.

Before Alpha Edward could touch Zina, Owen grabbed Zina's arm and yanked her outside of Alpha Edward's reach.

"Lieutenant Owen?" Alpha Edward growled lowly in a warning. "What's the meaning of this?" He saw that Dawn was marked, and that's why he went for Zina first.

Owen knew that five Alphas were watching, but this was his mate, and he would rather die than let another man touch her. Everyone knew what was going on in that packhouse. There was a reason why only young and pretty Omegas worked there, for Alpha Edward to help himself whenever he had an itch.

"I apologize, Alpha," Owen said. "But my mate and her friend are not members of the Red Moon pack, and it's not appropriate for them to receive orders from you or work in our packhouse."

"Isn't that only a matter of time?" Alpha Edward asked. "Why delay? Our shaman is here. We can do the ceremony and be done with it."

Owen balled his hands into fists. "We didn't decide where we are going to live."

"Are you saying you are thinking of leaving the Red Moon pack?"

"It's not final, but we want to keep our options open," Owen responded.

Alpha Edward frowned. "Nonsense. Who heard of an able male joining the pack of his female? Besides, you are already here." Alpha Edward moved closer to Zina again.

"What do you say? Will you give me a chance to show you the hospitality of the Red Moon pack?"

Zina raised her head to meet Alpha Edward's eyes on her. "I am just visiting here."

"Alpha Edward," Talia called. "Are you trying to poach my people right in front of me? Do I look like someone who is easy to bully?"

"Not at all, Alpha Natalia," Alpha Edward said. "But if you have open borders with the Dark Howlers pack, maybe you could consider the same with the Red Moon pack. I suggest that these two females stay here. Next time you visit, you will see that they are treated well, and then you will allow more people from your pack to come."

"Interesting proposal," Talia said. "However, I won't force my members to pick sides. If they wish to stay, they can."

"Excellent!" Alpha Edward exclaimed, and he glanced at Dawn and then turned his focus back on Zina. "What do you say, doll?" He reached to touch her cheek. "Will you stay here?"

A ferocious growl ripped from Owen, and he pushed Zina to stand behind him.

"Lieutenant Owen?" Alpha Edward growled, and he released his Alpha aura. He had enough of Owen's interference.

Owen's whole body shook, and he fell to his knees.

Zina wanted to help Owen, but she was weaker than Owen, and she could only watch helplessly as her mate was being forced to submit.

"Owen..." Zina called tearfully.

At this point, Maddox, Tatiana, Tony, Kalina, Cristian, and Michelle were on their feet, all six tense while observing the scene. Mindy, Gideon, Sandy, and Tyler were there as well.

Owen extended his arm toward Zina, indicating to her to stay away.

Alpha Edward was Owen's Alpha, but Owen ended up humiliated in front of Zina, his mate. How could he keep his head down?

Owen raised his head to meet Alpha Edward's glare, and he inhaled forcibly. "I, Owen of the Red Moon pack, denounce the Red Moon pack as my pack, and I reject Alpha Edward as my Alpha."

Alpha Edward clutched his chest. "What did you do?"

"Bwahahahaha!" Damon burst into hearty laughter like he just saw the most entertaining show.

Talia waved at Keith and Arya to come closer. "Please, escort those three away. Lieutenant Owen probably needs a drink."

Alpha Edward was still using his aura on Owen, but Keith stood between them like nothing out of the ordinary was happening. What the hell?

With Owen denouncing Alpha Edward as his Alpha, the effect of Alpha Edward's aura on him diminished, but he was not immune. However, when Keith stood in front of him, Owen felt like he found himself in a protective bubble, and he could breathe again.

"What is the meaning of this?" Alpha Edward asked furiously while his eyes moved from Damon to Talia.

Damon wiped the corners of his eyes. He was laughing until he teared up. Talia wanted to pinch him, so he stopped laughing because this was not a laughing matter, but the thing was that she enjoyed seeing Alpha Edward's red face that contorted in anger.

"It's amusing to see a Lieutenant standing up to his Alpha. And in front of an audience," Damon said.

"Amusing?" Alpha William chimed in from behind Alpha Edward. "That's mutiny!"

Alpha Richard was nodding in agreement.

"I will punish him," Alpha Edward seethed. Owen's action was a slap in his face. He was never so humiliated!

"You will do no such thing," Damon said, amusement from his voice gone. "That man showed bravery. If he needs a home, I will give him one."

Alpha Edward narrowed his eyes at Damon. "You are poaching my people?"

"People? It's just one warrior who left your pack of his own volition. Now, if his mate and her friend want to come also, that can be arranged," Damon said and turned to the table where Owen was sitting with Dawn, Zina, Arya, and Keith. "What do you say, ex-Lieutenant Owen? Will you join the Dark Howlers pack?"

Owen stared at Damon. "It will be my honor."

"What about your mate and her friend?"

"They will come as well!" Owen quickly responded.

Damon smirked. "There. It's settled."

"Wait a minute!" Alpha Edward exclaimed. "You can't do that!"

"I can, and I did," Damon said. "Normally, a pack member would fear retaliation, and he would sneak out. This warrior showed that he has the guts to leave the pack right in the face of his Alpha. I would be foolish not to poach such talent."

"You staged this!" Alpha Edward fumed.

"Staged, what?"

"This! Coming to this event to embarrass me."

"Not everything is about you, Alpha Edward," Talia said, and everyone turned to look at her. "I agree with Damon. That warrior was brave to stand up for what he believes in. If Dark Howlers doesn't suit them, they can come to my pack. In the Midnight Guardians pack, people get their duties based on interests and abilities, not based on their background and how they look."

Alpha Edward's jaw ticked. He knew Talia was talking about him trying to get Dawn and Zina to work in his packhouse. But those two were from the Midnight Guardians pack! Other than being two attractive females, they were Omegas, and they had abilities, and how could he let them go?!

But Alpha Edward didn't want to antagonize Talia. She was an Alpha female, a prized possession.

Alpha Edward turned his attention to Damon. "You are pushing beyond my limits, Alpha Damon."

Damon cocked an eyebrow. "What will you do about it? Issue me an Alpha challenge?"

Several people in the event hall sucked in at the same time. Alpha challenge! It was a big deal!

Alpha Edward gritted his teeth. Pulling back would be another stain on his reputation. And this time, too many people were watching. He needed a way out of this, and Damon just gave him an idea. "What if I am?"

Damon stood up and straightened his back. "Challenge accepted, Alpha Edward."

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