

REJECTED: CLAIMED BY THE ALPHA MAFIA

PSYCHO

KIARA:

Ever since my last encounter with Mindy, I haven't been able to get her words out of my head. It's shocking that Rufus agreed to keep it from Zane. He understands my situation for the first time and is allowing me to process my emotions. He's been helpful too, checking to see if I'm okay. For two days, I've been trying to process my feelings. I tried to put up with Zane yesterday, but today is different.

When I spot the basket of lilies, a surge of irritation curls through my belly. I get up from the bed, walking toward the basket. Sniffing the flowers only makes me feel worse, and I push it away without trying to identify what kind of lily it is. My eyes catch the note accompanying it, and I do not bother reading it either. I know a call will come next, so I take deep breaths, trying to prepare myself for Zane's call.

The sole purpose of this break is to heal and move on, but thanks to Mindy, it's a lot harder than I imagined. Rufus's knock comes at the door, and I force a smile, walking towards it. I open it and take his phone.

"Good morning, baby," Zane says, and I try to maintain my smile so I don't say the wrong things.

"Morning," I reply in a flat tone.

"Is something wrong?" he asks, and I silently curse myself for not sounding more natural than I intended.

I fake a yawn.

"No... nothing. I'm exhausted," I reply, shutting my eyes as I wait for his response.

"Why? Is Rufus stressing you? I can..."

"No." I cut him off before he gets playful.

Yay, Kiara, you're really holding it down. I hear a tiny voice in my head, which causes me to sigh.

"You really sound exhausted. Maybe I should leave you to it, but first, I'd love to remind you that you made it to day six," he says, and I stifle a chuckle.

"I'm so glad I've made it this far," I lie, as though I didn't wish for him to stay far away from me at the moment.

"I can't wait to hold you in my arms again, and this time, there will be no letting go."

His words trigger something in me, and soon I feel as though my lungs can no longer work.

"Me too," I say in a low tone, then I let out another yawn.

"I'll let you get some rest," he says. "Goodbye, and I love you."

"I love you too," I reply, knowing well that I'm unsure of those words at the moment.

He ends the call, and I let out a deep breath, walking out of the room. I hand the phone over to Rufus, and his gaze lingers longer than it should.

"What?" I ask.

"I worry about you. You've been like this since Mindy came here, and I knew it was a bad idea to let her in, but you insisted."

I let out a huge sigh. He's right, and maybe if I'd left her outside, I wouldn't be in a mess.

"I'll be fine," I say, turning around to leave, but then I feel a sudden urge to go for a walk. "Sorry to bother you, but you'll have to accompany me for a walk."

"Now?" he asks, and I nod.

"I mean, it's still early, and it'd be better to leave before the sun comes out so I can return before everywhere gets hot."

"Okay, let me change," he says, then turns to leave, but I stop him.

"Why?" He halts, turning to face me.

"Because I need to be in uniform, and..."

"And Zane isn't here. You don't have to be in a suit every time I need to go for a walk," I say, opening the door to my room. "I'll just throw on some sweatpants, and I hope to see you in those sweats when I return."

"Yes, ma'am," he replies, and I walk away with a smile hanging on my lips.

In a minute, I dress up and walk out to see Rufus still in his sweats, as asked.

"Good, come on," I say, then I make my way out of the house while he follows me.

The air is still cool, and the streets are empty. No one is walking or riding a bike-just Rufus and me. I walk further down the road, making it out of our street. When I reach the coconut stand, it isn't open yet.

"They're not early risers, are they?"

"No," Rufus replies, and I increase my pace until I start to jog.

All this is to feel alive, to shake off the negative energy Mindy planted in my head. I choose to forgive Zane because I love him, and I don't know if I ever want to see Blake. I try to convince myself I just need a little push, and I'll go back to the old me who's totally smitten by Zane.

After a while, I pause, bending with my hands on my knees as I take deep breaths, trying to steady my breathing.

"You're really unfit," Rufus says, causing my brows to crease.

I get to my feet at once, turning to see that he's normal, with no sign of exhaustion.

"I wasn't built for this," I say in defense, and he scoffs.

"Do you know what I'd do if I were a werewolf?" he asks, and I roll my eyes. "I've trained past my limit as a human, and I believe if I were a wolf, I'd be stronger."

"I could turn you into one." My eyes glow as I say this, causing him to take a step back, which earns a chuckle from me. "Too chicken?"

"Mr. Malibu would kill me. It'd take a while to get a hold of myself," he says.

"You're too chicken, and I can't think of anything else," I say, then I take off before he can say a word.

A smile hangs on my lips as I jog back to the house. I can't tell if I hated him less, but staying with Rufus feels less weird and more fun. You really grow into people. I've never really believed that absence makes the heart grow fonder-I'd probably forget the person after a while.

Shortly, we make a turn onto the street, and I pause to catch my breath. Rufus stops behind me, and I glance back at him to see the smirk on his face. I put up my middle finger, then get to my feet again.

"If you think of it, I'm jogging at a faster pace so I'll get tired faster!" I yell, looking back at Rufus.

"Then you can try to jog slower, or you can walk to see that it isn't an excuse." I put up my middle finger again, then keep jogging toward the house, which is almost at the end of the street.

In no time, the house comes into view, but then I notice a fleet of black cars waiting. Zane. Did he want to surprise me or what? I stop at once, allowing Rufus to catch up.

"Zane's here? When were you going to tell me?" I ask, but he doesn't answer.

Instead, he slides his hands into his pockets, making his way toward the gate while I follow close behind.

"I don't think that's Mr. Malibu," he says as we get closer. "I think you should run." He pulls out a gun, causing my heart to flinch.

Who takes a gun to an early morning jog?

Rufus approaches and points the gun at the car in front of the gate, then all the doors of the three cars in line flip open, and a bunch of armed men step out.

I recognize them at once, causing me to jog up as fast as I can.

"Stop!" I yell, catching their attention.

When they notice me, they lower their guns, getting on one knee, which startles Rufus. I reach where Rufus is standing.

"Who brings a gun on a walk?" I whisper in his ear before walking toward the men on their knees.

"Why are you here? And why do you bow down to me after I was banished?" I ask, and then one of them speaks.

"Alpha Blake lifted the ban, my queen. Luna Veronica has been imprisoned, and we're here because Alpha Blake is sick."

My heart skips a beat as I hear those words.

"Where is he?" The words fall out of my mouth before I can think.

A man close to the black car in the middle rolls down the window, and my blood freezes as I catch sight of Mindy and Blake sitting in the car, with his head resting on Mindy's shoulder. She really is a psychopath.