

## Chapter Four

### Rafael

My head is pounding when I pull up in front of Match HQ the next morning. I tossed and turned all night thinking about Alex, and it annoys the hell out of me.

Of all the applicants to select, our algorithm had to go and pick her. I don't know what it is about this woman — only that I won't be satisfied until I've bent her over my desk and claimed her in every possible way.

Grinding my back molars together, I climb out of the Rover and toss my keys to the waiting valet. My skin is crawling with the urge to shift, and my eight-hundred-dollar Versace shirt is like sandpaper against the back of my neck.

It was definitely a mistake to skip my run this morning, but I slept a full hour later than usual, and I couldn't afford to be late.

I plow through the lobby without so much as a cursory nod at the guy working security, and three terrified-looking interns jump out of my way as I storm up the steps to the elevators. I yank my collar away from my neck, sending the top button flying in the process.

I'm in a shit mood, but I'm determined to smooth things over with Alex. It's not her fault that my wolf wants to maul her.

I acted like a complete asshole yesterday to conceal how much I wanted her. Part of me hoped that she'd quit, but now that I've been away from her for almost twelve hours, I'm terrified at the prospect.

After the way I treated her, I wouldn't blame her for leaving, but I don't know what I'll do if she's gone.

The slow climb to the twenty-seventh floor is absolute torture, and I practically ram my way out of the elevator before the doors are fully open.

My gaze snaps to Alex's desk, and my stomach drops to my knees. It's empty.

"Fuck," I growl, yanking on my collar to loosen it further and losing another button in the process.

I'm sure my eyes have turned from brown to gold, and my skin itches so badly that I want to claw my way out of my body. I'm not going to make it through the day without shifting, but I can't go full wolf out here in the open.

I barge into my office, ready to tear my clothes off, but stop just inside the door. Alex is standing behind my desk, her hands folded primly in front of her. She has her hair pulled back in a braid today, and a few loose strands float invitingly around her face.

"Morning," she says, pulling a tight smile. Her tone is cheerful enough, but her chocolate-brown eyes hold none of yesterday's warmth.

I let out the breath I've been holding and try to rein in my wolf. "Good morning."

Alex is wearing another one of her sexy little skirts and a form-fitting white blouse. The buttons strain around her ample breasts, and I keep my office so chilly that I can just make out the hint of nipple pressing through the fabric.

I take a step toward my desk, and my eyes go to the giant plastic Starbucks cup sitting in the corner. I clench my jaw and pick it up. It's some blended coffee concoction with whipped cream and liquid caramel drizzle.

"What is this?" I growl, my gaze snapping to Alex.

"It's a caramel Frappuccino," she says, enunciating each syllable as though I'm an alien that just landed on Earth.

"Do you know how much sugar is in this?"

Alex shrugs and pulls an innocent smile, eyes sparkling with mischief. "I thought you might like to mix it up."

"I've been off gluten and dairy for nine years," I snarl. "I've been off processed sugar for fifteen. I have eight percent body fat. I do not 'mix it up.'"

"Your call," she says in an infuriatingly blasé tone. "Oh! Kevin Schilte called an emergency meeting first thing after lunch. There's an issue with the latest rollout of MatchAI HealthyU. It's all there in your briefing." She points at a piece of paper on the desk, where I see she's neatly typed out a digest of all my important messages.

I take a deep breath and let it out through my nose. I told myself I wouldn't be an asshole today. "Thank you for the coffee," I grit out, walking around my desk to take a seat.

It's then that I notice my leather chair is gone. I was so preoccupied with the drink that I didn't realize it at first. In its place is a bright-purple yoga ball.

“Sitting is the new smoking,” Alex says when I look at her. “I’ve already asked Vivian to order you a treadmill desk to replace this monstrosity. In the meantime, the ball is better for your core.”

I crush my back teeth together so hard it’s a miracle I don’t chip a molar. “I’m the CEO,” I snarl. “I can’t take meetings sitting on a yoga ball.”

Any sane person would be cowering in the wake of the furious alpha energy pouring off me, but Alex looks infuriatingly unperturbed. “I checked your schedule. You get a ninety-minute massage twice a week for lower-back pain. I figured if we could resolve that issue, you could save twelve hours a month.”

A low growl rumbles up my throat, and it takes every ounce of willpower I possess not to lash out at the beautiful little human standing before me.

Executive assistant to the CEO of MatchAI is one of the most coveted jobs in the world. We received more than twenty thousand applications for the job, and yet I can’t shake the feeling that Alex is fucking with me.

Shaking off the heady mix of aggravation and lust, I reach for my green juice, but it’s not there.

Sitting in the spot where Vivian usually leaves my drink is a burrito wrapped in white paper. Gingerly, I pick it up. It’s still piping hot.

I take another strangled breath and flick my gaze up to Alex. “What — the fuck — is this?”

“A chorizo-and-bacon green-chili burrito from Tanya’s Taco Truck.” A self-satisfied smile stretches her face, and she waggles her eyebrows. “Best breakfast burrito in the city.”

“Perfect,” I mutter, scrubbing a hand down my face as my wolf thrashes inside me. Human me is pissed that my assistant is throwing my entire world into chaos, but my wolf is delighted. He wants me to grab Alex by the hair, pull her head down, and sink my fangs into that soft tender flesh.

He wants me to fuck her, claim her, and make her my mate.

“That will be all,” I choke, dropping the burrito back onto the desk with a loud wet splat.

Alex smiles and flounces out of my office, her perfect ass teasing me underneath that infuriating skirt.



For the rest of the morning, I keep my office door shut and try to focus on my work. I have back-to-back meetings and contracts to review, but I just can't shake the image of Alex's smug expression.

The woman is definitely fucking with me, and that only makes me want her more.

But I have a company to run, I tell myself. I can't afford any distractions — especially not smart-ass brunettes in short skirts.

I'm successful in avoiding Alex for most of the morning, but when I duck out to use the bathroom and return just before lunch, I find her standing in my office.

"Your afternoon briefing, sir," she says, handing me another crisp sheet of paper that's still hot from the printer.

I grunt out a thank-you and head for my desk, ready to devour my juicy forty-ounce slab of prime rib. Shifters need to eat a lot, but my mind is clearer when I stick to green juice in the mornings. That means that by lunchtime, my wolf is ravenous for meat.

I pick up my fork, about to dig in, but instead of my bloody slab of beef, there's a plate of what looks like cat puke slopped on a pile of pasta.

"What is this?" I ask, not bothering to keep my tone in check.

A low growl rumbles up my throat, but Alex doesn't cower. She just folds her arms behind her back and nods down at my plate. "It's fennel 'sausage' bolognese — from that new vegan place."

She places air quotes around the word "sausage," which is my first hint that the cat puke isn't really sausage at all.

"Did you say 'vegan'?"

Alex smiles placidly at me, and I have to suppress a snarl. I'm keyed-up, hangry, and horny as hell, which is a dangerous combination for a shifter.

"Where's my prime rib?"

“You seemed really concerned about your health this morning, and I want you to know that I got the message. No more caramel Frappuccinos. But Vivian mentioned that you eat red meat for lunch most days, and I thought we could try something a little more heart-healthy.”

I’m too incensed to speak, so I take out some of my frustration on the fork, bending it into a V-shape. If I had any doubts whether Alex was messing with me before, they’re gone now.

“Do you think this is funny?” I snap, my wolf rising to the surface. I’m sure my eyes are more gold than brown, but at this point, I don’t even care if she notices.

This woman has no idea what I am, and she seems to get off on pushing my buttons. It’s like she’s a naïve little kitten batting at the wolf’s snout. It’s time I put her in her place.

“I mean, it’s a little funny,” Alex admits, pursing her lips to keep from smiling. “You should see your face.”

Slowly, I rise to my feet, preparing to pounce like the predator I am. I should fire her right now — send her scurrying back to wherever she came from with her tail between her legs.

Alex doesn’t realize how powerful I am — or the reach I have in this city. I could ruin her if I wanted to. I could make sure she never works again.

And yet, for some reason, my wolf likes that she’s got a naughty streak. Hell, I like it, too.

Straightening to my full height, I lean forward until I’m towering over her. Alex gives a little shiver, and the blatant dare in her eyes makes all the blood rush to my cock.

I know in this moment that I can’t let her go.

Slowly, I lean back and stalk around the desk to reach her. Alex stands absolutely still, though she tracks my movement out of the corner of her eye.

I can hear her heart beating a mile a minute and that little hitch in her breath that tells me she’s not as calm and collected as she’d like me to think. The tang of nervous sweat mixes with her delicious chocolate-and-caramel scent, but then I catch a whiff of something else: the sweetness of female arousal.

I stop and stare at Alex in profile. I can see her pulse fluttering beneath that porcelain skin and the slight flush of desire creeping up her neck.

Alex isn’t just enjoying messing up my day; she’s getting off on it. Well, two can play at that game.

“Let me make something abundantly clear,” I grit out, continuing my path around the desk until I’m standing directly behind her. “I do not tolerate insubordination.”

Alex's breath hitches, and I know there's a part of her that hates that she can't see the predator lurking over her shoulder. Smart kitten. "I-I wasn't —"

"Do you think I'm stupid?"

"N-no," she gasps.

"Then you must realize I know exactly what you're doing."

Alex swallows and lets out a shaky breath.

I take a step closer until I'm standing less than an inch behind her, and my breath lifts the wispy little hairs along the back of her neck. "This is not a game, Alex," I say in a low growl. "Unless you want it to be."

Alex lets out a sharp exhale, and the tang of her arousal intensifies.

Shit. What am I doing? I shouldn't be saying any of this — shouldn't be standing this close. From this angle, I can see her breasts straining against the inside of her shirt and just the hint of lace. I can feel the heat coming off her body.

"I like games," she whispers, her voice suddenly breathless.

My heart stutters erratically, and my erection almost punches through my pants.

I let out the breath I've been holding, stirring the hairs that have come loose from her braid. "There's only one game I play, kitten, and you might not like the rules."

"What rules?" she rasps, her breasts heaving beneath her shirt.

I don't answer right away. Instead, I reach out to grasp her braid and run my hands down its length. Her hair is thick and silky-soft, and my erection grows painful when I imagine holding her by the base of this plait as I drive her feisty mouth down onto my cock. "I play for keeps."

Alex sucks in a breath but doesn't release it, and the scent of her arousal becomes almost unbearable.

"I require obedience from my employees," I growl, bringing my mouth right up next to her head so my lips caress the shell of her ear. "Absolute submission . . ."

A little whimper slips from her lips, and my cock jumps in my pants.

"Tell me, Alexandra, are you ready to submit?"

Alex's eyelids flutter closed, and a trembling shudder tumbles from her lips. "Yes."

It's such a weak breathy reply, but that one word from her is all it takes to snap my self-control.

In one abrupt motion, I grip the back of Alex's neck and shove her face down onto my desk. I'm careful to use just enough force to elicit a gasp but not enough to hurt her.

Pressing my erection against her soft ass, I lean forward until my face brushes hers. "Tell me to stop," I whisper, so quiet that there's no way anyone would be able to hear, even if they had their ear pressed against my office door.

My hand seems to have a mind of its own as it trails up the back of Alex's bare thigh, and my naughty assistant quivers under my touch.

"Tell me to stop, Alex, and I will. I'll write you a glowing recommendation to an executive of your choosing, and we can go our separate ways." My hand continues its treacherous path up the back of her skirt until I'm caressing the soft curve of her ass. "Or stay and take your punishment."

I don't tell her that if she stays, I won't be able to let her go.

Alex makes a little uhn of protest, but when she meets my gaze, her dark eyes are blazing with desire.

Holy fuck.

My little kitten wants to be punished. And with her cheek smashed against my desk and her ass pressed against my hard-on, it takes all of my self-control not to sink my fangs into her flesh and mark her as my own.

My mate.

The words ricochet in my head, and I try to shake them off.

Alex is not my mate. She's a hot little human who happens to enjoy fucking with me. That's all.

I can't complicate things by trying to mate her, but that doesn't mean I can't have a little fun.

Shoving aside every reason I shouldn't, I grab the hem of her short plaid skirt and yank it up to her waist. Her perfect curvy ass stares back at me, and god damn — she's wearing a naughty little thong.

"This is what you wear to work?" I hiss, sliding a finger beneath the tiny scrap of lace and pulling it away from her crack.

Slowly, I run my knuckles down the crease of her ass, my balls aching with all the cum I long to fill her with. The movement causes the fabric of her panties to ride up, tugging at her pussy.

Alex whimpers, and the sound nearly unravels me.

Curious, I release her thong and reach between her legs to touch her soft mound. Her delicate folds are wrapped in lace, and the fabric is soaking wet.

I let out a slow breath through my mouth, nearly choking on the dark laugh bubbling up my throat. “You’re wet for me, kitten. You’re fucking soaked.”

Alex makes a noise that sounds like a protest, but the evidence is right there in her sopping-wet panties.

“You definitely deserve to be punished.”

Holding Alex’s bright needy gaze, I fumble with my belt until I manage to unhook the clasp.

I didn’t bother to lock my office door. If anyone walked in right now, it’d be an HR nightmare. But I don’t give a shit about any of that — only the sexy little human bent over my desk.

Sliding my belt off, I loop it over my hand, testing the spring of the leather. I whip the end down with a hard crack — right over her juicy ass.

Alex whimpers, knees buckling, and I gently rub the sting away. “That’s for this morning,” I mumble, hardly able to take my hand off her ass long enough to bring the tip of my belt down again.

It connects with a satisfying little smack, and Alex jumps about a foot in the air.

“That’s for the yoga ball.”

I double the belt over on itself and bring it down with a harder crack.

This time, Alex chokes on what sounds like a sob, and an angry red welt blooms on her ass.

“That’s for this fucking vegan lunch,” I mutter, kneading her perfect ass in my palm.

I keep delivering lashes until Alex is a quivering mess. Her ass is going to be sore for the rest of the afternoon, but I know it’s what we’re doing that has her trembling like that.

Reaching between her legs again, my suspicions are confirmed. Alex’s thighs are sticky with cream, and her panties are completely ruined.

Leaning forward, I capture her ear lobe between my teeth and give a hard nip. Alex closes her eyes and leans in to my touch, grinding her clit against my fingers. She’s wet and trembling and full of need.



As much as I'm enjoying punishing her, I want to sate her desire.

"You liked that, didn't you?" I whisper, stroking her through her underwear just enough to torture her some more.

"Mmm." Alex's cheeks are flushed a delicate shade of pink, and the way she's biting her lower lip makes me want to rip all of her clothes off and claim her right here — right now.

"I need you to say it," I rumble, removing my hand and pulling another whimper from her lips.

"Yes," she whispers, her flush deepening.

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, I liked it."

"You like it when I punish you?"

There's a long pause and then, "Yes."

I let out the breath I've been holding. I know what that admission cost her, and I intend to reward her for her honesty.

Tugging the gusset of her panties aside, I slip a finger inside her. Her tight little cunt sucks it right in, and my dick throbs in my pants.

Damn. She's so fucking wet and slippery that all I can think about is what it would feel like to have her sweet pussy wrapped around my cock.

Adding another finger, I start to pump my digits in and out, and Alex moves against me. I reach around to her front, sliding my hand down her mound until I find that hard little bundle of nerves. I work her swollen bud in tight circles, filling her again with my fingers.

Alex moans and slams her hips against my palm, her eyes squeezed shut.

Damn. She is so fucking sexy, bent over my desk with her ass in the air. All I want is to barricade my office door, sink my cock into her soft wet pussy, and spend the rest of the week making love to her.

But Alex is my assistant, and I'm an alpha wolf. I can't fuck my human assistant, no matter how much I might want to.

Frustrated by that realization, I slam my fingers into her harder until I hit the very end of her. Alex snaps her hips back to meet me thrust for thrust, and a second later, I hear a loud crack!

Alex staggers to one side, and I freeze.

Looking down, I see that the heel of her shoe is broken. I just keep slamming into her, though, filling her with my lust, my exasperation, and all my pent-up sexual energy.

A sudden cry rips out of her throat, and I bring my free hand around to cover her mouth. I feel her teeth sink into my finger, and I draw my hand back with a hiss.

Oh, fuck. She's done it now.

I don't care that she's human — that she's totally off-limits.

I'm going to show her who's boss in here.

Fumbling with the top button of my pants, I tug down my fly and reach for my cock. But just before I can pull it out and ram it down Alex's throat, the phone on my desk rings.

Shit. The light along the side tells me it's Vivian, and I realize I'm late for a meeting.

If Vivian can't reach me by phone, she's going to assume I'm held up on a video call, and she's going to come grab me in person.

Double shit.

Releasing my cock, I reach around to glide my fingers between Alex's gooey folds. I start to work her clit in furious little circles until a strangled moan escapes her lips and her juices spill down my fingers. Her pussy spasms around me as I slam my fingers in and out, milking every drop of her nectar.

Only when she's still and spent do I slide my fingers out of her and suck her cream off each one. She tastes so sweet, it almost kills me not to eat her out.

I want to thrust my tongue inside of her and spend the afternoon giving her orgasms, but I crossed a line just now, and I don't know how I'm going to fix it.

Wordlessly, I tug her ruined thong back into place and yank her skirt down over her ass. Alex straightens up — slowly, gingerly. Her ass must still be sore.

A button has come undone from the top of her blouse, revealing the nude lace of her bra and several inches of creamy cleavage. Her nipples are two hard peeks teasing me through her top, and only the threat of Vivian bursting in is enough to make me rip my gaze away from her tits and go back around to the other side of my desk.

I clear my throat and sink down onto the ridiculous yoga ball, staring at my cold vegan lunch.

I never got my dick out of my pants, and Alex still fucked me. I'm going to make her pay for this.

I open my mouth, but no words come out. There are no words for this.

Alex carefully tucks a stray hair behind her ear and straightens her disheveled skirt. She reaches around to tug the broken heel off her foot and then takes off the other. She doesn't seem to notice her gaping blouse, and the sight of her perfect tits moving around in the lace cups of her bra is enough to make me salivate.

Shoes in hand, she slinks barefoot out of my office and closes the door behind her.