

## FOURTEEN

I slept in the prince's bed that night. The same bed the pack reserved for distinguished alphas who were visiting for a short time. Alphas couldn't stay in another's pack for more than three days except on special occasions because the imbalance of power may trigger an unplanned fight between the visiting alpha and the ruling alpha, especially if the visiting alpha had more power than the ruling alpha. ①

I couldn't sleep that night as the bed was too soft, the room too warm and the presence of power too strong. He didn't sleep beside me. In fact, he didn't sleep. I stayed up all night in the penthouse room listening to him move about and it made me wonder if he too couldn't sleep. If I disturbed his peace or if insomnia was a part of his curse.

At early dawn, sleep took me by surprise and when I woke, I woke to panic in my guts. I was so afraid of the choking aura of power surrounding me and the fact that I woke up later than usual. Astrid would kill me. It was already past eight so I knew she would be in the kitchen by now and anyone that came in after her got a shoe flying at their face.

I didn't see the prince anyway which made me grateful because I didn't know what I would say to him. I didn't know how to treat him. He wanted me to stand up to him but he still told me there was no way I could stand up to him. He demanded respect and got furious when he didn't have it so

what was I to do? He was like a paradox that would ruin me one way or the other.

"You worthless thing!" A shoe flew into my face, smacking my forehead. I winced, even though I expected her to react like this.

While the men in the Alpha pack were quiet and brooding, the women were harsh and Astrid was the leader, the chair of all the harsh women.

"Why are you just coming in?" She hissed when I returned her shoe to her, smacking my arm with the shoe again.

"I overslept," I confessed which I shouldn't have as she hit me again before assigning me a task while muttering harsh words under her breath.

"I have been to a lot of packs but this one has got to be the most inefficient one I ever encountered," she declared, glaring at the girls working nervously around her. She even reduced Monica to a mumbling mess.

We worked well together as a pack but the problem was the woman with her stern glare and perfectionist ways. She came and declared everything we did wasn't good enough and it pressured us to work harder. No one worked well under stress. No one worked well when working for a stranger who came into their home to assert dominance and declare their ways useless and their people weak.

"You all decided to sleep in on the one day the alpha

decided to dine with us?" She hissed more words but they didn't register.

"The – the prince is dining with the others today?" I asked just to be sure I heard her correctly. She cut me a sharp look that had me scurrying away.

After washing and slicing and frying, I had sweat dripping down my face and an ache in my back as I hauled off trays of food to the dining room with my heart in my throat.

I let out a breath of relief when I walked into the dining room to see most of the men hadn't assembled yet. In a few minutes, they would come trooping in so I hurried to avoid them. If I set the food down fast enough, I could run out of the place before they came in.

I once mentioned things worked in reverse for me. My plan to leave early backfired once the men started coming into the place as if they'd been waiting for me outside before they came in. One by one they started coming in so I had to avoid blocking their way which made my movement slower.

Soon my pack members started to come in with them. Some girls who stopped dining with us long ago as they'd become too 'cool' for the dining room came in. Most of them were dressed as if they were on the way to a fashion show of the year rather than breakfast just downstairs. One girl came in wearing heels.

I'd been serving breakfast for the whole pack for a long time now, for four years to be precise and I never saw this many

people turn up to have breakfast with the rest of the pack. People had to bring in seats from other parts of the house to sit at the table. It all started to make sense when the Beta walked in.

Betas were the pillars of the packs. While the Alphas ruled, betas made sure the alpha had a hand, eye and ear everywhere. They oversaw the torture of enemies, liaised with other packs and ensured an alpha without a Luna stayed grounded. They carried power only second to the power of the alpha and because they were in charge of training warriors, they were always stockier.

I'd never seen a beta stockier than Beta Jabari of the Alpha Pack.

A deep hush fell over the room when he walked in, light on his feet despite his mass. A girl giggled while he passed her but he spared her no glance. The other men turned to stare at her until she went red in the face and ducked her head.

Beta Jabari took one of the only two available seats and everything fell into place. The reason why the place was so full and the girls were well dressed. It all made sense.

Alpha Valens hadn't made a formal appearance to the pack. The bond with him was still weak. This would be his first public appearance since his first appearance and everyone was anticipating it. And the girls knew he wasn't mated. Who knew, maybe he would find one beautiful enough to be with. Artemis rebelled at that thought.

I sensed him before everyone else did. Maybe it was because I was his mate or because I was an omega but people chattered amongst themselves while I went as stiff as a board. Then he walked in and everywhere quietened. I held my breath when he brushed past me, his body exuding a warmth that made me ache.

I set down the last of the dishes, arranged the table and prepared to take my leave from the dining room. A leg from nowhere tripped me and I stumbled, righting myself in time. Unfortunately, I grabbed onto Skylar's shoulder to steady myself from falling and she didn't like that.

She pushed my hand off her with more force than necessary and this time, I did stumble. Tears blurred my vision as I stood with every eye on me. Including the eye of the alpha prince. I chanced a glance at him and saw his cold face and tight jaw.

I swallowed down at the anger I detected in his stiff shoulder. He didn't like my weakness. He would expect me to stand up for myself but my tongue glued to the roof of my mouth and I couldn't say anything.

"Watch your steps, bitch." Skylar snarled.

Beta Jabari stood abruptly making everyone look his way, away from me and the drama Skylar was making up.

"Sit." The Alpha's cold voice had Jabari back in his seat in less than a second. He turned to Skylar and I with anger now

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prominent in his eyes. "Apologize to her." I knew what caused his anger.

Me. He was angry at me. Why would someone as weak as me be his Luna?


"I'm sorry," I said to Skylar in a quiet voice. She brushed off my apology with a wave of her hand and a small smile at the prince.

"Wait for me in the training grounds," he said to me, going back to his food and dismissing me. I walked out of the dining room with Skylar wearing a triumphant look and Celeste glaring at the prince. I wished she wouldn't get herself in trouble for me.

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