

AN ENEMY CALLED MATE

Chapter 71



XANDER

I took hurried steps toward Ziva. Breathing heavily as I tried to reach her since she was distant, the soles of my shoe were slapped against the ground roughly.

Then, Ziva turned around. Perhaps she heard the slapping sound and was eager to know the source of the sound. I took my chance, I rushed towards her, and finally... I reached her.

She glanced at me, and whispered, "You should go now. This place is very close to the Pack-"

Before she could continue her statement, I cupped her cheeks and crashed my lips against her soft lips.

As I pressed my lips against Ziva's, she leaned into the kiss, almost deepening it. But then she suddenly pulled away and pushed me, breaking the kiss.

"No," she said, her eyes wide with shock. "You should leave." She stepped back, putting some distance between us.

With that, I received a mind link from Lance and I had to leave. I didn't even explain to Ziva or tell her why I was leaving. It was important, so I rushed towards my car and sped off quickly.

As soon as I reached my Pack, I met Lance with his head hung low.

“Alpha, we received a disunion contract from Alpha Darwin,” Lance explained with his hunched shoulders as he handed some documents to me.

I grabbed the documents, glanced at them, and read them before speaking with an authoritative, firm tone, “I will sign it.”

“What?” Lance uttered, with his jaw dropped. He reached me and spoke, trying to convince me, “Once you sign it, our packs will not be united, and he might-”

“I know, I will sign it. But you and the warriors should be prepared,” I spoke firmly.

Then, I dropped the documents on the table, signed them, and handed them back to him.

“I should get changed now,” I responded..

He nodded and bowed. Meanwhile, I walked out of the room.

Out of the blue, I spotted Rose. She was in her room, but I could see her because the door was wide open. Also, I noticed the way she dragged her luggage roughly.

When a few Omegas tried to assist her, she insisted on taking it herself. She seemed serious and annoyed.

I felt concerned about her because she is my mate so I have to care. Walking into her room, the Omegas gave each other knowing glances, then they excused us politely.

“What’s going on? You didn’t inform me that you are going on a trip,” I asked Rose, gazing at her with concern. Instantly, she narrowed her eyes and scoffed.

“Trip? Does this look like I’m going on a trip?!” Rose asked, with a firm, annoyed tone. She huffed angrily and snapped, “I’m leaving, Xander!”

Instantly, my knees became weak.

Tsk, she must be joking.

I expected her to laugh or chuckle, and say it was a joke, but she didn't. She seemed to be serious as she had never spoken to me that way. What's going on?

I chuckled, "Rose, tell me this is a joke."

Rose snapped again, "It is not! I can't tolerate you and that Ziva witch!"

"Ziva?" I paused, trying to make sense of what she said, "What does she have to do with us?"

"Don't you dare say us! Our bond is slowly slipping away and you... You continue to support that sly witch!" Rose yelled, her voice rising with irritation in her tone.

I corrected her, "You have no right to speak about her that way. And I have-"

She interrupted, "She stole the Crystal Moon and absconded. But you two met, yet you didn't even try to punish her or have the Crystal Moon back!"

"I'm trying, Rose! I'm trying my best."

"Trying your best? Yeah, yeah. I was there. You kissed that witch when you had a mate. Do you even consider me as your mate or am I still dead to you?!" Rose questioned, causing me to be stunned.

"How can you say that? I loved you," I muttered, trying to make Rose calm or convince her to not leave this mansion.

She snorted, "Loved... Yes. You loved me, but not anymore. You know what, I reject you."

I tried to reach for her arm to convince her, but she pushed my hand away.

“I reject this mating bond, Xander!” Her voice echoed loudly, piercing directly into my chest. It made me stagger backward and fall on my knees as the force of her words felt like a physical blow.

A shot of pain hit my chest, as my chest ached. I clenched it and groaned silently while struggling to breathe. Rejection – it was worse than I could have imagined.

~~~

I was in a daze after recovering from the rejection. Rose left the pack and Alexei made things worse by showing me proof that Rose married Doctor Eugene in the human city and they had children.

I felt betrayed. She didn't even inform me about her marriage or her kids. Things didn't end that way.

After I and Darwin's pack disunion, a stronger pack started waging war against my pack. It wasn't easy at all, and the most important thing was the Crystal Moon.

I and Ziva spoke over the phone, and we planned that she needed to steal the Crystal Moon.

ZIVA

The meeting with Alpha Xander was complicated. First, the tension, then the unexpected kiss.

I picked up my pace, my heart racing as I moved toward the room where the Crystal Moon was stored.

Luckily, Alpha Darwin left the Pack for an Alpha's meeting. Also, Tania and her mother were busy, they were not interested in keeping the Crystal Moon anyway.

As I moved, I spotted the guards standing outside the room. They stood with their chests puffed out and their backs ramrod straight.

They looked muscular and they didn't take their eyes off the door, like the room itself was a treasure to protect. Even a slight noise from me can cause them to mind-link Alpha Darwin or report me.

Without thinking twice, I proceeded to the next step. I covered my nose with a handkerchief and grabbed a spray bottle from my bag. I released the content in the bottle and moved away from that area.

Soon, the men slumped to the floor, thanks to the contents of the bottle. Meanwhile, I was happy that the content worked perfectly.

Realizing that the guards were unconscious, I rushed into the Crystal Moon room.

Woohoo! Behold, the Crystal Moon was before me. It was placed on a golden stand, an expensive stand I guess...

I didn't hesitate to put on my gloves to take the Crystal Moon away.

Slowly, I reached for the Crystal Moon and touched it, with my gaze never leaving it. As I touched it, I felt a sudden, sharp jolt of pain, as if I had been hit by a bolt of lightning.

A wave of dizziness washed over me, as my legs became wobbly. I fell with a loud thud vibrating throughout the room.

Then, I saw a pair of walking boots moving toward the Crystal Moon.

"Don't," I managed to say, but the person didn't seem to care. The person left the room and I felt my soul slowly sink into darkness.

"Ziva..." I heard a feminine voice say.

My eyes fluttered open immediately, as I tried to analyze my surroundings.

I was in a room, the guest room with Mum.

“I followed you to the Crystal Moon room earlier, so I brought you here before anyone could notice a thing,” Mum uttered, but my head was spinning.

I tried to recall what happened earlier, but it felt like my head was banging, causing it to be difficult for me to remember.

“Dear, the Crystal Moon is missing,” Mum said, with a worried expression on her face. I nodded in response, recalling the way someone in the boots took the Crystal Moon.

“Someone stole it,” I managed to say, as I touched my forehead.

“Hold on... Mum, did you see the thief?” I questioned, with curiosity tinged in my voice as I glanced at Mum directly.

## Chapter 72



ZIVA

Mum shook her head in response. “No. I didn’t see anyone inside the room.”

I sighed, and muttered under my breath, “Our plan is ruined.”

Just then, I heard a loud bang from the door. I turned to the door quickly, but it caused a splitting headache.

Carefully, I sat on the bed and glanced at the door. Alpha Darwin stepped into the room, with his aura emanating power and dominance.

Fear gripped me instantly. Did he find out about my attempt to steal the Crystal Moon?

“Perhaps you should knock next time,” Mum spoke, confronting him.

“I came here to inform you about Anji. She won’t be able to assist you again,” Alpha Darwin replied, interrupting Mum’s statement.

“Why?” I asked curiously and Alpha Darwin turned to me.

Clicking his tongue, he continued with his lips curling into a smirk,

“Unfortunately, a guard spotted her with a bag. She was leaving the pack through the small hole that leads to the Del Tree but was stopped by the same guard. It turned out that she had stolen the Crystal Moon. She wasn’t willing to let go of the Crystal Moon, so the guard had to give her a few warning stabs with his silvery knife.”

“Oh, goodness!” Mum gasped, while I gasped silently.

She was the thief all along... A traitor to be exact.

“She passed away...” Alpha Darwin’s voice trailed off, “I hope you will learn your lessons from her story, and don’t try to act smart with me.”

I gulped, meanwhile, he stormed out of the room. I reached for Mum’s hand and whispered, “We need to take it quickly.”

Mum nodded in agreement, “Leave that aside... How do you feel now?”

“I’m fine, and it’s just a slight headache,” I explained to her.

But she approached me and gently placed the back of her hand on my forehead.

Suddenly, she withdrew her hand and called out to me in concern, “Oh no, you’re burning up! Are you feeling okay?”

“As I said earlier, I’m fine. You worry too much,” I replied, rolling my eyes. Instead of a reply, Mum rushed out of the room.

Certainly, she left to call for a doctor, even though I didn’t need one.

I grabbed my phone, attempting to send a message about what happened to Alpha Xander. So, I sent a 'Plan Failed' text message.

Afterward, the doctor rushed over, she took my pulse and checked my temperature.

The doctor's eyes widened as she looked at the thermometer. "This is unusual," she said, her voice low.

"What's wrong? Is she sick?" Mum asked, with concern tinged in her voice.

The doctor looked at me, her expression a mix of concern and excitement, "Based on the symptoms, I think it's possible that you're pregnant."

"What?" I blurted out, almost choking at her statement. I glanced at Mum, and Mum glanced back at me, with surprise flashing in her eyes.

Suddenly, Mum smiled and continued, "No worries, she said possible..."

She turned to the doctor and asked, "Can you perform a pregnancy test?"

"Yes, but we should meet at the hospital then," The doctor suggested.

I nodded, meanwhile, Mum escorted her out of the room. Luckily, Alpha Darwin released the cuffs around Mum's wrists and added more watch guards, enabling her to move her hands freely.

My lips curled into a smile as the thought of having a pup made me excited. I glanced down at my abdomen and placed my hand gently on it. This is My pup...

Recalling what happened the other time, I vividly recalled how Alpha Xander mentioned that the night we shared was a mistake and he would never cheat on his mate.

Does that mean that he won't accept his pup?



Worry settled in me, and I let out an exhale before I gently rubbed my abdomen.

“It’s fine if he doesn’t accept you. Mum is always here for you,” I whispered sweetly to my pup.

Just then, Mum walked in. I voiced out confidently as I reassured her, “We will get the Crystal Moon this time.”

~~

After lunch, I began to plan my next steps. I took Tania’s perfume and the same bottle I’d used to make the guards unconscious.

Making the guards unconscious like the other time, I walked into the room and sprayed Tania’s perfume slightly. Then, I moved the Crystal Moon to a small hole in the room.

Mum suggested that I keep it there because it would be difficult for anyone to find it.

She said she would have executed the plan herself, but her scent made that impossible. Since my scent is not as strong, or cannot be detected easily, I volunteered to do it.

With that, I walked out of the room and waited patiently for the other guards to notice the unconscious guards. Just like I expected, a few guards rushed over to the room.

They inspected the room and with Tania’s perfume, they assumed that Tania had stolen the Crystal Moon.

Alpha Darwin left the Pack a few minutes ago, while Tania headed to a spa to get her nails cleaned because she cared about her health.

The guards were confused as they whispered to each other. I watched how they tried to decide on telling Alpha Darwin about the situation or not.

Gladly, everything worked as I planned. They didn't inform Alpha Darwin as they assumed that they would be killed or punished immediately.

They decided to find Tania instead.

Within a minute, the room became empty. The guards left, while I sneaked in and placed the Crystal Moon in a bag.

Mum was waiting for me outside the mansion, with a driver and a car.

As I stepped into the car, the driver was stopped by a guard.

My heart raced quickly. Aren't they supposed to be with Tania?

"Where are you off to?" The guard asked with a scowl. "Alpha Darwin didn't mention that you could leave the mansion."

"I-I, uh," I stammered, fumbling for an excuse.

My mind was blank – I couldn't think of a single reason why I would be leaving the mansion without Alpha Darwin's permission. The guard's eyes narrowed, and I could feel my heart pounding in my chest.

"We are going to the hospital for a check-up. Doctor Erica was here a while ago, remember?" Mum asked, and the guard nodded.

Oh, thank goodness! He believed her!

"Yes, but what does the doctor have to do with the permission to leave?"

"It's important, very important. To be precise, Doctor Erica suggested that we meet at the hospital for a test," Mum stated, and the guard glanced at me. He creased his brows like he was suspecting us.

Turning to another guard, he ordered him, "Get Doctor Erica on the phone."

"Sure," The other guard responded politely. He walked away.

Meanwhile, I glanced at Anji's phone, the phone I was handling, and realized that we'd spent about thirty minutes.

Oh goodness, the guards that suspect Tania will be back soon.

I turned to the male guard who grabbed the phone from the other guard. He glanced at me, then he answered the call.

"Doctor Erica..." The guard called out in a raspy tone, "Are you expecting Ziva at the hospital?"

### Chapter 73



ZIVA

I interrupted, "For a pregnancy test."

The guard repeated the statement, "For a pregnancy test."

The doctor replied instantly, "Yes."

I sighed in relief, and the guard permitted us to leave. As soon as we reached the hospital, we boarded another cab that drove to the Crescent Moon Pack.

I handed the Crystal Moon to Lance, and he left. He didn't say a word, perhaps he is annoyed because I stole the Crystal Moon.

"We will leave tomorrow morning," I spoke to Mum as she sat on a chair and analyzed the guest room.

A knock echoed on the door, and I muttered, "Come in."

The door opened slightly, revealing Alpha Xander and Alexei. I felt an instant connection towards them, and I muttered, "Mates."

It can't be! How can I be mated to the two brothers?

I massaged my temple, as I felt a headache kick in.

~~~

"I'm leaving tomorrow," I told Alpha Xander and Alexei who are now supposedly my mates.

"Alright," Alpha Xander nodded.

Meanwhile, Alexei reached for my hand and voiced out, "You do not need to leave. You can stay here."

Suddenly, Alpha Xander stepped between us and pulled Alexei's arm away from mine.

"Let her make the decision," He spoke with a hoarse voice.

Thank goodness Mum excused us. She won't like the sight of this. To top it all, I'm pregnant and mated to twin brothers.

"I decided. I'm leaving," I told them plainly.

"What about your Mum?" Alexei asked with curiosity tinged in his voice. Obviously, he discovered that she was my mother because of the similar resemblance of our faces.

"She is the Crystal Moon Guardian. She needs to work on the Crystal Moon, doesn't she?" I questioned, thinking about the Crystal Moon.

"Yes, and it's safe to leave after the war," Alpha Xander replied.

I was stunned, "War?"

Alexei interrupted, explaining swiftly, "Alpha Darwin declared war against the pack yesterday. I guess he doesn't know about the missing Crystal Moon yet."

“You should get some rest now,” Alpha Xander uttered. Silently, he walked out of the room and Alexei followed after flashing a smile at me.

I sat on the bed, while my mind pondered about what happened earlier. I was fated as their mate, but what about Alpha Xander’s mate, Rose?

I gasped at that thought. Did she leave? I can only be mated to Alpha Xander if he was rejected by his mate.

That should be the reason for Alpha Xander’s change of attitude!

XANDER

Surprisingly, Darwin did not retreat from the war. It seemed like he didn’t realize that the Crystal Moon and its Guardian were missing.

I and my warriors prepared for the war, while Ziva’s mother and the sorceress worked on the Crystal Moon. We planned to connect the Guardian to the Crystal Moon. So, if it needs to be activated during the war, it can be done easily.

Afterward, I would have to let Ziva and her mother leave, though it would be difficult to watch Ziva leave. I spoke with Lance and he prepared a car to move Ziva out of this pack safely.

I’ve always been an asshole to her and that is the best I can offer.

I knocked at the door that led to Ziva’s room, with the divorce papers in my hands. They had my signature and I needed Ziva’s signature to proceed. She wanted it from the beginning, and it’s for the best. I should let her go.

“Come in,” Her sweet voice echoed. Then, I opened the door. Instantly, my gaze fell on Ziva. Her brown hair was packed into a tight bun and she was dressed in a floral gown.

She didn’t glance at me or my direction as she stayed focused on fastening the zipper of her dress.

“Thank goodness you are here. I think the zipper is stuck-” Ziva turned around as she spoke. As soon as she gazed at me, she paused.

“I thought it was someone else,” She spoke quickly, her gaze darting the door like she was expecting someone to walk into the room.

“I can help you with the zipper if you are fine with it,” I told her. I expected her to hesitate or ignore me. Instead, she turned around, revealing the back of her dress and the zipper.

I approached Ziva and glanced at the zipper. There was nothing wrong with the zipper, but the dress was very fit on her body, almost too tight.

“It’s not stuck, and the dress is too tight. Won’t you feel suffocated when I fasten it?”

She exhaled and muttered under her breath. “You only feel concerned because of the mate bond. No worries, I will only wear it today, and I won’t feel suffocated.”

“I’m not concerned because of the mate bond. I’ve always been concerned about you.”

“Huh?” Ziva replied like she was struck by my statement. She turned around and faced me with shock evident on her face.

“I was preoccupied with ruining Granelma Pack and Alpha Darwin through you because I assumed that you were his daughter. Then, I thought it was just mere lust I felt towards you, but it wasn’t,” I glanced up at her and smiled. This is

“You didn’t deserve everything I did to you. Now, you will live a better life. Reject I and Alexei. I signed the divorce papers.” As soon as I completed my statement, I felt Ziva’s arms around my body.

She hugged me tightly and I muttered, “You don’t want to be involved in this bond, you should move away.”

“You evil jerk,” Her words came out as a sniffle.

Was she crying?

I pushed her slightly and glanced at her face to see whether she was crying or if I heard something else. Her cheeks were wet and she wiped the tears off them quickly.

“Don’t look at me that way. It will only make tears pour down,” She pouted, causing me to chuckle silently.

Suddenly, the door swung open, revealing Lance in his armor.

“Alpha, it’s time,” Lance spoke quickly.

Chapter 74



XANDER

I glanced at Ziva and smiled, “I should leave now.”

She nodded, and I walked out with Lance. Hastily, I grabbed my weapon as Lance continued to speak.

“Alpha Darwin and his warrior are at the pack’s border. I think they intend to invade our territory.”

I snarled, “They wouldn’t dare. This is my territory, and if Darwin thinks that he can conquer and get rid of me, he is a joker.”

“You mean our territory,” I heard Alexei say from behind. He grabbed his weapon too, and spoke with his head held high, “We fight together, we conquer together.”

We reached the pack’s border quickly. Just like Lance said, Darwin intended to invade our territory. We could see his men moving towards the border.

They were led by Darwin as they used guns that fired silvery bullets. We surged forward too, clashing against Darwin’s men.

Guns fired, and silvery bullets ripped through the air, striking true and finding their mark in the flesh of Darwin’s warriors. They howled in pain and rage, their bodies contorting in mid-air as they were struck by the silver rounds.

As the battle raged on, I faced Darwin. We exchanged blow for blow, but I managed to dodge a few blows from him.

Soon, I heard a powerful cry. Oh no...

There were more men from Darwin’s side. They shot our men, and I watched them drop dead one by one. What is happening?

Darwin let out an evil chuckle, as he wiped off the blood under his nose. “Do you think I will let Ziva have the Crystal Moon that easily? Haha, if only you knew that its power was extracted to work for me. That’s just an empty fragment, fool!”

“Alpha, we have been surrounded!” Lance spoke through the mind link. I clenched my fists, as anger stirred in me.

ZIVA

I watched Mum and the sorceress perform some rituals on the Crystal Moon.

“It’s time,” the sorceress said to Mum. Without hesitation, Mum touched the Crystal Moon, but nothing happened.

“I can’t feel it,” Mum spoke, her tone filled with disappointment.

“It can’t be,” the sorceress gasped, while I stood there, confused by their actions and discussion.

“What happened? Is there anything I can assist you with?” I asked, wanting to help.

Mum shook her head quickly, “I can’t feel any connection towards it. It seems like the power has been extracted. It’s a trap to make us believe that we possess it, but we don’t. It’s just an empty Crystal Moon now.”

“Is there anything we can do to revive its power then? Or can we restore its power?” I asked.

The sorceress lowered her head, “Nothing can be done, and this war will lead to this pack’s destruction.”

I paced to and fro, hoping there was something I could do to stop this war.

“How can this be happening? We planned everything and worked through it.” I sighed, “I should have been more careful and attentive. If I had not fainted after touching the Crystal Moon and before Anji took it, maybe this would have not happened.”

The sorceress raised an eyebrow as she asked, “You fainted?”

I nodded, “Yes. I touched the Crystal Moon and I felt a sharp pain like I was hit by lightning. Then, I became dizzy and fainted.”

The sorceress’s face lit up with a smile. Hastily, she skimmed through the pages of a book and read out loud, “Feeling a jolt of pain, like he was hit by lightning, he became dizzy and fainted. Thus, the Crystal Moon had chosen him as the next guardian with its power connected to him.”

After reading, she exhaled and held my hand, “You have been chosen as the next Crystal Moon guardian just before its power was extracted. Thankfully,

you are connected to it which means that we can still work with it. However, you will be the one to activate and restore its power before it kills the opponent.”

“Nonsense!” My mother yelled as she pulled me away from the sorceress. She turned to me, her words tinged with emotions, “Activating and restoring will not only kill the opponent. It can hurt your pup and even yourself.”

“Pup?” The sorceress uttered, stunned by what Mum said.

“Yes, she is pregnant. So, she shouldn’t be involved in this,” Mum defended.

“Are there no other options to restore and activate the Crystal Moon’s power without hurting my pup? I want the pup and I want the pack’s safety. I want the Crystal Moon to be restored to the right hands, is that possible?” I questioned.

The room fell into silence, and I knew what it meant. There were no other options. However, if I am unable to stop the war, every pack member will be killed or enslaved, including Mum and myself.

Also, Mum wished to make up for the terrible things she did for Alpha Darwin, and this was what she wanted – The Crystal Moon in the right hands, and a peaceful place for all werewolves.

I grabbed the book from the sorceress and glanced at the pages. It was a simple task to activate the Crystal Moon, and it should be done quickly.

“I will do it,” I told them. I received a wide smile from the sorceress and furrowed brows from Mum.

“No, you won’t.” Mum disagreed, shaking her head. “I won’t allow you.”

Hastily, she took my hand and placed it on her head, “Swear, swear that you won’t get involved in this.”

“Mum...” I called, pulling my hand away from her grip. “This is the only option. There are a lot of people here and I will never forgive myself if something bad happens because of my greed.”

“It’s not greed, Ziva. It’s self-love, and what about me? You said you wanted us to leave together. You deserve a happy life and I do. We can even leave right now,” Mum replied with a shaky voice.

I embraced her, and muttered, “I promise, I will be fine and we will triumph.”

Chapter 75



ZIVA

Pulling away from the embrace, Mum’s eyes flooded with tears.

“Don’t do it!” She screamed as she was held back by the sorceress. I walked out of the room and rushed to the pack’s border with the Crystal Moon.

As soon as I reached the border, the smell of blood hit my nostrils. The Crescent Moon warriors were almost defeated by Darwin’s men, but they continued fighting. Slowly, they dropped dead on the floor like chickens and it hurt to watch them die.

From a distance, I noticed Darwin’s men, preparing a weapon that seemed to be deadly.

Then, I positioned myself with the Crystal Moon and prayed to the Moon Goddess. She doesn’t seem to answer my prayers, but I wished... I wished she did. I closed my eyes, not wanting to listen to the loud cries, and to concentrate on restoring the Crystal Moon’s powers.

“Moon Goddess, please restore its power and help the Crescent Moon pack,” I prayed silently. Then, I tightened my grip on the Crystal Moon and chanted the same words that I memorized from the sorceress’s book.

Suddenly, it felt like the wind pierced through me, and knocked my soul out. The cries of the men paused and the only thing I could hear was the repetitive sound of what I chanted.

“Ziva!” I heard someone yell. Opening my eyes, I realized that everyone was down. The warriors from both the Crescent Moon pack and Granelma pack fell. The Crystal Moon was too powerful...

“Foolish child. I was your father, yet you stabbed me in the back,” Alpha Darwin’s voice echoed. I noticed how his figure sped towards me with a silvery sword.

No, the Crystal Moon should kill him too. Didn’t I do the right thing? I closed my eyes, hoping that the Crystal Moon would work again and send the opponents to the ground.

Instead, I was hit. I looked forward and saw Alpha Darwin with an evil smirk on his face. The silvery sword was positioned to hit me, but I didn’t feel any pain. Then, I realized. I was enveloped in an embrace and the person who embraced me was none other than Alpha Xander.

He stumbled back, as his blue eyes flashed with a mixture of pain and fear.

Boom! The Crystal Moon activated, sweeping Darwin’s men off their feet as it threw them to the ground with a heavy thud.

At that moment, my sight became blurry and everything turned black. I sighed, as I was exhausted and excited... Finally, it’s over.

~~~~~

The beeping sound of a monitor echoed in my head. It was loud and it made me flicker my eyes open. I glanced at the ceiling, and then the surroundings. I was in a large ward, then I caught a scent. It was Mum's scent which meant that she was nearby.

"Ziva!" I heard her exclaim. The word made my ear ring loudly. I had to close my eyes and try to calm myself. I could not understand why I was not responding normally to the environment.

Also, it felt like I had been unconscious for decades. Mum hurried towards me and she sobbed, "I can't believe that you are awake."

I smiled and questioned her, "Everyone is fine, right?"

"Everyone? Talk about yourself. Are you alright? Do you feel better?" Mum bombarded me with questions. I could not even keep up with what she said as I just watched her speak.

As soon as her lips stopped moving, I said, "I'm fine."

Then, she let out a sigh of relief and muttered, "Thank Goddess you are alright."

"My pup," I cut in, sitting up quickly as fear gripped me. Hastily, I reached for my abdomen, hoping that I would feel my pup, but Mum held my hand.

I turned to her and noticed that the smile on her face had faded.

"It's been many months since the war. Everything is back to normal, and the pup..."

Tears slid down my cheeks before she could continue. I lost my pup.

"The pups are fine. Healthy pups too," Mum spoke, causing me to burst into a chuckle. I touched my belly as I felt it shifting, as if alive.

"I can feel them," I smiled.

Then, the door opened silently, revealing Alpha Xander with a bouquet of roses in his hand. My heart skipped a beat as I took in the sight of him looking more handsome than ever in his crisp button-down shirt and fitted jeans. His blue eyes were filled with warmth and concern.

“I’m going to step out for some fresh air,” Mum said as she walked out of the room quickly.

As soon as she walked out, I felt worried. It seemed like something bad happened and Mum didn’t want to talk about it.

I turned to Alpha Xander and asked him in a low tone, “Did something bad happen?”

“No, everything is fine... thanks to you,” he replied, as he smiled warmly. “Thank you.”

Suddenly, the door swung open. Alexei stood at the doorway with a bouquet of roses too. He was panting heavily.

“I’m so sorry. I was in a distant place and I had to rush over when I heard about your consciousness,” he managed to say amidst his heavy pants.

Hastily, he approached me and handed his bouquet to me. “Here, to the gorgeous Guardian.”

“Thank you,” I blushed. Turning to the other side, I realized that Alpha Xander left the ward.

“So, how do you feel? Should I call the doctor to have another check-up done?”

I furrowed my brows, “Another check-up?”

“Well, Xander insisted that the doctors should be around to give you a check-up every damn second. Just before you became conscious, the doctor did a

check-up and she informed us that you were recovering. I had to rush down here lol.”

“Oh...”

Hurriedly, Alexei put a pillow behind my back and he spoke, “Sit, and relax. I will get a delicious, mouth-watering meal. Just give me a minute.”

“Alright,” I chuckled, as I leaned back and watched him rush out of the ward.

## Chapter 76



ZIVA

I ate to my heart’s content and Alexei kept me company, making my stay at the hospital enjoyable.

Even Mum visited a few times and she discussed some important things. She narrated what happened while I was unconscious, revealing that my wolf would be unlocked because I was involved with the Crystal Moon.

Also, everyone, including Alpha Xander was aware of my pregnancy after I was admitted to the hospital.

Alpha Xander even claimed to be the father of my pups, and that was the reason behind Mum’s odd attitude. She was annoyed to realize that I activated the Crystal Moon for his pack, and he did nothing to stop me.

I told her calmly, reassuring her that he was not aware of the pregnancy or my plan to activate the Crystal Moon. Even if he had been aware, he would have definitely stopped me.

However, she was adamant. She continued to pester me with how annoyed she would have been if I had not woken up.

Afterward, she left, and as nighttime hit me like a storm, I tried to settle in for some sleep. I tossed and turned on the bed, closing my eyes in an attempt to get some sleep. It didn't work. Eventually, I gave up and simply lay on the bed, resting.

Just as I started to relax, I noticed that the door was opening slightly as a familiar scent filled my nostrils.

My heart raced, it was Alpha Xander! Strangely, I've been able to detect the scents of Mum, Alexei, and Alpha Xander after meeting them earlier.

My attention diverted back to the door. His scent was still present but it seemed like the door was closed. I shut my eyes, pretending to be asleep.

Then, I felt his warm hand press against my forehead as he spoke, "Thank Goddess you are fine now. Now, get some sleep and stop flickering your eyes."

I voiced out, "Perhaps I don't feel the need to sleep because I've been unconscious for a long time."

He looked away and turned on the night lamp which brightened the ward quickly.

Sitting up, I asked him, concern evident in my voice. "How are you doing? I remember that you were stabbed-"

"The wound healed up quickly. So, you have nothing to worry about," Alpha Xander replied, and he walked towards the door.

When he tried to open the door, I cleared my throat and said, "Well, I think we have a lot to discuss... Like our pups."



He paused for a moment and turned around, "I thought you intended to keep it to yourself and abscond."

"Well, that was in the past, and you caused it anyway. I only thought about keeping it a secret when you acted like you didn't want me or them."

"Did I ever mention that I didn't want you or my pups?"

"Yes, you did. You told me indirectly and Rose was your mate. I was just the other woman."

"You were not the other woman," He spoke, as he massaged his temple. "And yes, I was the asshole who mistreated you to gain vengeance, but keeping my pups from me is cruel. Yes, you don't deserve me. I know that's what you are going to say. I will hand over the divorce paper to you tomorrow. You can reject me and get married to Alexei if you wish to."

I furrowed my brows, confused and taken aback by what he said. "Alexei? Why is Alexei involved in this?"

"You do not need to inform me. I am aware of your romantic feelings towards Alexei. I will accept your union with him and your rejection, but that will be after you deliver the pups for your safety."

"Oh Xander, please stop saying nonsense. I like Alexei and I only regard him as my brother-in-law. This mate bond is just messing with our lives.

Also, if you have any feelings for me and you don't see me as just a woman who is pregnant with your pups, these aren't the ways to show or prove it. Rather, you are just making things go around in circles over and over again. It confuses me whenever I try to make a decision and it's exhausting."

Just then, Alexei barged in with two small bowls. He didn't look up, as he seemed to be preoccupied with his thoughts. He spoke quickly, "I knew that you would be awake. We should have ice cream together-

As soon as he raised his head and saw Alpha Xander, he raised his eyebrows.

“Did I interrupt?” He asked, darting his gaze from Alpha Xander to me.

“No, you didn’t. You came at the right time,” I responded. Hastily, I moved away from the bed and approached him. “I needed to step out and have some fresh air since this ward is stuffy.”

“Tsk, you should move to another ward then.”

“No worries. I will be discharged soon anyway,” I spoke as we walked out of the ward. Then, my gaze fell on that bowl, “Is that an ice cream bowl?”

“Yes. The doctor said you might find it difficult to fall asleep on your first night. So, I brought these.”

I took the bowl and smiled, “You are my savior. I was actually craving for this.”

As soon as we reached outside the hospital, the smell of wet soil wafted into my nostrils. I glanced at my surroundings and noticed the trees that were around. It would be nice to go for a run with one’s wolf.

“The best place a hospital can be developed is at the center of the woods. The sight of the trees and their smell can make any patient recover. You know, we can race, just you and I once you can transform into your wolf.”

“That’s a good idea. She will be so excited for that. Sadly, I’ve been unable to reach out to her.” I let out a sigh, “I don’t think what happened with the Crystal Moon unlocked her like Mum said earlier.”

“Give her some time. She’s probably frightened and cautious so she won’t hurt the pups.”

I nodded, “Probably.”

I opened the ice cream bowl and shoved the spoon into it. When I attempted to lick it, I heard Alexei say;

“Xander can be annoying sometimes but do not take it to heart. He is just a bit traumatized and obsessed.”

I paused, “...”

“I eavesdropped a bit.”

“Rude.”

“Sorry about that. I was just concerned, but the truth is that he really loves you. He might not be able to open up now or express it, but he will. Give him some time.”

“What about you? We are attached by a mate bond, remember?”

“Regardless of the bond, you are in love with him, not me. It’s fine anyway, I can always be the good-looking uncle.”

I almost laughed at his joke. The smile on my face was quickly replaced with a neutral expression. He was only trying to make me laugh it off, but I was concerned about him. “You were very excited to share this mate bond, and I’m sorry if this makes your heart ache.”

“Don’t be. There are still a few months left before you deliver the pups, and we still need to share this mate bond for your safety. Then, if Xander misbehaves or tries to hurt you, I will kick him in the a\$\$ and then marry you.”

We burst into brief laughter and I uttered amidst it, “It is a reasonable plan.”

## Chapter 77



ZIVA

“It is, and I’m damn serious about it,” Alexei said playfully while I laughed it off. I succumbed to licking the ice cream, as the sweet taste of strawberry was to die for.

Afterward, Alexei dipped his hand into his pocket and he brought out a phone. It appeared to be a new phone.

“Here. You can call me whenever you want. I have my contact number saved, even Xander’s and your mother’s numbers are saved too,” He said as he handed it over to me.

“Thanks, I would also like to schedule an appointment with the doctor tomorrow-”

“I will have that arranged quickly. So, all you need to do is rest and stay healthy. Your powerful mate will always be around to attend to your needs.”

I smiled, “Thanks, and I owe you one.”

He flashed a smile before glancing back at the hospital, “You should get some sleep now.”

“You too,” I replied. I handed the empty ice cream bowl to him and returned to the hospital. As soon I reached the hospital’s entrance, I turned back and waved at him. Then, he did the same with a smile.

Such a sweet man. Who would believe that someone like him would exist in reality?

I returned to my ward and dozed off after a moment of browsing on the new phone.

~~~~

I was woken up by the bright morning light that seemed to reflect on my face. Abruptly, the light stopped reflecting on my face. I looked around and saw

Alpha Xander. He reached for the window blinds and closed it to block the sunlight.

Surprisingly, he was in a new set of clothes, and he looked refreshed. I glanced at the couch that was close to my bed and noticed the blanket on it. Did he spend the night in this ward?

“Is this what you always do?” I asked Alpha Xander, “Stay in the ward throughout the night and leave the next morning?”

As I waited for his response, I remembered the stretch I learned online yesterday – a lying hip flexor stretch to ease pregnancy discomfort.

My back ached from a night of awkward sleeping on the hospital bed.

So, I slowly lay flat on the bed, bringing my knee towards my chest. “Mm-hm,” he replied, his deep voice distracting me from the initial discomfort.

As I held the stretch, I couldn’t help but feel a lingering ache in my lower back. It was as if the hospital bed had been wrestling with me all night, and I was the loser.

I closed my eyes, hoping the stretch would work its magic when I felt a gentle touch on my shoulder. I opened my eyes to find Alpha Xander’s concerned gaze.

“Do you need some help?” he asked, his deep voice soft and soothing.

I nodded, feeling a bit embarrassed but also grateful. Everything seemed to be different about him after I let out my thoughts last night.

First, he revealed that he had been around, spending every night at my ward while I was in a coma. Now, he is suddenly offering to help.

I sat up in a comfortable position, with my back straight and feet planted firmly on the bed, allowing Alpha Xander to access my lower back.

As he touched it, it felt like a spark of electricity ran through my veins. Swiftly, he massaged it, his fingers applying just the right amount of pressure to ease the tension. I let out a sigh of relief as his touch brought soothing comfort to my lower back.

“How does that feel? Is the pressure okay?” He asked.

A wave of tingles spread through my body. My cheeks turned red as he continued massaging my back. I replied, “Better. It eased the ache.”

Then, he paused, taking a deep breath, and faced me. “About last night... I am very sorry. I was completely out of line. I should never have brought up the divorce, rejection, or even Alexei.

I should never have lashed out at you in anger or thrown you into the Den over something as trivial as burnt pasta.

That was unforgivable. Also, I want to clarify that I never meant to imply that I didn't want you or the pups. When I said that night was a mistake, I meant it differently. You were never the other woman, and I regret my actions deeply. Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?”

I glanced away from his soft and gentle eyes.

“No,” I replied firmly. Then, he went on his knees and pleaded, “I am sorry-”

“When I look back at those moments, I can't think about forgiving you.

Sometimes, I wonder what came over me. No woman in her right senses can even tolerate whatever I tolerated.” I sighed and continued. “Even if Mum found out about it, she would never allow me to be around you. Also, you can draft the divorce papers.”

His eyes widened in disbelief as his face fell.

“You should not be surprised. After I woke up from a coma, I didn't oppose getting a divorce.

The previous night, I was only annoyed because you involved Alexei during our discussion. I wanted to speak to you about co-parenting the pups until you mentioned how cruel I was to keep the pups a secret. Honestly, I was exhausted.”

“Ziva, please don’t make a hasty decision. We can start all over again.”

“It was not a hasty decision. I thought about it properly.”

“Please Ziva, reconsider,” he said, his voice shaking as he reached for my leg. However, I was quick to pull my leg away.

“You must be busy with pack works. I have an appointment with the doctor,” I said quickly, but he didn’t stop pestering me. His eyes had turned red as tears threatened to fall from his eyes.

“Give me another chance. I will make it up to you,” he begged, as tears flowed down his cheeks non-stop.

I felt my chest tighten. Seeing my mate in such an awful state was devastating, but I had to do it.

I spoke in a cold, firm tone, “Is this what you want, huh? Crying to make me feel hurt? You won’t only hurt me, you will hurt the pups too. So, stop it.”

Chapter 78



ZIVA

A soft knock echoed on the door. I turned to Alpha Xander, or let me say Xander, and darted my gaze back to the door.

“Mrs. Ziva, it’s time for your appointment,” I heard a feminine voice say.

“I will be there,” I replied as I slowly moved away from the bed. I walked into the bathroom and had my bath. Dressed in a maternity top and jeans, I walked out, only to find Xander outside the bathroom.

“I thought you left,” I said, as my brows shot up in curiosity. “Why are you still here?”

Swiftly, he opened the door without answering my question, and the silence that followed was deafening. What is this now, a silent treatment?

“I stayed because I needed to accompany you to the doctor’s office.” He replied quickly.

“Hmph.”

Xander led me to the doctor’s office quietly. When we reached there, I was greeted by a nice woman.

“Hi, I’m Doctor Aurora,” she said warmly, and when I wanted to reply, she continued, “Mrs. Ziva, right?”

“Yes,” I nodded. Then, she gestured to the chair positioned across her. I sat on it and Xander sat next to me. Strangely, he was quiet, very quiet.

“Alright, Mrs. Ziva. Do you want more information about your pregnancy or shall we move ahead to prepare for delivery?”

“Uhm, no. Let’s start from the beginning. I’ve been away for a few months, and I’m very curious about a lot of things. Like how many weeks am I now?”

“Okay. You’re currently almost nine months pregnant, Mrs. Ziva,” the doctor replied with a warm smile. “You’ve got about two to three weeks left until delivery.”

“Wow, that’s amazing and fast!” I exclaimed, exhaling quickly.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes, yes, I am,” I replied, smiling widely. I calmed myself and asked, “And the pups? How are they doing?”

“Ah, your twins are thriving!” the doctor said, showing me the ultrasound images. “You’re having a boy and a girl, and they’re both healthy and growing perfectly.”

I stared at the ultrasound images as tears welled up in my eyes. My pups... I pressed my hand gently on my belly and gleamed in excitement.

“Since you’re in your third trimester, it’s essential to start preparing for delivery. Well, joining a pregnancy yoga or exercise class can help you stay active, manage pain, and connect with other expecting mothers.

We’ll discuss your options for labor and delivery, and I’ll recommend some exercises and classes to help you prepare.

As for labor, we can discuss options like natural birth, epidural, or cesarean section. We’ll also go over breathing techniques and pain management strategies.”

I was grinning from ear to ear as I listened to her attentively. “Everything sounds great,” I squealed.

“Then, your husband’s support is also crucial,” the doctor emphasized, causing me to lean back in my seat. I thought to myself, “Is he really needed? I can do everything myself.” I narrowed my eyes, clearly uninterested in listening to anything involving him.

The doctor must have noticed my expression. She turned to Xander and said to him, “Alpha Xander, you should be very involved in the process. Your physical and emotional support is needed. You can assist her with stretching and exercise routines, and listen to her concerns and feelings.

Then, help with pups preparations, be present during labor and delivery, if desired. Help her relax and unwind with baths and meditation. Ask how she's feeling and what she needs. Share your feelings and concerns too.

Be patient and understanding. Hormonal changes in pregnant women can cause mood swings. Be gentle and supportive during this time. Show love and affection, physical touch and intimacy if comfortable-

"Sorry to interrupt, but can we skip that?" I questioned.

The doctor nodded, "Yes, definitely." "We'll go over a list of foods to avoid, like raw fish or undercooked meat, and recommend nutrient-rich foods for fetal development. And don't worry, we'll cover everything in detail, and then I will personally send it to Alpha Xander."

"It's fine, you can send it to me," I told her.

She glanced at me, then shifted her gaze to Xander with furrowed brows.

"I'm fine with whatever she says," Xander spoke.

She smiled, "Alright, I will send the details to you, Mrs. Ziva."

"Great..."

"Then, I will send a copy to Alpha Xander. Is that good?"

"Honestly, there's no need to involve him-" I started to say, but Xander cut me off, interrupting with a polite but firm, "Thank you so much, Doctor. We will leave now."

He stood, gesturing toward the door, and I followed his cue, rising to my feet. As I led the way back to my ward, he trailed behind me like I was a baby and he was my bodyguard.

Recalling what the doctor said, I clenched my fists. Physical touch and intimacy, my foot!

As soon as we reached my ward, I told him firmly, “There is no need to follow me or get involved. Whatever the doctor says about your involvement, show love and affection. I don’t need it... and physical touch and intimacy? Don’t you dare come close to me!”

“I will be patient and understanding,” Xander exhaled. His statement sounded like sarcasm, as it played on my nerves.

“What do you mean by that?”

“I’m following the doctor’s instructions and you should too, for the pup’s safety.”

I wanted to reply, but he approached me and guided me to the couch.

“Now, get some rest,” Xander said in a soft, comforting tone. For a minute, I relaxed and let out a sigh of relief. Leaning back on the couch, he asked softly, “Now, how do you feel?”

“I don’t know... Tired? Mentally stressed? I can even feel an ache forming in my head,” I replied.

He pressed his warm hand against my forehead and was mute like he was mind-linking someone. Suddenly, the door burst open as three different doctors walked in, including Doctor Aurora.

“Alpha, we received an emergency mind link,” the doctors chorused.

“She feels tired and mentally stressed. Also, she is experiencing a severe headache,” Xander explained to the doctors, causing my jaw to drop in surprise. It was just a minor situation, and he was making a mountain out of a molehill.

Doctor Aurora approached me. She touched my wrist, forehead, and neck. Then, she turned to Xander with a smile, “These are just mere symptoms of pregnancy, Alpha Xander.”

“And the stress?” Xander asked.

“Well, hormonal fluctuations, anxiety about motherhood, and physical discomfort can contribute to mental stress during pregnancy. So, there is no need to worry.” As soon as the doctor completed her statement, Xander nodded.

Chapter 79



XANDER

I was devastated. After pleading with Ziva, she refused to forgive me and insisted on getting a divorce. However, if that was her final decision, I would accept it.

“Can she be discharged today?” I asked Doctor Aurora and she nodded. Then, I escorted the doctors out of the ward. When I returned, the ward was empty. My heart raced.

Instantly, I dialed her new contact number, but she declined the call.

“Well, that means she is fine and doesn’t want to be with you,” Maz spoke. I ignored him and walked out of the hospital, following her sweet lavender scent.

Then, I found her outside the hospital. She sat on a bench, probably wanting some fresh air.

I approached her and noticed how she touched her belly possessively. Honestly, I had always wished to touch her pup bump to feel our pups kicking, but guilt and shame held me back. I felt guilty. She didn’t even want me around.

Suddenly, she turned to my side, as if she knew I was beside her.

“Don’t look at me that way. I just need some fresh air, and I do not need to answer your call when I know what you will say,” She spoke, and glanced away from me.

Certainly, she was avoiding me, and my mind had not been at rest after what she said earlier.

“Let’s go home and have lunch together. We can also discuss the pup’s preparations,” I said softly.

She was quick to wave her hand, dismissing me, “You don’t have to get involved. I can do that by myself.”

She was hurting me with every word and she knew it. She didn’t seem to care about that, but these are nothing compared to losing her and just co-parenting the pups.

I asked calmly, “Fine, what do you want? What can I do to make you consider me as your mate or even the father of the pups?”

“Draft the divorce papers and sign them,” she said, her voice firm. “That’s what I want. Then we can co-parent the pups peacefully.”

I nodded, feeling a pang of regret. “I’ll do it, okay?” I told her, trying to sound resigned.

Just then, a sleek car pulled up beside us, its arrival timely. I had sent for it earlier, knowing we would need a ride soon. Ziva raised an eyebrow, “Aren’t you busy with pack works? You’ve been with me since morning, and this...” she trailed off, gesturing to the car.

“Lance will take care of that,” I replied, waving my hand dismissively. “It’s just a few hours’ leave anyway.”

“Shall we go?” I asked. She nodded and she swiftly got in while I opened the car door.

The car drove off, leaving our tense conversation behind. We arrived at the mansion quickly and settled in for breakfast together.

It seemed as though she had forgotten about what happened earlier, as she ate slowly and was sitting next to me.

I took my chance, handed a pup’s name pool over to her, and spoke, “There, a list of names that are my favorites. I thought about it properly and I think they are names you will love.”

She glanced at it slowly, and uttered, “Lovely names, but I love Xena and Zyke. Zyke would be our boy’s name, strong, courageous, and handsome, then Xena would be our girl’s name, adorable, sweet, and fierce.”

She smiled, “You know, I can already picture them. Running down the stairs, while I tell them to be careful. You give them this calm glare that will make them stop running. They will hug your legs with their tiny hands and I will kiss their foreheads after saying their bedtime stories. It will be beautiful.”

“What about us? Won’t you consider not getting a divorce?” I said, gulping a mouthful of food.

She spoke sweetly with a wide smile on her face, “No.”

“At that time, we would be divorced. Then, I would have probably found a job and a handsome husband, and would be expecting a little pup.”

I coughed, choking on my meal, as her words caught me off guard and went down the wrong pipe.

“You promised to draft and sign the divorce papers. Fulfill it,” she said.

She stood and left the dining hall. Almost reaching the landing, I rushed towards her and blocked her path.

“Divorce, that’s fine. Your room is on the other side.” I told her quickly.

She turned to the side and glanced back at me, “Why didn’t you just say it, and what’s with the urgent tone? Are you hiding something from me?”

“No,” I said, but she furrowed her brows and walked past me. “Come on, it’s supposed to be a surprise-”

She barged into the room before I could even complete the statement. The room was a nursery room for our pups, beautifully furnished and decorated with a blue and pink crib. I had prepared it during her second trimester, as I intended to surprise her before her delivery.

“Oh my goodness! You did this all by yourself?” She asked as she turned around to face me with surprise evident in her tone.

“Yes, we did It!” Maz said proudly.

“You ruined the surprise,” I replied, disappointment tinged in my voice.

“Oh, I can just turn around and pretend like I didn’t see it.”

“It’s of no use. It doesn’t change anything,” I responded and then walked back to the dining hall.

“Well, it’s very beautiful, and I love the cribs,” I heard her say.

I glanced at my wristwatch. Realizing that I was running late for my meeting with Lance, I took quick steps.

“Where are you going?” Ziva questioned.

“I have an important meeting with Lance, and I’m running late.” I looked up at her, and smiled, “I will be back by nightfall.”

“Ugh, that mischievous smile. Don’t overthink. I am not concerned about you, and I do not even want to stay with you.”

“Sounds like someone is missing me already,” I said in a sing-song tone, teasing her as I moved out of the mansion.

“Keep dreaming,” She said loudly.

Chapter 80



ZIVA

As soon as Xander left the mansion, I felt my cheeks turn red. He had prepared our pup’s nursery room all by himself and he even intended to surprise me with it.

I foolishly ruined the surprise, but I’m still excited. I walked into the nursery room. Seeing the blue and pink crib, a smile appeared on my face. My little pups would soon arrive and fill this beautiful room with laughter and joy.

A buzz sounded from my phone, drawing my attention. I glanced at it and saw a pop-up message from Sender – Doctor Aurora. The message contained details about the foods I should avoid and the exercise classes I could join.

There was a prenatal exercise class by noon that would involve other pregnant women and their partners.

I forwarded the class location to Xander and sent a message, “Can you reschedule your meeting and meet me here? Doctor Aurora recommended this prenatal exercise class, happening at noon with other expectant couples.”

“I will be there,” he replied quickly.

With that, I smiled and searched through my closet. Surprisingly, there were a lot of maternity clothes there. Glancing at each of the clothes, a pair of maternity leggings, and top caught my gaze. I decided to wear them.

When the clock struck 12 PM, I changed into the outfit I had chosen and the driver drove me to the location – a yoga studio.

I stepped inside the studio, feeling nervous and excited. The room was filled with women with round, big pup bumps, and their partners. However, Xander was not there..

I grabbed my phone, intending to message him and remind him about the exercise class, just in case he had forgotten. Then, his message popped up on my screen.

“I’m so sorry but I won’t be able to make it to the yoga studio. Something unexpected came up.”

My heart sank. Why didn’t he say that earlier instead of raising my hopes?

“Mrs. Ziva,” I heard someone say.

I turned around and saw a woman in yoga pants and a comfortable tank top. I’ve never seen her before and how did she identify me?

She approached me with a smile on her face, “I’m Nancy, the yoga instructor.”

Oh! I should have noticed. She was the only woman in the studio who didn’t have a pup bump.

She extended her hand for a handshake, and I shook it. I said, “Nice to meet you, Mrs. Nancy.”

“Nice to meet you too! Please make yourself comfortable and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.”

She glanced around as if searching for someone. Instantly, I knew who she was searching for.

“Alpha Xander isn’t here,” I explained to her. “He’s tied up with pack business.”

Her expression turned sympathetic. “Oh, I hope you’re doing okay with that,” she said, and I nodded curtly.

It stung a little, but I understood. Work had kept him away, and I knew it was part of being with a pack leader. Still, the absence lingered like a faint ache.

Just then, the yoga instructor strode to the front row, and she began the exercise class. I went through the motions, trying to focus on the exercises and the other expectant mothers around me, but my heart wasn’t fully in it.

After the class, everyone chatted and laughed as they left. I walked out of the studio and the driver took me back to the mansion.

I joined Mum and Alexei for dinner, listening as they chatted excitedly about Alexei’s new job in the human city. He had always dreamed of working there, and now he was finally taking steps to make it a reality.

I headed to my room after I finished having dinner, but I could not sleep. I was disappointed by Xander’s absence at the studio.

I checked my phone, reading Xander’s previous message. “Something came up?” I wondered. Perhaps he was really busy. I sighed. I shouldn’t greet him with a scolding or complaint then.

My ear perked up at the sound of a soft knock.

I called out, “Come in.”

The door creaked open, and I turned to face it. Xander appeared in the doorway. I could see the exhaustion etched on his face. His trip must have been tiring.

“I’m sorry I missed the class-” He began, his voice low.

“It’s fine,” I said gently. “But you said something came up. What happened?”

Xander sighed, and he rubbed his temples as if trying to ease a headache.

“There was a report of a family’s death on the other side of the pack. I had to pay my condolences, but Lance informed me that another family had been killed, with the same symptoms as the first. It’s been a long day.”

My heart softened and I asked, “Do you need me to accompany you there tomorrow? You know, the family of the deceased deserves to be comforted.”

His eyes widened in surprise, and he waved his hand dismissively, “Don’t trouble yourself. You may not be comfortable.”

“I am comfortable with it.”

~~~~

As dawn broke, I and Xander traveled to the other side of the pack. He mentioned that it was a war-ravaged rural place that he had under his protection because its people had helped his father during his reign.

The car halted, and Xander walked over to my side to open the door. Then, I walked out of the car and paid my condolences to the relatives of the deceased.

“It’s very disheartening. They were so close to us,” the woman sobbed as her husband patted her back.

“We are very very sorry for your loss,” I said in a low tone.

With that, they bowed their heads and left.

“Strangely, they seem to have a lot of well-wishers,” I whispered to Xander, who folded his arms.

“Well-wishers?” Xander replied, his voice low. “We can’t trust any of those faces. The family members of the deceased probably poisoned them for their selfish gains.”

I looked at him, surprised. “Why would you say that? You’ve only seen the corpses and relatives once.”

“Lance investigated,” Xander explained, leading me to a small house. “The deceased owned top stores in this pack and several others. You can imagine what their family would gain after they die.”

I thought for a moment. Then, an idea struck me. “Speaking of owning a top store, shouldn’t the first suspect be their business rival?”

Xander nodded. “Yes, but he doesn’t seem to be the culprit. He was investigated, and he even confessed to deciding to close down his business before this happened.”

As we walked inside a room, a pungent smell hit my nostrils.

“Are you sure you will be comfortable with checking the corpses?” Xander asked, concern evident in his tone.

“Yes,” I replied. Glancing around the room, I noticed a body that was placed on a table.

Lance was also in the room. He parted his lips to speak, but as soon as his gaze fell on me, his gaze darkened.

But then, he quickly composed himself.

“Lady Ziva, you are here,” Lance said in a calm tone.

Surprisingly, this was the first time I noticed his dark and cold gaze. Initially, he was very nice and gentle when we first met.

However, after I returned to this pack during the Crystal Moon incident, he seemed to have become increasingly distant and cold – Why does he seem so different now?

Xander strode towards the table and Lance approached him. He removed the white sheet from the corpse.

A wave of sorrow washed over me as I saw the corpse, a young boy likely between five and six years old.