

Chapter 38: Mother Dearest

Sephora suggested they all go downstairs to their private cinema to watch a new movie that had just come out.

"It's getting rave reviews," Sephora said.

But Amelia was at her wits end. She had come here to discuss business, not gush over gazpacho and watch cinematic blockbusters.

"That sounds lovely. Really it does, Sephora. I've been wanting to see *Where the Heart Roams* for a few weeks. But I have some ideas for the resort and I insist we discuss them." Amelia's voice was steady, but she smiled pleasantly at Sephora.

Sephora eyed Amelia up and down. She wasn't used to having someone insist on anything when in her company. She appreciated the young woman's persistence. She dabbed at the corner of her mouth with her napkin, then placed it down slowly.

"If you insist, then I oblige," Sephora remarked. "However, the dining room table is no place for business. Please, let us retire to my study. We can discuss things there."

Yes, Amelia exclaimed in her head. I finally got through to her. Amelia was very pleased with herself but she remained professional on the exterior.

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They all took a seat in the ornate study.

"You may speak your mind, Amelia. I'm all ears," Sephora said, as she lounged back in her plush armchair.

"Excellent," Amelia began. "Well, seeing as we're both werewolves, let's be direct. No offense, Jonathan."

Jonathan shook his head. "None taken. I've worked with werewolves long enough to appreciate their direct demeanor."


Sephora raised an eyebrow. "Is that so, Jonathan? You think you understand the complex nature of us werewolves?"

There was something strange in Sephora's tone but Amelia couldn't quite place it. So she ignored it and decided to dive right in.

"I have thoroughly explored the resort," Amelia stated. "And I have come to several conclusions."

"Do share." Sephora was impressed by Amelia's candor.

"The resort is lacking a reliable infrastructure. The internet signal is weak. A new signal station, however, could be built by werewolves. I'm not sure if you're aware, but my brother and my father made their start in the construction business. It was their way of getting into the upper echelon of commerce. As such, we have a wealth of experience and some of the best workers around. It's no secret that ME excels in high tech areas. For this reason, I believe we would

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work well together.”

Sephora smiled and nodded. Amelia continued.

“The resort has very good rides. I had the opportunity to visit them. They’re quite advanced. However, the amusement park is not publicized. There is very little media attention. I can remedy this. When I was in my ex-husband’s pack, I organized two very elaborate Goddess celebrations. They were both a huge success and were well-known in all packs. Therefore, Silvermoon can come up with a plan to garner some media attention. I’m thinking we can add some new rides. You know, to draw in more tourists? And Mandrake can help publicize it.” Amelia stopped. Sephora appeared very engaged. Amelia took a deep breath and continued with confidence. “That brings us to the final problem. An influx of tourists threatens the ecology. I understand that. But as a forest wolf, we have a unique way of ensuring that the resort’s vegetation grows very well. We can protect the environment from tourists.”

Sephora hadn’t said a thing the entire time. Amelia finished and pursed her lips closed. I can’t tell what she’s thinking. She seems amused, but is she interested in a partnership?

Sephora motioned at the door. Amelia turned to see Mercy standing there, waiting patiently. “Mercy, darling. Will you be so kind as to show Amelia my garden?”

Wait – what? Her garden? I don’t want to see her garden. I want to talk business.

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Amelia looked to Jonathan for help. But he only winked at her to follow Mercy. And since he knew Sephora best, Amelia trusted his judgement.

"You two run along and enjoy the garden. Jonathan, you'll stay behind with me," Sephora stated.

Once Amelia and Mercy had left the room, Sephora turned to Jonathan.

"Darling, it's been two years since you've reached out to me. I was surprised when you asked to meet up. I thought you wanted to tell me that you'd finally found a MATE. And that I was finally going to have an heir."

Jonathan sighed and ran his hands through his hair. "You know better, Mom. I have no interest in Alpha titles. The last thing I need is any more hostility from my brother."

"Then why did you bring this woman here?" Sephora asked, perplexed.

"I told you, Mother. It's business. She's the current head of Moonstone. I explained all this to you. I brought her here for my job. My job with Silvermoon."

"Shame. She really is quite lovely."

"I'm sorry you misunderstood but our relationship is purely platonic."

"I still don't understand though, son. You truly brought her all

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this way for business? Why is her company more important than your own family's? And why do you seem to think that other pack matters are more important than your own? You know how I feel about other packs. We are your family. Not her."

"This is a mutually beneficial arrangement. It will help both companies. It will..."

But Jonathan was interrupted by a loud voice.

"There you are, dear brother. I heard you were here. It's been so long." Lucas strode into the study and sunk down into the couch, his arm spread out and resting on the top of it. "Catch me up. What's new in your life."

"I thought you weren't home today," Jonathan snapped.

"Oh yes. I was going to leave. I was actually on my way out. When I smelled something interesting. A woman..."

Lucas smirked at Jonathan. Jonathan's eyes narrowed and his usual modest demeanor instantly took on a tone of menace.

The tension was so thick between the two brothers, it felt like all the air had been sucked out of the room.

"Play nice, boys. I've had a long day and I don't want any trouble." Sephora instructed her sons, knowing full well that they'd obey.

Even if they didn't want to.

Chapter 39: Tight on Time

"She doesn't like me, does she?" Amelia asked. She was on her way back to the resort with Jonathan. She'd been hoping that Sephora would want to talk more about her proposal after the garden, but she hadn't. Instead, she'd shaken Amelia's hand and thanked her for coming.

"I think she liked you just fine," Jonathan said. He could see the disappointment in her face and he tried to comfort her. The truth was, though, his mom had no intention of helping Silvermoon and he knew it.

Should I tell her? It seems cruel to let her hold onto hope. He turned and looked at her. Concern was etched into her soft features. He wanted nothing more than to hold her in his arms and wipe that concern away.

"Really? So you think she'll consider working with us?" Amelia asked, hope flooding her gorgeous eyes. He didn't have the heart to tell her the truth.

It really had nothing to do with Amelia. Not personally, anyway. He thought back to when his father had been killed. It had been horrific. But the worst part was that none of the other packs had stood up for him. He could still see his mother, standing in front of the massive bay window, looking out into the storm. Her silhouette was lit by candlelight. Her fists were clenched.

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"No news from other packs? ANY of them?" she'd asked, her jaw tight and her voice thin.

"None," her friend had confirmed. Jonathan had seen her face change then, shifting to a hardness. From that moment on, Sephora had felt nothing but hostility towards the other packs.

But he couldn't tell Amelia this. Not without telling her ALL of the truth. She didn't even know that Sephora was his mom. And he wanted to keep it that way – at least for the time being.

"Amelia, I meant to ask you," Jonathan said, changing the subject. "Do you know Lucas? It seemed like you do."

Amelia sighed heavily. There was no point in lying, not to Jonathan.

"Yes," she confided. "I'm not sure what your relationship to him is, but I'm that Lucas and I didn't exactly meet on the best of terms."

Jonathan had sensed that something was off. Her words made his stomach sink and he feared what she might say next. But he needed to hear it. "Go on," he said, his voice a lot softer than he felt.

"Well, long story short, I was having dinner at the resort when I ran into a friend of his. Her name is Sophia. They insisted I have a drink and he drugged mine. By the time I

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got back up to the room, I was really out of it. Luckily, my ex was there and he put a stop to the whole thing.”

Anger flared in Jonathan for a moment, and he had to swallow it back down.

Lucas and Gabriel?

Why would my brother be associated with Stormfang? Lucas is not my favorite person, but he’s pretty good about keeping a low profile. In fact, our pack always flies under the radar. We never get involved in other pack drama or business.

And what’s this about Lucas drugging her?

“I’m, I don’t know what to say Amelia,” Jonathan confided. “I’m disgusted by his behavior. And I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

He turned to look at her then. He expected to see a vulnerable young girl, but Amelia was anything but. She seemed unrattled by the confession.

She’s so much stronger than I initially thought, Jonathan said to himself.

“It’s okay. I’m perfectly fine. I only told you so you can understand why I have a strong distaste for Lucas.” And Amelia was about to say more when she heard Olivia mindlink her. “We must be back in Moonstone territory,” Amelia smiled. “Olivia is mindlinking me.”

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"Mila! There you are! I've missed you. How was the resort? Amazing, I'm sure. I can't wait to hear all about it!"

"Then why don't you wait until I get back?" Amelia teased.

"Because I have exciting news that just can't wait. Our wedding invitations! They came in this morning."

"Wedding?" Amelia asked, momentarily confused.

"Lily's wedding. Duh. It's the first of next month. But wait – there's more! She asked us both to be bridesmaids! Isn't that just the best?"

A bridesmaid? Amelia? "But I was married," Amelia pointed out.

"Lily doesn't care," Olivia explained. "All she cares about is sharing her special day with her sisters. And that's who we are to her. Sisters."

Amelia was touched by Lily's sentiment. And relieved that Lily had really good taste in fashion.

"I know, right?" Olivia agreed. "There's no way the bridesmaid dresses will be ugly!"

The following week went by in a blur. Amelia was busy with both Lily's upcoming wedding, and her project. Amaya popped into her office a few times with some snide remarks about how 'hard it must be to find a partner since it's taking

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Amelia soooooo long." But Amelia was in good spirits and not even Amaya's bad attitude could bring her down.

All was well in her world. Except for one thing...

"Mandrake still hasn't responded to my emails", Amelia sighed to Olivia in her office. "I don't know what to do, Liv. I'm running out of time. I'm getting anxious. I've reached out several times and nothing. Crickets. What if I can't secure this project?"

"No no no," Olivia said, shaking a finger at her friend. She held up two bridesmaid dresses. "This is a happy time, remember? We get to try these on!" Olivia squealed with excitement and it was contagious.

"Okay, pass it to me," Amelia said, motioning for the dress. In true Lily fashion, the bridesmaid dresses were stunning. Made of silk, they flared out at the waist ever so slightly and draped down to the knee. They featured a low back and halter style in the front. "It's gorgeous," Amelia confirmed with Olivia.

Just then, Amaya marched into the office. She took one look at the woman holding the bridesmaid dresses and burst out laughing.

"What's your problem?" Olivia asked, making no effort to hide the hatred in her voice. "Jealous because you have no friends and therefore, have never been asked to be a bridesmaid?"

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"No," Amaya said. "I've been a bridesmaid plenty of times. I wouldn't be caught dead in that color, though," she said with disgust, motioning at the dress.

"Then what do you want?" Amelia sighed. "Because unless you've come here to discuss something directly related to my project, then I don't have time for this."

"Oh, well, I just heard you laughing from out in the hall," Amaya said off-handedly.

"And?" Amelia asked.

"I was just wondering how you were both in such a good mood. A good enough mood to try on bridesmaid dresses, none-the-less."


"What are you talking about, Amaya. Stop being coy. Just spit it out." Amelia really had no patience for Amaya and her antics today.

"I'm just surprised you're so chipper, given the latest news and all."

"What news," Amelia asked, her eyes narrowing.

"Haven't you heard? The officials at the resort released the news this morning. The buyout party has been moved up."


The color started to drain from Amelia's face. "Moved up?" This wasn't good. She was already short on time as it was. "Moved up to when?"

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"Three days from now," Amaya shrugged. "All the bidding companies will be in attendance."

And just like that, Amelia suddenly had no desire to try on bridesmaid dresses anymore.

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