

Bad Love An Alpha's Regret by Elise Sinclair Chapter 16

Chapter 16

I must pass out because when I wake up, I'm in the living room on the couch and I'm hooked up to an IV. There are machines beeping around me and it's like the den has been turned into an infirmary.

"You flatlined," Adam explains. "We didn't have time to carry you up the twenty flights of stairs to your room."

"It's not that far," I say automatically.

"It is when you're not breathing."

I sit up. I'm groggy and disoriented.

I hear voices coming from the kitchen. "Oh, come here, baby.

Let me clean you up." It's Jessica. She's fawning over Aaron.

"You look terrible," Adam tells me.

"It's good to see you too."

"We should move you to a hospital."

I glance nervously at the kitchen then back at him. "Will they let me out if I get admitted?"

Adam bites his lip.

That's what I thought.

I don't want to spend what time I have left in a hospital bed, alone. Trapped from the world.

"I'll make you a deal. I'll start treatments, but I do it from here.

And we tell no one."

His eyes widen.

I'm not sure it's even possible to keep such a secret. I'm relatively okay now, but as this progresses or if my hair falls out...

"Leah, I'm not sure-

"Can you do it or not?"

"You're taking the pills?"

I nod. Not regularly yet. But I will.

He must sense that I won't back down because he relents.

"Then yeah. Okay. We'll find a way."

"Thank you." I pick at the sheet that's draped over my legs. My

one foot is elevated and there are pillows propped around

1. On the table that normally has various remotes for the tv and electronics, I see a vase of lilacs.

"Did you get those for me?" I point at the pretty purple and pink flowers.

"No. Your husband did."

AARON

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“Come upstairs,” Jessica says. “I’ll run you a bath and you can clean up. I’ll bring dinner up to your bedroom.”

Yeah. She’d like that.

But I haven’t taken a bath since I was six and I’ve already shifted to heal the worst of my wounds. The ones that remain have been treated by our pack physician.

I’m not sure if Jessica is fluttering around me because she’s up to her usual routine or if it’s because Leah is awake and

maybe fifty feet away overhearing everything we say.

If another male made such an offer to her, I’d rip his head off.

So maybe her “I want a divorce” decree has been coming for a while. Because I’ve never bothered to curtail Jessica’s behavior or to try and force her to conduct herself more appropriately.

4/5

Her parents had served mine and we grew up together. It had been assumed from when we were kids that she would be my bride. And when they were slaughtered, I felt responsible for

her. Then there was that time in the canyon and what she did
for me....

So I never fought the idea.

She's beautiful and biddable and beloved by my pack.

She'd make a good mate.

But...I'm already married.

She follows my gaze to the living room. "Aaron," she says quietly. "You can let her go. She's more of a liability than she's worth. The peace has held for a decade. Let her go and we

can move on with our lives."

She isn't wrong.

But... no.

And the attack today, it hadn't just been me who was

targeted. The wolf that mauled Leah's leg had been prepared to plummet to his own death. He'd tried to take her over the cliff with him. And that kind of focus spoke of a very targeted

assassination attempt.

"I know she wants a divorce," Jessica says. She clasps my hand

and brings it to her face. She kisses my knuckles. "Aaron, we

can be together. We can be a family. You can be free."

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Gifts

Chapter 17

I leave Jessica and try to dispel the things she'd said from my mind. Jessica would slide into Leah's shoes in a heartbeat.

She'd assume the role of Luna, dedicate herself to me and our pack and I wouldn't have to doubt her commitment or integrity.

She's been loyal for as long as I've known her and she's been patient.

I don't think that either of us expected this situation with Leah to be permanent. Certainly not when she was a minor and

then even after I married her there was always this notion that things would not be permanent.

But as the years have gone by, my thoughts on that have changed.

My goals have changed.

James is standing outside of the mansion and he's pensive.

He's working hard to step up but I can't overlook the missteps that have been made. He moves to the driver's side of the

Range Rover. And I stop him.

“No. I’ll drive.”

2/4

He frowns but tosses me the keys.

When he moves to get into the passenger side, I lock the door.

“I’m going to take this meeting alone,” I tell him.

He opens his mouth but what can he say? He frowns. “Aaron,

I…”

I know he is gutted by that announcement because it conveys

that I’ve lost trust in him. But there is nothing to be done for it.

Trust is earned.

It is not something that can be assumed or demanded. And though James is my beta, I’m beginning to regret promoting him to the position.

While grounded in the hurts her pack caused ours, his actions.

toward Leah, speak of prejudices that he’s allowed to cloud

his judgment, and that is not acceptable.

“Where are you going?” he asks.

I don’t say. “Reinforce the patrols along the borders and ensure that the mansion has a contingent of guards.”

He nods.

3/4

I start the car and drive off. He's still standing there when I peel out of the long driveway.

It's a good thirty minutes before I'm on the main highways for this region and I drive toward a small town for a meeting with our human CFO of the pack's corporation. Normally, I'd take that meeting in our corporate headquarters, but what I want to say and do, I don't need witnesses to.

It's a plan that has been a long time coming.

Jeffrey Quinton is waiting at the coffee shop. His briefcase is on the table and he has stacks of documents in front of him.

"This isn't our normal venue," he says. "You could've come to my office."

I smile easily. "I like to change up the scenery."

I sit across from him and offer to grab him a coffee. He rattles off some fancy mocha-chino thing and I'm grateful the

barista overhears. I hold up two fingers, not that I intend to drink that sugary shit, but because it's easier.

I'm not here for caffeine.

I'm here to secretly buy stocks and property.

Bad Love: An Alpha's Regret

I don't see Aaron again until the Council Meeting several days.

later.

He comes and goes, and I hear him, but he makes it a point to

avoid me.

Since he isn't home to force me to stay in his bed, I go back to my own room. It's easier not to think of him when I'm not

sleeping in his space.

Sometimes at night I think I hear him, but even when I rush and open the door there is no one in the hallway.

I've started the medications that Adam left me. It's not so bad, at least not yet, but as the drugs build up in my body, I'm told I'll feel worse and probably be bedridden at least a few days.

I try not to think about that.

A progression of wolves are piling out of the mansion and into the waiting vehicles. They'll run security and escort Aaron to

Chapter 18

the meeting and back.

1 file out behind them.

When I get into his idling SUV and buckle my seatbelt Aaron looks at me oddly. "You should stay home tonight," he tells me.

It's the first time he's spoken to me since the attack. "I haven't missed a meeting since I came here."

"You're injured."

The implication being that I'm 'human'. That I'm weak.

True, but ... "It's because I was attacked that I should be present. There are threats that the Council needs to be aware of."

"Do you plan to petition them for a divorce?"

So that's why he wants me to stay. To silence me. He has the nerve to look earnest and upset that I want to leave him when he is the one who broke his vows and impregnated another woman.

He is the one who hasn't slept beside me in a week.

"Yes. I still want a divorce, Aaron."

His eyes flash gold for a moment before he banks the emotion. Then he shrugs. "Suit yourself."

He nods to the driver, a wolf named William. "Let's go."

3/5

I sink back into the seat. I'm painfully aware of this man and all the tumultuous emotions he stirs in me.

I'm sitting close to Aaron but when he shifts his leg so it presses against mine, I wonder if I can endure his nearness for the next two hours.

When we reach the Regional grounds, already cars are arriving and prominent alphas from across this part of the country are exiting limousines and SUVs.

Some wear expensive suits and gowns. Others are in jeans

and shirts. There is no formal uniform or etiquette and the look of each ruling family is almost a calling card for their particular brand of influence.

Aaron has on a v-neck shirt and linen pants. The light colors set off his bronzed skin and his huge stature. The watch on his wrist is worth more than this car and though he doesn't flaunt it, he projects power and wealth.

My father and brother are at the front of the line. They wear

expensive bespoke suits and polished shoes. New money. The flashy kind.

An older couple surrounded by several wolves wear jeans and cotton t's. They're from the far north, and while they look dirt poor, they're sitting on more land than some small countries.

William opens my door and extends his hand to help me out.

I have a walking cast on. My foot is mostly healed. It didn't get infected which is good. Aside from aches and pains and cancer I look the same.

My dark hair is drawn back into a simple ponytail.

I chose dark slacks and a light white shirt. I have the ring

Aaron gave me when we married, a simple band, and a sapphire necklace that was my mom's. I didn't bother to bring

a purse.

Aaron steps out next and he holds his arm out to me.

There are images to project. And while I intend to gracefully dissolve our marriage, I can be civil about it. So I loop my arm through his and we walk into the estate.

The building resembles a library or a museum. It has columns in front and is a monstrosity of stone and glass. Inside, the foyer is marbled in a beautiful design and giant crystal

We check in, clear security and follow the procession into the main room.

It resembles a stage or auditorium.

We take our appointed seats.

“There are a lot of packs present tonight,” I say.

Each group is spaced out and given their own section in the theatre seats. “Yes.” His dark eyes cut to me. “Don’t do this, Leah...”

“I have to, Aaron.”

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you,” he replies cryptically.”

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Gifts

Bad Love: An Alpha’s Regret

1/4