

## Chapter 7

### His Jealousy

"So many dower faces, I thought this was supposed to be a party!" The male's tone was jovial, but suspicion sparked in his eyes as he looked pointedly at Xavier.

"Dylan," Xavier façade was firmly back in place as he slid the newcomer a cool smile. "\*Sweets\* here owes an unpaid debt to the Red Moon Pack. Luckily for her, I'm offering her an opportunity to make amends." "Oh," Dylan's blonde eyebrows rose in surprise, "Please, go on."

"I'm offering her an opportunity to wipe the slate clean. A lifetime in exile, gone in exchange for a kiss."

Dylan threw back his head and barked a bewildered laugh, "With Lance? Were you not her type, old friend? It's a shame you've lost your touch so young, Xavi. They probably have a pill for that, you know."

Lance glowered at the continued slights against his sparkling character, but Xavier took the ribbing in stride. "Perhaps, but that doesn't change the fact that I'm offering the chance of a lifetime to get back into my good graces and, unfortunately for her, she's not playing nice."

"Perish the thought, but perhaps the prospect of spending more time with you isn't the incentive you think it is," he laughed and moved to replace Xavier's tight grip on her neck with a far gentler one. "If you want someone to cooperate, Xavier, you need to offer them something they actually want."

Dylan threw Ava a conspiratorial wink and guided her closer to his side, "In this instance, I'm sure I'd make a much more appealing recipient for our girl. Don't you think?"

Ava realized that he'd aimed that final question directly to her. Unsure of how she was meant to respond given the evening's frequent tonal shifts, she settled for a curt nod. She didn't trust this male any more than she did Xavier, but at this point Xavier's behavior was unnervingly unpredictable and she was grateful for any reason to distance herself from him. Besides, the blonde male was the only person she hadn't seen cheerfully witness a straight-up assault tonight, so the lesser of evils and all that.

Dylan didn't give Ava any more time to get inside her own head. Gently taking her chin in hand, he drew her in and fit his lips over her own. Dylan and Xavier's kisses were like night and day; Xavier's kiss was fierce and

demanding, almost a punishment shared between the both of them. It was resentful and indulgent and, like it or not, it penetrated her down to the bone like the branding it was meant to be.

Dylan's kiss, though, was earnest and thorough, as if he'd spent countless hours practicing how best to make his lovers swoon; every aspect of the experience was a work of art, from the delicate, but firm pressure of his full lips, to each languid stroke of his tongue was well-curated. Ava thought back on when she'd caught him in the stairwell with Bria earlier that night. The single-minded passion Ava had seen him show to the other girl was the same he was intoxicating her with now. Ava's eyes flew open as Dylan's lips were suddenly torn from her own. Standing in Dylan's place was Xavier, standing imposingly between them with pure fury etched into his every feature. He held Dylan at bay with a fist clenched around his collar. Xavier's chest heaved with thinly suppressed aggression while the other male held his hands up in a show of peace.

"You're welcome," he quipped. "Although, full disclosure, I quite enjoyed myself. Feel free to call upon my services anytime." He said the last part directly to Ava, giving her another roguish wink.

Xavier growled from deep within his chest and drove Dylan backwards until his back collided with the nearest wall. "Lay off, Dylan."

Immediately, the underlying air of aggression in the room intensified as Wolves around the room instinctively tensed. Any lingering curiosity or frivolity was at once replaced with tense readiness as the two males

squared off. That let Ava know all that she needed to about Dylan and the new level of danger they were now edging; Dylan was an Alpha.

She didn't recall crossing paths with him at any of the inter-Pack conferences she'd attended with Xavier and his family growing up, and as far as she knew they'd never visited each other's territories. All the same, this room was mingling of Packs with two Alphas at the center.

At the slightest signal from either male, any and all semblance of comradery could erupt into a turf war, and everyone knew it.

Dylan's eyes widened and his eyebrows shot up, clearly not expecting such a blatant show of hostility from the taller male. "Hey, what's up, man? You needed help with your little game, and I stepped in." Despite his efforts to keep the mood light, irritation was quickly creeping into Dylan's laidback demeanor; the smile lines at the corners of his eyes grew more pronounced while his ice blue eyes sharpened. Ava made a note to add him to her ever-growing list of people that should not be pushed too far.

"Seems to me that our girl was finally starting to enjoy herself, too. Like I said, you're welcome."

It wasn't clear to Ava how the two males knew each other, but it was evident that whatever their relationship, Xavier wasn't willing to jeopardize outright challenging the other Alpha, at least not while trapped

in an enclosed space with a dozen of the other male's men. With a visibly concerted effort, Xavier reigned in his rampant emotions. He backed off, releasing Dylan from the hold he had on him and forced his shoulders to relax a bit.

"She's not our anything," he said. "From now on she's not your concern at all."

Dylan's eyebrow rose. "What's that supposed to mean? From where I'm standing it looks like you two are on the outs," he turned his gaze to Ava. "You can leave with me if you'd like to."

There were so many reasons that was never going to happen, least of which was the fact that the male was a near perfect stranger. No one but Ava would be able to tell that the reason behind Xavier's uncharacteristic hostility was - mostly - due to the sudden onset of the mating bond.

From what everyone else's point of view, the Alpha had laid eyes on Ava and lost his cool. Since random bursts of aggression weren't uncommon for Alphas, the confrontation between them was interesting, but not exactly notable. Once everyone had realized who she was and what she meant as a traitor to her Pack, Xavier's ire wasn't only justified, it was warranted.

Xavier's lip rose in a snarl before he caught himself and reschooled his features, "Actually, she can't." He looked at Ava and then back at Dylan.

"She's a member of the Red Moon Pack and therefore under my jurisdiction." "Since when does that negate a female's right to go wherever she damn-well pleases?"

"When said female is a runaway fugitive and still subject to Pack Law."

Dylan let out a long, low whistle. "Damn, Sweets, what'd you do?"

"Don't worry about it," Xavier grunted. "Just know that leaving with me without a fuss is her best option and she knows it."

Xavier's tone didn't leave room for debate. Instead, he calmly walked over to the suite door and opened it. Wordlessly, he turned to Ava and just waited to see what she'd do.

Shit. Ava did know that leaving with Xavier was her best option and she hated it. She hated him. As an Alpha, his word had weight. As her Alpha, his word was law, especially since she was a known criminal.

No matter what she did, her time at the Green Light Club was officially over; Madame Bella would be facing enough trouble now that an Alpha knew for certain that she'd been skimming prisoners and, even if he were so inclined, Dylan wouldn't go against Pack Law and another Alpha for some girl he'd just met. She couldn't make a run for it, either - even if she thought she'd make it further than the door, as her mate, Xavier's instincts

would urge him to find her, so she'd never be able to stop looking over her shoulder.

Adapt and survive, Ava repeated the mantra as she took a step forward. Mia whined and pawed at their connection causing Ava to pause.

A muscle in Xavier's jaw twitched, the only outward sign of his irritation, "Forget something?"

Ava hesitated for a moment before nodding. Suring up her courage, Ava looked to where the waitress stood in a corner, relieved that the attention had fallen off of her, but still shaking from her ordeal. Xavier followed her eyeline and simply nodded toward the door. The girl took off, making sure to skirt around the room taking the furthest route away from Lance's sneering mug. The girl darted past Ava and out the open door without so much as a glance back. Good, Ava thought.

Once the waitress was gone, Xavier turned his gaze back to Ava. She nodded her thanks and moved to meet him at the threshold where he guided her into the hallway with a hand to her lower back.

"Hey, Sweets!" Ava looked over her shoulder to where Dylan was considering her with a discerning eye, "I never got your name."

In answer, Xavier shut the door, ending their second meeting with a resolute thud.