

Alpha Leo and the Heart of Fire Chapter 51

had no effect on me when all I wanted was to be in his arms.

I felt giddy, and even breathing became difficult.

my core clench in desire, but Nikki's presence had been a pretty good slap and give him the cold shoulder.

mouthful of air.

I needed something to drink...

over to the drinks bar.

Both of us grabbing a non-alcoholic drink.

"So, was that her?" Song asked softly.

sighing.

keep her voice down.

"Hmm, I guess it was purely coincidental." I replied.

Song frowned.

wasn't coincidental." 2

"Yeah, me neither." I

turned sharply to see Leo holding Nikki's wrist.

intimate about it, Leo was exuding rage.

have you thrown out of here...

go quiet.

My heart thundered as Nikki looked near tears.

Harsh, but she kind of deserved it...

he doesn't want you.

Seriously, this woman...

her.

He turned suddenly, his eyes meeting mine.

burning into mine.

power, almost as if he was

“Leo?” Jax called him.

He looked away, and the intense connection broke.

I turned too, my heart thumping.

“What was that?” Song asked curiously.

“I’ve seen mated couples...

but that...

damn.

She stopped when I gave her a pointed look.

I didn’t know what to say.

Even my own head didn’t feel right.

“It’s probably the hatred.” I replied, frowning slightly.

She rolled her eyes with a knowing smile.

“You are stubborn, and I think so is he...

her being a witch.

were not coming closer.

magic wasn’t always accepted, but I was glad no one was giving her hateful

turn back, not wanting to be caught up in him again.

he ran over.

and complimenting my dress, but I

a picture." I suggested, smiling down at the gorgeous little cherub.

smiling slightly.

"You ladies look beautiful.

Welcome to our pack, Song.

her a handshake.

"Thanks for allowing me to stay, Alpha Marcel.

hand.

to me.

smiled, I didn't need to ask him if he meant Mama or Indigo.

We all know who the queen of red is.

1

"Thank you.

brushing my hand along the fabric.

the one who had purchased the clothes that Leo had gotten for me.

eye for this stuff.

I mean, some of that lingerie was pretty sexy.

had purchased it.

ordered for a woman of her size and shape, it had

she was getting a lot of attention as she walked around making sure

She was even the perfect mother to Corrado...

as he almost touched his hair, but Corrado ducked.

his fringe..

"Sorry son, my mistake.

over towards Leo.

get this party on its way.”

“Thank you, Marcel, for tonight.

You really didn’t have to do this.” I said.

Song.

.

“Who are you, miss?” He asked innocently.

puffing out his chest.

Song laughed.

“Oh, that’s an impressive name!” She complimented.

“Yes, it is.” Corrado agreed.

standing next to Leo, who now had an alcoholic drink in

and arrogance.

Damn, he looked so good tonight...

so perfectly? I forced my eyes away as

and I appreciate everyone who dropped everything to attend.

As you all may already know, she is...

clearly.

sharply, his gaze snapping to Corrado as Marcel continued smoothly.

bomb on Corrado: Leo needed to just calm down.

Idiot.

“Tonight, we drink and celebrate in their name.

part of this celebration, I will save it for the end of the evening.

finished, raising his glass.

me, I could hear the whispers as

few emphasising on me being a Westwood.

I looked.

See Leo, your pack thinks I'm pretty decent.

over, a smirk on his lips.

slightly.

taking a glass as Song thanked him and took the other.

"The décor looks good." Jax remarked.

"It does, doesn't it." I agreed.

said.

was certainly not complaining.

"Jax." Leo's menacing voice came.

Jax smirked.

turning and walking over to Leo.

man who comes near me? 3

I was about to say something to Song, when Eric and Jackie came

at my stomach and gave me an exaggerated wink.

I smiled back and, reaching over, patted his face.

to work on that beard of yours ..." I

handsome face.

case, I was sure a trim

my touch.

I gave him a dangerously sweet smile.

be as scared of Leo as Eric...

the four of us alone.

Jackie muffled a yawn, massaging her temples.

getting good sleep.” Song offered.

didn’t reach her eyes, which were full of pain.

Nikki, but now I wanted to speak to her.

I asked the other two.

with a grin.

replied with a laugh.

eyes searing into my back.

stop a few times as people introduced themselves and complimented me.

A few even ask about the baby.

sequined flowers sparkling under the fairy lights above.

good.

garden near the pool, which looked pretty with red petals and floating led candles,

still hear it clearly.

whisper of the wind could be heard

around me is Leo.” I said with a small smirk.

ever want to talk about anything, I’m

but with Emmet...

I never thought he’d tell anyone but yeah, he didn’t.

bitter.

did, he did.”

She ran her hands down her face, I placed my hand on her knee.

did she make a mistake?” I murmured, looking up

Like mine.

Why did she pair us.

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mean. Before Emmet, I had a boyfriend... in fact,

He just...

we just clashed.

with Leo.

That was until the bond...

and it's so strong...

it consumes you.

more intense.

Anyway, when the bond snapped into place everything changed.

Me and my boyfriend broke up.

obvious thing to do when you find your mate,

and soon I found myself falling for Emmet.

when it all began...

Eric too.

do." She hugged herself, staring at the water in the pool.

be hard, but I'm going to do it.

began hurting me to vent his anger...." I looked at her, my heart pounding.

strength in Jackie made me proud.

"You know...

the hands of her mate...

it.

I felt like I was seeing her in you.

Her mate ultimately led to her death.

yet years of living with an abuser wore her down

least stood up for me...

You did the right thing...

stiffened and turned to me sharply before taking a furtive glance around.

"Are you ok?" I asked concerned.

She nodded, taking hold of my wrist.

"I just..."

I think it's time I did the same...

Break a promise for the better...

Queen." Her voice was barely above a whisper.

about to say when we heard the sound of a thud.

"..."

the back of the garden.

you should have followed." Winona's gentle yet firm voice came.

"I don't follow your rules.

that, scumbag!" Nikki's voice came, filled with irritation and disdain.

Jackie gasped, and I felt my own anger rising.

was obvious from Jackie's gasp that it was something that wasn't meant

flash of red from beside the small cabin.

Nikki...

a job to do, and I made it clear that the dress

Is this why you called me here?" Winona asked.

"Really?" Nikki scoffed.

going to back off, and it was clear neither

"Yes." Winona said quietly.

"I don't really like, care.

If I want to wear red, I can.

Besides, I look better...

"That is our Luna!" Winona's shocked

two women came into view.

hand and her arms folded, gave me

I raised an eyebrow, quickly looking Winona over.

on her shoulder.

My eyes flashed dangerously.

Nail marks...

My gaze snapped back to her.

calmly, walking over to the shorter woman in red.

silver.

do, he still has a soft spot for me." "Do not do this, Nikki.

Winona.

more than happy to entertain you." I said, crossing my arms.

or not, I have priority over

before I rip every last hair off your head.

I will order a few kilos of

I was right in front of her now.

Our eyes locked as she tried to challenge me.

to stay away from Leo when I found out he had you by his side...

you, your issue is with him, not me.

Remember that.

want you.

away.

Oh bitch, you did not...

can't I? And do not fucking call me names!"

"If Leo saw your true colours."

"Bitch please,

not you, who acts all sweet and shit

the fact you hurt her than about

Winona tried to calm me down, discreetly trying to cover her shoulder with her hair.

calm my own emotions at the same time.

I shouldn't spoil it...

chose me.

He came right back and straight into my bed...

not once did he seem to remember

my tracks.

it when she let out a laugh.

pissed to care.

bitch.

her eyes widened, realisation hitting her, but before my hand connected, a
the pang of pain that squeezed my heart.

He was protecting her.

“Stop.” He commanded, his voice emotionless and cold.

gaze to Leo.

bitterly, and with that I ripped free from Leo’s hold.

to stop.

smirk.

a little.

in the nose.

A sickening crunch told me I had broken something.

from her nose pleasantly satisfying.

at me.

I looked back at him, my heart thumping violently.

“You really can go to hell, Leo.

I fucking hate you.” I spat..

but stopped and looked back up at him.

“Just shut up, I’m done.

I raised my knee, aiming right where the sun doesn’t shine, and kneed

a steel blue before he doubled over from the
pain.

better, ripped off!” I hissed, before shoving him hard

I was done.

I was fucking done.

wanted to be gone from here right

walked past the bench, but before I could get any further, he grabbed my arm, me!" I hissed, ready to rip him apart if he didn't let me go, but instead, his other

"Not until you listen.

Can you fucking stop acting fucking crazy?" He growled.

fucking go!" I shouted, digging my nails into his

"Azura, fuck! You're fucking misunderstand." "No.

came back to her." I said, my chest clenching.

were locked, our hearts racing, and even in my anger, I could feel his body moulded against

yet not for me...

other night." "That's different.

unhand me before I rip your dick off." I growled, my eyes blazing.

"No.

What are you going to?" He challenged, equally stubbornly.

my leg around his ankle and yanked.

the pool.

toppling backwards, but before my smirk could cross my lips, his hand shot out, grabbing my arm as he pulled

53. These Choices of Ours

AZURA.

I gasped when we hit the water with a huge splash, drenching us both. Leo's arm snake d around my waist. He even had the damn audacity to place his hand on my ass for a fleeting

moment.

A moment that made my entire body tingle with pleasure. I hated that.

I tried to yank away, clawing at his chest. These nails are sure coming in use!

But I didn't get far. He grabbed my wrists, twisting them behind my back and against my waist, holding them there with one hand as he pressed me against himself. His white shirt was practically see-through, sticking to his skin and making my core clench at how damn good he looked soaking wet.

"Behave." He commanded, his steel blue eyes boring into mine. 6

My heart was thumping as I continued to struggle, but it did nothing but make my core throb. I could feel his dick rubbing against me, and despite how my entire body felt hot, or the way our hearts were pounding, I refused to calm down.

"Fuck, let me go!" I hissed, my own eyes flashing.

"Not unless you calm the fuck down. I seriously won't let go. Fuck, just listen." He growled, his free hand taking hold of my chin.

My heart thumped loudly, my anger only rising.

Where have the others gone?

I scanned the area. Weren't they just here?

"If you're looking for Winona or Jackie... they left on my command. It's just the two of us." He said huskily, forcing my chin up, making me look at him.

Strands of his wet, brown locks tickled my forehead as his words sank in.

"Shame. Now, how about I excuse myself, so you and your bitch of an ex can take a swim in here?" I hissed, twisting my hand until I felt his wrist, and dug my nails into his skin.

He frowned and I wasn't sure if it was because of my words or the pain, but frankly, I didn't give a shit.

"Do you have to resort to violence and anger every fucking time?" He growled.

"And if I do? What's it to you?" I snapped, wriggling in his hold.

His nose brushed mine, and my breath hitched, making me tense. We were too close...

I could see behind his anger and cold exterior, the carnal hunger he was trying to hide... I could feel him hardening against me, and I prayed that my own arousal didn't reach his nose...

"Fine. Struggle as much as you want, I just won't let go until you're done." He said, running his tongue along his lips.

That piercing...

I swallowed hard, glaring at him.

I needed him to let me go.

For more reasons than just my anger...

"I think I broke your girlfriend's nose, why don't you go check up on her?"

He frowned. "She isn't my girlfriend."

"Oh, but you just had to protect her when she deserved that fucking slap." I growled, whipping my head to the side, trying to get my hair off my face. He ran his fingers through my hair and brushed it all back slowly almost as if enjoying it. I hated the way my body wanted to relax into him, the way I relished in the sparks...

I could feel his hard dick against my lower stomach, and that same intense heat seemed to settle between us.

"Yeah, she did, but that's not how Lunas behave." s

My eyes flashed, and my chest squeezed.

"I'm no Luna, remember? So I'll behave however the fuck I want. Let go of me, or I swear, claw your eyes out." I hissed.

He suddenly let go of my wrists, but just when I was about to pull away, his arm snaked around my waist firmly.

"Go ahead, even if you do, I won't let you go until you have fucking listened to me." He growled, his voice low and husky.

I'll

My heart thundered as I massaged my wrists, wanting to attack him. But when he was letting me, it didn't seem so tempting anymore...

Instead, I reached up, running my fingers through the long hair on top of his head and twisted my fingers in it painfully, yanking his head back. He didn't even flinch, simply looking down at me, that chiselled jaw set in an arrogant pout.

"I don't mind pain, carry the fuck on." He remarked, looking down at me with those gorgeous eyes.

Fuck, stop looking so good...

"What do you want to say? Hurry up before I mess up that pretty face of yours."

He smirked. "If you wanted to, you would have already done it, right beautiful?"

"Don't play me." I said, his words stung...

Don't call me that when I'm nothing to you. 2

His smirk faded, his eyes looking into mine almost as if searching for something.

"I didn't mean to." He replied quietly, his gaze dipping down to my boobs.

My dress was soaking, and it was clinging to me even more than before. That's all it was to him

the pull of the mate bond.

"I've decided... after we go to Alejandro's pack... I won't come back here." I told him quietly,

looking up into his eyes, our faces only inches apart.

Surprise flashed in his eyes as he searched mine. His heart thudded, and I wished I could read his mind, but his walls were up.

His scent was like a dream... It made me giddy, and I felt safe and free...

"The day after tomorrow then. Alejandro's set up the meeting between Rayhan and me." He said quietly.

So soon...

I swallowed and nodded slowly.

Maybe it was for the best...

“Cool, the sooner the better...”

Won't

you stop me? Did you want me in your life or not Leo?

“Yeah... I guess...”

Guess not...

“What did you want to tell me Leo?”

He seemed to hesitate, and I realised his grip on me had eased.

Pull away Azura...

I didn't. I couldn't.

Was this the last time he'd hold me?

I let go of his gorgeous chocolate locks, slowly running my hand down the back of his head, paying attention to the sparks that ran through my finger tips.

This feeling... it was magical...

For a moment his eyes closed, almost as if he was enjoying my touch, but I doubted that.

He sighed, opening his eyes, a few strands of his hair flopped sexily in front of his face.

“Nikki, she means nothing to me... What she said was a lie. After I met you and rejected you, it was hard, trying to act like everything was normal. We did get intimate a few times, but once you taste something so fucking incredible... Nothing else feels good enough. You keep saying that you aren't good enough for me, but you actually caught my eye at that club before the mate bond even snapped into place. It's not every day you see a woman just saunter into a strip club alone, looking so fucking fine. Anyway... the only reason I rejected you was because of my anger at the Elite... even though Elijah and Scarlett Westwood have never done anything wrong, they were still related to the Rossis through Kiara... I just... it wasn't you, I marked you because despite it all, I fucking wanted that... But yeah...” 4

“1

My heart was thundering, a storm of emotions inside of me, but I didn't get it. Why now, when I was brave enough to leave? He couldn't keep playing me again and again...

“Why tell me this now?” I asked quietly.

Why? Why confuse me when it’s obvious you hate me...

He frowned, looking down, only for his gaze to dip to my breasts.

“My face is up here, you old perve.” I growled, trying not to let the pain of his constant rejection hurt.

A ghost of a smirk lingered on his face as he looked at me arrogantly.

“You can’t stop me from looking wherever I want... I just told you because I don’t want you to fucking misunderstand because of Nikki.” He became serious once more. “So... since you’re leaving... want to tell Corrado tomorrow about the baby?”

You really won’t stop me from leaving...

“Sure.” I replied, trying to ignore the pain inside and keep my walls up. “What do you want to do about this baby? Do you want to like visit? I mean, I wanted him or her to know their father. Weekly, monthly, or holidays even?”

Why was this so painful?

Even with his arms around me, holding me firmly as if he never wanted to let go, we were talking about splitting up...

He looked down before looking back into my eyes, but this time the look in his eyes was regret.

“It doesn’t really matter.”

Wow.

I nodded, trying to fight my emotions as I slowly pulled away.

His words hurt... He didn’t even want to be a part of this baby’s life...

“Ok, whatever.” I said, wading through the water to the edge of the pool.

I was about to pull myself out, when his arm snaked around me from behind, and his hand rested on my stomach.

“Even if I’m not around, I’ll make sure you and our baby are taken care of.” He said quietly, caressing my stomach gently. 4

These emotions... these tingles...

I tensed when his lips brushed my shoulder, his hand slipping my strap that had slid down, back up.

I scoffed, glad he couldn't see my tear-filled eyes.

"Yeah, I'm sure you will. But don't bother, the Westwoods don't need your charity. No one needs a father who isn't there for them. Maybe it'll be easier just to tell my baby that you're dead." I said coldly, pushing his hands away from me. 8

His heart was thudding, but I didn't care if my words fucking hurt him. I wanted them to hurt him, just the way he hurt me.

He didn't reply, and I placed my hands on the edge. I was ready to pull myself out, when his hands gripped my waist, lifting me out. I didn't look back as I got to my feet, walking away with whatever confidence I could muster, not once looking back ...

Goodbye Leo.

Just tomorrow night, and we will be going our separate ways...

I returned to the party, feeling so many eyes on me. Well I couldn't blame them, I was dripping wet.

Song ran over the moment she saw me.

"Zu!"

She stopped, whispering a spell, and I felt an intense cold surround me, and then a tingle before I looked down. My dress was completely dry. But my hair was still soaking and completely straight once more.

"Come on, I can quickly fix your make-up before dinner is served, and we can get your hair dried... I wish I had some of my crystals..." She said, smiling gently, almost as if she knew what I was feeling.

Only the strongest of witches could do many spells without crystals, herbs, and engravings. Those at the level of Delsanra Diana Rossi, Raihana Somers, and the high witches of the coven. I nodded, not arguing as I allowed her to lead me away...

She had simply begun working on my hair, and I didn't speak. I didn't say anything. Just her silent comfort was enough... After she had fixed my make-up, we returned to the garden. Nikki was nowhere in sight, and I really didn't want to see her anyway.

Marcel had called me over to sit with him, but I refused to be anywhere near Leo for any longer than necessary. I was relieved that Marcel didn't push it when I declined. I forced myself to eat, and I did my best not to even look at Leo. He had changed out of his work clothes and was now in a pair of jeans and a grey shirt. Corrado was sitting at Leo's table, and I could hear him asking why I wasn't there.

I'd miss him too... Would he never get a chance to play with his sibling?

Eric, Jackie, and a few other pack members were at our table, but I could barely focus on anything, whilst Song kept them occupied enough for no one to bother with me.

What I did learn from Song was that Jax had left shortly after Nikki, and she wasn't sure about anything else. Well, I sure hope that Marcel did something about it because I wasn't so sure Leo would. Ok maybe he would since he did put his best friend into prison, but still, I would make sure Winona got justice. No one should have to suffer at the hands of another like that. I planned to fill him in on what happened after the evening was over.

Raj the beta came over to congratulate me on the baby just as dinner was finished. He had his mate Kesha and his seven-year-old daughter Kareena with him.

"I really was pleasantly surprised to learn who you were, so once again I would like to welcome you to the pack." He said.
I shook hands with both him and his mate whilst smiling at their daughter, who seemed to be an innocent soul.

Then again, never trust kids...

She shied away, hiding behind her mama.

I gave her a wave before turning back to Raj.

"Thank you, you were polite and welcoming even then." I replied simply, it wasn't like I was here for long anyway.

J

Once they moved away, Song gave me a small smile.

"You ok? Wait, dumb question." She murmured, shaking her head.

"I'm fine." I replied, my eyes looking around the garden, at the pack members.

Somehow, I had felt comfortable here, I had gotten used to all of them. A life that wasn't meant for me.

I exhaled slowly, placing my hand on my stomach.

Give me the strength to remain strong...

I was a fighter, not someone who succumbed to another.

“Zu...”

I turned to her, my eyes flashing silver with a surge of strength and confidence.

“I’m fine Song, stop stressing. I may not have a crown, but I’m a fucking queen, and I sure as hell can handle anything that comes my way.” I replied frowning deeply, my eyes blazing.

I was, and I was not going to let anyone break me.

She smiled. “That’s the Westwood Devil I know.”

I gave her a smirk just as Marcel stood up. Winona hurried over to him, passing him a box before Marcel took it and turned to everyone.

“Azura.” I turned my attention to him as his eyes found me, and he smiled. “I just want to say thank you for being here with us tonight, and gracing us with your presence-”

“Yes, thank you Azura!” Corrado added. “We love having you here!”

Several people chuckled as Marcel lifted his grandson into his arms.

“I loved being here too.” I replied, trying not to get emotional.

I would have to break his heart too... I could see Leo sitting there like the arrogant jerk he was from the corner of my eyes.

“Then stay forever ok, you won’t even have to cook.” Corrado offered, smiling brightly.

Sorry baby, I can’t promise that...

Marcel’s smile faltered, almost as if he could read my expression. I forced a smile, but the moment he returned it with a sad one of his own, I knew he knew. Knew that I wasn’t going to stay...

“Thank you for everything.” He said quietly, our eyes met, and I didn’t reply, breaking eye

contact.

He looked down at the box Winona had brought and opened it with one hand, placing Corrado down as the little boy peered into the box.

“Ooo.” He said dramatically, only piquing everyone’s curiosity.

“I know everyone probably doesn’t want to hear me rambling on and on, but there is one final thing I want to share with you all. Something important. My real reign as Alpha started roughly nineteen years ago... When we were freed from the reign of terror inflicted upon us, by one who’s name I won’t mention tonight... Nineteen years later this pack has thrived.

Despite everything we went through, we are now a normal pack with everything we could have hoped for. I’m sixty now, damn I’m getting old.”

“Not that old Alpha! You still look amazing!” One of the middle-aged she-wolves said, whilst everyone agreed, making Marcel smirk slightly.

“Thank you.”

Yeah, like I said, fine wine...

“He is so handsome.” Song whispered, making me smile slightly as I nodded in agreement. “Well, I still think I want to just sit back and just spend time with my grandchildren now... and so, tonight, I will pass that title to my son, Leo-”

He stopped, his gaze turning to Leo, who was looking at him sharply.

They were conversing through the link.

“Daddy will be Alpha!” Corrado said excitedly.

Yet I didn’t feel good. Despite the excitement that was rippling through the garden, something between the look of coldness in Leo’s eyes and the confusion in Marcel’s, told me things weren’t going as planned.

“Now I know why there’s a special knife.” Corrado added.

My heart thumped as Leo stood up.

“Leo...” Marcel began, unable to hide the sadness and hurt in his voice.

“I don’t need the title to be Alpha. I no longer fucking want it, keep it.” He said coldly, before he turned and walked away leaving a shocked silence in his wake... 22

54. A Disappointing Failure

MARCEL.

The evening that I had hoped would go well, had gone downhill. Both Leo and Azura had returned soaked from what was obviously a dip in the pool, but with it, their moods had gone down. Not once did they even talk after that, obviously avoiding one another.

I was now ready to make the announcement to pass Leo the position of Alpha, a title he deserved, and one I wished I had given him years ago.

“Well, I still think I want to just sit back and just spend time with my grandchildren now... and so, tonight, I will pass that title to my son, Leo—”

‘Stop, what the fuck do you think you’re doing?’ Leo’s voice was harsh as he spoke through the link, his eyes flashing when our eyes met.

‘Giving you something I should have years ago.’ I replied through the link. ‘It’s too fucking late to fix that shit. I told you I fucking forgive you, but I don’t want it. Don’t do this. “Daddy will be Alpha!” Corrado’s voice came, but Leo’s words had shaken me. “Now I know why there’s a special knife.” ‘Leo, you deserve this.’

‘I said I fucking don’t want it.’ He replied venomously, and I was taken aback.

Leo stood up, his demeanour was cold and hostile.

“Leo...” I didn’t know what to say. This wasn’t how tonight was meant to end...

“I don’t need the title to be Alpha. I no longer fucking want it, keep it.” He said coldly, staring me dead in the eyes before he turned and walked away, leaving complete silence behind... I didn’t know what to say, unable to ignore the pain I felt. I could feel all those pairs of eyes on me as I slowly sat down again. 2

The hope I had felt that maybe things could be better... had just come to an abrupt end. Raj was making conversation, and he soon managed to replace the shocked silence with the hum of chatter.

“Grandad... why did Daddy say no?” Corrado asked, “I’m not sure son.” I replied, patting his back as Winona came over. “Come on Corrado, do you want to go to the dessert table?” She asked him. I glanced at her, grateful that she had come over, and she gave me a small smile. ‘He’ll come around, Alpha.’ She said through the link as she helped Corrado down from his seat.

'I hope so.' I replied before they both walked away...

The night had ended in disappointment, and the plan that had sounded great this morning,

ended up a total failure. Everyone had slowly retreated, and I didn't miss the sympathy in the eyes of many. After all, Leo had rejected the title outright... I sighed heavily, running my hand through my hair.

I had gone wrong... somewhere... The silence felt loud... just like it always did in this huge house.

Even though I knew Corrado was now fast asleep in Leo's old room upstairs, he had been upset and confused after Leo walked out. Although Azura, Winona, and Song had tried to cheer him up, it was obvious Azura herself wasn't completely there. In the end, Winona had taken him away to turn in for the night. Song and Azura would be staying the night here too. Neither refused when I suggested the idea.

The sound of someone walking in the hallway came occasionally, as the staff were clearing the garden and house up. I was now in the kitchen, making myself a cup of coffee. I felt far more tired than I should have, it felt like I was losing it all.

Hope. I had let myself hope and even that had been ripped away from me... I truly felt like I had only ever had a few years with Leo. Under Endora's reign, it was all a blank or what I remembered was a hazy blur. The snippets I remember were tense, and I just remembered a child who always held a fire in his eyes. As he got older, from the age of six, he began pulling his weight and acting far older than he was... When I first created this pack, we had become closer... and I hoped he got the childhood he had been deprived of, but that all changed once Rayhan had come here.

Now when I thought I'd get him back... I lost the chance. Even if he said he had forgiven me, I wonder if it was just because he really just didn't care anymore.

I tried to reach him several times through the link after he left, but he had his block up.

I frowned, realising the coffee machine wasn't working.

Great.

The sound of footsteps and Winona's light, citrus scent reached my nose. She always smells refreshing. 1

I didn't turn as she entered; I had asked her to come to see me when she was finished putting Corrado to bed. Azura's words before she had retreated to bed weren't forgotten.

'I know it's not my place, but a member of your pack was disrespecting Winona today. And although I think I broke her damn nose, I don't think Leo will be holding her accountable for her actions... So I hope you do. Winona's shoulder had scratches too...

I frowned as I pushed the button a few more times. Why wasn't this stupid thing working?

I shook it, cursing internally, before a pale, slender arm reached out and switched the socket

1. on.

Right...

"It was switched off Alpha." Winona said, smiling politely. "You asked for me?" I looked down at her. She was still in that black dress, and it was easy to forget that she was the same Winona I knew. I looked away smoothly, watching the coffee machine for a second,

before turning back to her and nodding.

Crossing my arms, I leaned against the worktop.

"Yes, I did. Azura mentioned something that happened earlier, regarding someone disrespecting you." I began. Instantly, she rubbed her arm, looking away for a second

"It's sorted Alpha, Azura defended me, and it really wasn't much."

"I will be the judge of that. Tell me exactly what happened." I commanded lightly.

My gaze fell to her bare shoulder, and reaching over I brushed her hair back, feeling her tense at my touch, My eyes taking in the faint marks of nails, left behind...

She healed slowly after all.

Winona was one of Leo's additions to the pack. He had found her when he was twenty. He had come home, visiting England due to setting up some business or other, and he had found her being bullied at a human orphanage. She had come of age and was being forced to leave, although she had nowhere to go. Along with having nowhere to go, she couldn't shift. She hadn't been a rogue, but she also had no idea what pack she was from.

With nowhere to go and living in fear, Leo had dropped her here with the pack before leaving once again.

Although one would think she was an Omega, I wasn't so sure. Due to the fact she couldn't shift, I think people simply assumed that. Besides that, the rank system was long abolished.

"It was my fault, I asked Nikki why she wore red when I made it clear the Lu-Azura was going to wear red." She said, tugging on the sleeve of her dress, avoiding looking me square in the

eye.

"Nikki." I frowned.

I had been surprised to see her show up, but it was obvious she had been there to cause problems. I felt disappointed in her.

"Will you explain exactly what happened earlier?" I asked, taking the coffee mug and passing it to her. "Take a seat."

She looked down at the mug, her eyes full of worry, but when she saw me making myself a second mug, I was sure she understood that I was not going to take no for an answer...

"...and then Alpha Leo told us to clear the area..." She finished, after spending the last fifteen minutes telling me exactly what had happened. I sat back frowning, as I looked at her. She looked almost disappointed in herself.

I shook my head exhaling.

"That is... I wasn't expecting that from Nikki. I will make sure she is confronted about this myself."

She nodded and sipped her coffee. Watching her, I realised she was forcing herself to drink it.

"You don't like coffee." I stated.

She froze, looking up at me sharply.

"I uh..."

"You could have refused, Winona." I said, reaching over I took the cup from her, placing it aside.

Her heart was racing.

"I'm sorry, I just, I'm a tea person..."

I raised an eyebrow. "Well, I'll remember for next time."

"Next time?" She asked startled

I smirked. "Am I that bad company?" "Not at all Alpha! I just... I'm sure you have many others you can have coffee with." She said quickly. "Yeah, I guess... but then, not even my son wishes to be around me it seems." I said quietly, looking down at my hands.

The faint scars that ran up my hands and arms caught my attention for a second. They were mere lines now. Scars that left no memory. Yet the internal scars were the ones that Leo was suffering from.

"I'm sorry Alpha... I'm sure one day he will come around. Please don't blame yourself." She said quietly, giving me a small smile that lit up her pretty face.

It was weird... tonight it was almost as if I was seeing her for the first time... Those large brown eyes, her angelic features, it was strange how I have looked at her countless times, but never really seen...

She blushed under my gaze, and I hid a smirk, rather amused.

"It's late. Stay the night."

She froze, her eyes widening, her face flushing, and if that wasn't enough, her heart started thundering loudly, and I almost chuckled.

As much as I wanted to tease her, it wasn't really appropriate.

"I'm sure Corrado would be happy to have you here when he wakes up, especially since his father just left. He was clearly upset over it all."

"Yes... did we make a mistake tonight?" She asked, the flash of guilt in her eyes making me feel disappointed for her too.

"I honestly don't think we did anything wrong, but both are far too stubborn. Leo isn't helping matters either... We did what we could, even if it didn't work out the way we wanted. We did it with good intentions, and that's the important thing. Thank you, Winona, for all your help." I said with a small smile.

Yeah, I did think

I had messed up, but I was not going to allow her to blame herself. I just hoped that Leo really did realise what he was doing before it was too late...