

## Chasing His Kickass Luna Back Chapter 16

### Chapter 16 – Crisis

Abby

“I just wanted to say hello to your current date,” Karl says, smirking at Adam over my shoulder.

I can feel the tension radiating from Adam’s place behind me. I glance over my shoulder at him, but he

looks alright. Tense and annoyed, but no bruises to speak of. At least I managed to get here before an

actual fight broke out.

Great, just what I need tonight, an embarrassing display of male posturing. If Karl thinks he’s going to

win me back this way, then he’s sorely mistaken. Actually, if he thinks he can win me back at all, then

he has no idea how I truly feel about everything. He can’t just decide one day that the divorce was a

mistake and then expect that I’ll jump right back into his arms.

Karl looks at me, and his expression softens. “Also, there’s a piece of restaurant news I thought you’d

be interested in. I found out about it in passing when I helped you with the complaint. Have you read

these messages?”

He hands me his phone, and I look down at the screen. It’s a series of reviews on social media about

my restaurant. I read them, my brows pulling together. They’re bad. Some of them are even pretty

detailed. One is even a direct complaint about me. Overbearing and unprofessional, it says. Looks like

I've now got something else to cry about later.

I hand Karl his phone. "I've seen some of them before," I say, struggling to keep my voice even. "I just

didn't expect them to get worse."

There's a sinking feeling in my stomach, and it takes some effort to keep my expression neutral. Karl

gives me a careful look, and I force myself to meet his gaze. Unfortunately, he knows me too well.

"If you want—"

"I trust that Abby can fix these problems herself," Adam says, cutting Karl off. I turn to look at him, but

he's glaring at Karl. I wonder what they said to each other before I got here. Something tells me that

their conversation wasn't very friendly, on either of their parts.

"Yeah, I believe she can too," Karl says.

I turn back to him. He doesn't seem fazed by Adam's interruption, but I know he's just trying to

antagonize him. The less he reacts, the more he can act like anything Adam says or does is

unimportant. That it would be beneath him to be bothered.

He gives Adam a pointed look. "But wouldn't it be nice if someone could help her identify and fix these

problems ahead of time?"

Adam doesn't reply.

“Your biggest worry right now is restaurant capacity,” Karl says, turning his attention back to me. “Your

store is very popular, but it’s too small.”

I cross my arms. A part of me knows he’s right, but another part is resistant to the idea. I never wanted

a huge store, just something simple. And since when does he care about my restaurant? It’s not like

he’s ever taken much interest in my cooking. The last thing I need right now is Karl butting his nose into

my business. First my relationship, and now this?

“We reserve a lot of seats for familiar customers,” I say. “I don’t want to go upscale. What I want is to

share my food with more people. That’s what I’ve always wanted.”

Adam takes a step closer to me, but I don’t look away from Karl. “It’s her restaurant. She knows what

she’s doing.”

Karl ignores him. “I have plenty of business experience as an Alpha,” he says. “I could help you as a

business consultant.”

“I don’t know…” I start.

“And my first piece of advice would be for you to expand your store.”

“That’s unnecessary,” I say. “I don’t want you involved in my business. We’re divorced. I don’t need a

leader to tell me what to do with my restaurant.”

Karl shifts, his face turning red. I can tell he’s weighing what he should say next. I don’t bother turning

to look at Adam. There's no part of me that wants to see the smug look on his face. The last thing I

need right now is two men fighting over me.

My phone rings, saving Karl from having to reply. I cross the room and pick it up. "Hello?"

"Abby, hey. It's Ethan." Ethan's one of my employees. He's working the last shift with a few others.

They should be cleaning up now for the night.

"Ethan, what's up?"

"You need to come down here. Now."

I bite my lip. He sounds pretty worried. "Is everything okay?"

"Just get here."

He hangs up, and I stare at the phone for a moment. Unease pools in my gut. When I look up, both

Karl and Adam are staring at me.

"What was that?" Adam asks.

"I need to go," I say. I walk back across the apartment and throw my purse over my shoulder. Karl and

Adam both follow, but I don't pay them much mind.

"Go where?" Adam asks, reaching for my arm.

I shake him off. "The restaurant. Something's happening."

They both follow me out of the apartment and wait for me to lock it. "I can get you there fast," Karl says,

reaching out a hand to me.

I frown. Teleporting isn't exactly my favorite way to travel, and the last thing I want to do right now is

allow him to help me. But Ethan made it sound like I needed to get there immediately. I don't have time

to sit through traffic.

"Fine," I say. "Just this once."

"What?" Adams asks, looking between us.

"I'll be back," I say to him.

He shakes his head. "I'm coming with you."

Karl rolls his eyes but reaches out a hand to him. "Hold on," he says. We both grab his hands, and then

we're teleporting. One moment we're outside my door, and then next we're standing on the street

outside my restaurant. I drop Karl's hand.

"Just don't say anything," I say, my gaze lingering on Karl for a moment. He puts his hands up in mock

surrender. Adam just nods.

I push my way through the double doors, and they both follow close on my heels, Adam making a point

to walk directly behind me. Karl hovers behind us in the shadows, taking my words to heart for once.

Olivia is standing near the desk when I walk in, her coat on and her bag thrown over her shoulder. The

rest of my employees stand around her, dressed and ready to leave. I spot Ethan near the back of the

group, still in his uniform, with a worried expression on his face.

They all look up when I walk in. “Abby, what are you doing here?” Olivia says. She glances around at

the group and narrows her eyes at Ethan.

“What’s going on?” I say, looking around. The chairs aren’t even stacked on the tables yet, and all the

lights are on. It doesn’t sound like the dishwasher is running, either.

Olivia steps forward. “We’re quitting?”

I frown. “What do you mean?”

“We’re all quitting.”

## **Chasing His Kickass Luna Back Chapter 17**

Posted by

### **Chapter 17 – Betrayal**

Abby

“What? Why?” Some of them have worked for me for years, Olivia the longest of them all. What would

drive her and the others to quit so suddenly?

No one answers.

“Why are you all quitting?” I repeat. I’m not letting them leave here until I get some sort of explanation.

No one looks at me. Clearly, none of them want to be the one to step forward and tell me the truth.

After all these years together, they were just going to sneak away in the night without an explanation.

Without even finishing their shifts.

Finally, Olivia comes forward, a determined look on her face. “Because they’re joining my restaurant.”

I turn to her, my eyebrows going up. “Your restaurant?”

She nods.

“But why? Am I not good enough to work for?”

She shrugs. “I just haven’t enjoyed working for you. I’ve felt for a long time that I could do a better job,

and so I started my own place.”

I thought we were friends, but I can see now that I was mistaken. That realization alone is almost as

shocking as the news that every single one of my employees wants to work for her over me.

A wave of insecurity crashes into me. Maybe I’m not as good a boss as I thought I was. I’ve always

strived to make this a good place to work. A place where employees can actually enjoy their shifts, but

apparently, I didn’t do a good enough job.

I can feel Karl’s eyes on me, and I suddenly wish I just took a cab. Of course, after telling him I didn’t

need his help, he had to bear witness to my failure.

“I didn’t realize you felt that way,” I say as monotone as possible. I can’t let them see how hurt I am.

“You’re still stuck in this ridiculous family system.”

“Right.”

“And I just know my place will be really popular.” She looks around at the others. “Everyone else

agrees.”

Ethan shakes his head, but no one pays him any mind. It looks like he’s the only one still loyal to me.

With his pale, freckled skin, bright red hair, and pronounced limp, Ethan doesn’t come across as much

of a threat. I guess she didn’t feel the need to poach him with all the rest.

“Come on,” Olivia says, gesturing to the others. “Let’s go.”

They slip past her, glancing sidelong at Karl and Adam as they go. Olivia’s gaze lingers on Karl, her

eyebrows raised. I wonder how much of this has to do with the argument she witnessed between us.

Did she use that to convince everyone to leave? I refused to get an important Alpha a reservation, all

because of a personal vendetta. Truth be told, I acted petty, and I’m sure she used that to her

advantage.

Olivia turns back at the last minute, her hand on the door. “Good luck,” she says. Clearly, she can’t stop

herself from gloating. It’s in poor taste, but she obviously doesn’t care. “No employees. A shell of a

store. That’s going to be rough.” novelbin

I don’t answer. She just grins and pushes her way out of the restaurant.

There’s a stretch of silence, and I can’t bring myself to look at any of them. Ethan lingers for a moment,

then leaves me with Adam and Karl. He stacks the chairs. The injury in his leg slows him a little, but he

doesn't put up any complaints. I guess he's used to working around it after so many years.

"Abby," Adam starts.

"Look," I say, forcing myself to meet his gaze, "I don't really want to talk about it right now. I need to

close for the night. Maybe you should just meet me tomorrow or something."

"You don't want me to stay over?"

Karl, thankfully, stays quiet.

I shake my head. "If you wouldn't mind, I think I'd like to be alone tonight. I'm exhausted, and I could

use a good night's sleep."

It's partly a lie. I very much doubt I'll be getting any sleep tonight, but I don't want to answer questions

or come up with some sort of explanation for this. The last thing I want to do is talk about it. I need to

process what happened, and then somehow try to wrap my head around what I'm going to do next. If

there's even anything to do.

God, I'm so screwed.

"You too," I say, turning to Karl. "I can't deal with all this right now." I gesture between the two of them.

"You don't need help cleaning up?"

A dry laugh escapes. "You, cleaning? Now that would be a sight."

His brows pull together. "I was genuinely offering."

I shake my head. "Me and Ethan have this."

He must see how desperate I am for him to leave, because he gives in for once. "Fine. We'll talk again

soon." He doesn't spare Adam another glance before he's gone.

"I'll call you," I say to Adam.

He nods and kisses me on the cheek. "Don't worry, we'll figure this out. I respect your business choices

and I can provide financial support if you want to continue opening the restaurant."

"Thanks, we'll talk about it more tomorrow."

I shouldn't feel as relieved as I do when he's gone. Sometimes it feels more like we're business

partners than a couple. Shouldn't I want him to stay and comfort me? Isn't that what real couples do?

Instead, I got rid of him the first moment I could.

I tell Ethan I'm going to get the dishwasher going. He nods and gets to work on mopping the floor. The

minute I'm in the kitchen, I let the tears fall. I can't believe this is happening.

I order another drink, and the bartender pushes a glass of Vodka Soda across the smooth surface of

the bar. I've lost count of how many I've had, and room teeters a bit as I take a sip.

"And a shot of tequila," I say.

He nods and pours one for me. I down it instantly, the alcohol burning as it slides down my throat.

I didn't open today, and I spent most of the afternoon calling customers to apologize for the loss of their

reservations. I'm hoping I can get the restaurant open by Monday, but I'm not sure how I'll be able to

pull that off. I felt so hopeless, sitting in the silence of my apartment, that I decided the only thing to do

was go out and forget my problems for a while.

Leah's around here somewhere, but I haven't seen her since she went off with a handsome guy in a

business suit. The best thing about him was that he kept buying both of us drinks, getting me

spectacularly drunk. I'm a bit of a lightweight, and I rarely drink a lot, but if there was ever a night to let

loose, it's tonight. I just need an escape from the stress.

I stand by myself, sipping my drink. I stumble a few steps and mutter a few apologies to the people

beside me. One guy grins and moves closer. He puts his hand low on my back and I tense.

"That dress is pretty sexy," he says in my ear, his breath hot. "We should dance." He pushes me toward

the dancefloor, but I stand my ground. "I don't want to dance."

"Come on." He moves even closer. "Don't be like that."

I step away from him. "I'm not interested," I say, slurring a bit. I force my way through the wall of bodies

and pull my phone out of my clutch.

I bring up Adam's contact. Maybe he can come get me. I don't feel safe leaving by myself, and Leah's

nowhere in sight. A hand on my arm stops me from dialing.

“Now, where do you think you’re going?” He spins me around, his fingers digging into my wrist. The

world teeters dangerously.

Suddenly, an arm twines around my waist and I’m pulled back against a broad, warm chest.

“Take your hands off her,” Karl demands, a dangerous edge to his voice.

The man lets go and puts his hands up. “Sorry man, I didn’t know she was with someone.”

Karl growls, and he scurries off. I can feel the rage radiating from him as he gently turns me around.

“Come on,” he says, giving me a concerned look. “Let’s get you out of here.”

I nod, relieved for once to see him. I just want to get out of this bar.

He takes my hand and gives it a gentle squeeze. Then the pulsing lights of the bar fade away.

Tags:

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## **Chasing His Kickass Luna Back Chapter 18**

### **Chapter 18 – Bartending for you**

Abby

Karl hands me a glass of water, and I take a few small sips.

I’m still a little drunk, but I feel better now that I’m away from the bar. Thank God Karl was able to

teleport us out of there, even if it made me throw up the minute we appeared on his front lawn. Another

blessing, in retrospect, considering I feel a lot less dizzy than I did before.

“Why were you there by yourself?” Karl asks, sinking into the chair across from me.

He sounds a little mad, but I know his anger isn’t directed at me. Not completely, at least. I’m surprised

he didn’t tear that guy’s head off. If he had, I don’t think I would have felt the need to stop him. Just the

memory of those possessive hands on me makes me shudder.

I’m draped across Karl’s leather couch, my clutch abandoned on the floor beside me, and my heels

toppled over nearby. There are a few bruises on my wrist from where that guy grabbed me, and Karl’s

eyes keep lingering there, his gaze darkening.

“Leah was with me,” I say.

“I didn’t see her.”

I shrug and place my glass on the ground. “She went off with some guy.”

“Good friend.”

“I told her it was okay,” I admit. She offered to stay with me, but I didn’t want to hold her back from

having fun. It was stupid, but I thought I’d be alright by myself.

He shakes his head, his jaw clenched. “I’ve never seen you that drunk.”

“I don’t usually get that drunk.” And I’m not too interested in getting that drunk again. Feeling dizzy and

slightly nauseous is never fun. Neither is throwing up on your ex-husbands perfectly manicured lawn

while he holds your hair.

I decide to change the subject before he decides to scold me. "Why were you hanging around there?"

"For fun, I guess." He doesn't sound convinced. I wonder if someone else dragged him there. His

cousin maybe.

"You seem like less of a workaholic than you used to be. I could never get you to go out back when we

were married."

I always wanted to go out dancing, or try a new restaurant, but he was usually too busy. It was always

a special occasion when he actually had the time to do something for fun, and that was usually

because of some sort of holiday.

"The pack was in a precarious position back then," he says. "But things have stabilized. I have more

time for things now than I used to."

"But you'd still prefer to be working?" I guess.

He nods. "Yeah, usually." He seems to weigh what he wants to say next. "I wanted to get more

resources for the Alpha party," he admits.

"So, more work than play."

"Yeah, but work isn't everything. I know that now." Something vulnerable comes across his face. He's

being open with me, more open than he has in a while. I've gone over the last months of our

relationship a million times in my head, and a part of me could tell he was pulling away, even if I didn't

want to admit it to myself at the time. He stopped being open.

“Do you?”

“Yeah.” He looks down at his lap. “You’re just as important to me.” He meets my eyes, an earnest

expression on his face. “More important.”

A part of me wants to believe him, but I don’t know how after everything.

“I looked into Olivia after what happened with your employees. I wanted to help you.”

I sigh. I’m not really surprised that he did. I’d be more surprised if he didn’t butt into my business. “What

did you find?” I ask, resigned. There’s no point in passing up the information, even if I’d rather he didn’t

get involved.

“She was buying reviews on social media. I also saw pictures of her restaurant. Her decor is pretty

much a direct copy of yours.”

It takes a moment for the information to sink in. My throat burns, and I look down at my lap. Don’t cry,

don’t cry, I tell myself, but tears well up into my eyes, anyway.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do,” I admit, my voice a little shaky. He doesn’t respond, giving me a

moment to get out what I need to say. “I have no employees. I can’t open my restaurant with just me

and Ethan. Even if I do all the cooking, someone has to man the front desk and wait tables and make

the drinks. It’ll take weeks to hire and train new people.”

The tears fall, and I wipe them away with the back of my hand. “It just—” I take a deep breath. “It means

so much to me. I don’t want to lose my restaurant after everything I put into it.”

I put my face in my hands and cry harder. It feels good to let it out. The couch cushions beside me sink

as Karl sits down. He puts his hand on my leg.

“It’s going to be okay,” he says in a low voice. “You’ll figure it out, and I’m more than happy to help you

if you’ll let me.”

I nod, sniffing.

“Why don’t I make you a drink,” he says, standing. “How does that sound?”

I wipe off my cheeks and nod. “Yeah, I’d like that.”

He crosses the room to the bar cart in the corner and gets out the shaker. A moment later, he returns

with a fancy orange cocktail.

“What is it?”

“An exclusive drink.” He smiles and hands the glass to me. “My favorite bartender came up with it for

me.”

I take a sip. “Wow,” I say. “It’s really good.”

He nods and sits back down in the chair across from me.

“Does it have a name?”

“It’s called Orange Moonrise.”

I smile. “That’s a nice name.”

As much as I hate to admit it, it feels comfortable being here with him. We used to spend quiet nights

together when we could, sitting in the living room watching something on the TV. Usually, I'd have my

feet draped over his lap, or I'd be snuggled up close in his arms. And he never drank.

"I thought so too."

I bite my lip, wondering if I should even ask. But I'm curious. "You never drank before. I thought it made

you sick." He looks away, toying with the glass in his hand. "Why now?"

The click of heels on the hardwood is the only warning before Tiffany rounds the corner. Somehow, I

didn't hear he come in the front door. "Don't you know my cousin has been living on nothing but

supplements and alcohol since your divorce? Can't you see how thin he is now?"

I glance at Karl, my eyebrows raised. Tiffany perches on the edge of one of the chairs, assessing me

with a sharp gaze. It wouldn't take a genius to figure out she doesn't like me. Cousin or no, she has no

interest in my being here.

Karl doesn't exactly look thin, but now that I'm looking at him, it seems like he's lost some weight since

we were together. His face is less filled out. Harsher. His muscles are more pronounced.

"Tiffany—" Karl starts, his tone admonishing.

She lifts a hand. "Don't even start." Her eyes narrow on me, and I shift a little under her harsh gaze.

“It’s your fault he’s been like this.”

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## **Chasing His Kickass Luna Back Chapter 19**

Posted by

### **Chapter 19 – His Sister**

Abby

Tiffany crosses her arms, waiting for my answer. I don’t really know what to say to her. He’s the one

who divorced me, after all. It’s not like I set out to break his heart.

“I’m not the one who decided to get a divorce,” I say, opting for the truth.

She pushes her curtain of brown hair over her shoulder, revealing the muscular lines of her shoulders.

“Is that so?” novelbin

I give Karl an exasperated look. You could jump in here at any time, my gaze says. “I’m not a liar.”

If she thinks she can come in here and blame me for everything, she’s wrong. I’m not going to let her

walk all over me. Karl’s cousin or not, she has no right to make it seem like I’m the one at fault for

Karl’s behavior. Whatever he’s done in the years since our divorce, that’s on him. I’m not responsible

for his choices.

Her frown deepens, and she shoots Karl a look.

“She’s not lying. I ended things,” he says. He avoids my gaze, drinking deeply from his glass.

It doesn’t seem to get me off the hook, though. She looks just as bothered by me as she did before. I

can’t bring myself to care. After all the shit that’s gone down in the past few days, the last thing I’m

worried about is whether she likes me. I’ve got enough to deal with already.

“Yes, but you had your reasons,” she answers empathetically, shooting me a venomous look. Clearly,

she knows something I don’t.

I open my mouth to ask her what she means by that exactly, but Karl speaks up before I get the

chance. “Let’s not get into this right now,” he says.

He looks weary and exhausted, and I almost feel bad for him. Almost. A part of me just wants to stand

up and demand he tell me the real reason he left me. Obviously, he seems to have one. One he’s

never deigned to tell me, not even when I begged him. I never got that closure.

He takes a long sip from his drink, and Tiffany shakes her head. “Why is she here?”

“Lay off Tiffany,” Karl says, narrowing his eyes at her. “This isn’t about you. I thought you had important

people to entertain.”

The way he says it makes it clear exactly how he feels about these ‘important’ people. I can’t help but

feel a little bad for Tiffany. He obviously finds her and her friends a little silly. Tiffany clenches her jaw.

“I was just trying to get you out of the house for once. You can’t sit in here working 24/7 feeling sorry for

yourself. God, the whole reason I wanted to go to her restaurant is because I thought it might be nice

for you to have some real food for once. You know, something actually home cooked. You can’t just

survive on supplements and booze, even though you’re clearly determined to try.”

“Can’t we talk about this another time?” he says, his gaze sliding to me. Obviously, he doesn’t want me

to hear this. His life might be as perfect without me as I thought it was. Social media and tabloids can

be deceiving, after all.

I take a sip of my drink, looking back and forth between them. Maybe Tiffany isn’t as shallow as I first

thought. It’s obvious she cares about her cousin and wants to help him. Sure, she has a bit of an

abrasive personality, but she’s coming from a good place. Even if her clear dislike of me seems a bit

unfair, considering Karl put himself in this situation.

“Why shouldn’t she hear this? It’s kind of her fault.”

“My fault!” I exclaim. How is any of this my fault? We really need to stop blaming each other for the

things the men in our lives decide to do. I didn’t drive him to booze and bad habits. That was all his

decision.

“Tiffany!” Karl growls.

“What?” she says. “Am I lying?” She glares at me, and I can’t help but shrink back a little. “You’ve been

self-destructive. I’ve noticed it ever since I returned to the pack. You never sleep. You hardly eat. You

only go out and see other people when I force you to. How is that living?”

“Just leave it alone for once.”

She stands up with a huff. “Whatever. My bad for trying to help you.” She throws the words over her

shoulder at him as she stalks from the room. I watch her go, my eyebrows raised. She certainly knows

how to make an entrance and an exit.

“Sorry,” Karl says, running his hand through his hair. It falls back down into his eyes.

Again, I can’t help the urge to cross the room and sink into his lap. I want to run my fingers through his

hair, feel his lips on me, the strength of his muscular things beneath me. But I force the thoughts away.

That’s just drunk me talking. Under no circumstance would any of that be a good idea.

You’re engaged, I remind myself. You’re engaged to someone you really like, and you’re not going to

mess it up. Certainly not on Karl’s account.

“Is that all true?” I ask. I can’t help myself. In my mind, the divorce didn’t affect him at all, but clearly, I

was wrong. Maybe he took it just as hard as I did, even if it was his idea. I’m itching to ask him for an

explanation, but now doesn’t seem like the time.

“I’ve missed you,” he admits.

I feel a pang of pity for him, but I force it down. Even if my heart goes out to him, I can’t afford to forget

everything he did to me. It’s not like I had such a great time either. There were so many hardships

when I opened my restaurant, but I found a way to work through them. I had to build myself back up,

and I’m not going to feel sorry for him because he couldn’t find a way to do the same.

Now, after everything I did to pull myself out of a tough spot, I might lose the one thing that makes me

feel alive. The reminder of what my employees did has me downing the rest of my glass. He must

guess where my thoughts have gone, because he leans forward on his knees, pinning me with a stare.

“I know you’re in desperate need of staff,” he says. “You said you’re not short of leaders, but are you

short of staff?”

“You know I am. You just said you know I’m in need of staff.”

What, now he has to rub it in my face? I’m sure he feels all vindicated, knowing I managed to screw

everything up.

He shakes his head. “I’m offering to help you, Abby.”

I can’t believe what I’m hearing. Is he seriously offering to come work for me? Karl, the Alpha of the

Moon River pack, working in my kitchen? The thought almost makes me laugh, until I see the look on

his face.

He's dead serious.

## **Chasing His Kickass Luna Back Chapter 20**

### Chapter 20 – Accepting Help

Abby

“Stop joking around,” I say, placing my empty glass on the ground. “This is serious.”

“I'm not joking.”

We stare across the room at each other. I kind of want to laugh, but something tells me he wouldn't

appreciate that. Still, there's no way he's going to come into my restaurant and work in the back. He

might think he wants to help, but I'm not sure he knows what that job actually entails. Plus, it's not like

he has tons of free time on his hands. He's an Alpha. Even if the pack is in a better position, there's still

a million things he has to do on a daily basis.

“Okay, whatever you say,” I answer, opting for levity.

He frowns, a determined look on his face. “Why won't you let me help you?”

“I just don't think you understand what you're saying.”

He rolls his eyes. “I understand perfectly fine, thank you.”

I can tell I've offended him a little, but I don't feel all that bad about it. I need real help. Actual

employees. Not my ex-husband stacking dishes in the back. I doubt he's cleaned a dish in his life.

“I just don’t think you have the time.”

“I know what I have time for and what I don’t,” he answers. “And I’m no stranger to hard work.”

“Well, Ethan and I are going over everything at the restaurant tomorrow. So, if you still want to help,

you can show up sometime in the morning.” I don’t expect him to show up at all. “Fine,” he says,

leaning back in his chair with a self-satisfied smile. “Then I’ll see you there.”

Ethan watches me finish my second coffee of the morning, a look of concern on his face. After last

night’s debacle, I’m both hungover and exhausted. By the time I went to bed, I had maybe four hours of

uninterrupted sleep before I had to wake up and drag myself over here.

If this headache isn’t a sign that I shouldn’t drink that much ever again, then I don’t know what is.

“We need to get up and running before those negative reviews have time to fester,” I say.

The most important thing is that I get ahead of the competition. I can’t disappear completely, and just

recede into the background. If I’m going to maintain my position as a must-go spot, then I need to

reopen immediately.

I made Ethan my new restaurant manager on the spot, a promotion he took with a mingled look of

excitement and fear. While he doesn’t have a ton of experience yet, he’s loyal, and I value loyalty the

most out of everything. Especially after what happened with Olivia.

I have total faith he'll step up to the task. He's already proven a delight to work with. He's kind,

conscientious, and one of the most hardworking employees I've had. I know his injury makes things

difficult for him sometimes, but it hasn't slowed him down yet.

He never complains, and he seems to work around the pain. And now that he'll be spending more time

behind the front desk, hopefully his shifts will be easier for him. If I can even stay afloat after this, that

is.

"The most important thing is getting new people," he says. "We need workers."

I nod. When we got here, we started by taking stock of the food and all future orders. By the time we

finished, I'd broken out into a nervous sweat. If I don't hire new people soon, I'm basically screwed.

"I need to hire staff on an expedited basis," I say, turning to my computer. I've already written the ad,

and I quickly post it online. "Even if some people don't last, at least we'll have workers for the time

being. They just need to be good enough to get things going."

"I agree."

"You'll work at the front desk taking reservations and greeting customers. I'll work back here as the

primary chef. If we can get a few good waiters and a decent bartender, then we'll be alright."

"Exactly."

There's a loud knock at the front door, and Ethan gives me a curious look.

"I'll get it," I say when I see him start to stand up.

He nods and sinks back into his chair. I cross the restaurant floor and unlock the door. Karl stands

outside, a pair of sunglasses on. His business suit looks freshly pressed, and he's carrying a tray with

two coffees on it.

"For you and Ethan," he says, handing it off to me.

I'm not surprised he remembered Ethan's name. He's always been good at that, making note of

people. It's partly what makes him a good Alpha. He remembers people even if he's only met them

once. He knows how to make the people who work for him, and the members of his pack, feel special.

I step aside, and he slips past me into the restaurant. I lock the door behind him.

"So, you came," I say, turning to face him. I don't bother to hide the fact that I'm surprised.

He slides his sunglasses into his pocket, looking around at the desolate room. "I said I would."

His phone rings before I can reply, and he picks it up, giving me an apologetic smile. "Kimberly, hey."

He turns slightly away, and I give him his privacy. I can still hear his end of the conversation, but I at

least pretend like I'm not listening.

"I don't have time to take on another job right now," he says. There's a muffled response on the other

end. "That's great, but I still don't have the time. I'll call you back later. I'm in the middle of something."

Another muffled response. "Last I checked, I'm your boss. If I want your advice, I'll ask for it."

My eyebrows shoot up.

"Alright, bye." He hangs up, turning to face me again.

"Your secretary?" I ask, even though I already know the answer. Her smug smile during that dumb

interview she did flashes across my mind. The memory of it makes me angrier than it should.

"Yup." "Sounds like there's something else you need to be doing."

He shakes his head. "There's nothing else."

"Karl, you're an Alpha, not a cook or a waiter or even a bartender. You seriously want to work in the

back during a dinner rush? It's not exactly fun work, and it's not like you have free time."

"I have the time." "I think you need to get your priorities straight," I grumble, walking past him to deliver

Ethan his coffee. Three in the span of a few hours probably isn't a good idea, but I definitely plan on

drinking mine. I need the energy.

He reaches out and grabs my wrist, stopping me. His grip is gentle.

"Abby, look at me." I glance back at him and force myself to meet his eyes. "You're my priority."

It certainly sounds nice, but that doesn't mean it changes anything. I pull my arm free. "Come on," I say

with a slight smirk. "If you're so eager to help out, then we might as well get you started."

He follows me into the kitchen and Ethan joins us there, his gaze darting between us. I hand him the

coffee. "Thank you," he says to Karl, a nervous edge to his voice.

"Why don't you start by polishing the counters," I say. They're already gleaming, but I want to see if he'll

do a task that I'm sure he considers beneath him.

He shrugs and takes off his suit jacket.

"I'll hang that in the office," I say, reaching out a hand.

He gives it to me and turns to Ethan. "Will you show me what I need to do?"

Ethan nods.

I turn to go back to the office, trying to hide my surprise. "Wait," he says. I look over my shoulder at him,

and he has the sleeves of his dress shirt rolled up to his elbows. "I have a proposition for you."

"Oh yeah, what's that?"

"If I do a good job, then you have to come to the Alpha party with me. You know, in exchange for all the

hard work."

I roll my eyes. "Fine, but you have to last the day." I'm already cataloging all the menial tasks I can

make him do before the day is out.

I know he can't possibly afford to spend a whole day here, stacking dishes and mopping floors, but I'm

happy to let him try. If he's so determined to be helpful, then I might as well take the free labor while it

lasts.

"Easy enough."

"Alright then," I say. "You have a deal."

Tags:

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