

THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

Chapter 126 Massacre

Fiona was slower-moving in the morning. She snoozed her alarm and came right back to me, stretching lazily.

I slid a hand down her back as she curled in close to my body. She sighed and nuzzled her face against my neck.

“Can’t wait for the weekend,” she said quietly.

“Me too.”

When Fiona had asked, the night before, how my day was... my mind went flying through a flipbook of the day’s events. The morning had started with news of one looming threat and the evening ended with

another.

I was awake, lying in bed with her for a good portion of the night. The wheels were turning in my mind.

The vampires were a bigger problem than the Hellhounds, of course. But the pack feud was actually the more urgent of the two.

Fiona didn't need to know about any of that, though.

It did occur to me that she would probably be great advisor, if someday she wanted to assume that role for me. Be my Luna Queen, in a real way. Provide me counsel for matters that threatened our kingdom.

Fiona was smart and savvy, insightful and shrewd. But we weren't married yet. And she was also pregnant and already stressed from long hours at a demanding job. She didn't need the burden of

knowing a war may be imminent. Not until she absolutely had to.

I made her a small breakfast and brewed some coffee while she got ready for work, and she joined me at our little table when her morning routine was complete.

“How are you feeling today?” I asked. I liked the natural pink I was seeing on her cheeks. She looked well-rested and relaxed.

“Great.” She gave me a knowing, closed-mouth smile.

“You?”

“Fantastic.”

She slathered a croissant with raspberry jam and took a big bite, saying, “mmm...” while she chewed. It was good to see her with a healthy appetite.

“Some good news, work-related,” she announced after washing down her breakfast with a sip of coffee.

“Yeah?”

“Conrad told me to hire an assistant.” Her voice was crisp, confident and proud. “HR already posted the position.”

“Nice. I’m glad to hear it. I’m sure it’ll help a lot with your workload.”

Good news was something that I needed this morning. And this was definitely good. It meant I got more time with my fiancée. I sent a message of gratitude to Conrad in my mind.

I walked Fiona to the door and swept her into a lingering full-body hug before I let her leave. I just

wanted to let her and the baby have as much of my strength as I could give them. She pressed me away gently when another alarm went off on her phone.

“Gotta go,” she said, a hint of a frown on her soft pink lips.

I wanted so badly to kiss those lips. But I gave her a kiss on the cheek instead. She took the opportunity to kiss my cheek, too... we were so, so close to the real thing.

But then she was gone, her high heels clacking rhythmically on the marble floors as she hurried off to a waiting car.

I jumped into a cold shower to force a quick change in my mental state.

“You might not like the advice I’m about to offer.”

I sat down with my father in his study. He nodded, looking down into the steaming cup of coffee in his hand. I'd just watched him dose it with a splash of brandy.

He didn't reply. Just waited for me to lay it on him.

"As much as I would love to board a train today, head south and go hunting for those bloodsuckers..." I shook my head. "It's the wrong move. We can't send anyone down there. Not yet. And we need to make sure the villagers keep quiet about the sightings, too. The very best situation to maintain until we have more intelligence is to let them believe we haven't caught onto them yet."

My father crossed one leg over the other and sipped his coffee. "They're not safe," he said flatly.

He meant the villagers, and he was right. But warning or evacuating them, or swarming in to provide security would wind up endangering even more werewolves in the big picture.

“These kinds of sightings can only mean one thing,” I explained. “If the vampires felt safe, they’d already be hunting. We’d have disappearances at the least. Or even be finding bodies already. But they’re only stalking right now. They’re scouting, looking for a place to nest. They won’t attack until they’ve found cover.”

“What’s the ideal place,” he asked slowly, “for a nest? Can you pin down the most likely locations?”

“I can try. They’ll be looking for a place where they can spend their days in total darkness.”

“Underground?”

I shook my head. “They like being underground, but they don’t like digging. Leaves too much evidence behind for us to track. A few years ago, they took to nesting in caves. Deep ones, with big enough passages that they can drag victims into. It’s why they send troops in from the south. The rocky forests in the mountain foothills are full of caves like that.”

“As of this morning,” I continued, “we don’t have enough information to take any action. If we roll into that village to investigate and those vampires are still there? You can bet your life they will take the advantage. Going in blind and trying to capture a couple vampires loose in the forest is a suicide mission. They’d kill our troops the second they saw us coming, and then get word back to their superiors. The tip-off could make them panic. Could push them to accelerate plans for an invasion. If that is what they are planning.”

“And so, what now? We do nothing?”

“I told you you weren’t going to like it.”

My coffee had gone cold. I threw it down my throat in one gulp, then set the cup down on the table beside me.

“Give me a little time,” I said. “I’ll look at the map. See if I can figure out what they are up to down there. I’ll need the exact locations of both sightings.”

My father nodded stiffly. “What if they’ve already talked?”

I understood that he meant the witnesses.

“What’s done is done. But...” If he hadn’t liked my advice of withholding military action to protect the

village, he was going to like this bit even less. “We should put them into quarantine. The witnesses and anyone else they’ll confess they told. That’s the only way to keep word from spreading any further.”

My father was a stoic man. He did not feel emotions over this... but he felt something else.

The Alpha King’s sense of responsibility to protect his people was a deep-set drive. A whole entity that lived inside him, with a mind and heart of its own. That drive had been instilled into me as well, and just as completely.

I just understood this situation better than he did.

Inaction of any kind made my father feel impotent. But restraint and patience was what we needed to defeat this kind of enemy.

We needed to find their nest before doing absolutely anything else. That would set us up to take the spies out in a blindside. Attack them during daylight when they were, in every way that mattered, already dead and almost completely defenseless.

Hunting vampires this way... Yes, it was a brutal way to conduct war. It amounted to massacre.

A vivid memory flashed through my mind's eye. A scene of one such slaughter.

The bloodletting involved in taking out a nest was massive. We'd walk out of those caves drenched in black from head to toe.

Vampires were almost all liquid on the inside. They were like mosquitos. Full of blood.

Staking them at close range, often the only option in

the close quarters of their nests, was like bursting a sludge-filled balloon with your bare hands.

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Chapter 127 Rejection



Fiona

“You are looking extra lovely this morning.” Emmie smiled, giving me a quick once-over.

“Thank you, that’s sweet.” I offered my colleague a polite smile. “Better rested than you’ve seen me in a while, I suppose.”

“Mm-hmm. I think cutting down on that overtime is doing you some good, Fiona.”

I finished preparing my tea and moved aside. Emmie started pouring herself a cup of coffee while I walked over to the breakroom table and sat down.

I was flattered by her compliment, sure. But it also told me she thought I'd been looking ragged recently, which was not so flattering.

“I really can't thank you enough for taking some of that off my plate, Emmie. You and the guys are life savers. And you've been doing an amazing job of it, too.”

“Oh, it's no problem,” she said, coming over to join me at the table. She took a sip of her coffee and narrowed her eyes, studying my face a little more intently than I liked.

“Well either way, I really appreciate it.”

Emmie was a senior project manager, but she was newer to the firm than lots of our other colleagues. I’d always liked her. She was loud, sometimes ungracefully so, but that served her well in this environment. I would place her in her late twenties, maybe early thirties; she was pretty in a stern way, with auburn hair and bright green eyes I had to assume were the reason why her parents had named her “Emerald.”

“You’ve got that glow,” she said, her lips creeping up into a borderline mischievous smile. “Mm-hmm.”

I had to get out of there before I started blushing, before I could betray that I knew where my coworker was going with this. Emmie had the same look in her eye that Nina had had when she’d asked me, on

another occasion, “You get laid last night?”

This was not my best friend, and we were not alone in a diner at four a.m. This was a person I worked with, and I was not about to gossip about my love life with her or anyone here in the executive breakroom at Crescent Ventures. A company my fiancé also happened to own, making both me and Emmie his employees, to boot.

“Well, I’m going to get back to work.” I got up and went to the sink to strain and throw away my tea bag. “Thanks again, Emmie. I’ll see you later.”

“See you.”

She did look a little hurt, perhaps feeling rejected, as I left her sitting there alone. I didn’t enjoy doing it.

I guess since we’d been spending lots of time working

together lately, Emmie might've started thinking she and I could chit-chat like girlfriends. I would have been on board if she had selected any other topic. But I was too much of a professional to talk about sex with a coworker, and too responsible of a Luna to be indiscreet about my relationship with my high-profile Alpha, as well.

It also made me feel a bit prickly to think about Emmie possibly being... curious... about my fiancée.

I knew objectively that she meant no harm. I just could not go there with her.

When I got back to my office, I closed my door and pulled the shades closed over the hallway windows. That was my signal to let my colleagues know I needed to be left alone. I got comfortable at my desk with my tea and gave myself permission to take a five minute break before I had to go get set up for the

morning meeting.

My phone vibrated in my hand right as I picked it up to text Alexander.

Alexander

I didn't expect a quick reply when I texted Fiona on my way to meet Kayden for our morning run. I just sent a message figuring she'd see it later. Letting her know I really hoped to see her in the evening for dinner together.

Dinner didn't just mean dinner, of course. I was asking for her time, really. Time to let me take care of her. I think she knew what I meant.

She promised she'd do her best to make it back by to the palace by six. I knew she'd confirm with me again in the afternoon. She respected my busy schedule

and always kept me updated about her own limited availability, which I appreciated.

She had some other planning to discuss, too. Some requests for our time together over the upcoming weekend.

It was a cold morning, and already lightly raining by the time I stepped out from under a covered veranda and into the open field of the West Courtyard.

I could smell a big storm coming on.

Kayden appeared at my side thirty seconds later, sniffing the air as he walked up. He was thinking the same thing.

We were jogging toward the forest when I decided to jump right into it. I needed to give him a heads up about something.

“Nina’s going to be here this weekend,” I told him.

“Fiona invited her over to have breakfast with me and her on Saturday morning. Just wanted to let you know.”

“Hm.” Kayden kept his eyes forward, his form in order.

I got the feeling he was waiting for an invitation. But I let a few telling beats pass us by, and he picked up the hint.

I wasn’t about to say outright: “She’s got a new guy, by the way, and you’re not invited to hang out.”

Kayden did not really need to know that first thing. It wasn’t my place to clue him in about it, anyway. The second thing he understood quickly.

We reached the tree line and started jogging into the forest just as the rain began to pour down in earnest.

It got heavier and heavier with each passing minute.

The muddy forest floor kept us on our toes; the slick ground demanded better balance and made for a great workout for the small muscles around the ankles. And the icy rain on my skin felt great, stinging pleasurably with every cold drop that hit and bit at my sweat-slicked skin.

I had given Kayden some shit for the way he'd let Nina jerk him around.

She'd played him pretty thoroughly, when you looked at their affair with the advantage of hindsight.

Nina rode Kayden hard for a couple weeks. He probably tried not to, but he fell for her. And then she ghosted him.

He seemed to take that first fallout in stride. He didn't

bring her up in conversation afterward, and I thought that he was over it.

But a few weeks later she called him up out of nowhere (if I recall correctly, when she needed a ride to the palace for a visit with Fiona). And my boy had gone running right back to her like a puppy dog.

Then he'd lapsed back into devoting every second of his free time to Nina for another couple weeks that go-round. Until she blew him off again, ghosting him without a word just the same as she'd done the first time.

That second rejection hit Kayden harder. It had been difficult to watch.

"I'll lead a.m. training Saturday," he said, "while you entertain the ladies."

This was expected of my Beta and didn't really need verbal confirmation. He was saying it out loud to communicate that he got the picture about Nina.

"Would be good if you could drop in at some point," he suggested. "Surprise the guys when they think you won't be there."

"Good idea. Maybe you can hit me up if they start looking tired. That'd be a good time to make an appearance."

We talked about training plans for the week for a few more minutes. Until thunder started clapping in the distance and we sprinted the rest of the way back in, getting ourselves out of the trees as fast as we could before lightning could strike anywhere nearby.

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Chapter 128 Filthy

Fiona

An envelope full of resumes arrived with my morning mail. It was from HR: the applications for my assistant position.

I had never been entrusted with this kind of responsibility before. Having someone who reported directly to me was a big deal. Honestly, it had me feeling like I'd finally "made it." Gotten to actual boss status. Literally.

I was ready for it and excited. I had a million and a

half ideas already for how I was going to make use of my new employee. My life at work was about to be a lot easier, once I got this person trained up exactly the way I wanted.

I counted the resumes before I started reading any of them. There were ten. A recruiter had pre-screened all the applications and deemed these the best.

They were all impressive. Ten well-educated people with industry experience and well-written cover letters. But it was surprisingly easy to whittle the stack down to four candidates I wanted to interview, once I'd read through everything. They were clear front-runners in terms of the skills I was looking for.

Two of the four had female-sounding names, and a third was probably a male. The fourth resume contained not only a male-sounding name (Harry), but also an unusual feature: a headshot of the candidate.

This was the first time I'd seen anyone feature a portrait of themselves right there on their resume. But, I reasoned, everyone crafted resumes differently.

And considering what this individual looked like, I could see why he might've (rather arrogantly) included this professional photograph of himself on the first page of his CV, if what he was trying to do was stand out at first glance.

An ethical employer neither excludes nor hires anybody based on their physical appearance, gender, or other personal traits like that—that's a standard I value. And it only makes practical sense, too. I needed someone skilled for this position, and what they looked like had absolutely zero to do their capacity to do the job well.

But it's impossible to not notice these other things

about people as you study their biographies.

Especially when those documents come with a full-color headshot, and doubly so if that headshot looks like it should be in a men's style magazine.

This was my dilemma: I had absolutely no inclination to be biased in the handsome man's favor – in fact, it was just the opposite.

I sat with his resume on my desk, reading and re-reading it for a long time, trying to find a solid reason to move it from the small "interview" pile to the larger "rejection" one. But the simple fact was that, at least on paper, he looked like the very best of all the candidates.

I could not bring myself to disqualify him based on the photo alone. It was the one and only thing that gave me pause about moving him forward to interview. But I knew, just knew with great certainty that Alexander

would not like it if I hired this man as my assistant.

He would be jealous. Period. There was no doubt about that.

But... I had no reason to believe my Alpha would let his jealousy about something like this spiral into a dangerous extreme.

Yes, the last time I'd seen Alexander become territorial, the other man involved had probably gone to the hospital afterward. That situation had escalated quickly, but it was also a much more complication situation. My ex-fiancé had had his hands on me at the time.

There was no way having a handsome young man working for me could create a problem anywhere as explosive as that. And the idea of giving Alexander a reason to get just a little bit jealous... I don't know, it

didn't sound all that terrible, actually.

I had to quit overthinking it. I had more pressing matters to deal with in the office. So I kept Harry in the "interview" pile. Maybe one of the others would beat him out in the next round, anyway. This whole thing would be a non-issue if he simply wound up not being the best fit for the position.

I emailed the recruiter to let him know my choices and provide him my availability for the interviews. I was going to hire the most qualified person for this job. And that was that.

My door was open, so I heard the commotion from down the hall when the lunch cart arrived on our floor. The day was flying by.

I made an executive decision. Today was going to be the day I started taking actual breaks midday once

again. The “working lunches” I’d been hosting with my little task force team in the conference room were becoming unbearable. The mix of smells was just too much for me, and it killed my appetite. I couldn’t afford to skip lunch. I needed the calories, the protein, the energy.

I checked in with the crew and let them know I was going to start taking real lunch breaks again, and if they wanted to do the same, they should certainly go ahead. We’d made enough progress getting the emergency situation under control, and especially since they were all doing overtime tonight too, I no longer felt the lunch meetings were necessary.

The guys were unfazed and on board. Emmie, though... I could tell that she was worried she’d offended me this morning, and thinking that I might be avoiding her. That was unfortunate.

Oh well.

Alexander

Not a single wolf in the King Pack wanted to dare let me see them looking weak. Not today. Not after the way I'd been calling out underperformers and making examples out of them this week.

But I could tell that a couple of them were struggling when they all soldiered into the weight room to report for morning training. Jacob especially.

Here's something that a decade at war will do for you: make you really good at walking a lot and carrying heavy stuff. Forest marching wasn't that big of a deal for me. It was just a good workout. Had me looking jacked last night too, I guess, if Fiona's salivating over my muscles was any indication.

Kayden and the other warriors who'd spent years in battle with us were conditioned in just the same way. But the younger soldiers, especially the tallest and heaviest of them, were hurting some.

That meant one thing: we were about to start doing a lot more frequent ruck marches.

It didn't do me any good to cripple them today, though. So I planned on keeping the guys off their feet somewhat, giving their blister-covered feet and ankles a chance to heal.

We focused on upper-body strength training. Anything and everything that we could do indoors while the unseasonable storm raged on outside all morning.

We ran a demanding circuit. Push-ups, pull-ups, salmon ladder, rope climbs, and repeat. And repeat. And repeat.

The sky stayed dark till after noon, when finally the cloud cover over the palace cracked down the middle and let some light leak through.

I'd just gotten the pack started on end-of-workout stretches when my phone buzzed quietly in my pocket.

I stole a glance at the screen. It was Fiona.

She'd finally responded to a text I'd sent her right after my early a.m. mud run with Kayden.

She was probably on her lunch break. I dipped out a few minutes early and let Kayden finish up the session so that I could catch her before she got busy with work again.

Fiona

I reset my office from work mode into a space where I could enjoy a private, quiet break alone. It was simple: paperwork went away, keyboard tucked into its drawer; door locked, blinds closed, lights dimmed just a little.

I checked my phone while I started eating.

Alexander had sent me another picture of himself... a couple hours ago.

In this selfie he was outside, shirtless and soaking wet, with mud splattered all over his face and body.

I replied: I've never seen you like this. You always clean yourself up for me.

I had no idea if he still had his phone on him. I put mine down and returned to my meal. It was just a few

minutes later that he got back to me.

Alexander: And what do you think?

I caught myself rolling my eyes. He enjoyed it a little too much when I expressed how much I liked his body. How much I admired and lusted after it.

I used to try to hold back from giving him much encouragement on this topic. I remember feeling, before, like it gave him too much power to know that he could turn me on by just... existing.

I was not so worried about that anymore. My god-like Alpha only wanted me to worship him a little, and when I was actively looking at these pictures he was sending me, it seemed like a reasonable request. Remembering how he was the night before helped me want to indulge him in this, too.

I told him: I like it. I kind of want to lick some of that sweat off your skin. I bet it tastes good.

Alexander: No, you don't want to do that. I'm fucking filthy.

That got me chuckling under my breath.

Me: I know you are.

Alexander: Not actually what I meant, but... I like the way you're thinking.

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Chapter 129 Back In The Game





Alexander

I unfolded a big, heavily detailed map of the southern territories and laid it flat on my desk.

Kayden handed me a red marker while I pulled up an email from my father on my phone. The Alpha King, my reluctant advisee in this matter, had sent me all the information he could gather about the recent vampire sightings. The sightings had occurred in two different rural, sparsely populated villages down near the southern border.

I ran my fingers over the map while studying the names of the villages and the many natural features that surrounded them – mountains, valleys, forests, rivers, creeks, rapids, falls – until I found both locations described in the email, and marked each one with a neat, distinct X.

My Beta and I caught ourselves both reeling back, squinting at the map, and crossing our arms over our chests. We glanced at each other in unison, noted our mirrored postures, and laughed.

“Fuck,” he mumbled. “It’s like riding a bike, huh, Alex? One word of vampires and suddenly it’s like no time has passed at all. We’re just...” He snapped his fingers. “Right back in the game.”

“Just like old times.” The smile on my face was just as sarcastic as my use of this phrase.

And then we were done with the chit-chat. There was not a lot of space for laughter or smiles of any kind in a room where a vampire hunt was being plotted.

Kayden leaned over the desk, pressed his palms flat on the map, and fixed his eyes on the forested area

between the two red Xes.

“They crossed through these woods.” He traced an imaginary line through a dark space on the map.

“What was the timing between the two sightings?”

“About forty-eight hours. Just after midnight one night. The next, two days later, around the same time.”

“Think there are any deep caves in there? That far out from the base of this mountain?”

“Could be. We’ll need a more detailed map of that forest.”

I drew a straight line between the two Xes to connect them. It bisected the forest exactly in half.

“How many you think they’ve got out there?” Kayden asked.

I circled the perimeter of the forest with my marker, tracing its edges carefully, and stepped back again to stare at it.

My eyes became so sharply focused, I started to feel like I would never need to blink them again.

I was staring straight ahead at a green space on a piece of paper, but seeing, vividly, a forest. Trees.

Caves. The mouths of which were walled over with stones, which had been piled up from the inside. They looked like tombs.

Felt like tombs, too, when you got inside them.

To call vampires strong is an understatement. Some of the powers they possess—their speed, and ability to fly, to name just a few—make them very difficult to

match in direct combat.

When we figured out how to track down their nests and get inside without rousing the vampires, so that we could kill them in their “sleep” ... that was when the tide turned. That was when we started winning the war.

“Not many,” I finally answered. “Three. Two. Maybe even only one, if we’re lucky.”

Fiona

I counted down the minutes to the end of my workday—not something that I did very often.

But I was feeling... oh, I don’t know, more relaxed, more “normal” than I had in a while. I was almost done with the craziness of covering Conrad’s leave, and I was in the mood for a break. A break with

Alexander in particular.

I studied my planner and crossed out all the finished tasks, getting a little dose of gratification with every super straight line I drew through the completed to-dos. I was in good shape to leave the office on time. I texted Alexander to let him know.

My Alpha and I had a very business-like way of always checking in and confirming our plans together. I appreciated it. Probably not a lot of men were as organized as I liked to be with my time.

Seemed like every time I texted him lately though, it turned into a whole thing.

No matter what topic I started off with, he found a way to take the conversation and turn it dirty.

Not that I minded. I was having fun with it. But I

needed to focus till five p.m. if I was getting out of here at that hour, like I'd just promised him I would, so that's exactly what I did.

Leaving at five meant other people in the elevator. I would not dare to risk opening up a risqué photo of the future Alpha King while I was surrounded by strangers. So I waited for the privacy of the car before opening my thread with Alexander.

But, to my great disappointment, his response to my last communication was business only, confirming our dinner plans.

The tone of his message seemed kind of distracted, too. He was busy.

I could certainly relate and understand.

I took to texting Nina instead, just saying hi and

checking in. She hit me back a few minutes later with a bunch more videos of her dancing in the studio where she practiced. They were all incredible and kept me well entertained on the drive home.

Alexander's Beta was just walking out of our bedroom when I walked up.

"Hey, Kayden."

He offered me a warm smile. "Hi, Fiona. How are you doing?" He stepped out into the hall quickly, making way for me to head inside.

Alexander appeared, closing his office door behind him. He strode over and took my bags out of my hands and set them aside. "Hi," I said; he only answered with a little smile. "I'm great, Kayden. Thank you for asking. How are you?"

“I’m fine, thanks. You look well.”

He retreated, walking backward while we exchanged these pleasantries. Ready to make himself scarce.

“Thank you. It’s good to see you.”

Kayden waved, spun on his heel, and was gone.

Alexander pushed the bedroom door closed in a hurry once I was inside.

He knelt down in front of me and asked, “How was your day?”

I ran my hands through his thick hair. He placed his on my hips, then pulled them forward and brought them to rest on my stomach.

“Good. How about yours?” I combed my fingers

through his hair. He was so warm... every touch was pure relaxation. I soaked it up while he started taking off my shoes.

He looked up at me with the slightest hint of a smile. "Better now." He finished what he was doing and rose to full height, towering over me. His hands went to my neck and stroked it. "You look beautiful."

"Thanks. You don't look so bad yourself."

Then we lingered in a long moment of loaded eye contact and light touches. My hands were on his chest, then running down the length of his brickwork abs.

He gave up on the staring contest first, unable to resist his compulsion for smelling my neck and rubbing his face in my hair. "Do you want to get some dinner," he asked. "Or...?"

“I’m not hungry yet. Why don’t you help me work up an appetite first?”

He made an mmm sound and said, “I’d be happy to do that for you, baby.”

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Chapter 130 Destroy Me



“Can you keep these on?” Alexander asked, toying with one of my earrings.

I always took my earrings off before we got in bed. It never occurred to me before that he noticed or

minded. It was just a habit, so that they wouldn't get tangled in my hair or pulled by accident. My Alpha was not exactly always super gentle. To put it mildly.

I'd never worn much jewelry before I met him. And I certainly had never owned anything so lavish as the pieces I'd now gotten used to wearing to work every day. When I moved into the palace, there had just been a closet full of clothes and jewelry here waiting for me. I found that I loved the long, dangly earrings the most, and especially the ones with gemstones.

The pair I had in my ears right now were delicate gold chains about three inches long dotted with tiny gold-set amethysts.

"If you promise to be careful with them." I gave Alexander a stern look.

He pressed his lips together, suppressing an amused

smile, and nodded compliantly.

“Give me a few minutes to freshen up. And I’ll make you a deal.”

He breathed out a single chuckle. “Okay. What’s the deal?”

“I will keep the earrings in. And you will give me a full-body massage.”

He grinned, and agreed to my terms with a simple “yes, ma’am” that I enjoyed.

Maybe it was bossing my coworkers around all week. Or maybe hiring myself an assistant. I was just feeling bossy and confident tonight, ready to keep doling out instructions and making sure that they were followed.

I brushed my hair out and pulled it up into a bun

before rinsing my body quickly in the shower. Then I slipped into a nightgown, washed and moisturized my face, and took my hair back down. And put my earrings back in. A little eyelash curl and dash of fresh mascara, and that was enough.

Alexander had made good use of this time, I found when I emerged from the bathroom.

He'd lowered the curtains and dimmed the lights. Lit a couple candles, one on my desk and one on our café table. Both glass surfaces glimmered under the flickering flames. And he'd littered the bed with white rose petals again.

"You are something," I said. "Alexander..."

"You wanted a massage. And you know I like to do things right."

He peeled back the outer covers on the bed, scattering petals to the floor and making space for me to lie down on the crisp, clean gold sheets. I was feeling self-satisfied with this deal we had negotiated as I got into position. Alexander shifted pillows all around, propping some under my knees and ankles for comfort, all professional-like and officious, and then set to work.

He started with my feet. I gave him lots of direction as he worked his way up my body, letting myself moan when he touched places that gave me good relief, and bossed him around a little extra just for fun.

He said “yes, ma’am” every time I told him to do something. And then followed my orders exactly, and glanced up at me with a proud smile when I praised him for doing it right.

The massage I got from my fiancé, and the other

treatments he gave me after that, did in fact bolster my appetite as expected. I was ravenous by the time we were finished, and it was no wonder. My mouth fell open when I realized I'd already been home for three hours. The time had disappeared.

It was a chilly day, and the sun had set. But the cool wisps of post-rain air that floated in through the cracked windows smelled fresh and delicious, and had both of us wanting to get out of the room for a stretch.

We dressed quickly in casual clothes and enjoyed a meal in the dining room together. We were comfortably quiet while we ate, both apparently super hungry. Alexander cleared his plate before I did, and scooted his chair close so he could wrap an arm low around my hips while I finished.

“Are you going to be up working for a while?” he

asked as we walked back to the bedroom. He had his arm around my shoulder, warming me against the crisp, cold night air.

“I have a couple things to finish up, yes.”

“I’m going to meet the pack for training in a little bit. So I’ll be out of your hair.”

I laughed a little. Just thinking about the fact that Alexander did in fact often like to put his face right into my hair.

This was my last night before my direct supervisor was returning. The CEO had put a lot of trust into me while he was away, and I definitely wanted to make a good final showing for this last meeting that I needed to run in the morning.

I did not plan on working quite so late. But Alexander

looked displeased when he got back from working with his soldiers and saw that I was still at my desk. I did not understand why until I looked at the time on my computer screen and realized it was half past midnight.

I'd set my morning alarm to go off half an hour earlier than usual. Planning ahead to fit sex into our busy schedules, even setting an alarm for it... I wondered if other couples ever did that.

Alexander had developed a habit, a kind of reflex. He would wake to my alarm going off and reach out to grab hold to some part of my body, usually my wrist, and drag me over to him to try to keep me in bed for an extra minute or two.

It wasn't necessary today. I had a second alarm set for my usual wakeup time.

When he snatched me over into his arms, I pressed my lips against his chest and started kissing it. He rubbed my back sleepily, his chest vibrating with a low, quiet growl as I moved my mouth across his skin.

“I love taking my time with you,” he mumbled, rubbing his scruffy cheek against the side of my face. “But if you’d like, I can get you off quickly before you need to go to work...”

“Actually... you have thirty minutes,” I told him. “You can do whatever you want with that time. As long as I can get out of bed the next time my alarm goes off. Just don’t destroy me. I really need to start getting ready in half an hour.”

“Is that what I do? Destroy you?”

I pulled back to look Alexander in the eye. He was smirking. “You were there,” I said. “You’ve seen what

you can do to me.”

“So... you’re asking me to only make you come once?”

“Yes.”

“And not too hard?”

He used his knee to part my legs, then slid his hand down between them and started stroking me with a light touch. I closed my eyes and lay back to enjoy.

“That sounds acceptable,” I said drowsily.

He moved his mouth to my ear and whispered, “You want it only like this?” He was plenty awake now, but his voice was still thick with recent sleep. “Or do you want my cock, too?”

He rotated his hips into me while he said this, making

me aware that he was prepared to deliver that second option.

I shivered. And had to take a long, slow breath in and out as he entered me with his fingers. “If you can give me that... and still take it kinda easy on me, then yeah. I want it.”

He stretched out the length of his body with a big, excited growl and got a little faster with his hand, fingering me until I was on the edge and impatient to go over it and told him to get the fuck inside me now.

He said “yes, ma’am” again, and did as I demanded.

A lot of my clothes suddenly no longer fit me today.

The problem was my breasts. They were super swollen, now growing at a faster rate than my belly.

I picked out the one thing in my closet that would work for today: a sweater dress with buttons all down the front. Usually I wore it completely closed up, but this morning it was necessary to unbutton three of the buttons from the top down. Wearing it like this showed a bit more cleavage than I was used to doing in the workplace, but I deemed it still work-appropriate enough, and made a mental note that I needed to do some shopping asap.

Alexander noticed my predicament.

When I came out of my dressing room, he looked up, did a double take and then let his eyes linger on my chest while he filled a mug with steaming, cinnamon-scented decaf coffee. I worried for a moment that he was about to overfill the cup, but his attention snapped back to it just in time.

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