

THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

Chapter 131 Do It Slowly

“Conrad will be back this afternoon,” I announced to the group. “So this will be my last time leading the morning meeting. Thank you all so much for your support this past week and a half, it’s been my pleasure to get the day started with all of you.”

I dismissed everyone after I delivered this little end-of-meeting speech, feeling a rush of relief. I’d been given a crazy job to do this week, and now it was done. Starting Monday, I could return my focus to the other million things I needed to do for my actual job again.

But my colleagues were slow to disperse from the conference room and overall seemed... unhappy.

They weren’t looking forward to the CEO’s return to

running this show.

It was flattering to me that my coworkers preferred my meetings over Conrad's. And when I considered it objectively for myself, I had to admit that in some ways, I did a better job with them. I was more time-efficient than the boss, kept us on a strict schedule. And I was more plugged in to what my coworkers were all doing in their day-to-day, as well. This promoted a more collaborative dynamic in the meetings.

But... I really hoped Conrad would not ask me to do this again. Not while I had so much other work on my plate.

I devoted the rest of my morning to writing up reports for him. Not something he'd asked me to do, but I felt compelled; it was simply the best way to catch my boss up on what he'd missed while he was out of

office.

Conrad had said he'd be back in the afternoon. I figured he might ask to meet with me right away after he got in. So I set to work and hustled on the reports, racing to beat the clock.

Alexander: I sent you a second pic yesterday and you didn't return the favor.

This was the text I found waiting for me when I next checked my phone, on my lunch break.

There was no sign of Conrad in the office yet, and I was nearly finished with my reports already. My energy was dragging, though, after staring at the computer for hours upon hours without a break.

I wrote back to Alexander: You don't have to be so accusatory about it. You could just ask nicely.

Alexander: Okay. Will you please send me more pics?
Pretty please? ;)

Well. Now I supposed I needed to oblige him, since he asked the way I told him to. I double checked that my office door was locked (it was). I'd already closed the blinds.

Before I could start snapping selfies for him, though, Alexander went ahead and sent me something else.

It was a video of him working out. The angle it was shot from made me think about the dance videos that Nina had been sending me. He had propped his phone somewhere and set it to record, knowing he was about to put on an impressive show.

The video was Alexander on the salmon ladder, a piece of exercise equipment I imagined required immense upper body strength to climb even once. I'd never had the pleasure of playing on one myself, but anyone with eyes could see that this was a challenging obstacle to scale.

For most people. Not for Alexander, apparently.

Holding a steel bar in a cross grip with his elbows in perfect L shapes, he ascended the huge ladder rung by rung, landing the bar in every subsequent cradle with precision and grace, and doing the whole thing in perfect, rhythmic timing. Then he came back down, performing the motions in reverse. Then he went up and down again, and again, and again. Every time he reached the top, he reversed his grip on the bar. I wasn't sure if this served a purpose or was just a showboat maneuver.

His performance in this video was so impressive, I couldn't help but find it sublimely arrogant of him to film it and send it to me.

But my whole mouth just filled with saliva as I watched it.

His strength and power just looked so impossibly effortless. He was of course also shirtless in this video. It was indeed a sight to behold.

His next text read: Now you send me a video.

Me: Of what? You know I am at the office.

Alexander: I also know that your boss isn't there right now. And that you have a lock on your door. I'll tell you what to do.

Me: Okay...

Alexander: I just want to watch you undo a few more buttons on that dress you're wearing.

Alexander: Do it slowly...

It was a simple enough ask. After all, Alexander had put in a lot of work making some mouth-watering eye candy for me enjoy. I was getting off easy, if all I needed to do in return was unbutton a couple buttons.

I played around with my phone, found a good spot to set it upright on my desk, and hit record.

I ran my hands through my hair first... tucked it behind my ear so he could see my earrings... and then, sneaking glances up at the camera every so often, I slowly unbuttoned... quite a lot of buttons. A few more than I had planned on, calling it quits just below the band of my lacy black bra. I got very into it,

thinking about how Alexander was going to react when he watched.

A minute passed after I sent the video. I buttoned myself back up, leaving only three buttons open, like before. Then he replied.

Alexander: Fucking sexy

Alexander: I am going to tear that dress in half when I get my hands on you.

Me: Don't do that... it's the only thing that fits me right now!

Alexander: I don't care. I'll take you shopping.

Me: Okay. Then I guess you can do it...

Alexander: I'm distracted now. You got me turned on.

Me: You did that to me, first.

Alexander: Did I?

Me: You know that you did.

Alexander: I just want to make you come now.

Me: Wish you were here to do that for me... I could really use that right now.

Alexander: Me too, baby. Why don't you touch yourself for me, since I can't?

I dropped my phone, mumbling an expletive under my breath. It clattered onto my desk.

Was I really about to do this?

The door was already locked. I was already way more sexually aroused than I should have been in the workplace at all.

Alexander: Do it, Fiona.

His quick shift into a command presence forced me to stop hesitating.

Me: Where do you want me to touch?

Alexander: Lick your fingertips. Then stroke your nipples softly till they're hard. Tell me when you're done.

Oh, holy hell. I did what he said. And wound up with a chill running all through me.

Me: I did it...

Alexander: How'd it feel

Me: Tingly.

Alexander: Lower now. Between your legs. Think about the way I touch you while you stroke it.

I had to put the phone down for this.

And was actually surprised with myself when I pressed hard on my clit and quickly started into a heart-pounding little orgasm. I leaned back in my desk chair with my legs shaking.

Alexander: Did you come?

Me: Yes

Alexander: Good girl.

Me: I can't do that as well as you, though.

Alexander: Don't worry. I'll take good care of you tonight.

After I recovered from that brief heart-pounding rush of adrenaline and endorphins, I discovered that I felt... great. Super refreshed.

That experience definitely did more for my energy than taking a pill would have.

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Chapter 132 CEO



Alexander

“He’s gone into hiding.”

Conrad peeled an onion and chopped it in half. Then he took one half at a time and cut them quickly into thin, half-moon slivers.

“I don’t think that’s what he started out doing when he left,” he continued. “But it’s what he’s doing now. Hunkered down, and I’m thinking, about to stay a while. Either he got the idea that we, or someone else, were onto him. Or he’s planning to wait something out... something he knows is coming, and we don’t.”

He was speaking about Fiona’s father. Conrad had gone after the scoundrel when he left town several days ago, expressing to me a single purpose in doing so: “We can’t lose track of him.”

He followed the man around for several days, driving through every major city on this side of the country, and finally decided to come back when the man abruptly ceased his movements, filling up his car with rations first and then apparently moving into an abandoned cabin in the mountains.

“How about the maid?” Conrad asked. The onions slid off the cutting board into a buttered pan, hissing and steaming as they hit the high heat to be flash-grilled. “She give you anything else yet?”

I gave Conrad more of the same answer I’d supplied him with the last time he asked this question. Iris was settling in still, getting some medical care and resting. I couldn’t push her too fast. But I planned to give the memory exercise another try with her this coming week.

He heated a second pan on the stove while we talked, then produced a tray of thinly sliced steak strips from the fridge and started those searing. The apartment filled with mouth-watering aromas that smelled more delicious every second.

“Something else I want to run by you.” I threw back the last sip of wine in my glass before I continued. “I’ve been thinking about going public with my ownership share of the company. I don’t mean tomorrow. But I’d like to start working with you on a plan for that, and a timeline.”

To my surprise, Conrad looked me in the eye and said, “Great! I think Scarlet’s done, Alexander. Even if she manages to keep herself out of prison, at this point, her career’s beyond repair. She’s not a threat to Crescent anymore. She’s got no leverage on you in the industry.”

“And you feel good about me coming in and taking a more active role in the company?”

“I’m going to let you in on a little secret,” he said, beginning a roundabout answer. “I’m an old man. And I’m tired as all hell.”

I shook my head. “What do you mean, ‘old man?’ You haven’t even broken sixty.”

“Oh, hard living has aged me fast. I only admit this to you because, with what you’re telling me now, it sounds like it may well be the right time for me to take a small step back from the company. I could not give it all up at once, no, no.” He clicked his tongue.

“Couldn’t do that if I wanted to, even if I tried. But we can get the process started. What are you thinking? Within the next year? Two?”

“I have to admit, I’m a little taken aback to hear you saying all of this, uncle.”

“I have been tired, nephew, for ten years.” He retrieved a couple plates from a high cupboard and busied himself with toasting bread rolls on a front burner while the steak and onions simmered in the back.

“You sure as hell don’t look tired.”

“Ha! Flattery will get you nowhere, son.”

“I have no stake in flattering you.”

“Listen, Alexander. I was already hoping to start sharing some more top-floor leadership tasks with Fiona. She’s the best employee I’ve ever had. We need to promote her. But if you want to take on a

more active role in the company, too... that's even better."

"What will you do with all your free time, though? Once you step back from the firm? You'll be bored out of your mind, Conrad."

He shrugged and started plating our sandwiches. The steak strips went into the rolls first and got covered with shredded cheese that started melting on contact. Then the grilled onions, still steaming, went on top of that.

"Find someone to spend some of that time with, maybe," Conrad said suggestively.

I nodded. "Not a bad idea."

He took our plates and headed to the dining room, a big corner area of his penthouse apartment that had

full-glass external walls, just like the office.

The second we were seated, he jumped back up and went right back to the kitchen, apparently remembering a half-empty wine glass he'd left by the stove.

I took a huge bite of the cheesesteak sandwich. It was divine.

“You could take up a new career in the restaurant industry,” I suggested. “From what I’ve heard about chefs, you might have the right disposition for that job, in addition to the knife skills.”

He grinned, showing off a big mouthful of sharp white teeth.

Fiona

I was up from my seat the moment I heard Conrad's booming voice carrying down the hall.

It was already mid-afternoon, and the TGIF feels were real. I wanted to get back to Alexander and get started on my weekend. And I had no idea how long Conrad was going to want to meet with me, so getting started on our catch-up asap was my top priority.

I thanked myself for having the reports printed and sorted already, rather than obsessively working on them until the last minute. They were ready, stored in file folder; I grabbed it and hurried out into the hall.

Conrad was on the phone, yammering away into his Bluetooth headset. (This just looked, to an uninformed observer, like he was talking to himself.)

He caught my eye, snapped his fingers and pointed at me. "Superstar," he called out loudly. "Come join me

in my office.” The person on the other side of that phone call was probably cringing, maybe even temporarily deaf.

I was also cringing, but for a different reason.

I dearly wished the CEO had not called me that so loudly. I didn’t like imagining what my coworkers could be thinking about that nickname.

He ended his call abruptly once we were seated across from each other at his desk.

“You look well” was the first thing Conrad said to me. He produced a toothpick from nowhere and placed it in his mouth, grinding his teeth on it compulsively. “It’s good to see you, Fiona.”

“Thanks. Great to see you, too, Boss.”

He nodded at the folder in my hand.

“Some reports I wrote up for you. Notes from the all-staffs – I recorded the meetings and wrote up the minutes while listening to the audio again later. And a debrief on what’s happened with the expansion project. The new contractors are listed there along with their contact info. And some copies of important client communications about our new expected site completion dates.”

Conrad did not even open the folder. He just looked very carefully at me while I spoke.

“Fantastic,” he said flatly, a smirk growing on his face that I didn’t like, only because I didn’t know why it had appeared.

“The checks you requested.” He turned his attention to some paperwork that had already been sitting on

his desk. He rifled through the pile and produced a page of checks.

I glimpsed my colleagues' names in the "To" fields: Gerald, Emmie, Tavis. The amount on the checks? Two thousand, five hundred each. That was decent, for a last minute bonus. I was satisfied.

Conrad finished signing his big, wild signature on the bottom of the three checks, then slid the paper across the desk. I took it and folded it into thirds, along the perforations. I'd tear them carefully apart once I was seated at my own desk, to be sure I did it perfectly.

I noticed that Conrad had a second page of checks underneath the first. They came three to a page. This second page only had information printed into the blanks on one of the three checks, and it had my name on it.

Conrad signed the check. This one, he ripped free from the rest of the page. He smiled broadly as he slid it over to me.

Twenty thousand dollars.

“Whoa.” I could not help that I said this, but I did manage to keep my face neutral.

“That’s not just for this past week,” he said. “Though I’ve been told you did a killer job covering the meetings for me. Thanks.”

“Not a problem.” I took my check and folded it in half. Otherwise, I was about to keep staring at the dollar amount that was printed on it.

A quick flash of blue light on the side of his face told me that Conrad was receiving a call on his headset.

“Go home, Fiona,” he said, looking at his watch.

“You’re off duty. I’ll see you Monday.”

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Chapter 133 Give Me More



My car pulled up to the curb just in time for me to glimpse Alexander hopping out of the driver’s seat of a Bentley he’d just parked nearby.

He jogged straight to my door and beat my driver to the task of opening it for me.

“Hey, gorgeous,” he said, extending an open hand.

“Good timing.” I let him pull me out of the backseat and take away my briefcase.

Naturally, I wondered what he’d been up this afternoon. Where he was coming from. But when I texted him on my way out of the office, letting him know I was getting out of work early, he had only responded, rather mysteriously, that he was also just returning from the city and would meet me at the palace.

And my training was quite clear on this subject. My Alpha had a right to his privacy. It was not my place to ask him questions about how or where or with whom he spent his time.

“How was work?” he asked as we walked to our room.

“It was great.” I had to clench my teeth to bite back what would have been an enormous smile. I was

thinking about that twenty thousand dollar bonus I'd just gotten. "It's very good to have Conrad back."

"Yeah." Alexander was distracted... his eyes were loitering on my cleavage.

"Still thinking about that, huh?"

"Haven't stopped."

I'd made him a promise earlier, and I kept it: he tore that button-down dress open shortly after we were behind closed doors, and the look on his face while he did it was pure enjoyment. Then he made good on his own promise, taking care of me like he said he would.

When we were both finished, and he was relaxing his body beside mine in bed, he leaned close and whispered into my ear, so earnestly I had to believe

he meant it, “I missed you today.”

I didn't really know how to respond. It was not something we really said to each other. Especially not after only being apart for less than twelve hours.

So I didn't say anything.

But I didn't want to hurt him. My big, tough Alpha could be sensitive, sometimes, when it came to things like this. Intimate, love-like games didn't mean as much to him, I don't think, as they did to me. He wanted to do that stuff for fun, and sometimes got his feelings hurt when I wouldn't play along.

I couldn't do that stuff with Alexander, though, because he wasn't really mine. Not forever. Our relationship had an expiration date, and so it also had limits.

I turned toward him and planted a soft, slow kiss on his cheek right beside his lips, the way he had been doing to me lately in the mornings. I hoped maybe this gesture, an almost-kiss, was enough of a response.

Alexander wrapped his arms around me and kissed the top of my head.

The next thing he said was a change of subject. “Any interest in an early dinner?” he asked.

I was interested in this, yes, and so that’s what we did. We enjoyed a big, early meal in the dining room, and then took a little stroll out on the grounds in the hour before sunset.

We chatted easily, talking about Nina coming in the morning and our plans for breakfast with her. About

seeing Grandfather in a couple days. About work and Conrad and all kinds of things.

He dropped me off at our room and performed a quick change when it was time for evening training with his pack. He said he might come to bed late tonight. He apparently had a lot of work to do with his men, some problems he was trying to resolve.

I relaxed in bed with a book, thinking I could enjoy some unwinding time, but that did not last long. My next memory is Alexander dragging the flattened book out from under my arm, turning off my bedside lamp, and creeping into bed with me feeling damp from a shower and smelling like pine.

I was awakened in the morning not by my alarm, but by a text from Nina.

Alexander and I had been cuddling and snoozing for

hours, ever since we woke up naturally in the early morning. It felt good to be horizontal, resting my body and letting him hold me and soaking in his strength and warmth, and I was dozing when the text notification chimed.

Nina: Hey Fi... I'm here at the palace a little early. Just pulled thru security, actually.

I jolted upright with needless panic. My sleepy brain was piecing together what was happening.

“What’s wrong?” Alexander asked groggily.

“Nothing. Just Nina. For some reason she’s already here.”

He looked at the time on his phone. “Why?”

“I don’t know.”

I texted: Why? Didn't we plan on 9? It's 745...?

Nina: I know. I'm sorry! I've just been up since super early.

Me: I am still in bed.

Nina: Don't worry- I'll keep myself busy. Just lmk when you're up

Alexander had gotten started on something that distracted me. He was petting me, stroking the inside of my thigh.

"Well?" he asked. "What's the deal?"

"I told her I'm still in bed. She's just gonna have to wait a few minutes till I can pull myself together."

I wondered whether Nina was just abusing her security pass on purpose for fun, or if perhaps was up to something this morning.

My best friend's intentions were always good. But she was also often a bit too fearless. Reckless might be an even better word to describe that quality of hers.

I texted: Give me 30?

Nina: Take your time, babe ;)

Alexander's hand drifted up between my thighs. I sank back down into the bed and curled my body in toward his. He started playing, gently, with his fingers on me.

"Let me get you off before you get up, hmm?"

I couldn't say no to that. "Okay... I don't want to keep

her waiting too long, though.”

“I’ll make it quick, then...”

What great customer service this call boy provided for me, I thought to myself mischievously. It was a dirty, kind of shameful thought that came to me out of nowhere, but for whatever reason, it turned me on.

Alexander kissed my neck and started fingering me teasingly. Then, very quickly he got rougher with it. I ground my hips down hard against his hand, making him growl.

He brought his face close to mine and held his lips an inch away from my lips, threatening me with a kiss. His golden eyes were lust-filled and daring. He kept that posture until I couldn’t take the tension any longer and started to orgasm, and he held onto me tightly until the earthquake rippling through me finally slowed

and then stilled.

Then he asked meekly, while slowly withdrawing his hand, “Is that all you want, baby?”

I moaned. “No. Give me a little more.”

He smiled and set to work shifting both our bodies around. He pressed my legs apart and situated himself in between them, and then started rubbing himself against me, sliding only the tip easily up and down a place where I was already very, very wet.

“You’re not worried about your friend?” he asked.

I opened my mouth to answer, and suddenly he entered me all at once, growling as he did.

He buried his face in my hair and began thrusting his hips. He was breathing deeply, his hot breath tickling

my skin as he dragged on my smell. The feeling of air rushing in and out of his nostrils sent a shiver down my spine.

“I changed my mind,” I said between gasps. “She can wait.”

Alexander

Fiona needed some more time than I did to get ready. She wanted to wash and blow-dry her hair. So I told her I'd go find and entertain her friend for her.

I showered and dressed, told Fiona to text me when she was ready, and locked our bedroom door behind me.

It didn't take long to track Nina down. When I saw her, she was already walking straight in my direction. Her hair, a different vibrant color every single time I saw

her, was bright white today.

It looked as though she was heading back toward our room from the training field. Beyond her, Kayden was standing some hundred yards farther off, watching her walk away. He and I made eye contact and he nodded like he'd catch up with me about this later.

So Nina had sought out my Beta for a chat, it seemed.

“Hey, Nina.”

“Hey, yourself.” She flashed me a grin, looking sassy as ever and oddly comfortable strolling the palace halls on her own.

“Taking a little self-guided tour?”

She smirked up at me. “You’re the one who trusted

me enough to give me a security pass.”

“I did do that, huh? Should I be regretting it?”

“No, no,” she said, in the gentle way you’d soothe an anxious child. “Alex, I’m as trustworthy as they come.”

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Chapter 134 Glowing



Fiona

“Aw, you found her.”

Alexander held our bedroom door open for Nina, then

followed her inside.

I'd just finished texting to let him know I was done showering and getting ready. Then a couple seconds later the two of them were at the door.

"I sure did." A little twitch of Alexander's eyebrow hinted that he'd caught her in the middle of some sort of mischief.

"Fiona!" Nina was on me right away with a big hug. Her hair, always changing, was extra striking today—pure white, worn down and straight, and, my god, so silky and shiny.

"Nina. Thank you so much for coming over today."

"Dang, girl." She kept her arms around my neck while looking around the bedroom. "It does look different than the last time I was here. Love that desk! You can

actually tell that a woman lives here now.”

I guess that was a good summary of the redecorating that Alexander and I had done when we'd set up my home office. Made it look like “our” room, instead of just a room where I happened to sleep.

Alexander loitered near the door patiently, his usual cool smirk on his lips as he watched me with my friend. I got the feeling he was enjoying the sight of the genuine, relaxed smile on my face that no doubt appeared the second I saw her.

Nina gave my shoulders a tight squeeze, then swept her hands down the length of my arms. She gave me an appraising look, glancing up and down, and said, “You look great, Fi. Glowing.”

“And you look incredible. I love your hair like that.”

She flipped it back over one shoulder, a move that looked graceful and practiced. “Thanks. You ready here, babe? I’m trying to get that royal breakfast feast I’ve been promised and looking forward to for days now.”

Nina was not disappointed with the offerings that awaited us in the dining room.

She had an impressive appetite for her size. I’d always known Nina to be a good eater, but since she started dancing for a living, she’d also taken up an athlete’s kind of calorie-packing lifestyle in her downtime.

Alexander watched her with curiosity. “You know,” he said, glancing back and forth between me and my friend. “With your hair light like that, Nina, I’m noticing for the first time that you girls bear some real resemblance to each other. You could be sisters.”

Nina and I turned to look at each other with matching expressions of bewilderment. Then we said “no way” in perfect unison, and then fell into laughter.

Alexander was amused. “Wow. Forget sisters. You could be twins.”

He was just making an idle comment, but unfortunately, it happened to take the mood in the room and turn it upside down.

I knew Nina had to be thinking, now, about the same thing that I was.

The fact was that Nina actually did have a twin. The three of us had grown up together. But she never talked about her brother Michael anymore, and, like

the rest of her family, she had not seen him in many years.

As far as I knew, Nina and Michael never had a big fight or other fallout between the two of them directly. But she'd had to distance herself from their parents a long time ago, and Michael had stayed behind with them.

“Did I say something wrong?” Alexander whispered.

Nina had excused herself to use the restroom a few minutes after the awkward turn our jovial conversation had taken when he brought up the topic of siblings.

“No, not at all.” I weighed how much I could say to him that would be honest and also honor my best friend's privacy. “Nina's just a little sensitive on the topic of family. That's all.”

Alexander gave a single nod, clenching his strong, sharp jaw.

“You couldn’t have known.” I shrugged. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Maybe I should give you girls a little time to chat,” he said. “I want to go check in on the pack, anyway. I’ll come back shortly. That okay?”

“Yeah, of course. That works just fine. Will you walk with us to the room, though? Maybe you can brew us a pot of that delicious coffee of yours. Nina would love it. And I’m addicted, now. I need my daily fix.”

“Thought I got you your fix already this morning,” he said smugly. “Twice.”

I shook my head at him with narrowed eyes. “I told you there was more than one thing I needed you for.”

“Well that was a pretty picture,” Nina said after Alexander departed on his errand.

She and I were alone in the bedroom now, and she made herself right at home, hopping up into our big bed and lounging there on her stomach. I noted, gratefully, that the bed linens had been changed out by the maid staff while the three of us were at breakfast.

“What? Me and Alexander?”

She chuckled. “First of all. Why do you call still him that?”

“Alexander? That is his name, isn't it?”

“Yes... but I guess I got used to hanging out with Kayden, and he always calls him 'Alex.' You say

Alexander all the time, and it sounds so formal.”

“It’s not formal, it’s just his name.” I scanned my memory. It occurred to me that maybe I did call him Alex sometimes. But only in bed, when I was breathless and struggling for syllables.

“Based on what I’ve seen today, you and Alexander are well past formalities.” Nina licked her teeth thoughtfully.

“And what is it that you have seen today?” I asked, not sure I wanted to hear the answer.

“You two are so cute together, Fi, it’s almost gross.”

“We are not.” I felt my cheeks growing warm and made an effort to hide my face by taking a long sip of coffee.

“Girl. You can’t take your hands off each other for a second. And that thing at the door that I just witnessed... I thought you guys weren’t kissing on the lips, hm?”

“We don’t... that was not really...” I closed my eyes, not sure how to explain this. Alexander had given me another almost-kiss on the cheek when he said goodbye on his way out just now. I guess Nina had caught that.

“Look, you don’t have to explain anything to me.” She rolled over onto her back, stretching. “I’m just saying what I observed. Stating the facts the way I see ‘em.”

“Thank you for that,” I quipped sarcastically. “I’ll make sure your observations are noted on the official record.”

She giggled. “Oh, Fiona. Fiona, Fiona, Fiona...”

“Will you stop already?”

“Alright, I’m done. Swear.” She did a kind of somersault, inverting her body and winding up seated cross-legged. “For what it’s worth, babe? I love seeing you so happy.”

I sighed, minimizing my smile. There was no making it go away entirely.

“Let’s go shopping,” she said, putting me out of my misery.

“Ugh, yes please! I need some new bras. And work clothes.”

Nina smiled with a sparkle in her eye, looking like she’d just had a stroke of genius.

“Think your boo would let us take one of his credit cards out for a joyride?” she asked, looking way too excited about this idea. “I’ll drive.”

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Chapter 135 Wait Till You’re Alone



Alexander

I watched the pack from a distance, pretty sure they couldn’t see me from my strategically selected vantage point, for a few minutes.

They were running a punishing rope-based obstacle course that I was sure Kayden had spent a lot of time

setting up this morning. Probably trying to distract himself from thinking about Nina being here.

The men looked good. They were working hard.

I was certainly not done whipping the pack into their best fighting shape, not by a long shot. And it was urgent that they get there soon. But at least I could see the needle moving in the right direction.

Fiona texted me.

She said Nina wanted to take her shopping, and asked if I'd bring a credit card for her to take with them.

This plan worked out well for me. I was itching to run this course with the pack now, and I knew Fiona needed more maternity clothes; I'd been watching the changes in her body every day. Plus, I'd ripped up

more than a couple of her outfits and explicitly owed her replacements.

I hoofed it back to the room and handed over my black card. The ladies were already getting their shoes on and preparing to leave.

“Don’t abuse it,” I said, only joking.

Nina snatched the card out of Fiona’s fingertips and spun it through her own fingers in a showy little pinwheel movement. Then it disappeared into a barely-visible pocket in her tight black shorts.

“We would never,” she said, giving me a wink that implied the opposite.

“So what was going on with Nina this morning?”

I’d taken the opportunity, back at the room after Fiona

and Nina left, to change into sweats before heading back to the courtyard to join Kayden and the team for training.

Kayden clenched his teeth. “She had some questions about Iris.”

I didn’t need to ask what kind of questions, or how Kayden had answered them. I knew him and Nina well enough to predict just how that conversation had gone.

Nina must have wanted to look Kayden in the eye while confronting him with concerns about her friend. That meant she’d believe him when he told her the truth. So, hopefully, those concerns had been put to rest.

Taking care of Iris was undoubtedly the right thing to do. But her being here sure came with a big

downside. Not only was she annoying to Fiona, but her presence here also provided fodder for unfortunate speculations about my own behavior.

Sure—I could speak out against the rumors. But defensiveness, in matters like this, tended only to be interpreted as proof of a story being true. The only choice I really had was just to let it lie.

“On a different note,” Kayden continued, “I took care of that thing you asked me to do last night.”

I had instructed my Beta to track down the current pack leader of the Hellhounds for me. I only knew these men by reputation so far. I’d never had or wanted an opportunity to interact with any of them personally before now.

“Great. You set up a meeting?”

“Yeah. Tomorrow. But there’s, uh, something you should know. He’s currently incarcerated.”

“Figured there was a chance of that. Where?”

“A few hours’ drive up north. A max security place out in the middle of nowhere. He’s serving a three-year sentence.”

“Three years? In maximum security?”

“It was a weird case. He went to trial on a whole bunch of felony charges, all related to gun running. But he was only convicted on one lesser count, possession of an illegal firearm, and received the minimum sentence.”

“And he’s able to receive visitors.”

“He is. You’ve got a date tomorrow at noon.”

“Good.”

Damage control on this situation with the Hellhounds was overdue already, so it was for the best that I make this trip right away.

Going to the penitentiary tomorrow did mean, however, that I couldn’t spend the day with Fiona like we’d planned.

She’d be understanding. But now I’d have to tell her about what was going on.

Fiona

“Okay, I have something to confess.” Nina kept her eyes forward while she drove. We turned off the

palace service road and she picked up speed, climbing an onramp onto the highway.

“Oh?”

“There’s a reason I was a little weird at breakfast, when Alex said that thing about, ‘we could be twins’ or whatever...”

“You don’t need to explain, Nina. I get it.”

“No, it’s not just... the past.” She sighed. “The thing is, Mike actually reached out to me recently.”

“What? When?”

“A couple weeks ago.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I don’t know. I guess I just didn’t really want to talk about it yet.”

I thought back, trying to remember the last time I saw Nina’s brother Michael.

It was at our high school graduation. Nina wasn’t there. She finished school, of course, but she ditched the ceremony. Things were already tense between her and her family by that time.

“I haven’t gotten back to him,” Nina said. “And I do feel bad about ignoring him, but I just don’t know if I want to go down that road...”

“Well, what did he say? Is there something going on?”

“Nah. Well, not that I know of. He just said... ugh...”
Nina loosened her seatbelt and readjusted her body posture. She looked uncomfortable and

claustrophobic. “He said he missed me and wants to talk.”

Finally Nina stole a glance in my direction. Her eyes were shiny and sad.

I held my tongue. There were things that I wanted to say, but what my friend really needed was just for me to listen. If she wanted my advice, she’d ask for it. And she did not ask for it.

“I’ve been thinking about it, you know. It would be nice to talk to him. But I feel like it’ll just open up a box of worms. I don’t want to go back to wasting all my time and energy worrying about those people, you know?”

“Those people” always meant Nina’s parents.

She sighed again. “Anyway. Sorry if I made things awkward back there.”

“It’s really not a big deal.”

Nina reached over and gave my arm a quick, affectionate squeeze. “Anyway. Let’s go find you the most fashionable maternity clothes this world has to offer.”

I laughed. “We will need lots of luck with that. So much of it is awful.”

“I got you, girl. We’ll get a good haul.”

Nina and I were trying on clothes in adjoining dressing rooms when my phone chimed once. The sound was barely audible from within my purse.

I’d managed to get myself half-zipped into the dress I was trying on. Getting it the rest of the way closed was either going to require a lot of effort or Nina’s

assistance.

I took a break from all that work and sat down on a bench in the dressing room, fished my phone out of my purse and opened the text from Alexander just as a second one came in.

Alexander: Hey beautiful. How are things going?

Alexander: I need to tell you, something's come up and I'll be busy tomorrow. I'll explain more later. Just wanted you to know – maybe Nina wants the time with you.

I glimpsed my reflection in my peripheral vision (there were mirrors all around me). And found that I was frowning.

I wrote him back: No worries. Thanks for the heads up. I'll tell her.

The heavy curtain of my dressing room suddenly flew to one side and Nina appeared in the open doorway. She was wearing a sleek, sophisticated gray dress. It was strange to see her in something so conservative, but she also looked gorgeous in it.

“Oh, please come on in,” I said sarcastically.

Nina had been about to say something else, but when she saw me sitting there typing on my phone, the subject changed. “Ahh, we’re texting, huh? I was wondering why you were taking so long.”

I rolled my eyes. “He was just telling me he can’t come with me to the nursing home tomorrow. Because he is considerate. That’s all.”

“Then why are you blushing?”

I put my phone away. “Why are you barging into my dressing room?”

Nina grinned and made a motion with her finger that meant: stand up and turn around so I can zip you.

I lifted my hair up while I did this. Nina slipped behind me and zipped me up, then snatched the mass of my hair out of my hands and started tying it up into a high ponytail, using a black band she’d been wearing on her wrist.

“Nothing else you and Alexander text about?” she asked, feigning a disinterested tone.

My phone chimed with another notification.

She locked eyes with me in the mirror, arched an inquisitive eyebrow and asked, “You need to get that?”

It turned out I was blushing a little. That could not be denied in a room full of mirrors. “I’ll check it later, thanks.”

“Ah. Good idea – wait till you’re alone.”

I covered my face with my hands, unable to tolerate looking at my own reflection while discussing this topic any longer. That gesture was as good a confirmation as any for Nina, I guess.

“Oh, my god, I’m right, aren’t I?! You guys have been doing dirty stuff on the phone! Oh, Fiona. You are badder than I thought.” She pushed my wrists down and forced me to look at her. “I’m afraid you’re going to need to tell me more about this,” she said, smiling like she was proud of me.

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