

## THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

### Chapter 136 Popsicle

Nina helped me carry all my shopping bags in from the car. It was necessary, because I'd bought a lot of stuff.

I had texted Alexander to let him know when we were parking at the palace, and he replied right away saying he'd slip out of training in a few minutes so he could spend the rest of the evening with me.

I was contemplating how to politely suggest to Nina that she should get lost now. But when I looked up from my phone, the slant of her perfectly-shaped eyebrows told me she already understood.

"Well, I should probably get going," she said. "I kept you on your feet all afternoon. I bet you probably want

to... lie down now.”

“My god, Nina.” At least in part because I was in fact very tired from our outing, I dissolved into laughter.

“You know, you really have a way with words.”

“Ha. Thank you. I aim to entertain. No, but really, I’m gonna head out. You need your boo time. I’m guessing he just told you he’s on the way over here now that you’re back.”

“Can I ask you just one favor, Nina? Can you not call him that, when he’s around?”

Nina narrowed her eyes at me. “Your boo? Why? Too cutesy? Do I embarrass you?”

“Yes. You know why. I don’t want him to get the wrong idea.”

Nina met me where I stood and gave me a goodbye hug. When she pulled away, she gripped my shoulders and looked me squarely in the eye.

“Fi, you gotta know. Those ideas are already in that man’s head.”

“What? How is it you know what’s in Alexander’s head?”

“Guess I don’t, not really. But I see the way he looks at you. And...” She shrugged. “I might have a little inside information, too.”

“Inside information?”

Nina nodded, pressing her lips together tightly.

“You mean Kayden? Is that what you were doing this morning, you came here early to talk to him?”

“Well...”

“Nina! You asked him for information about Alexander?”

“Just a couple things, okay?” Nina slipped her shoes on and opened the door. She was practically fleeing now. “I’ll tell you all about it tomorrow, babe. Have fun tonight. Bye!”

And then she was gone.

Not thirty seconds later, Alexander was coming in.

I stopped in my tracks when I saw him.

“Oh, wow,” I mumbled. He was shirtless and glistening. I could smell the salt of his sweat.

He laughed under his breath with a smug smile on his lips. “You look good, too.”

“Do I?”

“Yeah. I like your hair like that.” He eyed my ponytail interestedly.

“I like... you like that.” The words struck me as clumsy and awkward when I heard them come out of my mouth, but Alexander appeared to find them acceptable.

He approached me quickly and reached for my neck, but then kept his fingers hovering an inch away.

“Didn’t you tell me something once about wanting to lick some sweat off my body?”

I nodded up at him. My mouth was watering.

“Well. I wouldn’t stop you if you wanted to now.” He brought his fingertips to my lips. I parted them and let him slip his fingers inside my mouth. I closed my lips around them and sucked while he slowly pulled them out.

That little taste forced my hormones to take over. In an instant I had my tongue on Alexander’s chest, taking big licks of the salty-sweet glaze that covered his warm, hard body.

His chest rumbled with a growl of enjoyment, and his hands went to my long ponytail and started stroking it.

“Taste like you imagined?” he asked.

I met his eyes and licked my lips. “Mm. Even better.”

He chuckled. Then he stroked the side of my face, gazing down at me intensely.

It was not exactly how he usually responded when I was like this. Other times when I was all over him, Alexander would be carrying me to bed in an instant. Not slowing things down.

“Is something wrong?” I asked.

He shook his head like no but said, “I’m sorry. Guess I’m a little distracted.”

I took his hand and led him over to the bed. “Come sit,” I said. I really needed to get off my feet.

“I should take a shower first,” Alexander grumbled.

“Just sit down for a minute.”

He obliged, easing his body down on the edge of the bed, very close beside me.

“What’s wrong? Is this about tomorrow?” I asked cautiously.

He dropped a warm, heavy hand onto my thigh and said, “Yes.”

Alexander

I provided Fiona with a careful summary of the situation I was facing, beginning with what happened while I was traveling and ending with what I was going to do tomorrow.

Of course, I omitted some details. Fiona did not need to hear about the comment that had incited the altercation in the club in the first place. I only needed her to know the gist of what was going on, and



gratefully she did not press me for details.

“I’m sorry to hear about all that,” she said when I’d finished talking.

“It’ll be fine. I’ll have a conversation with their pack leader to smooth things over, and hopefully that will be the end of it. It’s just something I have to go take care of.”

“I’m sure you will get it under control.” Fiona nodded at me seriously. The calm look in her blue eyes was reassuring, communicating that she had total confidence in me.

“I am sorry that I won’t be able to spend the day with you tomorrow.”

“I know,” she uttered quietly. She brought one of her cool hands to my forearm, touched her fingertips to

my skin lightly and started to glide them upward.

My Luna simply wasn't one for sentimentality. I'd learned that early enough, and learned not to take it personally. I watched as she took a hard swallow, eyeing my body like she was hungry.

"You seem worried, though," she whispered. Her hands continued feeling me up, and her tone of voice was going husky with desire. But her words were serious.

She brought both hands up to the sides of my face and met my eyes again.

"Is this going to be dangerous – visiting the prison?"

I turned my face to sneak a quick kiss onto the palm of one of her hands, forcing a smile to flash across her lips.

I sighed. “It’s not that. I think I’m just... feeling disappointed in the situation. And wishing that this wasn’t necessary.”

“I can understand that.”

“You can?”

“Of course. People are disappointing,” she said stoically. “It doesn’t mean that you have failed as their leader. What matters is how you respond when others fail to meet your standards. It’s just a fact that they will.”

For whatever reason, I was overwhelmed with a desire to kiss Fiona on the lips. That was my only thought for a long, spellbound second. The hazy but intense memory of the one time she and I did kiss flashed through my mind.

She gave me a funny look and asked, “What?”

“Nothing. Just... you are very wise for your age. How did you get to be so smart?”

“I don’t know. I just pay attention.”

“Even if you’ve got a big distraction right in front of you.” I caught her eye and made sure she caught my change of tone.

“I am capable of thinking about two things at once.” She dragged a cool fingertip down between my pecs.

“Yeah? What are you thinking about now?”

She gave me a very deliberate look that got me started feeling weak, batting her long eyelashes and licking her lips, then said, “I am thinking about licking

you like a popsicle.”

“Oh, fuck. Yeah, you go ahead and do that, baby.”

She had her mouth on my neck a moment later, kissing it hard and then running her tongue up and down it hungrily.

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## [THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

### Chapter 137 Playing House



Fiona

I licked the now-sticky sweat off Alexander’s skin, starting at his neck and working my way down. He

eased backward to lie flat on the bed and took me down with him. His body stiffened underneath me and he groaned with pleasure as I continued moving my tongue all over him.

He really did like my high ponytail. He kept holding and stroking and playing with it. I almost laughed as I thought about how much Nina would enjoy knowing that.

Then he took a harder grip on the ponytail and sort of wrapped the length of my hair around one of his wrists like a rope. He pulled, jerking my head up and forcing me to arch my back. My balance pulled me backward and I wound up sitting into his pelvis. I suppose that had been the point.

Alexander looked up at me with a wicked smile and started grinding his hips up into me. The thin, sweat-damp pants he'd been wearing to training fit him

loosely and were now sliding off and away under the movements of both of our bodies. Then he let go of my hair and switched back to a gentle touch, once more stroking the whole length of the (now messy and off-kilter) ponytail with his fingertips, and the light touch made me shiver.

“Put me on my back,” I told him. I was drawing some energy from contact with my Alpha, but my pregnant body was still not as agile as it used to be. Once again Nina was right; I did want to lie down.

Alexander sat up and swept my body into his arms. “Let me take your clothes off first.”

Permission granted, he performed this task slowly. I could hear the drumbeat of his heart pounding faster and faster with every article of clothing he removed. Then he did what I told him to, laid me on my back and took great pains to make sure I was comfortable.

He lay beside me, then, and hesitated again... his hands floated lazily over my stomach and breasts, and he looked into my eyes with a lost, dreamy expression.

I couldn't figure out what was going on with him. I knew he was aroused, I could see and feel that full well, since we were both naked. But he kept drifting out of our vibe and into some sort of deep thought.

I nuzzled into the crook of his neck. Whatever it was that was troubling Alexander, I knew my scent could comfort him at least a little. I kissed his neck, slower and more gently than before, and he breathed in slowly, curling his head in toward me and wrapping his arms around my body to envelop me in his heat.

We let out small, contented moans at the same time. Which then made us both laugh a little.



Alexander met my eyes. Then his gaze drift down to my mouth. I licked my lips unconsciously and he growled.

Finally I brought my lips to his ear and said sternly, articulating each word clearly: “Fuck me, Alex.”

His chest expanded with a big, trembling inhale. He liked that I’d called him that.

(Freaking Nina. Right again.)

He obeyed my command. Started with his fingers, pressing just the right places to get me started shivering, and then guided himself inside me slowly, pressing into me an inch at a time.

My eyes flickered closed. My body tightened around him as he filled me up and I was overcome with satisfying relief.

“Look at me, Fiona,” he whispered, and I opened my eyes.

Alexander pressed forward into me deeper and deeper. I already started trembling with a tense kind of pre-orgasm. Then he took one hand and gently stroked my clit, all while holding that intense eye contact, and that was enough to shock my body into quaking ecstasy.

I called out his name until he came, too.

I woke up later with that particular type of total confusion that hits when you rouse from a too-late, too-long nap you didn't mean to take.

It was dark, and my first thoughts were wondering what time or even day it was.

It came back to me... I shopped with Nina till I was really tired, then Alexander and I played around in bed for a while, till I could do nothing but curl onto my side and pass out.

The room was quiet, and the rest of the bed empty.

I'd been tucked in under the covers. Only a few dim lights had been left on. And I found a note on my bedside table next to a frosty glass of water.

"Picking up dinner," the note read. "Please hydrate. Back soon. X."

"You look awfully sharp for a visit to a prison," I told Alexander. We'd both stepped out of our dressing rooms simultaneously.

“And you look lovely as always. I like this.” He looked me up and down while shrugging on a deep blue jacket that completed his suit.

“Thanks. I got it yesterday.” I smoothed out the fabric of my new, soft and stretchy rose pink dress. It was more comfortable than anything else I’d worn in a while. Nina had done a good job of helping me find some decently cute and flattering maternity wear.

Alexander and I had stayed up late, going another couple rounds in bed after I had my nap and something to eat. The morning then found us snoozing lazily in each other’s arms until we absolutely had to get up.

He was on a schedule for his day’s agenda of travel, so we didn’t have our usual elaborate Sunday breakfast together. That was too bad. But

nonetheless, the spiced decaf coffee and croissant he served me in the privacy of our little café corner was good, and gave me all the pick-up I needed for my own day ahead.

We walked out to the parking lot together and parted ways at the door of my waiting ride.

“Be careful today,” I told Alexander, pressing my hands to his chest. His hands slid down around my hips. “Stay safe please.”

“I will. Tell your grandfather I said hello.”

“I will.”

He kissed me on the cheek and gave my body a gentle squeeze before releasing me. I sat down into the back seat of the car and he closed the door.

“See you tonight,” he said through the open window, and gave me a wink before turning on his heel and heading over to his own car.

It never stopped hurting when my grandfather looked me in the eye and did not recognize me. Even if it was only for a moment.

That was the case today. He was sleeping when I entered his room, and, despite my best efforts, the small sounds of my careful movements woke him up.

His eyes flashed open and darted to me, full of alarm and confusion. It made my heart ache.

But it was normal. Mornings weren't always the easiest for him.

I kept my distance while he eased into waking, busying myself with opening the curtains and tidying

the room until finally I heard him say “Fiona” and turned to find that awareness had arrived on his countenance.

“Good morning, Grandfather.”

“Good morning, sweetheart. What brings you by?” He swept up the water cup I’d placed at his bedside and took a drink.

“Oh, nothing in particular. Just missing my grandfather. How are you feeling this morning?”

He cleared his throat and said, rather gravely, “Hm. We will see what the day holds.”

I gave him one of my hands when he motioned impatiently for me to do so.

“You are so kind to come and visit your old

grandfather.” His eyes fell to focus on my swollen middle.

I felt like I could read his thoughts by the expression on his face. He was thinking: Why don't I remember her being pregnant? –or something along those lines.

And then his eyes went to my hand. He happened to be holding my left one. He ran his thumb across my knuckles.

“You are not wearing a ring,” he mused, noticing for the first time that my ring finger was bare even though I'd paraded my “husband” around here many times.

“Oh. Well, it doesn't really fit right now because my fingers have been swollen from the pregnancy.”

His wrinkly eyes went extra narrow. The old man was onto me. But I kept my face neutral, smiling gently. He



turned his attention back to my hand, studying it intently, and mumbled, “They don’t look swollen.”

I really hated lying to my grandfather all the time. But it was best that I do anything in my power to keep him calm and as happy as possible.

I prattled on with lie on top of lie: “Isn’t that nice, the swelling’s gone down; I guess I fell out of the habit of wearing the ring daily; yes, don’t you remember, you have seen it before...”

By the time I’d put his mind at ease about the whole thing, I started worrying about it for myself.

Suddenly I very much wanted an engagement ring, and even felt a little angry with Alexander for never offering me one. If only for the sole, practical reason of letting others know that we were, in fact, engaged.

It made sense, though. Why give me a ring, when he would just be planning on asking for it back in a couple months, when the baby was here and we were done playing house?

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## [THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

### Chapter 138 Dog Pound



Alexander

“You sure you don’t want me to go in with you?”

I shook my head at Kayden. “Don’t bother. I’ll need to talk with him alone in there anyway.”

Highland Prison was a square brick building surrounded by high, double-lined and barbed wire-topped thatched metal fencing. It really was in the middle of nowhere – the last twenty miles of our drive cut through nothing but barren, fire-scorched farmland that had been abandoned for many years.

We were idling just outside the front gate, under the watchful eyes of multiple security cameras and two hulking guard towers that rose from either side of the prison's sole entrance and exit. A guard appeared at the base of one of those towers and began walking in our direction.

I removed my seatbelt and opened the passenger door. "I'll keep this as quick as possible."

Kayden nodded once and put the SUV in reverse. After I hopped out, he eased backward onto the crumbly two-lane highway. I watched him roll down

the road about hundred yards and pull over to park under the partial shade of a lone, half-bare tree.

The world outside the brick and concrete walls of the prison may have been quiet, but once I passed through the front doors of the visitor entrance, reality descended into chaos and everything was noise. It was distant at first—I heard it through the walls. But each step forward turned the volume up louder.

“Welcome to the dog pound,” said a stout, baby-faced Corrections Officer wielding a metal-detecting wand.

“Personal items in the bin.”

I shook my head. I’d already emptied my pockets in the car. All I had on me was my identification, which I handed over; it was passed to another CO, who looked up from the card to behold my person and went round-eyed at the sight of me.

The young CO then instructed me to stand with my feet apart and arms to the sides, and he waved me down with the wand. It made high-pitched electronic zipping sounds as it passed over the buckle of my belt. Then the guard led me through a second metal detector—I had to duck under the top of the full-body scanner—and then we went through a steel door and entered into the prison's main lobby.

The noise in there was deafening.

Intake holding cells lined every wall. There was a nonstop, rhythmic banging, the sound of an inmate throwing his feet or fists or head or body into a metal door over and over; shouts from bullpens where multiple men were being held together, screaming profane threats and insults to each other; wild-eyed prisoners peered out the plastic windows of solitary holding cells, calling out drug-addled nonsense or barking and howling for attention.

Finally, the CO walked me down one last hallway and into an empty, cinderblock walled room. After I stepped inside, he closed the door behind me and left me there alone.

In the center of the room was a metal table. It was chained to the concrete floor and had a metal fixture on one side of the tabletop, a flat padlock to which an inmate's handcuffs could be attached.

I took a seat in a metal chair on the other side of the table and waited.

Fiona

Nina was waiting for me in the parking lot of the nursing home, her car vibrating with heavy bass from

the music she was playing inside.

I rapped my fingernails on the window before opening the passenger door, alerting her to my presence in case she didn't see me coming; Nina had her head bent over her phone, was staring at something on the screen. I suppose I'd also been asking her to turn her music down, because she did that in response to my light knock.

"Hey pretty lady," she said as I got comfortable in the passenger seat. "Wanna go for a ride?"

"Oh, sure, why not?" I eyed her phone, which was now in the center console cupholder. "You texting someone, too?"

"Ah." She flashed me an innocent smile. "Wish it was something more fun, but it's just one of the girls I dance with. I was letting her know I wasn't going to be

in the studio this afternoon.”

“I’m sorry to disrupt your schedule like this, Nina.”

“Girl, no. No worries at all. I can practice any time, but you? I only have limited opportunities to hang out with you, and I’ll take them whenever I can.”

I was very grateful Nina was willing to cancel her other plans and spend the afternoon with me on short notice. Because I really did not want to spend the rest of the day alone at the palace while Alexander was out on his trip. I would not be able focus on work or reading, not while sitting quietly in a room that smelled like him and wondering how things were going on the road or at the prison.

“You doing okay, Fi?”

“Yeah. Why?”



She shrugged. “Looked like you were thinking really hard about something.”

“Hm. Guess I was.” I looked down at my left hand. “Do you think it’s weird that Alexander and I are engaged, but I don’t wear a ring?”

Nina looked at my hand. Then met my eyes for a second. Then looked forward at the road.

“I don’t know,” she said. “Do you think it is?”

All I could do was shake my head. “Anyway. Alexander’s off doing something... I don’t know, stressful... today. I need you to distract me. Keep my mind off it.”

“Stressful, hm?”

I told Nina the story. What I knew of it, at least (which was very little).

“Wowza,” she said when I finished.

“I know.”

“Well. He’s a big boy. He can take care of himself.”

“I know that. I just... worry about him still, I guess.”

“I know you do, babe. But he’ll be fine. And I’ll keep you busy till you hear from him after he’s out of there, okay?”

“Okay.” I reached over and petted what I could reach of Nina’s soft white hair. “Your hair’s so pretty like this.”

Her lips curled into an amused smile. “Funny. That’s

what they were saying at work. They want me to keep it like this for a while, for the run of performances we start this week.”

“Ooh. Keeping the same hair color for several weeks. Are you even physically capable of doing that?”

She made a loud PFFT sound. “Honestly? I’ll probably fuck around with it a bit but find a way to keep them happy enough. I still like it for now; we’ll see what happens when I start getting bored.”

Alexander

The door swung open and in stepped a tall, thick man in his fifties. He was wearing an orange jumpsuit and was handcuffed in the front. Behind him paced the young-looking CO.

James was dark haired and pale complexioned. The

hair on his head was long, thick and wavy, brushed back neatly and tucked behind his ears. His jaw was heavily shadowed by a stubble beard that went bare over a shiny, well-healed scar on one cheek. The scar was neat, a straight, thin line about three inches long. The slashing work of a small, sharp blade like a razor.

The inmate paced forward into the room and turned, looking like he'd practiced this dance step before. He held his wrists out and the guard, to my surprise, unlocked and removed the handcuffs, dropped them into the breast pocket of his uniform, met James's eyes and nodded. The officer then retreated from the room again, closed the door and locked it behind him.

James took a step forward. He dragged the other chair back from the table noisily, making the metal feet screech on the concrete floor. All the while locking his dark, deep-set eyes on mine.

Finally he took his seat.

“Been expecting you for a while now, Alpha Alexander,” he said, and his lips crawled up the unscarred side of his face into a twisted smile.

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## [THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

### Chapter 139 Constant Contact



Fiona

“Put the phone away,” Nina said sternly.

I hadn't realized I'd taken it out again, and was sitting there staring at a lock screen with no new

notifications.

“Thank you,” I muttered to my friend.

Alexander had warned me this morning that he would not be reachable for most of the day. Cell reception in the area where he and Kayden were traveling was expected to be patchy at best. And, of course, he would not have his phone on him during the time he was inside the actual prison as well.

I guess I had gotten used to being in pretty much constant contact with my fiancé recently. A couple hours without hearing from him just felt strange.

Nina watched as I followed her orders. Then she allowed herself to relax once more with her eyes closed and head leaned back. We were side by side in reclining spa chairs with our feet soaking in little rose-scented whirlpools.

“Why don’t you tell me what’s going on with your work? I’ve been rambling about mine. What’s new in the finance world?” Nina smiled, trying not to laugh at hearing herself ask this last question.

The manicurists decided we’d soaked enough. They sat on little stools at our feet and turned the jets off in the foot tubs, then dried our feet and started massaging them with warm oil.

Nina looked extremely relaxed, still lying back with her eyes closed and a smile on her face.

The foot massage felt pleasant. But the small hands of the manicurist were nowhere near as warm and strong as Alexander’s. He had spoiled me.

“Well, my boss finally came back on Friday, so that’s a relief. And he gave me a bonus for covering for

him.”

“Ooh. How much?”

It was weird to discuss money in front of strangers. But the women working on our feet at least politely acted as though they were not listening to my and Nina’s conversation.

“Twenty thousand,” I confessed. I was grinning; it was hard not to feel accomplished when I thought about this.

Nina’s eyes flew open. “Nice! Good for you. You’ve done crazy overtime for a salaried job. He really should be giving you a raise, too.”

“Also, I’m hiring an assistant.”

“Ooh. Fun!”



“Yeah. I’m interviewing candidates this week.”

“Wow. That would be so cool to have an assistant. Are you gonna have them bring you fancy coffee drinks every morning, run your errands, and stuff like that?”

I snorted. “First of all, that is not what employees are for, Nina.”

She giggled under her breath.

“Secondly, I already have someone who makes me fancy coffee every morning.”

“Oh, riiight. Yeah, that was tasty. I personally like my coffee sweeter, but that’s just me.”

“I think it’s perfect.”

“Of course you do.”

“Stop.” I gave her a half-glare.

“Hey, you brought it up.”

Talking about Nina’s visit to the palace finally reminded me – “Oh, my god. I can’t believe I forgot until just now. You never told me what you were talking to Kayden about yesterday morning.”

“Wondered when you were going to ask about that.”

“What was that all about, Nina?” I glanced at the manicurists, trying to decide if I cared that they heard us. I guess I trusted Nina to use her discretion and answer me if she could.

“Look, I just wanted to ask him what was up with that bitch that moved in down the hall from you.”

I sighed. “Nina, you didn’t need to do that.”

“Maybe not. But I worry about you, Fi. You’re my ride or die, you know? We gotta look out for each other.”

“I love you for that. But I can’t go nosing around in Alexander’s business. It’s not my place.”

“You’re not. I am.”

“Well, as my best friend, you are an extension of me.”

She laughed. “Whatever. I really don’t think that he cares, Fi. Alex saw me talking to Kayden, and I’m sure they debriefed later. Those guys are very close.”

Nina's point was fair enough. Alexander sure had not seemed upset with me in any way when I saw him last night after I returned from shopping and he returned from training.

"Well, I guess now I have to ask, what did Kayden tell you?"

"He tried to be gentle about the way he said this, but the bottom line I understood was, he finds her pretty difficult to tolerate, and he's just trying to be a good guy in keeping her there. Really doesn't seem like he has any other interest."

"I didn't think that he did."

"Well. Now you have confirmation."

"You really thought something was going on with them?"

“No. But it was possible. And I know Kayden, he’s a good guy and a bad liar; I think we can trust he was telling the truth.”

I caught Nina’s eye and gave her a pleading look. “Be honest. Did you ask him about anything else?”

Nina pursed her lips. Paused a little too long. And said, “Nope.”

“You sure about that?”

“I asked no more questions. Swear to god.”

“But?”

“But he did volunteer a few things.”

If I had something in my hands other than my phone

(when did I take that out of my purse again?!) – I would have thrown it at her.

“Why are you making me drag this out of you?”

Nina fell into a fit of laughter. “I don’t know. You told me to keep you distracted today. And sometimes you just make it too easy to mess with you.”

Third person

“I don’t care if they think it is a stalling tactic. File the motion.”

Scarlet, alone in the Queen’s study, was whisper-shouting into her cell phone, instructing her lawyer to file a motion that would delay her embezzlement trial.

She was absolutely certain that her husband was in court at the moment. She received confirmation of

that just five minutes ago. But she also believed it never hurt to keep your voice down when you didn't want to be heard, whether or not you thought someone was listening.

“You have to understand, Queen Luna... regardless of your intentions, the court may very well interpret this as an attempt to interrupt court proceedings... you could be looking at adding a contempt charge to your case...”

“Let them interpret it however they want. File the motion. I am not going to court tomorrow.”

Scarlet received the confirmation she needed from her beaten-down attorney, then hung up the call with shaking fingers.

She glanced over her shoulder more than a couple times while breezing down the dim palace hallways,

heading west.

Scarlet had no interest in “trespassing” into the West Wing, which Alexander and his men occupied; he’d threatened her plenty of harm if she did so. But there was a dark corner in a seldom-used corridor near the edge of this domain. And that was where Scarlet and her spy in his pack traded communications, by way of a drop point.

She reached the spot. The wall sconces that lit this corridor hung lower on the wall than in the other hallways, and were reachable by any adult of average height. Scarlet reached into a little cavity in the wall behind one of these sconces, and was flooded with disappointment when her fingers touched the small bundle that was hidden away inside.

She pulled the bundle out slowly, knowing full well what it was.



Because she had left it here a week ago. It was a communication to her spy, along with a roll of cash – an advance payment for his next delivery.

He hadn't picked it up.

She put the bundle back into its hiding place and walked quickly back to her chambers.

A sudden, splitting headache told her she was grinding her back teeth into each other. She wrenched her jaw open with difficulty.

Scarlet had been watching her surveillance footage as much as possible, scrubbing through hundreds of hours of video recordings of all the goings-on in Alexander's slice of the palace. And so she knew that her man on the inside was spending a fair amount of time in direct contact with her stepson lately.

Perhaps his allegiances were changing.

What other reason could there be for him to cut off communication?

The young man been more than happy to take her money in the past. The fact that he was leaving it on the table now did not bode well for Scarlet.

She still had nothing on Alexander. Nothing to give the vampires.

And the clock was ticking.

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[THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

Alexander

“Here to ask me to call off my dogs?”

I arched an eyebrow. “I just came here to talk. Are you telling me there are dogs that need to be called off?”

“Ah.” James batted a hand through the air dramatically. “No, no. Listen, my guys know better than to mess with the King Pack. I told ‘em the day I heard about this scuffle, just lay low. Let it go. They shouldn’t have got themselves mixed up in whatever that started out as, in the first place. They’re not gonna do nothing to your soldiers, Alpha Alexander, Sir. You got my word on that.”

“I’m glad to hear it.”

“Yeah, they shouldn’t have been laying hands on your guys, no matter who said or did what to who first.”

James shrugged, frowning. “I got nothing but respect for you, Sir. Nothing but. I do wish, though, that I could say the same for your pack, but you know, after what happened, I gotta wonder.”

Passive aggression is not something that sits well with me.

“Tell me what you mean by that,” I said calmly.

“I mean what I mean. My pack’s already been told to stand down. We got no problem here, you and me, Sir. But you know, something did get started out there. And it wasn’t my guys who started it.”

“My pack is my responsibility. And I do regret their

actions in regard to this incident. But you need to watch your tone with me right now.”

“Hm. And maybe you need to remember where you are right now. Sir.” He spat that last word out like venom.

Finally his stupid, lopsided smile melted away, and for the first time I got to see James’s real face.

“Are you threatening me?”

James leaned back in his chair and crossed one leg over the other, hands folded in his lap, and asked, sarcastically, “Am I? The way I see it, all I did was call you out maybe only a little bit as much as I could have. And you respond by telling me to sit down at your feet.”

His upper lip twitched into a snarl, giving me a good

view of sharp, yellowed teeth.

“I’ve been nothing but a gracious host to you here in my house so far,” he continued. He was talking wildly fast. “Maybe you could think about the situation you’re in, why you came here in the first place and how many dogs I got outside that door before you start specifying the way you think I’m supposed to say the words that come out of my mouth.”

Foamy white spit bubbles appeared at the corners of that mouth.

James was high on something. His pupils were dilated so wide, his eyes looked completely black.

“Yeah, I know who you are, Alpha Alexander. I didn’t want to pick a fight with you. But maybe that’s what you came here for, huh? Thinking all that, what—six-four, six-five? —big frame of yours gives you free

range to come in here and size me down just to make a point.”

“Six foot seven.”

James laughed and shook his head. The hair on the back of his neck was standing on edge. His lopsided smile came back, uglier than ever.

“Six foot seven, huh. And all the power in the world. But you’re not out in the real world right now, big guy. You’re locked in a cage with a bunch of rabid dogs that do what I tell them to do.”

My heart was beating at a steady drum-like clip, pumping hot blood through my veins.

I leaned forward, set my elbows on the table, and

interlaced my fingers.

“If you really believe,” I said slowly, “that you can threaten me one more time without getting seriously injured, you go ahead and try it.”

I slid my chair back and loosened my tie. Took off my jacket, folded it in half, and set it down on the table. And returned to staring James down.

He went quiet, considering his options. He kept on smiling, but I did see his lips start shaking with fear.

Fiona

Alexander unleashed a vile smell into our bedroom when he returned from his visit to the prison.

“Whoa.” I rolled back in my desk chair and held a hand over my mouth and nose. “Oh, my god.”



It smelled like putrid body odor, mold and rot, and who knows what else.

He slid his shoes off at the door. “Sorry. I’m going to get right into the shower.”

“Thank you.” I got up and went over to open the nearest window, letting some fresh, cool night air slip inside and start to ventilate out the stench. “Wow, is that what prison smells like?”

Alexander gave me a tired half-smile. “No. Prison smells a lot worse.” He pulled off his tie and started unbuttoning his shirt while he crossed the room.

“What happened to your jacket?” I couldn’t help but notice that he was not wearing the jacket he’d had on this morning.

“I threw it out,” he replied quickly. “Got something on it.”

As if that were a normal thing to do with a custom tailored suit jacket. Throw it out. But I did not ask for further explanation.

“I’ll be out in just a minute, sweetheart.” He disappeared into the bathroom, leaving the door ajar, and had the shower running seconds later.

I closed up shop in my home office. Saved my work, powered down my computer, tidied the desktop. And then slipped into the bathroom to retrieve Alexander’s dirty clothes from the floor.

He was in the shower running a bar of soap all over his body, and turned to watch me through the glass door.

I got the stinky clothes tied up in a laundry bag, breathing through my mouth while I worked. It didn't help, though. Maybe I smelled the smell a little less, but I also started tasting it on my tongue.

I tossed the laundry bag out into the hall then locked the bedroom door back up behind me.

I met Alexander as he was coming out of the bathroom, steamy, damp, wet-haired and barely clad in a towel.

"Thanks," he said, nodding at the door and running his fingers through his hair to comb out some tangles.

I shook my head. The message was: you don't need to thank me for taking care of you; it's my job.

"Is everything okay?" I asked.

“Yeah. Everything’s fine.”

He closed the distance between us and his hand went to my neck. It was hot. It kind of shocked me a little, actually. I guess my skin had taken on a chill after I’d opened the window.

Alexander was looking down at me with some sort of heavy emotion in his honey-colored eyes. The hand on my neck began to stroke it. His other hand, damp from his own hair, pushed its way through mine.

“You sure?”

“Yeah. How about you... how are you feeling? How was your day?”

“It was good. And I feel alright.” I pressed my hands to his chest, making them tingle with another rush of warmth. “Better now that you’re back. You ready for

bed?”

He nodded, his lips curling into a slight smile.

I turned the lights out and Alexander ditched his towel in the bathroom after running it quickly through his hair one last time. We met under the covers.

He lay flat on his back and stretched, and I took the opportunity to slip into the crook of his shoulder and get comfortable there. Then he relaxed his body with one arm draped around me.

“So, how did the meeting go?” I felt okay to ask this, since he’d been open with me earlier about where he went today and why.

“Went as well as it could have, I think.”

“Does that mean... everything’s settled? No looming

feud?”

“Yeah. The Hellhounds won’t be giving us any trouble. Nothing to worry about. Can cross that off the list.”

“What list?”

Alexander ran his free hand down his face, stalling for an answer.

He had not meant to say that to me.

“Just... one less thing to do,” he finally said.

Seemed to me though, as I considered his earlier choice of words, that what he’d actually meant was a list of things to worry about. I had to wonder what other items were on that list. But, as usual, I did not press the matter.

He turned and wrapped his whole body around mine, kissed the top of my head and left his mouth and nose lingering there. Soon he started rubbing his face in my hair slowly, lazily soothing himself with the soft texture and breathing in my scent.

I felt some of the tension in his body melting away as he did this. My own body couldn't resist following suit.

It was late and we were both tired. Alexander passed his hands all over my body, but they moved slowly didn't seem to have any plans. I drifted off while he held me like that, too warm and comfortable not to.

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