

## Chapter 168 Slow Motion Daydream

Alexander

Funny how time seems to move at different speeds when different things are happening.

The night of the attack on my father – those ten or twelve hours passed by in a flash.

But then that awful argument with Fiona – that fight only lasted a few minutes, but it felt like an eternity. Everything just escalated so quickly. I don't know why it surprised me when she was devastated to learn about her father's fate. I thought I was being gentle enough, understanding enough, when I broke the news to her, but... I was wrong about that.

Fiona is just always so calm and collected. I never expect her to be rattled by anything. And I've also seen with my own eyes some of the atrocious things her father had done to her. How he hurt and demeaned and tortured his own daughter. It was difficult to understand how she could still love the man, after all of that. But he was, after all, still her father... like she said, her flesh and blood.

That fight felt like it spanned ages. Everything I said came out wrong. I was in agony. I hated to see what pain I'd inflicted on Fiona, and I hated how helpless I was to do anything to fix it. There was no going back and undoing what had been done. I'd wronged her badly, again, and worse than before.

And then...

Time changed its pace once again when our baby girl entered the world.

Alexis.

She interrupted all the chaos and pulled me and Fiona down into a slow motion daydream with her.

And our sweet child brought with her, too, the gift of forgiveness. A rift had formed between my Luna and me. Alexis built a bridge across it.

Fiona's new ability that was awakened when she gave birth... the first thing it did was repair our lost connection. I didn't even know that I was sharing my internal world with her when I wiped that tear from Fiona's cheek, but apparently it was the best thing I could have done. Apparently, she just needed to know how very much I did care, even if I hadn't been able to speak about or show it to her properly.

"Her eyes look so much like yours. It's uncanny."

I admired my girls while sipping some coffee in the early morning. Fiona was feeding the baby. The two of them were bathed in sunlight falling in from the open window. It was a beautiful day, and a beautiful sight.

Lexi's eyes were exact duplicates of Fiona's. Palest blue and crystalline, like aquamarine. And they even had the same piercing intensity.

"She has your family's coloring, though. The blonde." Fiona petted Lexi's little head with a gentlest touch, making the baby flutter her eyes closed, comforted and sleepy.

"More like my mother's than mine. Lighter." I smiled. It had been lovely of Fiona to offer to name our girl after my mother. "Do you remember what your grandfather said, what he expected for the baby?"

"Oh, yes." Fiona shook her head in a gesture of exasperation. "He kind of freaked me out. 'That's going to be a big baby.'"

"Yes. He's funny."

"I know. That reminds me, we need to go see him soon. But yeah, that had gotten me started worrying I was about to deliver..."

"A boy? A big one?"

"Something like that." Fiona flicked her eyes up and down the length of me, saying – yes, a child that'd grow to my size would probably be uncomfortable to birth.

"Do you remember what I told him?"

"Yes. That you hoped he was wrong, and that the baby would take more after me."

"And she does. I'm glad."

A newborn's needs are straightforward, but also shockingly demanding.

At times, the minutes and hours swam by slowly. The love and joy of time spent with Fiona and Lexi was all-consuming, and all I wanted to do was revel in it. Of course, the chores of parenting were also time-consuming, and the days seemed to just disappear, flying by too fast, while Fiona and I fed, changed, soothed, cradled, catered to, loved and obsessed over our baby.

Gratefully, I had systems in place that afforded me this time with my family. Kayden was doing a good job with the pack. Brandon was handling press needs in the aftermath of my father's attack. Wheels were turning. I kept in touch with my subordinates intermittently.

But I spent as many seconds and minutes as I could with my full attention on Fiona and Alexis.

And Fiona and I spent a lot of time talking, too. We talked about all kinds of things, talked more than we ever had before.

We talked about our child. Discussed the situation with my father. Discussed what to do about my uncle.

Strategized about the vampires. Speculated about Scarlet.

And brainstormed about Fiona's new gift, and how we might start putting it to use.

Fiona

I have always enjoyed a challenge.

And it turns out Nina had some helpful insight into my abilities. She'd known a girl in the past who'd possessed empathic talents, and remembered something the girl said about how to block the onslaught of information that could arise from touch contact.

And so I began practicing putting up a kind of wall in my mind.

At first, with no expert to tell me precisely how to do such a thing, I found it infuriating to attempt.

But I just kept trying. I practiced with both Nina and Alexander. I began to feel as though it would never happen. But then, one day, I just did it.

The wall was shaky and imperfect. But if I focused on it hard enough, it worked. It made it so that I could feel another's energy but not be overcome by it.

Finding this control changed everything.

I felt so much less afraid of my new skill. And excited to practice and play with it more, to discover what else I could do with this gift, and to master it.

Alexander was reluctant to ask me something.

He'd begun feeling anxious each time we touched. And also... curious.

"What is it?" I asked. "The thing you keep thinking and wondering about."

My husband arched an eyebrow and narrowed his golden eyes at me. He'd just been tidying up the baby's room after putting Alexis down for a nap. He shook his head, stifling a breathy chuckle, then ushered me into the bedroom and closed the nursery door behind us.

Lexi needed some quiet for a nap. But as soon as that door closed, my anxious maternal mind made me do a scan of the bedroom to be sure the baby monitor was on, that I could still see her and know she was okay.

It was, and she was.

I motioned for Alexander to join me in bed and he comically dove directly on top me, pinning me underneath him. I couldn't help but giggle as he started sweetly rubbing his face against mine, kissing my cheeks and temples, smelling my hair, and snuggling into my neck.

I basked in the attention with an irresistible smile on my lips, while he continued kissing and suckling on my neck and chest. And I practiced.

He knew that I'd been doing this and didn't mind participating in the exercise. Touching me while I practiced holding up the wall.

I visualized it in my mind. And focused on my own feelings and experiences. Focused on the physical sensations of my Alpha's hot lips on my skin, the pleasure that his soft touches brought, and not...

Yes, I still felt some of his emotions. Some of it simply couldn't be stopped. It didn't flood through me like a tidal wave when I had the wall in place, though. Instead, I perceived Alexander's desire for me like the sight of a dim glow; a red light was turned on behind a closed door, and spilling out from the doorframe's edges. But I could keep the door closed, and stay inside my own mind and emotions.

"My love." I gave a tug on his t-shirt and Alexander pulled back to look at me. "I really want to know what you were thinking about earlier. What is it?"

My strong Alpha did a pushup over me, lowering his upper body steadily and planting a kiss on my lips before pushing back up and flopping over onto his side.

"Okay." He gave me a very thoughtful look. "If you were to sit down with someone and access their emotions, do you think you'd be able to tell whether they were lying?"

"Oh, sure. I mean, people tend to become nervous when they lie. That's definitely something I'd feel."

Alexander smiled his smug half-smile, with an excited glint in his eye. "We're going to do some investigating together, then. Collect some information."

"And I'll be like a lie detector?"

"Exactly."

I met his smile with one of my own. I liked his idea. It seemed like a rather useful application for my talent, and I was excited to try it.

"Maybe this could help with Iris, too..." I wasn't sure what Alex would think of this. He had a soft spot for Iris, and a compulsion to see the best in her. He may not love hearing me suggest that she might be lying or intentionally withholding information from him.

But he understood my line of thought. "Mm-hm," he grumbled pensively. "You're probably right."