

## Chapter 199 Confession

Alexander

I heard Fiona’s voice when I opened the door. She was reading a nursery rhyme to the baby, speaking in a songlike cadence, her voice just above a whisper. Wishing not to interrupt, I quietly closed the bedroom door behind me, removed my shoes and jacket and crept in to the adjoining room.

Lexi was in the crib and appeared to be asleep already. Fiona sat in the rocking chair, a large hardbound book open atop her blanket-covered lap. Her eyes flicked up to acknowledge me as I entered the nursery and her lips curled with a slight smile, but she did not lose her place or slow her pace. She continued reading the passage in a low, melodic voice until she had recited the whole thing through to the end.

I dared to speak in a quietest of whispers. “That was beautiful.”

Fiona smiled while slowly closing the big, heavy book and carefully setting it on the table beside her. I held out a hand and she used it for balance and got up out of the rocker. She brought the blanket with her and immediately folded it into a neat square.

When she finished draping the folded blanket just-so over the back of the chair, I opened my arms to Fiona and she stepped in to accept my embrace.

It always felt so good to return to her after being away for any duration of time. And the last couple hours I’d spent with Kayden, staring at a computer screen and studying thousands of nearly-identical images of rocks and boulders, had my eyes and mind feeling in need of rest.

Fiona and I stood near the crib holding each other, looking down and watching Lexi as she slept for a few seconds. It was a perfect moment. Just watching and adoring my perfect little girl while holding in my arms and breathing in the scent of my perfect, loving wife.

I loved them both so much. My heart swelled with appreciation for my tremendous fortune, for the gift of family I had been blessed with this year, despite never expecting it.

But then my mind’s eye flickered back to the sight of my office printer shuffling out all those pages and pages and pages of missing persons reports... Every one of those people had someone who missed them already, someone who was worried for them, who would grieve them if they were gone and who would be forever changed by the loss of their loved one.

Too many innocents were being slaughtered by our enemy already. One would have been too many. But hundreds of werewolves were perishing on my watch, and every one of them had a family that loved them like I loved my wife and daughter...

Fiona twitched like she’d been shocked by electricity and pulled away from my embrace.

She looked up at me with an unreadable expression on her face.

I realized that she had picked up on the sudden, dark turn my thoughts had taken, because we had been touching. I was tired and hadn’t been thinking about the fact that I was sharing my pain and worry with her, whether I intended to or not.

We left the nursery quietly.

“Are you okay?” Fiona tugged me over to the bed, sat down and pulled me close.

“Yeah. I’m sorry.” We spoke in the sleeping-baby volume, a type of quiet just above a whisper. “I just started thinking about all the families of all these victims. How scared and worried and devastated they must be.”

Fiona closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

“I’m sorry. I don’t mean to stress you out.”

“You didn’t,” she said calmly. “Actually, I have a kind of confession to make.”

Fiona

“A confession?”

I nodded. “Come here.”

Alex was sitting on the bed’s edge, with one leg folded in front of him and the other on the floor. I tugged on his hand till he joined me all the way up on the bed and lay beside me. I rolled onto my side and brought our faces close together before continuing.

“When I felt what you were feeling, I was relieved. Because I was feeling so much the same. I have been trying to appear so strong, but I have been feeling so scared and worried these last couple days. It’s not like I want to keep anything a secret from you. I am just used to doing this. My whole life, I was trained to keep my feelings inside. I practiced it for so many years, it now just seems to be my nature. It’s like a reflex.”

“Fi. I would never think you’re any less strong or capable just because you admit to feeling scared and worried. Obviously, I feel just the same sometimes. It is part of being a good leader. If you did not care so much, you would not be so good at your job.”

“It seems ironic... The emotions of others are all available to me, all I have to do is open myself up to receiving them. But I keep my own feelings tightly locked away. Until they force their way out in the form of nightmares or blackouts...”

Alex leaned in and gave me a short, soft little kiss on the lips. “Fiona, please stop beating yourself up for that. Before I met you, I did the same thing. It is only with you, and because of you, that I can now be open and honest about what I am feeling.”

I snuggled into his chest, bringing my nose to throat and inhaling his scent. “I know,” I muttered, suddenly feeling sleepy and comforted.

Who knew it felt so good to share your feelings? Just telling Alex the truth, just speaking of my fears aloud... And also knowing I was not alone, that my strong Alpha husband felt just the same way that I did... I felt very relieved in this moment indeed.

Still scared, yes. Still worried. But a little bit less stressed out and tightly-wound. Like I could let go of a white-knuckle grip I didn’t even realize I had been holding.

I woke in the dark of night to the sensation of a big hand stroking my skin lightly...

The hand was going up and down my side, feeling up the curve of my hip. It felt greedy and anxious, like it wanted more...

I wanted more of that touch, too. I put my own hand over the top of that roving hand and squeezed it.

Now that he knew I was awake, Alexander lit up with energy. He pulled our bodies close together—thisclose—pressing skin to skin and spooning me tightly. His lips hovered over my ear. He was already breathing heavily, and his body was stiff with desire.

Being woken up like this was intense, and had me very turned on very quickly.

He lapped his tongue over my ear. My jaw dropped open and I shivered, but I refrained from making a sound.

He quietly grumbled, “I’m sorry I woke you. I couldn’t sleep.” There was a hint of taunting in his voice.

“I’m not sorry.” I reached back and grasped a handful of his hair and pulled his head forward over my shoulder while turning my own head back toward him. His lips found mine on the odd angle and our mouths tangled into a rough, sloppy kiss.

I don’t understand this—I don’t understand how such small sounds can rouse a baby that was sleeping one room away, behind a closed door. But apparently we woke Lexi up. Maybe her hearing was as good as her father’s.

She made some quiet, fussy sounds first. That was enough to dampen the mood instantly; Alex and I both tensed up, expecting the crying to commence any second. And then it did.

We groaned, frustrated, in unison. Then Alex planted one last kiss on my neck, rolled out of bed, threw some sweatpants on and headed into the nursery.

He came back some minutes later after getting the baby back down. I turned my bedside lamp on when he closed the door behind him.

“So you couldn’t sleep, huh?” I whispered when he was close.

He climbed right on top of me, hovering his body over mine in a push-up position, and resumed kissing me. ...Instead of answering my question.

I dodged his lips when I realized this, and gave him a pointed look. “Will you tell me what’s keeping you up? Maybe I can help.”

He rolled over into his side of the bed. “Thank you, sweetheart. But I guess my mind just keeps telling me I shouldn’t be sleeping, I should be up working.”

“Is there something you need to be working on?”

“Yeah, I’ve got all that drone video to study. Trying to find some sign of vampire nests out in the valley near that casino.”

Right. He had briefly told me, before we went to bed, about the work he’d been doing earlier tonight with Kayden.

“If you can’t sleep anyway, maybe you should just go and work on it.”

“You don’t mind? I don’t like leaving you at night, Fi.”

“We are fine. I’ll call you if I need you. Alex, your work is very important. And I can see you have an idea turning in your mind. You should go work on this while your thoughts are focused on the task. Perhaps it is the perfect time.”