

THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

Chapter 21 He Will Be Punished

Fiona

The doors opened to reveal a high, high ceiling painted with elaborate scenes of werewolves in battle. Sparkling chandeliers hung low every fifty feet casting an amber light throughout the room. A table seating at least fifty ran the length of the room. The scent of wildflowers perfumed the air. Alexander and I entered the Great Hall.

Alexander propelled me forward into the room with grace and confidence. There were others already gathering in small groups. I recognized Scarlet, her rude steward, and several of the noble women from the tea party now accompanied by their husbands. Alexander settled into one of the small circles of

couples. Kayden and Nina went to grab drinks. I wondered which one of these men was the King and which could be the half-brother, Lucas.

Scarlet locked eyes with me and wasted no time. She marched over and slapped me across the face in front of everyone with her butler trailing behind.

“You stole my necklace,” cried Scarlet.

Alexander stepped in front of me. I touched my lip, tasting blood. I straightened, anger hot in my veins.

We all knew she would do something tonight, but I hadn't seen this coming. I pushed Alexander out of my way, glaring at her. She would not see me cower.

I was a Luna. The nobles gasped but didn't move. The tension in the room was thick and heavy.

“I tried to find my diamond necklace to wear tonight, and it was gone. My servant Susan found it in her room. She needs to be arrested.”

Scarlet twisted around to plead at a tall man in a group with only men. His hair was shaggy like Alexander's and black as the darkest storm with silver streaks. His eyes were a rich amber, and he was well built, but his features were not as sharp as Alexander's, having seen the passing of time.

Alexander also locked on to this man, and I knew it must be the King.

The King moved toward Scarlet, then passed to take my face in his hand, turning my head to the side. Blood from my lip marked his hand.

“You have hurt this delicate creature, my dear,” he said as if it was a compliment, but I could see from his

eyes it wasn't. I pulled my face free from his hand. Instantly, I did not like the King.

"Father, you can't believe this nonsense," said Alexander. "How would Fiona even get into your room with the guards? How would she even know how to get there?"

Scarlet whined. "She could have had a servant take her to our room or maybe one of the nobles that don't like me."

"She still could not get past the guards even if she did. So call them in and question them," asked Alexander. The situation was unlike any I had seen before and in the royal family.

The King waved his hand dismissively. "There is no need to call them in. She could have used one of the many hidden passageways to bypass them."

Alexander was shocked by his father's words. So much for him being reasonable.

I was done letting others speak for me. "And where might I find that information? I don't believe that is common knowledge shared on the internet."

Scarlet's eyes narrowed, and the butler next to her cried out.

"She cannot speak to royalty like that. There has been no Marking Ceremony." The butler tried to smack me, and Alexander caught his hand and kicked him hard in the gut, knocking him back onto the floor, where he lay gasping for breath.

The nobles backed up a few steps. A spark of fear flashed in Scarlet's eyes. Things were not going as she had hoped.

“You try to touch her again, and I will kill you. You have no rights here,” Alexander growled to the man. I touched his arm softly, reminding him I was fine, and he relaxed.

“Why would I need to steal a necklace?” I said, curious as to what others might say.

The King turned and placed a hand in one pocket while holding a drink with the other.

“You did come from the Red Moon pack. That is reason enough to steal. I thought my son was smarter than to want any werewolf from the Red Moon pack. They are trash.”

It was a blow that hit hard in my chest. The Red Moon pack was the fruit of my grandfather's hard work, but now it was so easily dismissed by others. Anger

began to smolder in my heart.

I glanced at Alexander, who wore a blank expression, yet I saw him clench his jaw.

I would always be from the Red Moon pack and the daughter from a remote place who doesn't have the grace to be presentable.

I fisted my hands and put on my cold and indifferent mask. I lifted my chin, pulled out my phone from my handbag, found the video, and walked to the noblewoman with green eyes from the tea party.

I showed her the video. Then she showed her husband. They blinked at me, then the Queen. I took the phone to the next noble couple and showed them and continued to do this until everyone in the circle had seen the video. I stared at the King while doing this and then at Scarlet. Nina and Kayden stood next

to Alexander, now wearing expressions of fear. All eyes were on me.

“What is she doing? What is she showing them? Give that phone to me,” said Scarlet rushing over to take it. I didn’t let her see the video until I handed it to the King with a bow. “I have copies of the video, so erasing it will do nothing.”

When the Queen saw it, she bit her lip and appeared on the verge of panicking.

The King snapped his fingers, and in walked a guard. “Bring my wife’s maid, Susan.”

Murmuring broke out among the nobles, and the King growled at them. They all quieted.

Susan entered moments later, accompanied by the soldier. She looked scared.

“Show her the video,” the King said. I did.

She began to cry. “I didn’t want to do it. The Queen paid me to plant the necklace. She said it was her insurance to make Fiona do what she wanted.”

The King shook his head, disappointed. Scarlet rushed to him, dropping to her knees and complaining to the Alpha King.

“If Alexander hadn’t returned to the palace with all his soldiers taking over the West Wing with a future wife in tow, I wouldn’t have to do such things. He should not be here. They both should be punished for making fools of us.”

Scarlet cried out desperately in front of the king, who seemed to be quite bothered by her wailing. He ordered Scarlet to stand up, then scolded her half-

heartedly.

After that, he turned to Alexander.

"Your mother indeed made a mistake, but she's not entirely wrong. You've indeed neglected your manners, and you'll be punished for it as well."

I furrowed my brow, realizing that not only was Alexander being marginalized by his stepmother, but his own biological father had also been neglecting him, allowing him to be bullied.

"Your Majesty..." I wanted to step forward and argue with Alexander's father, but Alexander stopped me and shook his head.

A voice came from a nearby table. A man tall and lean staggered toward the group resembling Scarlet. This must be Lucas; I was not impressed in the least.

“Punish? Well, let’s beat him. Right here. I will start,” slurred the young man, pulling up his pants. The King snapped his fingers, and the young man exited the room two guards at his sides.

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Chapter 22 Let Her Watch

Fiona

“Take him as well,” the King said, pointing to Alexander.

Two more guards appeared and flanked Alexander,

who did not resist as they put rough hands on his big arms and tried to force him forward. He was completely calm and went without a fight, walking coolly out the door a few paces behind his brother.

Before passing me by, Alexander darted his eyes to look right at me. He shook his head quickly just once, then looked forward again and disappeared. I knew he didn't want me to get involved. I knew he would take care of this himself.

But I was running after them a moment later. There was some commotion behind me, though it didn't occur to me until later that it might have even been the King commanding me to stop.

I burst through the doors just in time to see Lucas wrench free from the guards that had been lazily restraining him. I guess they weren't expecting the lanky, clumsy, and seemingly intoxicated young man

to overtake them.

Lucas flew to Alexander, fist raised. To my surprise, Alexander held still, continuing to look calm. His shoulders were relaxed, unclenched fists at his side.

My fight instinct had my wolf itching to take over. But I knew better than that. Alexander could defend himself just fine – the scars all over his chest told me that the moment I first studied his body, the night we met.

Then suddenly everything happened all at once, in the split second that it took for anyone to follow us out of the Great Hall.

Somehow the guards were more concerned about keeping hold of Alexander, who showed no signs of resisting, than they were about the reckless man-child lunging toward him, and Lucas landed a sloppy blow to the right side of Alexander's face.

Alexander took the hit like it was nothing, turning to the side to absorb the punch.

Finally, the guards clamored to restrain Lucas, leaving Alexander in only one man's now-shaky grasp, from which he quickly pulled himself free.

And then, in a flash, Alexander was on top of Lucas, pinning him to the floor with a knee in the chest and punching him full force in the face. Once, and then twice – that's when I heard bones crunching – and then a third time that sent a fountain of crimson blood spraying from Lucas's mouth.

The blood flew an impressive distance. I was at least ten feet away, but I looked down and saw the bottom of my gold dress was now splashed with red mist.

Alexander's countenance was like nothing I'd ever

seen before. His eyes, somehow both controlled and ragingly wild, were still fixed rigidly upon his half-brother, who was unconscious on the ground underneath him.

He stopped, frozen, with a red-drenched fist behind his head. A few drops of blood fell onto his own neck.

The guards scrambled to their feet.

And that's when finally, the doors opened behind me. And out came first, the King himself, flanked by his guards. Then Scarlet behind him, shrieking at the scene before her. And the rest of the crowd came pouring out behind them, jaws dropping in horror.

Nina's voice was coming from somewhere, saying my name. Finally I caught sight of her, and saw that Kayden was holding her in his arms, keeping her from running over to me.

“Silence!” The King’s voice was like a roar.

Then, Alexander was suddenly on his knees before his father, with the palms of his blood-soaked hands pressed to the floor in submission.

I could feel the anger pulsing off the Alpha King. His energy was furious, sending a vibration through the hallway that I could feel rattling my bones. Suddenly I realized I was very cold. I did not make any movements to betray the weakness I was feeling, though. Just straightened my spine and pretended not to notice the eyes of the gasping crowd as they roved my body from head to bloody toes.

The King had his eyes on Alexander, who was prostrate before him, silent and unmoving.

“The dungeon,” the King said, snapping his fingers.

Ten or twelve guards then rushed to restrain Alexander, shouting for compliance, shoving him into restraints and dragging him away.

“Both of them,” the King added, dragging his eyes in a slow semi-circle... they landed on me.

Before I could even open my mouth to protest, I was in their grasp, and they were hauling me off behind Alexander and the massive swarm of guards that were upon him.

The dungeon was at first a cold maze of stairs and tunnels, and then we were in a brightly lit room with brick walls, hanging lamps with blinding lights, and endless varieties of metal restraints hung from the walls, floors, and ceilings.

It was all I could do to keep from panicking as I found myself being taken to Alexander’s side. He was

already seated in a metal chair and being latched to it with an enormous chain.

“Leave her,” Alexander said. “She’s done nothing.”

Somehow, the King and Scarlet had both beaten me to this place. Perhaps they’d taken a more direct path, while I’d been dragged around through the labyrinth.

“Nothing?” The King still had that white-hot energy of rage pulsing off of him. It felt even stronger in this little space, where the old man, though his back was now hunched slightly with the unavoidable signs of age, stood tall and hulking with his head almost touching the low stone ceiling. “You’ve made a fool of us – the both of you! This indignant whore with her disrespect to our family—”

“Allow her to watch,” Alexander said again, louder. His eyes remained on the floor in front of him. “It will

hurt her enough. Let her watch, and give me her punishment as well as my own.”

The King looked at me with a white-hot gaze that sent a strobe of unwelcome heat straight through my chest. My stomach dropped with fear... and then ached for a moment, causing me to wrap my arms around my abdomen unconsciously.

“Alright,” the King said reluctantly, dropping his eyes from my own down to my stomach. “Twenty lashes, then.”

And then with a nod of the King’s head, Alexander was removed from the chair and shoved down to his knees. I’ll never forget the sound of his kneecaps smacking the stone floor. But he didn’t even flinch.

For the first time since arriving in this place, I stole a glance at Scarlet, who had been standing in the

King's shadow on the other side of the room. She was quivering with excitement, looking both frightened and ecstatic, the devilish little smile on her red lips getting bigger and bigger the longer she looked upon Alexander as he shrank to the cold, hard floor.

To my surprise, it wasn't a guard that came forward to give Alexander his punishment.

A guard just took the King's jacket as he shrugged it off his shoulders. Then the King walked over to his son, rolling up his sleeves and unbuttoning the top two buttons on his shirt. Another man handed the King a long, well-weathered whip, which the old man handled playfully and then snapped expertly.

"Just one last thing," Alexander said as his father stood behind him.

The King was silent.

“I’ve been trying to keep it out of the media while looking for a time to tell you in private, so you wouldn’t be taken by surprise,” Alexander continued, “but it looks like we’ve missed that chance.”

The King snapped the whip at his side frustratedly.
“What is it, Alexander?! Out with it!”

“Your wife has been embezzling money from the royal property.”

Scarlet gasped. I saw all the color drain from her already-pale face, and she dropped slowly to her knees, like she was melting into a puddle, with her red gown pooling on the floor around her.

“It’s not true,” she said. Her voice was the opposite of convincingly sincere.

The King ran a rough hand across his face. “You have proof?” His deep voice lowered to an even deeper growl.

Alexander only nodded his head. But the King looked like he believed what had been said. Maybe it was Scarlet’s horribly insincere reaction of feigned surprise and scandal.

The King paced across the room over to this wife, whip still in hand.

She looked up at him with pleading eyes. But he took one large, open hand and slapped her hard across the face, sending her tumbling to the floor on her side with a yelp of pain.

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Chapter 23 Twenty Lashes And One Kiss



Alexander had been right. Having to watch this was punishment enough for me. Especially knowing that he was taking extra punishment to spare me for my own imagined crime.

I watched in silence, not letting my face or behavior reveal how shocked I was, as the King used every ounce of wild strength that he had to lash Alexander's back into a meaty mess of blood and tattered bits of fabric. I straightened my spine and did not avert my eyes, though my heart was pounding out of my chest, and my wolf wanted to make me shift and attack.

With every snap of the whip, the King tore into Alexander's broad shoulders and muscular back, sending spatters of blood all over the room.

Alexander's long, golden hair was wet at the roots with sweat and at the tips with blood that started out bright red and darkened to black as it soaked in more and more liquid with each passing minute.

I lost count, but I suppose the King reached his magic number of twenty lashes and was satisfied, because he finally stopped, grunted with exertion, and threw the whip to the side, leaving Alexander's fresh blood on it to dry into the seasoned leather.

"And you," the King said, turning his attention to his Scarlet, who was still sitting meekly on the floor in the red pool of her silky evening gown. "I'll investigate this allegation," he said, "and I will not hesitate to put you in jail if any part of it is proven to be true."

Scarlet nodded frantically in acknowledgement. Her chin was quivering, either in real fear or pretend innocence, I couldn't tell.

"Let me help him," I said, looking at Alexander's back, which was still gushing with rows of fresh, flowing blood. It was the first thing I'd been able to say since being down here in this nightmare place.

The King gave a slight, disinterested nod to the guards that were still holding my arms at my sides, and they released me. He said nothing to me. Didn't even look in my direction. Just stormed over to his wife and grabbed Scarlet by her slender throat, clenching it roughly in one big hand and dragging her, choking, with him out of the room. The guards were all then gone in the next second behind them.

I dropped to my knees at Alexander's side as he pushed himself, weakly, up into a seated position.

Then, the next thing I knew, he was throwing his arms around me, almost knocking me over in a hard, desperate hug.

Alexander

It had been nothing short of terrifying when Fiona stepped up to Scarlet to fight for me like that. My heart leapt up into my throat as my mind flashed a vision of Fiona on her knees in front of my father, taking punishment for treachery. That's what he would call the way she publicly defied my stepmother.

He wouldn't care that Fiona was pregnant. My father didn't spare anyone from a punishment he saw them as deserving.

The only path to sparing Fiona from the King's wrath was to submit to him completely and bide my time. I was no stranger to my father's signature brand of

justice against anyone who personally offended him or his Luna. All I could do was wait for the right moment to plead for him to spare mine.

All I could think about was my cub inside her womb. And how weak the baby was making her, especially since I wasn't giving them my full attention.

On the other side of this, I would do better at that. I needed to keep Fiona strong.

I was ready to accept my punishment and move on. Someone was going to pay for this scene. That much was undeniable. It was also undeniable that my father and stepmother wanted that someone to be me. They'd been looking for an opportunity to take me down ever since I arrived in the palace. Now was the time to get it over with.

Fiona peeled herself out of my bloody embrace and

started trying to help me stand up. When we were on our feet, she looked at my back and with one gentle hand, tried tugging a piece of ripped shirt out of a place where it had embedded itself into my torn, wet flesh. She grimaced when it didn't come free easily.

“Thank you.” My voice was a hoarse whisper, and my mouth felt like it was lined with sandpaper.

Fiona moved to face me and frowned. “For what?”

“Defending me.” Suddenly I felt faint and wobbled on shaky legs. Fiona ducked under my arm and caught me just as I was about to fall. I reached for the wall and steadied myself against it.

Fiona was stronger than I had been giving her credit for. She held up my entire body weight to stabilize me, and that's not an insignificant sum.

“I was just fulfilling my duty as your fiancée,” she said, looking at the wall. Her words were cold, but her tone was less so. I couldn’t be sure, but it almost felt like...

It must have been the blood loss that made me temporarily lose my mind. I let my body take over and in the next second I was grasping Fiona in my arms, wrapping them tight around her waist, and bringing my face close to hers.

When she put one hand on my shoulder and started to push me away, I began to remember myself. And the promise I made to her, that I would not push her to kiss me, no matter how bad I craved the taste of her lips.

But then I felt Fiona’s body release, and she silently withdrew her hand.

I put my lips on hers, hesitant at first. But the smell of

her overwhelmed me and I pressed her mouth open with my tongue, then filled her wet, mint and lavender flavored mouth with it, stroking the roof of her mouth, loving every second of the taste and feeling.

I let her lips fall closed again, but they reached for mine like magnets. I kissed her hard, relishing the soft texture of her lips, drinking her up hungrily. The hellscape around us faded to black, and all I saw was Fiona's porcelain skin, her long eyelashes, her lips... all I felt was her touch.

She gasped for air and I pulled away, hovering my lips just next to hers for one last second. The tiny space between our mouths hummed with the dueling vibrations of our hot, heaving breaths.

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Chapter 24 It Won't Happen Again

Fiona

“I’m sorry.” Alexander winced as he sat up in bed and slid over to the edge.

“This was not your fault.” I shook my head, thinking about saying more but deciding against it.

He had thanked me, down in the dungeon, for standing up to his stepmother in his defense. But I had yet to thank him for the beating he’d taken to spare me any consequence for the events that followed.

I had decided that I didn't need to give him any more encouragement. I was here at Alexander's side, after all, tending to him like a nurse as he recovered from his injuries. I was showing my gratitude in actions and doing my duty as his Luna. Surely that was thanks enough.

"No, that's not what I meant." Alexander looked me in the eye. His face was serious, with a look of slight embarrassment. "I meant... I'm sorry that I kissed you."

I looked away, blinking back an unwelcome flush of moisture in my eyes. I gave a single nod that he understood was an acceptance of his apology and a request not to talk about it anymore.

He ran a hand across his face, scrubbing at his furrowed brow, and said, "It won't happen again."

We hadn't talked yet about the kiss. The kiss that I had made clear to him I did not want to happen. But in his defense... I hadn't stopped him when I could have.

I didn't respond. I finished re-dressing the wounds that had bled through the bandages overnight and took the bloody trash to the bathroom, where I tossed it all in the bin.

I stood and looked at myself in the bathroom mirror. I didn't look great. The past day's mascara was smeared under my eyes, and I noticed a rust-colored smudge on my neck that I realized was a bit of dried blood. I almost let a cheerless laugh tumble out of my lips as I wondered absently whether it was Alexander's or his half-brother's blood.

Shaking my head, I closed the bathroom door behind

me, stripped naked, and started running the hot water in the tub. I'd been taking care of Alexander all night, and now I finally needed to clean myself up. I filled the tub with lavender bubble bath, and finally started to feel a little bit of peace in both my mind and body as I sank down into the fragrant water.

It worked wonders to recover my mood, and I was sleepy by the time I got out of the tub and dressed in a nightgown I had hanging on the back of the door. I opened the door, letting the fragrant steam flow out into the bedroom, and remembered at the last moment to grab something off the counter on my way out.

Alexander had changed positions in the bed again. It was like that all night. I could only imagine how difficult it must be to try to find a comfortable posture when half your body is thrashed to bits. Now, he was lying on his side, stretched out and holding a pillow

against his chest. His eyes fluttered open as I approached the bedside.

“Let me put a little more of this on you.” I held up the amber bottle of salve I’d grabbed from the bathroom. Alexander smiled a little closed-mouth smile and nodded.

I went over to his side of the bed and covered my hands with the thick, waxy substance, which I rubbed between my palms until it warmed and softened. Some of Alexander’s wounds were still open and oozing, but some less badly injured areas were just scraped up.

His golden skin was hot to the touch, and every bit of his body was hard with defined muscle. I ran my slippery fingers over his neck and shoulders, drenching his blood-crusting skin with the healing salve. Watching it soak into his dry and tattered skin

was satisfying. I traced the shapes of his chiseled back and shoulders with my fingertips and started feeling like I was in a trance. My hands came away covered in a wet, fragrant red film.

He laid still, being a good patient, until I got up and walked away. I washed my hands in the bathroom and gave myself another glance in the mirror. The bath had done me a lot of good and I was looking more like myself, with some color coming back into my eyes. I pulled my hair loose from its bun, letting my silver curls cascade down over my shoulders, combing them with my fingers.

Alexander hadn't moved an inch since I left him. And his eyes were now serious and locked on me as I approached the bed and slid down under the covers beside him.

I met his honey-colored eyes and started to melt. I

wanted him badly. I wanted to be mad at him, because of last night. The kiss.

But all I wanted was him. I wanted him on top of me. Inside of me. And my mouth watered as I remembered the kiss. It hadn't been like I expected. It was like I almost blacked out. A shocking moment of sudden, unimaginable, leg-shaking euphoria. That's why I couldn't fight him off, make him stop. It felt too good. But I still didn't want him to do it again. It wasn't right. This...

He put a hand on my stomach, sliding it gently over the silky fabric of my nightgown, and it came to rest in the crease of my hip.

This wasn't love...

The look on his face was pure hunger. The smell of him, and that way he was looking at me, were enough

together to heat me up. But his hand, now sliding down my thigh, was pulsing heat into me, healing and energizing my body, too.

This was only lust... only an animal kind of desire that I'd never felt before. Never even imagined possible. But that was all it was.

A soft moan escaped my lips as Alexander's hand came to rest between my thighs, where I was wet.

That got him really excited. He quickly closed the space between us, rotating me onto my side and cradling my body in the length of his. I only had to part my legs a little and his pulsing, rock hard passion found its way between them.

I'd had enough waiting. Enough lying beside this golden God at night, pretending I didn't care if he touched me or not. Enough wanting him and not

getting what I wanted.

I reached between my legs and guided him inside of me. My eyes closed, suddenly too heavy to keep open, as he filled me up and I arched my back, breathing into it.

He pushed my nightgown up and ran his hand gently around the curves of my breasts, stroking and teasing my hard nipples. The thrumming of his heartbeat pounding in his chest told me how much he liked to touch me there.

I reached back and pushed my fingers through his tangled hair as he pressed his mouth against my neck, panting into my ear, driving himself deeper and deeper inside of me.

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[THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

Chapter 25 Late Night Wake-up Call



Alexander

My back was aching with the hot, sore, nerve-wracking pain that hadn't let up since the lashing.

But when I was touching Fiona, I didn't care about the pain anymore.

It felt so good inside her wet heat, feeling the rhythm of her hips as they rocked back and forth against me. I loved the sound of her gasping breath as she let go of that hard, cold mask she always wore, breaking down to her baser self. I wished I could take her even

further. I wanted to see what was underneath her icy exterior, plunging all the way down to her deepest depths.

Fiona moaned, clutching at the back of my head. She dug into my scalp with her long fingernails. I wanted to turn her around and kiss her lips once again. But I worked my tongue lightly around her ear and left a trail of kisses down her neck instead.

I closed my eyes, remembering our kiss. My mouth began to water. It hovered, open, next to her ear. My wolf was right under my skin, quickening my pulse, making me stronger, pushing more of my strength into Fiona as she started crying out in pleasure.

She was leading me less and less as our bodies fell into sync. I smiled, knowing I was giving her what she needed. I felt her body tightening around me and was tempted to let her ride out a wave of pleasure. But I

wanted to watch her when it happened.

She whimpered as I slid out of her, but let me move her onto her back, and gave me a sultry smile as I parted her legs wide and sat on my knees between them.

I couldn't believe how beautiful she looked. I had to stop myself from staring too long into her ice blue eyes. I pressed my lips to the inside of her thigh instead.

She still had her purple nightgown on, scrunched up around her waist. I slid it off over her head before covering the length of her body with my own, ducking my head to place kisses on her soft breasts.

I pulled back to watch her face as I entered her again. She met my eyes, and I saw behind them a glimmer of that sexy goddess I met in my hotel room that

night. She let out a low moan as I pushed my shaft deep inside of her slowly. Then she grabbed my hips with both hands and pulled hard, locking our bodies together as tight as possible, and I felt her entire body start to quake. She seized up in a frenzy of pleasure, biting her lip between screams. I held her tight until we both went over the edge, losing ourselves to ecstasy.

The pain started back as soon as our bodies were apart. I had to lie flat on my stomach again to let my overtaxed muscles rest. The muscles in my upper back, where I'd been whipped most severely, were twitching fiercely. They felt hot, too, and I suspected they might be bleeding again.

Fiona slid out of bed and paced away, heading for the bathroom. She picked up her nightgown from the floor on the way and took it with her.

I stretched my arms out to my sides, hoping to release some of the tension in the convulsing muscles, but it only made it worse.

Fiona, now with a light robe slipped around her shoulders, came back carrying some fresh towels. She knelt beside me on the bed and pressed one into my upper back. I felt the muscles twitching, pulsing against her hand.

She said nothing. Just pressed down hard on the wound until the towel was soaked through with blood, and then changed it out for another one. And again, until I finally stopped bleeding and I could let out a long, easy sigh of relief.

“We should be more careful until this has fully healed,” she said.

“Should we?” I felt a smile curling the edges of my

lips. But my eyes were heavy, and I was fading fast now into a deep, irresistible sleep.

“Hey. Welcome back.” Fiona’s voice was a welcome wake-up call.

I pried my eyes open slowly. They were hot and itchy, as if swollen. I reached one hand up to my face but was struck with a blinding pain in my shoulder as I did so.

“Easy now,” she said, reaching out a gentle hand to push my arm back down into a more comfortable position by my side. “I had a doctor in here a few hours ago. He told me to try to keep you resting flat on your stomach as long as possible.”

Blinking my heavy, tired eyes into focus, I realized it was dim in the room and asked, “What time is it?”

Fiona raised one of her perfect eyebrows and smiled.
“Midnight. You slept all day.”

Without thinking, I started pushing myself up out of bed. The blinding pain hit me again and I paused midway, wincing.

“Need a hand?”

I nodded, and Fiona helped me get up and get to the bathroom. My legs worked just fine, but I was still woozy from the blood loss and needed her to stabilize me. She was a thorough and patient nurse.

My stomach started growling as Fiona led me back to the bed. “I’ll have something sent up,” she said. “And the doctor was worried you’re dehydrated, so please start by drinking some water.”

There was a glass of water on the bedside table

already. The sore ache in my back had me wanting to wave her off and lie down without drinking. But she was being so good to me, I felt I had no choice but to follow her orders.

Once Fiona had me stable on the edge of the bed, sipping water, she crossed the room and made the call. She didn't ask what I wanted – just ordered a whole mess of things.

Fiona cleared her throat noisily. I felt movement on the bed and realized she had sat down beside me. And that I'd passed out once again.

I took a big breath in. The room was suddenly full of savory and spicy aromas that hit my senses and woke me up fast. My eyes shot open, and I saw a small feast set up on the table in the corner of the room.

“Don't try to get up,” she said, her tone business-like.

“Just tell me what you want, and I’ll bring it to you. You just work on sitting upright... slowly.” She got up and crossed the room, preparing to serve me.

I was starting to recognize my good fortune in stumbling upon Fiona. I couldn’t have known, when I offered to marry the daughter of my enemy, a girl I’d accidentally gotten pregnant, that she was everything I’d ever wanted in a mate and Luna.

I knew the moment I laid eyes on her that she was beautiful. And then I learned she was intelligent, too. And courageous. Unflinching in the face of danger. And now she was here giving me such tender care, nursing me back to health.

I smiled up at Fiona, shaking my head in disbelief. She was going to be a good mother.

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