

The Alpha King Call Boy

Chapter 210 Hero

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Fiona

Alexander had purple half-moons under his eyes when he met me and Lexi for lunch close to noon. He probably hadn't slept at all overnight.

"Why don't you take a nap, Alex? Lexi will be going down for the afternoon soon. Once I feed her. You should take a break and get some sleep while she does. I know you have trouble resting at night lately. And actually, I was thinking I wanted to go see my Grandfather today anyway. If I can leave the baby with you, I'll make a quick trip to see him."

Alex's eyebrows shot up. "You want to go there alone?"

"Yes. Only to check in on him. He's been on my mind all morning. I do not plan to stay long."

"Do you feel... safe to go alone?"

I shrugged. "I'll have a driver wait for me downstairs. I'll be in and out quickly. I think it will be fine."

He flicked his eyes to Lexi, who was on my lap.

"You're sure you don't want to wait for a time when I can go with you?" He glanced at his big gold watch. "I could make some time today. Is Nina around? She could stay with the baby..."

I reached for my husband's hand and gave it a squeeze. "Yes, I'm sure. You catch some rest. I will make quick work of this errand. I'll be back in less than an hour."

I heard the commotion the moment the elevator doors rolled open on Grandfather's floor. Sounds of a struggle emanated from his room, the door of which was closed.

Something heavy banged against a wall. Stern voices half-shouted. Something metal clanged to the hard floor with a terrific clamor.

A blonde nurse in fuchsia scrubs exited the room just as I neared. She pulled the door closed behind her, but not before my Grandfather's pained, struggling voice drifted out, loudly shouting something incoherent.

The sound was heart-wrenching. But somehow my mind and body dispersed my sudden sadness evenly throughout my entire body. No tears pressed at my eyes, no emotions threatened to take me over; I was just suddenly sore all over, as if I'd run a marathon yesterday.

The harried nurse almost blew right past me. She looked up at the last second and startled when she recognized me.

"Oh! Miss—uh, Your—Your Highness..."

I grimaced and waved a dismissive hand. "Just Fiona, please."

She nodded. Then glanced anxiously back to the door from which she'd just emerged. The muted sounds of struggle within the room continued.

"Why don't you come with me, Fiona?" The nurse motioned toward the desk.

I followed her through a low, swinging door and into a kind of waiting room in a staff area.

Perhaps it was a break room for the nurses, I speculated, looking at the many coffee makers and tea boxes crowding the countertop.

The nurse invited me to sit, but I shook my head. She offered me a beverage, but I politely declined this too.

"Is he okay?" I asked as patiently as I could manage. The woman exhaled heavily. Her eye makeup was smudgy. A sheen of sweat covered the skin of her face and neck.

"He's not having a good day, as I'm sure you deduced. But he is uninjured, if you were worried about the sounds you were hearing. That was no big deal, just some items overturned. As far as your grandfather's overall condition, that's really for the doctor to discuss with you. He is in the room now. If you'd like, you can hang out here and wait for him. Or I can have him give you a call later." "You could have the doctor call me. That will be fine. I will head home now if I won't be able to see my Grandfather today."

“Oh, no.” The nurse shook her head. “I don’t think so. Not today. I’m sorry, Miss Fiona.”

I gave the kind woman the best smile I could manage. “It’s just Fiona. Thank you for speaking with me. And for taking care of my grandfather. I really appreciate all the hard work you all do here.”

The false smile fell off as soon as I closed and locked the restroom door behind me. I leaned my back against the wall and closed my eyes, suddenly very tired.

Getting into the back seat of a chauffeured car right now and enduring twenty minutes of silence alone with my thoughts sounded excruciating. Alex had been onto something when he implied that my coming here alone might not be so easy. I texted him. Asked if he was awake.

Alexander: Yes. Everything ok?

Me: Not really. Just stressful here. Is it possible for you to come pick me up? Alexander: Of course. I’ll get Nina to watch the baby. Be on my way asap.

I loitered in the restroom a few minutes longer. The driver who’d brought me here had been my primary morning driver when I was working, so I had his number saved in my phone. I texted him to send him away.

After using the facilities, I headed back downstairs. My throat was dry. I'd forgotten to tuck a water bottle into my purse this morning. If I knew my husband, he'd been here quickly; he had a way of crossing distances impossibly fast. But, depending upon how quickly Nina was able to sub in with Lexi, I had a bare minimum of ten minutes to kill. So I opted to visit the cafeteria on the main floor.

I found it sparsely populated, just like every other time I'd dropped in here over the years. I got my beverage and found a seat near a window. The weather was clear today. I gazed up into the blank, pale blue sky, and thought.

I thought and thought and thought and thought...

...How much time did Grandfather have left in this world?

...How much more would he suffer in confusion and fear and pain before his time was finally up?

...And how much of a fucking monster did I have to be, to even slightly hope that that time would come sooner than later, to spare him some of that suffering? Whispers drew my attention back to the present. I looked to my left and found I was being watched. And that suddenly there were many more people in the cafeteria than there had been minutes ago.

It was a family of five that stood just about ten feet away with all their big, unblinking eyes locked on me. A dark man in his forties was holding an infant in one arm and grasping the hand of a young boy that looked like a miniature version of him. A woman—she was younger than her husband, closer to my own age—paced forward with her hands on the shoulders of a little brunette girl of about five.

“I am sorry to bother you, Your Majesty,” the woman began in a nervous, breathy voice.

I never could have anticipated how very much I would dislike people calling me things like this. It felt premature and undeserved. I was not technically the queen yet. Were people really already thinking of me as such?

“But my daughter is your biggest fan,” the woman continued. She and the girl stopped about six feet away from my table. “She only wanted to say hello to her hero.”

The woman’s hands were shaking. And so was every inch of the little girl’s tiny body. They were having an exhilarating celebrity-sighting experience. I, on the other hand, was just sitting here trying to claw my way out of some of the darkest thoughts I’d ever spiraled into in my life.

So far, I had only stared mutely at my “fans.” Seeing the small girl struggling with her nerves,

though, I had to push my own internal universe aside for the moment and put her out of her misery. I gave a small nod to the mother, whose shoulders dropped in relief.

“Go on,” she whispered into the girl’s ear. “Ask her what you wanted to ask.”

“M-m-may I shake your h-hand?” squeaked the sweetest voice to ever exist.

I blessed the girl for being so cute. The sound of her voice brought a sincere smile to my lips. I stood and extended my hand to the child, whose round green eyes grew to saucers as she tilted her head up and watched me near. Her tiny, cold hand slipped into mine and trembled.

“What’s your name, sweetheart?”

The girl’s mouth fell open, but no sound came out. The mother smoothed the girl’s hair to the side and answered for her. “Her name is Sophia.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Sophia.”

The girl whispered something I couldn’t make out, her eyes sparkling with wonder.

“Thank you,” the woman said, taking a step backward and tugging at the girl’s shoulders.

I nodded at the mom with what I hoped was a convincing smile. “Please excuse me, I do need to be going.” Then I gave Sophia, who was glowing with happiness and pride, a friendly wink before I turned to leave.

I did enjoy this interaction. But I did not want any more onlookers to get ideas about approaching me. I beelined for the exit.

The timing was perfect. I saw Alexander's Bentley pulling into the parking lot just as I passed through the heavy glass doors at the front of the building. He whipped his car expertly through the porte-cochère and brought the car to a clean stop right as I trotted off the curb. I slipped into the passenger seat, closed the door behind me, and made my escape.