

The Alpha King Call Boy

Chapter 226 Here To Serve

Chapter 226 Here To Serve

I opened my eyes. Alex was rubbing oil into his hands, straddling my waist and waiting for instructions. A new kind of shiver surged through me, this one full of ache and adrenaline.

“You want me to boss you around a little?” The sultry sternness of my own voice surprised me a little.

He nodded, looking down at me with a doe-eyed, puppy dog expression.

I reached for his hands and pulled hard, planting them on my chest and dragging them in circles around my breasts. Alex growled out a deep exhale, letting me direct his movements and looking suddenly drunk with pleasure.

“My big, strong Alpha wants me to tell him what to do, huh?” I moved his hands to my shoulders.

The hot, wet pressure under his palms and fingers felt incredible. His eyes were dark, glimmering amber in the candlelight. He nodded slowly, his hands following my lead all over my body.

I got the sense that Alex had a long and taxing day today. He'd been training the pack on new attack strategies. There was definitely a lot of shouting and command presence required in that

work. His body was still wired from the vigorous workout, but I think his mind was also tired of being in charge.

And that suited me just fine. I was in a mood to be bossy.

I pressed his hands into my neck again, then released them and kicked him away. “Strip.” He slid right off the bed with a throaty “yes, ma’am.” I rolled onto my side and watched as he peeled off the remaining layers of his suit obediently. When he finished disrobing, I called him back into bed.

He leapt on top of me, positioning his hips between my legs and pressing me flat on my back. Our bodies pulled together like magnets, but I pushed his chest up and away from me gently. “Did I say you could fuck me?” I reprimanded.

Alex grinned. “No, ma’am.”

“Finish that massage you started,” I told him, grabbing a fistful of his soft hair and tugging back just a little roughly. “Do a good job, and I’ll give you a treat.”

“Fuck,” he groaned, stretching out the curse while he stiffened and shivered. “Let me kiss you first, baby. Please...” I let go of his hair and he lowered his head down to mine. He hovered his mouth right over mine, looked deep into my eyes, and waited.

I smiled, humming like I needed to consider the request.

He nuzzled his face into mine, rubbing his soft beard on my cheek, drifting his lips and nose all around my own, somehow resisting the intense gravity that was pulling our mouths to each other's...

After several painful seconds of restrained longing on both our parts, I finally said, "Okay. Kiss me."

His lips crashed into mine in an instant. I swallowed down a growling moan that wrenched from his throat.

The deep pleasure of having his tongue claiming my mouth so savagely made me change my mind about our priorities. I pushed his face down to my neck and he kept kissing me there.

"Forget the massage," I whispered into his ear. "I need you inside me—now."

He plunged his entire length into my core all at once, making me cry out in surprise. I was wet and ready for him, but still I almost felt as though the wind was knocked out of me at the force of his entry.

"Tell me how you want it," he said, pressing his hips up against me hard, keeping himself buried deep inside me, and once again pausing to wait for instruction.

That all-consuming wave of desire was washing over me again as my body and mind were flooded with my own pleasure as well as my Alpha's energy and emotions. Everything was red. I was plunged headlong underwater in a roaring ocean of love, lust and longing. Our hearts synchronized their racing rhythms to beat in time with one another.

I was going to explode before he even started fucking me.

I heard a sultry voice whispering, but hardly even knew what I was saying... I was channeling what Alex wanted, giving voice to his own desires. And he knew it. He looked down at me with a dark, wide-eyed look of awe mixed with burning, carnal passion.

"Are you sure?" he rasped.

"Mm-hm. I want you to do everything that you want to do to me, Alex. Everything." I brought my hands to his shoulders and dug my fingernails into his hard muscles, knowing it would set him off.

Finally he let go. He started drilling in and out of me so hard and fast, his body became a blur. I'd been so turned on already, I started to orgasm within seconds. And it wasn't just my body that felt like it was shattering. My mind went to splinters, too. A riptide swell caught me in that hot red

ocean of extreme pleasure and dragged me down, deeper and deeper into fathomless depths. I vaguely remember screaming...

I don't know how I lasted as long as I did. Alex didn't wait for me to come down from my first climax before manhandling me into a new position and fucking me hard again while strumming his fingers on my clit and forcing me right back down into the ether. His grunts of pleasure were inhuman, his movements fast and rough; he was loving it—and the hot thrills that coursed through him at the fulfillment of his fantasies zipped right into me like electrical currents.

At some point, his steely embrace loosened and I slumped onto my back in the bed...

And promptly passed the fuck out.

Alexander

I let Fiona snooze for a few minutes, then got myself dressed when I realized she wasn't getting up, bundled her in a blanket and carried her like a baby down to our room. I'd texted Nina ahead of time so she could open the door for me. She slipped right out as Fi and I slipped in, and I tucked my wife into our bed.

She was sleeping so soundly, so deeply that I got drowsy watching her. Sleepier than I'd felt in a long time.

My body was also unusually well tired out after a long day of training and then an unexpectedly wild late night date with my Luna. I think our short but intense little tryst destroyed the both of us, actually. I started fading fast once I got into the shower. And as soon as I joined Fi under the covers and wrapped my arms around her, I knocked out. We both slept like logs till Lexi woke us up just before sunrise.

“Is this new?” I asked, fingering one of the shoulder straps on the dark purple dress Fiona just had me zip her up into. It was gorgeous, a floor-length, form-fitting dress that walked a line between dressy and casual. It was satiny soft and fit her like a glove, hugging her curves in a way that made me want to rip it right off of them...

She wheeled to face me. “Yes. Nina made me order some new clothes last week.”

“Well.” Now I caught myself stuck staring at my wife’s cleavage. The neckline of the dress also worked an edge, high enough to be somewhat professional but low enough to be definitely sexy. I swallowed and tore my eyes back up to hers. “I like it.”

“Good.” Fi leaned in and stood on her toes to kiss me. “Let’s get going,” she said, pulling away and glancing down at her smartwatch. “Don’t want to be late to our own party.”

The “party” was a formal breakfast that we were hosting for our visitors. We brought the baby along with us and were of course the first to arrive. Grayson and Liv joined us in the dining room a few minutes later, followed closely by Chase and Dana. Fashionably late as usual, Kayden and Nina were last to filter in.

The spread on the table was elaborate and filled the room with rich aromas, both savory and sweet. There were trays of hearty breakfast sausages, baskets of fresh baked breads, herb roasted

potatoes and eggs cooked three ways; waffles, pitchers of warm syrups, and an assortment of chocolate-filled and honey-soaked pastries...

Glasses were filled – champagne for most, orange juice for myself; I needed my senses sober and keen today – and I was about to offer a toast of thanks to our guests for coming, when Grayson beat me to the punch.

He was seated opposite me at the other head of the table. When he rose from his seat, he met my eyes.

“I’m sorry if I’m out of place to be the one raising a glass in toast,” he said. “But I have to tell you, Alpha Alexander, it’s such an honor to be here. My Luna, our pack and I have nothing but respect for you, Sir. The both of you.”

He lowered his head and moved his eyes to Fiona. “Thank you for calling upon us. Whatever it is that the crown might need from our pack, we are here to serve.” With that, he raised his glass. The party celebrated cheerily. I glanced at Fiona and found her looking like she was in a trance. She participated in the clinking of glasses, but I could tell she was paying no mind to what her hands were doing. Her eyes were on Grayson, watching his every move. She was squinting slightly, her head cocked to the side. She was reading his energy. Or perhaps puzzling something out. She held the kind of smile on her face that I knew was affected, but which seemed to fool most others. Or so I found myself hoping. I mindlinked her. Warned her she was being a tad obvious. Staring. Fi smirked and slowly dragged her eyes over to mine. Well excuse me, came her sassy reply. I thought we were here to work...

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Chapter 227 Private Conversations

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“Quite a view,” Grayson muttered, gazing out the picture window in my study. The day was brisk, with a chilling breeze that had scrubbed the blue sky clear.

“I suppose I take it for granted much of the time,” I confessed.

During our brunch, Fiona had communicated to me that she believed Grayson was sincere in his professions of loyalty and respect for us. She believed it safe to move to the next stage with these people. We still knew very little about them, of course, but my wolf’s instinct told me hers was right. And so I invited Grayson here for a private conversation after the morning’s feast adjourned.

I eased into one of the two armchairs flanking the table under the window and motioned for my guest to sit with me. I was acutely aware that it was not all that long ago that I was sitting right here with my father, watching him guzzle spiked coffee and discussing his incompetence in knowing how to respond to the vampire resurgence. That was mere months ago, but so, so much had changed since then.

“I have called you here because I need to ask you for a favor.”

The graying man, who I would guess to be only in his forties, held his open hands out before him

in a gesture of supplication. “Anything I can do for you, Alpha Alexander, I will do as duty. I wouldn’t consider it a favor. Anything that I can give you, ask and it’s yours.”

“My pack and I will soon be traveling, somewhat near to your property in the desert. And we will need a place to stay for one night. A place where we will not be seen. Where there will be no record of our presence.”

Grayson quirked one of his dark eyebrows, processing this request. His gaze slid sideways, drifting back out the picture window. “Hm. And... how many men are we talking about? That need a place to stay the night?”

“There are about eighty of us.”

Grayson squinted out at the pale blue sky, like he was visualizing something. Then he said slowly, “Yeah. I have a place. It sure won’t be a comfortable place to sleep, but—”

I put up a flat palm like a stop sign. He nodded, understanding. He knew I was not requesting palace-like accommodations.

“I’m sure you ran a background check on me before inviting me here,” Grayson said flatly. He leaned back in his chair, easing his forearms onto the cushioned armrests comfortably. I could see that finally getting down to business had put him at ease. “You must know what I do for work.”

“You are a mechanic.”

He nodded again. “The garage. We can clear it out. And, uh, there’s another place up top of the garage, too, a... studio. Between those two areas, I think there’d be maybe just enough room.

Downstairs it’s all concrete of course, and smells like motor oil...”

“I’m not worried about that. As long as it’s a secure, enclosed space with doors that lock. And as long as our presence there can be kept confidential. Can you assure me that there will be no one around to see us coming or going from this place?”

“We’ve got no neighbors for miles. You and your men will be safe there with us. I’ll make damn sure of it.” He ran both hands back through his shaggy salt-and-pepper hair, tucking it behind his ears. “When?” he asked eagerly. “Just tell me a date and time, and I’ll make sure we’re ready for you.”

Fiona

I glanced down at my wrist, checking the weather forecast on my smartwatch, and frowned. I’d been hoping it would be warm enough this afternoon for a stroll around the palace grounds with the other Lunas, but we’d hardly stepped outside before I realized it was just too cold to do that right now.

“Let’s get back inside,” I said to the two women. Liv didn’t really appear phased by the icy breeze, but Dana was shivering. “I thought we may have a break from the cold today along with the gloom, but I can see now that was wishful thinking.”

Nina had taken Lexi back to the room while I spent a little extra time with the ladies after breakfast. I did want to take advantage of the opportunity to get to know them, but honestly was feeling very tired and was eager to get off my feet. And so were both Liv and Dana. I could feel it. We were all lethargic, craving the warmth of indoors and the comfort of a cozy blanket...

“Let me walk you to your rooms. We can all probably use a little break, some time to unwind and refresh ourselves. We’ll chat more when we meet up again later for dinner.”

The ladies were, as I expected, happy with this plan. We walked Dana up to the tower first, then Liv and I went together to her room.

“Thank you for being such a lovely host, Fiona,” Liv said quickly when I tried to start walking away, my hand already raised in a gesture of farewell. “And especially for all those thoughtful gifts you left us in the rooms. We found those last night after saying goodnight to you and

Alexander, of course. You're so kind, Fiona. This has been... I don't even know how to describe..."

I paced back to Liz where she stood in the doorway. "You are very kind as well, Liv, to say all that. It's been a pleasure to get to know you, and I'm very grateful that you all traveled so far to come out here when we asked."

She nodded, suddenly looking nervous.

"And, um..." She cleared her throat. "I know that there's a reason you did. I don't know what it is, and I'm not asking; I'm sure that's what Grayson and Alexander are discussing now, and it's for them to, well, discuss... um, what I'm really trying to say, Fiona, is just that we are going to be pleased to do anything we can for you. If that's what this is about, if there's some way we can help you in the war, I just want to say, from me to you, Luna to Luna—our pack would be honored to be serve yours. More than honored."

I smiled. It was sincere, because I felt that her words were sincere.

But there was more I could do to be sure about her honesty and trustworthiness...

"I'm rambling," Liv said, blushing and looking down at her feet. "Please forgive me. I'm just so nervous still."

"Please, don't be. I'm just a person, like you."

She laughed, then quickly covered her mouth. “I’m sorry. I just—no, you’re so, um, regal, and poised and, I’m sorry if this too familiar, but gorgeous, too. You really are. It’s intimidating, to be honest.”

Embarrassed by her compliments, now I was the one looking away. I allowed my eyes fall and fix upon a black and white photo on the wall. I caught a ghost of my reflection in the glass.

“I never dressed in fancy clothes like this before,” I said quietly, fidgeting with one of my dangly earrings. They were new: white gold with tiny rubies that matched the deep red lipstick I was wearing this morning. “A year ago, I really was just a regular person. My family was noble, yes. I was given a noble’s education and training. But they had little money when it came down to it. I never knew luxury before I met Alexander, before I moved in here with him.”

Finally I drew my eyes back to Liv.

“Maybe I have changed since then,” I admitted. “But deep down I’m still just me. Just a person, like you. You don’t need to be nervous around me. And thank you for all the nice things you said. I’m not the best at receiving compliments, but it really does mean a lot to me. Thank you.”

“Sure,” she said quietly. “Of course. It’s all true.”

“I should be getting back to the baby. Thank you again. It’s been nice talking with you.”

Hoping she would not find this odd, I dared to extend my hand to shake hers.

I liked Liv a lot already. But I had not touched her yet, and doing so was bound to give me much more information than just looking at her could.

“You, too.” Liv smiled and took my hand in hers, holding it tight.

A truly shocking rush of emotions surged into my mind and body the second that we touched. And I knew what they meant immediately, too. They were very familiar feelings, ones I remembered quite well.

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Chapter 228 I Can't Do It Alone

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Third person

The metal cuffs on Lucas’s wrists were clasped so tight that they dug into his bones. His skin was raw all around them, red and swollen and scabbing in some places and freshly bleeding in others.

“Try to shift and you’ll regret it,” Donovan had said the first time he clamped the heavy chains

onto the young man's limbs, looking dreadfully happy as he did so.

Lucas knew the vampire was right. His wolf's legs were definitely thicker than his wrists. And his ankles, too; they were also cuffed to chains. If he shifted, he'd still be stuck. And his legs would also be gouged very deep by the steel cuffs. His bones might even break, and then he'd wind up crippled.

"Whatcha thinking 'bout?" came a soft voice from his right.

The voice belonged to a young female prisoner that Lucas had begun talking with daily. She was chained up in the space right beside him.

"Nothing," he rasped. "Just... pain. Same as always."

The woman was a commoner. She was nineteen years old, or so she said; she looked younger, Lucas thought, but maybe that was just because she was small-framed. Petite.

She hadn't been here as long as some of the others. She guessed it'd been just a few days between her own capture and the night that Lucas arrived in this desolate prison.

Her name, strangely enough, was Tuesday. When Lucas learned that fact, he'd had a funny thought. He'd wondered if today, this day she introduced herself to him, happened to be a

Tuesday. He had no way of actually knowing what day of the week it was at any given time.

Tuesday's accent and the way she spoke, blending lots of her words together, continuously reminded the prince of her lack of education and low social status. But it bothered him less and less every time they talked, until suddenly he found he actually kind of liked the way she said things. Because the things she said were smart and interesting, and her wording was often really quite clever, and so unique.

And she was kind to him. Unlike the other prisoners who called him a traitor and acted as though the war and all the killings were his fault. Tuesday talked to him like he was just another person, even though she knew who he was and what he had done. It was no secret. There'd been a lot of yelling about it down here by now.

And Lucas had started believing and internalizing all that stuff the other prisoners were saying.

They were right, he'd decided. He just didn't know it before. Before they'd screamed the truth in his face and he couldn't run away or get high or get any other relief from thinking about it. He had to face it. And the more he thought it over, the more sense it made.

Lucas might not have started this mess, but yes, he could have stopped it. He didn't know his

mother had gotten involved with vampires, but he did know she'd been plotting treason. Planning to kill both the Alpha King and Alexander. He hadn't really believed she could pull it off, and he hadn't really cared if she tried.

If he had cared, he could have stopped her. He could have done something.

He got it now. And he felt he deserved the other prisoners' fury. He deserved every ill word they lashed at him when they returned, bloody, from yet another feeding and wanted to throw their pain in someone else's face. He was an easy target. But he deserved to be.

So he really didn't understand why Tuesday was so nice to him.

But he was also desperately grateful that she was. Every word out of her mouth was a relief. She distracted Lucas from his loneliness, from his guilt, from the dread of death, from the pain of torture and sobriety, and even from the maddening dripping sound... drip, drip, drip, drip—

“You ever break a bone before?” Tuesday asked, as if she knew Lucas had been thinking about bones breaking while he stared and stared at his wrist cuffs.

“Yeah,” he answered. “My nose.”

“Turn a lil, lemme look. Oh, yeah, I see it. How'd that happen?” Lucas hesitated, and even thought

about lying. But why? Pride? What pride did he have left in this place, in this state?

“Lost a fight,” he confessed vaguely. Before Tuesday could ask any follow-up questions he quickly asked, “How about you?”

“Oh, yeah. I broke my leg when I was a kid.”

“Ouch. How?”

She laughed. It kind of made her choke, since her throat was so dry. When she finished coughing and was able to speak again, she said, “I fell out of a tree.”

“That must have hurt.”

“Oh, yeah. Like a frigging bitch.”

Now it was Lucas’s turn to choke on a laugh.

“Lucas,” Tuesday whispered even more quietly than she’d already been doing. “C’mere.”

She started shuffling toward him, dragging her chains noisily.

The two of them were already sitting just a few feet apart, but they could get a little closer. Lucas shifted his weight and slid across the cold, hard stone, stopping just short of touching his companion, something he hadn’t done, but could...

“I’m gonna ask you something and it’s gonna sound crazy,” Tuesday warned, leaning close and breathing right into his ear.

“Okay,” he whispered hoarsely. His pulse quickened with the excitement of being this close to her

for the first time.

“I—I got an idea, for escaping this place. I don’t want everyone to hear me talk about it, cuz I did that before already and they got scared and mad, told me to shut up and stuff. Before you got here, you know. But I got a good plan. Only I can’t do it alone. The others don’t wanna try cuz they think it won’t work and they’ll get in trouble. They’re so scared it’s making them stupid. Me, I’m more scared of staying, of doing nothing and knowing this is just gonna go on and on. I wanna get out of here more than I’ve ever wanted anything in my life, Lucas, and I’ll die trying if I gotta. So what do you say, will you do it with me? I can get us both out, I swear, but only if you help me. I promise you, I got a good plan.”

Lucas was not afraid of attempting to escape. He just had no idea how to do it. So he was fucking thrilled to hear that Tuesday had a plan. She might just break him free from this place at last. They might just get away with it and escape this nightmare for good.

And if not—if the vampires caught them—maybe they’d finally just kill him. Either way, this agony would be over.

“I’m in,” he whispered into her ear. “What’s the plan?”

Tuesday pulled back an inch to look Lucas in the eye. Her mouth slipped into a smile. Her lips were dry and cracked, and her teeth were a bit crooked. But still it was the most beautiful smile Lucas had ever seen in his life, because it was full of hope.

“Oh,” she breathed, “you just made me so frigging happy. Lucas, we’re gonna get out. You and me, we’re gonna get outta here.”

He didn’t even think about it.

He just kissed her.

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Chapter 229 A Million Miles Away

Chapter 229 A Million Miles Away

Alexander

Grayson and I talked at length. The afternoon sun told the time as it slipped across the bright, clear sky.

He kept stealing glances out the window, and I became quite sure he was lusting after the forest, wishing he could get outside and go for a run through the trees.

Too bad we had more important things to do today. A long, hard run in the woods on crisp, cool

day sounded amazing. But we had many, many details to discuss for this, the single most important plan I'd ever devise in my life.

Too soon, a text from Fiona reminded me it was nearing time for our dinner date with the visiting couples. Grayson and I wrapped up our work and walked together back to the dining room to reunite with our wives. He and I would resume our work later, looping in our Betas and finalizing battle plans.

Kayden, Chase and Dana dined with the four of us, too. Lexi was still enjoying a long nap, Fi reported when I swept her up into my arms for a kiss hello, so Nina had volunteered to stay behind with her.

With pride, I saw our guests' eyes go large as they were seated at the dining table once again and took in the sight of the dinner spread. And this time, I was the one to raise a glass and say a few words before the meal. I kept my toast brief and succinct. I held my eyes on Grayson's and thanked him for our new alliance.

We were only two of seven courses into feast when Fiona jumped a little at my side. I heard her phone vibrating in her pocket.

When she pulled it out and looked down at the caller ID, her face dropped. But only for an instant.

By the time she righted her head, a neutral smile was in position on her ruby lips.

Fiona silenced the call, but rose to stand immediately. “Please excuse me,” she said to the group.

“I’m afraid I need to slip away for a moment.”

Liv, seated directly across from Fiona, offered an effusion of supportive words. “Of course—don’t worry about us! Please, don’t mind us at all...” Fi met Liv’s eyes, and it looked like the smile on my wife’s lips briefly changed into a sincere one. It seemed like the two of them had some sort of connection, already.

I gave my wife a supportive nod when she turned and met my eyes for a second. She gave an unreadable expression back to me, and then turned and walked from the room at an even pace.

I took my time folding my napkin, excusing myself, and making my own exit. I wanted to give Fi a head start in case she wanted a little privacy for the phone call. But I knew that I needed to follow her. I’d seen her screen. It was her Grandfather’s nursing home that had been calling her.

“Yes,” I heard Fiona saying from around a corner. I followed the sound of her voice until she was in my sights and felt my presence. She was pacing in one of the corridors, walking back and forth

between two large windows, and holding her phone to her ear.

I stopped about ten feet away.

Fi finally stopped her pacing. She turned to face me and met my eyes. “Yes,” she said into the phone again. “Yes, I understand.”

I could hear the other side of the conversation, too. I have very good hearing.

Fi’s grandfather was ill; more so than usual. The old man had fallen and injured himself, and then his wound had become infected. And then the infection had quickly gotten bad.

“I know I only just told you that you could come visit him any time,” the doctor was saying, “but I’m afraid I have to change my recommendation.”

“I see,” Fiona said.

“His immune system is in a weakened state, so he should not have guests for the time being. Not until his condition improves. And I will surely notify you just as soon as it does.”

“Of course. Thank you very much, Doctor. I appreciate the call.”

Fi’s mouth finally sagged down into a frown when she lowered her phone and hung up. I closed the distance between us and wrapped my arms around her. She collapsed into my chest and stayed there, silent. Just breathing. Thinking.

“I’m so sorry, sweetheart.” I pressed a kiss into the top of her head, savoring a breath of her sweet lavender scent as I did so.

I wished that I could also say something comforting like: “It’s going to be okay.” But I was pretty sure that, at least in terms of Reginald II’s future on this plane of existence, that would be a lie.

The old man was not going to be okay.

After a minute, Fiona started to pull away, extricating herself from my bear hug.

“Sorry,” she muttered. “I just needed a moment.

Let’s head back now.” She smoothed her hair and glanced at her watch, just like she’d been doing all day. Wanting to make sure we were keeping to our schedule with our visitors.

“Baby, you don’t have to go back to the dinner. Why don’t I walk you back to our room, and you can hang with Nina for a bit while I go and finish up with—”

“No,” Fiona interrupted firmly, shaking her head. “It’s fine, Alex. Really. It’s not that big of a deal. Let’s get back to our guests. Come on.” She slipped her hand into mine and pulled.

I stayed firmly in place. “Are you sure, Fi?”

“Yes,” she said, her voice now slightly tinged with irritation. I watched as the last traces of her frown vanished, replaced with a look of cool professionalism. “I’m fine,” she repeated calmly,

sliding her phone back into her pocket.

“Fiona. They will understand. I can tell them you’ve had a family emergency. Or I can tell them nothing at all, it doesn’t matter. Are you sure you don’t want to take some time...?”

“I am sure,” she said sternly. She turned to look in the direction of the dining room. “These relationships are critical, Alex, and we have very limited time to spend with these people. We only have this one day. I can put my feelings aside for a few hours. And it’s not like there is anything I can do for my grandfather, anyway. There’s nothing to be done. It’s fine. I’m fine. Come on.”

She tugged on my hand again, and this time I let her pull me forward, and onward back to our social commitment.

I hadn’t seen her wearing this mask of hers in a long time. She wore it so well, so convincingly.

The others didn’t even notice that it was a false face she had plastered on, as she smiled at their stories and laughed lightly at their jokes.

I hated it, though. It made me feel like the real Fiona was a million miles away.

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Chapter 230 The Hand

Chapter 230 The Hand

Fiona

“I think she’s pregnant,” I finally told Alex.

“Unexpectedly.”

Perhaps I ought not have. I will spill a secret. But he was kind of silently badgering me. Giving me suspicious, squinty looks. Somehow my husband just knew that I had learned something from my extra time with Liv this afternoon, and he wasn’t going to stop glaring at me until I told him what it was.

“Oh,” he said, his face going blank with surprise.

“Yeah. I almost said something to her about it, but it would not have been right. Those are private emotions she is dealing with, and it’s not my place... even if it were to say something reassuring... I don’t know. It probably would have overwhelmed her. And she’s a big ball of stress right now already.”

“Really? She seems so calm and upbeat. I would never have guessed.”

I nodded, frowning. “She really does. She must be very strong, to be putting up such a convincing front, while inside she’s...” I closed my eyes, remembering what I felt when I shook Liv’s hand. The woman’s internal world was a jumble of excitement, fear, joy, anxiety, hope, love, panic, and

elation... all the conflicting, crazy strong feelings I felt when I first found out I was going to have a baby. I had to guess her pregnancy was unplanned, for it to have her feeling so conflicted. "You won't say anything to Grayson." I meant for this to be a request, but it came out more like a soft demand.

"Of course not." Alex blew air out from between his lips, a pfft sound that meant he would gladly avoid getting in the middle of Liv and Grayson's business.

And that was the end of that conversation.

If only I could put the subject out of my mind so easily.

I was just still feeling for Liv. My new friend. She was already worked up about the pregnancy, and now... now my husband had just asked hers to aid him in battle against the vampires.

I was worried about her. I scrubbed my teeth, washed my face, and changed for bed, all while continuing to worry about her.

I wasn't just worried about Liv, though. I was worried about so, so many things...

This forest clearing was starting to feel familiar. I'd been here enough by now to recognize it instantly, the second that it came into focus.

The sun was shining overhead, veiled by a lace of leaves and branches.

I was alone. And I was cold. The air was icy and still, with no trace of any breeze slipping through the trees.

And the ground, once again, began to move beneath my feet.

This time I knew what was happening, because I'd felt that sensation once before. I ran for the trees.

But I only made it a few steps. Because suddenly a hand reached up from within the dark, soft, churning earth and latched onto my ankle.

I fell to the ground and screamed. I thrashed my leg, trying to wrench free from the small, pale hand clenching desperately to my ankle. I reached up, my fingers clawed into the dry earth, trying to find purchase, trying to drag my body up...But the hand was unrelenting. It dug its long fingernails into my flesh deeper, harder, telling me it was never gonna let go. I felt its pulse – a racing heartbeat pounding in the palm of the hand... In vain I tried to kick it away with my other foot, but it only held on tighter.

I gave up trying to scramble away and instead reached down for the hand next, using my fingers to try to pry it off me. And then I realized...I knew that hand.

I recognized the ring on the wedding finger. The thin gold band with its single, small, cloudy

diamond. It was covered in filth right now, but I'd recognize that ring anywhere—and those long pink fingernails tearing into my flesh, I recognized them too—

“Fi, wake up.”

And then I was waking up.

“Fiona. Hey.” Alexander was a warm shadow in the dark. “You okay, sweetheart?”

“Ugh.” I groaned, but needed to catch my breath for a few more seconds before I could answer him properly. My throat and lips were dry. My heart was racing. “No. I... ugh...”

As I tried to sit up, my head made me aware that it was aching severely. A moment's thought helped me identify my jaw as the source of the pain. Oh—because I was clenching it like a freaking vise. I sipped from the glass of water Alex offered me, then placed it on the nightstand.

“You're okay, Fi. You were just having another nightmare. I heard you talking, saying something about...”

I worked my jaw open and closed a few times. It was terribly sore.

“Can I turn on the light?”

“Please.”

Click. Warm yellow light pooled the bedside.

“Fiona.” Alex reached out and cradled my cheek with his hand. “I didn't press you about it last

time,” he said quietly. “But I’m getting worried about this. Maybe you’d feel better if you talked about it. The dreams. Do you want to tell me what these nightmares you’re having are about?”

I nodded. He was probably right.

Alex moved closer to me on the bed and took both of my hands into his. The love, sympathy and compassion I felt in his touch was enough to embolden me.

“There is something I haven’t told you about that has been weighing on me,” I confessed.

His eyebrows moved up his forehead, but he said nothing. Only waited.

“I found out a little while ago that my mother is in a bad situation. Alex, my... um, the Red Moon Pack, they went looking for my father. And did not find him, of course. After they gave up searching, they went ahead and inducted a new pack leader.”

I paused to clear my throat.

“Okay,” Alex said slowly. “And what’s going on your mother?”

“He has claimed her. The Alpha that’s claimed the pack, he’s claiming my mother, too. Saying they are going to be married. I suppose she will have to... divorce my father, somehow. Since...”

Alex dropped my hands and moved his own into his lap. He looked away. “Why didn’t you tell

me about this sooner?" he whispered into the dark. "Alex, it's not like I want to keep secrets from you. It's just... our families..."

He ran a hand down his face. "Yeah. That's not been the most fun topic for us to discuss in the past." He sighed heavily and finally turned back to look at me again. "But Fi, that's in the past. Right? Haven't we moved past all that? Don't we... understand each other now?"

"Yes. You're absolutely right. I'm sorry, my love."

He shook his head. "Forget it. You don't need to apologize. Just, please, Fi. In the future, if something's bothering you, will you please tell me? You keep things inside, maybe that's why..."

I nodded, swallowing down a guilty feeling that was rising bitterly in my throat like bile. Alex

looked hurt. "Yes," I promised. "I will."

He kissed me lightly on the lips. Then planted his lips on my forehead and left them to linger there. Finally he pulled away, then met my eyes with a look of fiery determination.

"What's this guy's name?" he asked quietly. "The one forcing himself on your mother?"

I shook my head. "Alex, no. You cannot get involved."

"Why not? If she doesn't want to marry him, and—"

"First of all," I interrupted, "I don't know if she has protested. She is very weak-minded, Alex."

My father really did... Well, listen, the bottom line either way is that you and I simply can't get involved—"

"Fi, I get that you're not a member of that pack anymore, but this is sketchy as fuck. Maybe I can help—"

"Stop. Please." Suddenly the air between us felt tense and heated. "This is the answer, Alex—why we can't get involved? In a word: Conrad. You know we cannot meddle in anything involving my father's disappearance. We have to act like we know nothing, remember? And keep far, far away from all the ensuing drama."

Alex exhaled forcefully, then groaned. "Fuck. You're right. I'm sorry. Come here." I let my body fall forward into his. He wrapped his arms around me in a tight embrace. Now he was feeling guilty about getting riled up into protector mode and accidentally upsetting me.

"That's probably why you didn't want to talk to me about this," he mumbled into my hair.

"Hm?" This conversation was starting to feel as inescapable as the nightmare. Yes, even after all this time, I still hated talking to Alexander about our families. It felt like pressing on a bruise. It was my turn to say, "Forget it. Please."

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