

## THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

### Chapter 31 Fear, Pain, And Panic

A blinding pain took hold of me.

My head was ringing, and it felt like the air thinned out. I gasped but couldn't get enough oxygen in. My hands were tied behind my back, but my arms thrashed instinctively, wanting to fly to my throat.

It was my father's Alpha power. I heard his footsteps as he came pacing into the bathroom behind me, where his men had set me kneeling in front of the bathtub.

"I tried asking nicely, and then asking not so nicely," came my father's voice. "Now, we are done with asking, altogether."

I felt an aching pressure all through my body. My father's anger was giving him strength, and he was using that strength on me.

"I am telling you now, Fiona. You are going to comply with what I am instructing you to do. Or you will suffer for it. The choice is yours."

I wanted to bite back with a sassy retort, but my father's power was as real as a hand around my throat.

"You don't need to speak, daughter. A simple nod of the head will do. A simple yes is all I need to see, and I'll release you at your word."

I held still, my gaze steady on the surface of the water in the tub. The air in the room was thick with energy, making the water start to stir with tiny waves. I maintained my silence. It was all I had.

My father groaned, standing from where he had been crouched behind me, and swapped places with another man, who knelt behind me with his legs on either side of my body, grasped my hair in his fist, and immediately plunged my head under the water.

I held my breath as long as I could.

And then I started choking some water in, first through my nostrils, and then down my throat. I tried to resist, but the body did what it was going to do, no matter how hard I tried to keep control of it with my mind.

When the water went in, my thoughts turned primal. It was nothing but fear, pain, and panic. Colors and lights and sounds.

I rose gasping from the water as I was yanked out just before I was about to drown.

“Pledge your loyalty to me!” my father cried out from the doorway.

I kept silent, save for my involuntary gasping breath, which was alternating between raspy, rattling sounds and a high, squeaky, sputtering cough.

“Again,” Father said, and back in I went.

White light and immense pressure in the head. That was all there was when I was down long enough, shoulders twitching against the heavy hands holding me under. It felt like my blood was on fire.

The next time I came up, my father screamed so loud that his voice broke. “I say, pledge your loyalty!”

I went deaf for a split second. And suddenly felt drunk, my vision skipping like I had the spins.

Pressure in my nose ached intolerably. I exhaled as hard as I could, and a rush of water came shooting out of my nose. The world stopped spinning and my hearing returned.

And somehow I found enough of my voice to speak, managing to croak out one word:

“Never.”

Father growled. The sound filled the small, hard-surfaced room, making the mirror on the wall and the handle on the toilet rattle noisily.

I sputtered, trying to catch my wind, and vomited out a bellyful of hot, sour-tasting yellow liquid.

My father turned and left the room, and I felt his hold over me release. The pressure in my skull let up, though the pain in my head did not go away

completely.

The man who had been drowning me became awkward, unsure what to do now that his boss had stormed out. When I started heaving again, he decided to free me from my hand restraints and leave me alone to throw up into the tub.

Alexander

I waited for Fiona in the bedroom, imagining she would be returning to the palace in time to change before dinner. I took my time picking out a tie from my collection, checking my watch every couple minutes. I settled on a skinny, sky-blue silk tie and fussed over the knot, making it perfect.

I started to worry when it was half an hour past the time Fiona should have been back, or at least should have reached out to let me know if she was going to

be this late. I walked to the dining room, keeping my stride casual even though my chest was tight with anxiety. There was a small chance she had gone straight there from the car.

But no, she was not there either.

I called her and it went straight to voicemail. I sent a text after that, and then stared at the screen waiting for a reply.

My gut had me imagining something horrible happening to her.

Kayden answered my call on the first ring. “What’s going on, boss?”

“I need you to check on something for me,” I told him. “Fiona hasn’t come home tonight, and I’m worried she’s in trouble. Can you call Nina and see if she

knows anything? Or if she can reach her?”

“Uh, yeah. Of course. I’ll call you right back, okay?”

“Thanks, Kayden.” I hung up and let out a big exhale.

I didn’t know what to think. Fiona could have been taken against her will. Or she could have left. I could not imagine exactly why she would, but it was possible. After all, I still hardly knew anything about her...

My phone rang and my heart leapt into my throat with anticipation. But it wasn’t Fiona.

“Kayden?”

“Yeah, I came by Nina’s place and had her call Fiona. No answer. Nina says she’s got no idea where she’s at, but now she’s worried, too.”



“Alright. Stay there,” I told him. “Just let me know if she calls back.”

I hung up and was on the phone with the nursing home a moment later. The person at the desk answered, sounding tired, like they were in the middle of a yawn.

“I need you to tell me if someone visited one of your residents this afternoon.” My words spilled out fast, and my tone came across even sharper than I had expected it to.

“Okay.” The voice on the other end was hushed now, sounding a little frightened. “Um, who is it you’re looking for? I’ll check our visitor sign-in sheet.”

“Her name is Fiona,” I told him. “She should have been there about three, four hours ago to see her

grandfather.”

“Hmmm.” The person breathed loudly into the phone as they searched their records. I heard the sound of pages turning, too. “No, I’m sorry sir, I don’t know what to tell you, but I don’t see any Fiona on the sign-in sheet today, not in the afternoon or any other time. Do you want me to check another day?”

I hung up the phone, my heart racing. I headed back to the bedroom, hoping against hope that she would be there by now, having slipped in without my notice.

She wasn’t there.

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Fiona

Next thing I knew, I was lying flat on the bed in the downstairs guest room of my parents' house. It was dark in the room, but light spilled in from the open door to the brightly lit hallway. My father stood in the doorway, his large frame silhouetted against the yellow light, speaking quietly with the man who had held my head underwater.

Trying to remember whether they had drugged me again or if I'd simply blacked out in the bathroom, I kept my body still and my breathing even, so they would keep thinking I was unconscious.

“Return her to him tonight, so he won't become suspicious. And be careful not to be seen.”

My father didn't realize that I could hear every word he was saying.

"I'll get her to comply, one way or another."

The other man grunted quietly. "Seems pretty strong, that one," he said in a low whisper. "A fighter."

Father said nothing in response to that. He began to turn around, so I clamped my eyes shut tight.

I heard slow footsteps coming toward me. One set, and then two. Some rustling noises. And then that soft towel was over my mouth and nose again, hitting me with another rush of that stuff that made my body go numb and my vision tunnel into blackness.

This time it took me out faster. I could barely open my eyes a tiny sliver. When I did, I saw my father on a

sideways angle, looking me dead in the eye and giving me a smug, knowing smile.

I came to in the backseat of the car, strapped upright with the seatbelt.

My neck was sore, aching as I straightened it out, making me wonder how long I'd been out and hunched over in that position.

And I had a dull, worrying ache in my stomach. My eyelids were heavy, though with every passing moment I was starting to wake up more and more. I felt for my hands and succeeded in wiggling my fingertips. I was surprised to find they weren't bound with restraints.

The driver noticed I was awake, and gave a sharp look into the rearview mirror, making eye contact with me. We were alone in the car.

“Don’t even think about trying anything,” he said. He kept his right hand on the wheel and lifted the left one. In it was a gun. “Just stay calm and you’ll be back home with your boyfriend in no time.”

I shivered as the feeling started returning to my limbs. The words this man was spewing did not merit a reply. I turned to look out the window and recognized the shapes of the trees as we approached the front of the palace.

The car stopped abruptly, though, well ahead of where the cars usually pulled up to, and suddenly the man twisted around in his seat, aiming the gun directly at my head.

“Out,” he said, pointing to the back passenger door with the gun. “Now.”

I did not need to be told twice.

But my legs were not working at full strength yet and I had to pause, shrinking to rest on my knees on the soft turf of the palace lawn, for a few seconds as the drug continued wearing off. I blinked away a few bright spots that were circling my head like birds, willing myself not to pass out.

And then after just a few more staggering steps, suddenly my whole body felt back to normal.

It was strange, how quickly the effects of the drug wore off, almost like a spell had been broken. I lifted a hand to feel my hair. It had dried but was a tangled mess. I started combing through it with my fingers and searched my pockets for something I could use to tie it back into a bun.

The last remnants of the sun were fading down below

the horizon by the time I was back in the West Wing, heading for our room. The arched hallways felt eerily quiet.

I pulled my key from my purse, feeling the bulge in the zippered pocket where I had stashed my father's letter. Crap—I'd forgotten to find somewhere else to put that today. Unlocked, the door swung open before me and I stepped inside, feeling the relief of safety at last.

And then I turned on a light and saw Alexander sitting silently in a chair beside the window, looking at me with golden eyes wide with concern.

“Where were you?” He rose and crossed the room to meet me near the doorway. He put one hand on my arm, and I felt heat coursing from his touch immediately.



I hesitated. I had forgotten to prepare for what to say to him. How I was going to explain my absence.

Because I wasn't going to tell him the truth. I couldn't implicate my father in this, his latest crime against me.

It was the same scenario as the letter, all over again. Was I really going to give Alpha Alexander the fuel he needed to ignite the fire of murderous rage against my father? I still did not know what had happened between them. But I was pretty sure that if I told my fiancé about how I had spent my day today, my father's life would be in serious, imminent danger.

The longer that I paused, my mouth agape as I searched for what to say, the more Alexander's eyes narrowed with suspicion.

"I was with Nina," I said. It was a flat lie, and one that could easily be proven false, but it was the only thing I

could think to say. “We met up after I visited Grandfather. I must have lost track of the time while we were talking. I’m so sorry I kept you waiting and forgot to call.”

I stepped forward into the room, zipping my purse closed before I placed it carefully on a chair. I caught my reflection in the full-length mirror on the wall and ventured a cautious glance. It did not seem like there was any visible evidence of what had just happened to me. Nothing that my father had done to hurt me had left a mark.

I could see in his eyes that Alexander didn’t believe me. But I met his gaze and held it.

He knew I was lying. All I could do was stand in silence, resolute against explaining myself any further. But my body started to betray the trauma that I had been through... I was weak, and suddenly the

façade of calm, collected confidence I had been showing him was crumbling to dust.

“Hey, come here.”

The golden God was holding me in the next moment. I guess he thought I was going to collapse. And maybe I was.

I'd been feeling strangely energetic ever since the sedative had worn off after I clamored out of my captor's car. But now I understood why – I had been in shock. But now that I was safe, and my body knew that, the pain of it all finally me at last.

Alexander's energy softened once we touched. He could feel how much I needed his strength. He wrapped me up tight in his arms, tucking my head underneath his chin. I was shaking like a leaf. He pressed his lips to the top of my head gently, swiped

a blanket off the foot of the bed, and wrapped it around my shoulders.

“It’s okay,” he whispered.

A stubborn tear forced its way down my cheek. I pressed it dry against his shirt and pleaded with my body to keep any more of those inside.

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### Chapter 33 A Game Of Chess



I pulled my phone out while Alexander was in the bathroom, and texted Nina. She was up late as usual, and responded right away.

Me: Just saw your missed calls. It's a long story, but I'm fine. Home now with A.

Nina: Phew!! We were all so worried about you!!!

My stomach dropped. That was not good. Nina had been speaking to Alexander while I had been missing from the palace evening. So he knew full well that I was lying to his face when I told him I'd been with her.

Me: Can we try that brunch date again, tomorrow?

Nina: Ofc. Just tell me what time babe.

Me: Text you when I wake up? It's been a day

Nina: Anything u want. I'll be up. Playing with this sexy soldier tonight.

And then she sent a bunch of vegetable emojis that, when strung together in the order she put them in, were actually really effective at telling a quite explicit little story.

Me: You are dirty!

I cracked a smile for the first time all day and thanked Nina in my mind for being her wonderful self. A laugh escaped my lips, and in my tired state, it turned into a giggle fit. I kept looking back at the screen and dying each time I re-read her emoji story, laughing so hard I started snorting.

Nina: That's me. I'll see u in the morning Fi. Glad you're safe.

I looked up and saw Alexander was standing in the bathroom doorway, watching me.

“Haven’t heard you laugh like that in a long time,” he said, smiling.

I was taken aback. When had he ever heard me laugh? In the short time I had known Alexander, had we ever once been in a cheerful scenario together?

But then I realized what he was talking about and felt a blush rising to my cheeks.

Our first night together. That’s what he was referring to.

It was embarrassing to remember. I’d been drunk off my ass, and thought he was a call boy hired to give me a good time. When he tried to push me away, I’d dropped him to the floor. I think I even kept him pinned below me with my bare foot.

I could hardly believe that girl in the memory, the one

in the sparkly blue dress, was even me. She was a version of me I hoped to never let out of her cage again. She was the one who had gotten me into this whole mess, after all.

Alexander had ordered some food for me after I got back, and we ate together in bed. He stopped asking questions about where I had been. The look in his eyes went back to concern when he saw how little appetite I had, and that's the look that remained on his face through the rest of the evening.

I only threw up a few more times and managed at least to not let Alexander see it. He left me alone behind the closed bathroom door until I was finished,

I tugged the chain on my bedside lamp to turn it off and shuffled down under the covers as Alexander, freshly showered, slid into bed beside me.



Under the covers, a warm hand slipped around my waist, and I fell back against Alexander's chest.

I wished that I could tell him what had happened to me. I knew he would listen. He would hold and comfort me. But this was just one more thing I had to keep inside.

Alexander's hand started to wander across my chest. I grasped it in my own and wove our fingers together. Lifted his hand to my lips and gave it a light kiss. He went very still for a moment. And then moved to tuck the blankets around me tightly, before quietly slipping his hand back into mine.

"You have got to be fucking kidding me," Nina said.

At the risk of sounding like a paranoid lunatic, I had convinced her to leave her phone behind in our bedroom before we came out to walk and talk.

We had found our way to an odd place behind the West Courtyard, where there was a life-sized chess set on a small, square lawn surrounded by bright green hedges that were cut, for some reason, into tall, flat-topped cylinder shapes.

Nina and I were pacing the squares and dragging the pieces around lazily, pretending to play. I had just finished telling her everything.

“I know,” I said. “But I can’t tell Alexander. He can’t know anything about this. He’ll kill my father.”

Nina nodded gravely. She didn’t even need any additional information about that to believe my words right away.

Before I could mention anything about Kayden, she said, “I won’t tell a soul. Promise. This is between you

and me only, but please do something for me.”

“What?”

“Tell me how I can help you out of this. It’s a fucking nightmare, Fiona.” She was whisper-shouting, keeping her voice just barely low enough to comply with my demand that we make sure none of our conversation could possibly be overheard.

“Kidnapped by your own father and almost drowned? What the actual fuck?”

I hissed to silence her. “Listen, you don’t have to tell me how messed up it is. But I do have a favor to ask of you. Just a small one for now.”

“Anything!” she whisper-shouted, grabbing my arm a little too hard.

It gave me a good opportunity to take my opposite

hand and press the letter into her palm.

I made it look as though I was peeling her hand off my arm, like I wanted her to give me some space. Just in case those odd, tube-shaped hedges were concealing an onlooker. You never knew.

Nina reacted smoothly, palming the square of folded paper discreetly and without hesitation. I saw her hand slip to the pocket of her black cutoff jean shorts and come back out empty.

“Just keep it safe for me somewhere,” I whispered. “I can’t have it in the palace, but I have a feeling I may want to have it later, for proof about what my father has been up to.”

“Consider it taken care of.”

Third person

“Payment for the first package delivered, gentlemen.”  
Fiona’s father pushed two stacks of cash across his mahogany desk, toward the men seated opposite him.

One of the men was young, strong, and tall, an overbuilt pretty-boy with short black hair. The other was smaller, with rounder shoulders, perhaps a few years older than his friend. But he was memorable for his distinctive attitude. It was the kind of chip-on-the-shoulder attitude that could be spotted from outer space.

And that was something that could be worked with.

The two men reached out and palmed the two stacks of money in unison, grabbing them up greedily. The smaller man flipped the corners of his stack noisily, like he was shuffling a deck of cards.

“The remainder of your reward will be delivered once we’ve received the package.”

The men looked at each other, had a silent conversation in their minds, and stood in unison.

“Pleasure doing business with you,” the smaller man said, grinning as he reached out to shake his new friend’s hand.

A thin smile cracked the nobleman’s lips. “The pleasure is all mine.”

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Alexander

“I’m guessing you have already seen this,” my father said, his tone dry. He pressed play on a remote and the giant screen on the wall sprang to life.

“...allegedly, Alpha Alexander’s leaked military documents prove he has been associating with vampires in the south, meeting with them on their territory and trading secrets. Now, this is an act of treason that, if proven, would carry with it a life sentence in...”

The video paused.

“It’s garbage,” I said. “A baseless accusation.”

The King laughed. “That’s exactly how your mother describes your allegations against her, you know.”

“Step-mother.” It was all I could do to keep my emotions out of my voice as I said it. But there was no way I was letting it go unsaid. I had a mother of my own, and she had been not only a good woman, but also a true queen. Just because Scarlet shared a bed with my father did not make her anything like a mother to me.

The King grinned, pleased he had gotten my attention. I almost groaned, hating myself for taking his bait. Then he turned his attention back to the TV screen and hit fast-forward.

“The rumors allegedly started when a whistleblower inside the palace discovered incriminating documents and leaked them online...”

Pause again.



“Find the mole.” The King looked at me with stern, unyielding eyes. “Whatever it is they got their hands on, it looks real enough to have them talking. That means some part of it is real. And that means you have a leak in your operation. Find it. Deal with it. Immediately.”

He threw the remote down on an ornate, heavy glass table. It bounced off, breaking open and landing in pieces yards away on the floor.

I paced the length of my office slowly, considering the limited options before me.

Someone had been in this room. They had found and taken something from here. Something they altered cleverly enough to use convincingly in their ruse to stir up suspicion about my supposed involvement with vampires.

I felt sick to my stomach, thinking about the details of the rumor.

I had personally fought those vampires, many times over. The ones that infested the deep canyons just south of our territory. They were despicable creatures. Our battles had been cold and bloody, fought in the dark in the dead of night.

To suggest that I was collaborating with those undead vermin was a low blow. Having no foundation of truth, the rumor would blow over eventually. But until it did, people would be mulling it over.

I pulled back the heavy drapery that concealed the entrance to the hidden passageway in the wall. The outline of the door was still visible. I still couldn't believe that my stepmother had it cut back open while I was gone. Like I wouldn't catch on to a cheap trick like the one she had tried to pull with the maid and the

planted necklace.

But I had set up a few traps after that last episode. And as far as I could tell, no soul had crossed the threshold of that concealed door since I'd set everything in place. It would not be possible to disable the tripwire from inside the passage, and it was still strung taught where I had tied it.

I dragged the drapery back into place, concealing the door from view, and resumed my thoughtful pacing.

The only people with access to the West Wing of the palace at all right now were me, my men, our carefully screened and well-vetted staff of maids, cooks, and butlers, and... Fiona. My fiancée and future Luna.

And, my nagging mind reminded me: the daughter of my enemy.

But I could not rush to a conclusion, especially as I thought back on the way she fought for me this week. Defended my name, even when it meant risking her own safety. Watched bravely and stayed at my side as I took a brutal beating. And doted on me carefully as I convalesced.

In my heart, I knew Fiona to be an honorable woman, but still my mind warned me not to trust her. Not just yet.

Third person

The two soldiers returned to the palace grounds well before evening training.

Dropping down from the tall cabin of their matte black truck, the men were smiling cheerfully, their faces glowing orange with the reflection of the night's vibrant sunset as they crossed the parking lot swiftly.

They were feeling lucky. Like things were just about to turn around for them. The gods of Fate were smiling on them for once in their short, violence-filled lives.

And so it seemed, hilariously, like another stroke of good luck – the dirty kind, this time – when they stumbled upon a couple having sex outside. They heard the girl's sweet little moans first and followed the sounds over to the climbing wall and outdoor weight sets at the far end of their training arena.

They recognized the guy at once. It was Alexander's beta and their fellow soldier, Kayden. He was lying flat on his back on the weight bench, with his feet planted firmly on the ground on either side.

The bar was nowhere to be seen. Instead, a petite, smoking hot girl was bouncing up and down on top of him. She was tattooed, with smooth tan skin, violet

hair, and a black choker tied around her neck. A little pink crop-top sweater was the only bit of clothing she had left on. A lacy black thong and a tiny pair of black shorts laid in a heap some twenty feet away.

The shorter man, who was smarter, by far, than his oafish friend, also had very good vision and an instinct for mischief. He was not the fastest runner in the pack, or the most coordinated, or the smartest. But he was very skilled at spotting an opportunity to get himself into trouble.

And there was something interesting bulging out of the pocket of the hot girl's tiny little shorts. A piece of paper.

He darted forward against the silent protests of his comrade and ran over to the pile of discarded clothes. Neither the girl nor Kayden registered any awareness of their company at all.

Grabbing the little folded square of paper, the soldier turned and fled. His pal followed close behind, and this time they didn't stop until they reached their bunk, where they slipped into the crowd of soldiers and tried to play it cool, like they'd been there taking a break with the others all afternoon.

The soldier kept the letter hidden in his pocket until he was sure he was alone. Only then did he unfold it and begin to study the words on the page.

Here he had already been thinking that this was a lucky day.

A smile broader than he'd smiled in a long time filled up the entire lower half of his face. Because this was not just a lucky find. It was like striking gold.

He left without a word and made his way across the

West Wing, heading to Alexander's office, where he knew his Alpha was likely to be at this time of night.

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## [THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

### Chapter 35 An Easy Decision



Alexander

“I'm sorry to bother you, Sir, but I had to show you immediately.”

I plucked the letter out of the soldier's fingertips warily, keeping my eyes locked on his as I did so. Something in my gut was telling me not to trust this man. It was, after all, the same soldier who dared to



disrespect me in front of the pack just the day before.

But my suspicions of him flew out the window when I started reading the letter. Because they had a new target.

“Tell me where you found this.”

“I was going to get an extra workout in,” he said. “And came across something I didn’t expect out in the yard. A, uh... well, first a little pile of clothes, and then the girl they came off of.”

“What?”

“Yeah, uh, there was this purple-haired girl, and, well, I don’t know how else to say it, Alpha Alexander. She was fucking Kayden right out there on the weight bench.” He shrugged his shoulders. Something about the way the story tumbled out of his mouth made me

believe that it was true.

“And the letter?” I asked, trying to see how Kayden having public sex with Nina had any bearing on the matter at hand.

“It was there on the ground with her panties. Must have fallen out of her shorts pocket. I don’t know why, I just snatched it up, it looked like something my instinct told me was suspicious, and, well...” He pointed at the well-creased paper in my hand.

“Forget what you read in this letter,” I commanded him. “Never speak of it outside of this room. Do you hear me?”

“Heard, sir.” He bowed his head.

“You’re excused.” I waved my hand at the soldier, and he hurried away.

My eyes went back to the paper. The letter was handwritten, and I could see the writer's furious emotion in his pen strokes, and the way the ink was smudged, like he had been writing in a hurry.

It just did not feel like it should be possible. I could not believe it was true. I studied every word on the page carefully. It was possible—probable, even, the more I thought about it—that Fiona received this letter from her father but had taken no action on his behalf. It was possible that maybe she had been just as shocked, the first time she read it, as I was in this moment now.

The language did suggest that Fiona was already conspiring with her father against me. But I still could not jump to that conclusion. I had to ask her directly first. Confront her and see what she would say.

I knew now that Fiona was not afraid to lie right to my face and could do it without flinching.

But for what purpose was she willing to lie to me... that I had yet to find out.

Fiona

It had only been a matter of minutes since Alexander left for a night training with his men. I was undressing in the bathroom, just about to step into a hot shower, and stopped in my tracks when I heard a quiet but distinct Pshhh sound.

I recognized the sound because it was familiar. It was the sound of a thick envelope sliding across our hardwood floors from under the hall door.

I threw my clothes back on and turned off the water. Went out and found, as I expected, another unmarked

envelope on the ground. I tore it open and started to read it immediately. My hands began to shake as I read. My father's words were much harsher in this letter than the last one.

You will regret your disloyalty, Fiona. You bring shame to our family and to the Red Moon pack! We cherished you as a prized Luna, and this is the way you will repay your family?!

A growl rumbled in my throat, my body buzzing with the vibration of it. How dare he accuse me of bringing shame to the pack? After all he has done, dragging us through the mud for years?

We do not need a cheap whore running our family's business operations. Is that what you are, Fiona? Alpha Alexander's most loyal whore? He was not even willing to pay me one penny for you, or do you not remember?

Do what your father has told you to do. Or you will be removed from every title you have ever held in any of our businesses. The choice, once again, is yours.

The harder my father pressed me on this, the more I wanted to push back.

The truth was that he had never wanted me to inherit the family businesses. The titles I held? I earned them through hard work. My father never handed me anything. He made me work for every one of my accolades.

Unlike my brother Liam, who skated by with his head in the clouds, at no concern to my father. Liam could get away with that because he was a male, and next in line to succeed my father as pack Alpha. But nothing Liam had ever said or done truly qualified him for such a position of leadership. Still, Father always

wanted Liam to take everything. If I were the one between the two of us that had proved herself more professional and business savvy, all that did was convince our father that I needed to work harder at teaching Liam what I knew.

This threat of disinheritance was a long time coming. My father had always planned on finding a way to cut me out of the family companies.

And Alexander had always been kind to me. Deep down, I knew he cared for me and wanted to protect me. My mind's eye flashed to the bloody scene in the dungeon and fixed on the memory of it. Alexander had taken a beating for me.

My father, on the other hand, had just drugged, tortured, and nearly drowned me.

It was an easy decision.

I found a pen in my bedside table and took it with me to the game table in the corner of our room. I flipped the letter over and began to write on the back of it, penning a contract by hand in the tightest, tidiest penmanship I could manage. I knew from memory what a legally binding document like this one would require. I started with the date in the upper corner of the page and worked tediously to recall all necessary details.

I was abandoning my rights of management to our mutually owned companies, giving my shares over to my father in their entirety.

The businesses would bankrupt eventually anyway, as long as my father remained involved in them. I had been kidding myself, trying to control his behavior for years. Keeping him from destroying the companies was an effort akin to trying to plug a hole in a fire



hydrant. There was nothing doing for him. He was a scoundrel, and he'd never change his ways.

It was a little painful to say goodbye to the businesses I'd been working so hard to save these last years. But it was necessary.

I signed my name at the bottom of the contract, digging the pen in so decisively that I tore a little hole into the page as I dotted the i.

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