

## THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

### Chapter 36 Not A Pretty Picture

Alexander

We finished up our training session and I walked back to our room at the far end of the West Wing slowly, thinking carefully about what I was going to say to Fiona.

I could not accuse her outright. But how could I even bring it up without accusing her? What was the first thing I could say to start the conversation? It seemed like a no-win situation.

But just as I was approaching our room, the door opened and she came out.

She turned in my direction, but did not see me,

masked as I happened to be under the dark of a heavy shadow. And she was in a hurry.

Fiona locked the door behind her and turned in the opposite direction. I saw, to my surprise, an envelope in her hand. She hurried away, light-footed, and I followed her at a distance.

The accomplice was waiting for her just before a sharp turn in the corridor would start leading back to the palace proper. I saw the man before she did, though I was far behind her. Fiona may have been a skilled fighter, but she had never seen battle. Had never known the need to be on your guard at every moment, to peer deep into shadows, never letting yourself trust anyone or anything—even your own eyes.

Fiona nearly jumped out of her skin when the man emerged from the shadow. Actually, it looked like she

came very close to taking him out. But she stopped herself before she could trip his heel, and silently passed the envelope over to the dark figure instead.

He disappeared back into darkness in the next second, leaving Fiona to whirl around and retreat in the direction of our bedroom. I fled before she could stumble upon me in the dark, too. I could not go straight to our room. That's where she was heading. I ducked around a corner and let her pass me by.

We spent that night lying side by side in bed, with an undeniable but unspeakable tension filling the room around us. I did not know what was going on inside Fiona's head. But a whirlwind of thoughts, doubts, fears, and imagined scenarios was tearing around inside mine.

I got up at first light and dressed quickly. Fiona was still in bed, quiet and unmoving though I suspected

she was awake and had been, just like me, all night long.

I called Kayden and told him to meet me in the courtyard. He arrived minutes later, jogging over with messy hair and a dark stubble beard.

“Have a late night last night?” I asked.

He gave me a blank look and shrugged, not following where I was going with this.

“Did you know you had an audience? When you were out here having sex with Nina last night?”

Kayden’s face turned pale and he dropped his eyes to the ground. “Shit...” he murmured under his breath.

“Ugh, God, I’m so sorry Alexander.”

I waved a hand at him. Reprimanding Kayden for

indiscreet behavior was not my priority right now.

“Just answer a few questions for me,” I said, and he nodded. “What was Nina doing here?”

“Oh,” he said, looking surprised by my question.

“Fiona invited her over for breakfast yesterday, and I drove her here. I guess we, uh, just kind of lost track of time after that. I took her back home before pm training.”

I nodded slowly, looking into the distance. The morning sky was lightening, getting brighter by the second. Soon the rest of the men would be joining us here for our morning workout.

I pulled the letter out of my pocket and passed it to Kayden. He may as well see it and know everything that I knew. My beta was not just my second in command, after all—Kayden was pretty much the only

person in the world I felt certain I could trust to have my back.

“Where did you get this?” he asked, scanning the letter with wide eyes.

“Have you seen it before?”

Kayden looked up at me, his face a portrait of shock.

“No. What the hell is this? Is this real?”

I threw my hands up. “Best I can tell, yes. And you asked where I got it from? One of our men, the perv who was watching you with Nina, said he found it in the pocket of her shorts when he went to steal her panties.”

Kayden’s jaw dropped. He looked at the letter in his hand, back up to me, and then out at the distant spot where the events in question had taken place some

twelve hours or so ago. My usually well-spoken friend was at a total loss for words.

“Listen,” I told him. “I just need to figure out what the hell is going on, and I need your help.”

“Of course.” Kayden passed the letter back to me and stood back, ready to listen.

I started Kayden running drills with the rest of the men, while I took the soldier who had found the letter aside to interview him on the subject one more time.

I put the man in a room downstairs and kept him waiting a while, to see if he would start getting anxious. Like someone with a secret is apt to do.

But when I entered the room a little over half an hour later, I could not read his energy right away. He was borderline. Not quite antsy with obvious guilt. But

there was something off. I just could not place what it was.

“Tell me one more time about the letter you found,” I instructed him.

“Not much I could tell you, boss. I’ve forgotten everything I saw in it.” He smiled up at me, pleased with himself for remembering my line.

I was not amused. “Tell me again,” I repeated, “how you found the letter. And why you picked it up.”

He nodded respectfully then and did what I asked of him. Told me the story just the same as he had the night before. Only this time, he peppered in some additional, wholly unnecessary details about Nina in the process.

“And you were alone when you found them?” I looked



the soldier square in the eye and saw him hesitate when I asked this. “You weren’t alone. Who was with you?”

He scratched his head nervously and cleared his throat. “The new recruit,” he said. “We were out smoking in the parking lot. Went out to get a pack of cigarettes from my truck. We were walking back across the courtyard when we saw them.”

I dismissed the man quickly and pulled the recruit in. He was sweaty and breathless from the training. Kayden was running in my absence. We went through the whole thing. I asked pointed questions, trying to find what I was missing. There was a hole in the story somewhere. Something that did not make sense.

But the young man answered all my questions easily. He corroborated every bit of the other soldier’s story, much to my displeasure.

Because the picture that their story painted was not a pretty one.

It was a picture in which my supposedly devoted fiancée was enlisting her friends to help her hide secrets from me. The same fiancée that I had seen hand-delivering a letter to a shadowy figure the night before, following the exact instructions laid out by her father in his letter inviting her into a conspiracy against me.

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

### Chapter 37 Who Do You Love More?



Alexander

I paced out to the training field with different scenarios playing out in my head. Fiona had replied to her father's letter, and it was easy to jump to the conclusion that meant she was working for him.

But I had seen the way Fiona's father treated her. The day of her wedding, when I found him illegally torturing his own daughter with his Alpha power. But still, this was a well-trained Luna, and her father had been her pack Alpha all her life. How much could she really resist obeying him?

It was possible that Fiona wrote back to her father, rejecting him. She was a strong woman with a mind of her own, and here a man who had hurt her – no doubt more than the one time I'd witnessed it. She would have every reason to stand against him.

But she should have told me. She should have shown me the letter, rather than sneaking around.

I arrived in the West Courtyard and found my men sparring in pairs. I caught Kayden's eye and motioned for him to come and join me at the side of the field. He gave the soldier he was sparring with a quick instruction, sending him to partner with the new recruit, who'd just re-joined after I released him from my interrogation.

Kayden fell into pace with me, and we walked quickly to the far edge of the field, well out of earshot of anyone. I caught him up on what I had learned in speaking with the two soldiers. He looked very serious as he took it all in.

"And now? What are you thinking?" he asked.

I gave Kayden a hard, probing look. "I was going to

ask you the same thing.”

Kayden ran a hand through his thick, dark hair.

“Well... there is someone who has regular access to your office, Alexander.”

I needed him to say it. “Who?”

“Ugh.” Kayden hesitated. “My gut is telling me she would not do this. But... there are a few other things that have happened lately, that make me question what could really be going on with Fiona.”

Kayden met my eyes so I could read them. He was being sincere and asking me to believe him.

“Go on,” I told him coldly.

“Well, for one thing, there’s that day she disappeared. When she told you she was at the nursing home with

her grandfather, but they said she hadn't been there. She had you and Nina worried for hours. Did Fiona ever tell you where she was? Give any explanation?"

I shook my head. I was not going to tell him the added information that Fiona had lied and said she was with Nina that whole time.

"And, well, you asked me to do what I could to dig in to find out who gave that leaked info to the press."

"And?"

Kayden turned his body squarely to mine. "And it looks like it was Fiona's father."

My mind searched for an alternative explanation. A way to explain away the likelihood, which grew with every bit of information confirmed, that Fiona was the one behind this breach.

“I wouldn’t stand here and try to implicate Fiona if I didn’t have to,” Kayden continued. “But this is serious, and you need to have all the information.”

I thanked Kayden and told him to return to training and finish leading the rest of the session. He nodded and ran back across the field.

Kayden said his gut told him that Fiona was innocent, and mine did too. And my intuition, honed sharp in years of battle, had never been wrong before.

But the evidence was piling up, and it was my responsibility to at least question Fiona.

Fiona

Alexander, looking like he was badly conflicted about something, asked me to sit in his office with him. I

found the request a bit strange. And the energy I was feeling around him was even stranger.

He sat behind his desk and motioned for me to take a seat in a chair across from him.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

He pressed his palms flat against each other and placed his elbows on the desk. “I need to ask you something.”

“Then ask it.”

He nodded, looking me in the eye. “The information that was leaked to the press. I need to find out how it happened.”

My stomach sank.



He meant me. He was about to accuse me of being involved with what was going on in the news.

I would not have expected his accusation to sting so badly, but suddenly the memories of our past few days together went speeding through my mind. How could Alexander believe I could betray him like that, after everything we had just been through together?

He realized I was not going to take his bait, asking further questions or becoming defensive. I remained silent, waiting for him to work up the courage to confront me outright.

“And,” he finally continued, “my sources have discovered that the person who gave the leaked documents to the media was, in fact, your father. Do you know anything about how he could have gotten his hands on them? We believe the files were taken from this room.”

I held a mask of indifference on my face and answered, "I don't. But my first thought would be that your intruder entered through that hidden passage." I nodded to my right, at the drapery that covered the door through which Susan, Scarlet's handmaid, had trespassed to plant the stolen necklace.

Alexander's eyes followed mine across the room. He frowned and said, "That was my first thought as well. But I rigged that door to trigger an alarm, after what happened last time, and the tripwires have not been activated."

The energy between us was strained, and I was beginning to feel queasy. What my body needed right now was contact with Alexander. Not to sit across a table from him being interrogated like a criminal.

He may have been reluctant to accuse me plainly, but

I was done with beating around the bush.

“I am your Luna,” I stated. “And I’m carrying your child. I would never betray this pack, and I have no loyalty to my father. I even gave over my rights to our family business so I could cut ties with him permanently.”

Alexander kept his eyes on mine. I did not flinch. He was trying to read what was really in my mind, to see if it matched my words. His eyes searched mine but came up empty. I was stronger than that. I never let my face betray my emotions. That was a weakness, one an enemy could easily use against you.

“You say you are not loyal to your father, but do you love him?”

This question caught me off-guard, but I answered. “He raised me,” I said. “He’s a scoundrel, but yes, I

still love my family.”

Alexander sat back in his chair and looked at me contemplatively. Then he sighed, leaned forward on the desk again, and cleared his throat.

Finally, he asked, “Do you love your family more than me?”

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

### Chapter 38 You're Not Safe There



I frowned. “This is just a contract marriage,” I said. “Why are you asking me about love?”

Alexander looked at me silently. His breathing became heavier, and then he rose to stand.

He turned away from me, putting his hands on his hips and looking across the room to the open window. Then he spun around and left without another word, slamming the door behind him on his way out.

I sat still for a moment, stunned.

Did Alexander really expect me to love him? We had only just met, and he was the one who insisted he planned to divorce me as soon as our child was born, and our arrangement was no longer necessary.

I realized he had left me alone in his office. It did not stand to reason that he really believed I was the perpetrator of the crime he was questioning me about. He would not have left me here if he thought I was the mole that conspired with my father to reveal his

secrets and undermine him. I left the room quietly, locking the door behind me and double-checking to ensure it was secure.

I sighed. Now that I was out of that conversation, I could relax. My stomach was growling, and I knew I needed to eat something. I started walking to the kitchen slowly, my mind swirling.

I replayed Alexander's words in my mind. He had, in fact, never gotten around to accusing me of being the one to steal from his office. I decided that my fiancé had not gone into that conversation convinced of my guilt. He must have felt obligated to question me, considering the tremendous responsibility weighing on him at this moment when his operation had been made vulnerable.

I wondered where he landed by the abrupt end of our discussion. If he believed what I told him and

understood that I was innocent.

And I also wondered... what else Alexander might know.

I reached for my phone, suddenly needing to speak to Nina.

As I neared the kitchen, I could hear the crowd of busy cooks and staff members working inside. Calling out to each other, chopping meats and vegetables, shifting pots and pans on the stoves. A pillar of fragrant steam rushed out of an open window.

But my lunch was going to have to wait. I turned and headed out down a stone path through the rose garden instead, and texted Nina to ask if we could meet up soon.

Waiting for her reply, I strolled slowly through the

garden, pausing every few feet to smell the perfume wafting from the blooming roses.

Nina replied: Sure! Want me to see if Kayden can bring me over there?

Me: I'd actually love to get away for a little bit. Can I come to you?

Nina: Ofc! Come on over!

I turned on my heel and hurried back to our room, pausing only as I passed the kitchen door. I thought about going in to grab something to eat, but my mind was on a one-way track right now. I needed to talk to Nina and find out whether she had gotten that letter out of the palace successfully.

I took a car from the palace that dropped me at Nina's doorstep. She lived at the far edge of town, on the top



floor of an old apartment building made of crumbly orange bricks.

Nina was standing on the steps when I arrived. Her hair was bubblegum pink today and tied into pigtail buns. She was smoking a joint and shifting her weight back and forth from one foot to the other.

Something was wrong.

She ushered me inside quickly, and we started walking up the six flights of stairs to her apartment.

“You okay, Fi?” she asked quietly. I saw her eyes rove my body quickly, checking to see if I was injured.

I nodded at her and darted my eyes upward. She understood and started to move her body faster. We were inside her apartment a minute later, and she spent a minute latching and sliding all the locks on the

door while I eased over to the couch and plopped down on it. The stairs had wiped me out.

“You need to eat something.” Nina knelt beside the couch. She pressed a wrist to my forehead and frowned. “Be right back.”

My eyes fluttered closed, and I focused on regaining my breath. My heart was racing, making me realize how very out of shape I had gotten since I put training, and basically all my life activities, on pause.

“Hey.” Nina was stroking my cheek lightly with a cool hand. “I’m all for letting you crash out if you want. But you gotta drink some water first, at least. And eat something too if you can.”

I looked at the coffee table and saw she’d brought over a loaf of bread and a bowl of butter, a sliced apple, and an open jar of caramel sauce with a spoon

sticking out of it.

I smiled. “Thank you, Nina.” I sat up slowly and she helped, pushing a pillow behind my back for support. I downed some water first, then endeavored to eat a chunk of bread with butter, finding my appetite coming back enough to let me swallow it down.

Seeing me revive, Nina sat cross-legged on the couch next to me. “There’s something I need to tell you, Fiona. And it might not be the right time, but you need to know, and I wasn’t even sure how I was going to be able to tell you, with everything you said about not being able to talk at the palace...”

I turned to look at her. The color had gone out of Nina’s face as she prepared herself to tell me something horrible.

“You lost the letter.” I meant for it to come out as a

question, but the word fell flat. Because I knew immediately that it was true.

“I’m so sorry, Fi. I’m so sorry.” Nina had tears pooling in her eyes.

“Where?”

She looked aside and blinked the tears away, huffing out a tense exhale. “Before I left the palace.” She shook her head and hung it low.

“How? How could you have lost it?” My mind replayed the scene in which I had given Fiona the letter from my father. She had slipped it into the pocket of her shorts. “Did Kayden find it on you? What did he do?”

Nina snapped her eyes back to mine and shook her head furiously. “No, I really don’t think it was him, Fi. I was with him the whole time.”

I narrowed my eyes as I pieced together the scene. “You were with Kayden... but not your clothes?”

She hung her head again and nodded. “I messed up, Fiona. I’m so sorry. We were out on the training field, so I think probably another soldier must have been out there and found my clothes and went through them while Kayden and I were, well...”

I had never known my friend Nina to be ashamed of talking about sex. It told me how badly she was feeling about what happened. Because she knew how bad this could be for me. I felt my body start to shake with anxiety.

Nina pulled a blanket around my shoulders suddenly. “Let me make you some tea,” she said, and she slipped away to the kitchenette on the other side of her tiny studio apartment.

If one of Alexander's soldiers had found what appeared to be evidence incriminating me in a conspiracy against him and the King Pack... they most definitely would have shown it to him.

I took the steaming mug Nina extended to me, smelling the fragrant herbal steam. It was chamomile with honey.

"I should get back to the palace," I told her. "I need to talk to Alexander."

Nina took a shaky breath. "Are you sure? You might not be safe there anymore. If he thinks..."

I shook my head. "If he thinks I'm conspiring with my father, then I need to make sure he knows it's not true."

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

### Chapter 39 Empty



I was sure now that Alexander had read my father's letter. Even still, he had been trying to give me the benefit of the doubt when he confronted me. That left a margin of hope for me to hold onto.

The sun was setting as I rode back to the palace, and it was full dark by the time I was walking up to our bedroom door. But I knew even before opening it that Alexander would not be inside. I could feel his absence.

Sure enough, the room was dark and empty. I locked the door behind me and went to sit on the bed.

Looking over at Alexander's side, I wondered where he might be. And when, or if, he would come home to me.

The early morning had me on my knees on the bathroom floor, throwing up what little I had in my stomach. And after that, I felt I had been drained of nearly all my life force.

I had never felt so physically weak in my life.

And I was not comfortable with being weak. I was a fighter. A strong woman inside and out, who could take care of herself.

At least, I used to be. Now, with the baby needing so much of my strength, I was at Alexander's mercy. The baby needed him close. And that meant I needed him



to come home.

I called for the doctor and used all the strength I had left to stagger back to bed, bringing a trash bin with me just in case I had to throw up again. The doctor came quickly and gave me a very brief bedside exam.

“The child is fine,” she stated, pulling out her stethoscope’s ear tips and hooking the device around her neck. “But only because it is taking so much of your strength. When was the last time you ate?”

I frowned, thinking about the prior day. I skipped breakfast. Skipped lunch. Ate bread with apples and caramel sauce at Nina’s house. And that was it.

The doctor shook her head at me disapprovingly.

“The cub needs contact with the father,” she said prescriptively. Her eyes flickered over to the empty

other side of the bed. She opened her mouth as if to say more on the subject, but then clamped it shut, perhaps realizing it was not her place to ask when Alexander would be back with me.

She dug into her doctor's bag and produced a small orange bottle. "This may help a little," she said. "It will cause your estrus period to be less frequent. Take one every six hours as needed. And, more importantly, you need to eat. As much as you can tolerate."

Again, the doctor disappeared in a hurry as soon as I dismissed her. I took the medication immediately and resolved to be a good patient and follow her orders. I would force myself to eat. And with or without Alexander, I would do everything in my own power to get myself well.

I began to feel a little stronger and more energetic as

the medication took effect. I dressed, pulled my hair back into a neat ponytail, and put on a little makeup. Then I walked quickly to the kitchen, keeping myself on alert as I went.

Nina had been right about my not being safe here. Of course, she had been worried about Alexander and the way he would react if he became convinced that I'd betrayed him. But I was not afraid of Alexander. I was afraid of walking the palace halls, knowing he was not here.

I had the kitchen staff pack up a basket full of fresh foods, and texted Nina while I waited for them to prepare it. I asked if I could come over to her place.

Nina replied: I'd love to see you Fi, but idk if you should climb these stairs again. Can I come to you?

She had a point, so I agreed. I took the lunch basket

to our room as I waited on her arrival, not sure I should be loitering out in the open alone.

Nina came quickly, which told me Kayden had probably already been at her place when I'd texted. He dropped her off at my door and gave me a polite smile and courteous greeting before winking at Nina and vanishing.

Nina spied the basket and asked, "Are we having an indoor picnic?"

I laughed. "Please, no. I need some fresh air. Let's go find somewhere to sit outside."

We walked out to the West Courtyard and found a quiet spot to sit on the lawn. I had brought a blanket that Nina helped me spread out on the grass. I noticed she was being very quiet.

“I’m not mad about the letter.” I looked over at Nina and saw her eyes go wide.

“Really?” she asked quietly.

I shook my head. “There’s no point in worrying about it. I need my best friend right now, and I know you didn’t do it on purpose, or anything.”

Nina leapt into my arms, wrapping me tightly in a hug. “I’m still so sorry,” she said.

“I know you are. It’s okay.”

She pulled away and settled back on the blanket, smiling cautiously. “Now, what’s going on? Did you get to talk to Alexander last night?”

“No, he didn’t come home.”

Nina frowned, saying “Hmm.”

“I saw a doctor today. She gave me some medication that is supposed to help me keep my strength up, even while we’re apart.”

Nina arched an eyebrow. “I did think you were looking a bit better today. I’m glad you found something that could help.” But my friend was still looking at me with deep worry on her face.

Trying to prove to her that I was going to be alright, I choked down as much food as I could. I ate half a chicken sandwich, a couple deviled eggs, and a handful of grapes. But then a soft gurgle in my stomach told me any more food might send it all back out again.

We spent the afternoon chatting, then Nina went home when I told her I needed to lie down for a nap.

Kayden met us in the hall outside my and Alexander's bedroom. Nina left me with a big hug, telling me to call her if I needed absolutely anything.

Sapped by the light activity of my day, I eased myself into bed and shivered with fatigue. I checked the time on my phone and saw it had been about six hours since I'd taken my first dose of the medication. I shuffled another pill out of the bottle and swallowed it down with a sip of water, then let my body ease back into our big, soft bed. I wrapped the covers tight around my shoulders and drifted off to sleep.

I woke hours later feeling revived, but still sleepy. The room was deadly quiet. I stretched my arms out and turned over onto my other side. I ran my palm along the blankets on Alexander's side of the bed, pressing them flat.

It was not just the bed that was empty. Looking at the

vacant space where my fiancé should have been lying beside me, I felt a strange emptiness inside of me, too.

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## THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

### Chapter 40 I Was Aching For Him



I woke to a fresh wave of disappointment in the morning, shivering awake in the cold, realizing as I came to consciousness that I was still alone.

Before I could forget, I sat up and took another pill immediately. I took a bath next, letting myself soak in the lavender-scented, piping hot water until I felt alive again.



I resolved to take my mind off Alexander today, and that meant getting out of the palace. I still hadn't seen Grandfather since the day of the wedding, considering how my father had abducted me the last time that I tried to visit the nursing home. I felt fearful as I considered making the trip there once again.

But I am not a person who makes decisions based on fear. I was not going to hide out in the palace for the rest of my life, and my father could find me anywhere. I could not let fear of him keep me from living my life.

I got myself ready and called for a car to take me to town. And on the way out, I passed through the kitchen to collect a basket of assorted pastries to take with me.

But once the car pulled up to the nursing home, I was struck with a fresh surge of fear. The driver opened

my door and I stepped out, looking around nervously.

“Do you mind walking me to the door?” I asked the driver.

He nodded without question and escorted me to the front of the building, where he stood to the side and held the big glass door open for me. I breathed a sigh of relief when I reached the front desk. I signed the visitor’s log and told the smiling receptionist that I knew where I was going. She happily returned to her paperwork without further conversation.

Grandfather was snoozing when I entered his room. I closed the door carefully behind me, so as to not make a sound and wake him. The white drapes were still closed over the big windows that lined his room, and the room smelled stale, like sleep.

I went to Grandfather’s bedside. He was breathing

noisily through his mouth. Sound asleep.

I smiled, happy just to see him. It was my mistake, coming here too early in the morning. I set the pastries on his bedside table and fished a pen out of my purse.

I found an old receipt on the bedside table that I pressed flat, turned over, and wrote a note on the back of it:

A gift for you, Grandfather. With love from Fiona.

I tucked the note into the basket then tiptoed to his side and planted a gentle kiss on his temple. His skin was cold to the touch. I took an extra blanket that was folded at the foot of his bed and laid it flat over the bed, tucking it in tightly around his shoulders.

Grandfather did not wake, but he sighed heavily, and his body seemed to relax under the fresh warmth of

the extra blanket.

I made it to the door before I remembered my promise to myself: I was going to take better care of my body, and that meant eating. I went back to the table and carefully extracted a cinnamon roll from the basket of pastries, trying hard not to make a sound. Then I crept away, closing the door delicately behind me.

I strolled down to the garden and sat on a bench to eat my treat. My appetite was better than I expected, and I gobbled down the cinnamon roll with pleasure, smiling as I licked icing off my fingers.

On the way back to the palace, we passed through a downtown area. I asked the driver to make a quick stop when I spotted a newsstand, where I bought a stack of business and finance magazines.

I may have resigned my position with my father's

business, but that just meant I was ready for something new. I needed to start brushing up on what was happening in the market before I could even consider applying for a position with a new firm.

I collected some more food from the kitchen and took it back to the room with me. I sat in bed and created a nest of pillows around me for support. Then I lay on my side comfortably, snacking idly while studying stock reports.

Of course, after reading through most of one magazine, I drifted off. It was dark when I woke, and my magazine was splayed on the floor next to the bed. I eased upright and started to tidy up. I was probably just going to clean up and get myself properly dressed for bed, then go right back to sleep. My body needed the rest.

Feeling averse to turning the lights on, I opted to light

some candles instead. They were fragrant, scented with lavender, vanilla, and spices, and would lend the cold room some warmth with their relaxing smells and gentle light.

I performed my nighttime ablutions quietly, taking a short, hot shower, then brushing out my hair and cleaning my teeth. I picked up the magazines that had fallen to the floor and stacked them neatly on the table in the corner of the room. The remaining food I'd been snacking on, I packaged up neatly and set aside.

That completed, I lay back into my nest of pillows, hoping for a quick return to sleep.

But sleep did not come.

I was wide awake now. And my body felt tight, like I needed to get up and stretch. I stood and paced the

room, deciding to blow out most of the candles. Telling myself I must be needing more darkness to fall asleep.

But it did not help. In the dark, my imagination came to life. And suddenly all I could think about was Alexander. When I closed my eyes, all I could see was his face. His intense, honey-colored eyes. The way he looked at me when we were in bed together.

Finally, I admitted to myself – I was aching for him. I was in pain after these days away from him. And I was craving some release.

A thought occurred to me and my eyes flashed to my nightstand, where I spotted the orange pill bottle. I cursed under my breath, realizing I had not taken any medication since the morning.

That had to be why I was feeling like this. I was back

in heat. It wasn't that my desire for Alexander was so strong I could not take two days and nights without him. I did not miss him... It was just the estrus cycle.

I closed my eyes and began to touch myself, feeling my body getting wetter as I stroked it. A vision of Alexander flooded my mind once again. I imagined it was his hand on me instead of my own... but no, it just did not feel the same.

I clutched a soft pillow to my chest and groaned, frustrated. Then I threw the pillow aside, into the empty space where my Alpha should have been.

All I wanted was a little relief. I slid my hand between my thighs again, touching the most sensitive part of me lightly. Eyes closed tight, I thought about the way that Alexander's hands felt when they were on me. Big, rough, and full of pulsing heat.



I licked my lips, picturing his broad shoulders and strong, hard chest. My heart was racing, but I still couldn't come. I leaned back, falling into a fantasy in which he was here, and getting on top of me... just teasing me...

“Alexander...”

I had called out his name unconsciously, in something between a cry and a whisper.

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