

THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

Chapter 61 A Bad Feeling

“Fiona! Wait up!” The young man who delivered our mail flagged me down, whisper-shouting my name, as I walked down the hall toward Conrad’s office in the morning, on my way to turn in some reports.

“Hello,” I greeted him cordially. “Do you have something for me?” I passed my boss’s door and met the young man a few yards beyond it.

He clenched his teeth, making an exaggeratedly anxious face, before he confessed, “No. Sorry, I just saw that you were about to go into Mr. Knight’s office, though, and wondered if you would take his mail in? Since you are going in there anyway? Do you mind?”

I turned to look through the tinted windows that lined

this side of the boss's office. We could see him pacing the length of the room inside while talking on his headset. He had a tennis ball in one hand and was intermittently bouncing it against the walls when his arms were not otherwise occupied with the expressive movements that accompanied yelling at someone on the phone.

I felt the sides of my mouth tugging upwards and held back a smile. I was just imagining why the mail kid was scared of knocking on Conrad's door in this moment. Maybe he was worried the ball might be thrown at his head.

"I don't mind. I'll take it to him." I held out my hand, expecting a few letters. The young man shoveled a big stack of envelopes in various sizes into my arms instead. "Oh. Alright."

"Thank you so much," he whispered frantically,

dragging his cart behind him as he ran away in the direction of the elevator.

I glanced down at the haphazard pile of mail in my arms. There was no way I about to walk into Conrad's office with what looked like a heap of garbage in hand. There was a small room just next to Conrad's where a few of our printers resided. I went in there and set everything down on a table beside the door, then started sorting all the envelopes by size. I put the small ones together, those I would stack on top, and then –

I paused, holding a heavy manila envelope that was about half an inch thick. I had been about to stack it with all the other big envelopes, but I froze when I saw the name on the front was not Conrad's.

The envelope was addressed to Alexander.

I narrowed my eyes at the printed address label, the wheels turning in my mind already. Why was Alexander receiving mail at Crescent Ventures? And at the CEO's office, no less?

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I turned the envelope over and found that it was not permanently sealed. It was only tied closed with the wiry red string that they use downstairs in the legal department when they notarize contracts and then send them back for final reviews.

Before I could stop them, my hands were rapidly unspooling the string from the metal fixture, flipping the envelope open, and sliding all the contents out.

My eyes flicked up to the hallway. There was no one around. And I could faintly hear, through the supposedly sound-proofed walls, the consistent drone of Conrad's booming voice as he yelled unintelligibly on a phone call in his office next door.

I only needed to take a cursory glance at the first page of the documents to understand what I was looking at. They were acquisition papers, showing that ownership of Crescent Ventures had apparently just changed hands. And the new owner of the company that I worked for? That would be none other than my own fiancé.

I flipped quickly through the rest of the paperwork, reading as fast as I could to scan for important details.

These were the facts as I came to understand them. Alexander and his uncle had just jointly bought out all the company's minority shareholders, making him and

Conrad the sole owners of Crescent Ventures. And in addition to that, Alexander had apparently already been the controlling owner of the business, having owned, before this acquisition, a slight majority share of the company already.

I hurried everything back into the manila envelope and started retying the red string around the temporary seal. My hands were shaking, and I felt warmth rushing to my cheeks. I did not have time immediately to sort out what this all meant for me. And I would need more information, too, before I could really do that.

It gave me a bad feeling, though. Like the start of a stomachache, when you're not sure yet just how sick you are about to be.

I looked up again, acutely aware that I had been loitering in an odd place for several minutes now. But the coast was clear. It was quiet as church in the hallway, and just as still.

I took a few seconds to fix my face, took a long breath in and out, shut out my feelings and put on my mask of indifference. Then I shuffled Alexander's envelope pseudo-randomly into the middle of the mail stack and piled everything neatly into my arms.

At Conrad's door I knocked twice only, my way of letting him know that it was just me.

He approached quickly, flipped the lock over, and then walked away again in the other direction immediately without missing a beat in his phone conversation. I opened the door quietly, dipped inside, then closed and locked it behind me.

Since we had no meeting scheduled, my boss understood I was just here to deposit something on his desk. He continued his pacing and heated phone argument as if no interruption had occurred at all. I crossed the room and went around behind his desk, kicking his rolling chair to the side since my hands were full. I stacked the mail neatly into a wire bin on the corner of the desk, then arranged my reports in the center. I also took the opportunity to straighten out Conrad's pen tray and toothpick holder, setting everything just-so on the desktop, exactly the way he liked it.

Passing him on my way back out, Conrad turned in my direction and winked, with a tiny flicker of a smile appearing on his mouth for a split second. I offered him a polite smile of my own in return before exiting.

Back in my own office at last, I locked the door behind me and pressed my back up against it.

I still had a full day of work ahead of me, including several meetings at which I was scheduled to speak. There was no use in letting my thoughts spiral on this confusing discovery, distracting me from important matters, until I could give the subject my full attention anyway. I would focus on work for the next several hours, then tonight over dinner, I would find a way to drag an explanation out of Alexander.


And maybe figure out what else he might be hiding from me, and why.

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[THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

Chapter 62 A Very Good Liar





“I was surprised when I got your text,” Alexander said with a smile, meeting me at the door. “And happy to hear that you could finally get out of the office at a reasonable hour. I have to say, I do like it when you’re back here with me before sundown.”

“Me too.” I gave him the softest smile I could manage and started to put away my things.

I’d given it a lot of thought on the drive home. My strange discovery from this morning explained a lot, actually. Why Alexander involved himself with stopping his stepmother from sabotaging my project. Why he didn’t tell me about it. And why he always had such a keen interest in hearing about my work. But it also, of course, raised even more questions. Bigger questions.

“How’d you manage to get away?” he asked, seeming

to enjoy watching me as I moved around the room, getting myself settled. “It sounded last night like everything was just about to take off for your project. I wasn’t sure if I would be seeing you for our regular dinner dates anymore.”

“Well, the time together is important,” I said, my tone even. “I will try to be here more in the evenings. I know it’s necessary.” I put my hands to my pregnant belly, which was growing rounder every day.

He nodded seriously and said, “I’m glad to hear that.”

“I also got some more support for my project,” I continued. “One of the other project managers was assigned to help me with whatever I need. Having him on the team has been a game changer.”

This was true, of course, but it was not the reason I had left the office early tonight. There was still a

mountain of work still waiting for me on my desk. But I had hurried through my meetings, skipped lunch, and worked super fast all afternoon so that I could leave by five, all because I needed time to talk to my fiancé, who I'd just learned was also, secretly, my boss.

“Good.” Alexander leaned against the wall by the door as I finished brushing out my hair and readying myself for dinner. “I’m glad Conrad is setting you up for success.”

I might have flinched if I was not so used to controlling my reactions. It was jarring, now, to hear Alexander speak about his uncle being my boss, and it got me wondering. Was it really Conrad’s decision, as I had assumed, to assign Gerald to help me with the expansion? Or could that actually have been Alexander’s idea, because he wanted to see me returning to the palace earlier in the evenings, as he’d just said he liked?

“Ready?” Alexander asked, holding out his hand. For the first time, I felt a slight reluctance to slip my hand into his, considering all the uncomfortable questions I had swirling around in my mind.

But I did it, nodding, without hesitation, and let him pull me in close. I wanted him to think that everything was normal right now, because I didn’t want to have to confront him directly about his secret. I wanted to provide him with an opportunity to tell it to me for himself.

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To my relief, Alexander didn’t immediately start

quizzing me about my project when we sat down to eat, like he'd done the night before. Now that I knew what I knew, it seemed somewhat underhanded and sneaky for him to be asking me work-related questions in the context of our dinner dates, as he'd just called them.

Instead, he asked about my diet and wellbeing. Had I been remembering to eat lunch? Had I been eating enough? Was I taking breaks during those long workdays?

I assured him that I was taking care of myself at work, yes. That I did always take a lunch break, even though I had to admit sometimes it was no longer than ten or fifteen minutes, just enough time for food, water, and bathroom.

He gave a small nod, looking at me with a mildly critical expression. I supposed that my answer had

been precisely satisfactory: Alexander my fiancé was glad I was taking lunch breaks, while Alexander my boss was glad I wasn't wasting time on the job.

“And how was everything at work today?” he asked, now making a seamless transition to the inquiry I had been expecting.

I took a sip of water before answering, using the small delay to choose my words carefully. “Good,” I answered. “Productive. Gerald – that’s my colleague I told you about, the other project manager who was added to my team – he has been great to work with.”

Alexander raised his eyebrows and asked, “How so?” I detected a hint of jealousy in his voice, which I had not been expecting or attempting to incite.

It did not take much to make him jealous, I was learning. And I had to admit that I kind of liked it. It

just reminded me that Alexander desired me.

“Gerald holds a senior position, but he has been very respectful to me,” I explained. “That’s been a refreshing dynamic. And it’s wonderful to be able divide the higher level tasks with a peer, rather than just having more subordinates who need to be managed.”

Alexander stroked the small of my back affectionately. He had stopped sitting across from me at the table, and now always kept close beside me, absently touching some part of my body whenever he had a free hand. “That’s great,” he said, with a very casual tone that I now perceived to be well-rehearsed.

“And how was your day? You seem to be in a good mood.” I smiled at him cheerily, as if this were a casual observation. It wasn’t a question, but it did invite a response. It was the perfect opportunity for

Alexander to tell me about his big accomplishment. That he had just closed a tremendous business deal.

But he said, “It was uneventful,” looking down at his plate. “I ran a long training session this morning. I suppose I am feeling some relief that the men are improving their performance.”

I sipped at a spoonful of soup, offering more time for Alexander to elaborate. I wanted to ask, “Anything else?” but I did not. I just continued eating, watching his body language and waiting for more.

Alexander cleared his throat. “I saw some news today about my stepmother,” he said, steering the conversation away from the topic of his suspicious mood. He wiped his mouth with a white napkin, scrubbing it hard over his lips. If he was trying to wipe

away a smile, he did not succeed – a tiny bit of it lingered behind. “Looks like she’s going to court next month to stand trial for the embezzlement charges.”

“Wow.” My surprise was genuine. My workday had flown by, and I hadn’t made any time to check the news. “That’s good, I guess.”

Now the arrogant smile just came bursting forth as Alexander added, “I wasn’t sure my father would actually go through with a trial. I considered that he might excuse her of all charges, whether or not he believed she was guilty.”

Though my appetite was waning, I busied my mouth with more food and drink. My mind was suddenly racing on a rather troubling theme and I was lost to my thoughts, hardly hearing any more of Alexander’s words as he continued on.

It was dawning on me that destroying Scarlet was a personal goal for Alexander. Something he'd been planning and working on for a long time. She was, after all, a proxy for his rival to the throne, and clearly there was even more bad blood between the two of them than I knew about.

And everything Alexander was doing right now, to take down Scarlet's business enterprises and reveal her crimes, was also working to ensure his own status as Alpha King.

Alexander was taking his stepmother to war. And he was using me to do it.

If that were true, it was also possible that all his recent displays of affection, supportive words, and nice gestures were part of the manipulation, too. Perhaps Alexander was another good actor, just like his uncle who winked at me and gave me praise and pep talks

in the office. Perhaps it was all just a management strategy.

I didn't want to believe it. And I simply could not be sure of Alexander's intentions without hearing it from his own lips. But if he was not going to afford me the luxury of an honest explanation, all I could do was continue to speculate.

And now, my instinct was telling me to be wary.

I had grown very comfortable with Alexander, but it was time to put my guard back up around this man, who could very well be using me like a pawn on a chessboard.

I looked him in the eye. He smiled at me sweetly, with an expression full of warmth and affection, and stroked my neck in a way that sent a tingle down my spine.

He was a very good liar.

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THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

Chapter 63 Come Quickly



I took a very short shower and readied myself for bed once Alexander was gone to lead evening training with his pack. I was tired enough to fall asleep early, and I wasn't sure I was capable of letting him touch me right now, while my mind was still wired and racing through everything.

Just this morning I had learned that Alexander had been keeping secret from me the fact that he actually

owned the company I worked for. And when I provided him with a chance to come clean, he chose to keep hiding it from me.

So here I was, sitting cross-legged in bed alone, with the drawer of my bedside table rolled open. The orange prescription bottle I had received from the palace doctor, back when Alexander had left me alone for a few days and I'd started to grow ill – it was still half full. I pulled it out from the back of the drawer and reread the usage label.

Sighing, I popped the lid off and scooted a single pill out. Threw the pill into my mouth and drank it down with a sip of water.

The medication was not a long-term solution. It helped keep my hormones in control if I couldn't be with Alexander, but not for long. All I wanted, though, was a little distance from him tonight. I did not want to

keep looking him in the eye right now. Not while I knew he was lying to me.

I fell asleep alone, but woke with my head resting against Alexander's chest, and his arm around me.

The heat of our bodies together was intense, and I felt relief from the touch of the cool air as I started peeling our bodies apart. I moved slowly and carefully, trying not to wake him. It was still very early in the morning, but my alarm was set to go off within the next hour anyway, so I figured I would just get up.

But once I had detached myself from Alexander completely, I felt suddenly very cold and tired. My body begged me to get back under the covers and back in touch with his skin again. I shivered and pulled a blanket around my chest while I considered my options.

I looked over at Alexander as he slept. His rough blond hair was splayed around his head on the pillow, looking like a lion's mane. The sharp edges of his chiseled jaw and cheek bones tempted me to trace their perfect lines with my fingertips. His strong chest was exposed, the blanket only covering him from the waist down. I started to salivate.

It was either wake him up or take another pill. Those were the options my body was giving me.

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I slid back down under the covers and made my way back to the position in which I had woken up. Dragged my fingertips lightly across Alexander's chest, feeling a slight change in his body as he started to react to my touch.

His breathing quickened, and then Alexander let out a soft moan and lazily reached one hand up to meet mine on his chest. I took the opportunity to press my hand further up his body, stoking his neck and throat. He shivered, grasped my wrist tightly, and opened his eyes.

I smiled at him and licked my lips. The look he gave me in return was serious, his eyes stern and dark with desire. I pressed my fingers to his chest again and now started to run them downwards, down the center of his body, with a soft touch.

Finally Alexander could not take it any longer. He was wide awake and on top of me, positioning our bodies carefully, anxious to get inside me. I was anxious for it, too. I could not hold back my pleasure, moaning with relief as he slid in and out of me. I knew I was going to come quickly. I dug my fingernails into his flesh, knowing it set him off, and moved one of his

hands to my breasts, running them over my hard nipples. He loved it as much as I knew he would, and soon I was taking him with me into the panting and staggering of satisfaction.

Alexander exhaled loudly, like a dragon's breath, and fell against the bed next to me once he was finished.

I didn't want him to drape his limbs all over me like he usually did after we had sex. I was not in a mood for cuddling. So I slid away across the silk sheets before he could get his hands on me again, and got up out of bed, heading for the bathroom to start getting ready for work.

I didn't look back until I was closing the door behind me.

Alexander was lying flat, staring up at the ceiling, with one hand over his heart.

Alexander

It was fun, at first, to wake up like that. With Fiona all over me.

But then it got weird in a hurry. She made me come fast, and then disappeared. It was like she simply vanished the second I was no longer inside her.

Fiona had work today, yes. But it was still early, hours before dawn. I looked at the clock on my nightstand: it was just past three in the morning. There was no reason for her to be rushing to the office.

She showered quickly and soon came back out, hair already tied up in a neat bun and clad in a bathrobe, to retrieve her work clothes. I sat up, having been

lying prone in bed feeling disoriented, the whole time she was in the shower.

“How are you feeling, Fiona?” I asked.

“Good,” she answered casually. She went into her dressing room and quickly reemerged wearing a sharp blazer over a purple dress, with her hands busy at her ears, fastening a pair of amethyst earrings. “I slept well. How about you? Still enjoying your good mood?” She stopped a foot away from me and, once she’d finished with her second earring, put a hand to the center of my chest and smiled at me with one eyebrow arched, her blue eyes looking very curious indeed.

I narrowed my eyes, carefully considering how to reply. Fiona was very perceptive. I had, in fact, been over the moon the night prior, having just finalized the paperwork to acquire full ownership of my mother’s

company. But I could not tell Fiona anything about that. I covered her hand with my own and pressed warmth into her cold fingers. “I feel fine,” I answered simply, and then changed the subject. “Think you will need to stay at the office late tonight?”

Fiona looked away contemplatively. Then she returned her eyes to mine and said, “I guess that depends on what the boss wants from me today.”

I nodded. “Just text me. Let me know when to expect you.”

She smiled brightly and nodded back, saying, “Of course,” gave my chest a little pat with her hand, turned on her heel and left for work.

It was getting hard to keep a secret from Fiona. She noticed everything. It was for the best, though, that she didn't know yet.

Because I did not want Fiona to wind up in the middle of my fight with her father. The more she knew about my partnership with Conrad, the more dangerous the situation could become. Not just for my uncle and myself, but for her as well.

I could not let her get mixed up in our plot.

I just wanted to keep her out of it as long as I could.

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[THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

Chapter 64 4 Am



Fiona

I headed off to work early, bundled up against the cold dark of pre-dawn, pondering Alexander's lies. It was clear that he was not planning to tell me the truth about secretly being my boss. At least not anytime soon.

I took my phone out of my pocket and texted Nina, asking if she was up. I was feeling like I could use a friend to talk to right about now, even if it was just a quick chat by text, and sometimes Nina stayed up pretty late.

She responded right away, making me do a double-take at the time before I opened the text. It was four a.m.

Nina: I'm actually in the city rn. wya?

Me: On my way to work. How far are you from the finance district?

Nina: Close. Wanna meet up for breakfast?

My brow furrowed as I re-read her messages. It was convenient that Nina was nearby and wanted to get together, but I did wonder why she was out here at this hour. My best friend lived in a dodgy area at the far edge of town, nowhere near where I worked. And it didn't seem likely that she'd had a sleepover nearby, either. Nina liked to have her fun with men, but she never stayed the night with anyone.

I told her yes, I would love to meet up, and she suggested a place. I gave my driver the new destination and he nodded politely, changing course without question.

Nina was waiting for me just inside the brightly lit 24-

hour diner. Her hair was pale blue today, straightened and pulled up into a sleek high ponytail, and she had a light sheen of matching, ice-blue eyeshadow swept over her eyelids. Her lashes were dark, thick, and extra-long, making me think she had gotten extensions. Her outfit was casual, though – black leggings and an oversized white t-shirt.

“My god Nina, you look gorgeous,” I said as I gave her a hug.

She giggled, giving me a tight squeeze. “Thanks babe. You look beautiful yourself.” She stepped back and looked over my work outfit appraisingly. “Like a real boss bitch,” she concluded, nodding. “Mm-hmm. I’d be scared if I had to report to you.”

“Thanks, that’s exactly what I was going for.” I grinned. This was why I needed Nina.

There were only three other patrons in the bar. One old man seated alone in a corner booth at the back, reading a newspaper and drinking black coffee, and two transit workers sitting side by side on barstools at the counter, eating greasy plates of eggs and bacon and watching a news program on a wall-mounted TV.

“I am starving,” Nina proclaimed as we tucked ourselves into a two-seater booth by the window.

“Sounds like you got something going on and I want to hear all about it, but just know that I am very happy to be here with you right now.” Her eyes flicked to an approaching waiter and she lifted a hand to flag him down, saying, “We’re ready to order over here.”

Once the business of selecting our meals was finished and the waiter disappeared back into the kitchen, I gave Nina a curious smile and asked, “What’s with the appetite? You’re not pregnant too, are you?”

Once the business of selecting our meals was finished and the waiter disappeared back into the kitchen, I gave Nina a curious smile and asked, “What’s with the appetite? You’re not pregnant too, are you?”

Her jaw dropped and she knocked her fist on the wooden table between us, then sprinkled salt into her palm and threw it over her shoulder. “God, no,” she said. “And don’t you go putting ideas like that out into the universe.”

“What’s going on then?” I asked, laughing at my friend’s superstitious compulsions. “Why are you here so early in the morning, all wide awake and dolled up like this? Your energy is wild right now. Were you with a guy?”

Nina chuckled and sighed. “In a way, yes.” She

cleared her throat, then looked me dead-on and said, “Okay. Promise you won’t judge.”

“Promise.”

“I got a job dancing at a club near here.” She paused to let that sink in.

“Dancing? Like...”

“Yes, like stripping.” She shrugged her shoulders. “I got off my shift an hour ago and was just about to head home when you texted me. And that’s why I’m starving – been working the past six hours.”

I leaned back, squinting at Nina. She gave me a tired smile. This news did not feel too surprising, really. Nina loved to dance, and she was good at it. Made sense to make some money off all the sex appeal she had, too. It was certainly something I could never do,

but Nina was her own woman.

“Is it safe?” I asked. “Do you like it?”

“I do,” she said with a coy smile. “And safety-wise, so far it seems alright, though I won’t take anything for granted. The security guards are good, they walk us to our cars after shift and everything.”

I nodded cautiously. I knew Nina could take care of herself, but I still worried about her.

“But enough about me,” she said, waving a hand dismissively. “What’s going on with you?”

Just then our waiter reappeared, carrying a big tray with our steaming breakfasts, my hot tea and Nina’s light beer. I waited for him to walk away, drenching my pancakes in butter and syrup, before answering.

“Tell me how weird this is,” I started in a whisper once we were alone. “It turns out that Alexander, not his Uncle Conrad, is the majority owner of Crescent Ventures.”

Nina took a moment to process this information. Then her eyes went wide. She pressed a hand over her mouth, which was full of food, like she was trying to stop herself from spitting everything out.

“Right? I found out yesterday morning. I... happened upon some mail that turned out to be paperwork related to him buying out all the other shareholders.”

Nina finally managed to swallow her food. “I don’t understand. Conrad Knight owns Crescent Ventures, doesn’t he? He’s always on the cover of magazines and stuff for it.”

“That’s what I thought, too. But I guess Alexander has always been a part owner as well, ever since his mother passed. And now he is the sole controlling owner. I can’t understand why he’s letting someone else run the company as CEO. Or why and how the public has no idea who really owns this huge, influential company.”

Nina grimaced. “Or why he wouldn’t tell you that he owns the company you work for, at the very least.”

“Thank you. That’s what I thought, too.”

“Hm. Yeah, that’s weird,” she continued quietly, shaking her head. Her sparkly eyeshadow shimmered under the diner’s white fluorescent lights. “Keeping that from you, it’s shady. Explains why he involved himself with the Scarlet situation, though, and why he didn’t tell you about that.”

I nodded. “I tried to get him to come clean, too. I didn’t ask him about it directly, but I set him up with a few different opportunities to tell me what was going on. But he just kept changing the subject.”

Nina bit a sausage link in half and chewed it thoughtfully. It seemed like maybe she was holding back from saying something that was on her mind.

“It looks bad, doesn’t it?” I asked. “I’ve been thinking about all the stuff that happened with Scarlet. He has been fighting with his stepmother for a long time, and I am starting to feel like he is using me as part of that fight.”

Nina sighed. “I didn’t really want to say that, but yeah, it could be.” She bit her bottom lip. That was something she did when she was nervous, which was not often.

“What am I going to do, Nina?” It was more of a rhetorical question than an earnest one, but I still needed to ask it.

“I dunno, Fi. But whatever happens, you know I’ll get your back. You call me anytime you need me and I’ll be there.”

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Chapter 65 No Loose Ends



Third Person

“An interesting place to meet.” Fiona’s father, dressed

in a dark brown suit, had his hands in his pockets and was looking around with judgmental amusement.

“It’s not as if we could meet at my home,” the Queen snapped, giving him a severe look. They were at the home of another nobleman, one who owed Scarlet many favors, and had just retreated into a rather old-fashioned library at the back of the house in order to have a private conversation. The bright morning sunlight pouring in through the high windows illuminated thick, swirling clouds of dust motes everywhere.

He met Scarlet’s glare easily, an arrogant smile curling his lips. “You sure have lost a lot lately, haven’t you? Including that nice penthouse office downtown. And, of course, all the leverage you’ve been holding over me recently.”

“Yes. Fine.” Scarlet ground her teeth unconsciously.

She heard the sound of her molars scraping against each other and reminded herself to loosen her jaw. “It’s true. And believe me, I wish it was not you that I needed to turn to right now, but seeing how as my life is on the line, I have had to swallow my pride.” She crossed the small room and approached the Alpha leader of the Red Moon Pack, a disreputable nobleman who she had alternately considered ally and opponent over the years. “I implore you. Allow me to explain to you why I need precisely your help, and why it’s in your best interest to give it to me.”

The nobleman rolled his eyes. “Alright. I’ll bite. What is it that you want?”

Scarlet gestured to a pair of armchairs beside the fireplace. They sat, facing each other, with the orange glow of a low, smoldering fire flickering between them. “What I want is simply to ensure that our tracks are covered,” she began vaguely.

“What do you mean, our tracks?”

“You know what I mean. I am concerned, in light of the pending investigations against me, that we missed something when we were cleaning up after the last time that you and I collaborated. It was over a decade ago, but surely you remember?” A devilish smile flickered across her lips, then was gone, replaced by a grimace. “The girl that got away. The witness. We need to find her.”

The man grunted. The wrinkled skin of his face and neck was growing redder and redder as Scarlet spoke. Yes, of course he remembered everything she was talking about. But he did not agree with her about the witness. “The girl is as good as gone,” he grumbled. “Why go digging around for someone you want to stay hidden?”

“Why?” Scarlet echoed incredulously. “To kill her, that’s why.” Now it was her turn to roll her eyes at her begrudging co-conspirator. “We need to make sure there are no loose ends. Alexander seems to have a skill for catching onto those.”

“Why?” Scarlet echoed incredulously. “To kill her, that’s why.” Now it was her turn to roll her eyes at her begrudging co-conspirator. “We need to make sure there are no loose ends. Alexander seems to have a skill for catching onto those.”

“And why bring me back into this? The way I see it, you are the one under investigation. Sounds like this is your problem.” He narrowed his eyes, feigning confidence and hoping against hope that Scarlet’s next words were not going to involve a threat of blackmail.

“I will implicate you.” She cut right to it. “If, in the

course of my trial, these events from the past come to light, I will name you as a conspirator.”

He growled, his upper lip twitching with frustration. “And what do you want me to do, exactly?”

“Find the girl and kill her.” Scarlet said this as if it were the simplest thing in the world. “You can do it however you like,” she added, “though I would like to see the body afterward. Just to put my mind at ease.”

Fiona

Maybe it was the greasy, sugary diner breakfast that had my stomach upset, or maybe it was just being pregnant. Either way, I was in and out of the women’s restroom all morning, until my stomach was confirmed empty.

I was on my way back into my office from one of

these unfortunate excursions when I heard my desk phone ringing. I hurried my pace to try to catch the call, and snatched up the receiver as soon as I reached the desk, answering without a glance at the caller information on the base unit.

“You’ve reached Fiona,” I answered. “How can I help you?”

“Fiona.” The voice that responded, stating my name back to me, was all too familiar. The hair on the back of my neck stood on end.

“Father.” I sat down carefully, swallowing back a swell of something rising up in my throat.

He made a scoffing sound. “You are a disgrace, you know that?” His voice was slurry, telling me he’d been drinking. But his words hit me like a punch to the gut anyway.

“Yes, I know,” I found myself answering sarcastically. “You have told me already, Father. Now if you’re quite finished repeating yourself, I need to return to work.”

“I’m not finished,” he growled shakily. I should have just hung up. Stubbornly, though, I did not want to give him the satisfaction of any sort of emotional response. “This is all your fault,” he said. “You abandoned your family. You betray your true pack every day that you stand beside that beast.”

My duty as Alexander’s Luna was activated at that. “Don’t you dare speak about Alexander like that. That “beast,” as you call him, will be your King. And he is a better man that you could ever hope to be.”

The last part came rolling off my tongue, though as I

said it, my fiancé's recently uncovered deception did return to my mind. The point was still valid, though. Alexander may have been dishonest, but my father was abusive, greedy, conniving, and stupid. And also a bit of a drunk.

“And you, daughter,” he replied, his voice dripping with disdain, “are a traitor.”

“I am no such thing.” My hands were shaking, but my voice remained steady. “I was loyal to you for many years, even when you did not deserve it—”

“You lie! You were never loyal to me, only to your grandfather. You have no respect for your own father. You never did.” He was getting louder and louder, angrier and angrier with every word.

I had to cover the receiver with my hand and take a long, slow breath to keep myself calm. It was not a

conscious decision to continue listening to my father's verbal abuse. A masochistic curiosity kept me on the line, though, wanting to know why he was calling me now, after leaving me alone for weeks.

“And you've always got to go and stir the pot,” he continued, even louder still. “Always sticking your nose in places it doesn't belong.” He laughed dryly, and the sound made my blood run cold. “You're a troublesome bitch, Fiona, and a slut whore.”

My hand and arm reacted before my mind could overthink and freeze them, slamming the receiver down to hang up the call. Enough was enough.

My father's words rang in my ears. They were not true, and had only been said to hurt me. But they did hurt.

Suddenly my stomach heaved again, catching me by

surprise. I snatched up my wastebin and held it in front of me as I doubled over. But I was dry, with absolutely nothing left inside.

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