

## THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

### Chapter 76 Easier Said Than Done

Fiona

I was reading in the armchair next to Grandfather's bed for a while before he woke. I was very comfortable. He was snoring lightly, and the sound reminded me of my childhood, times past when he would doze off on the couch at my parents' house after holiday dinners.

When I heard the change in his breathing I knew Grandfather was waking up. I made a mental note of the page number I was leaving off in my book and set it aside.

"Morning, sleepyhead." I smiled as he blinked his eyes open. When he realized who I was, a huge smile

transformed every inch of his face into an expression of pure joy.

“My dear granddaughter,” he said in a hoarse whisper.

“Hi, Grandfather. Sorry to surprise you so early in the morning.”

He moved his hand and I reached to hold it. His skin was cold to the touch, soft and slack. I covered the back of it with my other hand, trying to press some warmth into him.

“No better surprise than to wake up to see the beautiful face of someone you love.”

I squeezed his hand. “Can I get you anything? Drink of water?”

He nodded, closing his eyes, and I headed to the kitchenette for a cup of water. Behind me I heard sounds of movement from the bed, and when I turned back around, the linens were all askew. A blanket slithered to the floor. “Let me. Please.” I offered Grandfather the water cup in exchange for the project of arranging the pillows and blankets, getting him set up to sit comfortably upright.

Grandfather nodded, averting his eyes. No matter how long he continued daily life in this condition, I knew this once-proud man still struggled with the humiliation of needing help with tasks like this.

He pulled the cup from his lips and suddenly said, “Fiona. You are with child.”

I chuckled, resting my hands on my belly. “Yes, I am. You’re going to be a great-grandfather.”

“Oh, my dear. You will be a wonderful mother.” He reached his hand back out to me and I held it gratefully. A big smile spread across my face, feeling foreign in its absolute sincerity. Grandfather shook my hand excitedly. Tears pooled in his eyes, swelled and spilled over, sliding through the craggy topography of his face.

“Don’t cry.” I patted his cheeks dry. I did already tell him I was pregnant when I visited my grandfather on my wedding day, but I certainly didn’t expect him to remember.

“Oh, they’re happy tears.” He shook my hand vigorously once more, then dropped it. “It makes an old man happy to hear his family is living on, will carry on his legacy.”

I kept control of my face, continuing to smile. But these words made me very sad indeed. My

Grandfather's legacy had already been destroyed by his own son.

And, I mused internally, even if my father hadn't ruined the reputation of the Red Moon Pack, which had been the work of my grandfather's lifetime, I was estranged from my family now. I could never return. I would never be welcome or safe in my father's pack again. I was no longer a Red Moon Luna, and my baby would have no association with my grandfather's name.

"Is that big man still treating you well?" Grandfather asked, surprising me. "It was so lovely of you two to visit me on your wedding day. Tell me, is he still good to you? Does he treat you kindly?"

"Is that big man still treating you well?" Grandfather asked, surprising me. "It was so lovely of you two to visit me on your wedding day. Tell me, is he still good

to you? Does he treat you kindly?”

Telling my grandfather little white lies had become habit, and usually didn't trouble me. But this felt like a hard lie to tell, especially when his eyes, so rarely like this, were looking into mine with clear, sharp understanding, shining crystal blue in the morning light. I hesitated.

A sad look fell over his face. “You deserve to be treated well, Fiona.”

I pressed my lips together and nodded. “Thank you, Grandfather. I know.”

“You have done me proud. You have achieved so much.”

I smiled, delighted to be carrying on such a coherent conversation with my grandfather.

“You are strong, Fiona. Smart. And beautiful. You deserve the best. Do not let that man tell you otherwise.” He clasped my hand again, looking down at it and squeezing tight. Uncomfortably tight. “Only now, too late, I see how I failed him. I taught him how to fight, but I didn’t teach him how to love.”

Grandfather met my eyes again. The crystal sharpness I’d seen in his only moments ago was now gone. A veil had fallen down behind them, leaving them gray and unfocused.

“Don’t let him hurt you, Fiona.” His voice warbled, sounding frightened.

“I won’t, Grandfather.” I leaned over and pulled him in for a tight hug. “I’m safe. We’re both safe. You have nothing to worry about. Everything is okay. Everything’s going to be alright.”

Nina, who I'd been texting throughout the morning, offered to pick me up and give me a ride back to the palace. I happily agreed. I knew she'd bought a car recently but I hadn't seen it yet. "It's a surprise," she said when I asked what kind of car it was.

Surprise was right.

Nina rolled up in a sleek, shiny silver Mercedes Benz. The sunlight gleamed across its smooth curves as the car pulled around the parking lot and eased to a stop in front of me.

The tinted front passenger window slid down, revealing my smiling friend in the driver's seat. I stormed the door. "Are you kidding me, Nina?"

She grinned. "Get in, girl! Come take a ride."



Nina cruised out of the parking lot while I gawked, wide-eyed, at the fine details of the car's interior, tracing the tight seams of the leather with my fingertips. It wasn't like I'd never been inside a luxury vehicle. That was par for the course now that I lived at the palace. But being chauffeured around in someone else's fancy car is very different from owning one.

I turned the radio down. "Nina, this is awesome."

"Thank you. It's been a long time coming." Her hair today was longer than I'd ever seen it, worn down in loose waves. It was a very pale, shiny seafoam green color. She looked like a mermaid.

"So I take it the new gig is going well, then?"

"It's serving its purpose, that's for sure. I didn't buy the car outright. Got enough together for a good down payment, though. It's nice, huh?"

“Nice is an understatement, I think.”

Nina maneuvered through some traffic on the highway, then got us onto a country road that wove through a beautiful, wooded area and edged us vaguely in the direction of the palace. It was a gorgeous route, and Nina was a good driver.

She told me about her job at the club and the kind of cash she was making. I was stunned. “I wanted to get the car first,” she said, confident and matter-of-fact.

“New apartment is next. That spot I’m at now, sheesh...”

“The walk up those stairs nearly killed me last time. I don’t think I could do that again.”

“This is one of my main concerns. Plus, I have a pigeon infestation.”

I laughed so hard that I snorted. “What? I’m sorry – pigeons?”

“Yes. I’m essentially living in the building’s attic, and the pigeons have moved into the roof. They’re not actually inside my apartment, but I hear them up there. All day. Noisy little jerks.”

I buried my face in my hands to stifle my laughter. “I’m so sorry. It’s rude to laugh. I’m living a very privileged life right now, myself.”

“You can laugh. It’s funny. And I’ll get out of there soon. You know I just never wanted to live off my family’s money. Came with too many strings attached. It’s taken a while to make my own way, but I’m making it happen.”

Nina didn't press me about Alexander, waiting instead for me to bring up the subject myself. I appreciated that.

"I guess at some point, I have to stop avoiding him," I admitted. "I just needed some space, after what he did..."

"And you totally have a right to do that," Nina replied supportively.

"But I suppose I have to just get over it. I can endure anything, you know? It's just a few more months that I'll be staying with Alexander. I need him close while I'm pregnant, that's a fact. And I can't help but feel responsible to him, as his Luna."

Nina sighed. "I wish you didn't have to endure anything that makes you feel bad, Fi."

“What made me feel bad was that I’d started trusting him. I got too comfortable. I just need to keep my guard up from now on, and not give him another chance to hurt me.”

“Easier said than done.” Nina shot me a doubtful look.

“You know, Grandfather said something interesting this morning. I mean, he was confused, but... he started talking about my father, and said something that got me thinking.”

“What’d he say?”

“He said that he taught my father how to fight, but not how to love.”

Nina frowned, but didn’t respond.

“And I guess that’s what my own father turned around and did for me,” I continued. “Taught me to fight. Taught me to be a good Luna. Taught me nothing about love. Even if I wanted to, I don’t think I’d know how to do it.”

Nina kept her eyes on the road. “Maybe love is overrated,” she said. “Maybe it’s more trouble than it’s worth.”

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

### Chapter 77 The Promise



Fiona

Nina dropped me off outside the palace gates. I felt lighter in my step after spending time with my best friend and my grandfather. I hadn't been seeing enough of my loved ones. Time with them had sanded the edges off the pain I had been letting tear me up inside for days.

Alexander wasn't in our room when I got in, but I saw the door to his office was ajar and a light was on inside. My shoulders relaxed. I'd been tense, bracing myself to find him waiting for me expectantly.

I heard a desk drawer sliding closed, then Alexander's distinctive footsteps before he appeared in the doorway. "Hey. Welcome back." He came inside and closed the office door behind him.

"Thanks. How are you?"

He rubbed his hands together and looked away. "I'm

alright.”

“I think I’m ready to talk now,” I said, surprising us both. I’d just suddenly discovered that I didn’t have enough anger left inside me to keep up the bitter, icy treatment I had been serving my fiancé.

Alexander raised his eyebrows. “Okay. Yeah.” He looked around the room awkwardly, then moved to sit at the table in the corner.

I joined him there. I decided to skip the indirection and cut to the chase. “Tell me why,” I said calmly. “I’m ready to hear what you have to say.”

“Why…” Alexander looked at me with a blank expression, not understanding.

“Why did you say those nasty things to me? I have been nothing but good to you, Alexander. How could



you think such awful things about me? Why did you?"

I thought Alexander had been eager to explain himself, but now that I had asked him for an explanation outright, he seemed reluctant to speak. "I don't want to sound like I am making excuses," he finally started. "And maybe before I answer your question, I could just tell you one other thing?"

He waited for my permission to proceed. I nodded.

"I am ashamed of myself," he said. "You have to believe me."

He was indeed looking embarrassed, like it was taking all his strength to keep his head upright in my presence. I believed he was sincere in his shame. I nodded again to let him know as much.

"You saw the absolute worst of me." He sighed,

shaking his head. “I promise you, Fiona. I will never let that happen again.”

“Why, though?” I asked once more. I felt impatient for my answer now. We could circle back to the questionable promise later.

“The reason I went to your office that day was because I wanted to talk to you about... us.”

Alexander’s already flushed cheeks turned a deeper shade of red. “I think I understand now, but I’d been confused by the way you were treating me. Hot, then cold. I just wanted to talk to you and ask, what had I done wrong? Because the last couple times we were together, I...” He appeared to run out of words. His mouth opened but nothing came out.

“But you do understand now,” I said quietly, “why I was unhappy?” I stared him down, daring him to look away or dodge my question.

“But you do understand now,” I said quietly, “why I was unhappy?” I stared him down, daring him to look away or dodge my question.

He nodded gravely. “And I am sorry for that, too. It must have been troubling to find out that I owned the company, after my keeping it from you for all that time.” He swallowed hard. “I’ve made a lot of mistakes, Fiona.”

I sighed. I was too tired to be irritated. “You still haven’t really answered me,” I said gently.

“I was feeling bad about us. About the way you were treating me, which now I understand. And deserved. And then I saw you with Baron and I just lost control. I promise you, I don’t believe the things I said to you.” Finally he gave up holding my gaze, running a hand down the length of his face.

I wasn't satisfied with his answer. There were pieces missing. But I supposed the missing pieces might have something to do with the rumors I'd heard about Alexander way back before he and I ever crossed paths.

The rumors that Alpha Alexander was a monstrous being. A heartless killer. Maybe that's what he meant by losing control. Maybe sometimes the monster came out when it wanted, and the man I knew as my fiancé was helpless to stop it.

A chill ran down my spine at the thought.

"Are you okay?" Alexander asked. "Here." He shrugged off his jacket and passed it to me.

I wrapped it around my shoulders and felt my body relax immediately. It was warm with his body heat,

and smelled like him. I resisted the temptation to close my eyes and take a long inhale of the scent, not wanting him to know how much I loved it.

“Are we going to be okay?” he asked.

“I think so.” I slid my arms out into the arms of the jacket now, then rolled up the bottoms of the sleeves. Once, twice... several times till they hit a few inches below my elbows. The fit was actually quite comfortable, though it probably looked comical.

He looked me over and cracked a handsome smile. I could not help but enjoy the sight of it. “That looks good on you.”

I stood and went to look in the full-length mirror by the door, making myself smile this time. “What do you think, you want to eat something?” I asked Alexander. “I could go for some lunch.”

He grinned. “Sounds great.”

It wasn't so much that I was over it. Let alone ready to trust this man any further than I could throw him.

Alexander promised he wouldn't lash out at me again, but how could he do that? How could he keep that promise?

But I had to admit that things seemed settled now. It would be irrational to keep holding onto my anger. The stress would only hurt me and the baby. I had said my peace when it all happened. And now Alexander had given me the explanation I demanded (or sincerely tried to, at least).

And to be honest, once I'd let go of a little of the anger, the rest of it just sort of slipped away. It

might've been driven off, too, by a swell of hormones that wanted me to tear off Alexander's clothes off right there at the dinner table. I batted those intrusive thoughts away as long as I could, long enough for us to finish our meals.

We were walking back to our room afterward when I stopped resisting. I slid my hand into his.

Alexander looked down, grasping my hand with a touch that felt, somehow, grateful. Then his eyes moved up to meet mine. I licked my lips. His breath hitched, telling me he got my message.

It felt better now, lying in bed with Alexander without all the unspoken words clouding the air between us. It wasn't really the same, though. Not like it was before. I couldn't completely relax with him yet. My body wanted him, but it still remembered, too, the last time he'd touched me.

Alexander traced the shape of my thigh with one hand, making my blood run warmer everywhere he touched. I guided his hand to where I needed it. The relief was immediate. I didn't hold back, letting myself moan with the pleasure.

He kept his eyes on mine while his hand did its work. The look in his deep, amber eyes was intense. Full of desire, but also full of restraint. I liked it.

He kept himself clothed, though at some point my dress left my body. Alexander knew by now how to make me come with his fingers, just the right places to touch, just the right pressure and speed, and he did it quickly.

I held onto the back of his neck, digging my nails into his hard muscles. He growled quietly behind closed lips, still looking at me with that terribly sexy, intense



look in his eyes. He seemed to be taking pleasure of his own in watching me receive mine. I loosened my hand as the ecstasy faded away into relaxation. My hand stroked his cheek lightly.

He turned his face and planted a tender kiss on my palm. It felt more than nice. But it also set off an alarm in my head: I was not to get too comfortable with this man again.

Alexander felt my energy change, and that was enough. He had both hands off me and was scooting away in the next moment. He slid out of bed, leaving me there alone. Thinking that was what I wanted.

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[THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

Third person

“I’m not going to sugar-coat it. The evidence against you is quite substantial. We are looking at a long and difficult trial ahead.” The lawyer met his client’s fiery gaze hesitantly. He hadn’t been looking forward to this meeting.

“Well, that’s what I have you for, is it not? To argue against that evidence?”

“Yes. Of course. But we must be realistic. It’s not just how much evidence the prosecutor is going to present – and there is a lot of it. It’s how strong that evidence is, as well.”

Scarlet snatched a piece of paper out of her lawyer’s

hands. It was a photocopy of a document that had already been submitted to the court. The apparently damning evidence that the lawyer was talking about.

She looked over the document, of course recognizing it. It was some of the evidence that Alexander had dug up somehow and given to the King weeks ago. Time-stamped transaction records that showed deposits to Scarlet's overseas bank account, totaling the exact same amount of money that had recently gone missing from the royal fund.

She crumpled the paper into a ball and tossed it back at her lawyer.

He frowned, watching passively as it bounced off his chest and rolled down the length of the table, coming to a stop right on the edge.

"I have been framed," Scarlet said flatly, giving the lie

hardly any effort. “By my power-hungry stepson.”

“You can continue to plead innocence – that is your right,” the lawyer replied. “And I will continue to fight for you as well as I can. That is my job. But it’s also my job to warn you: things are going to come up in the courtroom that will not look good for you, and which will be difficult to argue against. Not only this.” He pointed to the paper ball. “They are building a strong case already, and they haven’t even finished investigating. I’m sorry, Scarlet. These are just the facts.”

The Queen stood, pressing her palms flat on the polished mahogany table as she did so. “I don’t care if it’s difficult,” she said, enunciating each word carefully. “Like you say, it is your job to defend me. I expect you to do it from now on without complaining about how hard it is. I simply will not go to prison for this.” She pointed a steady finger in the man’s face. “I

will not. Not if there is anything that can be done about it.”

“Of course, Your Highness.” The lawyer bowed his head. “We will do absolutely everything that we can to make sure that doesn’t happen.”

Scarlet stayed behind in the boardroom after her lawyer scurried away. She paced the length of it, her mind and legs equally restless.

Scarlet stayed behind in the boardroom after her lawyer scurried away. She paced the length of it, her mind and legs equally restless.

She was growing more desperate every day. She could sass and lie to and intimidate her lawyer all she wanted, but she wasn’t an idiot. She knew she couldn’t behave like that in court.

The money and power she worked so hard for – she had lost so much of it. She could not bear to lose any more. And she could not stand behind a witness podium and allow a prosecutor to make her look like a fool in front of the entire nation. She'd been humiliated enough already.

And if she was found guilty, the King would beat and imprison her.

And if, in the course of the trial, her worse crimes were revealed, the King would kill her, too.

But there was one last-resort option that Scarlet could use to put an end to all of it.

It was a kind of ripcord – one she did not want to have to pull. Doing so would have a lot of unpleasant consequences.

Unfortunately, the only other option was to gamble with her life before the royal court and the Alpha King. And her lawyer was right. Her odds there were not looking good.

“Scarlet.” The voice that answered the phone was deep and drawling. “Well, well. What a pleasure it is to hear your voice again.”

“I wish that I could say the same, Donovan.”

“Come now. You needn’t be tart with me already. Not when you have just called me to ask for a favor. That is why you are calling, right? You only think of me when you need something.” He snickered quietly.

Scarlet attempted to suppress an unladylike groan of exasperation, irritated already. She didn’t wholly succeed – the sound just came out muted from behind her clenched teeth. “I’m sure you have heard

about my situation here.”

“Yes, I have.” She could hear the smile on Donovan’s lips as he said this.

An image of his smiling face crowded her mind suddenly. His pale, chalky skin and black, deep-set eyes. She shivered at the memory and shook her head, willing it away. “I only have a question.”

“Hmm? Please, please. Ask me anything you like,” he said, in a way that sounded more than a little dirty and completely condescending.

“Are you in a position to pay for information, if I had some to offer?”

“Mm.” He kept her waiting through a long pause, then asked, “What kind of information, lovely?”



“I may be able to arrange... something like the last time.”

The fact was, Scarlet had nothing to offer. Right now, Alexander and the King Pack were living safely behind the walls of the very palace where she also resided. She could not set them up to be ambushed, not while they idled there enjoying a glimpse of peacetime. As far as stealing information from her stepson... Scarlet had unfortunately lost access to his office when her reckless maid got herself caught trespassing through the secret passage. Alexander had sealed it over afterward.

But she could rustle up something. Scarlet prided herself on being able to make things happen in the palace. She could find a way to compromise the King Pack. If it was something their enemy was interested

in.

Donovan chuckled. “And how very well that worked out for us, the last time, hm?”

“Don’t blame me for losing a war that started with an advantage in your favor,” Scarlet snapped. “The information I traded you did work out well for your side. What happened afterward is your responsibility.”

“Of course, of course,” he cooed. “Hm. And now, you ask if I am in a position to pay you?”

“Yes. That is what I asked.”

“Did you have a price in mind?”

The sounds of Scarlet’s own breathing echoed back at her through the phone. The other end of the line was silent. It had always unnerved her, the way the

undead didn't breathe.

"Double what you paid me last time," she said at last.

The dry, breathless chuckle came again. "You are dreaming, sweetheart."

"How about this," she countered without missing a beat. "I will bring you something, and you can tell me what it's worth to you."

"Hmm. Well, I must admit I am intrigued. I will look at your offering, sure, my dear. We will meet in person, though. That is my only condition."

"You know I can't do that."

"Can't? Or don't want to?"

"Donovan. You know it's too dangerous."

“And it’s not dangerous for me to have this conversation with you?” he snapped, his tone suddenly razor-sharp. “No more calls. You will wait for me to contact you, and you will meet me where I say, when I say.”

Scarlet had to pry open her clenched jaw to answer.

She had no choice but to agree.

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[THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY](#)

Chapter 79 Heartless



Fiona

I opened my eyes with difficulty, rubbing sleep away from the corners. Through the window I saw the sky was darkening, glowing deep blue. I'd been out cold all afternoon.

I hadn't intended to nap the day away, but it had been very helpful. I sat up and felt refreshed for the first time in days, my head clear and my body full of energy.

There was a note on my bedside table. A small white slip of paper folded in half, with my name on it in the same swoopy cursive writing that I'd seen on the card Alexander sent to my office.

"I hope you're feeling better after getting some rest," the note read. "I am out running an errand. Will you please join me for a late dinner tonight when I return?"

Yours, Alexander.”

The knock on our bedroom door was gentle, but it alarmed me anyway. I wasn't expecting anyone here except Alexander. I peeked through the peephole and my adrenaline started to settle down once I saw his beta standing there, a couple yards back from the door.

“Kayden,” I said, opening the door. “This is a surprise.”

“Hey, Fiona. Sorry to just show up at your doorstep like this, but Alex asked me to check in on you. He said you might be sleeping and he didn't want to wake you. But I saw your lights were on and just thought I'd check in. See if you needed anything while he's out.”

“That's nice of you. Come in.” I offered a polite smile and stood aside, motioning for Kayden to please

enter.

He was politely hesitant, clearly not wanting to intrude if I wasn't feeling up to company, and kept an almost too-courteous distance from me as he stepped inside and moved across the room. I discerned his awkwardness with me, especially in the context of a bedroom, to be a display of total deference and loyalty to his Alpha. I could understand that kind of deeply-instilled instinct, and respected it.

"How are you?" I asked, feeling a bit awkward myself. I realized that Kayden and I had never been alone together before, had never held a conversation between just the two of us.

"I'm good," he replied, shrugging. "And how are you?"

The awkwardness was getting unbearable, fast. I decided we needed to do away with the pleasantries.

“I’m just fine, thank you. Please make yourself comfortable.” I motioned to a chair and he sat. “Listen, if it’s alright with you, could I actually ask you a couple of questions while I have you here?”

“Sure,” he said eagerly. “What’s up? What can I do for you?”

“Sure,” he said eagerly. “What’s up? What can I do for you?”

“How long have you known Alexander?” I seated myself across the table.

“As long as I can remember. Our whole lives, pretty much. Why?”

I rallied some courage and dared to edge into more personal territory with my next question. “Did he tell you about what happened with us the other day? At



my office?”

Kayden’s cheeks flushed and he looked away. “Yeah, he told me a little. He’s been very upset over it.”

“Has he always been like this?” I blurted out next.

Kayden looked confused. “Been like... what?”

I narrowed my eyes, first pondering how to answer, then realizing I did not need to. Kayden knew what I was talking about.

“Alexander is a great warrior,” he finally said. “The greatest of our time. He and I have spent our entire adult lives at war together. It’s difficult to explain to those who have not lived the same kind of life.”

“Why has it affected him so much, though? More so than... for example, you? Perhaps even other Alphas,

other great leaders? I know that you have heard what people say about Alexander.”

Kayden nodded reluctantly. “They say that he is unstoppable.”

“Murderous,” I added. “Heartless. A monster.”

He shook his head. “People say all kinds of things. Alex isn’t heartless, I can tell you that for sure. But yes, he did used to be different. It wasn’t war, though, that changed him.” Kayden bit his lip, hesitating. He wasn’t sure whether he should tell me what he’d been about to tell me.

I waited patiently for him to continue. Sometimes that’s all you need to do to get someone to talk. People don’t like silence – they’re compelled to fill it.

Kayden had very nice teeth, I noted while waiting him

out. Perfect and pearly white, striking in contrast to his olive complexion and pitch black hair.

Finally he broke down and asked, “Has he ever talked to you about his mother?”

I frowned. Alexander and I were in a relationship, sure. We were engaged to be married. But it was an arrangement, or so we’d both always said, and I never really could tell what Alexander wanted from me anyway, so I wasn’t about to let myself fall in love with him. We had not been sitting around pouring our hearts out to each other. The longest conversations we ever had were about work.

“No,” I answered simply.

Kayden nodded understandingly. He seemed to be a

very even-tempered person. He was more comfortable to talk to than I'd expected. I could see why this was Alexander's second-in-command, his most trusted soldier and his best friend.

"She died while we were away," Kayden said. "We were both nineteen. Neither of us had been in combat yet when the war started. No one knows how they got the troops' locations, but the vampires ambushed all the active forces, slaughtering thousands of wolves, including every Alpha leader on the field. Alex was sent to lead the few remaining troops in a counterstrike. I went with him. And we'd just won our first battle – a brutal one, which we barely came through alive – when he received the news of his mother's death."

"That must have been hard for him."

"Yes." Kayden got a faraway look in his eyes. "He felt

guilty that he didn't get to say goodbye. After that, combat became his only purpose. Hm. I guess you're right. He did internalize the war more than any of the rest of us. He's our Alpha, though. It's what's expected of him anyway. But I think the worst thing for Alex is that he'll just never forgive himself for not being there to protect his mother, at the end..."

"Protect her?" My eyebrows shot up. "I thought his mother died of an illness. Didn't she?"

Kayden's eyes darted away from mine again. "I guess I meant to say, to take care of her. When she was sick."

"Hm." Curiosity made me want to ask more questions about this, but I reasoned I might have already pushed my luck far enough. Kayden was starting to look uncomfortable. "Thank you," I said with a polite smile. "I appreciate you checking in on me tonight,

truly. It was nice to have some company and I enjoyed talking with you.”

“The pleasure was mine, Fiona.” Kayden inclined his head slightly in a polite bow before heading for the door.

I was right behind him with my hand on the doorknob, ready to say goodbye, when he paused and swiveled on his heel to face me again.

He said, “Alex is lucky to have you, you know. You’ve been really good for him. And he does know it.” Then he gave me a stiff, closed-lip smile, turned again and disappeared down the hall before I could think of anything to say in response.

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

### Chapter 80 Chasing A Ghost



I closed the door behind Kayden and let my polite mask slip off my face, frowning. Our conversation had been very enlightening but also very heavy. I wondered if Alexander had ever actually grieved his mother, or if he had only been distracting himself for the past decade. It was sad to think about holding onto pain like that for so long.

He'd lost a part of himself when she died. That much was clear. And right at a time when the other part of him, what Alexander had referred to when last we spoke as "the absolute worst of him," was needed most. He'd leaned into his role as Alpha when it was

required and when it was also all he felt he had left. And he won a war as a result.

Kayden was very earnest in insisting that Alexander was not heartless. I wondered what Alexander himself thought about that rumor. Whether he would deny it, like his friend did. I somehow doubted that he would.

I for one did not believe it. Not entirely, at least.

I knew that Kayden was right – people love to talk. They say all kinds of horrible things. I remembered Baron's words, the ones he spat at me when I caught him screwing his mistress on the night before our wedding. He said he hated me for being cold. That I had no emotion, and it made me unlovable.

And Baron wasn't the first person to say something like that about me. I knew very well how lots of people saw me. But I would rather be cold and intimidating



than insignificant and disregarded. And I was groomed my entire life to be a perfect Luna. I knew my Alpha prince fiancé had certainly been raised and trained to fit the role he was born into, as well.

Maybe Alexander and I had more in common than I realized. Not really in a way that made it easy for us to be together. But at least I felt like I was starting to understand him.

I had changed into a simple, comfortable dress after waking up from my nap. I needed to pick out something better for our dinner date. Suddenly I was eager for him to return. I ran my hands along the edges of the garments in my closet, thinking about what he seemed to like seeing me in best. I picked out a soft blue dress with a low, square neckline that showed a fair amount of my breasts, a white gold necklace, and diamond earrings.

And I decided I was going to be kinder to him tonight. I was running out of anger to keep me going on the other route, anyway. I ran a bath with lavender salts and took my phone with me to soak in the tub.

I texted Alexander to let him know I was up and received his note. I wanted to ask when to expect him back, but thought better of it. I just sent my agreement to his invitation and hoped he would offer that information himself in response.

Alexander

“As far as I can tell, this woman ceased to exist the day that your mother died,” my PI was telling me. “That was the last time any of the palace staff – the handful of them that I could find who were working at the time, at least – ever saw her there. She’s never registered a vehicle or leased or bought a residence, at least not with her legal name, since then either. No

employment, criminal or medical records that I can find. Either Iris died the day your mother did, or she's been living as a ghost ever since."

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"And her family never reported her disappearance?"

"No family," he answered. He produced a file folder

from his desk drawer and passed it to me. “No father on her birth record. Mother died when she was nine, had no siblings, maternal grandparents deceased before Iris was born.”

The folder contained only a few slips of paper: a photocopy of Iris’s birth certificate, and death records for her mother and grandparents.

“And how does someone get away with that – living as a ghost?” I asked. “How do you survive in this world without leaving any trace of your existence?”

The PI drummed his fingers on his desk, considering something carefully. “You’d need a lot of help,” he said at last.

I frowned. If Iris had no family, who would have been helping her remain in hiding all these years? Her being dead was, unfortunately, sounding more and

more likely all the time.

“Tell me what you remember about the maid,” Conrad said, flipping the folder closed. I’d brought the records from the PI over to my uncle’s place, even though there was not much in there that helped us. “You said you were familiar with her.”

“Mother was very fond of Iris. She had her around all the time.” I thought back as best I could. “I suppose she and I chatted fairly often, just idle conversations though. She was soft-spoken, mild-mannered. Kind of excruciatingly innocent. She seemed to have trouble looking me in the eye.”

Conrad rolled his head in my direction, arching an eyebrow dramatically. As if to say: lots of women get shy around you.

Suddenly I remembered something. A scene flashed

before my eyes: the very last time I had spoken with Iris, right as I was about to leave to go to battle. I remembered every word of the conversation in an instant.

It was terrible that I had to go to war, Iris said. But, she admitted shyly, she did envy that I would see the world as I traveled.

I hadn't been able to bring myself to tell her that the parts of the world I was about to see were not the good ones.

I would not be visiting tourist sites after all, or anywhere any living creature would envy. I'd be in earthen trenches, stuffing my ears with cotton to keep

roaches from crawling inside them in the rare hours that I slept. Enduring the elements without a roof over my head. Going without a bath for months on end, my filthy hair matting, at times, into dark dreadlocks soaked through with mud and the black blood of vampires.

Sweet Iris was most definitely not a girl with whom a gentleman would chat about such gruesome realities.

It didn't surprise me when she told me, that day, that the only places she had ever been were the tiny nearby village where she was born and then, after being hired to serve my mother, the insular world that existed within the palace walls.

And she said one other thing. The thing that now felt very important.

"I always wished to see the moors," she said. "If I ever

do travel, that's where I will go.”

If Iris survived – if Scarlet didn't get to her first – maybe that's where she would have gone after fleeing the palace.

The moors were at the furthest opposite end of the continent. There was no way to drive through the mountains that divided that region of vast, largely uninhabited moorland from the rest of the country, and to travel there and back by either train or plane could take days.

If Iris was there, I needed to find her. I needed her testimony behind me when I exposed Scarlet as my mother's killer.

I got a sharp, stabbing pain in the center of my chest when I thought about leaving Fiona, though. I didn't know how I was going to do that. Especially not now,



while I was still trying to make amends.

I would just have to figure something out.

Kayden called as I was driving back to the palace.

“Did you check on Fiona?” I asked first.

“Yeah. And she looks good,” he said. “I only talked to her for a few minutes, but I think she’s fine, Alex. She seems okay.”

“Good. Listen, I’ve got another update about the other thing.”

“Yeah?”

“I’ll fill you in on the details later, but you and I are going to take another trip. A longer one this time, I’m afraid.”

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