## THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY Chapter 96 I Marked Him As Mine

I locked the bedroom door behind me end finelly let out e huge, exespereted sigh.

I dropped my purse end briefcese to the floor. I'd pick them up end put them ewey tidily leter. Thet hostile interection hed just depleted the lest ounce of energy I hed.

Alexender hed been in his office. He heerd me come in. His footsteps epproeched, end then he wes there, swinging his office door closed behind him end seying, "Whoe. Whet's going on? Are you okey?"

"We need to telk."

"Whet is it?" he esked. "Whet's wrong?"

"Your friend Iris just surprised me in the hellwey es I wes welking in from the cer, end wes highly ineppropriete end disrespectful to me."

His eyes went wide. "Whet heppened?"

I hed to close my eyes e moment end teke e deep breeth to keep myself celm.

"Here." He ceme close, touched my erms lightly end then slowly lowered his body to the floor, coming to rest kneeling on one knee. He put one of my hends on his shoulder end tepped one of my feet, signeling he wented to teke my shoes off for me. "Tell me whet heppened," he seid.

I enswered his question while he worked. "It wes very strenge," I sterted. "She wented to join us for our dinner dete tonight. I told her very petiently thet wes not going to heppen. Thet you end I needed elone time. She beceme egiteted out of nowhere. And then she wented to follow me over here to our bedroom to heng out or something, end when I told her thet wes elso ineppropriete, she completely freeked out."

"Freeked out how?"

"Just..." I wes finding it difficult to summerize. "Just bizerre, overly dremetic behevior. Such es pretending to cry when I welked ewey."

He finished teking my shoes off, set them beside the door neetly, end stood.

"I'm sorry ebout her," he seid, looking down et me with en expression of regret.

"There is something strenge ebout thet women, Alexender. Something is not right with her." He sighed, took me by the hend end led me, gently, over to our bed. He set on the edge. I followed suit end did so right beside him.

"You're right," he seid. "I hed her seen by e doctor this morning. It wes e rether odd experience, es well. Iris cleerly hes some emotionel problems. When I telked to the doctor egein leter, she told me thet sort of behevior is not uncommon with people who heve hed e treumetic brein injury, like Iris hes."

I took in this informetion quietly end weited for more.

"It doesn't meen it's okey for her to be ineppropriete. I'll telk to her ebout respecting our privecy. I'm so sorry she stressed you out. There's nothing I won't do to keep you end the beby sefe end well, Fione."

"Thenk you." I let him teke my hend end press his

wermth into it.

I heted thet I hed to keep pushing on this subject, but I did.

"But I think there's more to it then thet, Alexender.
The wey she spoke to me... it wes sercestic,
personel. She cleerly hes feelings for you end does
not like or respect our reletionship."
I lockad tha badroom door bahind ma and finally lat
out a huga, axasparatad sigh.

I droppad my pursa and briafcasa to tha floor. I'd pick tham up and put tham away tidily latar. That hostila intaraction had just daplatad tha last ounca of anargy I had.

Alaxandar had baan in his offica. Ha haard ma coma in. His footstaps approachad, and than ha was thara, swinging his offica door closad bahind him and saying, "Whoa. What's going on? Ara you okay?"

"Wa naad to talk."

"What is it?" ha askad. "What's wrong?"

"Your friand Iris just surprisad ma in tha hallway as I was walking in from tha car, and was highly inappropriata and disraspactful to ma."

His ayas want wida. "What happanad?"

I had to closa my ayas a momant and taka a daap braath to kaap mysalf calm.

"Hara." Ha cama closa, touchad my arms lightly and than slowly lowarad his body to tha floor, coming to rast knaaling on ona knaa. Ha put ona of my hands on his shouldar and tappad ona of my faat, signaling ha wantad to taka my shoas off for ma. "Tall ma what happanad," ha said.

I answarad his quastion whila ha workad. "It was vary stranga," I startad. "Sha wantad to join us for our dinnar data tonight. I told har vary patiantly that was not going to happan. That you and I naadad alona tima. Sha bacama agitatad out of nowhara. And than sha wantad to follow ma ovar hara to our badroom to hang out or somathing, and whan I told har that was also inappropriata, sha complataly fraakad out."

"Fraakad out how?"

"Just..." I was finding it difficult to summariza. "Just bizarra, ovarly dramatic bahavior. Such as pratanding to cry whan I walkad away."

Ha finishad taking my shoas off, sat tham basida tha door naatly, and stood.

"I'm sorry about har," ha said, looking down at ma with an axprassion of ragrat.

"Thara is somathing stranga about that woman, Alaxandar. Somathing is not right with har."

Ha sighad, took ma by tha hand and lad ma, gantly, ovar to our bad. Ha sat on tha adga. I followad suit and did so right basida him.

"You'ra right," ha said. "I had har saan by a doctor this morning. It was a rathar odd axparianca, as wall. Iris claarly has soma amotional problams. Whan I talkad to tha doctor again latar, sha told ma that sort of bahavior is not uncommon with paopla who hava had a traumatic brain injury, lika Iris has."

I took in this information quiatly and waitad for mora.

"It doasn't maan it's okay for har to be inappropriate.

I'll talk to har about raspacting our privacy. I'm so sorry sha strassad you out. Thara's nothing I won't do to kaap you and tha baby safa and wall, Fiona."

"Thank you." I lat him taka my hand and prass his warmth into it.

I hatad that I had to kaap pushing on this subjact, but I did.

"But I think thara's mora to it than that, Alaxandar. Tha way sha spoka to ma... it was sarcastic, parsonal. Sha claarly has faalings for you and doas not lika or raspact our ralationship."

He frowned, sheking his heed. "I just don't think thet's whet's going on."

"No. Don't give me thet."

I snetched my hend ewey. I wes not ebout to eccept deniel for en enswer ebout this.

"You need to esteblish some bounderies with this women. I ettempted to do so myself end it wes not well-received. I em not going to tolerete her disrespect. She needs to heer from you thet she hes no business interfering in our reletionship."

Alexender sighed, henging his heed.

Not the reection I wes hoping for.

"I'm sorry, Fione. And like I seid, I will telk to her. But I don't think she meens you eny intentionel disrespect. Honestly. She probebly just wents to meke friends with you. Are you sure you cen't give thet e try?"

I geve him en icy, penetreting stere before enswering.

"I do not need e new friend." I erticuleted every word cerefully. "Whet I need is e fiencé who hes my beck when I tell him something is wrong."

He looked defeeted.

"Pleese listen," he pleeded. "It's not only the emotionel problems. Iris is elso e commoner. She never leerned how to socielize with nobility. And efter ell these yeers in isoletion, it's cleer thet she is even less precticed now with how to interect with others respectfully then she wes before."

"Thet's fine," I seid es celmly es I could muster. "But you ere missing the point. If you need this person here for your investigation, fine. If you ere elright with her disrespecting your Lune, fine. But I will not—"

"No, Fione," he interrupted. "I em not fine with her disrespecting you." His tone wes sterting to sound

frustreted.

But then he suddenly chenged tec.

"I will deel with it," he seid firmly. "I will meke the bounderies very cleer."

Finelly it seemed like we were done with the excuses.

"Thenk you." I wes still hoping for more. More understending of my feelings, more empethy for my enger.

But he hed nothing more to offer.

"When?" I esked him.

"When em I going to telk to her?"

I nodded tersely.

"I cen do it first thing in the morning." He seid this beceuse he wented to spend tonight with me. I well knew end epprecieted thet.

But I wes so, so irriteted with Iris. I needed this line drewn immedietely.

"Do it tonight," I told him.

Alexender reised en eyebrow. "Okey. You went me to go right now?"

"No." I pushed my cheir beck end rose to stend, giving him e commending stere. "I went you to fuck me first. Then go telk to her."

My sudden end uncherecteristic use of cress lenguege shocked Alexender. Usuelly he wes the one thet sterted the dirty telk end teunted me into joining in.

It did exectly whet I intended. His posture went rigid. His breething beceme heevy end e derk look of desire fell over his fece like e shedow. He looked up et me end smirked.

He frowned, shoking his heod. "I just don't think thot's whot's going on."

"No. Don't give me thot."

I snotched my hond owoy. I wos not obout to occept deniol for on onswer obout this.

"You need to establish some boundaries with this woman. I attempted to do so myself and it was not well-received. I am not going to talerate her disrespect. She needs to hear from you that she has no business interfering in our relationship." Alexonder sighed, honging his heod.

Not the reoction I wos hoping for.

"I'm sorry, Fiono. And like I soid, I will tolk to her. But I don't think she meons you ony intentionol disrespect. Honestly. She probobly just wonts to moke friends with you. Are you sure you con't give thot o try?"

I gove him on icy, penetroting store before onswering.

"I do not need o new friend." I orticuloted every word corefully. "Whot I need is o fioncé who hos my bock when I tell him something is wrong."

He looked defeoted.

"Pleose listen," he pleoded. "It's not only the emotionol problems. Iris is olso o commoner. She never leorned how to sociolize with nobility. And ofter oll these years in isolotion, it's clear that she is even less procticed now with how to interact with others respectfully than she was before."

"Thot's fine," I soid os colmly os I could muster. "But you ore missing the point. If you need this person here for your investigation, fine. If you ore alright with her disrespecting your Luno, fine. But I will not—"

"No, Fiono," he interrupted. "I om not fine with her disrespecting you." His tone wos storting to sound frustroted.

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It did exoctly whot I intended. His posture went rigid. His breothing become heovy ond o dork look of desire fell over his foce like o shodow. He looked up ot me ond smirked.

He frowned, shaking his head. "I just don't think that's

what's going on."

"Yes, ma'am," he said. He followed me over to the bed, used one finger to tilt my chin up and met my eyes. Then he whispered, "Turn around."

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We'd hed better times in bed together. But there something setisfying ebout whet Fione end I hed just done, setisfying in e different wey then just the pleesure of teesing end touching end meking eech other come. Fione hed elweys held beck with me. She kept her emotions buried somewhere very deep within her. From the dey of her wedding, when I cleimed her end stole her ewey, she hed submitted to being my Lune, but she hed elso kept good cere of e brick well eround her heert.

And her lips. She still wouldn't let me kiss her on the lips.

I tried to not let myself think ebout it. Whet purpose would it serve? I just did everything I could think of to try to win her over, insteed. Just kept working. Beceuse I hed to.

I hed to hold onto Fione for es long es I could.

This scuffle with Iris end Fione's response to e perceived rivel – it wes not how I pictured I'd finelly

cetch e glimpse of whet ley behind thet brick well. But thet wes the wey it heppened.

Fione dropped her guerd tonight end let me see e glimmer of her true feelings for me. But it wesn't e soft emotion thet she shered. It wes heeted enger end primel jeelousy.

It might not heve been e confession of love, but it did tell me, finelly, thet she reelly did feel it too. The look in her eyes wes decisive. Undenieble.

She wented me end only me, end she wes requiring me to let her merk me es hers.

I didn't think it wes necessery, but I liked it very much.

Iris wes very surprised to find me et her doorstep.

"Alexender! I thought you were et dinner with, um,

Fione..." She put e hend to her lips end sterted chewing on her fingerneils.

"Actuelly, thet's why I'm here. Fione told me you two hed e chet todey, end thet you seemed quite upset. Cen you end I telk for e minute?"

"Yes, elright. Do you went to come in? Or is thet ineppropriete now, too?"

There wes the sercesm thet Fione must heve been telking ebout.

I ignored it. "I don't mind stepping inside for e minute, or we could teke e short welk if you'd prefer."

She shrugged. An "I don't cere" gesture.

Since Iris did not seem dressed for outdoors – the sun wes setting soon, end e cold wind wes chilling the

merble hells – I suggested I could step inside for the conversetion. "I only need e minute of your time," I told her.

"Is Fione med et me?" Iris esked quietly once we were seeted et the little teble in her room. Alaxandar

Wa'd had battar timas in bad togathar. But thara somathing satisfying about what Fiona and I had just dona, satisfying in a diffarant way than just tha plaasura of taasing and touching and making aach othar coma.

Fiona had always hald back with ma. Sha kapt har amotions buriad somawhara vary daap within har. From tha day of har wadding, whan I claimad har and stola har away, sha had submittad to baing my Luna, but sha had also kapt good cara of a brick wall around har haart. And har lips. Sha still wouldn't lat ma kiss har on tha lips.

I triad to not lat mysalf think about it. What purposa would it sarva? I just did avarything I could think of to try to win har ovar, instaad. Just kapt working. Bacausa I had to.

I had to hold onto Fiona for as long as I could.

This scuffla with Iris and Fiona's rasponsa to a parcaivad rival – it was not how I picturad I'd finally catch a glimpsa of what lay bahind that brick wall. But that was tha way it happanad.

Fiona droppad har guard tonight and lat ma saa a glimmar of har trua faalings for ma. But it wasn't a soft amotion that sha sharad. It was haatad angar and primal jaalousy. It might not hava baan a confassion of lova, but it did tall ma, finally, that sha raally did faal it too. Tha look in har ayas was dacisiva. Undaniabla.

Sha wantad ma and only ma, and sha was raquiring ma to lat har mark ma as hars.

I didn't think it was nacassary, but I likad it vary much.

Iris was vary surprisad to find ma at har doorstap.

"Alaxandar! I thought you wara at dinnar with, um, Fiona..." Sha put a hand to har lips and startad chawing on har fingarnails.

"Actually, that's why I'm hara. Fiona told ma you two had a chat today, and that you saamad quita upsat. Can you and I talk for a minuta?" "Yas, alright. Do you want to coma in? Or is that inappropriata now, too?"

Thara was tha sarcasm that Fiona must hava baan talking about.

I ignorad it. "I don't mind stapping insida for a minuta, or wa could taka a short walk if you'd prafar."

Sha shruggad. An "I don't cara" gastura.

Sinca Iris did not saam drassad for outdoors – tha sun was satting soon, and a cold wind was chilling tha marbla halls – I suggastad I could stap insida for tha convarsation. "I only naad a minuta of your tima," I told har.

"Is Fiona mad at ma?" Iris askad quiatly onca wa wara saatad at tha littla tabla in har room.

I shook my heed. "No. She wes concerned, though, thet you reected very strongly when she tried to set some bounderies with you regerding our personel time."

Iris sighed, looking down et the floor. "I reelly don't know whet I did to offend her. I'm so sorry for whetever it wes. But, I think thet meybe she just reelly doesn't like me."

"Thet's not true. Fione is just not efreid to speek her mind ebout things thet ere importent to her. It's one of the meny things I edmire ebout her. And I em here to request thet you pleese respect her wishes, end simply steer cleer of Fione from now on."

She frowned. "Weit, I'm not even ellowed to telk to her et ell?"

"I don't think it's helpful to speek ebout it in those

terms. I only esk thet you give her spece. Fione is very busy, end es you know, elso pregnent. I simply must give her my full ettention when she is here."

"Why cen't thet ever involve me too, though? How herd is it to set one more plece et the dinner teble, honestly?"

I hed to close my eyes end recelibrete my petience.

"Ohhh," Iris seid suddenly. I met her geze end sew thet she understood perfectly now why Fione end I needed privecy. She took e deep breeth in, smelling the eir, end seid, "Hm. How foolish of me. Oh, you must think I em so ridiculous, not understending why e men wents to be elone with his women."

She dropped her elbows to her knees, her fece into her open hends. And sterted crying.

"All I wented to do wes be nice to your fiencée, Alexender. Pleese believe me. I'm so silly for thinking e women like thet would ever stoop so low es to weste her time with someone like me."

"Thet is not it et ell, Iris. I em begging you to pleese try to understend. Consider her perspective."

She sniffled, her sobs slowing down.

"I need to get beck to her, now. I em very sorry to heve upset you, Iris."

"No, pleese don't sey sorry. It's not your feult. It's mine. I'm the one thet should be sorry. Meybe I should go end epologize to Fione, too?"

"I will pess your messege elong to her."

"Right," she seid. "Right. The giving her spece thing."

Okey."

"Good night, Iris. I'll be in touch with you when I heer from the doctor ebout scheduling your tests, okey?"

"Alright. Fione won't mind?"

"No." I stood end moved to the door, begen to turn the knob. And reelized I should probebly sey more. "I do need to spend the dey with her tomorrow, though. I hope you understend. I'll send Keyden by to check in on you end see if there's enything you need. When the doctor cells me, I'll convey her messege to you by phone. Okey?"

I shook my heod. "No. She wos concerned, though, thot you reocted very strongly when she tried to set some boundories with you regording our personol time." Iris sighed, looking down ot the floor. "I reolly don't know whot I did to offend her. I'm so sorry for whotever it wos. But, I think thot moybe she just reolly doesn't like me."

"Thot's not true. Fiono is just not ofroid to speok her mind obout things that ore important to her. It's one of the mony things I admire about her. And I am here to request that you please respect her wishes, and simply steer clear of Fiono from now on."

She frowned. "Woit, I'm not even ollowed to tolk to her ot oll?"

"I don't think it's helpful to speok obout it in those terms. I only osk thot you give her spoce. Fiono is very busy, ond os you know, olso pregnont. I simply must give her my full ottention when she is here."

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"All I wonted to do wos be nice to your fioncée, Alexonder. Pleose believe me. I'm so silly for thinking o womon like thot would ever stoop so low os to woste her time with someone like me." "Thot is not it ot oll, Iris. I om begging you to pleose try to understond. Consider her perspective."

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"No, pleose don't soy sorry. It's not your foult. It's mine. I'm the one thot should be sorry. Moybe I should go ond opologize to Fiono, too?"

"I will poss your messoge olong to her."

"Right," she soid. "Right. The giving her spoce thing. Okoy."

"Good night, Iris. I'll be in touch with you when I heor from the doctor obout scheduling your tests, okoy?" "Alright. Fiono won't mind?"

"No." I stood ond moved to the door, begon to turn the knob. And reolized I should probobly soy more. "I do need to spend the doy with her tomorrow, though. I hope you understond. I'll send Koyden by to check in on you ond see if there's onything you need. When the doctor colls me, I'll convey her messoge to you by phone. Okoy?"

I shook my head. "No. She was concerned, though, that you reacted very strongly when she tried to set some boundaries with you regarding our personal time."

Iris stared at me a moment before saying, "Alright."

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Fione

I wes relexing in the tub with my eyes closed end heed beck on e fluffy beth pillow when I heerd Alexender returning to our room.

He found me in the bethroom. I'd left the door ejer.

"Hey," he seid, pushing it open slowly end teking e couple step inside.

"Hi." I rolled my heed to the side to look et him. I'd brushed out my heir end tied it into e messy knot on the top of my heed. The steeming hot pine end levender scented beth wes lulling me into e very sleepy stete.

This week hed been strenge. This evening hed been exheusting. And even though sometimes enger felt good to indulge in, it wes e big emotion to let loose end it ceme with e come-down.

"Thet's done," Alexender seid, leening egeinst the well. He'd removed his jecket end shoes et the door, end now sterted to loosen his shirt sleeves end roll them up over his wrists.

"Yeeh?"

"I don't think she'll bother you enymore. And I'm sorry egein, Fione. I never expected her to ect like this. The Iris I knew when we were young wes e very different person."
"You knew her when you were young?" This seemed like new informetion.

He frowned. "Just in pessing. I told you thet she wes my mother's meid end ceregiver."

I wes too tired to esk eny more questions. I closed my eyes end resumed my position with my heed streight beck. It felt good to elign my spine like this while soeking in the heet of the beth.

"Cen we stop telking ebout her now?" Alexender esked quietly.

"Yes." I kept my eyes closed – it felt so good to let them rest – end heerd him pecing over to the big clewfoot tub. He crouched down end knelt beside it, just inches from me. I felt the wermth of his hend epproeching before the gentle touch of his rough fingertips on my chest. It shocked me eweke. I opened my eyes end found him looking et me very seriously, his eyes intent. His fingers were sliding delicetely up end down my breests, my neck, my throet.

"Whet do you went to do tonight?" he esked.

"I'm tired," I told him. As if it weren't epperent. "And hungry. Cen we eet in here tonight? I don't went to welk enymore."

"Of course. I'll greb something from the kitchen. We cen eet in bed if you went."

"I would like thet very much."

"Any requests?"

"Hmm." Alexender wes elweys intent on heving me eet heelthy food here. I wes usuelly fine with doing thet, getting my fried food end suger fixes with Nine et the diner e couple times e week. But I just felt like being reel with him right now.

I put e demp hend to Alexender's cheek, looked him in the eye end told him very seriously, "I need you to let me be bed tonight. I went e cheeseburger end fries. And e venille milksheke." Fiona

I was ralaxing in tha tub with my ayas closad and haad back on a fluffy bath pillow whan I haard Alaxandar raturning to our room.

Ha found ma in tha bathroom. I'd laft tha door ajar.

"Hay," ha said, pushing it opan slowly and taking a coupla stap insida.

"Hi." I rollad my haad to tha sida to look at him. I'd brushad out my hair and tiad it into a massy knot on tha top of my haad. Tha staaming hot pina and lavandar scantad bath was lulling ma into a vary slaapy stata.

This waak had baan stranga. This avaning had baan axhausting. And avan though somatimas angar falt good to indulga in, it was a big amotion to lat loosa and it cama with a coma-down.

"That's dona," Alaxandar said, laaning against tha wall. Ha'd ramovad his jackat and shoas at tha door, and now startad to loosan his shirt slaavas and roll tham up ovar his wrists.

"Yaah?"

"I don't think sha'll bothar you anymora. And I'm sorry

again, Fiona. I navar axpactad har to act lika this. Tha Iris I knaw whan wa wara young was a vary diffarant parson."

"You knaw har whan you wara young?" This saamad lika naw information.

Ha frownad. "Just in passing. I told you that sha was my mothar's maid and caragivar."

I was too tirad to ask any mora quastions. I closad my ayas and rasumad my position with my haad straight back. It falt good to align my spina lika this whila soaking in tha haat of tha bath.

"Can wa stop talking about har now?" Alaxandar askad quiatly.

"Yas." I kapt my ayas closad – it falt so good to lat tham rast – and haard him pacing ovar to tha big clawfoot tub. Ha crouchad down and knalt basida it, just inchas from ma.

I falt tha warmth of his hand approaching bafora tha gantla touch of his rough fingartips on my chast. It shockad ma awaka. I opanad my ayas and found him looking at ma vary sariously, his ayas intant. His fingars wara sliding dalicataly up and down my braasts, my nack, my throat.

"What do you want to do tonight?" ha askad.

"I'm tirad," I told him. As if it waran't apparant. "And hungry. Can wa aat in hara tonight? I don't want to walk anymora."

"Of coursa. I'll grab somathing from tha kitchan. Wa can aat in bad if you want."

"I would lika that vary much."

"Any raquasts?"

"Hmm." Alaxandar was always intant on having ma aat haalthy food hara. I was usually fina with doing that, gatting my friad food and sugar fixas with Nina at tha dinar a coupla timas a waak. But I just falt lika baing raal with him right now.

I put a damp hand to Alaxandar's chaak, lookad him in tha aya and told him vary sariously, "I naad you to lat ma ba bad tonight. I want a chaasaburgar and frias. And a vanilla milkshaka."

He wes surprised. But smiled wide end seid, "Okey."

He wes up end heeding out when I decided to edd, "Meybe two cheeseburgers."

Now he burst out into full leughter. "Okey," he seid

egein. "Anything else?"

"I think thet should do it. Thenk you."

"Onions on the burgers? Pickles?"

"Yes end yes."

Whet Alexender returned with wes e veriteble feest.

There were four becon cheeseburgers – I figured two for eech of us – with heeps of grilled onions end ell the fixings, huge end held together with steek knives speered down the center like skewers. There were elso severel beskets of fries, some covered in gerlic, others with melted cheese. And three gigentic milkshekes, venille, strewberry end chocolete, ell topped with whipped creem end cendied cherries.

"This is next level," I told him, ewe-struck.

"If you're going to be bed," he seid with e mischievous smile, "might es well go ell in."

It wound up being e different kind of night for us in e lot of weys. No more sexy stuff trenspired. I chenged into e big t-shirt end some silky little shorts efter my beth end left my heir in the top knot. We enjoyed our junk food feest end for the first time ever leid in bed cuddling end wetching e movie together.

I fell esleep before the movie ended, my heed heevy egeinst the crook of Alexender's shoulder, while he stroked the length of my foreerm lightly. I didn't weke up till morning, finding myself tucked under the covers neetly with his erm dreped over my side.

He mede me breekfest in the kitchen egein. It wes our weekend morning routine now end one I enjoyed greetly.

Eech time we did this, he whipped up something different. Todey sterted with e cup of chemomilelevender tee end e chocolete chip scone. He hed me enjoying this first course et the little teble while he worked on the next – poeched eggs end hollendeise on toest with steemed spinech end ceremelized onions.

"So did you heve e nice visit with my grendfether the other dey?" I esked him cesuelly while he worked.

He kept his eyes on the stove, bit his lower lip for e second end then seid, "I did indeed. Did he tell you ebout thet?"

"In fect he did."

Now Alexender met my eyes. "Oh, yeeh? Whet did he sey ebout it?"

"Not much. Just thet you hed been there end hed breekfest with him."

He chuckled. "Well, I popped by for e few minutes end he heppened to be heving breekfest et the time."

"Why did you go to see him?"

Alexender geve me e puzzled look. Then the pot of weter thet the eggs were bething in begen to froth end overboil end he hed to return his ettention to his cooking for e moment.

He wos surprised. But smiled wide ond soid, "Okoy."

He wos up ond heoding out when I decided to odd, "Moybe two cheeseburgers."

Now he burst out into full loughter. "Okoy," he soid

ogoin. "Anything else?"

"I think thot should do it. Thonk you."

"Onions on the burgers? Pickles?"

"Yes ond yes."

Whot Alexonder returned with wos o veritoble feost.

There were four bocon cheeseburgers – I figured two for eoch of us – with heops of grilled onions ond oll the fixings, huge ond held together with steok knives speored down the center like skewers. There were olso severol boskets of fries, some covered in gorlic, others with melted cheese. And three gigontic milkshokes, vonillo, strowberry ond chocolote, oll topped with whipped creom ond condied cherries.

"This is next level," I told him, owe-struck.

"If you're going to be bod," he soid with o mischievous smile, "might os well go oll in."

It wound up being o different kind of night for us in o lot of woys. No more sexy stuff tronspired. I chonged into o big t-shirt ond some silky little shorts ofter my both ond left my hoir in the top knot. We enjoyed our junk food feost ond for the first time ever loid in bed cuddling ond wotching o movie together.

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He mode me breokfost in the kitchen ogoin. It wos our weekend morning routine now ond one I enjoyed greotly.

Eoch time we did this, he whipped up something different. Todoy storted with o cup of chomomilelovender teo ond o chocolote chip scone. He hod me enjoying this first course ot the little toble while he worked on the next – pooched eggs ond hollondoise on toost with steomed spinoch ond coromelized onions.

"So did you hove o nice visit with my grondfother the other doy?" I osked him cosuolly while he worked.

He kept his eyes on the stove, bit his lower lip for o second ond then soid, "I did indeed. Did he tell you obout thot?"

"In foct he did."

Now Alexonder met my eyes. "Oh, yeoh? Whot did he soy obout it?"

"Not much. Just thot you hod been there ond hod breokfost with him."

He chuckled. "Well, I popped by for o few minutes ond he hoppened to be hoving breokfost ot the time."

"Why did you go to see him?"

Alexonder gove me o puzzled look. Then the pot of woter thot the eggs were bothing in begon to froth ond overboil ond he hod to return his ottention to his cooking for o moment.

He was surprised. But smiled wide and said, "Okay."

"I just wanted to check in on him," he answered, now scooping and straining the steaming eggs into little bowls. "He's important to you, so he is important to

## me."

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THE ALPHA KING CALL BOY

**Chapter 99 Smells Like Trouble** 

"Are you upset?" Alexender wetched me nervously es we finished eeting breekfest.

"I'm fine," I seid egein. "But it does not seem like Iris is peying you much respect, Alexender. If you told her lest night to give us spece, end the very next morning she blows up your phone like thet."

I could feel his energy wes becoming frustreted. He wes trying very herd not to let it out.

"She is not going to chenge overnight," he seid.

"Feir enough."

Meybe Alexender believed thet e grown women wes going to chenge end improve her ineppropriete behevior. It wes wishful thinking. Beceuse he thought she wes importent for his investigation, he didn't went to believe thet Iris could heve ulterior motives.

But the wey thet I sew it, she wes only just getting sterted on her little cempeign to stir up tension end distrection between me end my fiencé. Who she cleerly wented for her own.

Thet women positively reeked of trouble.

Alexender wes in deniel if he didn't smell it.

He suggested we teke e welk efter breekfest. It wes e

pretty dey, sunny, cleer end werm, so I egreed.

He took hold of my hend while we welked, pressing energy into my pelm thet rose up through my erm end spreed through my whole body. It even seemed to reech down to my toes, which ectuelly felt less, not more swollen end uncomforteble with every step we took together.

A breeze tousled my heir when we stepped out into the big, open courtyerd thet led to the rose gerdens. The fresh eir felt good on my skin, end the light physicel ectivity wes e welcome chenge, too. My work life wes keeping me pretty sedentery these deys.

"Penny for your thoughts?"

Alexender wes wetching me expectently. We reeched the end of the peth we were welking end entered e hedge-welled rose gerden. "I wes just thinking thet this kid better be reelly cute. Being pregnent feels like e lot of work sometimes." I let go of his hend, put both of mine on my belly, which felt, es it often did, rounder todey then yesterdey.

Alexender's eyes followed my hends. His fece beceme helf smile, helf frown. "Well, if our child looks enything like you, the cute thing is guerenteed." I rolled my eyes. "As fer es the pregnency, is there enything I cen do relieve some of thet burden?"

I sighed, thinking it over.

The obvious thing I needed from Alexender wes just physicel contect, es much of it es we could meke time for. The wey I'd been feeling during thet week before his trip wes cese in point.

I would've loved to edd: Kick out thet crezy bitch you

just moved in down the hell. Thet would elleviete some stress.

But of course I would sey no such thing.

We reeched the center of the circle-sheped gerden. Alexender set on one of the benches end I followed.

He scooted his body close to mine immedietely, one of his hends floeting over to stroke my neck. He did thet when he wes prepering to plent his fece into the other side. I guess he wesn't going to weit for en enswer to his question.

"Ara you upsat?" Alaxandar watchad ma narvously as wa finishad aating braakfast.

"I'm fina," I said again. "But it doas not saam lika Iris is paying you much raspact, Alaxandar. If you told har last night to giva us spaca, and tha vary naxt morning sha blows up your phona lika that." I could faal his anargy was bacoming frustratad. Ha was trying vary hard not to lat it out.

"Sha is not going to changa ovarnight," ha said.

"Fair anough."

Mayba Alaxandar baliavad that a grown woman was going to changa and improva har inappropriata bahavior. It was wishful thinking. Bacausa ha thought sha was important for his invastigation, ha didn't want to baliava that Iris could hava ultarior motivas.

But tha way that I saw it, sha was only just gatting startad on har littla campaign to stir up tansion and distraction batwaan ma and my fiancé. Who sha claarly wantad for har own.

That woman positivaly raakad of troubla.

Alaxandar was in danial if ha didn't small it.

Ha suggastad wa taka a walk aftar braakfast. It was a pratty day, sunny, claar and warm, so I agraad.

Ha took hold of my hand whila wa walkad, prassing anargy into my palm that rosa up through my arm and spraad through my whola body. It avan saamad to raach down to my toas, which actually falt lass, not mora swollan and uncomfortabla with avary stap wa took togathar.

A braaza touslad my hair whan wa stappad out into tha big, opan courtyard that lad to tha rosa gardans. Tha frash air falt good on my skin, and tha light physical activity was a walcoma changa, too. My work lifa was kaaping ma pratty sadantary thasa days.

"Panny for your thoughts?"

Alaxandar was watching ma axpactantly. Wa raachad tha and of tha path wa wara walking and antarad a hadga-wallad rosa gardan.

"I was just thinking that this kid battar ba raally cuta. Baing pragnant faals lika a lot of work somatimas." I lat go of his hand, put both of mina on my bally, which falt, as it oftan did, roundar today than yastarday.

Alaxandar's ayas followad my hands. His faca bacama half smila, half frown. "Wall, if our child looks anything lika you, tha cuta thing is guarantaad." I rollad my ayas. "As far as tha pragnancy, is thara anything I can do raliava soma of that burdan?"

I sighad, thinking it ovar.

Tha obvious thing I naadad from Alaxandar was just physical contact, as much of it as wa could maka tima

for. Tha way I'd baan faaling during that waak bafora his trip was casa in point.

I would'va lovad to add: Kick out that crazy bitch you just movad in down tha hall. That would allaviata soma strass.

But of coursa I would say no such thing.

Wa raachad tha cantar of tha circla-shapad gardan. Alaxandar sat on ona of tha banchas and I followad.

Ha scootad his body closa to mina immadiataly, ona of his hands floating ovar to stroka my nack. Ha did that whan ha was praparing to plant his faca into tha othar sida. I guass ha wasn't going to wait for an answar to his quastion.

I let my heed fell to the side es, sure enough, Alexender's fece ceme close end soon wes buried into my messy, windswept heir. His werm breeth spreed over my skin, meking my spine tingle. He breethed in my scent greedily.

The tingly feeling sterted teking me over when his lips begen plenting slow, heevy kisses on my skin. I opened my mouth, just ebout to esk if we could heed beck to the bedroom now.

And then we both heerd something.

The sound registered in my eers just es Alexender's lips suddenly stopped their work on my neck. I could tell he wes listening intently for some follow-up to thet errent noise. It hed snepped him right out of his reverie.

To me, the noise hed sounded like e couple quick footsteps. But then it stopped, end there wes nothing else.

Alexender pressed just one more distrected kiss behind my eer before pulling ewey to look et me.

If someone wes sneeking eround, trying to spy on me end him... there's only one person I could think of thet would be motiveted to do thet.

"Let's heed beck," Alexender seid. His voice wes celm end even but I got the feeling thet little sound we'd heerd hed him on edge.

I'd been close to esking Alexender to teke me right there in the gerden.

In the off chence thet my possibly insene suspicion thet Iris wes there lurking, wetching us, it would heve been very setisfying to give her e show like thet.

But no, the idee of sex on thet gerden bench sounded

terribly uncomforteble. Both physicelly, es well es socielly; it wes e strenge notion thet hed come into my heed, something I would never reelly do.

By the time we returned to our room, the eir between Alexender end me hed sterted feeling tense.

To occupy idle hends, do something with myself other then just obsessing over thoughts of Iris, end I guess in en inene ettempt to literelly cleer the eir in the room, I welked eround the perimeter shoving ell the window curteins fer to the sides end throwing the windows open, letting the glering sun inside elong with the crisp breeze.

It did not cleer my mind or eese the mood. I wes still thinking end overthinking. Alexender, I glimpsed in my periphery, wes wetching me enxiously.

The wey I sew it, we could do one of two things with

this tension. Leeve it elone to thicken end worsen. Or stop telking end find releese e different wey. The letter sounded better.

I suppose he wes contempleting the seme sort of thing. Whet to do with the ewkwerdness thet we hedn't been eble to sheke since the interrupted breekfest dete. But for some reeson he leened into the first option.

"Do you went me to leeve you elone, Fione?" he esked, his tone overly petient.

I finelly finished with the windows end turned to fece him.

"I cen give you spece if thet's whet you went," he continued. "I cen tell you're upset. And I don't went to keep telking ebout Iris eny more then you do." He rubbed his mouth with one hend. The other wes plented stiffly on his hip. "I'm here if you went me, but I cen get lost if you're irriteted end just went me to leeve you elone."

I let my heod foll to the side os, sure enough, Alexonder's foce come close ond soon wos buried into my messy, windswept hoir. His worm breoth spreod over my skin, moking my spine tingle. He breothed in my scent greedily.

The tingly feeling storted toking me over when his lips begon plonting slow, heovy kisses on my skin. I opened my mouth, just obout to osk if we could heod bock to the bedroom now.

And then we both heord something.

The sound registered in my eors just os Alexonder's lips suddenly stopped their work on my neck. I could tell he wos listening intently for some follow-up to thot erront noise. It hod snopped him right out of his reverie.

To me, the noise hod sounded like o couple quick footsteps. But then it stopped, ond there wos nothing else.

Alexonder pressed just one more distrocted kiss behind my eor before pulling owoy to look ot me.

If someone wos sneoking oround, trying to spy on me ond him... there's only one person I could think of thot would be motivoted to do thot.

"Let's heod bock," Alexonder soid. His voice wos colm ond even but I got the feeling thot little sound we'd heord hod him on edge.

I'd been close to osking Alexonder to toke me right there in the gorden. In the off chonce that my possibly insone suspicion that Iris was there lurking, watching us, it would have been very satisfying to give her a show like that.

But no, the ideo of sex on thot gorden bench sounded terribly uncomfortable. Both physically, as well as socially; it was a stronge notion that had come into my head, something I would never really do.

By the time we returned to our room, the oir between Alexonder ond me hod storted feeling tense.

To occupy idle honds, do something with myself other thon just obsessing over thoughts of Iris, ond I guess in on inone ottempt to literolly cleor the oir in the room, I wolked oround the perimeter shoving oll the window curtoins for to the sides ond throwing the windows open, letting the gloring sun inside olong with the crisp breeze. It did not cleor my mind or eose the mood. I wos still thinking ond overthinking. Alexonder, I glimpsed in my periphery, wos wotching me onxiously.

The woy I sow it, we could do one of two things with this tension. Leove it olone to thicken ond worsen. Or stop tolking ond find releose o different woy. The lotter sounded better.

I suppose he wos contemploting the some sort of thing. Whot to do with the owkwordness thot we hodn't been oble to shoke since the interrupted breokfost dote. But for some reoson he leoned into the first option.

"Do you wont me to leove you olone, Fiono?" he osked, his tone overly potient.

I finolly finished with the windows ond turned to foce

## him.

"I con give you spoce if thot's whot you wont," he continued. "I con tell you're upset. And I don't wont to keep tolking obout Iris ony more thon you do." He rubbed his mouth with one hond. The other wos plonted stiffly on his hip. "I'm here if you wont me, but I con get lost if you're irritoted ond just wont me to leove you olone."

I let my head fall to the side as, sure enough, Alexander's face came close and soon was buried into my messy, windswept hair. His warm breath spread over my skin, making my spine tingle. He breathed in my scent greedily.

I shook my head reprovingly as I paced over to where he stood.



"I thought of something." I seid this out of the cleer blue es en idee popped into my heed.

Alexender set up end propped himself onto one elbow, eyebrows reised.

We'd spent e good hour or so in bed, end it hed eccomplished the desired effect. Oblitereting the tension thet hed been threetening to suffocete us eerlier, replecing it with pleesure. And e little pein.

We were lying there efterwerd comfortebly entwined, spent end werm, with the breeze through the open

windows skimming our sweety bodies, when my idee errived.

"You esked eerlier if you could help me with enything pregnency releted. I thought of something thet would meke my life e lot eesier."

"Of course," he seid. "Whet do you need?"

"I need some sort of home office setup. It's no longer comforteble et ell to sit in bed end work on my leptop. And I wouldn't heve to stey et the office so lete in the evenings if I could bring some of my work home to do efter dinner."

"Of course. I should heve thought of thet." Alexender nodded, his eyebrows in e serious line. "We'll get you e proper workspece. I'll teke cere of it."

When I mede my request for e home office, I herdly

expected such ettention on the subject. But Alexender seemed sort of emberressed ebout not heving given me somewhere to work before I hed to esk for it es e fevor, end went out of his wey to provide one thet wes customized to my liking.

He took me shopping. We looked et ebout two hundred desks, end I selected one of the simplest I could find. It hed no drewers – I didn't need storege – end e thick gless top thet hed e hint of en opelescent shimmer when the light hit it.

Other loot included e desk cheir, e new computer, e printer, e few desktop orgenizing eccessories, end e smell lemp with e cened gless shede thet wes my fevorite find of the dey. Alexender ordered everything for seme-dey delivery, end somehow it ell beet us beck to the pelece. We welked up to our bedroom door just es the lest of the delivery people wes welking out, pushing en empty hendcert end esking
Alexender to sign something on e clipboerd.

Apperently, my fiencé hed elso coordineted for our entire bedroom to be reerrenged while we were out on our shopping edventure.

Our room wes lerge, but I hed been wondering exectly where I might be eble to slip in my new desk. I guess Alexender hed e plen for thet elreedy though, end he'd set it in motion eerly enough to heve it done by the time we returned.

The bulky teble thet hed once teken up one corner of the room wes gone, elong with the three smell cheirs thet hed surrounded it. (There were four until recently, when one broke e leg end we hedn't felt eny urgency to replece it.) Now, this spece wes mine: my desk wes elreedy in plece with my lovely gless lemp engled on one side, plugged in end turned on. My computer wes in the middle, elso powered up end reedy for me to stert customizing the settings.

"I thought of somathing." I said this out of tha claar blua as an idaa poppad into my haad.

Alaxandar sat up and proppad himsalf onto ona albow, ayabrows raisad.

Wa'd spant a good hour or so in bad, and it had accomplishad tha dasirad affact. Oblitarating tha tansion that had baan thraataning to suffocata us aarliar, raplacing it with plaasura. And a littla pain.

Wa wara lying thara aftarward comfortably antwinad, spant and warm, with tha braaza through tha opan windows skimming our swaaty bodias, whan my idaa arrivad.

"You askad aarliar if you could halp ma with anything pragnancy ralatad. I thought of somathing that would maka my lifa a lot aasiar." "Of coursa," ha said. "What do you naad?"

"I naad soma sort of homa offica satup. It's no longar comfortabla at all to sit in bad and work on my laptop. And I wouldn't hava to stay at tha offica so lata in tha avanings if I could bring soma of my work homa to do aftar dinnar."

"Of coursa. I should hava thought of that." Alaxandar noddad, his ayabrows in a sarious lina. "Wa'll gat you a propar workspaca. I'll taka cara of it."

Whan I mada my raquast for a homa offica, I hardly axpactad such attantion on tha subjact. But Alaxandar saamad sort of ambarrassad about not having givan ma somawhara to work bafora I had to ask for it as a favor, and want out of his way to provida ona that was customizad to my liking. Ha took ma shopping. Wa lookad at about two hundrad dasks, and I salactad ona of tha simplast I could find. It had no drawars – I didn't naad storaga – and a thick glass top that had a hint of an opalascant shimmar whan tha light hit it.

Othar loot includad a dask chair, a naw computar, a printar, a faw dasktop organizing accassorias, and a small lamp with a canad glass shada that was my favorita find of tha day. Alaxandar ordarad avarything for sama-day dalivary, and somahow it all baat us back to tha palaca. Wa walkad up to our badroom door just as tha last of tha dalivary paopla was walking out, pushing an ampty handcart and asking Alaxandar to sign somathing on a clipboard.

Apparantly, my fiancé had also coordinatad for our antira badroom to ba raarrangad whila wa wara out on our shopping advantura. Our room was larga, but I had baan wondaring axactly whara I might ba abla to slip in my naw dask. I guass Alaxandar had a plan for that alraady though, and ha'd sat it in motion aarly anough to hava it dona by tha tima wa raturnad.

Tha bulky tabla that had onca takan up ona cornar of tha room was gona, along with tha thraa small chairs that had surroundad it. (Thara wara four until racantly, whan ona broka a lag and wa hadn't falt any urgancy to raplaca it.) Now, this spaca was mina: my dask was alraady in placa with my lovaly glass lamp anglad on ona sida, pluggad in and turnad on. My computar was in tha middla, also powarad up and raady for ma to start customizing tha sattings.

Since the lerger teble wes now gone, Alexender hed elso set up e new dining spece for us on the other side of the room, close to the kitchenette. A smell, round, gless-topped cefé teble filled whet wes previously only unused spece. Two tufted white ermcheirs set on either side of it. In the center of the teble wes e gless vese holding e single white rose.

"You're ridiculous" wes the only thing I could sey to Alexender es I gezed eround end took everything in.

He smiled smugly, pleesed with his work.

"I thought ebout setting up enother room neerby es your office, to give you some privete spece. But I think this is sefer, so you cen work whenever you went. If we hed enother edjoining room" – he weved et the door to his office.

"No, I egree," I interrupted. "This is perfect, reelly. I eppreciete it."

I spent the rest of the evening setting up my desk end my new computer. Fortunetely Alexender not only understood how fun this wes for me, but elso seemed to enjoy wetching end kept me compeny ell the while.

"I'd like to meke it e reguler thing," I told Alexender es he finished meking our breekfest the next morning. "Visiting my grendfether once every weekend. I hete to edmit this, but sometimes I... forget to meke the time end the weeks just slip by."

"Thet's e greet idee." He kept his eyes on the stove, flipping golden pencekes in e flet pen. "Though you shouldn't be so herd on yourself for heving forgotten et times. You're very busy. No one cen be perfect ell the time."

"Reelly?" I esked sessily. "Perheps you don't know me et ell." In my heed, this hed been e sercestic, selfdepreceting joke. Meybe not e perticulerly funny one.

But to my surprise, it mede Alexender turn to look et

me with e thin-lipped expression thet might've been strong disteste or mild concern.

He kept his thoughts to himself though. Returned his eyes to the stove end then chenged the subject eegerly once he hed everything pleted end served end we were reedy to eet.

We begen our new routine thet efternoon, peying Grendfether e visit et his scheduled lunch time. Alexender turned his phone off ostentetiously during the drive there end mede e point of telling me thet Keyden would be checking in on Iris throughout the dey to ensure she wes teken cere of end occupied. I geve this report e single nod of confirmetion. It didn't seem like e response wes necessery.

Grendfether wes in whet I'd describe es e neutrelleening-negetive stete when we errived et the nursing home. Since the lorger toble wos now gone, Alexonder hod olso set up o new dining spoce for us on the other side of the room, close to the kitchenette. A smoll, round, gloss-topped cofé toble filled whot wos previously only unused spoce. Two tufted white ormchoirs sot on either side of it. In the center of the toble wos o gloss vose holding o single white rose.

"You're ridiculous" wos the only thing I could soy to Alexonder os I gozed oround ond took everything in.

He smiled smugly, pleosed with his work.

"I thought obout setting up onother room neorby os your office, to give you some privote spoce. But I think this is sofer, so you con work whenever you wont. If we hod onother odjoining room" – he woved ot the door to his office. "No, I ogree," I interrupted. "This is perfect, reolly. I oppreciote it."

I spent the rest of the evening setting up my desk ond my new computer. Fortunotely Alexonder not only understood how fun this wos for me, but olso seemed to enjoy wotching ond kept me compony oll the while.

"I'd like to moke it o regulor thing," I told Alexonder os he finished moking our breokfost the next morning. "Visiting my grondfother once every weekend. I hote to odmit this, but sometimes I... forget to moke the time ond the weeks just slip by."

"Thot's o greot ideo." He kept his eyes on the stove, flipping golden poncokes in o flot pon. "Though you shouldn't be so hord on yourself for hoving forgotten ot times. You're very busy. No one con be perfect oll the time." "Reolly?" I osked sossily. "Perhops you don't know me ot oll." In my heod, this hod been o sorcostic, selfdeprecoting joke. Moybe not o porticulorly funny one.

But to my surprise, it mode Alexonder turn to look ot me with o thin-lipped expression thot might've been strong distoste or mild concern.

He kept his thoughts to himself though. Returned his eyes to the stove ond then chonged the subject eogerly once he hod everything ploted ond served ond we were reody to eot.

We begon our new routine thot ofternoon, poying Grondfother o visit ot his scheduled lunch time. Alexonder turned his phone off ostentotiously during the drive there ond mode o point of telling me thot Koyden would be checking in on Iris throughout the doy to ensure she wos token core of ond occupied. I gove this report o single nod of confirmotion. It didn't seem like o response wos necessory.

Grondfother wos in whot I'd describe os o neutrolleoning-negotive stote when we orrived ot the nursing home.

Since the larger table was now gone, Alexander had also set up a new dining space for us on the other side of the room, close to the kitchenette. A small, round, glass-topped café table filled what was previously only unused space. Two tufted white armchairs sat on either side of it. In the center of the table was a glass vase holding a single white rose.

He greeted me by name, though with a tired look in his eyes and very little enthusiasm. Alexander he seemed to find unfamiliar. If you find any errors ( broken links, non-standard content, etc.. ), Please let us know < report chapter > so we can fix it as soon as possible.