## **Chapter 26 : Conflicted Choices**

"She isn't," Ethan stated, a slight irritation in his tone.

"I don't mean to quarrel, but I would like to hear what the lady has to say, Ethan. Plus, you have kept her away from us up in that room the entire time we have been here. I am intrigued to know more of her – and why you are so taken with her."

When all eyes fell on me again, I turned to Ethan. He had a hesitant look in his eyes.

But with a small nod, he gave me permission to respond—not that I wanted to.

"I– well... One day I do hope to meet my mate and have the life I have always dreamed of – with a man who loves me, and will protect me. But, for now, I have other priorities."

I hadn't thought I would have the courage to say what I did, but it felt great to let it out.

Ethan this time.

"That's wonderful. But you do know that, in society today, women often do not worry about destined mates. That is a thing of the

However, I immediately felt that cold atmosphere descend again. Knowing where it was coming from, I didn't dare to look at

past. When they are offered a proposal, women take it. It becomes their social standing, after all. Tell me, what is your station in society?"

The man was asking too many questions I didn't want to answer, and I was more than uncomfortable. I wish I could return to my

room already.

"Father, it isn't polite to ask an Omega that kind of question," Madalynn replied for me as she sipped her drink.

I couldn't argue back. What was I supposed to say? Should I tell them that, no, I was also an Alpha's daughter?

"Rosalie is no Omega."

That my own family sold me?

Rosane is no Omega.

How pitiful was that...

spot.

Suddenly, Vicky's words rang from the other end of the table.

I was shocked at Vicky's words. Even Talon looked at her with disapproval in his eyes. But Vicky showed no sign of regret and

"She is the daughter of an Alpha and deserves respect."

simply shrugged her shoulders.

Madalynn was surprised for a moment, and then her smile revealed even more contempt. "Is that so? Tsk, tsk, poor thing..."

She needed to say no more. I was an alpha's daughter, but I was not with my pack – meaning, ye, I was abandoned by my people.

Talon gave Vicky a stern look, while Vicky seemed sorry that her words hadn't help me, but actually seemed to put me in a worse

Worst yet, Madalynn wasn't done with me.

She raised her glass gracefully and looked me in the eyes. "Rosalie, I heard you have a nice voice. I'm sure everyone here would love to enjoy some entertainment from you."

please the masters. I bit my lip, trying to fight back the tears in my eyes.

She did not hide her scorn in her tone, and her words made it sound like I was a lowly maid or slave, to be ordered around just to

Vicky was terrified for me – I could see the worry in her eyes – but Talon pulled her down to her seat.

I didn't look at Ethan. There was no point. What would he do? Tell off Madalynn? Why would he? She was their distinguished

guest, and I was just a breeder, bought by him. He would never offend her because of me.

I felt that coldness coming in waves off of Ethan again. From the corner of my eyes, I saw his fist clench.

Was he upset that I didn't do what Madalynn asked immediately?

"Miss Madalynn, unfortunately, Miss Rosalie hasn't been feeling well..." I looked up, and saw Talon putting on a polite and an

apologetic smile, trying to talk Madalynn out of the idea.

"Oh, really?" Madalynn interrupted. "I thought she may not want to sing because she doesn't like me."

She then turned to Romero. "Father, am I really that dislikable?" she whined like an innocent girl.

"Beta Talon, thank you for your concern, but I feel fine to sing."

Before he could react, I slid my seat back and stood at the table, surprising everyone.

Ethan's eyes were narrowed, and I could sense that he was getting upset – and dangerous.

No matter what, I could not get Talon in trouble for helping me. I couldn't make Ethan more upset. I needed to do something!

standing up for myself, protecting myself.

I may have hated my father for what he did to me and for the life I lived – but I was still an Alpha's daughter. I had to start

I clenched my fists and took a deep breath.

"Miss Madalynn, it would be my honor to sing for you."

She sneered, seemily pleased with me being so cooperative.

along with a professional smile on my face.

I used to perform in restaurants, so I knew how to handle difficult customers. As soon as the music started to flow, I started to sing

It was a rock song – the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want."

Then I walked over to the band to whisper to their leader what I wanted. He seemed a bit surprised, but then gave me a smile.

As I intoned the opening verse, my gaze traveled around the room. But when I crescendoed into the first chorus, I tilted my head over to look toward Madalynn – who still seemed to be happy with getting what she wanted.

biting her lower lip, hard.

I turned next toward Talon and Vicky, both of whose jaws had dropped. I smiled. Music always brought me confidence and

I repeated the words of the song's title over and over, my eyes shining and a grin on my face.

I'd been feeling impulsive when I decided to do this, but I didn't care whether I would be punished later. However, I could not

As I finished the chorus, I couldn't help but glance over at Madalynn. Her victorious smile had been wiped away, and she was

Hopefully, that meant he wasn't too upset.

I didn't want to spend a single more minute in the same room as Romero's pack. I didn't want to give Madalynn any more

After the dining hall was fully out of sight, my nervousness returned. The stunt I'd pulled had exhausted all my courage. My

His face was emotionless for a moment. Then he chuckled. He shook his head as if he was extremely amused.

"Alpha, may I be excused...please?"

opportunities to insult me.

there..."

Next, I glanced over at Madalynn, and her expression was... priceless.

I bowed to the crowd, then I lowered my head towards Ethan.

knees felt weak, and I tripped on the steps in front of me.

But before I fell down, someone helped me up.

strength.

help but look at Ethan.

He nodded his head, and I took the opportunity to quickly leave the dining area making my way up the stairs.

I turned quickly to see Vicky's apologetic eyes looking at me.

"Rosalie, I'm so sorry for making things worse."

As she helped me up the stairs, a small laugh escaped my lips, and I shook my head. "It's okay. I made a fool of myself down

"Are you kidding me? You did amazing! I was so impressed! And it was great to see Madalynn's reaction. Ha!"

"Ethan won't be happy with how I acted..." I said worriedly.

"I can speak for myself."

His sultry voice wrapped around me, and I turned in the doorway to see him standing behind us. His gaze still had that dark, lusty glint that made my heart feel like it was going to explode out of my chest.

"I'll leave you two, then." Vicky winked at me, and disappeared down the hall as fast as she could.

As my eyes turned back towards Ethan, I couldn't help but notice that his attire matched my own. The black suit fit him in all the

right places, and his burgundy tie matched my dress perfectly.

"I– I'm sorry–" I stuttered.

"So, you're still hoping to find your mate?"

But before I could speak another word, he stepped forward, wrapping his arm around my waist and pulling me close against his

His deep tone made my breath catch in my through. My heart raced as I stared up into his eyes.

body.

"Ye-" I said breathlessly wondering why he cared if I wanted a mate. Out of all the conversations from tonight's dinner, that was

what stuck with him?

"It actually means that much to you, huh?" He interrupted me.

Finally, I whispered, "Yes, it means everything to me.".

His touch clouded my judgment, and the awareness that he was closer to me than I could handle slowly came to the forefront of my mind. I was trying to understand where he was going with the conversation, but I didn't dare answer his questions.

As my last word fell from my lips, his mouth descended upon me, and took away any breath I had left.

A rush of bliss swarmed through my veins as I let myself be lost in the way he made me feel.