

The Alpha King's Princess

#Chapter 5 They couldn't hurt me anymore

Candido's voice pulled me out of my flashback.

I sucked in a sharp breath and looked up at him. He gazed at my face, his eyebrows furrowed.

"Don't be afraid."

My tears fell from my eyes at his words.

He wrapped his arms around me, pulling me to his chest. I leaned back and took a deep breath, trying to slow my racing heart. The sight and sounds of the banquet hall filled my senses, and I averted my gaze from my father.

Everything was fine.

Candido was here.

I would never have to go back.

I would never be abused again.

"Nothing," I said, shaking off the scare and clenching my hand to hide my trembling. "I'm fine."

"I'm not done—" Steven's voice broke off. He stepped back and went a bit pale. I could only imagine Candido was glaring at him as he tightened his grip around my waist.

Silence filled the air again as they glared at each other. Lilian's words came back to me, and I remembered the conversations Candido and I had over the years. Steven had reached out to try and get me back. He'd made visits, probably with the intention to drag me back, but I never saw him. Candido informed me after he left that he had come. He'd tell me some of the things that Steven said about taking me back, but I never had to see him.

Truth be told, my father didn't care about me. He probably walked away frustrated every time, but he couldn't do a thing about it. Candido was the Alpha King. He had no choice but to leave without me every time he came to play at being a concerned parent.

I could even believe that he, Bella, and Lilian were the source of the rumors about me and Candido. He had never said anything about giving me a title in the pack or made any public announcements about my position. Many people thought he was just a tyrant with a fetish for fat young girls, and I was just his toy.

“Your Majesty, it has been a long time,” Steven said tightly. “Clearly, Hedy has forgotten who her family is in your care.”

“No,” Candido said. “She hasn’t.”

Steven’s eyes widened. He glanced between us and shut his mouth before turning away and bringing Lilian along. Bella glared at me over her shoulder and followed her parents. I remained in place, grateful for Candido’s warmth and protection like always.

“We can go,” Candido said.

I shook my head and pulled away. “I’m fine. Besides, it will be good for you to mingle with the other alphas and get a sense of how their packs are doing.”

Candido narrowed his eyes at me, seemingly considering it. I stared back at him, hoping he would let it go. I didn’t want them to run me out of here. I had run once, but there was no reason to run from them any longer.

I wouldn’t just take their abuse and duck my head. I’d get the respect I deserved whether they wanted to give it to me or not. Candido didn’t suffer anyone to disrespect members of his pack and get away with it.

“Fine,” Candido said. “Come with me.”

I followed him to a group of alphas. They each glanced at me and gave me a tight and polite smile. They didn’t think much of me, but they were curious about our relationship. I tuned out of the conversation, just grateful to have a bit of cover. I glanced around, skimming my eyes over the crowd.

They were still staring, murmuring between themselves about the conversation I’d had with Bella and Lilian. I didn’t know how much they’d believe or wouldn’t believe, but I tried not to think about it.

I turned my head to find the bathroom. I had made it all of a few steps away from the hallway when Bella appeared holding a glass of red wine.

“You fat, useless thing,” she sneered. “You should have just died.”

I shook my head, realizing that there was no one in hearing range. It was only a matter of time before she showed her true colors. I could see the jealousy burning in her eyes.

“I’m younger, sexier, and more beautiful than you!” She hissed. “I should be on his arm, not you.”

“Shouldn’t you be speaking to him about that?” I quirked an eyebrow. “Maybe he doesn’t like skinny girls.”

I probably shouldn't have said that, knowing that it would only feed the rumors, but I didn't care. Seeing her burning with anger, seeing her helpless because her prettiness and our father weren't getting her what she wanted, I felt like I was getting a little revenge for all the hell she'd put me through.

She growled, "You—"

People turned, and she seemed to catch herself. With a snide smile, she lifted her glass, mocking a toast to me. To anyone looking on, it was exactly what it would look like. I felt people turning back to their conversations.

"To you," Bella said. "For being so persistent."

I rolled my eyes at her ridiculousness and turned to return to Candido's side. She stepped in front of me. I tried to dodge around her, but it was too late. She let out a scream as she crumpled to the ground. Glass shattered as I looked down at her, and people gasped, looking at us. The wine stained her blue dress. She sniffled as she dragged her hand through the glass and started bleeding. She clutched her bleeding hand and looked up at me like a bullied girl in a movie.

It seemed that Bella wasn't just a vicious, spoiled brat, but she had learned some cunning from her mother over the years.

"Why did you push me?" Bella asked, her eyes growing glossy. She sniffled. "Do you really hate me that much, Hedy?"

The simple answer was yes, but I didn't have to say that as she started to weep like a damsel. She looked pathetic, and it was so fake that I wanted to clap at her performance.

Then, people started whispering.

"How could she do that?"

"Honestly, it's clear she's just jealous."

"The poor girl. Her dress is ruined..."

"How could she do that?"

I clenched my hands and glared down at Bella. She peeked through her blood and wine-stained hands with a small cruel smile.