

Chapter 24

Cullen's glare was enough to make everyone step back. Rissa tentatively stepped toward Cullen and Keith followed her. "I hope it's alright," she said nervously. "I mean you told me to check on her and when I got there she was unconscious and didn't look at all well. So I called Jake and helped me bring her back here. The doc in the infirmary said to put her in a bed and he'd check on her in the morning. So I brought her up here and we weren't sure where to put her..."

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Cullen tuned out Rissa's voice as she tried to finish explaining the events of the evening. He couldn't believe it but Aislinn was lying on the couch asleep. She didn't look well. She was pale and drawn. Her eyelids fluttered periodically as if she was dreaming and her face looked strained and tense. There was sweat on her forehead and she whimpered periodically. There was a small pecked bag on the floor next to the bed. He just stared at her for a moment wondering if he had fallen asleep in his room and this was some cruel dream.

He walked passed Rissa and Keith and knelt next to the couch. With as much control as he could muster he reached out and stroked her cheek gently. "Aislinn?" he said softly trying to wake her up.

"That's why we spoke to the doctor," Rissa said. "She won't wake up. We tried."

Cullen looked back at Rissa. "You did good," he said with a soft smile. Rissa beamed at that and looked over at Meghan as though to say I told you so. When Cullen looked back down at Aislinn she appeared to have calmed some. Her facial features had seemed to smooth over

"Where do you want us to put her?" Rissa asked enthusiastically.

Cullen thought a moment. He knew where he wanted to put her. But beyond the fact that it would send the entire pack into a tizzy because he never took any women to his room, he didn't know how Aislinn would react if she woke up in his bed. When he pulled his hand back her features tensed again and the whimpering started again. That was enough for him. "I'll take care of it," he said. Then to everyone's shock he picked her up off the couch and headed for the elevator. "Keith, would you hit the button?" he called back over his shoulder.

Keith jogged up behind his friend and Cullen could hear him chuckling as he hit the floor button and the doors slid open. He stepped inside briefly to get the button for Cullen's floor. For a brief instant Cullen thought that he was going to escape without a smart ass comment. But he had no such luck. "So," Keith said with a wicked grin. "Do I have breakfast sent up tomorrow?"

"Actually," Cullen said with a growl. "I intend to sleep until lunch." Then he kicked at Keith so that he'd back out of the elevator and let the doors close.

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Cullen had never felt his mood shift from one extreme to another so quickly. He walked through his living area and into his bedroom. He walked to his large platform bed in the middle of the room. As he looked down at Aislinn's sleeping form he noted that she was leaning into him and her features had softened again. He laid her down on his bed and watched her there a minute. The sight of her lying on his bed asleep pleased him far more than he thought it should. He made a mental note to find some way to reward Rissa for taking such good care of Aislinn.

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Aislinn awoke to sunlight streaming in on her face from a thin crack between the drapes on a large window and a warmth radiating through her from behind her back. She blinked in confusion as she took in the strange wall, then the strange bed, then the arm that was wrapped around her. She lay still a moment. The last time she was in a room this posh was when she was first dating Rafe, before she knew what he was. The blankets were soft and satiny and she had spent so long sleeping on that mattress on the floor she had forgotten what it felt like to be in a real bed. There wasn't any one thing she could see that stood out as extravagant. It was all normal bedroom furniture. But between the size of everything and the new/clean look of it all she might have thought she was in the best room at the Hilton.

Aislinn started to get nervous. All she could think about was the fact that Rafe loved places like this. But there was something about the feel of this that wasn't at all like it was before and it certainly didn't smell right. In fact... she took a deep breath and then started to blush. Aislinn rolled back. The arm loosened so that she could move and she found herself staring up into Cullen's face. He was wearing a hopeful, concerned look and he smiled at her.

"Good morning, mo mhúirín bán " he said softly. "I won't ask if you slept well. I know you didn't."

Slowly the memory of last night solidified in Aislinn's mind. The court hearing, the premonitions, Rafe... the mating ceremony. She took a deep breath then smiled as she realized what he had called her. If he had intended to make her feel better about everything she had to admit it was working. She had felt this safe in a long time. She cocked an eyebrow at him questioningly. "Mo mhúirín bán?"

He smiled back smugly. "I thought you knew Gaelic."

She shook her head and decided to not give him the satisfaction of knowing whether she'd understood or not. "I guess I can assume then that she didn't manage to kill you?" Aislinn said changing the topic to something she thought was relatively important considering the position she was currently in on what should have been his

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