

## A BLEAK MORNING

Alex had never witnessed someone was giving birth before, he only knew that a woman bet their own life to give birth to a new life. The pain would be something that one could imagine.

But, right now, Alex felt surreal. The sound of the healers' voice, who encouraged Althea to push her baby, Althea's red face, as she fought for her life and her baby's life.

But there was one thing that was more palpable than the other. The smell of blood. There were a lot of blood.

The thick smell of blood lingered in the air.

Alex had been in battle before, he knew how it smelled to be surrounded by a lot of amount of blood and right now, he sensed it again, but he was not in a battlefield.

How much blood that Althea had lost for giving birth for her baby? Were all women would lose this much blood during childbirth?

Alex couldn't imagine that. It was beyond his wild dream.

Althea was losing so much blood, but she was still alive. This was amazing and Alex got a new perspective of life and how he saw women in general, especially those, who fought for their lives during the childbirth.

And the next thing that was surreal for Alex was when he heard the crying sound from the baby for the first time.

He saw that tiny little creature wriggled its body in the healer's arms. The sound of the cry was so loud, as if the baby wanted to announce the existence of the new life.

Alex was mesmerized. For a moment, his mind drifted to the thought of 'what if...'

"It's a girl!" The healer announced. "It's a beautiful baby girl!"

She placed the baby that was still crying on Althea's chest and the baby started to wriggle.

But, the other healer approached the king and sheepishly asked for him to leave the room. "My king, I don't think this is appropriate for you to be here..." the healer said in small voice, she was scared, but this was

necessary for the king to leave.

Because no matter what, it was already scandalous for the king to be in the delivery room for the woman that was not even his mate, let alone to watch her breastfeeding the baby, which would expose her body even more.

Alex stared at the baby for a while and then left the room. He understood, but he only wanted to stay with them.

Even so, he still forced himself to leave, because he was well aware it would cause trouble, not only for him, but for Althea.

Outside, he met the judgmental gaze from his royal beta and royal gamma. He looked at him sharply. "I don't want to talk about this," Alex immediately cut them off even before they could breathe a complain.

He walked away and the two of them followed behind him. They looked unhappy and they didn't even shy to show it on their faces.

The next day, the rumor about what happened had spread like a wildfire. Of course, the maid, omegas and all the low rank, who lived in the palace wouldn't talk in front of the high rank people, but it was not hard to get the rumor.

Greyson and Northern immediately reported this to Alex.

"Let them talk," Alex said nonchalantly. He stared at the bleak sky in the morning. It felt like it reflected his mood perfectly. "I know what to do."

"You can't do this forever, Alex."

Norther started with his complain, but instead, Alex went out of the room and visited Althea with her baby. She had this little crib prepared in her bedroom, so it would make thing easier for her to breastfeed the baby at night, instead of for her to move to the other room.

"Good morning," Alex greeted Althea, as he entered the room after he heard her voice that allowed him.

Thalia immediately scurried away. She didn't know what kind relationship between the king and Althea, but sure enough she was curious to know about that too.

However, whatever it was, she only wished the best for Althea. She was the sweetest person that she had ever met.

"My king," Althea greeted him.

"How can I be 'my king' when I used to be 'Alex'?" Alex teased her. "Please, just call me by my name. I couldn't get used to hear you addressed me as such."

"It will not be polite, people will talk."

Alex sighed deeply, as he muttered to himself. "Why people care about what other people think and talk?" He heard the same thing over and over again from his two trusted people. "Address me formally only when there was someone around, but if it is only the two of us, please, I am Alex."

Althea wanted to argue, but the look on Alex's face told her not to do that. "Okay," she finally agreed and she was regarded with his bright smile. He looked happy enough with this little favor.

"How is the baby?" Alex asked.

"The healer just came to check me and the baby, she said that both of us are fine." Althea smiled brightly, her baby was full and she didn't make a fuss. She was sleeping right now.

"I am glad to hear that."

"Alex."

"Yes?"

"Thank you so much. I don't know what to do if you were not here with me." Althea couldn't even imagine to go through all of that alone. She didn't even want to imagine it at all.

"I am the one, who should be thanking you."

Alex was not lie when he said that, because he felt like Althea was the one, who had pulled him from under the dark water and gave him hope. He wanted to hold onto her tightly and wouldn't let go.

"Is that man the father of the baby?"



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