

Chapter 16

Silver

I was shocked when Elliot suggested I use him as his model. After the fiasco last night, I was going to ask him again to model for me.

When Leo brought me some of the paintings I left at my father's house, I was surprised when I saw the painting of Gavin in the middle of them. I remembered painting it a couple of years ago when we first met. It was meant as a gift, but I was too nervous to give it to him, so I hid it in my closet.

My cheeks flushed at the thought of my father finding it. However, knowing how popular Gavin was around our packs, especially with women, I figured this painting would go well at the auction.

I spoke to Mariah, the head chef, earlier today while she was making lunch, and she mentioned that I should just ask Elliot once more to be my model.

"He might surprise you," she had said just as she poured me a bowl of beef stew.

Mariah was a wise middle-aged woman who had worked for the Crown family for a long time. As Elliot previously mentioned, she was one of the best cooks in the region. She was not only the head chef at the mansion, but she was also in charge of the kitchen at the packhouse. She had employees that cooked the food at the packhouse though, and she would often go back and forth between the two places. Mariah also owned a couple of 5-star restaurants that she would often check on and work at

between her busy schedules. She was the busiest woman I knew. She travels around the packs often for work, which means she gets most of the gossip up front.

Because she worked for Elliot's family for so long, she also knew Elliot better than anyone. I enjoyed talking to her while she cooked.

"Elliot might seem thick-skinned at first, but once you break through the surface, you'll be surprised to see his soft interior. And I think he might have a soft spot for you," she said, winking at me.

I blushed at her words.

I wasn't sure if I believed them or not, but it was nice to think that Elliot might feel some sort of way towards me. Mariah knew that this was a marriage of convenience, as did Beta Leo and Gamma Erik. My mind shifted back to the present moment as I stood in front of Elliot, wide-eyed at his suggestion.

"Are you sure?" I finally asked him, feeling suddenly breathless.

Instead of answering, he started to unbutton his shirt. My heart nearly leaped into my throat as his abs were revealed to me. He slowly slid his shirt off his body and placed it on the chair on top of his jacket. "Do artists usually have nude models for painting? Do you like that?" He asked, his eyes never leaving mine.

He slowly reached for the belt on his pants before I snapped my mind back to reality.

"That's good enough!" I said quickly. "You can sit down over here."

I guided him over to a chair, forcing him to sit; my fingers brushing across his shoulders, sending shivers throughout my body. His body visibly tensed from my touch and his eyes shifted to meet mine. Clearing my throat, I turned away from him before my cheeks turned too red.

I grabbed a blank easel and my watercolors, along with my stool, and positioned them in front of him so I could get to work.

I walked over to him and showed him the pose I wanted him to do before returning to my seat and getting to work. With a racing heart, I grabbed my watercolor and paintbrushes and started to paint. The room was quiet as I concentrated.

After a short while, I fell into a comfortable pattern, and I felt more in my element. Elliot watched me, his eyes dark, and his face curious. I wondered briefly what he was thinking; his eyes were fixed on my features, and I tried not to notice it, but it was difficult when half of this job was to examine his every feature.

"You haven't gotten dressed," he pointed out, noticing my thin tank top and shorts.

I shrugged.

"I figured I was going to spend the day in the studio," I told him. "What would be the point of dressing up for just myself?"

His jaw ticked, but he didn't make any more comments on my attire.

I was very aware of Elliot watching my every move and occasionally I would make eye contact with him before returning my attention to the painting.