

Chapter 37

Lola

Mate, I've finally found my mate. I'm happier than ever before, floating on little pink clouds. Daisy is here to take me back to the hotel, but I'm barely able to pay her any attention. Caleb is the only thing on my mind.

My pretty mate with the fluffy blonde hair and the body of a Greek sculpture. He is so hot, but that isn't all he is!

Caleb is funny, smart...and, well he is a bit of a clutz, and I have no idea how he has survived this long without someone constantly watching over him, but he is undeniably charming. His smile can light up a room and his laugh, oh his laugh, it's like music to my ears, a melody that I want to hear over and over again.

We have spent three nights together thus far, and I think I'm in love. Did I mention he is a nurse? So goddamn dreamy.

"So, is there a reason you're wearing such a creepy smile?" Daisy asks while she packs my things into my bag. Sabrina is waiting in the car outside, and it's only her and me.

"Well, I grin wider. If I weren't sitting in a wheelchair, I would be dancing right now. "Would you believe me if I told you I've met my fated mate?"

Daisy pauses at that, her eyes widening as her attention travels to my face. "Your mate? Here? At the hospital?"

"Uh-huh, it's the transfer nurse. You know, the one Alpha Xavier called hired to watch over me from another one of his territories. His name is Caleb, and he is so dreamy, Daisy! Like you wouldn't believe."

I expect Daisy to be happy for me and congratulate me. Instead, I see suspicion cloud her eyes.

"Wait a moment, Lola," she begins anxiously, zipping up my suitcase with a little more force than necessary. "You said Alpha Xavier hired him?"

"Uh-huh."

"Okay," she swallows thickly. And do you think Alpha Xavier would actually do that? Hire someone specifically to watch over you?"

A strange chill runs down my spine at her words. For the first time, doubt begins to worm its way into my heart.

"Yeah," I respond hesitantly. "It's not that strange, right? Alpha Xavier cares about his pack members, doesn't he?"

Daisy doesn't respond. It makes me concerned. I can see the hesitation in her eyes and I know the reason she isn't saying anything is because she doesn't want to hurt me.

"Look, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I doubt it was Alpha Xavier who hired Caleb. Alpha Xavier cares about his pack

members, but to hire a special nurse? That sure as hell doesn't sound like the man who rejected me."

Daisy's words land like a heavy blow. The joy that was bubbling inside me suddenly starts to fade away, replaced by an unease I can't shake off. I stare at her, trying to comprehend what she just said, but it all seems so surreal.

"Daisy..." My voice trails off into a whisper, "Are you telling me Caleb is lying about being hired by Alpha Xavier?"

Daisy sighs. "No, of course not. I'm just saying I think you should be careful, Lola," she says softly. "Don't rush into believing everything he says just because he is your mate."

The room suddenly feels cold, my own heart seemingly matching the sudden drop in temperature.

"I...I trust Caleb," I whisper. "He has been nothing but nice to me

Daisy smiles. "Maybe he was scared to tell you the truth? He could have panicked when you asked him about himself. You're his mate, so I bet he was nervous and just said whatever came to mind."

I smile back at her. "That's probably what happened."

"Yeah," Daisy says, her face softening in understanding. "Just don't forget to protect yourself, okay? I also really want to meet this guy."

“You will, but not yet. We are going to have our first real date at the hotel tonight.”

“Oh,” Daisy’s face falls, which I immediately notice.

“What’s wrong?”

“Well... it’s just that Alpha Xavier said you shouldn’t stay at the hotel. He thinks you should be at a safer location and is moving you to a nearby pack house. You will live there by yourself, but it’s safe from vampires.”

“Ah, I get it. It’s a house, so a vampire would need an invitation to enter it.”

“Exactly.”

“Sounds nice.”

“I thought so, too, since you’re so terrified of vampires after you were attacked by one.”

“But still,” I whisper, my fingers absently twisting the hem of my shirt. “I was looking forward to the date with Caleb.”

Daisy reaches out to grab my hand, her fingers gently squeezing mine. “I know, Lola. But safety comes first. Didn’t you exchange phone numbers with Caleb?”

“No,” I pout. “I didn’t...”

“Well, since he is a pack member, I’m sure he will be able to find you. Don’t worry.”

“But...but what if he thinks I’ve disappeared, that I’ve stood him up?”

“He won’t. You guys are fated mates, and that’s a bond only idiots would reject,” she grimaces, and I know she must be thinking about Alpha Xavier. “Anyway, are you ready to go? Sabrina is waiting for us.”

“Yeah, I just...” I glance at my room one more time.

Despite Daisy’s encouragement, I can’t help but feel a tug of guilt at the thought of leaving this place, as if it’s a betrayal of Caleb’s trust. He won’t find me at the hotel later, and he won’t see me inside my room. I feel so rotten. But Daisy is right. I need to stay safe.

With a sigh, I roll my wheelchair forward. “Let’s go.”

The pack house I arrive at is a cozy, secluded cottage nested in the woods. It’s surrounded by tall trees and a high fence for my protection. The exterior is a rich, honey-hued wood, the windows adorned with shutters painted in soft pastels, and the roof blanketed by moss.

I like it.

“I just wonder if Caleb will be able to find me here,” I mutter to myself as I roll up to the kitchen.

I’ve already eaten; Daisy and Sabrina ordered pizza earlier, and there are some slices left on the kitchen table. But I feel like I could go for a light snack-

A knock on the door interrupts my search for a midnight snack, causing me to gasp in surprise. Could it be Caleb? Nah, it's too late for that. Daisy and Sabrina left a long time ago. Did they forget something?

....or is this another assassin vampire sent out to kill me?

Fear grips my heart as I tentatively wheel myself closer to the door, a makeshift weapon – the shoehorn from IKEA – gripped in my hand. My pulse races as I grapple with the thought of coming face to face with yet another danger, another threat to my life.

The knock comes again, more insistent this time, and I swallow hard. There's no peephole to peer through, but I hold my breath and listen.

Then comes a voice, strained yet familiar. "Lola?"

It's Caleb!

My heart leaps in my chest. "Caleb?" I call back, more hopeful than scared now. I toss the shoehorn aside and roll quickly to the door, fumbling with the latch. It opens to reveal Caleb, his blonde hair tousled and worry etched into his handsome face.

"Lola!" he exclaims. "You don't understand what kind of detective work I had to do to find you here!" His breaths are ragged, as though he's been running, and his gaze scans my figure as if trying to find any hint of harm.

"I'm okay, Caleb," I assure him, wheeling back to let him in.

But he doesn't.

He studies the doorframe with a puzzled look, and realization dawns on me: he expects me to tell him to come inside, Caleb needs an invitation.

Fear grips me, and I roll back as my own words from earlier echo inside my head: "It's a house, so a vampire would need an invitation to enter it."