

## The Mating Pact Chapter 5

I wasn't drunk again, was I?

I blew on my palm and sniffed, but my breath seemed just fine. I mean it smelled like a tuna sandwich, but not alcohol for sure. Then was I dreaming? Maybe I have been so in my head ever since I woke next to Logan Gray, n.aked may I add, that it was transcending into reality now. Because there was no fvcking\*g way he just said that.

"Cora?" Logan probed and I dragged my eyes back to his face.

"What?" I mumbled blankly. "What did you say?"

"I know that sounds weird but you know I like to come straight to the point," Logan said, idly picking at the table cloth. "I want you to be my luna."

"You kidding me?" I hissed, raising my brows. "You are not drunk again, are you?"

"I am perfectly fine and I meant what I said," Logan answered.

"You want me to be your luna?" And I couldn't help it as a giggle erupted from me. fvcking\*g hell, what was wrong with this man?

"I am sorry, but do you even hear yourself? Jeez. I am sure your mate must be getting chills or something because of your nonsense, wherever the hell she is." I said, trying to control my laughter. Logan didn't look pleased as he stared at me.

"I don't have a mate," he said flatly. My hysteria ceased the moment the words left his mouth and I blinked at him. Okay, now I was bewildered.

"What?" I mumbled. "You don't have a mate? How are you an alpha without a mate? I mean you can be alpha, but don't you need your luna to rule or something?"

"If I had a mate I wouldn't be having this conversation with you, would I?" Logan demanded, his voice hard and so was his face. "And if I had a mate, I wouldn't go and sleep with you."

Ouch.

“As if cheating has ceased to exist in this world,” I retorted sarcastically. He looked surprised at my comment, but I held my ground and stared back squarely at him, letting him know that I meant what I said.

“You think I would cheat on my mate?” He almost sounded hurt. I shrugged nonchalantly.

“It won’t be the first time you will cheat,” I said flatly. “You have cheated on your girlfriends before, haven’t you?”

“I was a mere boy then. And there is a difference between a mate and a bloody girlfriend!” He snapped, looking angry now. Of course, I couldn’t care a dime. I gave him a shrug again, trying to look bored.

“Whatever,” I answered, staring out of the window while he gathered himself.

“Will you just please let me speak and listen? This is extremely important to me, Cora. And had it been not, I wouldn’t have shown you my face ever again. But as I said earlier, I am desperate.” He said, a tad softer this time. I sighed and, masking up my irritation, turned my eyes to him.

“Shoot,” I grumbled. He pinched the bridge of his nose, looking exhausted before gazing up at me.

My stomach recoiled with a weird uneasiness as his golden-brown eyes held my hazel ones. Looking closer, I realized he had actually grown a lot. His face was more mature now, sharper too, and there was that determined, commanding aura to it. The boyish face was now replaced by a stubbly, rugged one. His hair was longer now. It used to be a buzz cut the last time I saw him and he was obviously heavier and muscular than the sixteen-year-old boy who used to be my best friend. But yet, he was still Logan Gray. Still just as handsome and attractive as he was ten years ago. And he knew that too. It showed in the way he carries himself. I inwardly stuck out my tongue at him.

“He’s se.xy,” my wolf, Ivory, prompted, deciding to materialize now of all time. I chose to ignore her.

“I...well I haven’t found my mate yet,” Logan muttered, looking agitated.

“Aren’t you twenty-seven years old?” I pointed out with a frown. “How come you still don’t have a mate?”

“How come you don’t? You are just a year younger,” he retorted, raising a brow. I bit my lip, appalled that he even knew that, and shot him a look. Was he stalking me or something?

“I have no interest in finding one,” I answered flatly.

“Why?”

“None of your concern.”

“Yeah, it isn’t,” he agreed. “Well, I just don’t know why I haven’t found my mate yet. We have looked every fvcking\*g where, every place we possibly could but it’s been sheer bad luck so far. I...well, I am tempted to think that I am...mateless.”

I tried not to act the way I felt. I aimed for a mild surprise when inwardly I was blown. Logan could be mateless? How was that possible? A potent alpha male like him, so powerful and strong, was possibly mateless. It was insane.

“That seems a bit exaggerated to me,” I said. “Why in goddess’s name would you be mateless?”

“Let’s hope it is exaggerated,” he muttered, sipping at his coffee which I didn’t even notice until now. “Oh, would you like something? I forgot to ask.” He pointed at his coffee mug. I nodded my head slowly.

“Yes,” I said. “Please get to the point.”

Logan gave me a look that clearly showed he was not pleased with my behavior. I am sure he wasn’t used to being treated this way. But why should I care? I was nothing to him. I was a rogue whom he hated as he had said once upon a time. And rogue I was because I grew up in a rogue pack. I do not care a sh!t about pleasing him.

“Well, so far my only hope is the annual mating ball,” he said, his voice hard. “But it’s six months away and I do not have that much time on me. My oath-taking ceremony is next full moon. Dad has been holding up as regent alpha up until now, but it’s high time. And the thing is, I cannot take an oath without my luna.”

I blankly stared at him. Really, I had no idea what he was getting at and how I could help him with this mess. Why would he just not get to the point so that I

could leave? I do not want to be anywhere near him. Especially since Ivory was shamelessly excited to see him, as opposed to the exact opposite sentiment on my side.

“So what? You want to help me find your...luna?” I asked, unable to hide my sarcasm.

“No, Cora,” Logan answered, his voice hard. “As I said before, I will repeat it again and it would help if you could just listen first and react later. I want you to be my luna. Not literally, of course. I want you to pretend to be my luna for the next six months. Once I find my mate, you will be free to leave. Of course, I understand it is asking way too much. That’s why I would also like to compensate you for investing your time into this.”

What. The. fvck.

What in hell’s name was he saying?

“Compensate?” I hissed, my scalp prickling at his words and even more at his audacity to barge into my life ten years later with the most idiotic proposal of the century. I placed my hands in my pockets before I reached out and strangled him to death for even thinking about this. How could he even think of something like that? Was he mad or what?

“Yes,” He nodded his head, looking expectant.

“And how exactly do you want to compensate me, may I ask?” I demanded.

He blinked at me, looking somewhat uncomfortable. Shuffling in his pocket, he pulled something out and placed it on the table in front of me. I shot it a gaze and my jaw hardened as I realized what it was.

Blank cheque.

“You can ask for whatever amount you want to help me out with this,” he said softly. “Once our contract ends, I will transfer the money to your account. Just six months, Cora. And I promise you will never see me again. This deal could change your life forever. You won’t need to work as a waitress anymore. You can open up your cafe...” He paused and his eyes widened as he realized he had slipped.

Right. So he was stalking me.

"I...er..." he muttered.

"Have you been stalking me? How dare you?" I hissed. "That's a blatant disrespect of my privacy. You do realize that, right? I can call the cops and get you arrested right now."

"That's basic information anyone can find, Cora," Logan replied. "And I will be honest. As I said, I am desperate here. I had to lay my groundwork."

At this point, all I could do was blankly stare at him.

So that's why he approached me in the morning. That's the reason for all the sudden concern and utter display of the heroic act. He was trying to lay his groundwork right from the start. Why does that feel so sh!tty even though I was well aware of his character?

He was the typical, too-full-of-himself, selfish alpha figure just exactly the way his father was. It ran in his bl00d. Treachery and using other people's weakness for their own good. That's why Gray Crest had such dominion over everyone. Alpha Joseph should be proud. He managed to raise the perfect alpha for his pack.

"Stow your money in your pocket," I sizzled. "And get out of my sight. Have good luck finding your mate. The poor girl will have all my sympathy."

Without even giving him a second glance, I stood up and, grabbing my bag, stalked outside. I felt hot with fury. And I knew this was not normal, the anger that I was feeling at the moment. I haven't felt this way in a long time, which meant I needed to calm down and get back home before I lose it.

His words were still ringing in my head as I impatiently waited for the lights to change. After sleeping his way into my life ten years later, not even bothering to ask how I have been or where I have been, or what I have been doing all these years, this was how he was planning to reunite?

By coming up with some nonsensical plan to use me and get his job done. By using my weakness, my financial inability, and my dreams as leverage for his cheating games. I hoped to the moon goddess that he really was mateless. That would be a good punishment for him and his father and everyone else of that god-forsaken pack that ruined my entire life forever.

That cost me...my parents.

“Cora! Just listen to me once, please?” Logan urged, rushing over to me. Grabbing my arm, he whirled me around, peering down at me with guilt-filled eyes. As if I would fall for that. I was no longer the little girl who considered him to be her hero. Time has taught me my lessons big time. He could go to hell for all I cared.

“Goodbye, Logan,” I said as I pulled away from his grasp, running away, and almost getting knocked off by the never-ending New York traffic. Good thing werewolves heal fast, just in case I slammed into a fvcking\*g truck tonight.

By the time I got back home, I felt much calmer but somewhat weak inside. I hoped that when I woke up tomorrow, this night would be nothing but a bad dream. That I never met Logan Gray, let alone sleep with him and it was just some other random guy I didn’t know at all. As I dragged myself up the stairs, I was surprised to find Maya sitting beside my door, knees drawn up to her chin and face hidden by her arms.

“Maya?” I exclaimed, rushing over to her. “Hey, what’s wrong?” She looked up at me and I was surprised to see her red eyes and tear-streaked cheeks. If anything, Maya never cries.

“What is wrong?” I repeated, hauling her up with me. I quickly unlocked the door and pulled her inside, kicking the door shut.

“Do you want some water?” I asked as she flopped down on the couch, placing her face in her hands. Maya shook her head. I knew this had something to do with Derek.

“What happened, May?” I repeated softly, squeezing her hand. “Tell me.”

“I had a very bad fight with Derek,” She whispered, her nose going red as she fought the tears. “It got really ugly.”

“Why?” I inquired, surprised because usually, Derek was like a lost puppy around her. I don’t think I have ever seen him even raise his voice at her.

“The loan...the application got rejected again,” She answered. I stared blankly at her as disappointment crashed through me. That was our last hope. As much as I felt like crying, my expectations and the perfect life that I envisioned now shattered, I held it back and tried to console her instead.

“And?” I prompted.

“I was very upset,” She mumbled. “And...I came up with an idea. I just couldn’t think of any other way we could ever accomplish having our own place.”

“And what idea is that?” I frowned. Maya gazed up at me, her face going red as she fidgeted with her engagement ring.

“I...I wanted to use the money I had set out for my wedding towards our cafe. It should be enough combined with yours. We might not exactly have the kind of place we wanted, but I think we could still start. And Derek and I can always go and get married at a church. It’s not like we have families anyway.”

fvcking\*g hell. Was she crazy?

What was it with all the crazy people in my life?

“No wonder Derek got pissed,” I grimaced. “Are you an i\*\*\*t or what? Maya, you have been saving that money for ages. It’s for your dream wedding and your contribution towards this perfect home that you two are going to build together. You want to give up on all that for a bl00dy cafe?”

“We don’t have any other choice. And it’s not a bl00dy cafe!” Maya exclaimed. “Cora, we are getting older. We cannot keep working as waitresses all our lives. I am tired of being treated like sh!t. And this is our dream. We have built it together piece by piece for years. I am not willing to give up on it just because this fvckingd up city has its own little box of fvckingd up rules.”

“This wedding is your dream too, isn’t it?” I murmured, a bit startled. “I know how excited you are. You have worked so hard for this. We will find some other way. I...I will try to save up more,”

“You have already given up all your savings, Cora. Aren’t you worried about your future? You have no mate, no family, or just anyone to stand by your side in need. And you have no intentions of ever returning to the pack life. Then what are you going to do the rest of your life?” She demanded, scowling at me.

“I will find some way, obviously,” I shrugged. “I might find a mate at some point if I feel like it...or some...I don’t know. We will see. And I have got you, isn’t it? But what you are suggesting is also not an option.”

“This is our only option. I am done begging now,” Maya grumbled, looking determined. “If Derek cannot stand by my side and my choices, then...well, then he can leave. I...”

She trailed off and I could see how disturbing the entire idea was to her. He was her mate after all. And I knew Derek was coming from the same place as me. We all knew how excited Maya was about her wedding. Since she was a little girl, she had things planned out for the day. And Derek understood her feelings.

Apart from me, he was the only family she had, given Maya’s parents abandoned her right when she was born. She grew up in the rogue pack right from the start. To me, she was no less than my own sister. And hence, I had to do something about this. Because if her mind was set, there was no going back. She was stubborn as hell. And I wasn’t letting her dream wedding take a backseat.

“No,” I shook my head. “Kick this nonsense out of your head right now. Go and talk to Derek and makeup. And we are having a wedding in two months. That’s it.”

“But!” She protested.

“No, but...” I said firmly. “Trust me. I will not let our dreams take the back burner. We will have our own cafe and just the way we wanted all along.” She blinked at me, looking somewhat hopeful.

“Do you have any other ideas?” She asked. I took a deep breath and glanced down at my phone, the unknown number and text message flashing on my screen.

Please just let me explain once. I apologize for offending you. That was not my intention. I will wait for you at the cafe tomorrow. Please, Cora. I really do need your help.

— Logan.

“I might have,” I answered silently. “A plan.”