

## Chapter 19

CLAIR

I put the radio on full volume, singing along with it while I washed the dishes. Singing, though I wasn't good at it, helped to relieve my stress, at least for a moment.

The fact that I hadn't seen Jake for the last two days after he left my room was technically stressing me out. So I tried to let go, even just for tonight.

I almost dropped the plate in my hand when I saw Aaron leaning on the counter behind me when I was about to spin around to dance along with my music.

"What the..." I glared at him before putting the plate down and wiping my hands with my apron.

I turned off the radio and faced him again, huffing. "Don't scare me like that."

He shook his head, arms crossed on his chest. "I was actually talking to you, but apparently, the radio was on full blast and I just wasted a tremendous amount of saliva."

I rolled my eyes and turned my back on him to

continue with the dishes.

"I have to bail out on you on your birthday, Clairry." I heard him talk, his voice remorseful.

I immediately focused my attention on him but I didn't face him. "What? No, you can't. What do you mean?"

"I'm not around on your birthday. Pack duties," he said as he scratched his head. 3

"No... No... No... We have not celebrated my birthdays together since I was twelve." I turned to face him and leaned my back on the sink, letting out a deep sigh as I wiped my hands on my apron again.

"I know. But we have next year." He pleaded.

"But what if next year never happens? What if we meet our mates? And I'm no longer here? You know, we missed out on so many birthdays already!" I said in exasperation.

He smiled warmly and ruffled my hair, as he usually does, before pulling me into a hug. "You think too much. There will always be a next time. Do you think your big brother will just let you go easily? We have till we're hundreds, Clairry!" He said, trying to calm me down.

I put my arms around his body and rested my cheeks on his chest. "Did Jake put you in it? Maybe I can talk to him. Any day, Aaron, just not on my birthday, please." My voice pleaded.

He shook his head before letting me go and took the kitchen towel to dry off some of the plates I had already washed. "This was planned a long time ago and the date was just finalized today. I'm really sorry."  
"

I huffed and proceeded to wash the remaining dishes with Aaron beside me. "Will it be the whole day? Can we celebrate the day before or the day after?" I tried to sound positive.

"It's actually five days. We're leaving the day before your birthday."

"It's okay." I sighed before I told him, with a defeated heart, "I know you won't abandon me if it's not that important." ①

"I'm sorry, Clair, but... I think we can celebrate in advance the night before we leave. What do you say about it?" He looked at me with a wide grin on his face. ①

"I really don't have any plans, but I'm okay if you're okay with it." I nodded.

"Of course, anything for you! We'll hit the club. You've never been to a club within the territory. I might as well bring you there first so I can watch you. Big brother needs to know how you handle the nightlife!" He nudged me while drying a glass, a teasing smirk on his lips.

"Hahaha!" I laughed sarcastically before pouting my lips. "As if I do bad things when I'm in a club. But I'm in! I want that! I'm taking Jenny with me!" I added excitedly.

He just shrugged his shoulders. "Take whoever you want. It's your day."

"Hmmm... I really don't have any friends here. Don't you think Jake and Gavin will come? I know the three of you hang out a lot, according to Jenny." I tried to sound nonchalant about it, trying to keep my heartbeat at a steady pace just so Aaron could not detect that I badly wanted Jake to come as well.

"Gavin may come, but Jake, I don't think so. He never likes to hit the bar here in his territory." I tried to find malice in his voice, but it sounded ordinary.

"What? Does he not like going to bars?"

"He does. Just not here." 3

"And why is that? Weird."

He chuckled before adding, "You know how she-wolves are around an Alpha, especially when they're drunk. They'll throw themselves on him."

"And he can't say no? Or he doesn't want to say no?" I asked. I felt my brow starting to hike up, but stopped it on time. I didn't want my real emotions to show, but for real - I wanted to claw my nails on Jake's face just with the idea of how many girls he had dated or maybe slept with.

He shook his head. "Nah, he doesn't mess with pack members and doesn't want to embarrass his pack she-wolves, so he tried to avoid it at all cost. Why so interested?"

"Nothing. I was just weirded out that he never goes to the bar here, but now it makes sense." I shrugged before adding. "But I can still invite him, right? Not that he needs to come if he doesn't want to. I just don't want to make him feel left out."

"Yeah, I can ask him. No worries. Just invite the girls and I'll ask Jake and Gavin. I'll tag Matteo too, so you may want to add Chloe there." 🗨️

Surprised by his response, I beamed at him and nudged him on his sides. "Got it! Thanks, bro! You're

the best!"

He just gave a smile and shook his head.

"By the way, speaking of Chloe, I saw her today and I didn't know she worked at the daycare here. She invited me to see inside. And my Goddess, Aaron! All the pups were amazing! So!!! I ended up getting a slot there." I told him proudly as I passed the last plate to him.

He feigned a surprised look and put the plate down. "What do you mean? I know you're still childish in some ways, but I never expected you to look for someone to babysit you. You're not that bad, Clairry. You don't need a babysitter!" And then he held on to his stomach and laughed his heart out. 1

"AAARGH!!! How are you even my brother?" I splashed him with the water in my hands, rolling my eyes at him before joining in his laughter.

Soon enough, the kitchen echoed with peals of laughter, and I felt all the annoyance I had for having my birthday without Aaron fly away instantly.

I will always be thankful that the Goddess gave me Aaron as a big brother.