

Chapter 10 Mina

Moana

Smiling to myself with closed eyes, I nuzzled deeper into the warm embrace of my bedmate, inhaling the smell of his chest.

Wait...

My eyes shot open, as did his at the same time. We stared at one another in disbelief for several long seconds before I felt my face get hot. There was no denying the chemistry in the air between us as we gazed at each other beneath the warmth of the sheets, but I knew deep down that this was wrong. Edrick was my boss, and I had signed a contract to not get romantically involved!

Blushing, I quickly pulled away and climbed out of the bed. I noticed that the cardigan I had worn to bed the night before now lay on the floor, so I picked it up and quickly put it on to cover myself while Edrick sat up slowly in bed.

“I’m sorry,” I said, my back turned to him as I buttoned my cardigan. “Maybe this isn’t the best idea.”

“Perhaps,” he replied. His voice was low and gravelly from sleep, and it admittedly made me feel even more attracted to him. “But I have to say that I haven’t slept that well in ages. Excluding our night in the hotel, of course.”

As I finished buttoning up my cardigan, I felt my face flush an even deeper shade of red. No response came to mind, so without a word, I quietly slipped out of Edrick’s room and hoped that no one would see me.

Unfortunately, that wish did not come true as I almost immediately bumped into Ella, who was standing outside of her father's room.

“Oh! Good morning, Ella,” I said, trying to act nonchalant as I smiled at the little girl.

She stared at me for a few moments, processing, before she spoke.

“What were you doing in my daddy's room?”

I felt a lump rise in my throat. How could I possibly explain to a child that her father was paying me to sleep with him? While the simple agreement was that I was only there to sleep beside him to help him sleep and not become romantically involved, there was no way to explain that to the wary little girl without making it sound like I was a prostitute.

“Um... Your daddy just called me in here to tell me that...” My voice faltered as I tried to come up with an excuse. “...That he wants me to take you out for breakfast before your training today.”

Ella's face lit up, and I felt a wave of relief wash over me.

“Really?” she said, her excited voice turning into a squeak.

I nodded. “Really. Go get ready. We can have crepes for breakfast at the bakery next door. I know they're your favorite.”

Ella squealed with delight and ran off. I pulled my cardigan tighter around myself, letting out a sigh of relief once she was out of sight. At least I had a way with children.

I quickly went to my room and got dressed in something suitable for the summer heat: a comfortable cotton dress and a pair of sandals. I pulled my hair up into a ponytail, and by that point, Ella was already excitedly banging on my door and singing a made-up song about crepes. As we made our way downstairs and headed to the bakery, my strange new arrangement with Edrick Morgan felt distant in my mind.

As we were eating our breakfast together, however, something new came to my mind... A voice.

It was clear as day, and sounded nothing like my own inner thoughts. It was a woman's voice, but it was fading in and out.

"Hello...Moana?" it said, sounding distant and weak.

I jumped a bit in shock, nearly dropping the forkful of crepes as I lifted it to my mouth.

"Shhh...I'm Mina... Your wolf. You can just talk to me through... our mind link..."

I tried to calm down. "I had a wolf? But... I was human! Well, if you are really my wolf...Where were you then?"

"I'm sorry it's taken me so long to appear... I'm still weak, but I've been awakened by someone close to you. I'm not sure who, but I sense a strong connection..."

Ella c****d her head, speaking with her mouth full. "Are you okay?" she said, breaking my train of thought.

I forced a weak smile and nodded, not wanting to reveal what was really going on inside my mind just yet. "Yes, I'm fine," I replied, reaching out to wipe a bit of whipped cream off of Ella's mouth with my napkin. "Don't talk with your mouth full."

I can no longer connect to Mina after that, but what happened was real. I just realized that I never really knew who my real parents were. This 'Mina' said that someone near me had a close connection. I thought of Ella, of the housekeeper, the maids... Could it be possible that I was related to any one of them?

...

It was Saturday morning, which meant that Ella had her weekly werewolf training today. As Selina informed me, Ella had to go to these training

sessions every week along with other werewolf children to learn how to use their abilities, control their wolves, and to get the chance to shift freely in a safe space. I had attended the first training with Selina and Ella, but this week, I took Ella alone and was allowed to leave her there for a few hours, which gave me some time to do whatever I wanted.

I hadn't been to the orphanage in some time, so once we dropped Ella off at her training, I agreed to meet the driver when her training was finished as he had other work to do in the meantime, and decided to take a taxi to the orphanage. Not only was I missing the children there, but I also wanted to speak to someone about my records... Maybe they would have some answers about my lineage, and could tell me whether I was human or not.

When I arrived, the children seemed preoccupied with arts and crafts, but a few of them perked up when they saw me.

"It's Moana!" One little girl said, waving her tiny hand enthusiastically as I stood in the doorway of the recreation room. I waved back and smiled.

"What are you all up to?" I asked.

"Mr. Ethan is teaching us how to make papier mache," a little boy, whose face was covered in glitter and the white water-flour mixture used for the project, replied.

"Ethan?" I said, c*****g my head and furrowing my brow.

"Ethan Bradley," a male voice said from behind me. I spun around to see a young man about my age; he was tall and had long brown hair that was pulled into a bun at the nape of his neck, and wore a white apron over his clothes that was covered in paint. I immediately recognized him as a well-known artist from the city.

My eyes widened. "Wow," I said, holding out my hand to shake his. "It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm a huge fan of your work."

Ethan smiled and shook my hand. "The kids here tell me that you're quite the artist yourself..."

I blushed, thinking about my sketchbook at home. “I sketch now and again, but I wouldn’t consider myself much of an artist,” I replied. “But I do find the combination of art and child psychology to be very interesting.”

Ethan paused, patiently mulling over my words, before replying. “Why don’t you come to my exhibit next week?” he replied, pulling a small card out of his apron and handing it to me. “And bring your sketchbook. I’d love to hear more.”

I took the card, a grin spreading across my face. “I’d be happy to come,” I said. Ethan smiled and returned to his work with the children, leaving me in the doorway.

“Moana!” a familiar voice said from the stairway. I looked up and smiled to see the director of the orphanage, Sophia, coming down the steps. “What brings you here? I heard you got a new job; live-in au pair, right?”

I met her halfway, adjusting my purse on my shoulder with a nod. “Yes. I had a little free time, so I thought I would stop by. And...” I bit my lip, looking at the floor for a moment. “I discovered something recently. It’s about my identity. I was hoping you could tell me about how I came to be here when I was a child.”

Sophia’s smile faded, replaced by an expression that I couldn’t quite read. She nodded slowly, turning to go back upstairs. “Follow me,” she said.