

Chapter 101 Fountain of Love

Moana

“The water feels nice,” Edrick said as he stood barefoot in the fountain in front of me. “I promise.”

My eyes were wide with disbelief. What had changed in the Alpha billionaire’s demeanor that night? He was suddenly acting more playful than I had ever expected, and the way he held his hand out for me with an almost childlike expression on his face made me smile.

I hesitated, but he only kept holding his hand out. Finally, I kicked my shoes off with a sigh and lifted my skirt. I took his hand and climbed up onto the bench, then stepped into the fountain with him. He was right; the water was nice and cool, and it felt soothing on my hot, swollen feet. Standing there, I couldn’t help but let out another sigh of relief and shut my eyes for a moment, tilting my head back toward the sky as I felt all of my frustrations wash away with the water.

“It’s nice, isn’t it?” Edrick asked.

I opened my eyes and met his gaze. His gray eyes were soft and gentle — something that I sorely needed after everything that had already happened that night. It was hardly even an hour into the banquet and I had already been accosted by Edrick’s cruel father, who told me that I needed to take his money and my baby and leave his family alone, and then I was equally assaulted by Kelly, who went so far as to even hit me because she was so

jealous over my dynamic with Edrick. Needless to say, it was an incredibly stressful evening... But the way that Edrick was looking at me now made all of that feel so insignificant.

“Yes, it is,” I replied, feeling my face go a bit red as I looked up at Edrick.

We stood there like that in silence for a while, just looking at each other. He seemed to be studying my face, as though he was searching for something; although what exactly he was searching for was a mystery to me.

I didn't realize it at first, but we were still holding hands. My heart began to race as I came to this realization, and I quickly pulled away, distracting myself by holding my skirt up with both hands and wading around in the cool water. I heard Edrick clear his throat behind me, and I glanced up to see that he, too, seemed to be trying to distract himself.

While Edrick was looking away, I took that moment to study him now, just as he had studied me. His sleeves were rolled up to his elbows and the first couple of buttons were undone around his collar, giving him a casual look. The way that his soft white shirt billowed in the hot summer breeze along with the way that his dark hair became ruffled made him appear effortless and relaxed, much unlike the stark Alpha CEO I had come to know over the past few months. There was no denying that he looked incredibly handsome like this, with his sharp jawline and sinewy, muscular arms. I had never seen him work out, but he must have done it quite a lot, because his biceps strained against his shirt when he moved.

Beyond that, however, his eyes contained something new and gentle that I hadn't seen before. He seemed to be lost in thought; his brow was somewhat furrowed, but not in an angry or brooding way, and at one point he gently bit his lower lip, causing my heart to flutter for the briefest of moments. As I watched him, I suddenly felt Mina begin to react strongly to his handsome appearance inside of me, begging me to do something. She wanted him, and had been wanting him more than ever lately, for

reasons unbeknownst to me. Maybe it was the baby making her want to find a mate. But I knew that Edrick could never be my mate; not with the stark differences in our social status. To him, I was still just a human. Even if he did find out that I wasn't human, it wouldn't change the fact that I was from an incredibly low social class, and he was from the highest social class possible. If he was going to be with anyone, perhaps it should be Kelly; she was, after all, a wealthy socialite. I was an orphan who was nearly homeless before Edrick hired me.

I must have been staring at Edrick for too long, and he noticed, because he suddenly looked up and met my gaze again. My face went even redder, but I couldn't tear my eyes away.

I especially couldn't tear my eyes away when I suddenly saw a mischievous smirk spread across the billionaire's face.

Suddenly, without a word, he reached down into the water and he...

Splashed me.

I felt my jaw drop. "Edrick!" I exclaimed, laughing. "You got me all wet!" Without thinking, I reached down and scooped my hand into the water, splashing him back with even more vigor in retaliation for what he just did to me.

Much to my never ending surprise, Edrick only splashed me again, this time harder.

We kept going back and forth like this, our laughter growing and floating through the air as we splashed each other more and more. During those moments, I saw Edrick smile — truly smile. There was a youthful look to him, as though he was no longer the stressed Alpha CEO I had come to know, but was rather the same young boy who slept out here in this very garden when he was a child. And, during those moments, I felt an overwhelming sense of emotion wash over me. An emotion that I couldn't quite place my finger on just yet.

By this point, we were almost entirely soaked and both of us were too caught up in the fun of the moment to care. I reached down to splash him again, but then I suddenly felt my foot slip.

In an instant, I was falling forward, unable to catch stable footing in the slippery fountain. All of my mirth suddenly melted away, replaced by fear of harming my baby, and my eyes widened as I fell forward.

But a pair of strong arms caught me, wrapping around me.

He slipped, too, and together we went tumbling down into the shallow water.

The air was quiet now, replaced by the shocked silence of our mutual fall and the soft sounds of our heavy breathing. I pushed myself up, realizing now that I had fallen on top of Edrick — but his hands were still on my waist, holding me, keeping me from pulling away.

Something came over me then. I felt Mina begging me to get closer to him, so I did.

I kissed him.

For an eternal few moments, we laid together in the shallow fountain, our wet lips pressed together with a strange sense of gentle urgency. His lips were soft and tasted like heaven, and I felt his hands slide up along my waist, over my arms and up to my face, cupping my cheeks in his palms. During those moments, I was certain that I could stay like this forever.

But I couldn't.

When we pulled away, both of our faces were beet red. Within a split second, I could see the regret filling Edrick's eyes; I felt a sense of regret, too, for what I had done. Not only had I ruined my dress, but I had also made the mistake of kissing a man whose relationship with me was nothing but a ticking time bomb.

"S-Sorry," I said, pushing myself away from him and onto my knees.

Edrick only nodded and stood. Without a word, he held his hand out for me and helped me stand.

Neither of us spoke as we stepped out of the fountain, but as it turned out, we didn't need to.

Because Verona was standing in the archway, watching us with an open mouth and wide eyes.

Chapter 102 Something Borrowed

Moana

As soon as Edrick and I stepped out of the fountain with our clothes dripping wet, we came face-to-face with Verona. Her eyes were wide open and her mouth hung agape, making me wonder just how much she saw of that entire interaction. She hadn't been there the whole time, had she? Even just thinking about her seeing our kiss made my heart race.

All at once, Edrick and I both began to stutter out an explanation for ourselves — but Verona only held up her hand and shook her head.

“I don't need any explanations,” she said with a slight chuckle. “Come with me. Let's get you both some dry clothes.”

Edrick and I shot each other a glance before following Verona, who almost seemed to be hiding a bit of a smirk as she led us across the garden and into a colonnade. We entered the mansion through a wooden door on the side of the colonnade and came out into a dimly lit, empty hallway.

As we followed Verona through the hallways, I couldn't stop thinking about my kiss with Edrick. It was a mistake, and I wasn't denying that... but it was a sweet mistake that lingered on my lips. I could still taste the softness of Edrick's lips. I could still feel his hands sliding up my waist and coming up to cup my cheeks. Meanwhile, inside of me, Mina became suddenly depressed and all but went to sleep as she came to the realization that I wasn't going to let things get any further tonight... or ever, probably.

I couldn't help but think to myself if I should just take Michael's money and leave, for everyone's sake. It would only cause me more heartbreak to keep having encounters like this with Edrick, only for them to go nowhere, and it would hurt the baby to have such a strange dynamic between its parents. Not only that, but Edrick was probably already receiving a lot of heat from his father over our relationship.

Finally, Verona led us up a small stairway meant for servants and out into the hallway where our bedrooms had been the last time we were here. Edrick silently slipped into his room to change, but Verona stayed with me and led me into the guest room.

"Take that wet dress off," she said, pointing to the bathroom once the door clicked shut behind us. I headed over to the bathroom with my proverbial tail tucked between my legs and did as she requested, peeling the damp fabric off of my skin, and dried myself with a towel. There was a hair dryer on the sink, so I quickly dried off my damp hair. Thankfully, my makeup was still perfectly intact despite my crying and the fountain accident that night, thanks to Tyrus' expert application. At least one thing had turned out well that night.

When I managed to fix my hair and finally re-emerged from the bathroom, Verona was rifling through the wardrobe.

"It really was an accident," I said, watching in my towel as she looked for something for me to wear. "I wanted to cool my feet off, but I slipped in the fountain."

"There's no need for any excuses, dear," Verona said. She withdrew a long, black dress from the wardrobe and held it up to inspect it. "Hmm... This should work. It's not too tight, so it won't reveal your belly."

Not that it's necessary at this point, I thought to myself. Everyone already knows anyway, apparently.

Instead of saying that, however, I simply smiled and took the dress. I slipped it on over my head and Verona helped me get it adjusted; it actually fit quite well, and was comfortable.

“This was one of my dresses when I was about your age,” Verona said as she zipped the back up. “If you like it, you can keep it. I never wear it anymore.”

It really was a pretty dress. It had a vintage feel to it, with a faintly embossed floral design on the fabric and a fitted bodice. “T-Thank you,” I replied, watching in the mirror as Verona worked. “That’s very generous of you.”

Verona finished zipping up the dress and smiled, looking at me in the mirror. She held my arms and gave them a light squeeze.

“You know,” she said, “you’re such a beautiful girl. I can see why my son cares about you so much.”

My face went red. I didn’t know what to say, and even if I did have an idea, I wouldn’t have been able to get it out. To think that even Edrick’s mother had the impression that Edrick cared for me was both endearing and heart-wrenching, because on one hand I craved his affection and would never forget about that kiss in the fountain, but on the other hand I knew we could never be together. I could only smile weakly back at Verona in the mirror.

“Well then,” she said, patting my arms and stepping away. “Let’s get back to the party.”

I nodded, although I was certain that people would stare at my change of clothes and would start to gossip, and I would have much rather hidden in this very room because of that. However, I knew that Ella was probably wondering where I was; I was here for her, after all.

When Verona and I emerged from the guest room, Edrick was already waiting for us in the hallway. He was wearing almost the exact same

clothes, which made me think that no one would even notice that he had changed.

And, as all three of us returned to the banquet hall, it seemed that I was right. No one looked at Edrick, but a few people were already beginning to stare at me as I walked back to the table with Verona. I could practically hear their whispers in my head as I began to imagine the things that they were saying about me or the words that they were calling me. It made me feel almost sick, and I almost touched my belly out of anxiety, but I caught myself and managed not to draw even more attention.

“Moana! Grandma!” Ella said a bit too loudly for my liking as we approached the table. “Where did you go? And, Moana... What happened to your dress?”

I tried my best to smile nonchalantly as I sat down next to Ella, thoroughly exhausted already from the events of the evening. “I just had a wardrobe malfunction,” I said, taking a napkin and wiping a bit of whipped cream off of the little girl’s cheek and choosing to ignore the fact that she was eating yet another dessert. “That’s all.”

“Oh.” Ella seemed a bit confused, but didn’t ask anymore questions and returned to eating her dessert. Meanwhile, Edrick was already over at the bar.

When I looked up, I saw that he wasn’t alone, either. Kelly was with him.

And she was staring right at me with an angry scowl on her face. But that wasn’t what scared me the most...

What scared me even more was that she was handing her phone to Edrick, and his eyes went wide as he looked at the screen.

Chapter 103 Pure Intentions

Edrick

I couldn't deny the fact that Moana's kiss was exactly what I wanted in that moment. The feeling of her waist beneath my hands, her soft lips on mine, her body pressed up against me... It all sent a shiver down my spine and left me craving more.

But it was a mistake.

As I got changed into dry, clean clothes and dried my wet hair, I knew I would have to push that memory of the kiss out of my mind. I simply couldn't be with Moana, and it seemed that our undeniable attraction to each other was only making that even more difficult.

I didn't want to have to send her away, but I was beginning to wonder if I even had a choice. Between my father and Kelly, along with this, I was feeling as though I was stuck between a rock and a hard place. I couldn't be with Moana because of our glaring differences, but at the same time, I couldn't have her around because of our lust for each other. Maybe it really was time for me to start considering the possibility that I would have to buy her a penthouse and keep a distance between us. Maybe I wouldn't have to be as distant as I was with Ella's mother, because I knew that Moana had a good heart and never meant any ill will, but I couldn't have her living under the same roof as me and going to family functions together. It was too close.

But for right now, I just needed a drink.

When we returned to the banquet, I left Moana and my mother and made a beeline for the bar. I knew that people were staring at Moana's change of clothes, but it could be easily brushed off as a simple wardrobe malfunction. Thankfully, my clothes looked more or less the same, so no one seemed to notice.

As I stood at the bar, still pushing the thought of our kiss as far out of my mind as I could while I swirled my drink around in its glass, I suddenly felt someone tap my shoulder. When I looked over, Kelly was leaning on the bar next to me, leaning back with her elbows on the bar and looking out at the party. I felt a pit grow in my stomach. Couldn't anyone just leave me alone?

Kelly nodded her head toward Moana, who was sitting at a table with Ella. "She changed her dress?" she asked. "Was it too tight or something? It seemed like she was a little too big for it."

"What do you want, Kelly?" I snapped, gritting my teeth. Did she have to be so condescending toward Moana's body? I easily could have pointed out her own flaws, but I chose not to.

Kelly turned and gave me an astonished look. "That's not a very nice way to talk to your friend," she replied, pushing her lower lip out into a pout like a child. She then dug into her purse and retrieved her phone. "Besides... I have something to show you."

Before I could respond, Kelly tapped furiously on her phone screen and then turned it so I could see.

My eyes widened as I saw what was on the screen. It was a picture of Moana and Ethan. They were kissing.

"When did you take this?" I asked, pointing at the photo with one hand while my other hand gripped my glass so hard my knuckles turned white.

Kelly shrugged and slipped her phone back into her purse. “I don’t know... Thirty minutes ago, maybe? It wasn’t long ago.”

I felt an undeniable feeling of fury beginning to bubble up inside of me. Had Moana really kissed both Ethan and me in one night, hardly even half an hour apart? To think that I trusted that her intentions were pure, that our kiss meant something and that she wasn’t just trying to weasel her way into a family of higher social status... I gripped my glass even harder and swallowed the lump in my throat, turning to look over at Moana.

She was looking directly at me with wide eyes. She knew, somehow, that I knew about her kiss with my illegitimate half brother.

“I think it’s safe to say that the nanny is only here for one thing,” Kelly said, inspecting her nails as she spoke. “It’s a shame. I know you liked her.” She stopped then and turned to face me, batting her eyelashes. She then reached out to squeeze my arm comfortingly — but I brushed her off, my eyes still locked on Moana, and walked away from the bar.

Moana’s eyes widened even more as she saw me approaching and she stood from her chair before I even said a word, which only solidified my suspicions that she knew what I had just seen.

“Moana,” I said as pleasantly as I could so as not to frighten Ella, “I’d like to speak with you in private. Now.”

She didn’t answer: only nodded and followed me. I stormed over to the side door that led to one of the private corridors with Moana on my heels, and once we were alone, I spun around to face her in the dim light.

“Did you kiss him tonight?” I asked. My hand was shaking as I held my glass still.

“Edrick, I—”

“I only need a yes or a no,” I interrupted, gritting my teeth. “Did you or did you not kiss my f*****g brother tonight?”

Moana was silent. Even in the dim light, I could see her eyes begin to well up with tears and she stared down at the floor. That was all the confirmation I needed. As I came to the realization that I did in fact see what I thought I saw in that picture, a feeling of dread came over me. Somehow, even though our kiss was a mistake, I couldn't deny the fact that I was hurt by her actions.

“That’s it,” I growled. “I want you gone by—”

“It wasn’t consensual,” she said suddenly, lifting her gaze to meet mine. Her eyes were red with tears and her lower lip quivered. “I was sad, and I thought he was comforting me as a friend, but... He kissed me. I didn’t want it. I swear.”

I froze. Part of me didn’t want to believe her, but an even bigger part of me knew that she was telling the truth. The tears in her eyes were too genuine, too full of pain. My own wolf even sensed, somehow, that Moana wasn’t lying.

But then, my pain became overtaken with rage. I knew that Ethan was never up to any good, and once again he had swindled someone into believing his lies. Now, he had hurt someone that I... cared about.

And I wouldn’t let him get away with it.

Without thinking, the glass slipped out of my hand and shattered on the floor, causing Moana to gasp in surprise. But I didn’t care; without another word, I turned on my heel and stormed off in the direction of the one place that I knew that little rat would be: his studio.

“Edrick!” Moana called, chasing after me. “Where are you going?!”

Chapter 104 Intervention

Moana

Edrick took me utterly by surprise as he suddenly dropped the glass containing his drink, letting it shatter all over the floor, and took off in the direction of Ethan's studio. I knew now that Kelly had indeed shown him the picture of Ethan and I kissing, but I didn't expect him to react like this. He believed me so willingly when I admitted that Ethan kissed me without my consent, which was not something that I ever would have expected from the Alpha billionaire. Now, he was storming off... And I didn't know what he was going to do to his brother when he saw him.

"Edrick!" I called, lifting my skirt and running after him down the dark hallway. "Where are you going?!"

Edrick didn't answer. He only kept storming away, his fists clenched at his sides as the clicking of his shoes echoed loudly on the marble floors. He didn't stop me from following him, though, and I was determined to make sure he didn't do anything rash.

"Edrick, it was only a misunderstanding with Ethan," I insisted, grabbing his sleeve. "Please don't do anything without thinking about it first."

The Alpha billionaire suddenly stopped and whirled around to face me. His gray eyes were glowing silver then, but the anger wasn't directed at me; I knew that much now. For some reason, the Alpha billionaire was jealous.

“Don’t think you can get in the way of this,” he said, his voice so low it was almost a growl. “I told you that he’s not to be trusted. I won’t let him get away with touching a woman without her permission... Especially not you.”

My eyes widened. I opened my mouth to speak, but before anything could come out, Edrick took off again and left me standing in the middle of the hallway.

Meanwhile, inside of me, Mina began to get excited at the prospect of two men fighting over me.

“Follow him,” she insisted happily, as though she wanted to see what would come of this. “I want to see him protect you.”

I was a bit confused by my wolf’s sudden and intense interest in the situation. When I first started feeling her presence, I thought that she was a voice of reason, but over time I slowly began to realize that she represented all of the primal urges that I had been pushing down my entire life... And shockingly, I was just as intrigued as she was.

“I should stay out of it,” I replied, staring down the hallway at Edrick. “This is between two brothers.”

But Mina wouldn’t hear it. “It’s not just between them,” she said. “It’s about you. Edrick is doing this because he cares about you.”

Maybe Mina was right. I bit my lip as I watched after Edrick for a moment, watching his back as he stormed off down the hallway and disappeared around a corner, before I cursed under my breath and ran after him once more.

Eventually, I caught up to him just as he was climbing the stairs to Edrick’s studio. He didn’t stop or look back at me, clearly focused entirely on confronting his brother. Admittedly, something about his jealousy turned me on in a strange, primal way. I almost felt a little guilty for feeling that way, and tried my best to push that feeling down — but there was no

denying it. It didn't mean that I wanted Ethan to be hurt, though. Ethan was still someone who I considered to be a friend, and I wanted to be there to make sure that nothing got out of hand.

The door to Ethan's study was open. I saw Edrick disappear inside as I made it to the top of the stairs.

There were some muffled voices. I quickened my pace, ignoring the pain in my feet from my shoes, and ran up to the door just as the voices began to raise.

My eyes widened as I saw that Edrick had Ethan pinned up to the wall with a fistful of Ethan's shirt in his hand.

Ethan's face was full of shock, but there was something else there. It was faint... But it almost appeared as though he was inwardly mocking Edrick, like this was all a joke to him. Or, it was almost as though he wanted Edrick to come after him like this, but I couldn't be entirely sure — and as soon as Ethan saw me, that look faded and returned to pure shock and discomfort.

“Moana, please explain to him—”

“Don't you dare talk to her,” Edrick snarled, pushing Ethan harder up against the wall. “Answer my question. What's your motive behind trying to seduce her, hm? What are you trying to get out of her?”

“I'm not trying to get anything out of anyone.” Ethan swallowed, then looked at me almost pleadingly... But I still couldn't get that strange look he had earlier out of my mind, and something told me that I didn't need to protect him in any way. Maybe I was just too shocked, or maybe it was just an urge to stay out of it to protect my baby. I couldn't be sure.

“That's a lie, and you know it,” Edrick replied. His eyes were glowing brilliant silver by now, and he was gritting his teeth. “I know you're up to something. You're always up to something, you little weasel. How dare you force yourself on the mother of my child like that.”

My eyes widened. Edrick didn't seem to react to what he just admitted right away; he was too lost in the moment to notice what he had said.

But before Ethan or I could react, there was suddenly a booming, deep voice bellowing from behind me.

"The truth is out, isn't it?" Michael's voice said, echoing in the large room. I felt my heart drop and I spun around to face him, but he wasn't looking at me. He was only looking at Edrick, as though Ethan or I weren't even there.

Just then, the sound of heels clicking on marble approached. A few moments later, Verona and Kelly appeared in the doorway. Kelly remained behind Michael while Verona came scurrying in, her face instantly turning red as she saw the scene in front of her with Ethan still pinned to the wall by Edrick.

"Boys!" she shouted, running over to them. "Stop fighting! Now!!"

Instantly, Edrick released Ethan's shirt. He kept his eyes fixed on Michael, but my eyes were now on Kelly, who only smirked at me from behind Michael's shoulder.

Those two were working together... I was sure of that now. But was Ethan working with them, too, somehow? I didn't want to believe it, but I couldn't be certain anymore about this family. It felt as though Edrick and Verona were the only two I could vaguely trust at this point.

"Well then," Michael said, striding into the room with confidence, "perhaps it's time you think about what I said earlier." He didn't elaborate, but I could imagine that whatever he said to Edrick was very similar to what he said to me.

Michael wanted me gone. And it seemed, especially now that the truth was out, that he was planning on getting his way.

Chapter 105 Truth is Out

Moana

“Well then,” Michael said, striding into the room with confidence and brushing past me as though I wasn’t even there, “perhaps it’s time you think about what I said earlier.”

The room fell silent. Verona held her ground between Ethan and Edrick, but it was clear that Edrick’s fury was no longer directed toward his brother.

As I stood there, looking at all of them and feeling Kelly’s vindictive glare boring into the side of my head, I couldn’t help but wonder if Ethan, Kelly, and Michael were all working together somehow. Kelly and Michael I could see working together... But Ethan? He had done nothing thus far since I’d met him to make me think that he was anything but a good friend, aside from his more recent attempts to become more than that. But was that alone really enough reason to think that he was in cahoots with Kelly and Michael to get me away from Edrick? I didn’t want to believe it, but thinking about the way he looked before he saw me, the dark smirk on his face and the cunning look behind his eyes, made me wonder if I should have listened to Edrick all along when he said that his brother was up to no good.

More importantly, however, Michael wanted me gone — and I was certain that he would get his way tonight.

At least, I thought I was certain, but that certainty melted away when Edrick suddenly turned on his heel and strode over to me.

“Let’s go,” he said, taking me by the arm and shooting one last angry glare between Kelly, Ethan, and Michael. “We’re leaving.”

“Darling—” Verona called out, but it was too late. Edrick was already whisking me away, and I went willingly. Hot tears were beginning to prick at the backs of my eyes, and as he ushered me down the hallway and back down the stairs that led to the banquet hall, I was grateful for his strength to walk away from his father. I couldn’t let any of them see my tears; especially not Kelly and Michael.

“What did he say to you?” I asked once we were out of earshot. “Earlier, he asked me to dance and he told me that—”

“We’ll discuss it another time,” Edrick said. His voice was cold and low, much different from the way he spoke to me in the garden earlier. “I just want to get my daughter home.”

I decided not to pry any further. When we reached the banquet hall, Edrick located Ella and scooped her up right out of her seat without a word.

“We’re leaving, Princess,” he said.

Ella furrowed her brow as Edrick carried her away and gave me a confused look over his shoulder. “But why, daddy?” she asked. “I was having fun.”

Edrick didn’t answer. He seemed to be unable to come up with a response, so I stepped in.

“I’m sorry, love, but I’m not feeling well,” I lied. “I hope you’re not too upset with me.”

Thankfully, the expression on the little girl's face shifted from confusion to concern. "Oh. That's okay, then." Part of me thought that she didn't entirely believe me, and I was almost certain that Edrick's unceremonious exit was frightening her a bit, but she didn't cause a fuss. When we reached the car, Edrick put Ella in her car seat, and within a few moments the driver was peeling away from the driveway.

No one spoke the entire way home. Edrick stared sullenly out the window, his jaw set hard and his eyes fixed on the sky. I couldn't stop thinking about what Michael and Kelly must have said to him in private earlier that night; surely it was within the same vein of what they said to me.

Would this be the end of my living situation with Edrick? Would I be tucked away neatly into my own, separate home to stay away from the Morgan family?

After everything that had happened, I couldn't help but wonder if maybe that would be for the best. Maybe this whole dynamic was really unhealthy; even if I did reveal that I was a werewolf, it didn't change the fact that I was from a much lower social class than Edrick. I wasn't sure if that gap could ever be bridged, and even though it broke my heart to think about leaving Edrick and Ella behind, the logical part of me knew that it might be better for everyone if I just stayed away. Maybe Edrick could still be in the baby's life somehow, but we couldn't live together anymore.

By the time we arrived back at the penthouse, Edrick sullenly stormed off to his room without a word. I jumped slightly as I heard the door slam, but put on a brave face for Ella and took her to bed.

"Moana?" she asked as I helped her out of her party dress and into her pajamas.

“Yes, love?” I replied. My voice was shaking a bit still from the whole ordeal, but I tried to hide it for Ella’s sake.

Ella turned toward me then, and there were tears in her eyes. “C-Can I sleep with you tonight? I’m scared.”

“Oh, sweetheart...” I tucked a strand of loose hair behind her ear and sighed, pulling her into a hug. Admittedly, the thought of having Ella in my arms that night was a bit of a comfort. Maybe it was something that we both needed after what happened. “You don’t have anything to be afraid of. But... Yes, you can sleep with me tonight.”

Ella sniffled and managed a weak smile when we pulled away. I took her hand and led her to my room, where I finished brushing out her hair and getting her ready for bed. Then, while she laid in bed with her stuffed duck, she watched as I brushed out my own hair, took off my makeup, and changed out of my dress. When I was finished, I climbed into bed with her and held her while I read her a bedtime story.

Thankfully, she fell asleep before the story was even over. I couldn’t help but smile down at her as I shut off the light and laid down myself, but even then, I couldn’t sleep.

There was too much whirling around inside my head. I thought back to the tooth that Sophia gave me — the one tangible link to my werewolf lineage. I knew that Mina desperately wanted me to tell Edrick, but I didn’t think that I was ready yet. Would it be wise after tonight to finally tell him and see his reaction? I couldn’t help but wonder if it would solve some of our problems, but it still wouldn’t solve the glaring issue of the gap in our social statuses. Michael and Kelly clearly hated me, and Ethan was possibly working with them as well; if they hated me that much, then my status as a werewolf wouldn’t change their opinions of me. To them, I would still be nothing but a lowly servant. Not only that, but I would be a freak of nature for my wolf not emerging until my twenties. Because of

this, Mina could possibly never emerge fully, and I would still always present as a human.

But, even then, maybe it really was time to show Edrick the truth. Maybe it would make things easier on all of us for the full truth to come out.