

## Chapter 121 Unwanted Attention

### Moana

I was still completely and utterly shocked that Edrick announced that we were in a relationship on live television. Even long after Selina shut off the TV and ordered the maids to return to their work, and even after I woke Ella up and got her ready for the day, I couldn't stop thinking about it.

In some ways, I was elated that Edrick announced that I was his “secret fiancée”, since it meant that he may have been slowly coming around to the idea that we could be together. However, I still didn't know exactly what all of this meant.

Would we only be in a fake relationship?

If this really did only ever turn out to be a fake publicity stunt, I couldn't help but wonder if it would only cause more confusion and pain. Our relationship was already rocky enough as it currently stood; even though Edrick knew that I was a werewolf now, I could still tell that he had hangups about real marriage. Not only that, but I didn't even know if we were mates. If Mina never fully emerged, then becoming true mates wouldn't even be possible. That was why so many wolfless adults wound up being shunned by the majority of the werewolf world; obviously, there were countless other reasons for it as well, but one of the major reasons was that wolfless adults couldn't create a mate bond. Therefore,

werewolves who did have their wolves wouldn't want to waste their time trying to bond with someone who could never feel the same way.

Aside from that, the thought of only ever being a fake wife made me uneasy. I wanted to be with someone who loved me and devoted themselves to me and our child, not someone who only pretended to be in love with me to keep the media from creating negative news articles about us. The whole thing felt somewhat fishy, and I couldn't decide by that point if I should have just been happy that this potentially meant that Edrick wouldn't marry someone else and make our home life confusing for our baby and Ella, or if I should try to find out what his true intentions were.

Either way, I was completely confused.

...

Later that evening, after putting Ella to bed, Edrick still wasn't home. I couldn't sleep after everything that happened that day, so I sat on the couch and looked at my phone to pass the time until Edrick got home.

However, I quickly realized that I made a mistake when I started looking at social media.

My eyes widened as I began to read all of the posts made about Edrick and I.

Somehow, within mere hours of Edrick announcing our fake relationship, there were already hundreds — if not thousands — of posts about us. And the more I read, the more I began to realize that the majority of those posts were distinctly not positive.

In fact, the majority of those posts were extremely negative.

I always knew that Edrick had a sizable fanbase of women who adored him. After all, he was an incredibly handsome Alpha billionaire, and up until today, he was always known as being single and available to the public. It seemed that a lot of those women believed that they had a chance

at becoming the Alpha CEO's next wife, and my presence seemed to royally piss them off.

Even though I knew that it was never a good idea to read comments on these sorts of things, and that I should have turned off my phone, I couldn't stop myself from scrolling a little. My heart sank as I began to read some of the nasty comments that were made about me.

"I can't believe Edrick Morgan is actually planning on marrying a human," one comment read. "And he really had kids with her! Gross!"

"It'll be okay," another comment replied. "She's clearly just a human plaything. Plenty of the werewolf elites like to dabble with humans when they're bored and waiting for their true mate to appear. When he finds his real mate, he'll throw her in the trash where she belongs."

As I read even more nasty comments, many of them seemed to fall into this similar vein. It seemed that most people agreed that I was nothing more than a "human plaything" for Edrick, as they didn't yet know that I wasn't even a human; not that it made it any better, of course. My entire life, I had been raised thinking I was a human, so seeing people speak about humans like that made my blood boil.

Eventually, I came to my senses and realized that it was best to shut off my phone for the night. I tossed my phone down on the couch and let out a deep sigh, shutting my eyes as I leaned my head back on the pillow.

This was too much attention, too fast. I never asked for this. Even though Edrick's announcement of our fake relationship made me excited in the moment, I realized now that it might not have been a good thing. In fact, I couldn't help but worry if the stress of it all would impact my baby. I wished that he had at least talked to me about it first before jumping to that decision, and now it was too late — the news was out.

I couldn't help but feel incredibly sad after that. Would my baby only ever be viewed as an impediment to other women's chances to be with the

Alpha billionaire? Even more so, would my baby be in danger with so many women being furious about my “relationship” with Edrick, regardless of whether it was real or fake?

Suddenly, I wished that I had simply stepped away from all of this as soon as I found out that I was pregnant. Maybe I should have taken Michael’s offer and used the money to move to another city; but at the same time, I couldn’t deny the fact that I enjoyed being near Edrick and Ella, and even Selina and the maids. In a way, this place had become my home, and these people had become my family. Even after just a couple of months of living here, I already couldn’t imagine living somewhere else. But the stress of the public finding out about our “relationship” still made me rethink whether or not this was a safe situation, not only for myself, but also for my baby.

I tried to read a little to pass the time after I shut my phone off, but I found myself unable to focus with my mind racing, so I finally gave in and closed my eyes as I laid on the couch.

Finally, a little while later, I heard the elevator doors open. I quickly jerked my head up and peered over the back of the couch to see Edrick stepping into the foyer.

He didn’t see me at first. During those moments, as I watched him take off his jacket and his shoes, I swore I saw a slight smile faintly flickering across his lips. I couldn’t help but wonder if he was smiling about his announcement earlier.

And even the thought of his announcement making him happy enough to smile made my heart flutter.

## Chapter 122 Someday

Edrick

I came home that night after a long, exhausting day of work. The news of my fake relationship with Moana quickly spread, and I found myself having to dodge all sorts of questions about it from intrigued coworkers. Thankfully, my father didn't appear yet to berate me for it, although I knew that it was only a matter of time until that happened.

When I arrived at home, I just wanted to sleep. The apartment was quiet and dark, so I took off my shoes and my jacket before heading into the living room to have a drink before bed.

However, when I walked into the doorway, I finally saw Moana peering at me over the back of the couch.

I knew instantly from the look on her face that she had seen the news. And I also knew that I would have to explain things to her, as she was clearly upset. Admittedly, I knew that I shouldn't have said what I said earlier that morning; it just slipped out in the heat of the moment, and I found myself regretting it afterwards. But what was done was done, and now we had to make the best of it.

"I'm sure you'd like to talk," I said, sticking my hands in my pockets as I watched Moana stand from the couch. "Let's talk in my office."

Moana, who was dressed in her robe and nightgown, followed me to my study. I closed the door behind us in case anyone would overhear our conversation, then gestured for her to sit in one of the soft armchairs by the fireplace. But she continued to stand, her eyes burning with a combination of confusion and anger.

“Let me explain—” I began, but Moana quickly cut me off and shook her head vigorously. Her hands were balled up into fists at her sides, and as she shook her head, bits of curly red hair fell into her face.

“Just tell me whether I’m just a human plaything or not,” she said, her voice low and intentional.

I furrowed my brow. “What?” I asked. “What are you talking about?”

Moana let out an exasperated sigh and pulled her phone out of her robe pocket. I watched silently as she furiously tapped on her phone screen, then held the phone out for me to see.

Of course, it was just as I suspected; it seemed that many of my “fans” were angry about this “relationship”, which I did expect. However, to make matters worse, they were saying horrible things about Moana and calling her a human plaything. They didn’t know yet that Moana was a werewolf, and that she was actually my fated mate. Of course, it wouldn’t matter even if the public did know that Moana was a werewolf, though, because these women would have found any reason to be angry about it. I was used to this sort of thing and that was why I had removed myself entirely from social media, but it was all extremely new to Moana.

Seeing the look on her face and the way that her hand shook when she held the phone out to me made me feel even worse for jumping into this so soon. I should have spoken to her about it first and given her time to prepare. I didn’t even ask if this was what she wanted, and I did feel bad about it.

“Look,” I said, watching as she shut off her phone and slipped it back into her pocket, “I’m sorry that I didn’t consult you before I said what I said this morning. But now that you’re in the public eye, there are some changes you’ll need to make; to start, you’ll be better off if you make all of your social media accounts private. Not only that, but you’ll have to delete anything that’s unnecessary or that could hurt our image. That includes any distasteful photos or posts. My manager can help you with that.”

Moana’s eyes widened. She seemed taken aback.

“Why should I have to change my habits over something like this?” she growled. “You’re the one who suddenly decided you were going to make this announcement. I had no idea.”

I sighed. “If it makes you feel any better, I had no idea either,” I replied. “It just sort of slipped out this morning. I’ll admit I got a bit overwhelmed with all of the paparazzi.”

Moana fell silent. I couldn’t tell if she was understanding where I was coming from or if she was still royally pissed at me — maybe both of those things at once. She stared at me with a certain amount of intensity for a few moments, chewing the inside of her cheek deliberately, before she spoke again.

“I still don’t understand why you did this,” she said quietly. “I thought you didn’t want to get married to anybody. Not only that, but you’ve made it abundantly clear in the past that you have no interest in having a relationship with me because of our differences in social status, and I’m positive that that hasn’t changed at all despite the fact that you know I’m a werewolf now. What changed?”

I didn’t know how to respond. All I could do was stare at the floor unblinkingly as I digested her words. She was right; even as a werewolf, there were still glaring differences in our social status, and a marriage was off the table. Aside from that, even though I knew now that she was my

fated mate, it didn't necessarily mean that I was comfortable with creating a mate bond with her or that I would want to commit to her. If I learned one thing about marriage from my parents' horrible history, it was that marriage was a complete sham and a waste of time. Even people who had a mate bond with each other, like my parents, still abused and cheated on each other. No matter how I felt about Moana, I couldn't picture myself committing to anyone like that. Sure, I was okay for now just having a fake relationship with her, even if it meant never being with anyone else. I had been completely alone for years before I met Moana, so being without intimacy was not really a problem for me.

"I may have made it clear that I have no interest in marriage between the two of us," I said finally, "but you also made it clear that you don't want me to get married to anyone — real or fake — because you clearly don't want Ella or our child to have another mother. So, you had just as much of a hand in this as I did, and now I expect you to play the role as my fake fiancé. Isn't this what you wanted?"

Moana's eyes widened. I could see anger bubbling up inside of her, mixed with a bit of confusion.

"So, it is only fake?" she asked.

I nodded.

Moana was silent for a moment, staring up at me incredulously with her big green eyes before she finally responded and took me completely by surprise by what she said next. Apparently, unlike myself, it was in fact an issue for her to live without intimacy.

"What if I fall in love with someone someday?" she asked. "What then?"

Moana's words made me freeze. All I could do was stare at her intensely, completely taken aback by this statement.

## Chapter 123 Decisions

Edrick

“What if I fall in love with someone someday?” Moana asked, her green eyes full of fire and fury. “What then?”

I froze at her words. My eyes widened as what she said settled in fully, and already I felt a little bit of anger and jealousy beginning to bubble up inside of me.

Even though I partially understood what Moana meant, and that she didn't know yet that she was my mate, what she said just then angered me. The thought of her being with anyone else, despite the fact that I knew I would never be able to get married, made me feel almost sick. I didn't know how to respond for the longest time as a million different things whirled around inside my head.

Finally, I was able to speak.

“You're free to make any decision you want,” I replied, feeling my blood run cold as I spoke. “But you had better be prepared to pay the price for a decision like that.”

Moana's face fell. She glared at me intensely for several long moments, almost as though she was in disbelief, before she spoke. “Is that a threat?” she asked, instinctively placing her hand over her belly and instantly making me feel guilty for my choice of words. Of course I wasn't

threatening her; I only meant that she should be prepared to face the consequences if she chose to be with someone else. If she was going to have an issue with me being with someone else, even if it was only a fake relationship with another woman, then I felt as though I had every right to set my own boundaries as well. If she was going to fall in love with another man, then she could also leave my house to go and be with that other man.

In fact, I was frankly appalled by her sudden double standards. I wanted to tell her all of these things that were on my mind, but I was suddenly reminded of what the man in the baby supply store had said about not fighting with the mother of my child. Moana had already dealt with enough stress this early on in her pregnancy, and I wasn't about to cause more stress by arguing with her.

All I could do was sigh. "Listen," I said, passing my hand over my tired face. "What's done is done. For now, you need to just go along with it and pretend to be my fiancée. We can cross those bridges when — or if — we come to them. It's best for everyone right now if we just go through with this."

Moana was silent. Her hand stayed planted on her belly, almost protectively, but I knew she was also soothing herself by holding her stomach. Then, without a word, she turned on her heel and stormed out.

I watched after her while she walked away; and admittedly, she looked sexy in her robe. She had the sash tied around her waist tightly, accentuating her small waist and round hips. Maybe it was just because it had been so long since I'd been intimate with anyone, but even as she stormed out angrily, I couldn't help but be a little turned on. Maybe now that I knew that she was my fated mate, it would prove to be too much of a distraction.

As soon as the door slammed shut behind her, I let out another sigh and sank into the armchair by the fireplace.

Of course, I didn't like the idea that Moana could ever love someone else; she was supposed to be my fated mate. And after everything that had happened recently, I couldn't imagine not having her by my side. But at the same time, I knew that I would never get married, and I still wasn't even sure if I was willing or ready to commit myself to a mate bond. Would it be best if I just cut her loose so she could be in a normal relationship with someone? If her wolf never fully emerged, then she would never know that I was supposed to be her fated mate, and I couldn't help but wonder if it would be better for her like that. Not only that, but if she was already distracting me this much, I couldn't imagine the level of distraction that would come from it if we had a mate bond. How could I ever continue to perform well at my job as the CEO of WereCorp if I was constantly being distracted by this beautiful red-haired woman?

Maybe it really would have been best if I hadn't announced our fake relationship earlier that morning. But what was done was done, and we needed to stick with it for the time being if we didn't want even more unnecessary attention. If I announced my fake relationship with Moana and then she moved out and we "broke up" a week later, it would only label me as someone who couldn't commit to anything. WereCorp stocks were already on the verge of suffering enough from this entire mess and I didn't want to risk them dropping even more.

But that wasn't the only thing on my mind.

The stunt that Kelly pulled was still fresh, and I couldn't let her get away with it. I knew that she would only pay off the police if I tried to turn her in, or she would feign innocence too easily, and she would never receive any repercussions. However, I knew that her parents would not be proud of their daughter if they found out what she did.

And so, even though it was late, I decided to call her father anyway.

Just as I suspected, Kelly's father answered almost immediately. He was a businessman just like my father, and rarely slept. He was in his office

until all hours most nights, poring over documents, and probably had no intention of going to bed anytime soon.

“Hello?” he answered in his usual gruff, gravelly voice.

“Hello, Mr. Anderson,” I replied. “It’s Edrick Morgan.”

“Ah, Edrick! To what do I owe the pleasure at this late hour?”

I stifled a sigh and chewed on my lower lip, unsure of how to broach the subject. I had always respected Kelly’s father. Even though he was a ruthless businessman, he was a successful and proud person, and I always looked up to him in some ways. I hated to be the bearer of bad news, especially when it came to Kelly; she was his pride and joy, and aside from that, she had also given him plenty of trouble throughout her life. Hearing about yet another antic that she pulled might have just sent him over the edge.

“Oh no,” Mr. Anderson said. “You went silent. It’s about Kelly, isn’t it?”

That was another thing about Kelly’s father: he was terribly astute.

“...Yes,” I replied.

“What did she do this time?”

I sighed and cleared my throat. “Kelly paid Rogues to attack my daughter and my... fiancée.”

Kelly’s father was silent for a long time. I could only picture his face turning bright red and his knuckles turning white as he gripped the phone for dear life.

“She what?”

“It’s true,” I replied solemnly. “I wish I was joking, but I’m not. She nearly got my fiancée — and our baby — killed. I found Moana in the Rogue district the other day after Kelly was supposed to take her to a doctor’s

appointment. Kelly confessed to it herself; she thought she would play a 'prank' on my fiancée, and it got out of hand."

Mr. Anderson let out a long, drawn-out sigh. "I see..."

"I don't want to press charges right now," I replied. "But I think that Kelly needs help. Serious help."

Kelly's father made an indiscernible sound through the phone that seemed like a grunt. I could hear him pacing around the room through the phone.

"Very well," he said. "Thank you for letting me know. I knew that Kelly would get in trouble like this someday... And I've been thinking about it for a while, but I think it's finally time."

"Time for what?" I asked.

Kelly's father sighed. "Time for me to cut her off financially until she becomes a better person."

## Chapter 124 Alpha Daddy to the Rescue

### Moana

I didn't sleep in Edrick's room that night, and he never came to my room to sleep with me. I had to admit that I felt a little lonely without him, but I simply couldn't get over everything he had said to me. It felt as though I had no choice in the matter, and now I was stuck in a fake relationship that I didn't ask to be in and would have to change myself to fit the role of the "billionaire's fiancée".

Not only that, but what had he meant when he said that I should be prepared to "pay the price" for falling in love with someone else?

There was no denying the fact that we were both young, and it would be nearly impossible for either of us to live our entire lives without feeling love for anyone else. Maybe it was natural for Edrick to be closed off and without intimacy, but it wasn't natural for me. I craved a loving relationship with a good man not just for my baby's sake, but for my own sake, too. What woman didn't want to feel loved and cared for?

But then again, I did feel a little cruel for what I said. I supposed that it was a bit of a double standard for me to be angry with Edrick to even consider a fake relationship with someone else while I considered falling in love with someone else someday, and maybe I shouldn't have said that. In the moment, it felt right, but it didn't feel so good when I thought about it while laying alone in my bed.

...

The next morning, I woke up shortly before Edrick left for work and ran into him on my way to the kitchen to make tea.

“Good morning,” I choked out, feeling my heart race as we passed each other. Edrick replied with hardly more than a grunt and brushed past me, leaving me standing in the middle of the dining room by myself.

Of course, I expected there to be tension between us, but as I heard the elevator doors open and close without Edrick so much as saying goodbye, I felt even worse about the situation.

However, it was a beautiful day; maybe I just needed to get out. I hadn’t taken Ella out for crepes for breakfast recently, so I decided to get dressed and wake her up.

Ella’s big eyes widened when I woke her up with the mention of crepes. “Really?!” she said, practically shouting as she jumped out of the bed.

I nodded, stifling a laugh at the little girl’s sudden energy after only waking up a few moments earlier. “Yes,” I replied. “Get dressed and brush your teeth, and then we can go.”

Ella excitedly zoomed around her room as she got ready. I helped her put on a little dress and fix her hair, and once she was ready, we headed downstairs to the lobby. It really was a beautiful day outside, and I looked forward to even going on a little walk in the park across the street after we ate.

However, I quickly realized that going out alone with Ella may not have been a good idea.

At first, I didn’t realize what was happening; there were a lot of people on the street, many of them with cameras. I wondered if there was something happening on the news, but when Ella and I exited the lobby hand-in-hand and the lights on the cameras began to blindingly flash in our faces, I knew what was happening.

I was instantly stunned by the amount of flashing lights and all of the noise. Ella also immediately began to cry, not understanding at her young age what was happening. I held her tightly to my side as the paparazzi began to crowd around us, shouting their questions at us.

“Please stand back!” I shouted, feeling my voice shake with fear. “T-There’s a child here and I’m pregnant!”

But the paparazzi didn’t care. They only closed in on us more tightly, squishing us up against the building and blinding us with their lights as they asked their questions.

“How does it feel to be the Alpha CEO’s new fad?” one woman shouted.

“Are you and Edrick Morgan really engaged, or is this just a publicity stunt in light of his poor treatment of human workers?”

“Is Edrick Morgan paying you to be his bride? Why do you think a wealthy Alpha werewolf would be interested in a human such as yourself?”

“P-Please!” I begged again, ignoring the barrage of questions that were being thrown at me. “Stand back!”

I felt tears begin to well up in my eyes. Ella sobbed into my skirt, clinging to me for dear life. I couldn’t even see a way to get out over all of the flashing lights, not that there was a way out anyway; they were fully closed in on us on all sides, with only the side of the building behind us.

Suddenly, I heard a booming voice emanating over the paparazzi that caused a slight lull in all of the noise and the chaos.

“Back OFF!” the voice bellowed. “NOW!”

I recognized that voice immediately; it was Edrick.

“Daddy!” Ella shouted; her face caked with tears. I let out a sigh of relief as I saw Edrick forcing his way through the crowd. He didn’t say anything as he came up to Ella and me, but he instead blocked us with his body.

“All of you leave, now!” he shouted. I had never heard him this angry before; his voice was deep and threatening, almost like a growl.

Some of the paparazzi got scared of the Alpha werewolf and scattered, but not all of them. One man in particular kept putting his camera in our faces regardless of Edrick’s warnings, causing Ella to sob even harder.

All of a sudden, Edrick did something completely unexpected: when the man wouldn’t stop taking photos and barraging us with questions, Edrick’s face turned red, and in one swift movement he pulled his fist back and then punched the man right in the center of his face.

Nearby onlookers gasped as the man fell to the ground, blood gushing out of his nose and his camera shattering on the sidewalk. My eyes went wide, and Ella’s wails raised in intensity, but Edrick only whirled around and scooped her up with one arm while putting the other around me. He quickly ushered us both out of there and back into the lobby, where two security guards immediately locked the doors before more paparazzi tried to run inside.

Edrick was silent as we took the elevator up. Ella continued to sob and wail after being traumatized by the paparazzi, and it was all my fault; I should have known better. I half expected Edrick to berate me for doing something so stupid when we got back to the penthouse, and I would have accepted it because I knew that what I did was wrong.

But, much to my surprise, he didn’t say anything. Instead, he only continued to hold Ella tightly in one arm while his other arm stayed firmly wrapped around me, and together the three of us collected our bearings in the foyer until Selina and the maids came scurrying in.

“Are you okay?!” Selina said, her eyes wide.

“It’s those goddamn paparazzi,” Edrick growled, setting Ella down now that she was a bit calmer. “They’re animals. But it’s over now, at least.

I'm glad I decided to come home for something, but I think I'll be staying now."

But when my eyes shifted over to the TV and I saw that clips of Edrick punching the paparazzi were already being broadcast on the news, I knew that I wasn't over. Now, because of a stupid decision I made without thinking about the consequences, Edrick would have to deal with worse press.

## Chapter 125 Getaway

### Moana

My eyes landed on the TV in the living room, which was already showing clips of Edrick punching the paparazzi.

I felt my blood run cold as I watched it. Not only did the paparazzi spread the clips of what happened so quickly, but I felt as though it was entirely my fault. If I hadn't made such a stupid decision to go out only a day after Edrick announced our "relationship", then none of this would have happened. Not only that, but I put Ella in danger by deciding to take her out with me, and now she was terrified.

But when I looked over at Edrick, he didn't look concerned in the slightest. Without a word, he calmly walked over to the television and shut it off.

"Keep the news off for today," he said, turning to Selina and the maids. The three of them often liked to play the news on the TV in the background while they worked, but now it wasn't the best idea after what happened. Not only would it be upsetting for Ella to see clips of her father punching someone over and over again, but it would be upsetting for the rest of us as well.

I opened my mouth to apologize to Edrick, but before I could say anything, he pulled out his phone and retreated to his study. The door slammed shut behind him and I could hear him speaking quickly. I

couldn't help but wonder who he was calling, but the door was thick and his voice was muffled. However, I could only imagine that he was calling the tabloid company like before, to pay them off for the clips. I couldn't think of anything else that he would be doing, although I wasn't sure how successful it would be considering the fact that the clips of him punching the paparazzi were already plastered all over the news.

Selina, the maids and I all shot each other concerned looks.

"This is all my fault," I whispered, feeling my eyes well up with tears. "I shouldn't have gone out there. Not with Ella, at least. I feel like an idiot."

Selina shook her head and rubbed my back as she guided me over to a chair to sit down. Meanwhile, Ella was sitting on the couch and sniffing. Amy had given her a picture book to keep her busy, which seemed to be working.

"It's not your fault and you're not an idiot," Selina said gently. "You're not used to this. But let it be a lesson for the future; there's a reason why Edrick brings bodyguards when he goes out without his mask on."

I nodded and sat down. Selina brought me tea while I breathed deeply, trying not to stress anymore about it for the baby's sake.

Eventually, Edrick came out of his study a little while later.

"That's settled," he said, sounding rather satisfied with himself. I was surprised to see that he didn't even seem to be fuming; it almost seemed like this was nothing more than a mild inconvenience, despite the fact that he punched someone to save me.

In fact, this was now the second time in the past week that Edrick had saved me; first the Rogues, and now the paparazzi. I couldn't help but feel a bit awed by his strength and ability to handle situations like this, but I still felt bad for what I did that morning.

I quickly stood and looked at him, my brow furrowed with anxiety. "Edrick, I'm so sorry—"

“I know you’re going to apologize, and there’s no need,” he said nonchalantly as he poured a cup of tea for himself. “My PR agency handled it. With a few articles on how the paparazzi were harming a pregnant woman and a child, along with exposing a few other nasty things that those damn tabloids have done in the past, everyone will take our side. And maybe, they’ll leave us alone from now on.” He paused then, sipping his tea, and glanced over at Ella. The stress of it all must have exhausted her, because she was now fast asleep on the couch. Edrick then turned back to me and lowered his voice.

“Maybe with everything going on, it wouldn’t hurt to get out of town,” he said.

I raised my eyebrows, surprised by this proposition. “Oh?” I asked. “Where?”

Edrick shrugged. “I like to keep the mountain estate for times like this. It’s a nice, quiet place to go when the city gets to be too much. If you want to go, I’ll take you and Ella.”

I was shocked not only by Edrick’s calm demeanor about the situation, but also by the fact that he had just invited me on a small vacation away from the city. Even after I put his daughter and our baby in danger by going out during a media frenzy, he still seemed to have my best interests in mind. Or maybe he just had Ella’s and the baby’s best interests in mind.

As I went about my day, I couldn’t help myself from thinking about Edrick’s offer. Getting out of the city for a few days did sound nice, and I needed to de-stress. If I didn’t manage my stress, I knew it wouldn’t be good for the baby, but I wouldn’t be able to do that if I was cooped up inside this penthouse for days until the media calmed down. Besides, I remembered visiting the mountain estate during my interview; it was stunning there. The mansion was surrounded by nature, the air smelled like pine trees, and the mansion itself was stunning. Maybe I could even

bring my painting supplies and my easel so I could paint a bit while I was there. A nice little painting would be perfect for the baby's nursery.

Finally, later that night, I decided to agree to Edrick's proposition. I walked over to his bedroom in my robe and nightgown and knocked on the door.

"Come in," he called.

When I cracked open the door, the Alpha billionaire was sitting up in bed and reading a book. He glanced up at me over the book, his eyes lingering on the lace of my nightgown for the briefest moment before his face turned slightly red and his eyes met mine again.

"I decided that I would like to go to the mountain estate after all," I said, nervously fiddling with my fingers. "If you'd still like to go, of course."

Edrick set down his book and, much to my surprise, smiled slightly.

"We'll go first thing in the morning," he said.

"So soon?" I asked, raising my eyebrows. "What about work?"

Edrick merely shrugged. "My baby's health is my top priority," he said. "Besides, I'm the CEO. I have unlimited paid vacation days." For a moment, after he spoke, he flashed a bit of a mischievous smile. It was only a second, but it made me blush to see him grin. The thought of Edrick being willing to blow off work on a dime for our baby also made me feel happy, and that maybe things weren't so bad after all.

"Thank you," I said. Edrick nodded and picked his book back up. I turned to walk out the door again, but stopped when he called after me.

"Will you sleep in here tonight?"