

Chapter 146 Once a Cheater Always a Cheater

Moana

I hoped that Edrick wasn't too upset with me or jealous. After all, I did just reveal to him that I had conceived our child with him on the very night that my ex-boyfriend and I broke up, which would certainly seem like rebounding. I felt my voice shaking a bit as I told him what happened, but at the same time, it felt better to get things out in the air.

And, much to my surprise, Edrick didn't say anything about the fact that I slept with him on the same night that Sam and I broke up. In fact, he seemed entirely focused on Sam's transgressions. It really made me realize that Edrick was on my side above all else, and it made me feel safe with him.

"I'll take care of it," Edrick said. His voice was low and stern, and even though I felt better after telling him everything, I instantly became worried that I was about to cause a scene after all.

"I-I don't want to cause a scene," I began, but Edrick waved his hand for me to stop. With his arm still wrapped firmly around my shoulders, he steered me away from Sam and in another direction, which took me by surprise. I had thought that he was going to march up to Sam and confront him with me, but he didn't.

In fact, he was heading toward someone else entirely.

Mia.

She was standing by herself when we walked up to her. She was talking on the phone, but when she saw us coming and saw the look on Edrick's face, she quickly hung up.

"What's up?" she asked, swirling her mimosa around in her glass. "You two look like you just had war flashbacks."

"I have a proposition for you," Edrick said as he stopped in front of her. "Are you interested?"

Mia raised an eyebrow. So did I; in fact, I was utterly confused. What was Edrick getting at?

"Um, that depends on the offer," she said slowly. "What is it?"

Edrick let out a wry chuckle before glancing over his shoulder at Sam again. He lowered his voice so no one could overhear us, then flashed Mia a mischievous smile.

"See that guy over there? The one with the tall blonde?" he asked, nodding his head subtly toward Sam and his new girlfriend. Mia casually glanced over at Sam, looking him up and down, then looked back at Edrick and nodded.

"Yeah. What about him?"

"He's a cheater," he said. "And he just threatened Moana. If you can make him betray his new girlfriend, I'll give you whatever you want."

Mia slowly sipped her mimosa, her eyes narrowing as she thought hard about Edrick's proposition. Meanwhile, I was still too stunned to talk. This wasn't what I had in mind when I decided to tell Edrick about what Sam did to me. I just wanted him to know about the situation so it could be handled in case Sam tried to expose the lie that I was Ella's biological mother. I didn't tell Edrick in the hopes that he would get revenge for me.

Finally, Mia shrugged. "Sure. I want a new sports car, though. A red one."

Edrick nodded and folded his arms across his chest. “Whatever you want. If you can expose him for the asshole that he really is, I’ll go to the car dealership with you and buy you a dozen cars if you want.”

Mia chuckled, then knocked back the rest of her mimosa and shoved the empty glass into Edrick’s hands. “One is enough,” she said, patting him on the shoulder with a grin. “But I’ll tell you what... If I get this done in thirty minutes — and I will — you two had better invite me to your wedding.”

I couldn’t help but blush. Edrick said nothing, but nodded. It seemed that Mia wasn’t even aware that our relationship was fake, and I couldn’t tell if Edrick simply didn’t want to tell her the truth right now or if it was something else.

Regardless, I was about to open my mouth to tell Mia not to go, but it was too late. She was already on her way over toward Sam. I watched with wide eyes and a slack jaw as she let down her long, black hair, then stopped at the bar for another mimosa and began to saunter up to Sam.

“Edrick, isn’t this too far?” I asked, turning to face him. “I didn’t want anyone to get in trouble. I was just worried that he would expose everything.”

Edrick merely shrugged. “People always follow the same pattern,” he said matter-of-factly. “Once a cheater, always a cheater. Maybe this will teach him a little lesson.”

I was still shocked. This mischievous side of Edrick was entirely new to me, but it was becoming more and more abundant lately. And I couldn’t help but admit to myself that it was something that I was attracted to... And Sam did deserve to learn a lesson for being a cheater. Not just a cheater, but a jerk who said such horrible things to me when I was the one who found him cheating, especially after everything I had done for him during our relationship.

“Come on,” Edrick said, taking my hand and flashing me a smile. “You look hungry.”

Admittedly, I was. And although I could have stood there and waited for the outcome of Mia’s plan all morning, I was starting to feel nauseous from the hunger, so Edrick and I made our way over to the buffet. I couldn’t help but blush as he stuck close to me, our shoulders touching the entire time we picked out our food. We sat down at a table beneath a tree and waited for Mia’s big reveal. It was like brunch and a show. I ate some fruit and yogurt with a deliciously frothy coffee prepared by the barista that was there, and if I pretended that nothing had happened with Sam, it did feel like it was just a nice picnic in the park beneath a beautiful willow tree.

But, like clockwork, not even fifteen minutes had passed before we heard screaming.

“Ugh! I can’t believe you!” a female voice shouted. “You’re a cheater!”

Edrick and I glanced at each other, flashing each other a quick smile, before we suddenly got up and made our way over to where Mia, Sam, and Sam’s new girlfriend were standing. A small crowd had formed around them.

“Baby, it’s not what it—”

Suddenly, before Sam could finish, his new girlfriend slapped him hard across the face.

The crowd erupted into a wave of gasps and mutters. Sam’s face instantly turned red, both from the hard slap and the embarrassment, while his tall blonde girlfriend towered over him in his heels.

Neither of them said anything for a few moments. Sam just stood there, holding his face in shock.

And meanwhile, Mia just stood off to the side. She was leaning against a tree, standing in the shade with her arms folded across her chest. She wasn't even trying to help in the slightest.

When Mia's eyes met mine and Edrick's, she winked subtly. And I knew that she had done it.

Chapter 147 Humiliation

Moana

“Ugh! I can’t believe you!” Sam’s new girlfriend shouted, causing Edrick and I to run over to the scene while a group of other intrigued employees gathered around as well. “You’re a cheater!”

“Baby, it’s not what it—”

Slap.

Sam’s face went red with a mixture of embarrassment and redness from the hard slap that his girlfriend gave him. A chorus of gasps and confused mutters erupted amongst the people who had gathered around, and meanwhile, Mia only stood leaning against a tree with a subtle smirk on her face. Her eyes finally met mine and Edrick’s, and she winked.

I knew then that she had accomplished what Edrick had essentially hired her to do: she had made Sam betray his new girlfriend. I wondered if his new girlfriend even knew that he cheated on me to be with her, or if he just brushed me off as some crazy lady who he didn’t even know when I found them in the restaurant that day.

Either way, Edrick was right. Once a cheater, always a cheater.

“You know, you wouldn’t even have this job if it wasn’t for me,” his girlfriend, a Beta, said with a scowl. “I can’t believe you would pull a stunt like this. We are over!”

With that, Sam’s new girlfriend — well, ex-girlfriend now — turned on her heel and stormed off.

“Baby!” Sam called. He tried to chase after her, but Mia suddenly ran after him like a flash and grabbed him by the collar of his shirt. “H-Hey! What are you—”

“Save it for the judge,” Mia said with a smirk. She yanked Sam over by his collar, causing him to struggle the entire way, and presented him to Edrick and I like a cat that had just dropped a dead bird on our doorstep. “Here you go.”

Sam’s eyes widened as he stood in front of Edrick and myself. He began to stutter out a series of apologies for causing a scene, but Edrick only stared down at him with narrowed eyes.

“Everyone, return to the picnic,” Edrick said, addressing the crowd that was still standing around us. “Let’s not let pretty high school drama ruin your nice afternoon.” People in the crowd snickered at the way that Edrick referred to it as nothing more than petty high school drama, which caused Sam’s face to turn an even deeper shade of red. His eyes shifted back and forth between Edrick and I, and Mia continued to stand behind him with her arms folded across her chest in case he decided to try to leave again.

I really hadn’t expected any of this to work. When Mia said that she could make Sam betray his new girlfriend in less than thirty minutes, I thought that she was either joking or that she was too full of herself. But now, Sam stood here like a little kid who got in trouble in front of Edrick, and I had to focus all of my energy on containing my smile. It felt good to see him get a little taste of the humiliation I felt when he berated me outside the restaurant on that busy city street.

As the crowd dissipated, Edrick only continued to stare down his nose at Sam, who was practically trembling by now. Once we were alone, Edrick finally spoke.

“I don’t tolerate cheaters and abusers in my company,” Edrick said, his voice low and serious and not mischievous at all like before. “I have half a mind to fire you on the spot just for disturbing my company picnic. And you should apologize to your colleagues for causing so much of a scene.”

“I-I’m sorry, sir,” Sam blubbered, his eyes fixed on the ground. I had always thought that Sam was pretty tall, but Edrick was far taller and towered over him. Edrick especially towered over him now as Sam began to shrink into himself, slouching as though he wanted to make himself appear smaller. He looked like a dog that got caught rummaging through the trash.

“I think you should fire this jerk,” Mia said. She wrapped her arm around Sam’s shoulders and gave him a lighthearted shake as though they were old friends, but it was entirely condescending and emasculating. “He did threaten your fiancée, after all.”

Edrick nodded. “You’re right, as usual, Mia,” he replied. “We’ll fill the role with someone better.”

Sam’s eyes widened even further. “No, please,” he whined. He then turned to face me and clasped his hands together in front of them, pleading with me. “Please, Moana. I need this job. I have to pay my rent. I-I need to pay off my expensive car. Please.”

I couldn’t hide my scoff. Of course Sam would be the type to get a fancy apartment and an expensive car as soon as he got a job at WereCorp, even going so far as to go into debt to appear rich.

But, at the same time, I knew what it was like to struggle financially. I had come from the lowest caste in our society; not just a human, but an orphan, too. I knew how it felt to barely make ends meet, and even though I knew

that Sam would have little trouble finding another job as a werewolf, and even though he had done me horribly wrong in the past, I hated to put other people in that situation.

“Please, Moana...”

Finally, I sighed and turned to face Edrick. “Don’t fire him,” I said.

Edrick’s eyes widened. “Why not?”

I shook my head. “I know what it’s like to live as a lower status, and I wouldn’t wish it upon anyone else. Not even this sorry sack of shit.”

For several long moments, Edrick just stared at me with his eyebrows raised. I knew that he felt uncomfortable by my request, but I just didn’t like the idea of causing someone to lose their job entirely over this. Sam got humiliated, and that was enough for me.

“Fine,” Edrick said finally, smacking his lips together annoyedly. “I won’t fire you. But you’ll be working in the mailroom from now on.”

I could tell that Sam was not excited about being demoted, but at the very least, he still had a job. “T-Thank you, Mr. Morgan,” he said.

Edrick stared down his nose at him for a few more long moments before he stooped down to Sam’s level and stopped just inches from his face, causing Sam to look even more panicked. He then lowered his voice so no one else could hear.

“And if you say a word about Ella or Moana... You won’t even be working in the mailroom,” he said. “And I’ll make sure you can’t find another halfway decent job in this city for the rest of your pathetic little life. Do you understand me?”

Sam’s eyes widened so far I could see the whites of his eyes all the way around his irises. He glanced back and forth between Edrick and I several times before rapidly nodding and taking a big, nervous gulp.

“I won’t say a word,” he replied.

“Good.” Edrick straightened again, then waved Sam away with his hand.
“You can go home now. You’re not welcome at this picnic anymore.”

Sam didn’t say a word. He simply turned on his heel and took off toward the parking lot with his metaphorical tail between his legs.

I felt relieved. It felt nice to see Sam finally get the same amount of humiliation that I felt, and maybe it would teach him not to treat women poorly in the future. But, like Edrick said...

Once a cheater, always a cheater.

Chapter 148 Cityscape

Moana

After Sam left, I felt relief wash over me. I was happy to see Sam finally get just as humiliated as I was when he cheated on me, and now he had to actually work his way up in the company instead of using his Beta girlfriend to get the job.

However, when I looked over at Edrick, his face had fallen and gone dark.

“Thanks, Mia,” he said, his voice sounding rather cold compared to how it sounded earlier when he was acting mischievous with his old friend. “I’ll get you that car you wanted. Just let me know which day you’d want to go to the dealership.”

Mia shook her head, the look on her face indicating that she also realized the sudden change in Edrick’s demeanor. “Don’t worry about it,” she replied with a wave of her hand. “I can afford my own car if I want it. I was just joking earlier.”

Edrick looked a bit surprised, but he didn’t say anything. In fact, without another word he simply turned around and walked away. I could only watch after him with wide eyes as he disappeared into the crowd of employees, my heart practically pounding out of my chest. What changed so suddenly? He had been so full of life when he was making his little

plan with Mia, and now that it was over, he was sullen and quiet. Was it because I didn't want Sam to get fired, or was it something else?

"Good old Edrick," Mia said with a shrug. "Gotta love when he does that."

I turned to face Mia then. "Um... Really, thank you," I said. "You really didn't have to do that for me."

Mia only smiled. "I'll do anything if it means exposing a cheater and a liar," she said. "But I have to say... I'm surprised that you didn't want to get him fired."

I bit my lip for a moment, then shrugged. "I just don't want to inflict too much suffering on others," I replied. "An eye for an eye, you know? He got what he deserved."

Edrick's childhood friend nodded slowly. I watched as her gaze shifted over toward where Enzo disappeared for a few moments, and I followed her eyes. He was talking to another business partner already with that same plastic smile on his face. It was as though he put on a mask when he talked to people.

I realized then that Mia had asked for a wedding invitation earlier. Although Edrick didn't say anything at the time, which indicated that Mia didn't know that our relationship was fake, I felt comfortable enough with her to tell her the truth. She was so kind and did something really important for me, and I felt as though she deserved to not be lied to.

"Um... About the wedding," I said, turning back to face Mia. "I don't know if—"

Mia suddenly cut me off and shook her head with a smile. "I know already," she said.

I raised my eyebrows. "Edrick did tell you?"

"Well, not really," she said. "I can just tell. I know him too well. But... If I'm being honest, I have a feeling..."

“A feeling about what?” I asked.

Suddenly, Mia shook her head again. “I’ve already said too much,” she said, flashing me a warm smile. “I’ll see you around.”

With that, Mia left me standing there feeling utterly confused.

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Later that night, after everything was said and done, I was finally getting ready for bed in Edrick’s bathroom. The picnic went on for much longer than I expected, but I didn’t mind. After everything that happened with Sam, I finally just wound up spending the remainder of the picnic with the children. Hearing their laughter and seeing how happy Ella was to be playing with other kids her age made up for everything else.

When I walked out of the bathroom, however, I noticed that the balcony doors were open. And Edrick was standing outside, which was rare for him.

I watched him for a few moments. He was leaning over the railing and looking out at the city. In his white button-down shirt and black trousers, with his dark hair moving in the breeze, he looked incredibly handsome even from behind. I tried to get a good mental image of the scene, because I wanted to sketch it at some point.

Finally, I decided to join him. I quietly walked up to him and leaned on the railing beside him. He glanced over at me for the briefest moment before both of us silently stared out at the city without a word.

However, Edrick’s cold demeanor hadn’t changed much all day. Even now in this peaceful moment, he seemed sullen.

“I’m sorry if I upset you by asking not to fire my ex earlier,” I said, breaking the silence.

Edrick didn’t answer for a few moments, but I could see him tense up beside me. Finally, after a long time, he spoke.

“It’s not that,” he said.

“Then what is it?”

He shook his head and stared down at the city street beneath us. “Did you really sleep with me on the same day that you two broke up?”

I felt a lump rise in my throat. I should have known that that was what he was upset about; it only made sense.

“It’s true,” I admitted, feeling my heart race in my chest. “But I never saw you as a rebound.”

“Then what was it, then?” he asked, standing up straight and looking over at me with his steely gray eyes. “What would you call that night?”

I swallowed. Maybe I didn’t know. Or maybe I just wasn’t willing to think about it. Either way, nothing would come out, and Edrick only nodded and turned away. I watched as he slowly walked back into the room, where he went over to the closet without a word and kicked off his shoes before beginning to unbutton his shirt.

“What would you call it?” I asked from the doorway. “It was all the same to you, wasn’t it? A one night stand?”

Edrick froze. I immediately felt a little guilty for what I said. Finally, he just shook his head and finished taking off his shirt before turning to face me. I tried not to look at his bare chest, but it was difficult.

“It was a one night stand,” he said. “A one night stand during which we just so happened to conceive a child together. Nothing more, nothing less.”

I didn’t know what to say. I thought back to what Mia had said earlier, about how she had a feeling about something. What was it? A feeling that we would get married after all? Part of me wanted to ask him, but I knew deep down that I wouldn’t get an answer. Even if I could get an answer, the words wouldn’t come out anyway. I could only stand there, frozen.

“Let me release my scent, and he’ll calm down,” Mina suddenly said.

“No.”

Edrick froze. So did I. My eyes widened as I realized that I had just responded to my wolf out loud, and Edrick had heard me.

“What?” he asked.

I shook my head. “N-Nothing.” Without another word, I walked over to the bed and climbed in. Edrick didn’t say anything else about my slip-up as he got ready for bed, and the only noise between us after that was the sound of him getting into bed and shutting the lamp off.

And in the morning, he was already gone when I woke up.

Chapter 149 Lock & Key

Moana

I couldn't sleep at all that night after the picnic. It was for a variety of reasons: first of all, I was still admittedly upset over what Moana had told me earlier that day. I knew that I shouldn't have been jealous or hurt over it, as Moana was my mate and what happened between us was only fate striking at just the right time, but it didn't make it hurt any less.

I just wished that she told me sooner that she broke up with her ex not even an hour before we met, and I had to admit that the way she pitied him made my mood darken. However, that feeling was quickly overshadowed by the way that she suddenly blurted something out.

It was only one word: "No."

Somehow, I knew that she was talking to her wolf, and not to me. But what were they talking about? Was there something that she wasn't telling me?

Either way, I knew that it would only be a matter of time before Moana's wolf fully emerged. If she accidentally shifted, and if she was in fact the Golden Wolf, she would be putting herself in grave danger. I needed to get to the bottom of this before it was too late. If she was the Golden Wolf, I would have to find some way to keep her from shifting for the first time until the baby was born. People would instantly know about her existence the second she shifted, and they would no doubt be hunting her. With a

baby in her belly, it only made it more dangerous... Not that I wouldn't also be terribly worried about her anyway even if she wasn't pregnant.

That night, I kept tossing and turning. I would fall asleep for a few minutes, only to wake up again from my nerves. Finally, I decided that I simply wouldn't sleep at all.

My mind kept wandering back to the forum thread that I found about the book on the Golden Wolf. It was supposedly extremely rare, and possibly didn't even exist. But I had a feeling that I could find it.

There was a private library in the city that was only open to the highest class of werewolves. I had never been there before myself, but it was common knowledge that the librarian lived there, and she had an enormous collection of rare and banned books. It was late, but I didn't care; I needed to see her now.

I quietly got dressed while Moana slept, taking one last glance at her before I slipped out of the room and headed outside. And soon, I was driving my car across the quiet city, and pulling up to the curb outside the library.

It was a massive stone building that had been a part of this city since the city was built. The librarians here were always from the same family, and the library would be passed down to each generation. There was something almost ominous about the building, but I swallowed my nerves and walked up the front steps to the big, ornate wooden door and pressed the doorbell.

There was a long wait. I pressed the doorbell a couple more times, and by the third time, I began to think that no one was going to answer.

However, just as I was about to walk away, the door finally cracked open.

“What do you want?” a gruff, old woman’s voice said through the crack. “It’s three o’clock in the morning. Can’t you read? The hours are posted right in front of your face.”

I felt my face flush with embarrassment. “I’m sorry,” I said. “I know you’re not open. But I have urgent research to do. Can you please let me in?”

The door cracked open a little wider, and now I could see an old woman’s face staring up at me. Her face was covered with wrinkles, but she had piercing blue eyes. “I recognize you,” she said, her voice low and gravelly. “You’re Edrick Morgan. What are you doing here?”

I swallowed. “Like I said, I have urgent research I need to do,” I replied. “It’s really important, but unfortunately I can’t tell anyone what it’s about.”

The woman didn’t say anything for a few long moments. Finally, she pulled the door open the rest of the way and gestured for me to come in. “Do you want tea?”

I shook my head. “No, thanks. I just need to see your rare books. The rarest of the rare.”

The woman grumbled something to herself, but complied anyway and led me through the narrow walkways between bookshelves that towered all the way to the high ceiling. There must have been thousands of books in there — no, millions — and each of them looked even older than the last. Unlike any regular library that would normally be spacious with lots of seating, this library was nothing but shelves. Books were even piled on the floor, along with paper scrolls and half-melted candles. The whole place reminded me of some sort of demented wizard’s tower from a fairy tale.

“The rarest of the rare, huh?” the old woman asked, her appearance flashing beneath the large skylight that let the light of the moon in, revealing a hunched over posture and gray, frazzled hair. “How rare, exactly?”

“Rare as in... It might not even exist,” I replied.

The old woman stopped and stared at me for a moment over her shoulder, pursing her thin lips as she looked me up and down. I stared back, and eventually she nodded and led me over to a narrow wooden door that was nestled in between two bookshelves. If she hadn't led me there, I never would have seen it.

“I don't normally let people in here,” she said, extracting a ring of keys from the pocket on her robe, “but since you're... well, you, I'll allow it. It's where I keep my most prized books.”

“Thank you,” I replied. The old woman didn't respond as she rifled through the keyring. She finally found the key she was looking for and unlocked the door. When she pushed the door open, it creaked loudly and exposed a set of narrow stone steps that led downward.

“Go ahead,” she said, gesturing for me to enter. “Be careful on those steps. And try not to get your fingers all over everything. The oils from your skin will ruin my books.”

I nodded. “I'll be careful,” I replied. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and switched on the flashlight, then descended down the stairs.

With each step, the air became colder. By the time I got to the bottom, it was almost frigid. I found myself in a surprisingly small room, but it was still packed with books. The walls were made of bookshelves, and there were a few glass cases that housed extremely decrepit old tomes. Unlike upstairs, everything seemed to be neatly organized.

I began to scour the bookshelves, searching for anything that would even remotely resemble the book that I heard about. If it was going to be anywhere, it would be here... I was sure of it. I had a good feeling about this place.

At first, my search was fruitless. There were plenty of rare books, but none of them seemed to contain any information on the Golden Wolf. I even went through each bookshelf twice, but found nothing. I must have been in there for a few hours at that point; the sun was probably rising and I had no way of knowing since it was so dark down there.

I was about to give up after my third time looking through all of the bookshelves. Obviously the book simply didn't exist, because if this library didn't have it, then it couldn't possibly be anywhere else. If it did exist at one point, then it probably didn't exist now.

But then, something caught my eye.

I only noticed it because there were three books that protruded from the shelf slightly more than the rest. At first, I thought that they were just shaped differently, but on closer inspection I realized that something was behind them. With a furrowed brow, I carefully pulled the books out.

A cloud of dust sprung up as something flopped down onto the shelf. My eyes widened; it had been pinned behind the books.

And as I pulled it out, I realized that it was exactly the book I was looking for.

My heart practically leaped out of my chest as I snatched the book off of the shelf. The pages were yellow and brittle, but it was still fully intact. I thumbed through it as carefully as I could, straining my eyes to read the faded text.

"The Prophecy of the Golden Wolf," I whispered to myself, reading the text on one of the pages. "The Golden Wolf will return in the form of a

human at first... But they will possess strange abilities unlike any human, with only a single physical indicator of their existence... A single Alpha tooth that glows in the light of the full moon.”

My eyes widened even more as I read the text. I snapped the book shut, my breath catching in my throat.

There was no doubt about it; Moana had the tooth. She came in the form of a human at first, but she possessed strange abilities. She had to be the Golden Wolf.

But I still needed more proof. Not only that, but I needed guidance, and there was only one person in the world who could possibly help us now: the Mother Witch. The wisest, oldest, and most powerful of all witches.

First, however, I would need a lock of Moana’s hair to bring to the Mother Witch.

Chapter 150 An Unexpected & Unwelcome Visitor

Moana

When I woke up and found that Edrick was gone, I was confused. It was still early, and he usually didn't leave for work until a little later. I figured that he just got up early and was having breakfast in the dining room, so I got up and made my way out there to see where he was.

However, when I headed out to the dining room, Edrick wasn't there. His study door was also open and he wasn't in there, either. Furrowing my brow, I headed into the kitchen next, where Selina was already awake and preparing some coffee.

"Good morning," she said. "Coffee?"

"Yes, please," I replied as I walked up to the counter island. I then looked around, my brow still furrowed. "Have you seen Edrick?"

Selina shrugged. "I haven't seen him yet this morning. Was he not in bed?"

I shook my head. It was still a bit awkward to hear others, especially Selina, mention the fact that Edrick and I slept in the same bed so casually. But I was getting used to it. "He wasn't there," I replied. "I guess he left for work early."

Selina and I shared some coffee in the kitchen. As much as I loved Ella, it was nice to have a little bit of quiet time in the mornings before she woke up, and lately I had been spending more time getting to know Selina. I felt as though she was opening up to me more and more the longer I lived here, and I even felt as though I could begin to call her a friend.

However, Selina and I weren't sitting there for long before we heard the elevator doors open.

"That must be him," she said, standing. "Maybe he just went out for a run early this morning or something."

I stood along with Selina and peered out of the kitchen doorway, hoping to see Edrick.

But it wasn't Edrick. It was his father, Michael.

My eyes widened. Michael's eyes stared coldly back at me from the foyer, his gaze traveling down to my nightgown. I had my robe open casually in the front, and I quickly darted out of view and tied it shut, feeling my face get hot.

"What is it?" Selina asked quietly.

"It's Michael."

Even the housekeeper's eyes widened when I mentioned that Edrick's father had suddenly shown up. She quickly brushed past me and came out into the dining room. "Good morning, Mr. Morgan," she said politely with a small curtsy. "I'm afraid you caught us so early we're still in our dressing gowns. Are you looking for Edrick?"

"I am, actually," Michael said, his voice cold and gruff. "Where is he?"

"Edrick stepped out early this morning," Selina replied. "We think he might be at work or running some errands."

I stood behind Selina in the hallway, my heart pounding. Michael stared calmly and coldly at me over Selina's shoulder. His steely gray eyes shot daggers at me, and I felt like a deer in headlights.

Michael cleared his throat, then abruptly pulled out a chair. As he did, he pulled it out so roughly that it scraped on the wooden floor and made a horrible screeching sound that made both Selina and I flinch, but he didn't even seem to notice or care about making such noise so early in the morning.

"I'll wait, then," he said, sitting and crossing his legs over each other. He leaned back in the chair and folded his hands in his lap, then stared down his nose at both of us. "I'll have some tea."

"Right away, Mr. Morgan," Selina said. She turned on her heel and scurried into the kitchen. My eyes, however, stayed glued on Michael, and I instinctively placed my hand over my belly in a protective manner. As I did so, Michael's eyes flickered down to my stomach. He almost looked disgusted.

"U-Um... It's nice to see you," I said, not wanting to be impolite despite the fact that Edrick's father scared the living hell out of me.

He didn't answer. I swallowed, hard, as he just continued to stare intensely at me.

Selina returned to the dining room a few moments later with a tray that contained a pot of tea and a teacup. She set it down in front of Michael and picked up the teapot to pour it, but Michael's hand suddenly shot out and he stopped her from pouring the tea, his eyes still locked on mine.

"I'd like my future daughter-in-law to serve the tea," he said gruffly.

"Oh." Selina set the teapot down, then looked over at me. Her eyes were just as wide as mine; both of us knew the sort of subservient position that Michael was trying to put me in. But nonetheless, I nodded and walked up to the table. Selina walked away, returning to the kitchen, although I

knew that she was still keeping one eye on me at all times in case Michael tried to do anything.

The air was silent and thick with tension as I walked over to Michael. He watched me like a hawk as I poured the tea. I tried to hide the fact that my hands were shaking, but I knew that he noticed anyway.

Finally, I poured the tea and went to set the teapot back down. However, before I could, his hand shot out again; not to block me this time like he had with Selina, but instead to grab my wrist. Hard.

His grip was so hard, in fact, that it made me wince.

“Don’t think that you’ll be getting anything more out of this fake relationship with my son, you little human wh**e,” he snarled, his voice low enough so that Selina couldn’t hear.

I could feel my eyes instantly well up with tears, and my face got even more red. My hands started to shake violently, causing the lid on the teapot to vibrate. When Michael finally released his iron grip on me, my wrist burned like someone had scalded it with boiling water. All I could do was calmly set the teapot back down and stiffly walk back to the kitchen, where Selina stared cautiously at me from where Michael couldn’t see her.

Finally, the elevator doors opened a few minutes later. Edrick came walking in, and although I was now practically cowering in the corner of the kitchen and sobbing quietly while I held my wrist where I was out of both Michael’s and Edrick’s line of sight, with Selina rubbing my back gently, I could hear the two of them talking.

“Let’s talk in your office,” Michael said, standing. “And this tea is disgusting, by the way. Can’t you afford proper tea leaves instead of these silly tea bags? Or maybe you should consider hiring more competent servants.”

Edrick didn’t respond to that comment. I heard them retreat into the study, followed by the study door closing.

“Come,” Selina said, guiding me over to the kitchen sink now that we were alone. “Let’s put your wrist under some cool water. That bastard...”

Selina ran my wrist under the cold water from the tap, which soothed the burning on my wrist where Michael had grabbed me. Thankfully, there was nothing more than a faint red mark; I was more scared than actually hurt. I was just glad that he hadn’t hurt my baby in any way.

However, Selina and I both heard raised voices coming from Edrick’s study not even five minutes later. The yelling only lasted for a couple of minutes, and the two of us could only stand in the kitchen in shock as we heard the study door swing open. Michael stormed past the kitchen, then disappeared into the foyer, followed by the sound of the elevator opening and closing.

Once he was gone, Selina and I finally emerged from the kitchen to see Edrick standing in the doorway of his study.

I opened my mouth to ask if something was wrong, but before I could, Edrick simply gave me a strange look before suddenly slamming the door shut.