

Chapter 221 The Classroom Aide

Moana

Even though I half expected to hate the bodyguard who Edrick supposedly found for me, I actually wound up liking my new bodyguard, Kat, quite a lot. During my interview with her, I found out that she was funny and sweet, and she got along well with Ella and loved kids in general. She really seemed perfect — almost too good to be true. Although I still didn't like the idea of being followed around by a bodyguard all day, I figured that if I had to choose one, then I would choose Kat.

The next morning, I returned to work with Kat and Ella by my side. The headmistress and everyone else were under the impression that Kat was just a medical aide that my doctor wanted me to keep nearby due to pregnancy complications, and I preferred to keep it that way. If news got out that the late bloomer with all of the mysterious absences from work was walking around now with an undercover bodyguard, then it would only create more of a fuss over me. I was already despised enough by most of the other teachers as it was, and I could only imagine what it would be like if they all figured out that I was being sent to work with a bodyguard because I was having crazy PTSD episodes due to the soap opera that was my life.

After the first class of the day, I was already happy to have Kat there. She was actually very helpful with the classroom duties, and it took a lot of stress off of me. By the time that Ella's class came in, I was already feeling a lot better to be back at work. In fact, in between classes I even found

myself talking to Kat quite a bit, and I had to admit that it felt nice to have someone at work who I could talk to since the other teachers seemed to collectively decide that I was a danger to be around. By the middle of Ella's class, I had almost completely forgotten about my dream and my drawings as well, and everything felt normal for a little bit.

However, I quickly noticed that Ella was sitting by herself that day. Her little group of friends that she was normally stuck to like glue were sitting on the opposite side of the room, and every so often I would catch them giving her dirty looks or whispering. Ella kept her head down and just paid attention to her coloring, but I could tell that it was bothering her.

The whispers and gossip that I occasionally heard about myself bothered me, but not too much. But as I saw Ella being separated from her friends and being treated like an outcast, I couldn't help but think that it was because of me. Everyone still thought that I was bad luck because I was a late bloomer, and if they thought that Ella was my biological daughter, there was no doubt in my mind that they saw her as a pariah as well... And that hurt me to my core.

...

That night, as I tucked Ella into bed I decided that now would be a good time to talk to her about it. After I finished reading her bedtime story, I closed the book and set it down on the bedside table before leaning over and tucking her in.

"Ella, can I talk to you?" I asked gently, to which she nodded as she looked up at me with her big eyes peeking out over her blanket. I took in a deep, ragged breath, then reached out and brushed a loose strand of hair out of her face. "Is everything going okay at school? I noticed that you weren't sitting with your friends today."

Ella simply shrugged. I could tell that she didn't want to talk about it, but it needed to be addressed.

“You can be honest with me,” I said. “If you had a fight or anything, I promise you won’t get in trouble. I just want to know what’s going on.”

Finally, Ella sighed. “Well... I guess my friends just aren’t my friends anymore,” she said wistfully. “That’s what they told me, anyway.”

I felt my heart sink. “Why, love?” I asked.

Ella shrugged again. “They said that I’m a weirdo who’s the kid of a freak. Since first you were a human and now you’re a werewolf, they say that there’s something wrong with you and something must be wrong with me, too.”

“Oh, honey...” As Ella spoke, I felt my heart shatter into a million pieces. The thing that I feared the most, above all else, had come true; Ella was being alienated from the other kids because of me. Because they thought that I was her biological mother, and therefore that something was wrong with her. She had a chance to be a normal kid, but now it was ruined because of me. Tears came to my eyes just at the thought of it, and I bowed my head for a moment to collect myself. “I’m sorry, Ella.”

Ella was silent for a moment. I looked up then and was surprised to see that she didn’t look sad at all; in fact, she was smiling. Suddenly, she sat up and grinned, kissing me on the cheek and wrapping her arms around my neck.

“It’s okay,” she said, giggling. “I don’t care about all of them. I’m just so happy to have the best mom ever. You’re better than a million-bajillion friends.”

Ella’s words made me laugh. I wiped the tears from my eyes with my finger and pulled her close, holding her tight against my chest. I kissed the top of her head and smiled, then put her to bed.

However, although Ella’s sweet words made me feel a bit better about the situation, it still broke my heart to know that she was having trouble at

school, and so I vowed to make it right for her. That wasn't the only thing on my mind, though.

I found it sweet that Ella referred to me as her mom. In fact, it made me feel over the moon with happiness. But it also meant, to me, that Edrick still hadn't told her that her real mom was alive out there. It made me wonder when he planned on talking to Ella about her mom, if ever.

I also couldn't help but wonder where Olivia even was. Surely Ethan paid her handsomely for the trick she pulled on me, but the police didn't have her; in fact, after my meeting with her in the coffee shop, I never once saw her in person after that. Did she flee the country with the money, never to be seen or heard from again? Did she truly leave poor little Ella in the dust this time with no intention of ever rekindling her relationship with her own daughter?

If that was the case... Then maybe I didn't mind being seen as Ella's mom after all. But even so, she still deserved to know the truth. Eventually, she would figure it out one way or another.

And I didn't want her to hate Edrick or myself for keeping the truth from her.

Chapter 222 Over the Balcony

Moana

I decided that I couldn't let Edrick go on for any longer without telling Ella the truth about her biological mother.

"I know that you didn't tell her everything," I said as I stood in front of him with my hands on my hips. He was standing in front of the bathroom sink in his bedroom and was brushing his teeth. With a sigh, he slowly spit out his toothpaste and then looked over at me.

"What do you mean?" he asked. I could tell that he was trying to play it off like he didn't know what I was thinking about.

A frown came across my face. "Don't play dumb. I know that you didn't tell Ella about her mother even though we talked about it. Are you going to tell her the truth, or do I need to? Because the longer she goes without knowing everything, the more she'll resent you when she eventually does find out."

For a few long moments, the handsome Alpha billionaire stared at me unblinkingly with a somewhat shocked and embarrassed expression on his face. But then that look was quickly hidden, and he shook his head and scowled slightly. I could tell that I had struck a chord by bringing it up to him, which was understandable but was nonetheless something that we would need to work through. "I'll handle it when I'm ready," he said, brushing past me and heading into his bedroom. "Don't worry about it. I

just didn't want to bombard her with too much information all at once. That's all."

I sighed and followed him. His excuse made sense, but it was just that: an excuse. And it didn't matter at this point whether he bombarded Ella or not, because it was better than letting her go on for any longer. But as I sat on my side of the bed and watched him as he took his watch off and set it neatly in the spot that he always kept it on top of his dresser, and saw the way that he ran his hand through his dark hair and the way that his muscles gleamed in the lamplight, I felt myself soften a bit.

"Edrick, she's having trouble at school," I finally said quietly.

Edrick spun around and looked at me with concern across his face. "She's what?" he asked. "Is she alright? What's happening? Is she being bullied? I swear, if I find out that any of those kids are bullying her, I'll—"

"Calm down," I said. "It's not that bad, and I'm sure they'll get over it eventually since they're just kids. It's just..." I paused, sighing again, and stared down at my hands in my lap to hide the tears that were threatening to pool up in my eyes. "She's being alienated because of me. Because I'm a... a freak. And now they think that she is, too, because everyone thinks that she's my biological daughter. So it's my fault, really. And I guess in a way, I thought that if you told her about her real mom—"

Suddenly, I felt a rush of wind as Edrick walked up to me, and I felt his hands firmly grasp my shoulders before I could finish.

"Look at me," he demanded. I slowly looked up, blinking away my tears to see a stern expression on his handsome face. "Moana, you're not a freak. The children and the other teachers will get over your sudden change; it's just new to them. That's all."

I shook my head. "But what if I am a freak?" I asked. "What if I have another episode in the middle of the classroom and I scare everyone?"

What if I have an episode and I never come out of it, and you really do need to put me in a mental institu—”

“Stop it.” Edrick’s voice was harsh, and his hands gripped my shoulders even more tightly. Almost too tightly. His eyes screamed with hatred, not for me, but for the horrible things that I just said about myself. I instantly felt like a small ant beneath his glare, and I immediately regretted it. “I won’t hear any more of that. You’re not a freak, and everything will be okay. You’ve just been through a lot and your brain is reacting in a perfectly reasonable way for someone who’s been through that sort of trauma. As long as you keep seeing your therapist, everything will be okay.”

“What if I shift, then?” I asked. “What if I shift, and everyone finds out that I’m the Golden Wolf, and then I’m not only a freak but I’m also a hunted freak by people who hated me before I was even born?”

Edrick stared at me for a moment with wide eyes. “You don’t need to worry about that,” he said. “I wasn’t going to say anything just yet, but I might as well now; the Mother Witch’s apprentices are working on a perfume to mask your scent if you shift. It’ll keep you safe.”

My eyes went wide at Edrick’s words. That was comforting, but... I still felt uneasy. My dreams were too vivid, and something told me that no matter what, I would see that knife in my future.

I let Edrick pull me in for a warm hug, but even as I felt the comforting sensation of his lips kissing my forehead, I still didn’t know how much I really believed him. How reasonable was it, really, for someone to black out and draw dozens of violent pictures depicting blood and gore and a strange knife with a wolf head handle? How normal was it for someone to go into a coma for three days and have a dream about being stabbed repeatedly by that very knife? What if part of the symptoms of being the Golden Wolf entailed losing one’s mind, assuming that bounty hunters didn’t kill me first?

When Edrick pulled away, however, he was smiling. I forced a weak smile too, if only to make him worry a little less. “How about this,” he said, brushing a strand of hair out of my eyes. “I’ll take you and Ella somewhere special this weekend. Just the three of us. We’ll have a nice day out doing whatever the two of you want, and then I’ll talk to her about Olivia. You and I can sit her down and do it together. Okay?”

Edrick’s words were a slight comfort. I nodded and smiled against his soft lips as he kissed me, but as we went to bed that night, I still felt the uncomfortable feeling of uneasiness boring a hole through my stomach. No matter how warm and safe Edrick’s arms felt, I still felt sick to my stomach as I slowly drifted off into a fitful sleep.

I had more dreams about Michael that night. I dreamed about that knife again, too. It was always in his hand, and he was always chasing me with it. He always won in the end...

“You can’t run, Moana,” Michael’s dark voice said. “You might as well give up.”

I was standing on that same cliff with the rain beating down on me. Only this time, I was standing facing away from Michael, looking out over the cliff into the dark abyss below. My stomach dropped as I looked down, down into the darkness. I stood so close to the edge that my toes curled over the slick rock that I stood on, and I didn’t even bother to turn around because I already knew how this would all end. When I felt the knife plunge into my back, I wasn’t even remotely surprised. I heard the sound of Michael’s laugh, and then he pushed me over into the darkness...

“Wake up! Moana, wake up!”

Chapter 223 Wake Up

Moana

“Moana, wake up!” my wolf’s voice suddenly said. That wasn’t a dream... It was real. The rain was real. The wind beating down on me, whipping my hair into my face, was all real.

I opened my eyes, and shrieked at what I saw.

I wasn’t in bed. I was standing on the balcony, up on the ledge in my nightgown. I felt my stomach drop as I stumbled backwards and clung to the rail, heaving in my chest as the feeling of fight or flight kicked in. Every fiber in me screamed to get away from the ledge, and I scrambled away and back to my feet, sobbing loudly. Nothing could be heard over the sound of my own racing heartbeat and the sound of the wind and the rain; for all I knew, I was really on that cliff from my dream, and Michael very well could be standing behind me with the knife in his hand.

The door behind me stood wide open with the wind blowing the curtains aggressively. I ran inside to safety, and as I did, I ran straight into not Michael, but a petrified Edrick.

“Moana?!” he said. “What happened?!”

I couldn't speak. I could only sob and shake violently as he gathered me into his arms and carried me back to the bed. He held me there for a long time, just rocking me while I continued wailing.

"The knife," I said, "Michael has the knife. H-He's going to kill me—"

"Shh," Edrick said, stroking my wet hair as his wide eyes stared unblinkingly at the open balcony doors. "Just breathe, and then you can tell me everything.

For the longest time, Edrick just held me and rocked me back and forth until no more tears would come and my chest was too sore to sob anymore. I kept feeling as though I was still inside of a nightmare, like I would suddenly wake up and everything would be okay. But I was awake, and the fact that I sleepwalked straight out onto the balcony in the pouring rain and nearly fell to my death was completely real.

I didn't know what was going on... I didn't know if the dreams were visions, omens, or if they were just bad dreams as my mind descended into madness. Either way, it felt as though something inside of my mind wanted me dead. It felt as though my entire body wanted to kill me, like I couldn't even trust the very fibers of my being to keep me alive. If it weren't for my wolf suddenly calling my name and waking me up, I most certainly would have fallen to my death.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, I felt calm enough to speak. Edrick left me for only a few minutes to make some tea, and when he returned I clutched the warm teacup in my shaking hands like my life depended on it. I was shocked by his calm demeanor, but I was incredibly thankful for it at the same time.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, stroking my leg as I sipped my tea.

I shook my head. "No," I said. "But I was sleepwalking. One moment I was having a dream about Michael with that knife, and the next moment I was standing on the ledge on the balcony, like I was about to..." My

voice faltered. A sob got caught in my throat, and Edrick let out a curse under his breath before he took my teacup, set it on the bedside table, and pulled me into his arms again.

“I don’t know if that knife is real, or if I’ve just imagined it,” I said between sobs. “But I’m terrified. I’m terrified that Michael might have it; I think he knows I’m the Golden Wolf, and I think he’s coming for me.”

Edrick was silent for a long time, thinking. I chanced a look up at him to see that his jaw was set hard, clenching and unclenching, while his eyes burned silver. He stared coldly at the wall in front of him, as though he was almost in a trance. I half expected him to do one of two things: either he was going to send me away to a mental hospital, or he was going to go after Michael.

But thankfully, he did neither of those things. Instead, he retained his calm and collected Alpha demeanor, although there was no denying the bright silver glow to his eyes.

“Let’s just get you to bed,” he said. He set me down and then stood. He walked over to his dresser and pulled a white t-shirt out of the drawer, then handed it to me. “Put this on. Your nightgown is soaked.”

I nodded slowly. But as I stood to take my nightgown off, my hands shook too much. Edrick let out a soft sigh and helped me, and as his hands lingered on my waist, I wished that this could be different. I wished that we could be undressing each other in a romantic way. I felt his gaze on me as I put the oversized t-shirt on, which I practically swam in once it was on all the way, then climbed into bed. He said nothing as he retrieved two of my sleeping pills and held them out for me.

There was fear in his eyes. He didn’t seem to want to let on that he was terrified, but I could tell that he was. He wasn’t terrified of me, but rather he was terrified for me. And I was, too. If my dreams really were prophetic, then Michael was out there looking for a way to kill me. We had no tangible evidence to take to the police, and they wouldn’t believe

me anyway after the way that I passed out in the station. They would just think that I was really nuts.

“W-What if I sleepwalk again?” I asked nervously as I took the pills from him.

Edrick just shook his head soberly. “I’ll stay awake,” he replied gently. “Don’t worry. I’ll be here to watch over you.”

I bit my lip as I stared down at the pills in my hand. It was comforting to know that Edrick would be right by my side, watching me for the rest of the night just in case anything else happened. But at the same time, I couldn’t help but wonder if I would have more nightmares, only this time I would stay in the dreams instead of waking up due to the effect of the sleeping pills. I couldn’t decide what was worse: waking up from the terrifying dreams or staying stuck in a dream where I was violently killed over and over again.

I took the pills, though. I needed to sleep, if only to keep my body in one place so that I wouldn’t have an episode while I was awake. And besides... I supposed that being stuck in the nightmare was better than plunging to my death off of the balcony.

And as I slowly began to drift off into my artificial slumber, all I could feel was the sensation of Edrick’s hand wrapping around mine. And all I could see were his glowing silver eyes watching me like my guardian angel.

Chapter 224 Mother

Edrick

I was sleeping soundly when I suddenly heard Moana's screams.

By the same I jolted myself out of bed and frantically began to scramble in the direction of the balcony where the screams were coming from, she ran into my arms and nearly knocked me to the floor. She was soaking wet and completely inconsolable, repeating things about my father having a knife and killing her with it. When she finally was able to tell me everything that happened, I felt my soul practically leave my body.

I didn't want to let her know how terrified I was, so I kept my calm until she was safely asleep in bed. Her sleeping pills knocked her out quickly, and as soon as I saw her chest begin to rise and fall in a steady, deep rhythm, I quickly jumped to my feet and began to pace while frantically tugging on my air. I couldn't hide my terror any longer.

I had heard stories about these visions before. It was an uncommon phenomena, but it was known to happen on occasion. People who were gifted with the ability of Foresight, which was an extremely rare ability to begin with, were often known to have other symptoms in the beginning such as sleepwalking, blackout episodes, and getting hurt during those sleepwalking or blackout episodes. More often than not, if those symptoms were noticed early on, the person affected by it could wind up getting hurt and dying in their sleep. Moana, thankfully, woke up before

that happened to her, and I would forever thank whatever gods watched over us, if any, for that miracle. At least now, we knew what was happening and could take preventative measures to ensure her safety at night until she developed her Foresight fully.

But surprisingly enough, that wasn't the main thing that I was worried about.

Moana was having visions. I was sure of it; all of the signs pointed to it, and unbeknownst to her, I had done my research while she was away at work earlier that day. That knife did in fact exist, and it very well could be used against her.

There was only one weapon that was prophesied to kill the Golden Wolf, and that was the Golden Knife with the wolf head on the handle. It was said that the knife had to be used before the Golden Wolf shifted for the first time, otherwise the knife would shatter in the user's hand when it tried to stab the Golden Wolf. The source that I read also said that thousands of Golden Wolves may have existed between the time that the first Golden Wolf was seen and now, and that all of them had been killed with the Golden Knife before they shifted, which was why a Golden Wolf hadn't been seen in so long. I never really believed it and just saw it as another old wives' tale, but I sure as hell believed it now.

And I believed that my father had the knife, and was going to use it to kill Moana before she could shift.

I didn't know what to do. My first priority was to protect Moana and our baby as well as Ella, but I couldn't leave their side if my dad was waiting to attack. I knew that I wouldn't stand a chance against taking him down on my own, either. He would gladly kill me for the sake of destroying another generation of the Golden Wolf. I was sure of it.

My only option was to get Moana to a safe place where she could shift before my father had a chance to use the knife. Only then could she be

protected. If she shifted, the knife would only shatter and the only weapon that could kill the Golden Wolf would be gone forever.

The mountain estate; we would have to go there after all. With all of my security that I had hired, I was confident that we could surround the place and keep a constant watch. My father wouldn't be able to get in, no matter how hard he tried. And then there, at least, Moana could shift safely where no one could get hurt. Maybe I could even try to help her shift for the first time, so we could accelerate the process.

But Moana and Ella weren't the only people who I was worried about. My mother still lived in a home with my father, and she would certainly try to stop his plan...

And I knew that he would kill her if he needed to. I had to get her to safety with me.

Cursing under my breath, I quickly pulled out my phone and dialed my mom's number. It was well past midnight, and I half expected her not to even answer, but thankfully she did pick up on the third ring.

"Edrick?" she said, sounding groggy. "Are you alright, darling? It's so late."

I let out a sigh of relief just at hearing her voice. "Mom," I said, "is dad there?"

"Yes. He's sleeping right here. Why? Do you need to talk to him? I can wake him up—"

"No!" I demanded, then cleared my throat. "No. Mom, I need you to listen to me; dad is going to do something really dangerous. It's been seen in visions."

"Visions?" my mom asked.

"Yes," I replied. "Moana has the power of Foresight and she saw my dad... killing her. She's the Golden Wolf, mom. And he has the knife."

My mom fell silent. I knew that she believed me; she had always believed in spiritual things of that sort, especially Foresight.

“Listen,” I continued, “I’m going to the mountain estate, and I want you to come with me. I’m worried about you. I’m worried that dad might—”

Suddenly, my mom interrupted me. Her voice was much quieter now, and it shook as she sternly spoke. “Get as far away from the city as you can,” she whispered hastily. “Get far, far away, and don’t let that girl out of your sight.”

“Mom—”

But then, suddenly, the phone went dead. I pulled my phone away from my ear and stared wide-eyed at the screen as my mom’s number flashed, then disappeared. But I didn’t think she hung up at all; something was telling me that my father had woken up and forced her to hang up. I could sense it.

Something incredibly sinister was at play here. Now, more than ever, I believed that my father was up to no good. I swallowed hard as I looked over at Moana’s sleeping body, and watched the way that she nuzzled peacefully into the pillow as she slept thanks to the sleeping pills. At the same time, I became aware of a newfound strength emanating from her wolf. My wolf could sense it, too; she was close to shifting. It could only be a day, maybe two, now. If my father knew, and he likely did, then it only made our situation even more dire.

My mom was right. I needed to get Moana to safety far away from the city...

And I needed to do it now, because there was no time left for any of us.

Chapter 225 Pulling the Rug

Moana

I woke up after a night of dreamless sleep to the sound of someone rushing around the room. When I cracked open my eyes, I saw Edrick pacing back and forth. He had a pile of shirts in his hand, and I watched in a state of shock as he walked over to a suitcase and quickly shoved the shirts inside.

“What are you doing?” I asked, sitting up.

Edrick didn’t even look up at me. “We have to go,” was all he said.

My eyes widened. “Go where?”

“We’re going back to the mountain estate for real this time.”

As Edrick spoke, I felt my heart sink. My limbs still felt too heavy from the sleeping meds to move quickly, and as I threw the covers off and swung my limp legs over the edge of the bed, it felt as though I was moving through a thick mud.

“Why?” I asked. “You didn’t mention that we would be leaving before. Was it because of last night?”

Edrick didn’t answer. I watched with wide eyes as he stuffed more clothes into his suitcase. “Come help me zip this up?” he asked. I nodded slowly

and walked over, then pushed down onto the top of the suitcase so he could zip it up.

“Edrick,” I continued, “please tell me what’s going on. Is it because of last night? I’ll be okay, I promise. We don’t need to leave—”

The Alpha billionaire just shook his head and scurried over to the bathroom, where he began tossing toiletries into a bag. “It’s not that,” he said. “It’s for your own safety. And that’s all I’m going to say. Go get dressed; we’ll get breakfast on the road.”

I felt my heart sink even further. “But, Edrick—”

Suddenly, Edrick spun around and glared intensely at me. His gaze wasn’t mean, but it was stern and his eyes were still glowing silver, as though he was on edge. “Just do it, Moana,” he demanded. “Selina already packed your bags. Just get dressed so we can leave. Please.”

The desperation in Edrick’s voice unsettled me. I felt as though I wasn’t even allowed to argue with him, and it was unfair. But even if I told him how unfair I found it to be, it didn’t seem to matter anyway. Edrick clearly had made up his mind, and there was no way to get around it this time; whatever went through his head last night after I went to sleep seemed to solidify something. Or maybe something else happened... I couldn’t be sure.

“He’s not angry with you,” my wolf said as I painfully made my way to my bedroom. “He’s just worried.”

“I know. It still hurts.”

I opened my bedroom door and, just as Edrick said, Selina had already packed my things. Only a single outfit was left out for me on the bed, and a few toiletries so I could get ready for the day. Other than that, my other necessities were all packed up. Everything except my valuables and sentimental items were packed away, like Selina was rushing to get just

what I needed into my bags. In Ella's room next door, I could hear the sound of Ella whining while Selina responded in hushed tones.

"But why?" Ella cried. I walked over to see her tugging on Selina's skirt with tears streaming down her cheeks. "I don't wanna leave! I wanna go to school!"

"I know," Selina replied, sounding quite defeated herself. "But we have to. It won't be forever."

Ella pouted. Selina yanked her skirt away so she could continue to pack Ella's bags and Ella, in a childish fit, plopped down on the ground and wailed loudly. Sighing, I rushed into the room and past the exhausted-looking Selina and crouched down to Ella's level.

"They're making me leave!" Ella wailed, sobbing loudly. "I don't wanna leave!"

As I looked at Ella, I felt my heart break just a little bit more; especially because I knew that this was my fault. "Here, love," I said. I grabbed her stuffed duck off of the dresser and put it in her hands, and that seemed to calm her down a bit. "We'll be together, okay?"

Ella nodded tearfully. I held back my own tears as I wiped hers away, and then led her to my room with me and let her sit on my bed while I got dressed, so that Selina could pack up her things in peace.

Clearly, Ella and I were both in the same boat of being forced to leave with no say in the matter. But I, unlike Ella, had a pretty good reason why. It certainly had something to do with my dream and my sleepwalking episode from the night before, but I knew that I wouldn't get any specifics out of Edrick.

And for that, I was a bit bitter toward him.

The drive to the mountain estate was spent mostly in silence, with only Ella speaking up on occasion to whine about how she wanted to go home or how she needed to go potty. Edrick just drove with his hands gripping the steering wheel tightly, and I could only clench my jaw and stare out the window.

The last time we went to the mountain estate, it was for a lovely vacation. That time, the mountain air felt fresh, the view was beautiful, and the trees calmed me. However, this time it just felt like we were ascending into a prison made of stone.

When we arrived, Ella sprinted inside with one of the maids on her heels to keep an eye on her. Edrick immediately started unpacking the car, and I circled around to the trunk to help him.

“Go inside,” he demanded.

I was taken aback. “Why?” I asked. “We’re here now, away from the rest of the world. Why imprison me inside, too?”

Edrick didn’t answer. I grimaced and reached for a bag, but he pushed my hand away and shot me a stern glare.

“Moana... Just... Go inside.”

I felt my eyes widen. I opened my mouth to protest, but no words would come out beneath the weight of his glare. With a hmpf, I spun on my heel and stormed off.

If Edrick wanted me to stay inside when we were already separated from the rest of society, and he still wouldn’t tell me why exactly all of this was happening, then he would get his wish. Only now, I wouldn’t just stay inside; I would stay in my room, imprisoning myself even further.

Even Kat couldn’t keep up with me. I ran inside and bolted up the stairs, taking two at a time as I ignored her calls in the background for me to

slow down. When I arrived at my room from the last time that we were here, I stepped inside and slammed the door behind me before I locked it.

I plopped myself down into the chair by my window, and shut out the rest of the noise in the house as I let my own anger take over.

Maybe Edrick just saw me as a danger to myself and to our baby after my sleepwalking episode.

And if that was the case, and if he would refuse to just talk to me about it and at least keep me in the loop, then I couldn't possibly be a danger to anyone if I was just locked in my room like a prisoner.