

Chapter 23: The Alpha Pups

Moana

As I was drying off my hands on the plush hand towel, I suddenly felt a tap on my shoulder.

It was Kelly.

“Oh... You scared me,” I said, taking a step backwards. “Do you need something?”

“Why haven’t you been doing your job?” she asked abruptly, her voice somewhat shrill. She seemed incredibly irritated, and her face was a bit red from alcohol.

“Um... Excuse me?” I asked.

Kelly laughed and rolled her eyes abrasively, folding her thin arms across her small chest. I was never much of the type to judge other women negatively for their bodies, but it was apparent that she was wearing a pushup bra through her almost-sheer dress, and it wasn’t working. In fact, now that I thought of it, I had hardly seen her eat anything at the luncheon the other day or at the banquet just now. It made me wonder if it was a regular thing for her to refuse food, which made me sorry for her.

“You’re the nanny,” she said, stepping toward me and poking her index finger into the center of my sternum. “You’re basically just a glorified maid whose only duty is to play with children all day. So, pray tell, why are you spending the evening running around with Edrick and Ethan instead of doing your job?”

I blinked, taken aback by Kelly's rude behavior.

"Don't just stare at me," she snarled. "When someone asks you a question, you answer."

"I'm entitled to spend a few minutes socializing when Ella is with her grandmother." I attempted to step around Kelly, but she moved with me and stood in my way. She had her hands on her hips now.

"Ella is still with Verona," she said. "She doesn't need you, but I know someone else who does."

I watched, confused by what Kelly seemed to be getting at, as she held up her hand in front of her face and inspected her nails. "There are children here who need watching, nanny," she said, glancing up at me over her nails with an almost evil look on her face. "Do you want me to take you to them?"

I glanced over at the door. "Well, I promised Edrick I'd stay with him and Ella for the remainder of the night," I said.

Kelly shrugged. "I spoke to Edrick. He said that he doesn't care, so long as you're preoccupied and not trying to f**k his brother."

"He... said that?" I asked, my voice quivering slightly as I felt my face flush hot with embarrassment. "I wasn't trying to—"

"Come with me," Kelly interrupted, turning on her heel and heading for the door. "I'll take you to where the children are."

I still felt embarrassed at the thought of Edrick speaking about me like that to Kelly, but decided to follow her; I couldn't hide in the bathroom for the remainder of the night, but I also didn't want to see Edrick at the moment if that was what he was saying about me, so I figured that it would be easiest to just "do my job", as Kelly liked to put it.

I followed Kelly through the winding palace hallways. She always stayed a few steps ahead of me, taking sudden corners and slamming doors in my

face, essentially making me jog to keep up with her so that I didn't get lost in this maze of a mansion. If I was being honest, I wasn't sure how I would find my way back to the party on my own if Kelly left me wherever she was taking me.

"Almost there," Kelly called over her shoulder as she rounded a corner in a flash of long blonde hair. "I'm sure you don't mind the trek, though. You could use the cardio, right?"

I wanted to shout back at Kelly that no, I didn't need the cardio and that I was actually quite fit, but I decided to keep my mouth shut and just follow her for the sake of keeping my job. If Edrick really thought that I was trying to sleep with his own brother after sleeping with him and becoming his employee, then it would also be a risk to talk back to his childhood best friend. Regardless of how much Kelly aggravated me, one wrong word from her could potentially land me in the unemployment office... And I didn't want to have to go there again if I could help it.

Finally, we rounded one last corner and pushed open a set of heavy double wooden doors, coming out into another courtyard garden. This one was larger than the other with a massive oak tree in the center, but it was much further from the banquet hall. In fact, it was so dark outside now that we were away from the glow of the party that I could hardly see, nor could I hear any sounds of music or people talking anymore.

"And here we are," Kelly said, gesturing with a condescending flourish toward the two children who were standing in the middle of the courtyard. "Good luck, nanny."

I went to ask Kelly why she was wishing me "good luck" in such a sinister tone of voice, but when I turned around and opened my mouth to speak, she was already gone.

"Um... Hello," I said, approaching the two young boys that stood in the middle of the courtyard. "I'm Moana. What are your names?"

The boys didn't reply. They appeared to be too busy glaring at each other, their little fangs bared and their pointy wolf ears pricked backwards. It was reminiscent of the way that Ella had looked the night that I had my interview, except these boys were a bit older and bigger, and were more frightening than Ella had been.

"Is everything alright?" I asked.

Still no answer.

I started to get concerned and looked over my shoulder, hoping to see Kelly standing nearby, or anyone passing by who might be able to help; but there was no one. I was too far from the party to call for help, nor would I be able to find my way back to the banquet hall by myself. I couldn't just leave these boys alone, either, since they appeared as though they were about to fight. Who knew what trouble two werewolf boys could cause on their own!

The boys started snarling more loudly and began to approach each other, crouched down. My first instinct was to put myself between them in the hopes that they would stop, or that they would even scatter, but I was met with a menacing growl as I made my first move toward them. I stopped in my tracks, my heart racing as I tried to think of some other way to stop this before anyone got hurt, but there was nothing I could do.

I watched in horror as the boys shifted into their wolf forms. They were larger than I expected for such young boys, indicating that they were both going to grow up to be Alphas — which would also indicate that they could kill me in a matter of seconds if they tried.

Gulping, I took a few steps back as the little Alphas began to circle one another.