

Chapter 5 L'affaire Au Pair

Moana

I woke up at 4:30 the next morning — a bit earlier than I needed to, probably, but I wasn't taking any chances with this job. I spent the next hour practically scrubbing myself raw in the shower, fixing my hair, ironing my clothes, and taking extra care to make sure that there wasn't a single stray hair or speck of dust on me, because today was the first day of the job that would change my life, and I had to be perfect.

I then spent the final half hour of my preparations pacing and staring out the window, willing myself with all of the strength I had to not bite my nails, as I waited for the car that Selina had mentioned. Lo and behold, as soon as the clock struck 5:59, I saw a black car slowly pulling up out front, and I practically flew out of my apartment and down the stairs so that I was opening the car door by 6:00 sharp.

"Hmph," Selina said, looking at her watch as I clambered into the back. "Six o'clock on the dot. A little out of breath, but at least you're here."

"Sorry," I said, tucking a strand of hair behind my ear and buckling my seatbelt. "It's a bad neighborhood, so I didn't want to wait outside."

Selina didn't answer. The driver pulled the car away from the curb and started heading down the street.

"We'll be stopping to sign your contract with the lawyer first," Selina said, her voice flat as she looked out the window with a modicum of disgust on

her wrinkled face. “Then, you’ll get a tour of the penthouse apartment where you’ll be spending most of your time. I suspect you won’t be needing to return to your old home to collect your things?”

I thought back to my apartment and its contents.

“Well, I have some clothes and things there—”

“Your employer will supply you with anything you need: clothes, toiletries, books, and anything else you might need or want. Unless you have sentimental belongings you need to go back for, I wouldn’t recommend wasting your time and energy on such a move.”

I nodded, clutching the tiny silver locket around my neck. That locket was the only sentimental thing I owned, and it was always around my neck. Everything else in that apartment could burn, for all I cared.

“Very well,” Selina said.

We spent the next several minutes of the car trip in complete silence. Although Selina was seated directly across from me in the back of the expensive town car, she didn’t turn away from the window to look at me even once. I didn’t let it get to me, though; growing up human in a world dominated by werewolves prepared me for this sort of treatment. There were many werewolves who saw humans as equals, but there were even more who saw us as an inferior race. Selina was likely one of them.

The driver eventually pulled the car over in front of a brownstone with large bay windows with a sign over the door that read “William Brown, Esq.” Selina got out of the car without a word and started for the door — I did the same, standing behind her as she rapped on the door with the brass knocker.

The door swung open a few moments later, and a young woman led us in. The office smelled like a sickly combination of mahogany and burnt coffee, and it was eerily quiet. Neither Selina nor the woman said a word; the woman only shut the door behind us and gestured toward a half-open

door at the end of a short hallway, and when we entered, there was an old man sitting behind an enormous wooden desk.

He was asleep.

Selina cleared her throat loudly and sat down in the chair across from him, and when he still didn't wake, she swiftly kicked him under the desk.

“Wake up, William!”

“What? Oh!” the old man exclaimed with a start as he was unceremoniously awoken. I stifled a laugh as I stood in the doorway, but my smile quickly faded when Selina abruptly turned around and gestured with her head for me to sit.

“Right,” William said, putting on his glasses with shaking old hands as he opened a drawer and pulled out a stack of documents. “Now, let's see...”

The cuckoo clock on the wall behind him ticked in time with my racing heartbeat and filled my ears, driving me practically insane, as the elderly lawyer licked his fingers and flipped through the documents. Finally, after a painstakingly long time and a curt “ahem” from Selina, he produced the packet of paperwork for me and set it down in front of me with a pen.

“You'll just have to sign this basic contract and an NDA,” he said.

I leaned forward and picked up the pen, scanning over the contract. My eyebrows raised as I noticed a couple of interesting clauses thrown in: one mentioned that I was not allowed to become romantically involved with my employer at any point, and another stated that I was prohibited from becoming pregnant with my employer's child without permission.

“Um... What are these clauses for?” I asked, pointing to them. William leaned over and glanced at them, then waved his hand dismissively.

“All very standard.”

“But I—”

“Just sign the agreement,” Selina growled under her breath. “Unless you think you will break the clauses...”

“No, no,” I said, quickly scrawling my signature down on the dotted line and sliding the contract back to William. “I would never. I was just curious.”

Selina let out another “Hmph,” and stood, smoothing down her skirt.

“Well, that’s finished,” she said, nodding politely to William, who seemed already exhausted from our brief interaction. “Let’s go, Moana.”

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We arrived at the location where I would be working and living a few minutes later. It was vastly different from the Tudor-style mountain mansion I had visited the day before, but equally as massive and beautiful. Selina and I walked through the marble lobby and took the elevator up a few dozen storeys before coming out into a gorgeous entryway with cherry wood parquet floors and large, arched windows that were reminiscent of an expensive Parisian apartment.

Ella was waiting for us when we arrived. She looked much more put-together and far less feral than the night before, wearing a prim baby blue dress with ruffles and a bow in her hair.

Much to mine and Selina’s surprise, Ella threw her arms around me in a tight hug and then took my hand, leading me away from Selina and around the massive apartment on a tour — which took over an hour since the place was so large, and I was thoroughly exhausted by the time it was over. Ella’s bedroom alone was bigger than my old apartment.

Finally, after she introduced me to the twin maids, Lily and Amy, Ella led me to what would be my room.

“This is your room!” she said, pushing open a large set of double doors with her tiny hands. I stifled a gasp as I saw how spacious and beautiful it was, with even a small balcony that overlooked the city below.

“This is... mine?” I asked, unable to contain my disbelief.

“Mm-hmm,” Ella said, climbing up on the bed and bouncing a bit. “Come feel the bed!”

Smiling, I walked over to the bed and sat down next to Ella.

“Wow, it is bouncy,” I said, to which Ella giggled and flopped onto her back, arms outstretched. I took the silence and the fact that we were alone as an opportunity to get to know Ella a bit better — as well as to pry a bit for information on this mystery father to make sure that he wasn’t a complete weirdo.

“So, can you tell me anything about your parents?” I asked. “Do you have a mom?”

Ella shook her head, still laying back and staring up at the ceiling. “Nope. I never met my mom. She died when I was born.”

“Oh,” I replied, my voice faltering. “I’m sorry.”

Ella merely sat up and shrugged, hopping off of the bed to walk over to the dresser and play with the ornate drawer knobs. “It’s okay. I’m happy with just my daddy. He’s always nice to me... I just wish he could spend more time with me.”

I stood and walked over to Ella. She turned and looked up at me, her eyes just as blue as they had been the night before. “I’m sure he wishes he could spend more time with you, too,” I said.

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That evening, after spending the entire day together playing games, Ella and I were sitting on the living room floor while Amy and Lily prepared dinner. I was watching as Ella drew a picture with crayons, helping her to draw things that she couldn’t quite figure out yet for herself, when I heard the front door click open.

Ella jerked her head up and suddenly dropped her crayons, jumping up and running out into the foyer.

“Daddy!” she yelled. I took a deep breath and stood, smoothing down my shirt and quickly fixing my hair as I prepared to meet my employer for the first time.

“Hey, princess. Did you have a good day?”

My eyes widened as I heard his voice.

It seemed I already knew this wealthy, handsome father I had heard so much about.