

Chapter 91 Sweet Affection

Moana

Sophia didn't ask about Edrick again after that. I knew that she could tell that something more was going on than I was leading her to believe, but she didn't pry any further and just enjoyed the remainder of the walk with me. We talked a bit about her plans with the foundation a bit as well as her need for a secretary to help her out; up ahead, as we talked about the secretary, I swore I could see Edrick glancing over his shoulder at us as though he was listening intently.

Finally, we made it to the ice cream parlor. It was a cute little mom and pop shop on a small strip of quaint little stores, and when we went inside it was like stepping back in time. There was a long counter with stools to sit at and there was a nice older man working behind the counter wearing a red and white striped uniform.

"Well, hello there!" the old man said cheerfully as we entered. "So many little ones!"

Sophia and I smiled and helped the children sit at the counter. Once they were all seated, we stood with Edrick as there were no chairs left.

"What can I get for everyone?" the old man asked, leaning on the counter and beaming at the children, who all looked over at Sophia expectantly.

“Go ahead and tell the nice man which flavor you would like,” Sophia said in an encouraging tone. Almost all at once, the children started bombarding the old man with the flavors of their choice, but he somehow managed to get all of their orders just right. Sophia also ordered a bowl of chocolate ice cream, and I ordered French vanilla. The old man handed us our ice cream and Sophia thanked both him and Edrick profusely while Edrick paid.

The ice cream was refreshing after being outside on such a hot day. French vanilla was always a favorite flavor of mine, and I couldn’t help but smile a bit as I tasted the sweet coolness of it on my tongue.

I noticed, however, that Edrick didn’t seem to get himself any ice cream.

“Aren’t you going to have any?” I asked, furrowing my brow. It felt a bit odd having him pay for all of us but not get anything for himself.

Edrick shook his head. “I don’t really eat ice cream, so I’m not sure what I would have,” he admitted.

The children’s mouths dropped almost in unison. “You don’t eat ice cream?” Clara insisted. “That’s crazy talk!”

“Clara, be nice,” Sophia chimed in, stifling a laugh. I could tell that Edrick didn’t quite know how to react, so without thinking, I scooped up a bit of ice cream on my spoon and held it out for him.

“Here,” I said. “Try mine. It’s not too sweet.”

Edrick’s eyes widened for a moment. He seemed to be struggling over whether he should move his mask down to taste the ice cream, but I had been comfortable since the moment we came in here as the nice old man was the only other person here and seemed to be the type to be entirely indifferent to celebrities. Edrick, seemingly coming to the same conclusion, finally tugged his mask down a little and ate the ice cream right off the spoon without even taking it out of my hand like I had expected. I noticed that his cheeks turned a little red as he tasted the ice

cream on his tongue, but he quickly nodded and turned away before I had a chance to tease him about it.

“I’ll take whichever flavor she had,” he said.

“French vanilla it is,” the old man replied with a smile. Edrick watched intently, almost in a childlike way, as the old man plopped two scoops of ice cream into the bowl, drizzled a little caramel on top, and handed it to Edrick.

As we ate, listening to the children as they prattled on to each other about this or that, I couldn’t stop thinking about how good Edrick’s attitude was now compared to this morning. Even though I was still a bit hurt after everything, it was nice to see him acting so friendly and open with Sophia and the children, and his offer to take everyone out for ice cream was still a shock. Not only that, but the fact that he ate the ice cream right off of my spoon with very little hesitation and seemed to like it enough to order some for himself was blowing my mind.

But, then again, I knew that there was a good chance that he was only acting so sweet to make his daughter happy; not that that was necessarily a bad thing, and it was all I really wanted from him to begin with, but I supposed that there was still a part of me that secretly wished that the Alpha billionaire would be kind like this out of his own heart and not for any particular reason. Still, I knew that beggars couldn’t be choosers, so I decided to take it for what it was and just be happy that he even showed up to begin with.

At one point, Sophia turned toward me and stifled a chuckle. “You have ice cream on your cheek,” she said, gesturing to her left cheek.

I felt my face go red and grabbed a napkin to wipe it off, but missed.

“Nope,” Sophia said, stifling another laugh. “A little to the left.”

Once again, I missed and felt my face go even more red.

Beside me, Edrick stopped eating his ice cream and peered over to see what was happening. He caught my eye for a moment, but his gaze quickly shifted over to my cheek and he shook his head. “Here,” he said, holding his cup of ice cream in one hand and walking up to me. Without hesitation, he took me completely by surprise and reached out. “I’ll get it.”

He rubbed his thumb along my cheek before I could even comprehend what was happening. As if my face wasn’t red enough as it was, I was certain now that I was the exact shade of a fire engine and felt my heart leap in my chest. His hand lingered on my cheek for a moment as he wiped the ice cream away, and at that moment, I forgot where we were entirely as we looked into each other’s eyes.

But then, suddenly, our brief trance was broken.

“Eww!” one of the children, Joshua, exclaimed as he pointed his stubby little finger at us. “They’re gonna kiss!”

The rest of the children erupted into a chorus of “eww’s” and gagging noises. Edrick suddenly pulled his hand away and stared at his thumb for a moment before wiping it on his napkin. Now, his face was just as red as mine.

“There,” he said, stepping away. “Got it.”

“Alright, alright,” Sophia said with a laugh, calming the children. “Be nice. Come on, everyone. Let’s finish up so we can go home.”

The children quickly returned to their ice cream, but my heart was racing too fast now to finish mine. And when I glanced back up at Edrick, I swore I caught him glancing at me out of the corner of his eyes

Chapter 92 Love and Marriage

Moana

The children quickly forgot about the emotional moment between Edrick and I by the time they finished their ice cream, and we left the ice cream parlor to make our way back to the orphanage.

By the time we made it back to the orphanage, the sun was already beginning to set. Ella would have her werewolf training in the morning, so we needed to get home in time for dinner and bedtime. As Ella said her goodbyes to her friends in the foyer, Edrick and I stood patiently by the door.

Finally, when Ella had hugged all of her new friends as though she would never see them again, I gave Sophia my last goodbye and we began to head out.

“Wait! Moana! Mr. Morgan!” Clara’s little voice called out, causing us to stop in our tracks. “I have a question!”

“What is it, Clara?” I asked, feeling a smirk spread across my face at the little girl’s urgent demeanor.

“Um... Well, actually...” She turned to face her friends. They all whispered for a moment before Joshua reached out and spun Clara back around to face us. Her face was red from embarrassment. “We want to know... When are you and Mr. Morgan getting married?”

I froze, as did Edrick beside me.

“Clara, let’s not ask such personal questions,” Sophia said, shooting me an apologetic glance as she walked up to Clara.

“Oh... Sorry, Moana and Mr. Morgan,” Clara said.

“It’s okay,” I replied, crouching down and planting a kiss on the little girl’s cheek. I felt bad for not being able to explain anything more, but it wasn’t entirely my call. Edrick’s silence told me that he wasn’t ready to talk to outsiders about our situation just yet, and I wanted to respect that. “I’ll see you guys later, okay?”

“Okay.”

With that, Edrick, Ella and I returned to the car where the driver was waiting. Edrick opened the door for Ella and myself, and while I buckled Ella into her car seat, Edrick got in on the other side.

The ride home was quiet. Ella seemed too sleepy from her exciting day to say much, and instead swung her legs happily in her seat as she played with the wooden puzzle that I kept in my purse to keep her busy during car rides. Meanwhile, Edrick stared quietly out the window without so much as turning even once to look back at me. I could tell that Clara’s question took him just as off guard as it did to me, and I knew that it made us equally uncomfortable. It was a confusing and awkward subject to broach, and what made it even worse was that the children at the orphanage — and Sophia — didn’t even know about the pregnancy yet. How would we be able to explain something like that when my belly eventually grew to the point where there was no hiding it?

When we got back to the penthouse, Edrick retreated to his study and shut the door. I sighed as I heard the door click shut, but kept my chin up for Ella and helped Selina and the maids prepare dinner. Ella was thankfully just too preoccupied with her exciting day to notice her father’s sullenness

after the question that Clara asked, but I couldn't stop thinking about it as we ate dinner and I gave Ella her bath.

Would I even want to marry a man who was sleeping with other women during my pregnancy? I felt almost betrayed; even though we weren't technically together, I felt as though I was doing my due diligence and being faithful for both Ella's and the baby's sake despite the fact that I was just as lonely as Edrick was. Meanwhile, he was having one night stands with other women. Just because I caught him this time, too, didn't necessarily mean that there hadn't been other times. Even just thinking about it made my blood boil, however, so I tried not to let it get to me as I got Ella ready for bed.

Finally, I finished Ella's bath and dried her off, then got her into her pajamas and combed out her long hair. It had become a bit of a ritual at this point for us to sit in front of her mirror at night while I brushed her hair one hundred times and braided it, and just like any other night, we did just that.

I expected Ella to chatter on about her exciting day, but she didn't. Much to my surprise, she was mostly quiet while I brushed and braided her hair. I figured that she was just tired, but it wasn't until I tucked her into bed for the night that she finally spoke.

"Um... Moana?" she said, just as I was about to shut off the light.

I stopped, turning to look at her. She was tucked into her blanket up to her chin, with her favorite stuffed animal — the little handmade stuffed duck that I'd purchased for her at the farmers' market all those weeks ago — nestled into the crook of her neck. "Yes, love?" I asked.

"Um... Do you think that you and my daddy really will get married one day?" she asked.

I was taken aback by her question, but I supposed that I knew it would come out eventually. Between mine and Edrick's shocked silence in

response to Clara's question earlier and the way that Sophia pulled her away, it was bound to have struck Ella. Not only that, but the way that her father went silent and disappeared into his study for the remainder of the night was also bound to make her uncomfortable. It was only now that I realized that she was probably mulling over the subject as well, and that was why she was so quiet all evening.

Ella kept looking up at me curiously with her big doe eyes, and I finally let out a sigh and sat down on the edge of her bed. I reached out and brushed a loose strand of hair out of her eyes before I spoke. "Sometimes things just don't work out that way," I said gently.

"Well... Why not?" she asked. "In all of my fairytales and princess movies, the boy and the girl always fall in love and get married and live happily ever after."

I paused, biting my lip. "Real life just isn't always like your fairytales or princess movies," I finally said after some contemplation. "But that's okay. I promise that we'll all still have our happily ever after... It'll just be a little bit different."

Ella didn't answer for a minute. I watched as she scrunched up her nose, chewing and digesting what I had just told her. Of course it broke my heart a little bit to have to tell a little girl that happily ever after wasn't always like fairytales or princess movies; sometimes, instead of a prince, the boy was a cold CEO who couldn't commit because of social status. And sometimes, instead of a princess, the girl was a human nanny who got herself into a rather sticky situation.

Chapter 93 Regrets

Edrick

I was passing by Ella's room when I overheard Moana and Ella talking, and my heart sank a little when I heard Ella's question.

"Um... Do you think that you and my daddy really will get married one day?" she asked, no doubt because of the children at the orphanage thinking that Moana and I were engaged.

There was a long pause; I almost considered going in there and talking to Ella myself as I wasn't quite sure how well Moana would handle it, especially after how upset she'd been that morning, but it turned out that I didn't need to.

"Sometimes things just don't work out that way," Moana finally replied. Her voice was soft and gentle.

"Well... Why not?" Ella asked. "In all of my fairytales and princess movies, the boy and the girl always fall in love and get married and live happily ever after."

Another pause.

"Real life just isn't always like your fairytales or princess movies," Moana said after several long moments. "But that's okay. I promise that we'll all still have our happily ever after... It'll just be a little bit different."

I was a bit taken aback by how well Moana handled the situation. It warmed my heart, honestly, to hear how sweetly she spoke to Ella. She could have easily said something sarcastic or backhanded because of how angry she was with me for what happened that morning, but she didn't tarnish my daughter's perception of me. Honestly, did I even deserve that? Sometimes I wondered if Ella should know that her father was... Not the man she thought I was. I couldn't help but wonder, either, if Ella would always feel a little bitter about my relationship with Moana; especially if she ever found out that her mother wasn't actually dead.

Ella seemed satisfied by this response, and as I stood there, I saw the light flick off in the room followed by the sound of Moana's footsteps approaching. I didn't have time to move out of the way before she opened the door and saw me standing there.

"Oh," she said, her face grim and cold, "I didn't know you were here."

"I was just coming to say goodnight," I replied.

Moana nodded. "Well, she's still awake, so now's your chance." She then stepped out of my way, avoiding my gaze, and headed toward her room — but I couldn't contain my frustration any longer, and I followed her.

"Actually," I said, standing behind her as she opened her bedroom door, "I'd like to talk to you."

Moana froze, her hand still on the doorknob. She seemed to be unsure as to whether she wanted to speak to me or not, and I understood that, but at the same time I felt as though I had a right to explain myself. She got some seriously wrong ideas about me that morning that I needed to set straight, and she hadn't given me a chance all day to explain anything. Even though I tried to make it up to both her and Ella today, she still didn't seem satisfied.

“Fine,” she finally said, her voice low. She opened her door and stepped in. I followed and closed the door behind us. “What is it?” she asked as she folded her arms across her chest.

I frowned, a bit annoyed still by her harsh attitude, but I decided to push my own angry thoughts down to at least try to have a civil conversation.

“You got some seriously wrong ideas about me this morning that I need to set straight,” I said.

“Oh?” Moana asked, raising an eyebrow. “Was that your perfume, then? Or am I not allowed to ask or care, even though I’m carrying your baby in my belly?”

I paused, gritting my teeth. There were a few choice words that I wanted to say in response to that, but I chose to take the high road instead and took a deep breath before responding. “First of all, I’m sorry that I fell asleep like that on the couch,” I said. “I had a drink at the bar, and then I finished off that whiskey bottle when I got home, but I was only exhausted... Not drunk.” I really wasn’t drunk that night; Moana didn’t seem to believe me, but I kept going anyway. “Furthermore, I didn’t sleep with anyone,” I said.

“Why did you reek of women’s perfume, then?” she interrupted, her frown deepening. I watched her for a moment as she glared up at me. As I stood in front of her, even from a bit of a distance, I realized how small she was despite the air of indignant confidence she was trying to put across. She almost seemed to be unintentionally making herself smaller with her stance and her posture, as though she was recoiling into herself.

I shook my head, then sighed and stared down at the floor. Admittedly, I didn’t want the truth to come out now... But it had to.

“I almost did sleep with someone,” I admitted. “At the bar. I came close, but... I couldn’t do it. I decided against it.”

When I looked back up, Moana's eyes were wide. She no longer had her arms folded across her chest and now had them hung at her sides, where she was clenching and unclenching her fists. Whether it was out of anger, frustration, hurt, or all three, I couldn't quite tell.

"Well... Why did you decide against it?" she asked. Her voice, which had been solid and even-toned before, now sounded small and almost childlike. Even in the dim light of her room, I could see that tears were beginning to form in her round, green eyes.

I didn't know what to say. Of course I only did it to get my mind off of her, to try to distract myself and hopefully get over whatever strange fascination I had with her, but when I opened my mouth to say that, nothing would come out.

Moana, noticing this, took in a sharp breath and narrowed her eyes.

"If you don't have anything else to say, then you can leave my room now," she said, pointing to the door behind me with a shaking hand.

I nodded and turned back to the door. But when I put my hand on the doorknob, I couldn't bring myself to open it. It was now that the words finally came out. Maybe turning away from her, not looking her in the eye, gave me the strength to do that.

"I decided against it because I can't stop thinking about you," I said.

Moana was silent. I still couldn't bring myself to turn around and face her, because if I did, I knew that I wouldn't be able to control myself again. Just like last night, I knew I would kiss her if I looked at her, and would probably take things even further than that just like I secretly wanted to.

I had to leave before that could happen. It would only be bad for both of us, as well as Ella and the baby, if I let it happen.

Without another word, I swung the door open and walked out, hearing it shut behind me.

As I stood there in the hallway, all I could think about was what I was going to do if I could no longer control myself around this strangely captivating human nanny.

Chapter 94 Favorite Girls

Moana

A few days passed after that. I had a hard time getting over what Edrick said to me in my room that night: that he couldn't stop thinking about me. Was that true? Why, then, did he try to sleep with another woman? If he really couldn't stop thinking about me in the same way that I couldn't stop thinking about him, why couldn't we just admit our feelings to one another and be done with it? Even if we couldn't be public with our relationship, part of me still wanted to see if we could make it work in a private setting.

Eventually, the day of the banquet came. While there was still a large part of me that just wanted to make an excuse to not go and hide in the penthouse instead, I knew that I had to be there for Ella.

On the morning of the banquet, I came out of my room to find that Selina had already prepared a large breakfast for Ella and me. Ella was already sitting at the table, happily shoveling pancakes into her mouth, while Selina poured my coffee for me.

“Wow,” I said as I approached, temporarily forgetting my anxiety about the banquet. “This is nice, Selina. Thank you.”

Selina nodded. “You’ve both got a long day ahead of you, so I wanted to make sure you have a good breakfast. Take a seat.”

I smiled and sat across from Ella. A plate of pancakes, bacon, and fresh fruit sat in front of me. Selina finished pouring my coffee, which I sipped gratefully before starting to dig into my breakfast.

“Now,” Selina said, wiping her hands on her apron and then retrieving her small datebook from her apron pocket, “let’s see...” She opened the datebook, slipping her glasses onto her nose and reading for a moment. “Ella, you’ll be getting your hair done at eleven... And Moana, you’ll have your own hair and makeup stylist coming at noon.”

My eyes widened just as I was about to take a bite of my pancake. I lowered the fork, furrowing my brow. “That must be a mistake,” I said with a chuckle. “I don’t have a stylist for these sorts of things.”

Selina only shrugged and stuffed her datebook back in her pocket. “Mr. Morgan booked one for you,” she said.

I was astonished. Edrick really booked a hair and makeup stylist for me? He’d never done that before for either of the events we went to, and never even mentioned it. I couldn’t help but wonder if he was just trying to butter me up by doing this, but I had to admit that there was a little part of me that secretly hoped that he was trying to doll me up because he was going to announce my pregnancy to his family at the banquet.

But, no. That would be ridiculous; I knew that he wouldn’t be telling the rest of his family for quite a while. After all, according to him, his father could potentially do something to the baby this early on in the pregnancy. Even just the thought of it made me hold my belly protectively.

Either way, I didn’t put up a fuss. I finished eating, then gave Ella her bath and got her ready for her appointment, which she wasn’t particularly excited for. Ella, however, was a good girl as always and didn’t put up a fuss either, and was as polite as can be to the stylist when she finally arrived.

Not long after they began to do her hair for the banquet, my own stylist arrived: an older, well-dressed man by the name of Tyrus. As he stepped out of the elevator, I was shocked by his impeccable style and perfect hair. He even wore a bit of gold eyeshadow that made his brown eyes pop out.

“You must be Moana,” he said, walking up to me with a smile and holding out his hand. “I’m Tyrus.”

“Nice to meet you,” I replied.

“Can I offer you some tea, Tyrus?” Selina asked, seemingly already familiar with the man. Tyrus shook his head.

“No, thank you, Selina,” he said with a smile, then looked back at me. “We’ve got quite the afternoon ahead of us.”

I was still taken aback as Tyrus led me to my room, where he sat me down in front of my vanity and laid out his hair and makeup supplies. For the next three hours — yes, three — Tyrus and I chatted while he trimmed and styled my hair and did my makeup. It was fascinating watching how expertly he curled and styled my hair, and how perfectly he did my makeup to give me a natural look while still having a bit of sophistication. He gave me a similar glittery gold eyeshadow to his own, which brought out the green in my eyes and the red in my hair in a way that I’d never seen before. When he was finished, I was shocked by my own reflection.

“Well?” he asked, holding a mirror up so I could see the back of my hair. “What do you think?”

I shook my head in disbelief as I ran my hands over my incredibly soft hair and leaned forward in my seat to look at the impeccable makeup he did. “It’s...”

“It’s beautiful!” a tiny voice suddenly called from the doorway. Tyrus and I both looked up to see Ella standing there with her hair done as well and a big grin on her face. She ran up to me and bounced up and down excitedly on her toes. “You look so pretty, Moana!”

I couldn't help but blush at Ella's reaction, and Tyrus chuckled as he packed up his supplies.

"Really," I said as I walked him back to the elevator a few minutes later, "you did a great job. Thank you so much."

"Oh, it's nothing," Tyrus replied with a warm smile. "A friend of Edrick's is a friend of mine."

"You know Edrick well?" I asked.

Tyrus shrugged. "We knew each other in college," he said, "before I came out to my parents and decided to run off and enroll in cosmetology school. If you can believe it, I was a business major back then. Yuck."

I laughed as I pictured a younger Tyrus and a younger Edrick being acquaintances in college. In fact, as I said goodbye to Tyrus and watched the elevator doors close, I couldn't stop imagining what Edrick was like in college; to think of him as a bright-eyed young man with big dreams for the future made me smile. But at the same time, I couldn't help but wonder if going to school to become the next WereCorp CEO was his own dream, or if it was his father's dream.

That evening, Selina helped Ella get ready for the banquet while Amy and Lily helped me. I wore the silk dress that Edrick picked out for me at the mall, and although it felt a little dirty now knowing that he almost slept with another woman on the same day that he bought it for me, I couldn't help but feel beautiful as I looked in the mirror. Even Amy and Lily couldn't stop fawning over the quality of the dress, and kept feeling the fabric between their fingers. I promised that they could try the new dresses on in my room sometime, just for fun, and they seemed excited by that idea.

When I was finished, I finally stepped out of my room and into the living room, where Edrick was waiting. I felt almost like the lady of the house, and when Edrick's eyes slid over me and his face almost went a little pale, I temporarily forgot that I really was just the nanny.

Ella came out along with me and took my hand, grinning up at me.

“Well, daddy?” she asked, twirling around to show off her skirt. “How do we look?”

The Alpha billionaire smiled a warm, sweet smile.

“There's my favorite girls,” he said.

Chapter 95 The Banquet

Edrick

“There’s my favorite girls,” I said with a smile.

I didn’t even think about it before I said it, but I knew as soon as it came out of my mouth that I’d made a mistake. Ella didn’t seem to notice, but Moana sure did. Her green eyes, which looked even more beautiful with the small amount of gold eyeshadow around them, widened.

“Ha,” I said, feigning surprise at myself in the feeble hope that I could get away without Moana dwelling on this too much, “slip of the tongue. Are you two ready?”

When we arrived at the banquet, the party had already begun. The end of summer banquet was a long-standing Morgan family tradition. The banquet that I had taken Moana and Ella to earlier that summer was solely for more immediate family and close friends, but this banquet was different. Each summer, practically every single member of the entire Morgan clan, from immediate family to cousins several times removed and all of their own friends and extended families through marriage would come from all over the globe to visit my parents’ mansion. Needless to

say, these parties were huge, and often went on for two or three days. That was why I paid my old friend Tyrus to come and do Moana's hair and makeup; sure, it was necessary for the nanny, but I wanted to make a good impression. Besides, I had to admit that I wanted to do a little something nice for Moana to make her feel better, although I would never tell her that.

The driver pulled up to the front driveway and we got out. Moana held Ella's hand as we walked up the wide stone pathway, lined with fountains and sculptures, but as soon as Ella saw her other little cousins she instantly took off running.

"Oh— Ella!" Moana called, taken by surprise by Ella's sudden mad dash.

"It's alright," I said with a chuckle. "She only gets to see these kids once a year. She'll be fine — although that dress will probably wind up in the trash by the time she's done rolling around with them like an animal."

Moana managed a wry laugh and followed me up the steps to the front door, where servants were waiting to take our jackets. Glasses of champagne were handed to us almost as soon as we walked into the large banquet hall, but Moana refused.

"Darling!" my mother's familiar voice called as I entered. She waved at us from across the crowd, and Moana and I made our way over to her. Of course, with so many people here, she only extended Moana the basic pleasantries, although I knew that my mother secretly wanted to dote on the mother of my second child all night. When I was with Olivia, it was the same thing. I didn't have to hide my relationship with Olivia quite as much as with Moana, so my mother would spend hours at these events gushing over her despite my father's sullenness that I wasn't married to her. Although, Olivia quickly stopped even coming to the events as soon as she got pregnant; I didn't realize it at the time, thinking that she was just dealing with morning sickness throughout the pregnancy, but she was

really sneaking around with other men and only used the pregnancy to keep me faithful.

“How are you, mom?” I asked, planting a kiss on her cheek while Moana stood nearby, looking a little out of place despite her luxurious outfit.

“I’m splendid,” my mother said, then turned to Moana. “And you look absolutely stunning, dear. You’re glowing.”

Moana blushed. “Thank you.”

Then, my mother turned back to face me and lowered her voice. “I’d advise steering clear of your father, at least until he’s had a couple of drinks in him,” she said, patting my hand. “He’s not happy about the tabloid.”

My eyes widened; so my father did see the tabloid after all. When he didn’t call to scold me about it, I thought that he never saw it.

“Does he know...?” I asked, indicating Moana’s pregnancy.

“I think he might have an idea,” my mother replied. “But I told him that we were just having a nice lunch, and that you never mentioned anything about a pregnancy. That might have allayed his suspicions for the time being.”

“Good.” I felt a lump rise in my throat as I scanned the crowd for my father, but when I finally spotted him, he was far on the other side of the banquet hall and appeared to be deep in conversation with one of my uncles.

Suddenly, I felt someone tap my shoulder. I turned around to see none other than Kelly grinning up at me. She really seemed to go all out for this banquet with her hair and makeup, but what most struck me was that she was wearing an eerily similar dress to the one that Moana was wearing. In fact, the longer I looked at it, the more I realized that it was in fact the exact same dress; just tighter, as though she had it altered to sit snugly around her waist and show off her flat stomach. I couldn’t help but wonder

if it was intentional, as if she was trying to one-up Moana, who had to hide her belly somewhat. I personally found Kelly to pale in comparison to how beautiful Moana looked.

“Hello, dear Edrick,” Kelly said, planting a wet kiss on my cheek. “It’s been a little while, hasn’t it?”

“Since the gala, yes,” I said. “Thank you again for that generous donation.”

“Hm.” Kelly pursed her lips and glanced over at Moana, who had still hardly said a word this entire time. Kelly’s eyes slid up and down Moana judgmentally before coming back to me. “Well, it was the least I could do to help you get a head start,” Kelly finally said. “Of course, if it were a werewolf orphanage, I could have donated more... But, you know, I didn’t want to be making too much of a political statement.”

I stifled a scoff. Of course Kelly would say that; she had always been anti-humans, at least since we were teenagers. I always found it funny because of the fact that we often played with the human servant children when we were little, and she didn’t seem to have a problem then. But, then again, I supposed that it was bound to happen eventually being raised by a wealthy werewolf family. Even I still had my hang ups about humans, although I had to admit that Moana was slowly breaking those walls down.

“Anyway,” Kelly said, “I’m glad I found you. Can we talk? I only need a minute of your time.”

“Sure,” I replied, only to be polite. I followed Kelly across the banquet hall, taking one last glance over my shoulder at Moana. She stared after us with a combination of abandonment and jealousy on her face, and it admittedly made me feel a little bad.

Kelly eventually pushed through one of the doors that led to a small garden outside. Once we were outside and alone, she stopped on the steps and turned to face me.

“I have a proposition,” she said, a coy smile spreading across her face.

I frowned. “What is it?”

“Well... Everyone saw that tabloid, you know. Now, I’m not saying that what was on the cover of that tabloid is necessarily true — although I think the nanny’s added weight says it all anyway — but you know that people are bound to start asking questions. And, well, say that the tabloid was right, and you did have something to hide... I could help you hide it.”

“Oh?” I asked, raising an eyebrow as I folded my arms across my chest.

Kelly grinned. “Yes. I think you need a public ‘wife’, so to speak. Preferably an Alpha from a good family.”

I couldn’t help but roll my eyes. “And I suppose you expect that to be you,” I replied. Kelly didn’t seem fazed.

“I mean, it could be anyone,” she said. “It’s not like it would be real. Only real to the public. This ‘wife’ could also claim Ella as her daughter, so not only could you be free of speculation, but you also wouldn’t have to hide Ella as much anymore. I think it’s a win for everybody.”

I didn’t know what to say. I was completely taken aback by this preposterous idea of Kelly’s, and it made me wonder deep down if she somehow orchestrated this; she was so infatuated with me that I wouldn’t put it past her to be the anonymous donor who tried to pay the tabloid to keep the picture up, just to cause an uproar and give me no choice but to go through with this ‘fake’ relationship.

Before I could say anything, however, Kelly spoke again. She moved closer to me as she did, and her eyes narrowed seductively.

“Think of it this way,” she said. “If I came out as your Alpha wife and Ella’s Alpha mother, then no one would bother you about the nanny anymore; because no one would ever accuse the CEO of WereCorp of being unfaithful to his wife with a lowly human servant... Right?”