

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 15

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#Chapter 15 Want To Make Bastien Jealous

Selene's POV

My lungs burn as I choke on the salty pool water, trying desperately to keep my eyes open. A razor sharp pain explodes in my chest, tearing me from the inside out. As my airway seals shut and all the oxygen leaves my body, I feel a strange sense of peace. As if I know in my heart it's over now, and I can finally rest.

As my eyes shutter for the last time, I catch a final glimpse of the mortal world: An eerie cauldron of blue and green, dotted with the reflections of the garden's fairy lights. The yellow orbs are broken only by the soft air pockets floating skyward, and then an explosion of bubbles and foam.

An iron bar circles my middle, and suddenly I'm ascending, catapulting towards the surface. Saltwater spews from my mouth as I burst into the fresh air. I cough violently, unable to focus on anything but gulping in as much oxygen as I possibly can. I'm floating towards the pool's edge, vaguely aware of a warm body holding me aloft.

Half a dozen hands pull me from my watery coffin, rolling me onto my stomach so that I can expel every last drop of fluid from my lungs. A heavy blanket settles over my shoulders, and I realize I'm shivering like a wet chihuahua.

Familiar voices break through the haze, fussing and calling my name. I crack my eyes open to find Odette and Gabriel sitting on my left, both bone dry. I turn my head in the opposite direction, zeroing in on the man dripping water from every thread of his ruined tux.

His hair is so dark it's almost black, and he watches me with piercing green eyes. He is not nearly so large as Bastien, but he is

undeniable air of an Alpha wolf, but I'm sure I've never seen him before.

He must be from another pack, I realize.

"Thank you," I gasp, reaching for his hand.

The man clasps my palm, squeezing gently. "Don't mention it."

"Selene sweetheart, what happened?" Odette is hovering over me like a frenzied mother hen, distress drawn in every line of her beautiful face.

"Give her some space to breathe, my love." Gabriel says, scooping me up. "Let's get her inside."

As the crowd of guests part to let the Alpha pass, I hear *my* mother-in-law fussing over my savior. "You must be freezing, please come inside and we'll find you some dry clothes, Mr. Cavanaugh."

I recognize the name; the Cavanaugh's lead the Eros Pack. This man is too young to be the Alpha, but I'd bet good money he's next in line.

Gabriel carries me up to one of the hall's social parlors, his mate close on his tail commanding the various sentinels to bring blankets and dry clothes. Every inch of my body feels bruised and drained. I never knew drowning was so painful and exhausting.

I'm barely conscious as Gabriel deposits me on a plush settee and Odette gets to work stripping my sopping dress from my trembling body. She bundles blankets around me, only letting the men enter the room once I'm completely covered.

My mother-in-law strokes my drenched hair, "I'll call Bastien." She promises, retrieving her phone.

The Eros Pack heir strides into the room behind Gabriel, dressed in one of the older man's suits. His hair is still wet, but no one at the party will hold that against him.

"Selene," Gabriel broaches gently, "This is Drake Cavanaugh. Drake, meet my daughter-in-law, Selene."

"Thank you again for saving me." My voice is a shadow of itself, weak and hoarse.

"I should be thanking you," Drake grins, "It's not often I get to play the hero. I might even get a few dates out of this."

My laugh is interrupted by a cough, but the warmth remains. This man is all light and charm – nothing like Bastien. "I'm glad I could be of help." I reply throatily.

"Do you remember what happened?" Gabriel asks me, his salt and pepper brows furrowed.

Like I could forget.

"No." I lie. I don't think I can bear the embarrassment of explaining the truth. "One minute I was walking by the pool and the next was in it."

“Sweet girl,” Gabriel murmurs sympathetically, “Bastien should have taught you to swim a long time ago.”

Our conversation is abruptly silenced by the sound of Odette’s raised voice. “What do you mean you can’t?” The door to the hallway is closed, but her words are as clear as day. “Did you hear what I said? Your wife almost died. You cannot tell me there is anything more urgent than this.”

We all pause, and I feel a familiar lump in my throat. No explanation was needed. Bastien was choosing Arabella over me – again.

The same kindling flames I felt before confronting that horrible gossip ignited once more. Suddenly I did not want to simply curl up and wait for Bastien to come sweep me home. No, I want to make him see what he’s missing, and I know exactly how I’m going to do it.

*So, just so we’re on the same page, you want to use me to make your husband jealous?”

I’m standing before a mirror again, in my second dress of the night. My hair has been blown dry and though I still feel like death warmed over, I’m determined to rally.

Unlike the molten silver dress the pool destroyed, the emerald gown I now wear reveals far more than it leaves to the imagination. Its silk bodice appears almost painted on and the flowing skirt is slit straight to my hip.

“I didn’t say that,” I hedge, smothering a smile. “But if that’s how you want to interpret it, go right ahead.”

“Oh I have no objections,” Drake teases, “I just want to make sure I know the plan.”

I’m quickly coming to like Drake. He is warm and easy-going, always ready with a laugh. “Well in that case, yes. That’s about the size of it.”

Normally I wouldn’t dream of doing something like this, playing games or seeking petty revenge for Bastien’s neglect. I know he cares for me as best he can, but part of me is still aching from the rejection announcement.

“Can I ask you something?” I request, slowly working up my nerves.

“Of course.” The young wolf replies.

“This will probably sound very odd, but I don’t know a lot about our kind.” I admit.

Drake nods, appearing suddenly serious. "I'm aware of your history." An apologetic look crosses his countenance, "Gabriel notified my father when your step-father ran. He thought he might seek refuge in our territory."

"Ah." I say simply. "Then it won't come as a surprise to you that my knowledge of pack behavior and traditions is a bit lacking." He offers me a conceding nod. "I heard something tonight I didn't understand, and I wondered if maybe you could explain it to me."

Drake raises one dark brow. "I don't suppose this has anything to do with the woman who pushed you into the pool."

I gape at him, "You saw?"

"I have to say you're being a lot more forgiving about it than I would be in your shoes." He remarks blithely.

All I can do is blink in surprise. "But you didn't say."

Drake shoots me a look. "Heroes don't tattle. You clearly didn't want Gabriel to know."

I purse my lips, "I think this hero stuff is starting to go to your head."

"What was your question, Selene?" Drake laughs.

"What's the difference between marriage and claiming a mate?" I can feel the vermillion flush heating my cheeks.

The future Alpha does not look surprised. "You mean marking?"

"Yes." That is exactly the word those horrible women used.

"Well," Drake clears his throat, "marriage is only half of mating – a legal union. But to truly claim one's mate, you have to mark them."

"Like scent marking?" | clarify.

"Yes." He answers, "Only this is permanent. It's a bite which infuses your mate's scent into your body so that it may never be washed off or covered up. Marking your mate is the ultimate commitment – it solidifies the soul bond, connecting your wolves completely and making it impossible to be parted."

I can feel a lump rising in my throat. "So if someone lost their wolf?"

Drake sighs deeply, "I don't have an answer for that one. You're the only person I've ever heard of experiencing that, and I have no idea if it'd be possible to bond with someone who has been disconnected from their soul."

I blink away a rogue tear. "It's not like it matters. I may not even have a fated mate. I was just curious."

"Plenty of people marry without marking each other, Selene. Not every union is divined by fate." He reminds me.

"I know." I offer up a watery smile.

Drake tsks and takes my face in his hands, brushing my tears away with his thumbs.

At that moment the parlor door swings open, and an animalistic snarl fills the air. "Take your hands off my wife."