

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 156

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate
Chapter 156

Chapter 156-Bastien Makes a Proposal

Bastien

It's not much of a proposal, and certainly not how I ever planned on asking a woman to marry me, but given our dire straits, it will have to do. "We'll get married." I say again, sharing my idea as it forms in my mind. "I'll reject Selene, we can have the papers sent from here via courier."

"She'll never sign." Arabella argues, even though her doe eyes wide and hopeful.

"She won't have to." I announce, "with all the crimes she's guilty of, we can get the marriage annulled. It's not a true union if one party is tricked into it, and regardless I'm the Alpha." I remind Arabella. My elite status gives me privileges even my spouse doesn't enjoy. She doesn't have to agree to being rejected, as long as I want it."

"You'd really do that?" Arabella asks in awe.

"Trust me, Bella, I was already planning on it." I remark ruefully.

"No, not the rejection." She clarifies, "You'd really marry me?"

Turning to face Arabella head on, I can't help but imagine Flynn standing beside her with his muscular arms crossed over his chest, glaring at me for ever letting a witch break my vow to take care of his sister in the first place. "I gave Flynn my word that I would always take care of you, no matter what." I explain to Arabella, "I'm sorry I let Selene get the better of me, but now that I know what she is, I won't be fooled again. You have my word. I will fulfill my duty, I will make you my wife."

A beaming smile splits Arabella's cheeks, but it doesn't quite reach her eyes. For the first time since losing my memory, I remember part of why I waited so long to go through with this vow in the first place. Arabella is still so young, and I know we aren't mates... she deserves the chance to find love as much as anyone else. "Unless of course you'd rather marry another, or take some time to try and find your true mate. I'll provide for you either way, and I don't want to tie you to a union that won't make you happy, I just want you to be safe."

"No!" She exclaims without hesitation. "I want to marry you, Bastien." She professes, "I always have, I just feel... well, I know you don't love me that way."

Dropping my head so she can't see my frown, I recall all the stories I've heard from generations past, when marriage was a legal and financial arrangement and fated mates were considered frivolous fantasies. "Lots of great marriages have started out being arranged between friends, or people who barely know each other." I state simply, striding forward and taking Arabella's hands in mine, "We have a great friendship and that's a better foundation than many true mates start out with, I'm sure love will grow in time." I proclaim confidently, though deep down, the thought of kissing my surrogate sister – let alone consummating a marriage with her, makes me slightly nauseous.

*Are you sure it will be enough?" Arabella simpers, sidling close, "You have no idea how horrible Selene truly is." She murmurs, making my heart ache in sympathy. She did everything she could to destroy me and everyone believed her and now she tries to make you a fool and she's succeeding."

"I'm so sorry that happened, Bella." Hugging her and hating every last detail of what she's shared with me, I continue, "But it sounds like Selene succeeded by twisting my emotions for years and years. So losing my memory is actually a gift." I declare with utter conviction. "I'm awake now. She doesn't have any emotional leverage over me anymore. I'm certain the Goddess took my memory in that attack so that I could go back and make things right."

I've always imagined myself to be a man of principle, but if everything Arabella is telling me is true, I've failed completely. I've let a horrible woman deceive me and manipulate me into acting completely out of character, and for what? This has to be a second chance for both Arabella and I, otherwise everything we've lost over the years has been a waste.

"I think I'm dreaming." Arabella admits, suddenly uncharacteristically shy. "You have no idea how many times I've imagined you coming after me," she bites her lower lip, turning positively crimson. "how many times I've fantasized about marrying you."

Guilt and shame wash over me, competing for dominance. Flynn's little sister has only ever been good to me. She's suffered beyond belief, from the loss of her parents, to the death of her brother. I can't claim any fault in the former tragedy, but the latter was undoubtedly my fault. I have carried Flynn's death with me from the moment it happened. But apparently it wasn't enough, even before my head was turned by Selene, Arabella suffered and pined for me while I overlooked her at best and spurned her at worst,

*You're not dreaming, and I'm not teasing you." I promise, "I want to marry you."

"Are you sure?" She presses, "I don't want you to offer unless you really mean it."

"I've never meant anything more." I insist. "Please Arabella, be my wife. You won't regret it. I promise,"

"You're only saying this because you feel guilty about Flynn and Selene." Arabella argues,

"You're wrong." I command. "I'm saying this because I want what's best for you." Scanning her features, I all but beg her to agree, so what

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Chapter 156-Bastien Makes a Proposal

do you say?"

"Of course!" Arabella smiles, throwing her arms around my neck, "Of course I'll marry you!"

Laughing and spinning her around. I make a silent vow to myself. I won't fail this woman again. I don't care what happens with Blaise or Selene, I will never turn away from her again,

A few hours later, when we've broken out a bottle of Champagne and Arabella has enthusiastically began planning the event despite the fact that we're in mortal danger – a fact I've decided to ignore for one night, simply because I can't bear to ruin her good mood. I collect the evening paper. We may be celebrating, but there's a lot of serious matters to deal with, as well as logistics to sort out, I can't risk losing touch with the situation in Elysium.

As soon as I open the front page of the paper, I'm both immensely glad I chose to read it, and horrified by the headline.

Dr. Thomas Kane Issues and Ultimatum for the Alpha's Return and Challenges Him for the Pack

In an explosive press conference held at Elysium Memorial Hospital today, the chief of medicine called out the Alpha for his absence at a time of such peril in our pack. Combined with the wildfire, rogue attacks and the attempted kidnapping of Selene and Lila Durand last week, he insisted that Bastien return to Elysium immediately to face judgment for his neglect, calling particular attention to the plight of his mate and pup. "I was certain that no matter what neglect he may have inflicted on the pack in the past few years, a wolf as honorable as Bastien would never neglect his wife in the same way. I have come to the terrible and unfortunate conclusion that our Alpha is not the man we believed him to be."

Arabella comes to read the publication over my shoulder when she hears me cursing. "Oh my god!"

"Who the hell is Dr. Kane?" I demand, eyeing the black and white photo closely to try and determine if he could be my cousin. Because our fathers were always at each other's throats, I never spent much time with him when we were pups, and all association was cut off after the coup attempt. All I really remember is that he has green eyes.

"That's not Dr. Kane," Arabella confirms my suspicions a moment later, that's Frederic. He became a doctor at Odile's bidding. She knew the family doctor would have unlimited access to the Alpha, it's how he killed Gabriel. He used one of the emergency passageways and then arrived with the investigators to pronounce him dead. That way his scent was mixed with everyone else's, so they never got any leads on the assassin. It gave him the power to help Selene fake her death, forge the DNA results so she could convince you their pup was hers."

"Odile?" I repeat, this is the first I've heard about Frederic's mother being involved.

Arabella goes still, "Did I not mention?" She asks, licking her lips. "Selene and Frederic met after his plan was already under way. Odile had been grooming him to take revenge on your family every since the coup attempt. He and Selene simply had compatible ambitions, it wasn't until after they allied that they fell in love."

"And what's this about a kidnapping attempt?" I growl, "He's talking about it like it's widely known, but it hasn't been in any of the papers."

"I don't know." Arabella sighs, sounding as frustrated as I am, "but if I had to guess I'd say it's another scheme of Frederic and Selene's, to win her sympathy and turn people against you. You notice it was only an attempt. He probably charged to the rescue and is now using it to say you're a horrible mate."

Crumpling the paper and throwing it against the wall, I snarl, "I'll kill him. I'll kill them both."

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Chapter 157 – Selene Eminaces Her Fame

Selene

I don't think I'll ever get used to people recognizing me on the street, as if I'm some sort of celebrity rather than a girl who spent 8 years alone in a basement with no one for

company but my trapped wolf. Now it's impossible for me to go anywhere without being recognized.

Even now as rain falls in sheets around me and I'm bundled up against the crisp chill of the autumn air, walking down the street is a veritable minefield. Half of the people who stop me merely wish to offer me congratulations on the new baby, but the other half pepper me with questions about Bastien's whereabouts,

I've almost reached the hospital when a reporter catches me, running forward with a microphone and camera crew in tow. "Selene, I'm Katrina Davies from the Evening Standard, do you have a moment to speak with us?"

I can spare a moment," I agree, unsure of whether this is actually a good idea.

We've been debating how to respond to Frederick's challenge since he issued it yesterday, barely sleeping in the wake of the unfolding disaster. As of yet we still haven't reached a consensus about what to do, and I'm already going rogue by going to the hospital in the first

The guys would lose their minds if they knew I plan on confronting Dr. Kane directly – and I'd certainly prefer to avoid the conflict myself – but I don't know what else to do. I can only pray I get through it without having a post-traumatic stress episode, I'm sure the sly wolf would use it as an excuse to hospitalize me again. On the other hand, if I give an interview in front of the hospital, at least people will know where to look for me if I don't come home tonight.

*First of all, how are you doing?" Katrina asks, holding the microphone out to me, "We're so pleased to see you out of the hospital."

*Thank you," i respond graciously. "I'm happy to report I'm doing much better," I smile, patting my belly through my wool coat, "And getting fatter by the day,"

The reporter and crew chuckle warmly, and I decide that speaking to them might actually help after all. If I can pretend to be charming, maybe people will take our side.

*That's wonderful." Katrina gushes, "And your little one at home, has she warmed up to the idea of being a big sister yet?"

Now it's my turn to laugh. "Not quite, but she is currently trying to convince me that she'd feel better about it if I got her a pony, so at least it' s helping her develop an enterprising spirit."

"And the Alpha?" Katrina continues, "is there any word on when he might return?"

"I wish I could tell you otherwise." I share honestly, "but I'm afraid I don't have any news on that front."

"Now I have to ask," The reporter announces, which all but guarantees she doesn't have to do anything of the sort. "Do you have any comment about the accusations Dr Kane made against the Alpha yesterday, and the challenge he issued?"

"I'd like to say I won't dignify Dr. Kane's slander with a comment, but I'm afraid that would only add more fuel to the proverbial fire." I sigh. not bothering to hide my frustration. Next to the slimey wolf's fake persona, hopefully seeing someone with genuine feelings will highlight just how dishonest Dr. Kane's act truly is.

"Instead I'll say this to any Novan who has met my husband in person," I begin, choosing my words carefully. "I beg you to think back on those occasions and ask yourself what you yourself thought of him. What did your wolf's instincts tell you about the man and how did you feel in the moment? Ignore whatever might be getting said in the papers or on tv. And ask yourself whether you trust yourself or the words of strangers who greatly stand to gain by bringing down the Alpha, more."

"You think Dr Kane is saying all these things purely for his own gain?" Katrina questions excitedly.

Pursing my lips, I reply, "Well let's just say this. If you want evidence of Dr. Kane's dedication to this pack's wellbeing and his apparent concern for me, you might like to know that while I was in the hospital, he treated me by giving me placebos which kept me ill and under his control. He purposefully failed to help a patient in his care because he wanted me within his reach and away from the people looking out for me

"After our betas and Drake Cavanaugh helped me leave the hospital as I'd been begging to do for days and days, I went to another physician who confirmed that Dr Kane had been making me sick. He risked my life, and the life of the Alpha's pup, because he knew if I was close by he might have a chance to convince me to give up on my husband."

The reporter's jaw actually drops, "That's quite an accusation."

*The evidence is right here." I shrug. patting my belly again. "You can see how well I appeared in my own press conference, after I'd been under his care for over a week and was supposedly drugged to the hilt. I couldn't make it ten minutes without getting sick and looked like a

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Chapter 157 – Selene Embraces Her Fame

walking skeleton. Now, I'm down to three prescriptions with a different doctor and I can not only make it through the afternoon without collapsing, but I've already put on five pounds. The only difference is that my pills are real now."

"How could any doctor do such a horrible thing?" One of the cameramen mutters, earning an exasperated look from Katrina.

"We'll cut that out." She remarks, "but he's right."

"I've been approached by a lot of concerned Novans these past few weeks." I continue, on a roll now, "And I appreciate everyone's congratulations on my growing family, and I empathize with everyone who is afraid or upset right now, because I'm honestly feeling exactly the same way. We are living in extremely difficult times." I feel myself tearing up, and ask to pause the interview. "I'm sorry, can we stop for a second?"

"No, this is great!" Katrina whispers, before saying more loudly. "It's okay, Selene, tell us how you're feeling."

Annoyed but trusting the woman, I continue. "I wish Bastien was home, and I know he does too. But he's not here because he believes so much in his duty to protect his family and his pack that he's willing to lose his reputation in order to do what's right."

Swiping at the rogue droplets rolling down my cheeks, I clear my throat, "The people's concerns are valid, and it's right to ask where Bastien is and why he isn't here even if we can't give you the answers you deserve for security reasons. But anytime we're faced with the prospect of a challenge like this, we also have to remember to ask about the people making the accusations. I don't have these answers yet myself, but I encourage anyone who cares about our future to ask who exactly Dr. Kane is. Where did he come from? What is his background? Why should we listen to him? And if it comes to this, does he deserve to lead us?"

"Wise words." Katrina nods, an excited glimmer in her eyes, "Now Selene, I can't help but notice we're standing outside Dr. Kane's hospital right now. Can we presume you're on your way to ask some of those questions yourself?"

Offering her an amused huff, I confirm. "Yes, I'd hoped to speak with Dr. Kane about his press conference off the record, rather than beginning a public feud by keeping everything in the media – but you got the better of me, Katrina."

"Well you know the public loves good gossip." She laughs.

"Who doesn't?" I concede, "But I find as entertaining as gossip is at times, it almost never makes things better for the people with most at stake, which in this case, is the pack. Hard work behind the scenes isn't fun or newsworthy, but it does more to improve the lives of everyday people than slinging mud behind a podium."

"So I suppose there's no chance you'd let us come with you?" She asks hopefully, clearly realizing this was never going to happen. I shoot her a look, and she surrenders with a laugh. "Alright, thank you Selene." Katrina shakes my hand, "We wish you luck either way."

"Thank you." I answer, trying to smile as I walk away. I'm not sure how well that went, and I have a bad feeling it sounded far too preachy at the end. Still, it helped me frame my thoughts for the conversation ahead.

A few minutes later, I'm storming into Dr Kane's office with my hands on my hips and smoke steaming from my ears.

The physician rises, a surprised expression on his face as he comes around his desk. "Selene, how are you feeling?"

Rather than answering him, I narrow my eyes and offer him my most intimidating glare. "What the hell are you doing?"

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Chapter 158 – Selene Confronts Dr. Kane

Frederic

Well this is interesting. I didn't think Selene had it in her to stand up for herself, clearly the betas and Drake have been a worse influence on her than I realized. On the other hand, she is here, and that gives as an opportunity to help her see the error of her ways.

"What do you mean?" I ask, spreading my hands in front of me and inviting her to continue.

"Don't give me that." Selene snaps, "You just publicly challenged my husband."

Goodness, she can be feisty when she wants to. My wolf growls.

Just another bad habit to train out of her. I think back. There were always bound to be a few.

And look, she looks much better, she must have figured out about the pills. My wolf points out, sounding even more irritated than before.

I too have to admit that's a problem. I had been hoping she'd miscarry without the right drugs, but I didn't want to trigger it directly because then she'd be released from the hospital and go home. Far better if she be admitted for a drawn out stay and lose the baby towards the end, by which point I'd have been her closest confidant. I still hadn't

given up hope for this plan when she left against my orders, after all I knew she'd be back soon enough without the right care. Unfortunately her watch dogs seem to have figured out that she wasn't getting better for a reason.

"Yes, I'm sorry about that." I sigh, trying my best to sound genuine. "This has all been so unfortunate."

"You're sorry?" Selene parrots fiercely, "You do realize your actions are hurting some very real people don't you?"

"And what about the harm to the pack?" I argue back, pressing my hand to my heart. "I have to follow my conscience." I insist. Reaching forward and clasping her by the arms, I ignore her protests and speak as poignantly as I can manage. "Selene, the pack is suffering."

"And you think playing on their fear and pain is helping them?" She counters incredulously. "You think that exploiting their hardships to make them turn against the best leader we've had in a century is going to make things better?" Her tiny hands are pushing at my arms ineffectually, and I can't help but admire how adorable she is for trying when she has no chance of success. "No Thomas, let's be honest, you just want to cause chaos and destabilize the city so that you can swoop in like a hero and take power."

Hmph, she's smarter than I realized. My wolf notes, another problem.

Not if she can be won over to our side. I reason, brushing aside his cynical concerns.

Please, you've seen what happens when she-wolves get too many bright ideas. He reminds me, Arabella and your mother caused nothing but problems.

They weren't Selene. I insist. You know as well as I do that she's normally sweetness itself. You were the one who pushed me to save her from the fire, remember, you couldn't bear to see such an innocent life taken when she's already suffered so much.

That was before. He grumbles.

She's only doing this now because she's frightened. I state firmly.

Cornered animals are always the most dangerous. He agrees, the question is whether you can ever convince her to trust you. As long as she sees you as an enemy, she'll never feel safe and we'll be stuck with this defiance.

I know my wolf is right. I have to make her realize I want what's best for her – that I, not Bastien, am the one she truly deserves to be with. Staring deep into her eyes, I drop my voice an octave and brush my thumbs back and forth across her bare skin, pleased to

see a shiver of desire run down her spine. "That's not the only reason and you know it," I declare. "I can't stand what he's doing to you."

"What he's doing to me?" Selene repeats, her lovely, full lips agape. "I'll have you know he's doing all this for me." She hisses, trying to hide her obvious interest in me by going completely still. "And regardless, I'm not your concern."

Oh, so that's the way you want to play it? I think in amusement. "You're a public figure and the leader of this pack's she-wolves," I remind her. "your treatment is of concern to all Novans."

Her stunning eyes flash, "Let's cut the crap, Dr. Kane." She insists, "this isn't about the pack, it never has been."

"Fine." I agree. "Let's speak plainly. Bastien has never treated you right." She opens her mouth to object, but I raise a finger to her lips. "I've known you for years, Selene. I remember how devastated you were when he was rejecting you, I remember the way he sided with Arabella all the while she tried to kill you. How could you ever forgive him after everything he did?"

"No." Selene pushes my finger away, "You knew me once, at a time in my life when I was weak and confused. I had so little self worth I believed I was completely unlovable, and I was so vulnerable to manipulation that I let a crazy woman trick me into believing my husband

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didn't want me. None of it was real."

"Oh Selene," I shake my head and sigh, "you poor thing. That isn't what happened, you're so caught up in the middle of all this you're incapable of seeing the truth."

"How dare you!" She cries, so loudly that I release her and close the door to my office before my secretary can get suspicious. "I lived it, not you! And you're not an objective observer here. Just admit it, you've had it out for Bastien since day one." When I try to approach her again she backs away, continuing to retreat until we're circling each other,

* Arabella tried to push me down the stairs and you helped me run away from Bastien, you encouraged me to fear him." Selene recalls. "Arabella made me believe he was leaving me for her, and you helped me hide my pregnancy, you didn't tell him I was pregnant when Arabella tried to kill me. You probably altered the DNA results too – didn't you? You knew I wasn't dead but you wanted Bastien to be weak so you made him think I was!"

"You're wrong." I growl. "I was trying to help you. It never had anything to do with him."

"And why were you willing to risk so much to help me?" She demands, "You turned against your Alpha, you kept him from his mate. He could have killed you if he found out and no one in the pack would have blamed him."

"Why do you always defend him?" I explode, slamming my fist on my desk, "He's an arrogant, entitled, bully! He has good looks, muscles, and nothing else! He only married you because his father ordered him to, then he made you miserable the entire time you were together, he didn't even claim you until he found out he'd bred you!"

"And what you would have done things differently, would you?" Selene scoffs.

"Damn straight I would!" I thunder, "I've seen how special you are from day one! I would have claimed you the moment I laid eyes on you, if I had his power, I would have made you my queen. I would have made sure you never wanted for anything. You deserved to be pampered and cherished after everything you went through, not tossed aside like yesterday's garbage."

Her brows furrow, and a sliver of vulnerability enters her expression. Her voice is small when she asks, "You would have claimed me, when I was barely eighteen, traumatized, wolfless, and didn't even know what the word meant?"

"Yes!" I assure her passionately, "I wouldn't have thought twice about it. That's how much I care about you!"

"That's despicable." She forces the words out through clenched teeth, all signs of weakness long gone. "Bastien may have coddled me and kept himself at a distance, but at least he recognized that I needed time to heal rather than just forcing himself on me. I'm glad it was him and not you! I'm glad, even if I did end up almost burning alive because of the target on his back!"

"And who do you think pulled you from that fire?" I question ferociously, "You wouldn't even be standing here today if it wasn't for me?"

"Are you saying that you're the one who saved me?" Selene clarifies, looking truly stunned now.

"Yes!" I cry, "Yes, I saved your life and Lila's!"

I'm not sure what I expected. Gratitude? Thanks, praise, fawning? Proclamations of love or eternal dedication? Whatever I thought, it isn't what I got. Instead Selene's shocked expression fades away, replaced by a look so cunning I take a step back. What?

“And how did you know I was in that cabin, Thomas?” She asks, going in for the kill, “how did you know I needed saving, and why did you abandon me, pregnant and alone, in the neutral territories afterward?”

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Chapter 159- Training with Helene.

Selene

There haven't been many times in my life that I've felt like a genius, but I certainly do now. After my success with the reporters outside, was prepared to take on Dr. Kane, but I never expected to catch him out like this. As alarming and disturbing as his behavior has been throughout our conversation, I'm on the verge of making him admit he was working with Arabella, and that's only a few steps short of making him admit he's not Dr. Kane at all, but Frederic.

This man I once trusted, is looking at me as if he's never seen me before. I'm afraid he'll try to touch me again or profess his love, but I'm also afraid he might attack. It honestly seems like it could go either way. “I learned what Arabella was planning.” He admits hoarsely, seemingly unable to think of a lie in the moment.

“Because you were working with her.” I suggest. “Because you were helping her drive me away from Bastien.” Suddenly another detail clicks into place, “That's why she was in the hospital the night she tried to push 'me down the stairs isn't it? She was coming to meet you and you made sure she overheard I was pregnant.”

“No.” He immediately denies, “she was never supposed to overhear that.”

“But she was there to meet you.” I press, feeling more powerful than I can remember being in quite some time. Moments ago this man was controlling the room, and now he's pale and sputtering nervously because of me – and I didn't even have to use my powers.

“Yes.” He breathes in resignation. “We were working together. But Selene, you have to understand, it started out about Bastien, but when I met you, I realized we were meant to be together.”

“The Goddess would disagree.” I reply simply. “And so do I.” I've been walking a fine line this entire time, needing him to confess to being Frederic Durand, but knowing if I come out and ask or accuse him outright, he'll deny it. “I don't understand why you were

working with her in the first place. If it was before you met me, what did you have against Bastien, has it always been about the power?"

"That's it?" He asks, clearly offended. "I tell you I saved your life, and your pups life, and all you care about is why I worked against your husband?"

"Our lives never would have been in danger in the first place if it hadn't been for your and Arabella's schemes." I remind him. "Do you expect me to thank you for that?"

He shakes his head, looking truly disappointed now, "You're not who I thought you were."

"That's the difference between a fantasy and a real person, Thomas." I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel discouraged not to extract a full confession from him, but I also don't want to show him all my cards just yet. "I'm not the dream woman you imagined, and Bastien isn't the villain you've made him out to be either." Turning towards the door, I leave him with one final thought, "The truth is a lot more complicated than you're making it out to be, I'm here, if you want to talk further. I'd much rather you and I speak this way, than play games in the media."

He looks truly torn, as if he wants to believe me and strike me at the same time. I'm not sure which feeling will win out, and I don't want to risk the latter, so I duck out before he can respond.

When I get home I'm excited to share what happened with the others, but I don't get the chance. As soon as I walk inside, my pup's voice and the sound of the tv news greets me, and I have a sneaky suspicion I know what the anchors are covering.

"Mommy you're famous!" Lila cries, flying across the room and into my arms.

Kissing her hello and moving deeper into the apartment, I see my own image on the television screen and wince, I always hate seeing myself in photos and videos. Even so, the scrolling text at the bottom of the screen is nothing short of a glowing compliment, even going so

far as to encourage viewers to keep an eye out for investigations into Dr. Kane.

Odette is as complimentary as my daughter, hugging me and sharing, "I'm impressed, they almost never show full interviews like this. It's always edited down to a few clips. You did so well, Selene."

"I don't know where it came from, the words just sort of spilled out of me." I shrug, blushing.

"And you looked fabulous." Sophie adds from the couch, in the rain and all!"

Turning to look at the other figures in the room, I realize the womens' opinions are not shared. Drake, Aiden, and Donovan are glaring at me with identical expressions of disapproval. Unfortunately for them, there's only one wolf that can make me quake in my boots these days, and he's very far away.

"Ah-ah." Aiden scolds, clearly reading my mind. "We might not scare you Selene, but we're making a list for Bastien when he gets home."

As much as the threat makes my insides go to pure mush, just hearing that they still believe Bastien will come home comforts me. I'm not even bothered that he'll be furious when he learns everything I've been up to in his absence, as long as he's furious with me, I don't care.

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Chapter 159. Training with Helene.

Helene

"Concentrate, Selene." Helene's soothing voice instructs. "Focus on the magic, forget everything else that's happening in your life right now."

"Easier said than done." I snort.

After the scolding I received from Drake and the Beta's about confronting Dr. Kane without them, I shared what I learned. My information both confirmed their suspicions and shocked them, and ever since they've been locked in Bastien's office planning their next steps. To their credit they aren't excluding me anymore, but I have so much to do between raising Lila, practicing with Helene, keeping up public appearances and puking up my guts every morning that joining their discussions inevitably gets pushed to the bottom of my agenda.

"Just remember that this is the most important thing you can do to protect your family." Helene reminds me, everything else is just window dressings."

"I'm sure the pack would love to hear their governance referred to that way." I chuckle.

"You can't govern them if Blaise Denizen is drinking you like a juice box." She scolds good-naturedly.

"Fair point." I concede, dropping my hands in frustration. But this isn't working!"

"Because you're not concentrating." Helene observes with the sort of detached assessment i've come to expect from the ancient witch. "Surely you didn't think you'd learn to bend shadows overnight."

"No." I agree with a huff, "But creating energy bursts happens so naturally, I kind of thought the other stuff would come the same way once I knew how to do it."

She's been trying to teach me to use this particular skill for days. It's not something normal witches can do, but Helene assures me it's not that different from transfiguring matter- whatever that means. All I know is that she's confident this is the easiest of the abilities Odette's books attribute to Volanas, so we're starting here. Unfortunately, if she's right and this is the easiest, I'm not too optimistic about learning the other skills.

"Any idiot with an ounce of power can create an energy burst." She derides, shaking her head. "You have the potential to be great Selene, but getting there is going to take a lot of hard work."

"I'm trying." I insist, trying to draw the shadows towards me the way she instructed. You must first draw them to you if you want them to do your bidding. She'd cryptically explained. It seems I'm doomed to only understand a fraction of what my mentor says, but as long as she doesn't mind, I'm willing to be confused and just pray some of her knowledge will rub off on me.

"You know the problem, Selene." She says then, studying me closely. "You're afraid of the shadows."

"I'm not." I reply simply. "I lived among them for years, trust me, the shadows and I are old friends."

"No." She utters thoughtfully, "they tortured you for years, you were never equals. Familiar is not the same thing as unafraid." I stop trying to summon them for a moment, staring at the elegant woman while she lectures. "Garrick used them against you, now you have to make them your own. You have to channel them for your own purposes, take control and make them work for you, not against you."

I throw my hands up in exasperation, "how am I supposed to undo eight years of trauma in a few days. I can't just rewrite history."

"Think about everything you've accomplished this week alone. Think about what you told me about all those bossy men you just faced down." She encourages. "Five years ago even one angry authority figure would have made you collapse, but today only the very strongest of wolves can intimidate you. You aren't that little girl Garrick tormented anymore. Show those shadows who's boss the way you showed Dr Kane."

I have to admit she has a point. I'm not the scared little girl I used to be, and this week has proved it more than most.

"Bastien is going to be so proud of you when he comes home." Helene adds, making my heart swell in my chest. "Don't you want to show him what you can do?"

It happens then without trying, all the shadows in the room flee their hiding spots to gather around me as if I'm one of their own. Swathed in darkness and studying my own shadow-kissed limbs in awe and confusion, I ask, "How did that even happen, all I did was think of pleasing Bastien?"

"That's the trick to magic, sweetheart." Helene grins. "The light calls the dark, and the dark calls the light. You just have to know how to speak their languages."

Excitement swells in my chest. "What else? What else can you teach me?"

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 160

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 160

Chapter 160- Selene Confides in Helene

Selene

Shadows surround me, downing me in darkness so impenetrable even my supernatural eye site cannot stand against it. Moments ago I could have sworn Helene was standing next to me, talking me through yet another training exercise, but now when I reach for her she's nowhere to be found. I cannot hear her anymore, and I cannot find even the tiniest sliver of light to help me find my way out of this place.

I'm alone, completely lost in the artificial night I created with my own hands, and a stab of fear slices into me as I realize I'm truly stuck. The obsidian cloud pulses with energy I can feel but not see, and I will the shadows to part, to take shape rather than blinding

me.

They don't budge, instead smothering me in pitch blackness, choking me with it until I'm gasping for air. Panicking, I send out an energy burst, hoping my power will shatter the darkness and return the shadows back to the fringes and hollows where they belong. But my power only feeds the nightmare, and suddenly the gloom transforms, just not in the way

Thoped.

Suddenly I'm ten years old again, locked in Garrick's basement after losing my mother and wondering if I'll ever see the outside world again. I'm too afraid to cry out, he always hurts me when I complain or call for help. My body is already covered in bruises, I don't want any more pain.

Luna? I think weakly, calling to my wolf. Are you there?

She doesn't answer, and I can feel tears of despair burning in my eyes. She can't be gone, she's the only thing I have left – my only friend in the world. Besides, it's not possible for a wolf to live without their wolf... right?

Wait, my delirious mind thinks weakly, Why does this feel so familiar? Has this happened before?

"Selene!" A voice calls in the distance, sounding miles and miles away. "Luna?" I jerk my head up, hope zinging through my veins.

When the voice sounds again, I realize it's not my wolf after all. "Come back to me now, Selene." I know that voice. I just can't place it. "You've gone too deep."

Helene! I realize suddenly, returning to the present. All at once the details come

flooding back, Garrick's basement was just a waking nightmare. I'm in Helene's workshop, practicing my powers. But I didn't mean to create so much darkness, I just wanted to make a trick of light – and I don't have the first clue how to find my way back out of this mess.

"I can't!" I cry, "I don't know how to make it stop."

"Yes you do, Selene." She encourages. "You created the darkness, you can make it go away."

"It's not that simple!" I insist, "It's everywhere! It's too powerful."

"The power doesn't belong to the shadows Selene, it belongs to you." Helene guides me firmly. "Take it back."

My hands are shaking violently as I reach out to the onyx void, trying with all my might to pull the electrical currents swirling through the air back into my body. Come back, come back, come back. I think manically, I can't stay trapped here, I have to get home to Lila.

My pup's sweet face appears in my mind's eye, and some of the crushing darkness eases. Luna help me. I beg, praying she'll answer this time.

Just keep thinking about Lila, and the new pup. She advises. They need you. But I started out channeling my feelings, I remind her, what if I get lost again?

You got lost because you let your fear take over, but a mother's love is stronger than fear. She replies sagely, you won't get lost this time.

Doing as she says, I direct all my determination into getting home to my daughter and caring for my baby. Little by little, the web of shadows unwinds. Strands thin and break, letting in dappled rays of light until with one final tug, the darkness breaks and I collapse on the ground, gasping for air.

Helene kneels down next to me. "Just breathe darling." She croons, "In and out, slowly. I'm still gulping in air like a fish out of water, and she squeezes my hand, "slower, Selene. Just inhale and hold it for a moment. Good, just like that." She praises when I obey.

When I'm finally calm enough to speak, I gasp, "I'm sorry." "What happened?" She asks gently.

"I was thinking about Bastien, like usual." I explain shakily. After our first couple of lessons I quickly discovered that being in the right frame of mind often made the difference between success and failure – and nothing grounds me better than my mate. "He always makes me feel stronger than I am."

"But?" She prompts, "But then I started thinking about him too much, about why I haven't heard from him

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and why he's still gone." I confess, my voice thick with emotion. "I'm starting to show. He promised he'd be back by now... and the more time that passes, the more I think he's never coming home."

"What do the others say?" Helene asks, referring to Drake and the betas. "They keep assuring me everything will be fine, but they haven't heard from him either.

"I share.

"Are you you afraid he's dead?" She asks bluntly.

"I'd feel it if he was." I answer simply. "I know he's still alive, but something is wrong. I'm sure of it. He'd never go this long without checking on us, and if he knew what was going on in the pack, he'd never stay away... if he could come back, he would have by now."

"Are you certain?" She prods, not skeptical, but curious. "Alphas don't give up easily, especially when it comes to their family's safety. He might not know everything that's happening here, and if he does, he might still put the mission first."

"The problem is that we're in danger here too." I confess, explaining about Frederic.

When I finish, she purses her lips. "That is concerning." Helene abruptly takes my face in her hands, studying me closely. For anyone else her behavior would be considered

odd, but I've gotten used to the old witch's quirks. She does this sort of thing so often that it ceases to surprise me.

"I think you're right." She murmurs after a minute. "He lives, but something is waylaying him. Something... or someone." She releases me, striding to her shelves. "T'U look into it, but I have to warn you that you may not like what I find."

"Look into it how?" I ask, following her.

Helene cuts her eyes to me, and I flush and apologize. Another lesson I learned early on, is that it's better not to question her methods. Some things are not meant for me to know – or so Helene says. "In the meantime, you need to work on controlling your powers."

"I think I'll start using Lila to ground myself instead of Bastien." I decide, remembering Luna's words. . "No." Helene replies, surprising me. "Running from the problem isn't going to help anything. I think it's good for you to get lost like you did today, and to work through the darkness rather than avoiding it altother. I know it wasn't pleasant, but the more comfortable you become facing your fears, the better." She continues, multitasking as she pours varying amounts of herbs and oils into a bowl. "Now you know you can use Lila to

help you find your way back, but I want you to continue pushing yourself."

"Alright," I agree reluctantly. "If I do, can we start practicing a new skill?"

Helene shoots me another look, "You think you're ready to move on after two weeks of bending shadows? That's not how magic works, little girl."

If anyone but Bastien called me that, I'd probably try to bite them, but Helene is so ancient I know I am just a child by comparison – just like our size difference makes me seem tiny to my mate. "Yes but look at all the threats I'm facing!" I exclaim. "If Blaise turns up here tomorrow, bending shadows isn't going to protect me- unless of course he's afraid of the dark."

Helene arches a brow, "You think that's all this is? Playing with darkness? Making tricks of light?"

"I know it's more than that." I sigh, realizing I put my foot in my mouth yet again.

The witch sets down the vials in her hands and surprises me by saying, "You have a point that your situation may necessitate changing the way I normally do things. However I urge you not to underestimate the power of shadows, Selene. Just look at what a little darkness did to you today."

"Yes, but darkness is a trigger for me." I reason.

"Darkness is a trigger for everyone, darling. Your demons are just more literal. You didn't start out thinking you were in Garrick's basement, you started out thinking about your husband and then the darkness descended." I have no idea how she knew what the shadows made me see. It might be a lucky guess, but one of the more unsettling things about Helene is the way she seems to just divine information.

"A man like Blaise is bound to have a lot of demons in his own shadows." Helene surmises, "if you can use them against him, you stand better than a fair chance of defending

yourself when the time comes."

"You mean if the time comes." I correct her.

The corners of her mouth tug downward, and I have a very bad feeling she's about to shatter my world. "No Selene." She announces sadly, "I mean when."