

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 161

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Chapter 161

Chapter 161- Selene Gets a Letter

Selene

“Mommy, are you wake?” A little voice speaks in my ear.

Slowly I return to the waking world, blinking open my tired eyes and registering the warm little body snuggling up against me. “Hello little bean.” I murmur, wrapping my arms around Lila and pulling the covers more tightly around us.

Lila hasn't slept through the night in her own room since Bastien left. Instead she's taken to crawling into my bed somewhere between the hours of midnight and dawn, which both warms my heart and makes handling my morning sickness more difficult. Today the sun is just beginning to rise, and Helene's soothing draughts have actually managed to ease the worst of my symptoms, so I'm happy to simply lie here and cuddle with my daughter until we're ready to get up.

“Mommy, I had a dream 'bout Daddy.” Her morning puppy breath is terrible, so I tuck her head beneath my chin, earning myself a mouthful of her hair.

“You did?” I inquire, smoothing down her tangled locks, “was it a nice dream, hope?”

“Uh-huh.” She nods against my breast. “We were playing pony, an'da flying game.”

“That's wonderful.” I breathe, honestly elated that she's not having nightmares like I am. I hate that she misses him so much, but I'm glad her dreams are sweet memories rather than horrible possibilities. Ever since talking with Helene, my nights have been haunted with terrible images of Bastien hurt, imprisoned, or dead.

“Mommy, will Daddy be home soon?” Lila wonders aloud.

I'm fully awake now, with a large lump caught in my throat. “I don't think so, sweetheart.” I admit.

She looks up at me in alarm, and I wonder if my honesty was a mistake. “Why not?”

“Because things aren't going so well. It might be some time before we see him again, Lila.” I confess.

Her tiny face twists up, turning red as tears well in her eyes. "But I wan'him home!" "I know, angel." I hush her gently, wiping the tears from her cheeks. "I do too." "I's not fair!" She exclaims, heading straight towards a tantrum. "I want Daddy!"

"I'm so sorry, Lila." I proless, on the verge of tears myself. "If I could bring him home for you this second, I would. Things just aren't that simple."

"You're liar!" She accuses. "You pwomised he wouldn'be gone long!"

"I was wrong." I admil. "Mommies don't know everything sweetheart, we can only do our best."

"You don' care!" She cries, pushing me away "you're never 'ven here'nymore!

Deep down I know Lila understands I love her. Deep down I know this is just my baby being a toddler and testing her limits, but my heart doesn't think with that kind of logic, my heart just sees my pup in pain and breaks into pieces knowing. I'm the one causing it.

"Lila, i care about you more than anything in the world." I vow firmly, trying to rub her back and earning a wail for my efforts. "I know I've been busy lately and we haven't gotten to spend as much time together, but that's not by choice. If I could, I would stay with you

always, but grown ups have responsibilities sweetheart. I'm sorry you're hurting, but one day you'll understand."

"No I won'!" She insists, "Go away!"

"I'm not going anywhere." I choke out the words. "That's not how this works. You can be upset with me all you want, but I'm going to be here whether you like it or not."

She's in full tantrum mode now, squealing and beating her hands and feet against the mattress while I sit next to her and try to push down my own feelings. It's no use, within seconds I'm crying too, breaking into a sob and burying my face in my hands instead. I can only imagine the picture we make. If Bastien was here he'd walk in and fuss over us both, comforting me and helping Lila work through her feelings until we were ready to kiss and make up.

But he's not here, and it hits me all at once how much of a difference he's made in our lives in such a short time. It used to be me and Lila against the world, but finding a mate and a father made us both realize what we'd been missing, and now it doesn't feel like enough just being together. One day we might get there again, but right now... right now it's just going to hurt.

Next to me, Lila's tears quiet, and I feel a pair of miniature paws tugging at my wrists. Apparently she realized she wasn't the only one having a meltdown, and is now determined to see my face. Sighing heavily I drop my hands and show her my red eyes and miserable expression. Her two-tone eyes widen as her full lower lip quivers violently. "I sorry, Mommy, please don' be sad."

"I am sad." I explain forlornly, "I miss your Daddy, and I hate seeing you upset."

Lila climbs into my lap without a moment of hesitation, wrapping herself around me. "Is okay, Mommy." She sniffles, "I make it better." She presses sweet little kisses to my wet cheeks, and I moan pitifully, holding her close.

"I really am sorry, Lila." I confide, when I can speak again. "I haven't been giving you enough attention. Why don't we do something special today, just us?"

"I'd like dat." She agrees.

"Good." I exhale shakily, swiping at my cheeks. "Let's make a deal okay. No more tears today, only fun."

Lila nods enthusiastically, "Deal."

After a full day of playing in the park, painting pottery and going to a movie with Lila, we're both fairly exhausted. By the time we get back to the pack house Lila is passed out in her car seat, and I have to carry her all the way to the top floor to get her to bed.

When I enter the apartment, I find a full house. Drake, Sophie, Odette and the Betas are all there, and all offer to take Lila from me. However I don't want to let anyone else have her. I put her down for a nap in her room, before rejoining the others.

No sooner have I entered the main living area that a knock sounds on the door, and I find a sentry holding an envelope which was apparently just delivered via courier. It takes a second for me to realize why the guard's expression is so urgent, but then Bastien's scent hits my senses like a ton of bricks. I snatch up the envelope, ripping it open and eagerly extracting its contents. Excitement and relief when I recognize Bastien's handwriting, but as I begin to read confusion and overwhelming hurt take over.

Selene,

You will be disappointed to learn that your assassins failed. I am alive and well, and I know what you've done.

Consider this the beginning of the end. Your efforts have truly been impressive, but now that I know the truth, I will not rest until you are behind bars. You will pay for your crimes, and no amount of pleading or lies will save you now.

I am writing you today for two reasons, first to inform you that I am having our marriage annulled as soon as possible, and I will be formally rejecting you as soon as the papers are filed. Don't bother refusing to sign them, your consent is not required under these circumstances. I also plan on publically disowning your child – she may be innocent in this,

but I refuse to acknowledge Frederic's bastard as my own.

Second, you and Frederic would be wise to give up your schemes and leave Elysium immediately. I will not let you go if you do, you will be hunted to the ends of the earth – but every day I fail to catch you, is another day you get to live. I feel I owe you at least that much, if you are in fact my mate.

Either way, you may consider this your formal notice: I am coming for you both, and when I find you all hell will reign down. What you have done is unforgivable, and no bond on earth could ever save you from being held accountable.

Your days are numbered.

Bastien

Beneath the letter is a stack of legal documents, pages and pages of forms explaining in very fancy language that our marriage was being annulled on the grounds of gross deceit and criminal deception. I flip through them in stunned silence, barely able to comprehend what I'm seeing. Luna is howling in my chest, but I'm still just trying to make sense of Bastien's bizarre letter.

"Selene, what's wrong?" Odette asks, crossing the living room to stand in front of me.

"It's Bastien." I say, my voice like gravel. This gets everyone's attention. Suddenly Drake, Sophie and the betas are all gathered around me, and I'm infinitely glad Lila is napping. "He's alive." I announce, to their immense relief. "And he's rejecting me... again.

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Chapter 162

Chapter 162- Selene Decides to go to Tartarus

Selene

Within moments, I have five fully grown wolves hovering over my shoulder, reading the strange letter with sounds of confusion and disbelief. The tension in the room is palpable, but within moments it explodes into chaos.

“What on earth?” Odette murmurs. “This is madness.” Drake agrees.

Aiden is doing nothing but curse, while Donovan has taken to pacing and reading the annulment papers. Sophie is the only one who hasn't said a word, but she seems stunned into silence.

“This doesn't make any sense, is it in code?” Aiden finally exclaims, apparently running out of four letter words.

“I don't think so.” Donovan frowns, “we'll look into it, but there aren't any patterns jumping out at first glance.”

“Selene,” Sophie asks gently, “Are you okay?”

“I think I'm going to go back to bed.” I decide, convinced I'm dreaming. “This is a nightmare. It has to be a dream, so if I go to sleep here, I'll wake up back in reality, right?”

Five pitying expressions close in on me, and I sigh in defeat, “Well it was worth trying.” Flopping down onto the couch, I read the letter for a fifth time. “I don't understand... it's his handwriting, but it's like...”

“Like he's lost his memory. Drake finishes my thought. “Lost his memory and swallowed a pack of conspiracy theories.”

“Why is he talking about the assassination attempt like it just happened?” I ask, “we spoke afterwards, of course I know he survived.”

*More importantly, why does he think you sent the assassins?” Donovan questions. “Maybe there was another attempt.” Odette suggests. “One Frederic pinned on you.

“Maybe, but he wouldn't tie himself to it as well.” Aiden reasons, “it's one thing to frame Selene, it's another to expose himself.”

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I keep going back to the line where he says he'll disown Lila. “No, this isn't Frederic. Someone has made him believe I had an affair with Frederic, that Lila belongs to him.” I speak the words as they enter my head, “Frederic himself would never claim a pup that wasn't his.”

“Okay,” Drake assesses. “So it isn't Frederic, and we can assume it isn't Blaise because he would just have killed Bastien on sight. Who does that leave?”

Another knock sounds on the door, and this time I refuse to answer it. "Uh-uh, things didn't go so well the last time I opened the door. Someone else can do it this time."

Sophie pats my hand and moves towards the front door, but Drake intercepts her with a growl, spinning her to face me and nudging her back in my direction while he goes to the door.

A familiar, herbaceous scent hits my nose a second before the wooden panel swings open and Helene appears. "Helene!" I exclaim, "Thank goodness, the strangest thing has just happened."

The aged witch accepts the letter and legal documents from Odette, bypassing all introductions as she scans the pages. When she finishes she offers me a solitary nod. "It's as I feared."

"What do you mean?" I ask anxiously, guiding her into the living room and offering her a chair.

"Well, I looked into the Alpha's whereabouts like I promised." She begins hesitantly. "And I found... well, it's like you suspected Selene, something is very wrong."

"Can you tell what?" I urge her, my agitation growing by the minute.

Narrowing her eyes at me, she reaches out and takes my pulse, clucking her tongue when she feels it racing. She lurches to her feet and walks to the kitchen, moving around the open space as if she'd been there a thousand times before. While she started the process of making tea, we all look on in stunned silence, unsure how to react to her strange behavior. She seems so calm, but her words had been completely cryptic.

When the kettle is bubbling away over an open flame, she looks back to me. "Your mate is very far away."

"We already knew that." Aiden snarks. Helene shoots him a glare, "I did not mean in distance, pup."

I'm not the only one who has to smother a snort of laughter, seeing Aiden respond to being called a pup by the old crone was beyond laughable. At first he puffed himself up like:

an angry blowfish, before slowly deflating beneath the weight of Helene's glare. "I mean his spirit." She explains. "He's lost his way, and he's not alone. Someone is leading him astray they've stolen his memory and his strength. With every day that passes he falls further, and though he's safe for the time being, that will only last as long as he serves a use for his captor."

“Who is his captor? Donovan presses urgently.

“I cannot see exactly.” Helene purses her lips thoughtfully. “But I can tell you it is a woman. A woman with the soul of a snake and a heart of stone.”

“Arabella.” I mutter, not understanding how I’m so certain, but knowing without doubt she is the person behind this latest misfortune.

“Arabella is in the Calypso territory?” Aiden demands.

“It would make sense.” Donovan ponders aloud. “She wouldn’t have been able to flee to our allies, and that wouldn’t leave her many options.”

“But how could she fool Bastien?” Odette questions, “when he left here he would have killed her on sight.”

“That assumes he saw her first.” Drake remarks cryptically. “it doesn’t matter what his true opinions were. He’s forgotten them now.”

The tea kettle begins to whisper, the shrill noise piercing my dazed mind and making my skull throb as Drake’s meaning sets in. “He’s forgotten me?” I repeat, feeling sick to my stomach. “And lila?”

“He is under a spell,” Helene assures me, pouring steaming water into a mug with a blend of herbs from her purse. “and a powerful one at that.”

“But what is her plan?” Sophie chimes in, “I mean it’s one thing to make him forget the past, but it’s not like she could enchant all of Elysium. She has to know the truth would come out once they return.”

“Maybe that’s why she’s trying to get Selene to leave before they arrive.” Odette suggests as Helene presses the warm mug into my pal.

“Then either she’s crazy or just plain stupid.” Drake grumbles, prompting a round of muttering nods. “Selene being absent won’t stop the rest of us from setting him straight.

Odette shakes her head. “I know Arabella, I helped raise her and she isn’t stupid.” She slumps onto the sofa beside me, “But she is incredibly headstrong, and she doesn’t know how to take no for an answer. I wouldn’t be terribly surprised if she doesn’t ever intend on

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Bastien returning. She just needs to win him long enough to…” She trails off, a look of dread taking over her elegant features.

“What is it, Odette?” Donovan asks.

“I never believed Arabella wanted to marry Bastien because she cared about him.” She replies soberly, “And you’ve all been talking about her motives for working with Frederic and Grigore.”

“This isn’t about jealousy.” Aiden finishes her thought, the same dawning horror on his face, “It’s always been revenge.”

“Revenge and power.” I add, remember the way she used to talk about the threat my child would pose to her own heir.

“And if all she wants is power...” Drake ponders, “that’s probably why she went to Tartarus in the first place. Blaise is the most powerful shifter on the continent. She’d lost all her allies, what better place to find a new one?”

“So what are we saying?” Odette asks, “that she’s going to try to make Bastien marry her so she can lead the pack, then get rid of him?”

Donovan shakes his head, “It’s almost unheard of for a female to become Alpha.”

“But not unprecedented.” Aiden reminds him, “and Arabella doesn’t consider herself to be average in any way. She’s conceited enough to believe she could out muscle her competition, whether physically or through more deception.”

“I hate to say it,” Donovan admits, “but that makes sense – more sense than any of the other explanations we’ve come up with to understand everything that’s gone wrong these last few years.”

As one, we all turn to look at Helene, searching for her approval of the theory. On cue, she disappears into that magical void she somehow inhabits, studying us all closely before her expression goes blank and finally resets. When her search is complete she nods, “I think you’re right.

As I look around the room, studying the worried faces of my friends and family, I know what has to be done. The words are on my lips before I can think better of them. Working with Helene has taught me to trust my instincts over my chaotic thoughts, so just as I sensed Arabella was behind all this, now I sense the only solution to our problem with supernatural certainty. I stand, calling everyone’s attention to me. Taking a deep breath, announce, “I have to go to Tartarus.”

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Chapter 163

163- Selene Convinces the Betas

Selene

Every mouth in the room is gaping wide open in shock. From the looks on their faces, you would have thought I'd announced I was planning a ritual human sacrifice, rather than proposing a trip across the continent. When they finally regain their senses everyone begins speaking at once, half shouting objections and already trying to talk me out of it. In truth can't really decipher one person's words from another's, but I certainly hear Aiden when he thunders: "Are you out of your mind?"

"No, I'm very much in my mind, thank you." I retort, trying to stay calm amidst all the upset. The last thing I need is to have an anxiety attack from so many people yelling. That would hardly convince them I'm up for the journey.

"Selene, you can't go to Tartarus." Drake insists in a much more reasonable tone than either of Bastien's Betas. "Blaise is hunting Volanas. One look at you and you'll be done for."

"We can disguise her eyes." Helene announces, though I have no idea how we'd accomplish such a thing. When I went to Asphodell attempted to use color contacts but it was no use. The magic of my eyes shone through the artificial lenses as if they weren't even

there.

"No." Donovan chimes in, "It's out of the question. Bastien would have our heads on a platter."

"Bastien doesn't even know his own name right now." I remind them. "If I was in his place, he'd move mountains to help me. I can't just stand by and let this happen."

"That's different." Drake sighs.

"Why?" I demand. "Why is it any different for me? Because I'm a woman? In case you've forgotten, I have powers none of you possess."

"No." Donovan sighs, gesturing to the soft swell of my stomach. "Because you're a breeding mother."

"So what, I'm weak?" I challenge. "I'm incapable of helping my mate?" "Selene you can barely go a week without being hospitalized!" Aiden exclaims.

"That isn't fair." I fight back, feeling increasingly tired of everyone treating me as though I'm made of glass. Honestly, the way people behaved you'd think being pregnant

was a terminal illness, not a miracle of life. "I'm getting stronger every day."

"You forget that you may very well be carrying Bastien's heir." Donovan interjects, "It's not just about your strength, but the risk to the baby."

"Don't you dare insinuate that this child's safety isn't my highest priority." I snarl, every ounce of maternal instinct I possess rearing up protectively. "None of you could ever care as much as I do about this baby. If I'm willing to go, it's because I feel it's worth the risk, and that I can succeed."

"Why are we even discussing this?" Aiden questions, "There's no need." He continues, trying a different tactic, "The letter says he's coming home."

"And by the time he does, it will be too late." I cry, "You read it as well as I did leave Elysium immediately or else. If I'm still here when he gets back, there's no telling what he'll do. Every day Arabella continues to mislead him, the more danger the pack is in. We can't wait for them to come back home."

"Selene," Odette begins in a soothing tone, "you're upset."

"Yes, I am." I agree, interrupting her before she can finish her undoubtedly condescending remark. "But that doesn't mean I'm wrong." Spinning around to look at them all in turn, I declare, "I have to go. I have to do this for him."

"What about Lila?" Drake inquires, "What about Frederic?"

Taking a deep breath, I look hopefully at Drake and Sophie, "I would ask you to take Lila to Asphodel for a while. Just until we're back."

Drake tugs Sophie to his side and murmurs something in her ear, so low I can't even hear what he's saying. After a moment Sophie nods, and Drake looks up at me. "Of course, if this is happening we'd be happy to take her."

"Thank you." I sigh, thinking about the second part of his question. "And Frederic, well it's probably better if I'm out of his reach. People are already looking into his background, it won't be much longer before the truth is exposed. He'll keep trying to use me as a prop to defend himself if I'm still around. But he can't do that if he doesn't know where I am."

"That raises another question, Selene." Donovan asserts grimly. "What would you tell the pack? How can we possibly explain your absence?"

"Tell them I'm on bedrest." I supply simply, "Or that I went to a treatment facility outside of the territory because I didn't trust Elysian institutions after what happened with Frederic."

“That’s not a bad idea.” Odette acknowledges. “No one would fault her and it would help build resistance to Frederic.”

“Okay.” Aiden grouses, glances back and forth between us. “Let’s say we agree.” He suggests, “Let’s say you go to Tartarus and find Bastien and Arabella. What happens then? What are you going to do? How are you going to break her spell or whatever she’s done to him?”

“The only reason Arabella has been able to do this is because we’re not together.” I argue. “If we were his wolf would recognize me. He’d be able to feel that I truly am his mate and realize she was full of shit.”

To my surprise, it’s not the Betas or Drake who contradict me, but Helene. “I’m afraid it’s not that simple.” She announces. “The letter acknowledges that you may be his mate, but she’s clearly convinced him that you tricked him into loving you. Being near you will make it harder for her certainly, but he doesn’t remember you exist. All he knows is what she’s told him.”

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“All the more reason I have to go.” I insist. “I have to help him remember me, before she convinces him to do something truly drastic.”

“Fine, but if this is happening you can’t go alone.” Donovan proclaims, “if you’re determined to do this, we’re going with you.”

“No.” Odette shoots him down immediately. “We can’t all go. We already made that mistake once. If Selene and Drake are both leaving, you and Aiden have to stay to run the pack. I’ll go with her.”

The Betas glance at one another nervously, “Odette, please don’t take this the wrong way,” Aiden broaches, “but you’re not exactly a spring chicken anymore.”

“I’m sorry, is there a right way for me to take that?” My mother in law growls. “I’ll have you know I’ve seen more action in my time that you could ever dream of, pup.”

“Please don’t argue about this.” I interrupt. “I don’t need a chaperone, and if anyone was going to come along, well, I’d ask Helene.”

Helene smiles softly, patting my hand. “There now, a good idea at last.” She teases. “I’ll go with Selene. She can keep training on the way, and I’m not important to the pack. No one will miss me.”

“Are you sure?” I press, though I’m already breathing a sigh of relief. “Of course.” Helene says, as if it was obvious, “you aren’t ready to face Blaise alone.”

I wince as the words leave her mouth, but it's too late. The others are already jumping on the statement. "Face Blaise?" Drake repeats, "who said anything about facing Blaise?"

Helene stares at him intently, not offended by his objection, but not giving him an inch of leeway. "You cannot change what is fated. All of you are so determined to interfere with the Goddess's plans because you do not like them, but they are what they are." Giving me an approving nod, she continues, "Among you only Selene is accepting what is rather than what she thinks should be."

"Are you saying it's her fate to fight Blaise?" Odette asks weakly. "Her destiny." Helene corrects gently, "Just as it is mine to help her on her quest."

My mentor's words fill me with pride, but also with trepidation and fear. She's alluded to me facing Blaise in the past, but she's never been so explicit about what my future has in store.

"Is she destined to win?" Sophie pipes up for the first time, "I mean, will she come back?"

"Not even I know that." Helene admits simply.

"Either way, I have to go." I reiterate. "Not because of fate, or destiny or anything else. I have to go for Bastien. Please stop trying to talk me out of it and just support me."

There's a long beat of silence, all the members of my makeshift family thinking hard and exchanging meaningful looks. "All right." Donovan breaks first. "If you're certain this is the way it has to be, we'll support you."

The others mutter in agreement, and a wave of relief washed over me. "Thank you."

Right on cue, Lila's bedroom door opens, and Lila comes toddling out rubbing her eyes. She's still half asleep from her nap, which is a guarantee she's looking for cuddles. I intercept her halfway across the room, gathering her into my arms and feeling a rush of warmth as she snuggles happily into my embrace. Then she asks a question I've been absolutely dreading, one I don't have the first clue how to answer. "Mommy what's going on?"

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Chapter 164

Chapter 164- Telling Lila

Selene

After two full days of arguing about my plans to go to Tartarus – most of which were devoted to convincing the Betas it was the right thing to do even though we'd already reached that agreement with Helene – Aiden, Donovan and I have finally reached something

close to a detente. The Betas have accepted that I'm going to Tartarus whether they like it or not, and now Helene and I are well under way planning out trip. After reviewing the quickest route to Tartarus over and over again, we finally moved on to figuring out how we're going to disguise me, what precautions I'll take to avoid Blaise, and how to convince Bastien to believe me over Arabella.

I've continued training with her day and night, moving on from bending shadows to working on hypnosis, harnessing moonlight and putting people to sleep. I'm not very good at the latter two, but I've made surprising progress with the hypnosis, so much so that Helene offered me rare praise after our first session, telling me my efforts weren't half bad.

In the meantime I've been trying to figure out how I'm going to explain what's happening to Lila, let alone how I'm going to work up the strength to leave her. I've never been away from Lila for longer than a day or two, and at least one of those occasions was her k*****g, so I don't exactly have strong positive feelings associated with the idea.

I wish I had more time to prepare her for my departure, letting her sit with the idea for a day or two would surely be better than surprising her with it and immediately disappearing, but we simply don't have the time to spare. So today I'm going to spend every last second of my time with my pup, and tomorrow we'll both be leaving Elysium – Lila traveling West with Drake and Sophie, and me traveling to the far East in hopes of rescuing Bastien from Arabella's cruel clutches.

I'm so lost in my thoughts about what is yet to come, I forget to hide my pensive mood from my daughter.

"Mommy, wha's wrong?" Lila asks, coming to stand beside me as I finish doing the dishes from Breakfast.

"Sorry Lila bean, I was just thinking. Are you almost ready to go?" I ask her. "Mommy I's ready hours ago!" She announces dramatically, throwing her dark head

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back in exasperation.

“Alright, alright.” I laugh, drying my hands, “let’s go!”

I’ve been promising Lila a real trip to the zoo after our last attempt was thwarted by Frederic’s k*****g scheme, but this time it’s going to be just us. Sophie is spending the day with Drake, so I’ll have an abundance of quality time with my little girl, and countless chances to break the news of my departure to her.

Of course, when it comes down to it, Lila has so much fun zooming around the enclosures full of exotic animals that I’m loathe to ruin her good mood. Still, I know it has to be done. As we stroll through the aquarium, surrounded by glowing turquoise light, I say, “I have to tell you something Angel.”

In hindsight I realize telling her here may have been a mistake, because she’s so

distracted naming all the fish in the floor to ceiling tanks lining the walls, that she isn’t listening to a word I say. “And dat one’s Gil, and Flipper, ooh and there’s Guppy and Stripe!”

Pulling Lila to a bench in the middle of the room, I lift her into my lap and wrap both arms around her, resting my chin on her slight shoulder, “Which one is your favorite?”

“I like da pretty speckled one.” She announces happily, pointing to a lionfish. “That is a good one.” I agree, “I bet you miss all the fish in Asphodel, don’t you?”

“Uh-huh.” She confirms, still only half listening – though now rather than being preoccupied with what’s in front of her, her thoughts seem far away. I have no doubt she’s remembering running through all of the floating city’s canals, it used to be impossible to get her to come inside when the sun was shining and the water was teeming with fish and wildlife. “I like ‘Lysium better cuz of you ‘n’ Daddy, but I miss all my fish friends.”

“Well how would you like to visit them?” I suggest, praying the conversation continues to go smoothly.

“Really?” Lila chirps, bouncing up and down in my lap. “Can I, can I, can I?”

"You can." I confirm with a wide smile. "Uncle Drake and Aunt Sophie have invited you to come stay for a few weeks. You can see all your friends and ride the boats, then you can go searching for manatees and have pancakes at the cafe!"

"When d'we leave?" She exclaims, already jumping down from my lap.

"Well that's the thing, Lila bean." I sigh, catching her and pulling her to a stop between my legs. "I actually won't be coming with you."

Her-exuberant expression disappears, confusion overtaking her sweet features."

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What'd you mean?"

This is the absolute worst part of having young pups, I decide. When they aren't old enough to understand why bad things are happening, but you can't protect them from misfortune either.

Just rip it off like a bandaid. Luna advises. I know it hurts now but in two years Lila won't even remember this happened.

Unless I don't come back. I think morosely. Don't say that. Luna snaps. Thinking that way doesn't help anything.

Easier said than done. I concede, turning my attention back to my daughter. "I don't want to lie to you, Lila. So I'm going to tell you something very serious, and I want you to promise me you'll try to understand."

"I pwomise." She vows sincerely, her blue and violet eyes wide.

"I'm going to find Daddy and bring him home." I admit, dragging my knuckles across her cheek. "He's a little lost, just like I was when he came and found me in Asphodel. So I have to go find him now."

"Then I come with you." Lila decides firmly.

"You can't my darling." I try to break the news as gently as I can, but it hurts just speaking the words. "It's too dangerous. So while I'm gone, Uncle Drake is going to keep you

safe."

"But..." Lila thinks for a moment, her lower lip pushing out in a pout. "When you come back?"

"I don't know, little one. I wish I could tell you for certain that it will only be a few weeks, but I don't want to make you any promises I can't keep." I share honestly.

"But what if you don't come back?" Lila is working herself up to tears, and my heart thumps in sympathy, "Like Daddy. What if you goes away and I don't see you 'gain?"

"You're going to see me and Daddy again." I swear, gripping her shoulders. "Do you know why?"

"Why?" She sniffles, rubbing her eye.

"Because we love you more than anything in the world and as long as we are alive, we will always find you. We will always come home to you, even if we get a little lost on the way." I promise, knowing that this is one vow I can absolutely keep. Nothing on earth could keep me from doing whatever is necessary to get home to my pup. "Besides, this baby is going to need it's older sister to teach it how the world works."

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Distracted, Lila gazes at me in surprise. "Mommy tha's a lot of 'sponsibility."

"I know." I laugh, "That's what Daddy and I have been trying to tell you. Being a big sister is a very important job."

"Will da baby be here when you comes back?" She questions, c*****g her head to the side.

"I sincerely hope not." I reply honestly. "I'm going to come home with Daddy as soon as I can, and then we can all watch this new pup make me big and fat together."

Lila giggles. "Okay Mommy."

"So is that okay?" I press, amazed that she's not more upset, "Will you be okay with Drake and Sophie for a few weeks?"

"A course." Lila shrugs, "I loves uncle Rake."

“I know you do.” I grin, pulling her in for a hug. “Thank you for being such a big girl about this. I’m so proud of you, Lila.”

“Mommy, I am a big girl.” She reminds me in exasperation. “Silly me.” I hiccup, “How could I forget?” “Silly Mommy.” Lila laughs, “Come on, I wanna see da sharks!”

As Lila drags me forward through the aquarium, leading me by the hand and pointing out all her favorite animals, I feel a catch in my throat. I know it won’t really sink in that I’m leaving her until tomorrow morning when Helene and I set out, but I can’t help but feel like Lila is handling all this much better than I am. I’m a basket case thinking about leaving her for so long, but she took it all in stride. I’m both proud and worried for what will happen when we actually part ways. But for today, I’m determined to make the most of our afternoon together. Despite what I told her, I’m far too aware that if things don’t go as planned, this might be the last time I see her – and that scares me more than Blaise Denizen ever could

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 165

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 165

Chapter 165- Frederic Slips Up

Frederic

Selene is smarter than I gave her credit for – and more stubborn. Her impromptu

interview with the press outside the hospital was masterful – if it hadn’t caused such problems for me I’d even be impressed. However ever since she told the pack to start looking into my background, I’ve been doing nothing but putting out fires.

Every five minutes a different reporter is calling for my comment, while a bevy of others dig into my past. Of course, Thomas Kane only has records dating back to college – when my mother invented him. Before then everything I did was tainted by my father’s so-called “ crimes”. The media has already figure out my current identity is a fraud, how much longer can I last before they learn the truth? Even the medical board has been calling me, threatening to revoke my license.

Part of me regrets throwing my mother into the basement, I’d really love to have someone to talk to right now, but I have a feeling Mom isn’t going to be too forthcoming with advice after spending two weeks in a cold dark pit. Oh well, you live and you learn.

It might be easier to stomach if I were any closer to winning over Selene. But she seems as distant as ever- if not more so. We haven’t spoken in quite some time now,

and I have a bad feeling she's onto me – why else would she have directed everyone to investigate

me?

Every day that passes seems to make my situation seem more and more bleak, and I'm trying to keep my head up, but it isn't easy. The worst comes when I learn that Selene is planning to leave the territory to chase Bastien. I didn't realize at first, it wasn't until my spies around the pack house began to notice a lot of movement: Selene and her witchy mentor planning and packing their bags, and Drake and his little mate talking to Lila about

their plans for Asphodel.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out what's going on, but no matter the harm she's done to my reputation or the problems it might cause, I know I have to stop her.

Selene

I'm on my way to visit Dr. Lee one last time before Helene and I depart, and I'm hoping she'll agree to do an early sonogram test so I can take the video with me to Tartarus. I need

every last bit of help I can get to make Bastien remember the truth, and if there's a chance the new baby can convince him, I'll gladly use it. However just before I reach Dr. Lee's office, I smell Dr. Kane.

Stopping and looking around warily, my heart sinks into my stomach when I see the man in question step out from behind a parked van. For one terrible moment I'm afraid he intends to coerce me into the vehicle, but instead he comes to stand in front of me.

He's wearing a grave expression, and his body language is downright somber. "Selene, what are you planning?"

Gritting my teeth I reply, "Thomas, what are you doing here?"

"I came to talk to you because I heard a rumor that you were leaving." He says, as if the mere idea of me going away is ludicrous.

"You heard a rumor," I repeat coldly, not believing this story for a single second. "More like you have more spy cameras hidden somewhere."

His eyes widen almost imperceptibly before he quickly covers his surprise. "What are you talking about?"

“Enough Lies, Frederic.” I answer, throwing caution to the wind. “I know exactly who and what you are.”

His entire demeanor changes at once, as if by confronting him I flipped a switch and transformed him from kindly Thomas Kane to conniving Frederic Durand. The man I’ve only ever known to be warm and earnest is gone, replaced by someone I don’t recognize at all. His green eyes narrow to slits, and he crosses his arms over his chest, sidling closer to tower over me. “And just how did you figure that out?”

“Because you aren’t as smart as you think you are.” I hiss, tilting my chin up defiantly. “The next time you want to try and ruin someone’s life, you might want to consider covering your tracks better.”

Now he doesn’t bother to hide his shock. “How can you say that? Surely you know I would never hurt you.” He moves to touch me, and I instinctively back away. A few passersby are beginning to take notice, but Frederic doesn’t seem to realize the attention we’re drawing. His locus is solely on me. “You’re a survivor, like me.”

Suddenly I realize the man is not just cunning and ruthless, but completely delusional. I knew he’d developed some sort of strange fixation on me, but he truly believes every word he’s saying, “You already have hurt me. How do you think it felt learning you were spying on me in the most intimate moments of my life? Keeping me from Bastien all that time didn’t

help me, Frederic, it almost destroyed me. If you and Arabella hadn’t ever separated us, so much pain could have been avoided. Don’t pretend you care about me. You care about yourself and your own mission, not me.”

Somewhere in the back of my mind I know it’s terribly risky to confront someone who is so clearly disturbed this way, but I can’t help it now that the fight has begun. Besides, we’re beginning to gather an audience, and the more people hear, the better. “That isn’t fair.

“Yes it is, and you know it.” I counter fiercely, keeping his attention on me. One of the people standing behind Frederic has pulled out their phone and are clearly recording our interaction. “You knew Arabella was going to try to kill me and you didn’t stop her, you got cold feet at the last second and abandoned me in a situation that could have ended up just as deadly. You made me sick so that I would stay under your control and risked the life of my baby, you separated me from my mate over and over again. You faked my death. You murdered Gabriel, who was like a father to me!”

With every word I speak, Frederic has gotten angrier and angrier, swelling up like a puffer fish and turning redder and redder. It’s sort of like watching lava bubble up in a volcano, and he’s clearly about to blow. “Gabriel deserved to die!” Frederic explodes, “And so does Bastien! The entire Durand family is corrupt and has only stayed in power this long by taking credit for other people’s achievements!”

“You’re a Durand too, Frederic.” I remind him, speaking very clearly for the cameras. “Your father tried to stage a coup and he failed because he wasn’t strong enough to lead. That’s how it works.” Shaking my head, I laugh in his infuriated face, “You know you two are just alike. He thought the world had wronged him and he was so determined to claim what he thought he deserved that it didn’t matter who he hurt in the process. Good people died in that battle, Frederic. Wolves fighting to defend their families lost their lives because of his vendetta and now you are following in his footsteps!” : “Don’t you dare speak ill of my father!” Frederic thunders. “You weren’t there that day! I was, I saw Gabriel kill him – his own brother!” !

“Who was trying to kill him!” I shout back. “He was doing what good Alpha’s do and defending his pack.”

“If he cared about what was best for the pack, he would have stepped aside to allow a better ruler to take over.” Frederic insists. I swear arguing with him is like talking to a brick : wall. But it’s certainly serving its purpose. Multiple onlookers are recording us now, and I’m

sure the footage will be all over the evening news.

“And if you cared about what was best for me, you’d let me go and stop trying to sabotage my mate! I combat, “you’ve been trying for years now and all your best attempts have failed! Aren’t you tired of playing this game yet?”

“My plans have only failed because -” He begins furiously.

“Because Bastien deserves to be Alpha!” I interrupt him. “You sent the Geminis to disrupt Gabriel’s funeral, and Bastien talked them down. You flooded the Equinox festival, and he handled the crisis. You made him believe I was dead, and he overcame his grief for the sake of the pack. He has been outmaneuvering you for years while you hid in the shadows like a coward!”

When the final word leaves my mouth, I realize I’ve gone too far now. Frederic looks positively murderous, and I flinch away from him when he raises his hand to strike me. My eyes are clenched tightly shut and I’m still waiting for the pain to explode across my cheek when I hear a clapping sound and a new voice.

“Don’t even think about it.”

Opening my eyes, I find the bodyguard Bastien secretly hired to protect Lila and me standing over Frederic with his fist curled around the younger man’s wrist. For the first time, Frederic seems to realize that we are standing on a public street, and that our conversation was far from private. Breathing heavily, he looks around in horror and notices our audience. All the livid color drains from his face, and he looks back at me with the kind of helpless expression Lila sometimes gets when she gets herself in

trouble. She would say, "uh-oh." Frederic, on the other hand, chooses a different word. "Fuck."