

# Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 36

## Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

### Chapter 36

#### #Chapter 36 Leave

#### Bastien's POV

Axel hasn't made a sound in days. Though he was all but feral from the moment I answered Denver's phone call to the second Dr Kane uncovered Selene's body in the morgue, he hasn't moved a muscle since. I've found myself reaching out to him on the hour,

extending my internal feelers toward his shape just to make sure he's still there.

More than anything else, his absence tells me that this nightmare I've been living is unfortunately very real. Selene – my sweet, perfect little wolf – is dead.

She ran from my home believing I thought her guilty of a terrible crime. She fled my protection because I made her think it was persecution, and died alone and afraid.

My father's death nearly destroyed me, but my mate's has annihilated me completely. Everything that used to matter to me, has ceased to be important. Suddenly I don't care if I'm the Alpha; I don't care if the pack falls to ruin; I don't care if Arabella is found; I don't even care if I live.

I do not recognize myself, and I don't feel the need to find the man I once was, nor create a path forward for the wretch I've become.

At first I took to the forest, but when I discovered that I could not shift, I returned to the pack house, and locked myself in my rooms. My mother, Aiden and Donovan have all tried to persuade me to return to the land of the living, but I have no interest in being there without Selene,

Even now, when Aiden is outside my door with news that might have sent me running last week, I want nothing more than to disappear.

"The enforcers think they've found Arabella." He calls through the heavy wood panel.

"Fine." I respond blankly, refusing to pull my attention from the picture frame clutched in my hand. "Go get her."

“Not without you.” Aiden huffs out a frustrated breath. “We need you to lead us.”

“You don’t.” I counter, tracing Selene’s shape in our wedding photo. “Just bring her home.”

Donavon’s voice sounds alongside my friend’s, deep and familiar; evoking memories of my father. “Alpha, this is your duty. You made a vow to Flynn and your father to care for Arabella, to safeguard the pack. Do not disappoint them this way. Do not break your word.”

“I also made a vow to protect my mate.” I lash out, flinging all my anguish and fury in their direction. “I broke the most sacred vow I ever took. How can you possibly think I care about lesser promises now?”

“A promise is a promise.” Aiden chastises. “You’d never forgive yourself if something went wrong with the rescue and you weren’t there to help us.”

“Then that’s a risk I’ll have to take.” I snap, wishing I could pull my mate out of the photo and into my arms.

A brace of muffled grumbling meets my ears, too low to decipher without strain – and I don’t care enough to try. If you won’t do it for honor, do it for intel.” Donavon finally proffers. “If we can recover Arabella there’s a good chance she can lead us to the kidnapper. This is your chance to find your father’s killer, and Selene’s.”

His words rouse a prickle of interest in the far reaches of my mind, even as I brush them aside. “If she could identify them, they would never let her live.”

“None of their other targets have survived.” He reminds, “I doubt they planned on letting her live. We just beat them to the punch this time.”

Drained and disheartened, I drag one hand through my hair. “What makes you so sure we can even get her back?”

“Because,” Donavon announces assuredly. “We’ve already got eyes on her.”

Enforcers huddle around Arabella, wrapping her in emergency blankets and patting her back while she cries. Her nose and cheeks

are swollen and splotchy, her flushed skin wet with tears and her willowy *frame* shaking with fear and relief.

“It was so awful!” She wails, clinging to Danvers’ burly shoulders. “He said he said he was going to kill me. He promised to make it hurt.”

Danvers makes a soft shushing sound, helping her sit on a nearby park bench. “Can you tell us anything about the man responsible? What he looked like? Anything he told you about himself or shared about his motives?”

I watch from a few feet away as Arabella swoons into another fit of sobs. I should feel guilty for not being more concerned, indeed, under any other circumstances I would be absolutely horrified by my apparent apathy when someone I care about is so clearly suffering. Yet I can’t bring myself to conjure any feelings other than relief that Arabella is safe.

I don’t have room in my heart for anything but mourning Selene, and as fond as I am of Arabella, I’ve known for a long time that those feelings come down to my love for Flynn, rather than any true affinity for his sister.

More horrible still, part of me blames Arabella for my mate’s death. It isn’t fair in any way shape or form. She didn’t ask to be kidnapped, but if I hadn’t been off looking for her, I would have been there when Selene needed me. She and Mom never would have gone to the cabin, she would never have been implicated in a crime or doubted my belief in her. She would still be alive.

All the time I spent worrying about Blaise Denizen, trying to protect her from bounty hunters and power mad dictators – and it was all for nothing. The real danger was right under my nose the whole time. I never saw it coming, and my mate paid the price.

“I never saw his face.” Arabella’s voice drags me back to the present. “He wore a mask. But he said Bastien has only himself to blame.” Her big brown eyes lock onto me, her lower lip caught in a trembling pout. “He said you don’t deserve to be Alpha. He said you have blood on your hands and he’s going to come at you until you know how it feels to lose everything he said this is only the beginning.”

### Selene’s POV

My lashes flutter, dappled light dancing through my eyelids as the afternoon sun bathes my skin in golden warmth. My senses gradually return, filling in the world around me with crisp air, damp earth, and the familiar smells of moss and evergreens.

Verdant mountains appear when I finally open my eyes, the cold ground beneath my cheek littered with fallen leaves and sprawling tangles of knobby roots. A fluttering breeze carries birdsong to my ears, along with the babbling of a distant brook, enveloping me in the sounds of the wild woodland.

I know this place. I think with languid bliss, carefully pushing myself up to examine this new plane of existence. It looks so like the forests around Elysium; the forests I grew up exploring with Luna; the forest where Bastien found me in my darkest hour.

It's right, I decide, that the otherworld should take the shape of those beloved stomping grounds; that my afterlife should be spent in the peace of the virgin forest. The only things missing are the people. Where is my mother? Where is Gabriel and Luna?

I roll my neck and stretch my aching limbs in confusion, a new thought plaguing my bewildered psyche. If this is the otherworld, why do I still feel pain?

My first attempt to take a breath of fresh air ends in a fit of coughing, my weary body evacuating cinders and sediment from my chest in a vile deluge. Surely the fire could not have followed me into the afterlife. The Goddess would not allow such a thing.

The obvious answer dawns on me slowly, ebbing in like an unyielding tide of reason. I'm alive. I realize in wonder. But how?

The last thing I remember, I was tilting over the edge of extinction, falling from the precipice with no hope of escape. I was curled in the closet, out of time and oxygen.

How could anyone reach me through the flames? How could I have gotten out without a scratch?

I flatten my hand to my belly, trying to sense the tiny pulse of my child and whimpering with frustration when I can't. If only I was far enough along to feel it moving, then I could know it was alright without the help of a doctor.

However I don't see any blood or stains on my clothes to indicate a miscarriage, only soot and ash. Surely if the baby had been harmed, there would be some signs. I shake the cobwebs from my head. I need to figure out where I am, I need to get to safety, then I can worry about doctors and everything else.

I find my feet, following the sound of the stream, my parched and burning throat begging for cool clear water. I stumble through the undergrowth, making it only a handful of steps before I hear voices in the distance.

I freeze, cocking my ears toward the sound.

"Did you hear?" A woman's voice questions with excitement. "The Nova Alpha just lost his mate. She died in a fire."

"You're kidding." A second woman answers, "That's horrible."

"I know. I swear, everything I hear out of their territory lately sounds like chaos." She sighs, "Murders, brawls, kidnappings, now this? If you ask me, the Novas are on their way out."

I must not be in Nova territory anymore. In some ways that's good – in others it's a disaster. Neutral territory is just about the most dangerous place for a lone female wolf, and I'm not even that.

Before I can second guess myself, I bolt towards the womens' voices. I need help, I need to find allies, and I don't want to wait around for the next passersby, who are more likely to be rogues than innocent travelers.

I topple out of the trees and onto the path in front of the gossiping wanderers, taking in their surprised expressions and expensive hiking gear. One of them, a pretty redhead, approaches me with clear concern, "Are you alright?"

"I need to get to Eros territory." I blurt out, whipping my gaze between them frantically. "Can you help me?"

## **Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 37**

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#### **Chapter 37**

##### **#Chapter 37 The Eros Pack**

Selene's POV

The mountains seem to go on forever. I never realized how much distance is between the pack territories until now. Of course, most people don't travel on foot anymore. In a car the journey would probably take a day or two, on foot it drags on for two weeks.

I might enjoy the adventure more if my situation was different. The landscapes around me are beyond compare, but I cannot enjoy their beauty – not when I'm constantly looking over my shoulder.

I know everyone in Elysium thinks I'm dead, but part of me is still afraid Arabella might be coming after me. Was she fooled like all the others? Was she watching when my mysterious rescuer carried me from the flames?

Though I'm no closer to understanding who saved me, I know this is the only explanation for my survival. I was unconscious and on the verge of death; somebody had to have braved the fire to rescue me.

My first thought was Odette, but I don't think she would have taken me from Elysium and left me in the forest. Yet she and Arabella are the only ones who knew I was at the

cabin. In one brief moment of insanity I even considered the possibility that Arabella returned for me out of sudden remorse, or perhaps more likely, to instigate some sort of cruel mind game.

Of course, evil mistresses aren't my only concern on the road to Eros. There's also rogues and bandits to fear. Without a pack to govern the land, crime and violence rule all neutral territories. No one is safe where anarchy reigns, but especially women traveling without protection.

The hikers who came to my aid when I first woke in the forest, a pair of Vega wolves named Chloe and Annie, have been nothing but lovely to me. They lent me clothes and shared their supplies, even changing their planned route in order to help me reach my destination. Though I haven't shared my story with them, or even revealed my true name, they have not pried.

It seems this is one of those unspoken bonds of womanhood; we do not need to know why one of our fellows is on the run to help them. We all understand the reasons women might need to flee far too well.

When at last we cross the final ridge of the mountains and the Eros territory spreads out on the horizon, we all share a sigh of relief. "We're almost there." Chloe wraps an arm around my shoulders. By this time tomorrow we'll be over the border."

Just hang on one more day," Annie says, appearing on my other side. "Then you can sleep for a week."

I haven't told either woman that I'm pregnant, but the baby made its survival known in the same way it's marked is presence from the day I conceived. I've been so ill on the journey that I've avoided having to explain to Chloe and Annie that I don't have a wolf. I haven't been in any state to contribute to the hunting or camp labor, and I'm certain they know the truth.

In the end, I don't have to wait another day to reach safety. Just before dusk, as we're forging a low water crossing, the sounds of approaching wolves send us into high alert. We bolt together to stand in a tight ring in the middle of the water, communicating possible escape routes with our eyes.

Just as we're about to dive into the river, I smell a familiar blend of sea mist and sandalwood, and throw out my arms to stop my friends from fleeing. "Wait."

The huge shifters who burst through the trees are all in their animal forms, and though I've never seen Drake's wolf, I'd recognize his bright green eyes anywhere. They widen to saucers when he sees me, and he transforms immediately, hurtling toward me through the water and throwing his arms around me.

"Oh my god, I thought you were dead." He breathes against my neck.

“Drake,” I gasp, my feet swinging around his calves, “I can’t breathe.”

“Oops!” He returns me to the ground, “I’m sorry. It’s just – Selene, I went to your funeral. That’s where we were coming from.” He explains, gesturing to the men around him. “We just stopped for a run because we’ve been stuck in the car all day.”

“Selene?” Chloe and Annie say in unison. This is not the name I gave them.

Shooting them an apologetic look, I turn back to Drake. “As far as anyone is concerned, I am dead.” I answer firmly. “And I need to stay that way.”

The Eros pack territory is about as different from Nova lands as a place could be. Settled among the tidal forests and salt marshes of the Western coast, their capital Asphodel is a true marvel of engineering. A floating city, dissected by hundreds of saltwater canals and intertwined with living bridges woven from mangrove roots, it feels wild and wondrous in a way the caves of Elysium never did.

Under the mountains life felt dark and cramped, no matter how beautiful the exteriors or near the forest. Nothing ever changed or shifted; how could it when the city was literally set in stone? Here the ground beneath my feet is different one moment from the next, and the oscillating tide breathes life into every corner of the marsh.

“How do you run?” I wonder aloud, gaping at the floating docks forming an endless maze through the city. The Eros wolves are known for their speed, but I cannot comprehend how they could develop such skills without solid land.

Drake grins widely, “There’s a reason we’re the fastest pack on the continent.” He boasts good-naturedly, “When you spend your life running on water, running on land is child’s play.”

Laughing feels so foreign to me, “But don’t you get frustrated having to always stay on paths, and what about hunting?”

“Well we do go inland sometimes.” He allows, nodding toward the water on our left. “But there’s plenty to hunt here.” At that moment a large velvety snout breaks the surface of the blue-green lagoon, followed by gentle eyes and a very round body.

My eyes dart back and forth between the animal and Drake. “What is that?”

“We call them sea-cows.” Drake explains, chuckling at the expression on my face.

“You eat them?!” I exclaim, horrified that they would harm such a peaceful looking creature.

“I’m only teasing.” He admits, then shifts his predatory eyes to the mangroves on the other side of the canal. “The crocodiles on the other hand.”

I gaze at the huge reptile, suddenly understanding how the Eros pack earned its reputation for being so tough. They aren't the best fighters on land, but I'd be willing to bet they own that title in the water.

"I had no idea..." I admit, positively reveling in the sights around me, "I've never been anywhere but Elysium."

"The world is full of amazing places." Drake agrees, "you can go anywhere now."

I shake my head. "I'm in the same position I was three years ago. I'm free but I have nothing." I sigh, "This wasn't how I planned on leaving."

"It doesn't have to be the same." He replies as we stroll through the wetlands, "I'll help you get started, anywhere you wish. I'd like you to stay here," He confesses with a wink, "but if you want to go somewhere else, I'll take you. We'll get you settled, find you a job – you can build your own future, rather than depending on a man to provide it."

"I still don't understand why you would do that for me." I reveal doubtfully. The last time I asked, he didn't really give me an answer. He simply redirected with a question about my inability to trust.

"Because I can't think of anyone alive more deserving of help." Drake responds simply. And because I believe you could be anything you put your mind to, if you simply had the opportunity. The Eros pack can always use more good people."

I study him for a long moment, from his raven hair and emerald eyes, to his disarming smile and chiseled body. After a minute or so, I find the courage to ask, "What's wrong with you?"

"What?" He blinks.

"This all sounds too good to be true." I sigh. "No one is this nice."

Drake frowns, "I guess I'm just going to have to prove you wrong."

Chloe and Annie are waiting for us in front of the Eros Pack House, an enormous palazzo towering over the city center. Unlike Elysium there are no skyscrapers or buildings at different elevations in Asphodel. The entire city floats at the same level, making the pack house visible from anywhere in the marsh.

"We'll have to choose a new name for you." Drake ponders as we stroll across a living bridge, "I take it you were already using one with your Vega friends."

"Yes, although I think you let that cat out of the bag." I tease, "I told them my name is Celeste." "I like it." Drake compliments, "And it's close enough to Selene that it shouldn't be hard for either of us to remember."



“Your men will know.” I remind him.

“They won’t tell.” He promises, “I’ve already given orders to take your real identity to their graves.” My shoulders untense at this news, even as his next words tangle my nerves once more. “I take it Bastien never found out about the baby?”

“No.” I confirm. A question which has been gnawing at my mind since reuniting with Drake finally works its way out of my mouth “Did he... how did he seem, at the funeral?”

When Drake won’t meet my gaze, I know I’m not going to like the answer. “Actually, he wasn’t there.”

His words hit me like a punch to the gut. “He didn’t even go to my funeral?”

“And that’s not all.” He exhales heavily, “The news is all over Elysium: Bastien’s about to marry Arabella, and apparently they aren’t even waiting for the mourning period to end. Rumor has it they’re moving so quickly because... well,” He trails off, rubbing the back of his neck.

Understanding dawns on me from the awkward expression on his face, “She’s pregnant too.”

## **Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 38**

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#### **Chapter 38**

##### **Chapter 38 Marriage Proposal**

Odette’s POV

“I swear to the Goddess.” Donavon crumples the magazine in his hand, lobbing it at the wall, “Where do they get this shit?”

The shiny pages slacken as it falls, brightly colored tabloid headlines peeking out of the wrinkled ball of paper, “Alpha’s secret love child.”

Unfortunately I have an idea where these rumors are coming from. I’ve seen the way Arabella looks at my son, and I can’t stop hearing Selene’s last words to me: She really hates me. She’s attempted worse. Half an hour later my daughter-in law was dead, then Arabella was miraculously found unharmed a few days later – with an iron-clad alibi for her whereabouts at the time of the

fire

Even so, those are not the kinds of accusations one makes without evidence, and a few words from Selene in the height of a very stressful moment isn't reliable intelligence. I could have completely misinterpreted her meaning. "Does Bastien know?" I query, gesturing to the tabloid.

"He hasn't left his rooms since the fire." Donavon reminds me, shaking his head. And he's not speaking to anyone."

I understand better than anyone. The only reason I can get myself out of bed in the morning is because Bastien needs me so badly. I've been letting him mourn while I run the pack, not that anyone knows what's happening behind the scenes. However the situation in Elysium is deteriorating without his leadership, and the rumor mill is out of control.

What's more, I'm deeply afraid that Bastien cannot go on like this much longer. Young as he is, losing a mate can kill a wolf of any age, and as much as I want to give him time to heal, I can't risk letting him grieve himself to death.

"That's not all, ma'am." Donavon says, pulling my attention from the magazine. "We also received a letter from the Elder Council. They want Bastien to increase the frequency of his security reports."

"They've been weekly since Gabriel's murder." I scoff, "What do they want, a daily update?"

The Beta purses his lips and raises his eyebrows, confirming my guess.

"That's ridiculous." I snap, "They've never had that kind of oversight before."

\*Clearly they want to use Selene's death to bolster their own power." Donavon complains, "frankly I'd like to tell them where they can shove their reports."

"I'll talk to Bastien." I resolve, "he's got to come back to work, we cannot cave to this sort of pressure."

The large man grimaces, "be careful, Odette."

I straighten my spine, giving my old friend an imperious glare, "I'm his mother, he can huff and puff all he wants, but he won't follow through."

"He's not your son right now," Donavon relates gently. "He's an Alpha who lost his mate. Pushing him is dangerous."

I notch my chin up. "He's not the only alpha who's lost his mate, Donavon. And I've had more time to heal."

The apartment is such a mess my first instinct is to douse the entire space in bleach, starting with my son. The air is perfumed with an unsavory blend of hard liquor, dirty laundry, spoiled food and even from the other side of the doorway, I can smell the many days Bastien has gone without showering.

It takes all my strength not to immediately gather a garbage bag and begin filling it on my way through the space, but I maintain my focus and head straight for the giant unwashed wolf in the center of the living room.

He's unconscious on the couch, his golden skin grimy and his jaw covered with weeks' worth of stubble. An empty bottle of whiskey dangles from his limp hand, and the table in front of him is scattered with beer cans. He wears only a pair of sweatpants, and the weight he's lost in the last few weeks is noticeable.

I reach for his shoulder, but his massive hand closes around my wrist before I can touch him. His powerful fingers dig into my skin, and my attention leaps to his face. His eyes are wild, staring at me without recognition. "Sweetheart, you're hurting me." I tell him softly.

My voice jogs a bit of recognition into his hard features, and he slackens his hold. "Mom?"

"The one and only." I confirm.

Bastien sits up and rubs his eyes, "I'm sorry, you startled me."

"I can see that." I remark tartly. "You, my son, need to take a shower. And then we need to talk."

His expression is suddenly so similar to the one he made when he was little and wanted to escape a bath, I have to bite my lip to keep myself from smiling. "Do I have to?"

"Yes." I put my foot down. "You do."

While Bastien is getting cleaned up I take up the helm cleaning the apartment, trying not to judge the mess. I know all too well how crushing grief can steal your will to care about anything and everything.

When he finally emerges, clean-shaven, wet-haired and smelling of soap, the space almost looks inhabitable again. He sits down at his kitchen island, watching me work with a far odd look in his silver eyes. "You don't have to do that, Mom."

“Someone has to.” I murmur, holding out the sponge in his direction. “Of course, it would be better if you did.”

He takes the implement from me without complaint, replacing my spot over the sink and beginning to scrub dishes while I find a drying cloth. “I know it feels pointless, and silly and tedious, but you just have to force yourself to go through the motions for a little while. Eventually, you’ll be able to find sense in taking care of yourself again, in living.”

“Please don’t pretend you know what I’m going through, Mom.” Bastien rumbles. “You lost a mate who adored you for more than 30 years. I lost a mate who I never even got to claim. We never had any happy years, we didn’t get to build a life together.” He drops the sponge and closes his fists around the edge of the counter, “I failed her, I wasn’t there when she needed me, I caused her nothing but pain.”

“That isn’t true, Bastien.” I argue instantly.

“She rejected me!” The bark is so vicious I take a step back, putting some distance between us. “That is the last thing she did before she died. I accused her of kidnapping, put her under house arrest and forced her to run into a situation that killed her.” Bastien thunders, “Still she called me for help! But I didn’t pick up, I failed her one too many times. And she rejected me.”

My heart sinks, and only with much restraint do I stop myself from reaching for him. “Darling, why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because she was right.” He growls, “She was right to reject me. I never deserved her, and we both knew it.”

The gears of my brain turn rapidly as I search for the right thing to say – a hopeless quest. Empty comfort and denials won’t help. If Selene truly rejected him, no one will ever be able to convince him she was wrong. Platitudes and cliches won’t work either. There is no soothing this kind of sorrow.

Finally I decide on tough love. “Then you have a choice.” I tell him. “You can lie around in your own filth and drink yourself to death, and prove her right. Or you can try to become the man she did deserve, and pray to the Goddess that when you reach the otherworld and see her again, you’ve done enough.”

Bastien’s POV

6 months later,

The elder council sits on a raised dais in Nova Hall, their chairs forming a tight semi-circle from which they can look down upon the empty chambers. I stand before them alone and on edge. This is the last place I want to be.

I've worked hard over the last few months to fulfill my responsibilities to the pack, but despite my mother's promise that going through the motions would lead me back to myself one day, I still can't bring myself to care about anything in this life. Her advice to make myself worthy for my mate in the next, got me out of bed and back into the office, but I feel no pride in my work.

Rumors continue to swirl around the pack about my fitness to lead, especially now that Selene is gone. For the most part, all anyone can talk about is the fact that a heartbroken Alpha is about as reliable as a broken clock. They might land on the right time every now and then, but try to guide your day by them and disaster ensues.

Along with the continued gossip about my relationship with Arabella, my reputation has taken a significant hit. I'm not sure what

the elder council requested this meeting to discuss, but I know it can't be good.

Alpha, One of the gray, grised men begins. "We have the utmost respect for the losses you've endured this year."

Fat chance. Axel grumbles in my head, getting a little more vocal every day.

\*However we are concerned for your own wellbeing, as well as the balance of the pack's leadership." The counselor continues. "Unmated wolves are not as stable as those with wives and families, and as you know an Alpha's mate has a vital role in ruling the pack's she-wolves. In combination with your grief. well to be frank your situation puts the pack at risk."

"Seeing as my mate is dead," I snarl, making the speaker blanch. "I don't see what we can do about that."

The elders glance at each other hesitantly, Alpha, we respectfully propose it's time you take a new mate." As the leader speaks, a counselor on the far left gestures to a guard at the side door. One of which the council approves this time."

The door opens, and to my shock and disbelief, Arabella steps in.

## **Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 39**

### **Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate**

#### **Chapter 39**

**#Chapter 39 New Life**

**Bastien's POV**

One by one, wolves from across Elysium filter into the council chambers, answering the mental summons I roared out across the territory ordering the pack to gather at once. Emitting such a call takes incredible strength; it's a feat very few Alpha's could accomplish, and one which has left me exhausted, though no less angry.

When the wolves have finally filled the circular space, I call the council back to order, keeping Arabella primely situated before the dais. She's smiling confidently, and even the counselors look somewhat pleased. I imagine they think I've decided to give into their demands

The fools must not realize that suggesting I remarry was the very last thing they should have attempted if they wished my cooperation

"It seems "I announce to the room at large, "That many of you are displeased with my leadership, and uncomfortable with my marital status."

Already I see Arabella's smile waver. Until she returned to Elysium I never realized how much Arabella truly wanted to marry me. I thought it had been a childhood crush, one I never worried about encouraging because I planned on giving her what she wanted. Now I think I must have underestimated her interest significantly. I've told her privately at least half a dozen times that nothing is going to happen between us, so the idea that she would be colluding with the council this way is rather outrageous.

"However it is my duty to inform you, that I don't give a damn about your displeasure or discomfort. If you have complaints you are welcome to raise them with me privately or in forums such as these. I can promise they will be heard and fairly considered, but that is the extent of my obligation." My deep voice echoes harshly through the vaulted ceiling. "I am not here to give you what you want or coddle you, I am not here to make your lives easier."

"You are entitled to my protection and governance, and unless you are able to step forward with specific and concrete criticisms regarding those duties or advocacies for new policies, I'm sorry to tell you that I have no interest in your opinions. Particularly when it comes to my personal life." I can see my audience slowly turtling, subtly curling in around themselves in defense against my wrath.

"My mate was Selene Durand." I boom. "She is the only mate I will ever have, and the only wife I will ever take. Anyone who says otherwise is deluded or lying. I cannot stop you from gossiping; that is your right, just as it is your right to disagree with me. But I warn you, do not make the mistake of turning gossip into slander about my mate, or disagreement into challenges of my authority because they will be taken seriously."

As I look around the room, taking in the flushed faces and sweating brows, I listen to their pounding hearts and increased pulses with relish. "I once made the mistake of

asking if any Novan believed themselves more capable to lead this great pack, and if so to step forward. I know now that is a question I never need to ask, because if there was anyone strong enough to stand against me, they would already be doing it.”

“I want you to remind yourselves of that fact the next time you want to question me. If all you have the courage to do is talk behind my back, you don’t have a leg to stand on.” I fuel all my dominance into my final words. “Now Get. Out.”

As the room clears, I finally turn my attention to Arabella. She’s breathing heavily, her face crimson and hands curled in fists at her side. She always did have a penchant for tantrums. I stop by her side as I move toward the exit, “I don’t know what your involvement in these rumors has been, and I don’t care. But let’s get one thing straight – it ends now. If anyone asks you about us, if you overhear any hushed whispers, I expect you to deny them, clearly and firmly. Are we understood?”

Her eyes flash dangerously, but her voice is sickly sweet. “Of course, Alpha.”

### Selene’s POV

The cafe is dark, chairs stacked on tables and freshly mopped floors shining in the reflections of empty glass bakery cases. It’s tranquil without all the customers and bustling servers, but this is always my favorite part of the day.

I pull the doors shut, turning the locks and untying the apron from my swollen belly. Six months after leaving Elysium, my life is more different than I could have ever imagined. I have my own apartment, my own business, a best friend who’s held my hand every step of the way, and I’m just days away from giving birth,

### #Chapter 39 New Life

Of course, it hasn’t all been easy. My arrival in Asphodel hasn’t been received well by everyone. After Chloe and Annie left, I was literally thrown to the Eros wolves and the women in particular seem very unhappy about my friendship with Drake and very judgemental of my status as a single mother – but gossiping busybodies are nothing new, and I’m more capable of dealing with them now than I ever was in the Nova pack.

I’ve gotten stronger every single day, even as my body expands and takes on all sorts of strange and surreal new qualities. The baby kicks on queue, meeting my hand as it strokes the curve of my tightly stretched abdomen – so large I can no longer see my feet.

If I didn’t know any better I’d even say my senses have heightened, almost to the levels they performed before I lost Luna. I feel more in tune with the world around me, more connected to my instincts and intuition, but I suppose that’s the magic of motherhood

As anxious as I am about the imminent trauma of labor, my life is full enough now that I'm distracted by such mundane things as who will cover for me at work, and how much time I can afford to take off.

When I first decided to apply for a job at a cafe, Drake's response had been typically indulgent and easygoing. "Why not just open your own cafe?"

Despite my laughter and protestations of insanity, in the end he forced the seed money into my hands. To my amazement – though not his, as he'd reiterated countless times – I was able to pay him back within the first three months. Now all my profits are my own, and for the first time in my life, I'm self-sufficient.

My apartment is only a block from the cafe – another string pulled by the future Alpha, like the zoning permits, liquor licenses, and public incorporation for my business. It's a modest one bedroom I've gradually made my own, and now I've truly started to think of it as home.

Drake is there waiting when I get home, unpacking bags of takeout on the kitchen table as I waddle through the door. He laughs when he sees me, "I swear you get bigger every day."

I toss my purse at his head, which he easily dodges. "Didn't anyone ever tell you not to insult a pregnant woman?"

"I'm not insulting you!" He feigns horror, clapping a hand over his heart, "I'm complimenting the spacious home you've created for your pup."

Despite his joking tone, my increasing size is a relief for us both. It took me so long to start putting on weight that I was truly worried for my baby's health, and true to Dr. Kane's predictions, my hospitalization in Elysium wasn't the last of my pregnancy.

"Oh put a sock in it." I retort, sniffing the air, "Is that food?"

"Yeah." He answers, waving a fork at me, "Hungry?"

"Starving!" I exclaim, swiping the utensils and falling into a chair. "How was your day?"

"Boring pack business." He sighs, "Yours?"

"Not bad." I concede. The truth is even my bad days are rewarding now. I'm too grateful for all I've accomplished to complain. "The Alpha came in for lunch, though I suppose you don't know anything about that."

"Hey," Drake holds up his palms in defense. "He made the first reservation because I thought it might help business, but he keeps coming back because of the food. That's all you, baby."



“Suurre.” I snort, studying my friend in the soft kitchen light, “You know you really don’t look much like your dad at all – or your mom for that matter.”

His eyebrows disappear beneath his hairline, “You mean the pack gossip machine hasn’t reached you yet?”

“What do you mean?” I ask, cocking my head to the side

“The Alpha isn’t my real father.” Drake reveals coolly. “My biological dad died when I was a teenager and my mother brought us to Eros territory and married the Alpha a couple of years later. He never had children and I have the genes, so he took me under his wing. A few years ago, when it became clear I could take the mantle, he named me his heir.”

“I had no idea.” I admit, searching for emotion in his bright green eyes and finding none. “How did your dad die?”

“He was betrayed.” Drake shares, taking a sip of his beer. “He stood up for what he believed in, and got stabbed in the back by the person he trusted most in the world.”

I reach over and squeeze his hand. “I’m sorry.”

“Thanks,” Drake smiles sadly, returning my affection, “One day I’ll make it right, until then I’m just glad to have such an amazing step father.”

I start to return his smile, but at that moment warm wet heat floods my lap, and I look down at my drenched lap in horror Drake jumps to his feet, “What’s wrong.”

“I think

I think my water just broke.” I stutter, looking up at him helplessly. “The baby’s coming.”

## **Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 40**

### **Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate**

#### **Chapter 40**

##### **#Chapter 40 Rebirth**

Selene’s POV

I’ve known more than my fair share of pain over the years, but nothing compares to labor. I feel like I’m being torn apart from the waist down. Even Wolfsbane didn’t come close to this torture.

It happens in waves, swelling and cresting over and over again until I'm so exhausted and drained that I barely have the strength to keep my eyes open. I want to rest, but every time my muscles relax enough to attempt it, a fresh assault wracks my form with agony and drags me back into consciousness.

"Can't you just knock me out?" I ask the nurses petting and soothing me.

"No honey." The nearest one coos. "I know it's terrible, but you're doing so well." She praises. "Do you want some more ice?"

"No." I cry, tears slipping from the corners of my eyes, "I want Bastien."

Drake strokes my hair back from my face, lowering his lips to my ear, "Easy now, Celeste." He enunciates my false name pointedly, remember who you are."

I whip my head from right to left, my chest shaking with sobs as I grip the hand rails at my sides with white knuckled fists. "I need him." I sob piteously. "I can't do this without him."

It's been so long since I let myself think of Bastien, I'd almost even convinced myself I don't miss him. I've filled my imagination with my shiny new life, my burgeoning accomplishments and independence – telling myself I finally have everything I've ever wanted. But none of it feels right without my mate.

It's true I have so many things I've never been able to contemplate in the past, and it's true I'm happy with my freedom, but these past 6 months have felt just a little too much like a dream. Everything that's happening feels true in the moment, but something always seems off, a small part of my mind knows it isn't real. Eventually I have to wake up, and whenever I do, it's never easy.

Sometimes it happens in the middle of the night, in those stolen hours when deep thoughts always seem to appear unbidden, and unspoken anxieties and emotions rear their ugly heads. Sometimes it happens listening to a familiar song, or watching a movie scene that hits just a little too close to home.

And sometimes it happens when something so jarring and unfathomable strikes that it becomes impossible to pretend any longer – like now. This pain has stolen all pretense from my mind, as well as all concern for my own self-preservation.

"Shh Celeste." Drake croons, "You can do this. You've come so far."

"Stop it!" I push his hands away, my roiling hormones making me suddenly furious that my friend is not my mate. "I can't – I don't want... I need."

\*Just breathe, honey.\* The nurse says, shooting an apologetic glance to Drake. “Don’t take it personally, you should hear some of the things laboring moms say to their mates in the heat of the moment.”

“He’s not my mate!” My despondent wail comes out a whisper, my chest heaving but still unable to draw in enough air. “My mate didn’t want me. He rejected me.”

The nurse pats my hand, holding my gaze with stern but understanding eyes. “If that’s true, then he’s not worth your tears, and he’s the last person you need.” She nods to Drake. “The people who care are the ones who show up. They’re the ones who deserve your love, don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”

My head falls back on the pillow as a contraction eases, and I sniffle pitifully. “I’m sorry.” I hiccup, reaching for my friend. “I didn’t mean it.”

“I know, silly wolf.” Drake grins, taking my hand again. “It’s okay, you’re doing so well.”

Another contraction seizes my uterus, and I jolt forward off the bed with a howl, “Liar!”

Just then the door opens, and my doctor sweeps in. She’s pulling on gloves with a wide smile that makes me want to hit her, “How are we doing, Celeste?” She beams.

“Get this thing out of me!” I demand weakly.

“Let’s just see how far along we are.” She suggests calmly.

I moan and writhe as she examines me, feeling no relief at all when she announces, “Ten centimeters.” Her head peaks up from beneath the blanket covering my splayed legs, “Are you ready to become a mom?”

“I was ready fourteen hours ago!” I snap.

Infuriatingly, she just pats my leg and smiles, “Then let’s get this show on the road.”

The nurses follow the doctor’s instructions, positioning themselves on my sides and hooking their arms beneath my legs to help support me while she hunkers down at the end of the bed. I feel so guilty for resenting their touch, but no matter what encouragement or comfort anyone offers me, the fact remains that the only person I want is Bastien.

I channel all my frustration, sorrow and fear into pushing, screaming and groaning at the top of my hoarse lungs. It happens in bursts, bearing down for ten seconds at a time, bawling and retching in between pushes before starting all over again.

After what feels like hours, the sensation of tearing from the inside out eases, and the doctor’s obnoxiously perky voice announces, “it’s a girl!”

Before I can feel relief or joy – or anything else for that matter – something like an explosion bursts deep in my chest, washing over me in a flood of electricity. The sudden rush of power carries me floating on a tide of memory into the darkness, as the hospital room, and everyone in it, disappears.

### Drake's POV

Elation fades to terror as I watch Selene faint, my attention swinging from her newborn daughter to her slumped body and lolling head. "Wait, what's happening?" I demand, jerking my head back and forth between the silent baby and my unconscious friend.

"Sir, please step back." The doctor advises, "her vitals are still strong, she may simply be overwhelmed."

Despite her words, they're all gathering around Selene in a very concerned manner, and three different nurses are gathered around the baby, which has yet to cry.

The heart monitor beeps steadily on, but the doctor is clearly running through a mental checklist, studying different machines and searching for warning signs on my friend's body.

"What's happening?" I repeat authoritatively, utilizing my rank for the first time.

"She's lost consciousness." The doctor informs me unhelpfully. "Her heart rate and temperature have increased, but they're still within the normal range. This does happen sometimes." Even as she says the words, she looks uncertain.

"And the baby?" I demand, "Why isn't it crying?"

"These things don't always happen immediately." The doctor counters, more confidently this time.

As if she heard us speaking, a tiny cry fills the air, the delicate screech of new life greeting the world. The nurses clean the tiny being and swaddle her in blankets while the doctor continues to work on Selene, eventually approaching me with the squalling bundle. "Would you like to hold her?" The nurse asks, offering me the baby.

I accept her wordlessly, uncertain what to do other than cradle the tiny life like she's made of glass. After standing frozen for a moment I begin to sway gently on my feet, grinning when the baby's cries soften. A pair of glassy eyes blink open and for a moment i'm completely distracted from my worries.

It's Selene's eyes looking up at me: one violet, one blue, wide and innocent as can be. Perhaps she will grow to resemble her father, but in this moment she is her mother's perfect miniature. A swath of dark hair covering her brow, the same pert nose and delicate frame. I'd be surprised if she even weighs five pounds.

I'm so enthralled by the baby I don't even notice when Selene begins to stir, though my inattention is quickly remedied by the flurry of activities among the doctor and nurses. They gather around her in a veritable frenzy, rechecking vital signs and running their tests.

Selene moans deep in her throat, tossing her head against the pillow and hazily surfacing consciousness. Her striking eyes blink open in much the same way her daughter's did, but instead of looking up at me in wonder like the tiny creature in my arms, her gaze is wide and unseeing.

Yet even as I'm certain she has not returned to us fully, there is something undeniably different about her, and I don't think it's waking as a mother. It feels as if all the days I've known her so far, I've only been seeing half of her. And now for the first time, she's appearing to me fully. This is not the same Selene I met in Elysium, or the one I've come to know in Asphodel. She's not even the same woman she was five minutes ago.

The haunted waif is gone, replaced by a radiant nymph no different in appearance, but unrecognizable in spirit. Her full lips part as the doctor leans over her, and when she speaks her voice is fuller and stronger than I've ever heard it. She does not cry in pain or ask questions, she merely utters a single, reverent word: "Luna."