

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 41

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Chapter 41

#Chapter 41 Three Years Later

Bastien's POV

It still feels strange to sit at my father's desk

When I first took over as Alpha I continued using my personal study for pack business, but after a few months Donavon suggested transition to the official executive office. I reluctantly agreed, and though I'm now used to sitting in Dad's chair, I know I will never truly fill his shoes

Taking care of the pack is the only thing keeping me going now.

It took a long time for me to find my way as a leader: sabotaged by forces beyond my control and mourning the loss of my mate, only the danger posed to my pack kept my head above water. Over time doing whatever was required to protect the pack evolved into true governance, and one day I woke up and realized I was no longer merely going through the motions

In some ways this was my enemy's biggest mistake. If they hadn't continued trying to destroy my family's legacy and weaken the Novas, I probably would have given up. Instead they gave me a reason to fight.

Not a day goes by that I do not miss my mate, that I do not wish I could turn back the clocks or trade the Goddess my life for hers. but I've come to believe helping others is a far better tribute to Selene's memory than wasting away in grief, failing countless others the way I failed her.

As if he can hear my thoughts, Aiden appears in the doorway with a cursory knock. "We've had a report from Eros lands. A sighting of a mother and child – both Volanas."

My brows raise skeptically. In the three years since Selene died, the tip line has never received a valid report of a Volana sighting. A few false tips have come in every so often, but none which have ever panned out. Before today I was starting to think my mate might have been the last of her kind. Still, I could never bring myself to shut the system down.

If there is even a small chance another wolf like Selene is out there and in trouble, I have to protect them. I'll never forget the way she stormed out when I suggested other Volana's didn't matter because they were not my responsibility. Of all my regrets, the number of lies or implied falsehoods I let Selene believe for the sake of politics and subterfuge remain high on the list.

Normally I wouldn't go to investigate myself, but it's **extremely rare to hear of two Volanas**, and I'm long overdue for a diplomatic visit with our allies. I haven't **seen Drake Cavanaugh** since my father's funeral, and though we have been in regular contact since **his step-father retired** from being Alpha, we've yet to have a formal meeting as Alphas.

"Assemble a delegation for travel to Asphodel." I instruct my second-in-command. "Our cover is a diplomatic mission Donavon and I will handle the Cavanaughs while you investigate the tip. Bring along **whoever you need for the search.**"

Aiden raises one dark brow, "You want to go in person?"

Inod slowly, "Something feels different about this one." I confess, "I can't explain it, I just feel like I have to see it through **personally**

He accepts my instincts without question. "How soon do you want to leave?"

"Immediately."

Drake's POV

"What do you mean the Novans are coming to Asphodel?" igit out slowly, barely able to believe my ears.

My Beta, Hugo, **passes me a printed** missive, detailing an imminent visit from Bastien Durand and a full diplomatic envoy. "They're going to be here within the hour." He states contritely, bowing his head in apology. "The message came in last night after wed already left for the day."

My wolf sits up at attention, hackles raised. "Do we know why?" An unplanned and urgent visit like this is never a good sign. It **means** something is wrong, and they didn't want to give us any time to prepare a defense or cover up.

Do they know? My wolf wonders sharply.

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How could they? I think back, trying to smooth down the hairs standing on the back of my neck

“The dispatch simply says there are critical security matters to discuss,” Hugo shrugs,
Fuck My wolf aripes. Not Good

“You know what to do.” i direet Hugo

“Yes, Alpha “Before he reaches the door, the other wolt pulls up short, swearing under his breath

I cock my ears outward, immediately zeroing in on a rising cacophony from the water garden in front of the Pack House, The commotion is already rippling through the residence, sentries serambling to take up defensive positions and destroy evidence.

We're too late.

* They're already here.” I declare, resignation blooming in my bloodstream. “Brace yourself. This is going to be ugly.”

Bastien's POV

it's impossible

I smell her the moment I step out of the car, faint at first whispers and traces on the air and through the vaulted ceilings of the opulent Pack House. Axel is already going berserk, despite the fact that it can't be true. We must be imagining it.

Do you smell that? I ask Aiden and Donovan as the Eros officials lead us inside

I wasn't sure I was right. Aiden confirms, I thought I must be misremembering but

It's Selene. I growl, I don't know how, but it's her scent.

Bastien, she's dead. Donovan reminds me unhelpfully

I know my mate's scent! Axel responds for me, speaking directly to my Betas' wolves in a true rarity

Just take it easy, this could be some sort of trick Aiden advises.

I knew it. Axel is clashing for control, running himself ragged trying to break free. I knew she wasn't gone. He rages,

There were always a lot of things off about her death. I remind them. Things that didn't make sense I never felt our connection break, I never felt her go the way my mother did when Dad died,

So what you think the Eros's took her and staged the fire? Donavon inquires, To what end?

I don't kn- At that moment Drake Cavanaugh appears at the top of the staircase overlooking the foyer, and all thought leaves my head. While I could smell hints and whiffs of my mate lingering in the public garden and communal spaces of the house, the Eros Alpha reeks of her

They've been together very recently, and from the strength of the aroma, they're together often. The only reason he isn't already dead is because their scents aren't intertwined in the way of mates. He hasn't marked her, not she him.

Aiden and Donavon's strong hands and the barrier of Cavanaugh's own guards prevent me from launching my body at the other man. "Where is she, what have you done with her?!" I thunder, fangs salivating,

"Good to see you too, Durand," Drake drawls, descending the stairs with easy swagger "take it you're looking for someone?"

"If you've hurt her I swear to the Goddess you will not live to see the moon rise." I vow, thrashing against the wolves restraining

me

"Am I supposed to know who we're talking about?" Drake replies, nonchalant.

My wolf breaks out of my body with a roar, shredding my clothes and bursting forth in a tomado of black fur that throws off all constraints. Betas and guards scramble to contain the threat and shield the Eros Alpha, but Drake simply stands there assessing my furious, glowing eyes and hostile bearing with cool disinterest. "I don't understand you, Durand" He announces, "if you were too much of a fool to appreciate what you had until it was gone, that's no fault of mine,"

"What are you talking about?" Aiden demands, his own wolf pushing at the surface

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"Your Alpha seems to think I've taken something from him." Drake replies, rolling his eyes. "But I assure you I've done nothing of the sort." He continues down the stairs with a lethal expression. "What's more, I don't give out personal information about my pack members – no matter who's asking." Another grumble of rage escapes me and Drake continues, "In my experience if a she wolf feels the need to hide from a man, she has good reason."

"Here's the problem, Cavanaugh." Donavon interrupts, We're talking about the Alpha's mate, who was a target for kidnapping and eventually murdered – or so we believed,

How are we to know she's here of her own free will, unless we can hear it from her directly?"

"You can't." Drake answers unapologetically,

"Then we're going to have a problem." Alden hisses menacingly.

Drake surveys our aggressive demeanor and belligerent poses, exasperation clear on his face. After a moment he sighs, pulling out a cell phone and bringing it to his ear. "We have a situation." He says when the line clicks open. "I need you to meet me at the pack house, right now." His green eyes flash in my direction, "Come alone."

I change into a fresh set of clothes while we wait, my questions, threats and demands falling on deaf ears. After ten minutes the scent of honeysuckle and freshly fallen snow begins to grow stronger, no longer residue left behind in past wanderings, but the pure, undiluted source moving nearer.

I'm out the door in a heartbeat, racing out of the pack house and into the water garden like a man possessed. At first it's only her scent, the intoxicating perfume I was sure I would never smell again. I breathe it in greedily, scanning the public park for the aroma's origin.

My heart stops when I see her, and it doesn't start again.

This is a dream, it has to be. A cruel twist of memory conjured into my sleeping mind. Any minute now I'll wake up in the car, hours **away from Asphodel** and heartbroken all over again.

Selene stands directly across from me on one of the floating pathways, bathed in golden sunlight and more beautiful than any of **the flowers** surrounding us. She wears a short sundress, her luscious hair flowing freely down her back and eyes of blue and violet glowing out from behind thick black lashes. She's watching me sharply, frozen in her tracks with a tumult of emotion flickering behind her carefully guarded expression.

When our eyes meet the earth crumbles beneath my feet, and I know she feels it too. The world around us disappears, our

surroundings fading to a dull gray blur and leaving only Selene in full, breathtaking color. Axel howls with joy, calling to his mate in a fit of pure instinct even though we both know it can never be answered.

Only this time, it is.

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#Chapter 42 Reunion

Selene's POV

Luna's melodic bay rises to meet the call of Bastien's wolf, sounds only we two can hear. I try with all my might to reign her back in. Luna, I groan internally, cut it out!

I can't help it! She exclaims. He's calling me.

Get it together. I snap. He's no good, and he can't find out about Lila.

This is a disaster. I can't believe Drake didn't warn me when he called. I am not prepared to face Bastien, especially not when my wolf has lost her head at the mere sight of him,

Though she was still with me after I escaped Garrick, Luna had buried herself so deeply in my heart that our connection became completely blocked. Neither of us could feel the other, and my wolf never met our mate. Things might have been different if Bastien had ever marked me, but he hadn't wanted me without Luna, so she stayed hidden until our daughter was born.

Lila is the most precious gift I've ever received, and bringing her into the world unlocked Luna's trapped spirit. Looking back, I think she started to return the moment I conceived. My wolf senses began to resurface long before Lila actually arrived, but freeing Luna completely made it possible for me to love and appreciate my child as a mother should. My wolf healed my fractured soul, if not my broken heart.

Luna whines as I cross the garden, coming to stand in front of my ex-husband. Goddess I'd forgotten how handsome he is; how tall. It doesn't feel right to be so near him without our bodies touching, it takes all my strength not to reach out to him. "Hello Bastien."

Whatever he was expecting, it clearly wasn't this. His silver eyes stop their hungry head-to-toe scan of my body, settling on my face and blinking in surprise. I can see the gears turning in his head, piecing together the puzzle of my presence here and replacing shock with confusion and anger. "Is that really all you have to say to me?"

I cock my head to the side. "What would you have me say?"

“I thought you were dead!” He barks, making Luna tuck her tail between her legs.

Unlike my wolf, I have more than enough bad memories and regrets to withstand his ire. “Oh I’m sorry, did my funeral get in the way of your wedding plans?”

Bastien looks like he might explode. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“Oh I forgot,” I press my palm to my cheek. “Silly me, it can’t have gotten in the way because you didn’t bother going.”

Just then, Aiden appears at our side. “Listen, I think we all appreciate that this is a very difficult and emotional situation, but I really don’t think you want to have this conversation in public.”

Bastien and I both look around, realizing we’ve gathered quite an audience. Reluctantly we pause our reunion to move into the pack house, heading for Drake’s sound-proofed office.

“I’m sorry, are you really angry that I didn’t go to your fake funeral?” Bastien grumbles behind me as we ascend the stairs.

“I didn’t set that fire Bastien, I didn’t do anything other than disappear. You assumed I was dead and you threw the funeral.” The bitterness I still carry prompts me to add, “Granted, I doubt you asked many questions. Having me out of the way had to have made your life easier.”

A huge hand catches my arm just above the elbow, pulling me to a halt while electricity zings through my nerve-endings. “I saw your body!” He growls, “The DNA matched yours.”

“What?” My face twists up in confusion. “That’s not possible.”

“I assure you it is.” He corrects me harshly. “Your barbecued mate is not a sight you forget.”

Bastien’s warm, tingling skin leaves mine as we continue walking. This doesn’t make any sense. “Why would someone rescue me and then go back to plant a fake body?” I question aloud.

“What do you mean, ‘someone rescued you’? You said you just disappeared.” He counters.

“Yes, after I woke up in the forest outside Elysium half-dead from smoke-inhalation.” Bitterness coats my tongue. “Clearly someone cared about me more than you did, because they pulled me out of the fire just in time.”

“Selene, I didn’t have my phone with me when you tried to call.” Bastien implores me to understand, “If I’d known *you were* in trouble I would have dropped everything.”

Like hell. There’s no way he let his phone out of his sight in the middle of a kidnapping situation. He ignored that call, just like he ignored my calls every other time I needed him. “It doesn’t matter.” I wave off his excuses. “That’s ancient history *now*.”

“It isn’t.” Bastien insists, “I’ve lived in nothing but regret for three years. There’s so much I have to explain, so much…” He trails off as the office doors close behind us. “Goddess I can’t believe you’re really alive.”

When Bastien moves forward like he’s about to hug me, I jump out of the way. “I’m not interested in excuses and lies. I don’t want to hear your explanations.” Crossing my arms over my chest, I shift to stand next to Drake, forming a united front against my ex. “Asphodel is my home now.

Bastien glowers at the Eros Alpha, “Was this your doing then? The rescue, the body?”

“I didn’t know Selene was alive until after the funeral.” Drake reveals, gesturing to me pointedly. “She walked for *two* weeks through rogue territories to get here. She came to the Eros Pack of her own free will, and she’s been under my protection since.”

A deep rumble vibrates in Bastien’s chest, and Luna quivers with desire. Seriously? I mutter in internal exasperation.

It’s not my fault. Luna counters defensively. He smells so good.

Bastien’s claws extend. She’s still my wife.”

“No,” I object immediately. “I rejected you.”

His molten gaze skewers me. “I never accepted.”

“But…” I sputter in confusion, the rejection was your idea in the first place! You remarried the second you were free!”

Bastien looks so bewildered I almost believe him when he turns on Drake. “What in the Goddess’s name have you been telling her?”

“Nothing that wasn’t common knowledge in Elysium.” Drake argues without remorse. “Everyone said you were going to marry Arabella before the month was out.”

My attention ping pongs back and forth between them. “You mean, you didn’t?”

The muscle in Bastian's angular jaw twitches. "Those rumors are three years old. I suppose you conveniently forgot to tell Selene when they didn't pan out?" He suggests gruffly. After all, it's not like we haven't been in contact."

For a moment I let myself be distracted, looking at Drake in hurt and uncertainty before regaining my senses. What's one omission compared to everything Bastian put me through. I give myself a little shake, "Stop it. It doesn't matter whether you remarried, or that you didn't agree to the rejection." I remark firmly. "My life is here now, so if you came here to bring me home then I'm sorry – I'm not going anywhere."

"That's not why I came." His deep voice scrapes over my skin, sending a shiver down my spine, "I didn't know you were alive until I got here and smelled you."

"Then why did you come?"

Something appears to click in his head, and his expression darkens even further. "Because I still have a shadow tip line for the Calypso pack's bounty on Volana wolves. You're not as safe here as you think. Someone reported you."

"But you just said you didn't know I was here." I remind him.

He cuts his eyes to Drake. "Are there any other Volanas in the pack?"

Panic lances through me – there is one other Volana wolf living in Asphodel, one I would do absolutely anything to protect. Along with Bastien's absence, realizing my baby inherited the Volana gene was the only cloud over the happiest day of my life.

Lila is still too little to understand what it means to be a Volana, or for any of her playmates to know she's different, but when I lay awake at night worrying as every mother does, this is the exact scenario which terrifies me most. The idea that Blaise might find

out about Lila, that anyone might hurt her for the blood I passed down to her, is my worst nightmare.

Being reported myself used to petrify me, but now I find myself praying that I was the one who was reported. Anything so long as it wasn't Lila.

"No." Drake lies smoothly, not even glancing my way. "There are no other Volanas in Asphodel."

Bastien's focus returns to me, a look of grim determination set on his face. "Then you were the she-wolf they reported, and you are also the only true Volana that has ever been reported to the line in more than three years." He shares. "We have to assume you're on the Calypsos' radar, and we have to find out who called in the tip."

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#Chapter 43 Volana Child

Third POV

A decade of planning, three and a half years of hard work, and it might all be undone by a fucking tip line.

I've gotten lax, lazy and discouraged by my plans' low yields. Somehow I missed the developments in the Calypso pack, the search for Volana wolves that could return Selene to Bastien's orbit.

In some ways it was inevitable. Bastien was bound to visit Eros lands one day, but I always imagined I'd have time to prepare, time to obscure Selene's presence in Asphodel and erase her scent. I would have been able to hide her, if I'd only had the time.

Granted, it's not as if things were going off without a hitch before. In fact, Bastien has proved to be imminently more resilient than I predicted. Rather than crumbling under grief and the crushing pressure of leadership, he's persevered, growing even stronger and sharper than before.

Maybe I should have killed Selene after all. If Bastien's mate had truly died he would never have been able to recover, let alone make a comeback. Even so, I could not bring myself to destroy such an innocent life, no matter her relationship with my cousin.

She understands what it's like to have everything stolen. She understands having to rebuild a life from scratch, and not having any power or control in your own fate. Not like Bastien and his father, not like the Betas and leaders of the Nova Pack who have never wanted for anything, who have known only power and privilege. They owe their entire lives to accidents of fate, lucking out by being born first or being born wealthy.

It's not as if I was born without any advantages myself, or like I haven't enjoyed any turns of good luck. The difference is that I have also lost. I paid costs no one should bear, despite deserving so much better. I may be at the top of my game, but I could have achieved so much more by now if I was leading the Novas; they are the most powerful pack on the continent, second only to the Calypsos. At their helm I could turn one pack into an empire.

One day soon I will see the fruits of my labor, when I finally destroy my cousin and take my rightful place as Elysium's Alpha. But first I have to find a way to get Selene away from Bastien, and make sure he never learns about Lila. I need him weak and vulnerable, to take away his reasons to live- not give him more to hang onto.

I don't understand the Calypsos' hunt for Volana wolves, but I don't particularly care about that – so long as Selene is far away from Bastien. She's going to have to leave Eros territory, at least for a little while. I hate to see her start over yet again, but she's done it twice already – what's one more time?

Bastien's POV

"How do we know you aren't saying all this to scare me into coming back to Elysium?" Selene questions, her slender arms wrapped protectively around herself.

Axel is pulling at my limbs, it's our job to soothe her, she shouldn't have to comfort herself.

If we go near her now she'll spook. I argue.

He refuses to listen. She has her wolf again. He purrs, sending out waves of affection to the animal lurking beneath the tiny brunette's skin. She can feel the bond.

Selene stiffens slightly, narrowing her eyes in my direction and shifting restlessly. Feeling it doesn't seem to be softening her up.

Cavanaugh has been lying to her, whispering all sorts of vile conspiracies in her ear. Axel asserts fiercely, we just have to explain.

It's not just Cavanaugh. I admit ruefully, alive or dead, we still parted on very bad terms.

We have to fight –

Of course we're going to fight for her. I growl, cutting Axel off. We simply can't do it the way we used to. She's grown up: she's stronger now, more sure of herself. I'm afraid the days of cuddling her into submission are gone.

"I wouldn't lie about this." I admonish the accusation with stern rebuke, "you know better than to think I'd ever frighten you for my own gain."

#Chapter 43 Volana Child

"Hold on." Drake steps forward with raised palms, "Slow down and back up. Why are the Calypsos after Volana wolves?"

I return my attention to Selene, closely studying her countenance. "Does he know?"

My mate averts her gaze, shaking her head and biting her lip.

“Do you want to tell him? I prompt, stepping nearer.

Luminous two-toned eyes travel between us, and I can feel her uncertainty as if it's my own. After a long moment with no resolution, I decide, “If you're this unsure, the answer is no. This isn't something you take chances on.”

“Would one of you please explain what's going on here?” Drake grouses.

*All you need to know is that Blaise Denizen has bounty out for information on Volana wolves. He's been looking for one for years and if he finds Selene, he will kill her.”

Drake's eyes leap to Selene. “There's been a bounty on you all this time and you never told me?

Ha. Axel says smugly, Not so close now, are you swamp boy?

“I forgot.” If she tried telling me such a blatant lie, i'd threaten to put her over my knee, but somehow I don't mind her disrespecting the Eros Alpha this way.

“Why would he kill her?” Drake demands of me.

“Because he's a rabid dog without a leash.” I summarize coldly. “When I discovered the bounty I set up a shadow system so that we could intercept anyone trying to turn in a Volana before Denizen's own search could spread to this part of the continent.”

“You kept it going all this time? Selene interrupts abruptly, finally registering my earlier words with an odd catch in her voice.

*As I said, none of the reports we've received have ever identified a true Volana.” I explain. “But yes, I kept it going just in case.”

And thank the Goddess you did. Axel exalts.

Drake opens his mouth to speak, but Selene is still looking at me with wide, wary eyes. “Why?”

“I'll explain that and much more if you'd only give me the chance, little wolf.” I offer earnestly.

Instantly throwing up the walls which had surrounded her since we first reunited in the garden, Selene straightens up and glowers at me, ignoring my words.

“So you’re telling me that a member of my pack tried to report Selene to a homicidal maniac in exchange for money? Drake demands.

“In their defense, they probably don’t know Denizen is homicidal.” i concede.

“I’m sorry but I find it hard to believe anyone calls that kind of line thinking good things are going to result.” Drake snarks, “Did you trace the number?”

“That’s why we’re here.” I begin, changing my mind halfway through the thought, *Or it was. Now that I know my wife is alive there are a few other things I’d like to work out first.”

“Ex–wife.” Selene and Drake correct in unison.

Though I have plenty of anger for my mate at this moment, she isn’t the one I turn on. “Stay out of this. I bark at Cavanaugh,

“I’ll stay part of this until Selene asks me to do otherwise.” He answers, moving around his desk to stand in front of me. Which, if you hadn’t noticed, she isn’t doing.”

Almost a full head taller than the Eros wolf, I take great pleasure in towering over him, exuding undiluted menace, “Selene isn’t the one you should be worried about right now.” I instruct ominously, in fact, she isn’t yours to worry about ever.”

“She chose me.” Drake proclaims with bared fangs, “That means she is.”

“I would be very careful if I were you, Cavanaugh.” I snarl, you’re coming dangerously close to challenging me for my mate and ! guarantee that isn’t a fight you can win.”

Before any more threats can be spoken, Aiden and Donavon enter with Drake’s Beta, Hugo. “Enough of this. Donavon growls, fulfilling his inherent role as pack mediator. “Swinging your dicks around isn’t helping anything, and it’s especially not helping

46.43%

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#Chapter 43 Volana Child

Selene.”

“How am I supposed to help Selene when he won’t tell me why Denizen wants them?” Drake hisses.

“We don’t know that either-” Aiden starts, trailing off and surveying the Eros Alpha curiously. “Why *did* you say ‘them?’

“What?” Drake’s eyes widen almost imperceptibly, betraying the falsehood in his answer, “I meant Volanas as a whole.”

Donavon swears under his breath, and Aiden turns to face me with the bearing of an exhausted soldier. “Alpha,” He sighs, “We all forgot – in the excitement about Selene. the report wasn’t just about a woman.”

I finish the thought for him, a sense of foreboding spreading through my limbs. “It was a mother and child.”

As one, we turn to look at Selene, finding only an empty office and a very smug looking Cavanaugh.

She’s gone.

90.76%

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BOMANN 4 ESTRY

Selene’s POV

At first I hadn’t realized what Drake was doing when he joined my rebuttal about the status of my marriage, but as soon as Bastien turned away from me, I understood. If there’s one sure fire way to distract an Alpha, it’s to provoke their possessive instincts regarding their mate, and my friend’s willingness to enrage a bigger, stronger wolf gave me time to slip away.

By the time I get to the apartment I’ve changed routes and laid so many false trails i’m actually a bit afraid the Nova wolves might have beaten me home, but I’m counting on Drake to safeguard my location and force Bastien and his men to track me the old fashioned way.

I push into the apartment with a sigh of relief, dropping my keys on the table by the door and kneeling to intercept the tiny bundle of love already rushing my legs. I scoop up my giggling daughter, my heart swelling with happiness despite the urgency of our situation I’ll never get used to the rush of joy I feel every time I return home after being parted from her, as if it’s been years and not hours since I last cuddled her.

Hello my sweet pup. I croon, breathing in her perfect scent as I drop a few kisses to her hair. “I missed you. Did you have fun with Mrs. Brooks?”

The babysitter stands on cue, tidying up the kitchen table and smiling over at me. She was a doll. The elder woman reports, gathering her bag. “Same time tomorrow?”

“No actually. I correct “I’ve decided to take the weekend off, but I’ll call you about next week. I promise.

As soon as the door closes behind her, I look into the miniature mirror–image in my arms. Lila really is my carbon copy, in all ways but one. She has my hair and eyes, my skin and bone structure, my voice – but her expressions and mannerisms are all Bastien’s. I’m not sure how it happened, after all, aren’t those traits learned rather than inherited?

Apparently not because though my own features are gazing up at me, they’re wearing Bastien’s smile. It strikes me today more than ever. I still can’t believe he’s here, and I can’t believe how viciously Luna has been fighting me to be near him. Even now, holding the most important thing in my world, she complains

I want to go back, she whines, I miss him.

You don’t know him well enough to miss him. I snipe internally, I do and I promise, you don’t

Liar

I stride into the nursery, setting Lila down and beginning to throw clothes and toys into a bag while she tells me about her day in half–formed sentences and misshapen words. As much as I usually adore this part of the day, right now I don’t have an inch of brain space to focus on tales of coloring, puzzles and petting 2005

I have to figure out my next steps. I know we have to get out of the house, but I don’t have the first idea where to go. My immediate concern is Bastien, but there’s also the Calypsos to worry about. What are we going to do? What are we going to do The words play over and over in my head.

Go back to Bastien Luna offers unhelpfully. Our mate will protect us.

Our mate” didn’t want me at my worst, he doesn’t get to have me at my best. I argue

My phone pings, and I scramble to open the screen certain Drake is texting me with a warning about the Novans in

instead I find instructions of a different kind.

Get out of Asphodel.

A car and driver will be waiting at the first land crossing out of the Lethe Lagoon. Take the car leave the driver

A

The GPS has been pre programmed with an address known only by me, follow the directions and drive to the intended locatam Secure safe house has been prepared for your arrival. The residence is equipped with one month's worth of supplies.

Do not leave until the all clear has been given,

Further instructions will arrive as events develop

Be safe

Mommy. A little voice sounds to my right Are lsten?

I'm sorry angel, Mommy was distracted. I confess with a gentle smile Till tell you what if you can play by yourself for a few minutes, then we can go for a car ride and you can tell me absolutely everything about your day

"Car ride?" She squeaks excitedly her blue and violet eyes wide and excited Cars are such a rarity in Asphodel that even a short trip out of the marsh can be truly thrilling

*That's right. I grin. in fact, we might be in the car for a very long time

Bastien's POV

By the time I track down Selene's apartment they're already long gone.

After my mate snuck out of the Pack House and left me squabbling with her new – Well, whatever Drake is to her, my Betas reminder about the full extent of the tip we received threw me through a loop. I'd been so stunned to learn Selene was alive that everything that's happened in recent months flew out of my head. Even after I remembered the reason we came to Asphodel, my thoughts were too scattered to recall everything.

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“You’ll have to ask her that.” He smirks, “If you can find her.”

In the end it took my sentries three hours to find Selene’s home. In the three years since we parted my little wolf has learned a thing or two about evasive maneuvers and I can’t deny part of me is proud of how difficult it was to track her.

We found the cafe first, where I lingered to stare at the photo of the venue’s grand opening. Selene stood beaming next to the Alpha and his family, appearing almost exactly as she had when I saw her last. Other photos surrounded the first of notable visitors, special events and staff birthdays. The changes in my mate became more visible with every new snapshot as she transformed from haunted halfling to confident she-wolf.

My men scoured the space while I gazed dumbly at my beautiful, lost little wolf, wondering why she never talked about opening a cafe, or even working in Elysium. After it became clear she had not been to work in tours, we continued down the road to a modest apartment building covered in her scent.

We were on the stairs the first time I caught a whiff of a new aroma: like Selene, but decidedly not. The same delicate blend of snow and flowers, muddled with balsam and ash. Axel perked up at the first trace. What is that?

I think you mean, who is that.

We have to find it. He urges. It feels important.

By the time we entered the apartment, the second scent had risen to equal the strength of my mates as deeply ingrained in the home as she is.

Clearing the rooms one by one, we confirmed what was already obvious, Selene is not here. I moved through her cozy home even more slowly than I explored her cafe, taking in every sight, every detail. Her life here is so different than our life was in Elysium. I’m beginning to think I was an even worse husband than I knew. Was this what she always wanted and I just never saw? Never listened?

Axel has been whining from the moment we stepped inside, from the moment I realized to whom the second scent must belong. It’s obvious a child lives here. Even if it were not for the toys and sippy cups scattered through the home, the photos reveal all. Selene, glistening with sweat and exuding pure bliss as she cradles a newborn in the hospital a baby with two different colored

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 44

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Escape

Selene's POV

At first I hadn't realized what Drake was doing when he joined my rebuttal about the status of my marriage, but as soon as Bastien turned away from me, I understood. If there's one sure-fire way to distract an Alpha, it's to provoke their possessive instincts regarding their mate, and my friend's willingness to enrage a bigger, stronger wolf gave me time to slip away.

By the time I get to the apartment I've changed routes and laid so many false trails I'm actually a bit afraid the Nova wolves might have beaten me home, but I'm counting on Drake to safeguard my location and force Bastien and his men to track me the old fashioned way.

I push into the apartment with a sigh of relief, dropping my keys on the table by the door and kneeling to intercept the tiny bundle of love already rushing my legs. I scoop up my giggling daughter, my heart swelling with happiness despite the urgency of our situation. I'll never get used to the rush of joy I feel every time I return home after being parted from her, as if it's been years and not hours since last cuddled her.

"Hello my sweet pup." I croon, breathing in her perfect scent as I drop a few kisses to her hair. "I missed you. Did you have fun with Mrs. Brooks?"

The babysitter stands on cue, tidying up the kitchen table and smiling over at me. "She was a doll." The elder woman reports, gathering her bag. "Same time tomorrow?"

"No actually." I correct, "I've decided to take the weekend off, but I'll call you about next week." I promise.

As soon as the door closes behind her, I look into the miniature mirror-image in my arms. Lila really is my carbon copy, in all ways but one: She has my hair and eyes, my skin and bone structure, my voice – but her expressions and mannerisms are all Bastien's. I'm not sure how it happened, after all, aren't those traits learned rather than inherited?

Apparently not, because though my own features are gazing up at me, they're wearing Bastien's smile. It strikes me today more than ever. I still can't believe he's here, and I can't believe how viciously Luna has been fighting me to be near him. Even now, holding the most important thing in my world, she complains.

I want to go back, she whines, I miss him.

You don't know him well enough to miss him. I snipe internally, I do and I promise, you don't

Liar.

stride into the nursery, setting Lila down and beginning to throw clothes and toys into a bag while she tells me about her day in half-formed sentences and misshapen words. As much as I usually adore this part of the day, right now I don't have an inch of brain space to focus on tales of coloring, puzzles and petting zoos.

I have to figure out my next steps. I know we have to get out of the house, but I don't have the first idea where to go. My immediate concern is Bastien, but there's also the Calypsos to worry about. What are we going to do? What are we going to do? The words play over and over in my head.

Go back to Bastien. Luna offers unhelpfully. Our mate will protect us.

Our “mate” didn’t want me at my worst, he doesn’t get to have me at my best. I argue. My phone pings, and I scramble to open the screen, certain Drake is texting me with a warning about the Novans imminent arrival. Instead I find instructions of a different kind. Get out of Asphodel.

A car and driver will be waiting at the first land crossing out of the Lethe Lagoon. Take the car, leave the driver.

The GPS has been pre-programmed with an address known only by me, follow the directions and drive to the intended location. A secure safe house has been prepared for your arrival The residence is equipped with one month’s worth of supplies.

Do not leave until the “all clear” has been given.

Further instructions will arrive as events develop
be safe

Mommy,” A little voice sounds to my right, “Are listen?”

“I’m sorry angel, Mommy was distracted.” | confess with a gentle smile, “I’ll tell you what. If you can play by yourself for a few minutes, then we can go for a car ride, and you can tell me absolutely everything about your day”

“Car ride?!” She squeaks excitedly, her blue and violet eyes wide and excited Cars are such a rarity in Asphodel that even a short trip out of the marsh can be truly thrilling

“That’s right” | grin, “in fact, we might be in the car for a very long time.”

Bastien’s POV

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a r there could be no doubting they were mother and daughter

me from down a long hallway, and I follow the sound until I'm standing beside him in the doorway of

a nursery, complete with a mural of the full moon over Elysium.

I turn to Drake Cavanaugh, consumed by a riot of emotions too numerous to settle on just one. "No Volana children in Asphodel, huh?"

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 45

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 45

#Chapter 45 On the Run

Selene's POV

By now they'll have found the apartment.

By now Bastien will know about Lila.

Will he know she's his? Will he recognize his own scent, like a bonfire in the nighttime forest, blended with my own through the apartment? Will Drake be safe at my mate's mercy now the truth is out?

I glance at my daughter in the rearview mirror, counting down the minutes until we finally reach the safehouse. She's cozy in her carseat, playing with the cloth doll I gifted her at the equinox, babbling away happily in her own special language.

We've been driving for more than two hours, and I'm beginning to worry that I haven't heard from Drake yet. Surely he should have been in contact by now? Surely he should have checked in to make sure we made it to the meetup with his driver and were on the road.

"Mommy," Lila asks, catching me watching her. "Where we going?"

"We're going on an adventure." I answer, pushing away my worries and adopting a light-hearted tone.

Her tiny nose crinkles. "What's an venture?"

"It's when you go somewhere new, and have exciting and unexpected experiences." I explain, and do things you've never done before, and..* Run away from ex-husbands and psychopathic dictators, my unhelpful thoughts suggest. "Lots of things."

Lila hums thoughtfully, staring out the window as the landscape whizzes by. "Where's Rake?" She wonders, using her baby name for the Eros Alpha.

"Uncle Drake is with..." What do you call the father of a three-year-old who doesn't know he exists? "A friend of ours."

She perks up automatically. "Playing?"

"Yes." I latch onto the description. "They're playing... keep away."

"With a toy?" Lila suggests eagerly.

With great effort, I manage to keep the bitter sarcasm out of my voice, "With something our friend treated like a toy." I can't keep the smile from my face as I watch her intent expression. "And with something else, much more precious."

"I wanna play!" Lila exclaims, buying my flimsy falsehoods as only a child could.. "We'll play all you want when we get to..." Our fully furnished padded cell, intended to keep out serial killers and mad ax men, "the castle."

"We're going to a castle?!" She squeals. Whoops. "Well not a real one." I hedge, not wanting to get her hopes up. "Not like the ones from your books, but it's very high up

and very safe, just like a castle. They were built so that no one who wasn't invited in, could ever enter. We're going someplace just like that."

At least, I hope we are. I can't be certain how secure the home is until we arrive, and I have a bad feeling that if Bastien tracks us here, no security measures in existence will keep him out.

Which is why we should be with him, instead of alone in the middle of nowhere.

Would you please give it a rest, Luna? I beg. I know you're mad at me, I know you want Bastien, but you weren't there when we were together. You don't know what it was like, and Lila is more important.

Lila is the most important thing in the world. Luna agrees. I'm already waiting for the other shoe to drop. Luna has been impossible from the moment she caught sight of our mate, and I'm certain her agreement is a misdirect. She doesn't disappoint. And her father is the only other person who could understand that the way we do.

At best her father would use her to trap us, at worst he would claim her for himself and take her away from us. Is that what you

Waansowe energy

wwdamental part of ou bene i never shifted when I reached physical maturity, blocked by the poison I never came into my power out of her that part of my magle Now I'm grown and inally have an intact soul, but some wounds are too deep to heal

I never hinter te wolf hin, Ani probably never will most of the Ilmei'm so happy to be whole again that I don't feel *any*

more for the lone but Huht about how I'd give my left arm to transfo no matter how painful the procese

As the sun

is the car's headlights are automatically, and only ntiien minutes later, the ope pinge

Mounding the final bend in the road, a fortress like house comes into view, shielded on all sides by thick stone walle I pull into the

we and put the car park jumping out of the vehicle as soon as I can, and gathering Lila to explore our new residence

I'm running out of patience, Cavanaugh "I growi, "I know you know where she io" We're back in the Alpha's offee, pacing around each other like etteling vultures, each overflowing with rage, worry and resentment

I haven't had time to process all the revelations we discovered in Selene's apartment, least of which is the fact that she has a chiha i don't know much about children, but if I had to guess, her little girl is close to three years old, That would mean that Selene was either pregnant when she left Elyalum, or she became pregnant shortly thereafter

Is it possible i'm a father? Would she have smelled the change in her, even if the pregnancy was in its early stages?

More importantly, if I'm not the father, who is? Selene was impossibly sheltered before escaping Carriok, and has always been terribly skittish around men. Drake Cavanaugh would be the likeliest candidate, but if he fathered a child with my mate, why aren't they living together? Why isn't he in the photos/Why hasn't he marked her?

In the end it doesn't matter who fathered her child. It's still an innocent in need of protection, and one created by the love of my life, a miracle of her creation. Just looking at the angelic little face in the photos makes me want to rip Cavanaugh limb from limb for endangering her. For keeping them from me is doing just that.

"I told you when you arrived that protect the privacy of my pack members," Drake bites back. "I produced Selene so you could see she was not being held under duress, but that is the extent of my responsibility."

"Like hell!" i thunder. "She's being hunted by."

"Hy a husband she does not want!" Drake bellows, "You need to accept it, Bastien. You had your chance, and you threw it away. You mistreated and neglected her, you chose a cruel, vapid socialite over the woman created for you by the Goddess herself. You have only yourself to blame."

"You speak of what you do not know!" I hiege, "I never looked at another woman, from the first moment I saw Golene. I loved her with every Aber of my being" i profess, my throat burning, "But she lost her wolf and couldn't feel our bond. I loved her so much I was willing to let her go. I didn't do it in time, but I was going to."

"Oh and I suppose that now she has her wolf back, you think she's just going to fall into your arms," Drake scoffs in disgust.

"This isn't about us!" i thunder. "This is about the fact that someone in your pack tried to report a woman you're supposed to be protecting and her daughter to a man who would kill her." Alden and Donavon have ceased trying to hold me back, instead standing by to watch and mop up the blood when it inevitably spills. "You've failed them both. You are not equipped to protect them, and it's time you sacrifice your pride and let someone who is capable take over!"

"I've heard enough." Drake nods to his guards, "You might be the Alpha in Elysium, but I am Alpha here, and no one speaks to me this way, no matter their excuse. I can see the

sentries approaching in my periphery, bracing myself for an imminent attack, "Take Me Durand into custody, let's see if some time in a cell doesn't cool his temper"

"You're going to regret this," I caution Cavanaugh as his men move in. "I'm going to find Selene, one way or another I'm telling

#Chapter 45 On the Run

"Famous last words." Drake drawls, giving the signal to attack.

Wolves fly at me from all directions, determined to restrain me and take me into custody. Unfortunately for them. I'm not just an Alpha who's lost his temper. I'm an Alpha who's been separated from his mate, and they now stand between us.