

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 91

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Chapter 91

#Chapter 91 Coming Home

Selene's pov

Leaving Asphodel is harder than I imagined. I've been homesick for Elysium ever since I left, but I have so many fond memories here. This is where Lila took her first steps and said her first words, this is where her young life began,

Bastien seems to sense my sadness, he's been hovering over me all morning in the agitated way men do when they're faced with a problem they don't know how to solve. I think he feels guilty for putting his foot down about the move, but not guilty enough to delay it. I suppose prolonging the ordeal would only make things worse anyway.

Lila is actually taking this better than anyone, though I don't know how long that's going to last. She's been running around the docks while the men pack the boat, saying goodbye to all the fish and manatees, hugging her favorite buildings and even attempting to crawl into the mangroves to kiss them farewell. I almost fell into the canal pulling her back, which would have been the perfect end to a very stressful week.

Though it was probably foolish of me to live in a city like this without learning to swim, I've never been able to get over my fear of drowning. Not since I fell into the pool the night Drake and I met. With much cajoling and even a few tears, the Eros Alpha convinced me to let him teach Lila, but I was never able to get back in the water myself.

At least that will be one less thing to worry about in Elysium. I can trade my concerns about dying in a watery grave for ones about Blaise Denizen and faceless enemies lurking in the shadows. How lucky am I?

Bastien loops his big arm around my shoulders when all of my belongings are finally stowed in the hull of our chartered ferry, "It's time, baby."

Clamping my eyes shut to try and ward off the inevitable tears, I nod. "Come on Lila bean," I say, bundling her into my arms, and taking comfort in her pure scent. "It's time for a new adventure."

I can only pray it's less eventful than our last one.

Bastien's pov

I feel like an absolute ogre.

Selene's obvious sorrow as we float away from Asphodel makes me want to rake myself over hot coals. I hate knowing I'm the one who put that pained expression on her face, and even worse is knowing there's not a damned thing I can do to fix it.

The city is growing smaller and smaller across the lagoon, and even Lila's exuberant mood seems to have become subdued. I imagine it feels very different to talk about leaving, than it does to actually watch the only home you've ever known fade into the distance, especially at such a young age. Axel whines as Lila's lower lip begins to quiver, "Mommy, we come back?" She asks shakily.

"One day." Selene promises, trying to sound composed. Tucking her more securely under my arm, I give shoulders a reassuring squeeze.

"Next week?" Lila asks hopefully.

"No angel," I can hear the strain in my mate's voice, "it's going to be a while before we can visit, but you're going to love Elysium." She says, redirecting the pup's train of thought. There are forests as far as the eye can see, plus whole mountains to explore and a beautiful lake. I'm going to take you to all my favorite places."

"And we live with Daddy?" Lila chirps, successfully distracted.

"Yes." I answer for Selene, leaning down to kiss my daughter's nose. "We're all going to live together and be very happy." Internally I'm keeping my fingers crossed, desperately hoping that this is a promise I'll be able to keep.

I don't know how the pack is going to respond to Selene's return, in fact I have a bad feeling more than one person will have something to say about her hiding Lila's existence from the pack. Nonetheless I'm determined to make things better for her this time. I won't stand for anyone making her life difficult. I'm still haunted by her words in the hospital: those hopeless questions about why she's experienced so much hardship, her fear that Lila's path will be as difficult as hers.

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Despite all this, despite my guilt over failing her so completely, I'm overjoyed to be bringing my mate home. The house hasn't been the same since Selene left and I never thought I would see her again, let alone live with her. It's as if the Goddess delved into

all of my wildest dreams and manifested them into reality. Sometimes I still have to pinch myself just to be sure this is all real.

I'm eager to return home for other reasons too, not the least of which is getting away from this strange floating city. I don't know how the Eros wolves can be so happy surrounded by water. I don't feel right unless I'm in the mountains, and it makes me horribly restless to be so far from the woodlands.

Then there's the pack. I always feel uneasy leaving for more than a few days, even though I know the council has been taking care of things in my stead. I would have heard if anything was going wrong at home, but I'll still feel better once I'm back in Elysium where I belong.

More importantly, there are answers in Elysium: Answers about the forged DNA tests; answers about how my mate survived Arabella's fire; how her death was faked without her knowledge. Neutralizing the threat Blaise Denizen poses is my number one priority, but none of the things that have gone wrong these last few years have been his doing. From the day my father was murdered, something has been very wrong in my city, and I'm only just discovering how deep the rifts plunge.

Selene

Lila and I sleep through most of the car ride to Elysium, still recovering from everything that has happened in the last few weeks. There were a couple of tears when we finally began our journey on land, but Lila loves the car so much that her sadness was short lived.

For a while I entertained myself by simply watching her take in the world whirring past the windows, but her mid-afternoon nap put an end to that. Before I knew it I was falling asleep too, dozing to the soft music emanating from the radio and the feel of Bastien's steady hand on my thigh.

It's dark by the time I wake, confusing my bleary eyes as I return to consciousness. Looking around to try and figure out what disturbed my slumber, my attention quickly lands on Bastien, who is leaning over me with a tender smile.

No longer ensconced in the driver's seat, my mate is standing in the open passenger door, looking impossibly handsome. "Poor baby." He croons, "You were tired."

"Hmph," I moan reluctantly, "why did you wake me?" –

His warm chuckle envelopes me as I stretch, glancing behind me to check on Lila – who isn't there. The car seat is empty, and I turn back to Bastien in confusion, absorbing our surroundings for the first time. We're not in Elysium, and we're not at a restaurant or hotel. The vehicles bearing all my boxes appear to have gone ahead, while our car and

the one transporting Aiden, Donovan and Odette remains here on the side of some remote mountain.

“Don’t worry, Lila is with my mother. Getting ready.” My mate shares before I can ask.

Relaxing slightly, it takes a moment for his words to sink in, “Getting ready for what?”

“Well,” He replies with a secretive grin, “there’s one more thing we have to do before we go home.”

“What? No, we did everything – I’m sure of it.” I argue, flipping through my mental checklist for the move. I crossed off every last task from our to-do list before we left, made sure everything was accounted for. I’m certain we didn’t forget a thing.

“Not everything.” Bastien corrects me with that same smile. Suddenly I realize why he looks so dashing at the moment – he’s wearing a suit, a suit he definitely wasn’t wearing earlier.

“Selene,” Bastien continues, taking my hand and kneeling down. “Three and a half years ago, on the absolute worst day of my entire life, you rejected me.” There’s a decidedly haunted look in his molten irises, and pain swells in my chest as I remember those horrible moments in the burning cabin, “I never accepted it, but I think we’re in need of a fresh start even so.”

My heart thumps a little bit more loudly as I develop an inkling of hope. Is he saying what I think he is? “You are the love of my life; the twin half of my soul; the mother of my pup.” Bastien professes deeply, “I never want to spend another day apart from you, and I never want you to doubt how desperately I adore you.”

Unable to take so many sweet words, I lean forward to kiss my mate, but he catches my face between his powerful hands, staring deep into my eyes. “I didn’t do right by you the first time around, but I’m determined to do right this time, little wolf.” Bastien’s voice is hoarse with emotion, “We’ve been through a lot, but I don’t want to live in the past anymore. I want to put all the pain and sadness behind us and start our new life together the way we should have started it in the beginning.”

“Selene,” He says my name like a prayer, “Will you marry me – again?”

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#Chapter 92 Vow Renewal

Bastien's pov

At first I wasn't sure springing a vow renewal on Selene was a good idea. She doesn't tend to do well with surprises, but my mother convinced me that this surprise would be well received. It just goes to show you should always listen to your mother – when you've got one like mine anyway.

Selene is beaming, her blue and violet eyes shining and hair still disheveled from sleep. Sliding her hands around my neck she asks, "Can I kiss you now?"

Sweeping my thumb over an escaped tear, I purr, "You have to answer me first."

Selene giggles joyfully, "Of course – of course I'll marry you again."

I don't wait for her to kiss me, instead swooping in and pulling her from the car. Hitching her up against me, I finally dip my head to join our lips, slanting my mouth over hers and drinking her in. I only intended it to be a quick prelude, a sample of what is to come later. Instead I find myself getting lost in my mate, extracting kiss after kiss from her swollen lips and groaning when her delectable tongue slips into my mouth.

"Come on, you two." An amused voice sounds behind us, "that's for after the wedding."

Turning, I find my mother dressed in an elegant silver gown, watching us with unabashed delight and holding Lila by the hand. My pup is wearing a pristine – though I'm sure it won't stay that way for long – white dress with a silky pink sash tied around her waist. She's twisting left and right so the filming skirts float around her like a bell and grinning up at us.

"Oh Lila!" Selene exclaims, pushing at my chest to signal I should put her down. Of course I don't. I wait until she turns a little glare on me and give her one last thorough smooch before setting her on her feet, sending her off with a swat to her behind.

Her head whips around when my hand connects, her long dark hair flipping and shining in the moonlight. I think she probably meant to glare again, but she can only smile, eyes twinkling with carnal amusement.

When she reaches our daughter she oohs and ahs, "Come here munchkin, let me see this beautiful dress." She twirls the pup around before scooping her up and kissing her tiny hands, making little nibbling noises as she says, "You look so pretty I could just eat you up!"

Lila laughs and chirps, showing her mother all the flourishes and details on the frock before bouncing up and down with unrestrained glee. "You get married now?"

“She has to get dressed first.” Mom says, brushing a strand of hair from Selene’s eyes, “It won’t be your original gown, but I think I’ve found something equally lovely.”

“Thank you Odette,” Selene murmurs, pressing a kiss to Mom’s cheek, “and you look stunning, by the way.”

“Sure, sure.” Mom waves her off as they retreat towards the changing tents we set up earlier, “You know, I remember the days when people used to make a fuss like that over me.” She teases, nodding towards Lila.

“So do I,” Selene jokes, but I think our glory days have passed, my Lila bean just shows everyone else up- don’t you angel?”

Lila nods firmly, and their laughter lingers long after they disappear from sight.

Selene

“Mommy, you look like a princess.” Lila murmurs in awe.

“Thank you, my love.” I reply with a grin. I have to admit, I do look like something out of one of her story books. My reflection glitters in the long mirror someone managed to cart into the tent. The first time I got married my dress was wispy and ethereal: a gauzy, fragile thing exactly like I was.

This time Odette found a creation that seems to have been spun from threads of pure moonlight. I’ve never seen anything like it. The pearlescent fabric hugs my modest curves, the neckline plunging to my waist and thin straps leaving my back and sides

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#Chapter 92 Vow Renewal

almost completely bare. The skirt billows out into a cascade of shimmering chiffon, with a modest train that flows behind me as I walk

It’s still delicate, but where my first gown looked like it would dissolve in water and made me feel like a child playing dress up, this one is anything but. The fragile looking straps support the full weight of the garment, belying their appearance with untold strength, and the risque cut announces loud and clear that I’m a woman grown. I feel powerful and beautiful in a way I rarely have before, and I can’t thank Odette enough.

“Enough.” She says after my third outpouring of thanks, “let’s not waste all this beauty on us. Your mate is waiting.”

My heart is pounding as we leave the tent, but it stops completely when I see the altar.

What I took as a deserted mountainside is anything but. Below the tent, an enchanted woodland sprawls, wreathed in fairy lights and wildflowers. Lanterns cast glowing amber light over the petal-strewn pathway at my feet, which winds down to a shaded meadow lined with towering trees. And at the center of it all is a simple stone altar, where my mate now stands looking up at me with the exact awe-struck expression our daughter wore moments ago.

Odette and Lila are already down below, and I begin my descent with electricity pulsing through my veins. Bastien's expression has gone from worshipful to ravenous and possessive, then back again at least three times. I can't take my eyes off him, and I can feel his passion for me as keenly as I feel my own desire.

I can't recall ever being happier than I am in this moment. Even Lila's birth was tainted by my mate's absence, but here we all are – together at last. This is how it was always meant to be, I realize. If it hadn't been for Arabella and Garrick, if there were no Blaise Denizens and no scheming saboteurs, this might have been how our life was from the beginning.

Bastien and I would have met in some perfectly innocuous way. I wouldn't have needed three years of coddling and struggle just to be rejected. I wouldn't have been forced to live as a shadow myself for so long, or be separated from my soulmate when we needed each other most.

We would have gathered at an altar just like this, pledged ourselves to each other and welcomed Lila's arrival with nothing but joy. We would never have to run, never have to look over our shoulders for bloodthirsty Volana hunters. For a moment the unfairness of it all rises up from a bitter well inside of me. Why couldn't that be our life, our story? Why did we have to go through all this pain just to get here?

I think Bastien can sense the direction of my thoughts – it seems like he's able to do that more and more since he marked me – because he walks to greet me at the bottom of the makeshift steps, pure love radiating from his handsome face.

"You are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen." He tells me reverently, taking my hand as I descend into the meadow. His arms snake around me in a protective cage when I land on the mossy floor, and then his lips are at my ear, "Don't think about what might have been, sweetheart." He encourages, "Think only about what lies ahead. We have a lifetime of happiness ahead of us, and we'll appreciate it all the more because of how hard it was to get here."

Leaning into his warmth, I nod in agreement. He's right. There's no use dwelling on the things we cannot change, and this moment is all the sweeter because of how hard we fought to get here. So I let Bastien lead me down the aisle where the small

gathering of shifters await, and feel nothing but joy as we start our lives together once more.

We say our vows under the full moon and stars, reaffirming our commitment to love and cherish each other for the rest of our days, and kissing to the raucous cheers of our family and friends. I'm crying by the time it's over, and even Bastien looks like he might shed a tear.

But then the time for pretty words and human traditions is over, and we look to the forest to seal our bond in a way we've only done once before.

Bastien guides me out of the clearing and down the hill, before pressing me up against an ancient tree and kissing me senseless. My mate strips my gown off of me with relentless patience, kissing, licking and nibbling every inch of flesh he bares and driving me absolutely out of my mind with need.

With a wolfish grin, Bastien pulls away from me, and I realize I'm not going to get what I crave for a long time to come. "Time to shift little wolf." He announces huskily.

Oh I'll shift all right, I think mutinously, I'll give him the chase of his life for denying me this way.

Without offering him any warning, I transform and take off into the night, running as fast as my four legs can carry me. Bliss bubbles up inside of me when I here my mate howling in the distance, warning me that the hunt has begun.

Bastien is chasing me now, and Goddess, I can't wait to be caught.

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#Chapter 93 The Honeymoon is Over

Selene

In the dawning light of early morning, Bastien and I emerge from the forest, dressed in our wedding garb once more. Lila and Aiden are already awake, though the Beta looks like he would rather have slept in. I'm sure the excitement of her first camping trip rendered Lila incapable of staying in bed for a single moment longer than she had to, and her uncle Aiden must have been the weak link among her babysitters.

He's rubbing his eyes, clearly regretting caving to Lila's adventurous whims. She's currently seated beside him in front of the campfire, but she has the squirrely energy of a pup who's been told she can't go play until she finishes her breakfast.

When she sees us, Lila looks askance at our disheveled state. "Mommy you're dirty." Her little head tilts to the side as she takes in the sight of my muddy limbs beneath my dress. Bastien isn't any cleaner, but his suit covers him a hundred times better than my gown. "What were you doing?" ..

Her question makes me flush, less from embarrassment than the heated memories of our wedding night. I can still hear the predatory howls of my mate echoing in my head. I can still feel the wind on my face as I flew through the trees, my pulse racing faster the closer his howls drew.

I didn't make it easy for Bastien. I evaded him for as long as I could, but he cornered me in a sunken stream bed and pinned me to the ground, refusing to let me up until I surrendered. I went from showing him my furry belly to lying beneath the massive black wolf in my human form, feeling impossibly vulnerable with the vicious beast looming over me.

When I reached for his velvety muzzle Bastien transformed back to a man, though he took me with such raw, animalistic vigor that I wondered just how close to the surface his wolf remained. He ravished me completely, rutting me right there on the ground then up against a tree in the shallow stream... on the ground again..

Eventually I had to shift back into my wolf and snarl at him just to give my poor body a break. Thankfully my insatiable husband took mercy on me, at least I thought he had. No sooner had I returned to my human form than Bastien coaxed me into letting him take a look at my tender sex, but I put a stop to his mischief the moment his tongue came out to soothe me" – as he put it.

"We were celebrating." Bastien answers Lila, noting my distraction with a smug smirk.

"That's one word for it." Aiden snorts under his breath.

"Celebrating how?" Lila's pert nose crinkles in confusion, but a moment later her features light up as she arrives at a possible explanation for all the mud, "jumping in puddles?"

"No my love," I laugh. Jumping in puddles is Lila's all time favorite pastime. "We let our wolves out to play."

This announcement sends Lila into a tizzy. She abandons her breakfast and runs up to Bastien, who crouches down to her height and pulls her in for a cuddle before she can ask her question. Lila only indulges him a moment, quickly wriggling free and bouncing up and down on the balls of her feet. "Daddy, I want a wolf ride!"

Now it's my turn to feel smug. That'll teach him not to waste all his energy trying to rut me into a coma.

"Hmm," Bastien pretends to think, rubbing his chin with his thumb and forefinger. "What's the magic word?"

"Please!" Lila immediately begs, please, please, please!"

"That's my girl." Bastien praises her, straightening up to unbutton his shirt while Lila dances around in triumph.

With the sound of my daughter's high pitched, "yaaaayyyy!" playing in the background, I study the worn lines around Bastien's rugged countenance. Unlike me, he didn't get to nap through yesterday afternoon. He drove all day and was up all night, and now he's paying the price.

"I bet you regret not sleeping now." I sing in a told-you-so sort of tone.

My mate arches a challenging brow and drags me up against him, taking my mouth in a demanding kiss. His soft lips are relentless, and his skilled tongue teases my mouth open and thrusts inside with long, sensuous strokes that evoke thoughts of a very different organ. Despite my soreness, Bastien's dominance makes my thighs clench, trying to soothe the ache he's creating at their apex.

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He doesn't release me until I'm panting with need, a devilish glint in his silver eyes as he replies, "Not in the least."

It's a good thing I'm starving and worn out, or I might be tempted to pull Bastien away for another round. Instead I go sit with Aiden by the fire, shoveling pancakes into my mouth and watching the giant wolf I married gallop around the meadow with Lila on his back. I'm sure the peels of her joyous laughter are going to wake Odette and Donovan, but the sound is simply too sweet to interrupt.

When the older wolves emerge from their tents, I know they feel the same. Their smiles are every bit as wide as mine, and I wish this moment could never end.

Bastien

Oh how I wish this moment would end.

Don't get me wrong, under any other circumstances, I would be delighted to do this for hours. I would be thrilled to be Lila's pony or lapdog, or anything else she wanted me to be-but Goddess am I tired. Still, I can't bring myself to put an end to the game until she's had her fill.

Selene thinks I'm going to spoil the pup, and she's absolutely right – at least when it comes to my time and affection. I have three years of absence to make up for. Besides, no one ever turned rotten from too many snuggles.

When Lila's little arms get too tired to hold on any longer, I slow to a stop, kneeling so she can slide off my back. Once she's clear, I collapse onto my side with an exaggerated huff, letting my tongue loll out and panting dramatically.

"Uh-oh." I crack one eye open to see Aiden standing next to Lila. "I think you've done him in, little one."

"Wha's that mean?" She asks curiously.

"Well he's too exhausted to move!" My Beta exclaims before adopting a somber tone, "we might have to leave him here."

"He is heavy." Lila remarks sagely, "but we can't leave Daddy."

"No?" Aiden inquires with a smile in his voice, "Ah well, I suppose the pack does need an Alpha." My friend leans down and takes hold of my back legs. "Okay Lila, grab a paw, we're going to have to drag him back to the car."

Two small hands circle my right foot, and I feel a light tug on the limb. She's probably pulling with all her might, but it feels about as strong as a light breeze. Aiden, of course, has no intention of dragging me anywhere, instead letting Lila bear the brunt of the task. "Are you pulling?" I hear her ask, voice full of accusation.

"Of course I am," He sounds offended, and the gentle tugging on my front leg resumes.

Around the time I hear the pup begin to grunt with the force of her efforts, I open my eyes and pounce, smothering her in big, slobbering wolf kisses while she giggles and squeals beneath me.

I scent Selene a moment later, turning to watch the stunning she-wolf approach. I don't know how she managed to get herself so clean, but she's free of mud and wearing a fresh dress. She eyes our pup, who is still giggling in the grass, before raising her eyes to me and crossing her arms over her chest. "What was the idea, Bastien? To get her as muddy as we were?"

Looking down at Lila, I realize she is indeed very muddy. I exchange a wide, canine grin with my daughter, before offering my mate an apologetic shrug. She laughs softly and rolls her eyes, shaking her head in exasperation.

“Come on pup, we need to get you cleaned up before we leave.” Selene says, extending her hand to Lila.

I let the toddler wrap her arms around my neck and pull her to her feet, before nudging her towards her mother with my nose. However Lila doesn't move. “I want keep playing.” She argues, pouting.

“I know angel,” Selene answers, taking her resistance in stride. “but we have to go soon and your Daddy needs a rest.”

“No he doesn't.” Lila insists stubbornly, “I don't wanna go anyway.”

“Lila,” Selene begins in a warning tone. “You'll have plenty of time to play later. Be a good girl and come along.”

Lila stomps her tiny foot. “No.” I can feel a tantrum coming on, and rumble low in my chest, giving the pup another nudge forward.

She turns to scowl at me, seeming to forget that I am not actually her pony but a very powerful predator. Her eyes widen when she sees my stern expression, and she instinctively lowers her gaze. I press my muzzle into her soft tummy, encouraging her to

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#Chapter 93 The Honeymoon is Over

go to her mother.

Lila clasps her hands on either side of my snout, giving me world-class puppy dog eyes, “I wanna keep playing.” She begs in a small voice. Devious little thing, I think. Mommy says no, so you ask Daddy instead.

I shake my furry head, and Lila's pitiful expression scrunches up into one full of rage. Her cheeks flush bright red and before know it, she's thrown herself on the ground at my feet. Before she can begin crying and beating the earth with her balled up fists, I carefully close my teeth around the back of her shirt, and lift her into the air.

The pup freezes, looking around in befuddled shock for a few moments before resuming her tantrum. I carry the angry bundle over to Selene, who receives her with practiced

ease. I shift back to human form and drop a kiss on my mate's cheek, "I'll come help as soon as I'm decent." I promise.

However before I can walk away, my pup turns her furious, tear-stained face to me, "I don't like you anymore." She snaps before resuming her attempts to squirm out of Selene's arms.

I know pups say all sorts of things they don't mean when they're upset, but I'm amazed at how deeply her words cut me. I feel like the air has been knocked out of my lungs.

Selene emits a heavy sigh, "I guess the honeymoon is over."

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#Chapter 94 Elysium

Bastien

By the time I'm clean and dressed in fresh clothes, Lila's tantrum has subsided. I find her and Selene by the campfire, the pup sniffing softly against her mother's neck. Selene trails a gentle hand up and down Lila's back, somehow soothing her and scolding her all at once.

"I know it's a lot of big changes and it's all happening very fast," She murmurs, kissing Lila's hair. "It probably seems like all of these things are happening around you and you don't know what's going on, just that all the grown ups are telling you that everything's going to be different and you don't have a say in any of it."

Lila nods, rubbing her wet, salty skin over Selene's collar. A wave of guilt washes over me. Here I thought her tantrum was just regular toddler mood swings – I took it at face value, but Selene knew instantly. I wonder if it's maternal intuition, or simply experience and knowing the pup so much better than I do.

A few weeks ago I would have felt bitter about her advantage with Lila, but now I simply feel wretched for causing my daughter distress. Maybe Lila was right to say she doesn't like me anymore, it sounds like I deserved it.

"It's alright to feel upset or scared or angry." My mate continues, "I feel the same way sometimes, but you know better than to say mean things simply because you're feeling out of sorts. You hurt your Daddy's feelings."

"I didn't mean it." Lila moans piteously.

"I know angel, but words are very powerful." Selene explains, rocking her gently. "You can't take them back, saying sorry doesn't make someone forget that you thought those things in the first place. And that hurts."

"Is h-he m-mad at m-me?" the pup hiccups weakly.

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My wife meets my gaze over our daughter's head, "Why don't you ask him?" She suggests. Moving to sit next to Selene, I rest my hand on Lila's small head, prompting her to look up at me tearfully. "Poor pup, you've had too much excitement haven't you?"

Lila looks positively miserable, like she wants to reach for me but isn't sure if I'll take her. The thought nearly breaks my heart.")" m sorry, Daddy." She sobs.

Pulling her out of Selene's lap and wrapping her up tight in my arms, I answer, "I'm sorry too, little one." She's so tiny, so fragile! I have to remind myself not to squeeze her too tightly.

"Please don't be m-mad at me." She cries, holding onto me as tight as she can.

It takes me a moment to pry her off my chest, but I need her to look at me when I say this, "Listen to me very carefully, Lila." I instruct seriously, staring into her two-toned eyes. "There is nothing you could ever do or say that will make me stop loving you. I might get angry or disappointed sometimes, but that's only because I care about you so much. You can always come to me, and you never need to worry that I'll turn you away, because that will never happen."

Her lower lip is still quivering, but she no longer looks so anxious. "Just like Mommy?"

"Just like Mommy." I confirm, looking to Selene and searing her with my gaze so she'll know I'm not only talking about a parent's love, but a mate's as well. In some ways it's harder with Selene because Lila has only ever known love, so it's easier for her to accept these concepts.

Four little words drag my attention back to my pup, the four most perfect words that I've ever heard. "I love you, Daddy."

My mate's miniature is looking up at me bashfully, with red eyes and a red nose, her plump limbs still smeared with mud. Her tantrum is all but forgotten, and her

proclamation washes away the hurt I was feeling a little while ago. I feel like my heart has swollen three sizes. "I love you too, Lila."

Selene

Though we got through Lila's fit with relative ease, I was right to think our honeymoon was over. Our wedding and makeshift

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#Chapter 94 Elysium

campsite was only an hour outside of Elysium, so the final leg of the trip was swift and easy. Our arrival was another story.

My breath caught the first time I glimpsed the beautiful city over the ridge of the North mountain, in fact I was so mesmerized by

the sight that I temporarily lost the ability to speak. Luna had been ecstatic to be back in the fresh alpine air last night, but returning to Elysium makes me feel like a fish that has been trying to survive on land and finally made it back to the water.

You might think I never wanted to see Elysium again after everything I went through with Garrick, but his dank basement was a world away from the incredible city where I spent my childhood. That dark cell was the exact opposite of the wide open greenspaces and towering mountain peaks dominating the Nova territory.

Making it out into the city is what saved me. Elysium is where I found my freedom, where I met my mate. Bastien and I had three years of happiness here before Arabella returned, and even her horrid influence can't poison those early memories.

More than anything else, I think this land is simply in my blood. My mother might have fled the Calypso pack, but they are mountain wolves too – Elysium is my element, pure and simple. "Look Lila," Bastien pointed out the window, "there it is – your new home."

"Lysium?!" She exclaimed.

"That's right," He confirmed warmly, reaching over to stroke my nape as I navigated the twisting mountain roads, "and you see that big house right at the top of that ridge?"

"Uh-huh!"

"That's the pack house. That's where you're going to live." Bastien shared, sounding so happy that my insides melted.

Lila continued asking questions and reveling in the scenery as we drove through the city gates and up the main road. However my own excitement dampened the further we ventured into Elysium. The news had clearly spread about my return – and Lila’s existence.

Bastien’s sleek black car has always been like a flashing marquee announcing that the Alpha is away from the pack house. I’ve never driven with him without half the city turning to stare and signal their respect, but it hadn’t even been like this before. It seemed like the entire pack was lined up on the sidewalks awaiting our arrival.

These weren’t just intrigued glances or cursory salutes from wolves going about their business, these people were expecting a show. Luckily the windows were tinted so heavily that I didn’t have to worry about anyone actually seeing inside the car, but I still felt the weight of their prying eyes.

It didn’t help that Bastien seemed taken aback by this development, though he hid his feelings better than I did. We forged up the serpentine streets towards the Pack House and Nova Hall, our wheels bumping over the cobblestones and further fraying my nerves. And the closer we came to our destination, the larger the crowds grew.

I tried to tell myself this was all because of Lila, because the pack wanted to see the Alpha’s pup and nothing more. Of course then all I could think about was the fact that thousands of people would be gawking at my pup like some sort of circus animal – an idea that made Luna snarl with maternal outrage.

“So many people!” Lila observed, making me wince.

“Bastien,” I’d murmured nervously, unable to compose a sentence or voice my concerns in front of my pup.

“Easy sweetheart,” He purred, massaging my tense shoulders, “they’re just curious.” Unfortunately the note of tension in his deep bass belied his placating words. He didn’t believe what he was saying.

Reporters and camera crews were assembled at the Pack House’s security gate, and I breathed a little easier when we cleared the guardhouse and the gates closed behind us, safely locking out the medie. Of course, my relief vanished when we rounded the final corner of the drive, and the house came into view.

Half of the elder council was gathered in the mansion’s doorway, and they did not look pleased to see us.

I pulled into the garage rather than parking out front, triggering the door close” button on the remote and waiting for the wide metal curtain to lower completely before stepping out of the car. I headed Bastien off before he could open the back door to extract Lila

from her carseat, closing my hand over his on the handle. "Tell me the truth, Bastien." I begged, "Why are they here?"

He sighed, scrubbing his hand over his face. "The truth is that I don't know."

"But it's not good – is it?" | demanded.

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#Chapter 94 Elysium

My husband studied me for a long moment before answering. "No baby," He acknowledged, sounding resigned. "it isn't."

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 95

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 96

#Chapter 96 Headlines

Selene

The day after we arrive home, Bastien is stuck in meetings from dawn to dusk. He barely made it home in time to read Lila her bedtime story, and when he emerges from her room half an hour later, he looks absolutely exhausted.

I'm waiting in the kitchen with a tumbler of scotch, but Bastien bypasses the alcohol completely and wraps his big body around me like a blanket. Burying his head in the curve of my neck, he pulls my hair out of its pins so that it falls around him in a chocolate cascade.

"What happened?" I murmur, brushing my fingers through his thick hair.

He inhales deeply, breathing in my scent and sighing with relief, before raising his head. There are dark circles under his eyes, but those molten irises are as sharp as ever when he studies my lips and moves in for a long, luxurious kiss.

When he's had his fill, he tucks my head under his chin and clutches me to his chest. "Nothing bad." He shares, though in this position I can't see his face. "It was just a really long day."

"What did the elder council say?" I inquire, not wanting to bombard him with questions but incredibly anxious after what happened yesterday. It seemed bad enough that the city was rallying against me, the last thing we need is for them to turn

against Bastien – and somehow I imagine strangling the Chief Elder isn't going to earn him any brownie points.

"Believe it or not, Grigore wasn't exactly popular with his colleagues or the people." Bastien explains, referring to the man by his given name now that he's been stripped of his position.

"Oh I believe it," I snort.

Finally setting me away from him, Bastien retrieves the glass of scotch, as well as the freshly microwaved plate of leftovers ! prepared for him while he was reading to Lila.

"Apparently Arabella was working her charms on him for a while before she left, and our little welcoming committee yesterday was the result of his outrage over her exile." He continues, moving to the dining room table.

"Working her charms?" I repeat, following him with a glass of wine in hand.

"I don't know the extent and frankly I don't want to." Bastien remarks, sounding fairly revolted. "But I'd put nothing past her."

Now I understand why he seems so put off. Grigore is about as old as dirt, the idea of anyone as young as Arabella "charming" him is disturbing – to say the least.

"Anyway, it seems Grigore's been very busy trying to turn the pack against you ever since." My mate goes on. "but luckily he's so vile that most people actually sided with you because he told them not to."

"What are you talking about?" I scoff, "it didn't look like anyone was on my side yesterday."

To my surprise Bastien grins, rising from his chair to collect the newspapers stacked by the door. I didn't go anywhere near them this morning because I was convinced they would be nothing but horrid. Now my husband drops three different daily chronicles in front of me, all boasting headlines that shock me to the core.

Alpha Returns, Rids Elder Council of Chronic Plague

Attempted Murderess Arabella Winters Exposed, Alpha's Pup Rescued by Mother's Sacrifice

Selene Durand Alive and Well, Gifts Alpha with a Daughter

"The pack came out to watch our arrival because they were curious after all the gossip. It wasn't an angry mob, just an interested one." Bastien declares.

"I don't understand," I breathe, staring at the newspapers, "Was this you?"

"No." He smiles, "A few of the elders got chatty with the press, but I didn't plant or leak anything."

"But this doesn't make sense." I insist. "People hated me when I lived here."

1271

#Chapter 96 Headlines

"A few jealous she-wolves might have, and many didn't trust you were strong enough to lead without your wolf – but that wasn't dislike. In fact, I'd say the majority of people had great sympathy for you."

Bastien reclaims his chair, taking a big bite of pork. "Unfortunately the most powerful people in the city are also the most entitled and shallow, and they're the ones we have to deal with most often. But Selene, they don't represent average Elysians, you had much more support among the general populace than you ever knew."

I sit back in my chair, struggling to take in this information. In all honesty, I'm starting to feel like a crazy person. It's like everywhere I turn I'm met with some new revelation that contradicts everything I thought I knew. It's confusing and overwhelming – and I don't know how to handle it.

"Even if that hadn't been the case, Arabella made herself a villain and you a martyr." Bastien relates, "Nothing earns people's forgiveness faster than self-sacrifice."

"How can you be so certain of all this?" My hands are fidgeting in my lap, and Luna is becoming increasingly agitated. "I mean it's easy for you to say all that, but I know how I was treated when we started out. It's not like it was all in my head: I got pushed into pools and stalked, it wasn't just mean girls calling me a halfling."

Bastien pushes back his chair and opens his arms to me in invitation, but I stay seated with my arms crossed over my chest. "No. I'm not going to let you soothe this away or distract me, Bastien. If I'm going to raise my daughter here, I need to know she's not going to go through what I did."

His eyes sparked dangerously when I refused him, but I know I've made a mistake when I said "If I'm going to raise her."

My mate growls low in his chest, "I'm going to count to three, little wolf."

"Or what?" I bite, "You'll spank me again?"

Bastien arches a brow that tells me he absolutely would, and he'd enjoy doing it. Even so, I don't actually get out of my chair until he says "three."

When I stalk around the table and sulkily settle in his lap, Bastien purrs and rubs his huge hand deliberately over the curve of my hip. "Careful baby, or I'm going to think you want to be punished."

My mate's words send delicious shivers through my body, and I'm praying that for once in my life he won't be able to smell my arousal. But then his nostrils flare and a predatory glint appears in his eye.

Nonetheless, he's perfectly solemn when he addresses my comment. "I'm not trying to soothe this away or contradict what you experienced. I'm trying to tell you that I think you were right when you said you lived in a bubble here, and unfortunately that bubble wasn't just my protection, it was a bubble of spoiled, materialistic aristocrats."

Bastien reaches for the nearest paper, his long arm easily closing the distance across the table. And I know because the proof is right here in black and white." He affirms gently, "I also know because when we thought you died, Mom and I weren't the only ones mourning. Yes a subset of young she-wolves saw it as an opportunity to replace you, but most of the pack was devastated."

I'm staring down at the page in his hand, scanning the article beneath the huge boldface font. Selene Durand, forced to go into hiding to protect herself and her unborn pup, has finally returned to Elysium to reclaim her rightful place at Alpha Bastien's side.

Shaking my head, I exclaim, "All of these articles and headlines make it sound like I was doing some great, noble thing by leaving. When really I was a scared, stupid girl who got manipulated by a deranged sociopath."

"Don't call me mate stupid." Bastien admonishes, petting me to take the sting out of his stern rebuke. "And trust me, that's the angle we want them to take. It might not feel authentic or be entirely accurate-but it's not false either, and the more people who run with this storyline, the better."

"I hear you, but I still don't trust this," I confess. "It feels too good to be true."

"Oh we're not out of the water yet." Bastien sighs, "The Council is throwing us a Banquet tomorrow, to welcome you home and introduce Lila to the pack."

My heart sinks. Not another overly formal event full of two-faced rich people. And Lila's expected to go? What is a toddler going to do at a banquet, how is she supposed to be introduced, it's not like she can make a speech.

"Do we have a choice?" I moan.

"Not if we want to keep them on our side." Bastien informs me.

39 70%

#Chapter 96 Headlines

I huff with disappointment, then look up at my husband with sudden skepticism. "Wait, if the worst part of the day was being invited to a banquet, why was it so long and difficult?"

Bastien drops his head in exasperation, "See, this is why I get angry when you call yourself stupid." He declares ruefully, nibbling my ear. "My little wolf doesn't miss a thing."

"What is it?" I press.

"I sat through about ten different council debriefings, and every one was about some crisis that Grigore buried so I wouldn't rush back to deal with the problem. Right now I think I'm less popular than you are, because a lot of issues popped up and I wasn't here doing my job."

He takes a deep breath, glancing at me in a way that bodes nothing good. "And it particularly concerns me, because the more time that passes, the more likely it seems I'm going to have to leave again."

"What do you mean?" I ask sharply, "Leave again where?"

Bastien looks like he'd rather do anything than answer my question. "To the Calypso pack."