



Chapter 12

Verena

I'm laying curled up in bed, wondering how long I have until Alpha Niklaus waltzes in here and tells me I have to move out. I literally insulted him last night, so the last thing he's going to want to do is to keep me here.

Right? That's what Alphas do; when you're no longer useful, they chew you up and spit you out.

But I couldn't go through with whatever he wanted me to do, even if I was tempted to. He needs to realise that I'm not that kind of woman. I won't be used and I won't allow myself to be used.

"Acting tough, yet you're rotting in bed when you should be getting ready for work," I mumble to myself. Work? I literally walked out and left my entire cart in his apartment last night.

Oh, Gods... Martha is going to skin me alive when she finds out what happened!

I groan and am about to cover my head with my blanket when I stop myself. No, I can't stay here wrapped up in my self pity. I promised myself that I wouldn't be the same woman I was before. I have to face this head on, even if I am terrified.

So, with that weak confidence in mind, I decide to get ready and prepare myself for the day. Can't be worse than imagining the worst, right? Mind over matter and ... whatever.

After getting dressed and having breakfast, I didn't even taste, I go downstairs and see what hell awaits me. Only there's no hell, fire, or brimstone. Everyone, including Martha, is greeting me as normal. Martha even hands me the sheet of the rooms we're doing today since two more were added on.

And then ... nothing.

Have you ever messed up badly and keep looking over your shoulder, while waiting for the other shoe to drop? The absolute anxiety of it all, I tell you. Even cleaning his apartment didn't yield me a shouting match because he wasn't at home.

Although the glass of whiskey was still where he left it last night.

By 7pm, I am showered, clad in a red dress and downstairs in the bar. There's still a knot of anxiety curling up in my gut, but what can I do? He clearly isn't going to retaliate by the looks of things, right? I can calm down, right?

Of course not, that would be silly. Why would the universe make things easy for me?

I can feel his eyes on me from all the way across the room, but I don't dare to turn around. I cannot give him that satisfaction, although I am pretty sure he can hear my heart beating like a Drumline.

He walks up to the bar and sits down next to me; the epitome of cool and unbothered. Meanwhile, I feel like I've

just trekked through the desert; sweating in all the wrong places.

"You kept the collar," he says, referring to the leather collar with the heart-shaped ring in the center. The same one from the event the other night.

Turning to him, I take a sip of my red wine and shrug. "I like it; I hope you don't mind? Unless you need it back," I say, tilting my head to the side and the corner of his mouth lifts in a humourless smile.

"It's yours," he says. "It looks good on you."

Then we immediately plunge into an awkward silence that makes me want to run away from here. I fiddle with the stem of my wine glass while he swirls the alcohol around in his glass; the ice clinking.

Just when I think I'm about to lose it, I hear him exhale and I turn to face him. "I owe you an apology," he says, looking at me. "Last night ... I was out of line and should not have done that. Especially given the ... circumstances."

I don't want him to elaborate on what he means by circumstances, so I merely say 'apology accepted,' then I take the last sip of my wine and hope for the best.

But then he leans in close. "I apologise for what I did ... not what I said, kitten," he says, his voice low. "I'll always wonder if you taste as sweet as you smell."

"Too bad you'll never find out," I say and can't help but smirk when he does that same rumbling in his chest again.

Okay, why am I egging him on right now? This is not very ' smart, independent woman' of me. I have no idea why this man is attracted to me when my own mate couldn't even stand to look at me or sleep together in the same bed.

"True, and I don't think I should," he says as he finishes the last of his alcohol. "Ours is a professional relationship and it wouldn't be a good look on me as Alpha to sleep with ... the help."

Wow, talk about a blow to my ego.

"That's understandable and expected," I say with a shrug of my shoulder. "Since I won't be around here for long."

The look on his face tells me he didn't expect that. "You're leaving?"

"As soon as I'm on my feet again, I think it's for the best that I move on ... out of New York and spread my wings now that I'm free to go anywhere I please," I say, and for some reason, I believe it.

"Brave choice," he says with a hint of respect in his tone. " Not many people can make that decision and stick with it."

If I'm going to start over, I can't do it in a place where I was hurt the most. Lucan is literally still around the corner, and with Alpha Niklaus as a constant temptation, I need to make this decision. Save up and move on.

"Any idea what you're going to do after ... all this?" he asks, and I shake my head.



"Not at all, but I suppose that's the beauty of choice. Perhaps I could tour Europe and settle in a cottage somewhere ... meet someone...start a family," I say wistfully, staring into my wine glass and trying my damndest not to cry. "It's the dream, right?"

It was what I always wanted, but given that I rejected my mate and am now cursed, I doubt the Goddess would grant me a child. Also, with what I went through being Lucan's Luna, I don't think I could ever trust someone like that again.

Giving your heart to someone always has a risk of them dropping it. Mine has been shattered beyond repair, and with Alpha Niklaus' actions last night, I know that I can't trust anyone because they're all the same.

Men want, want, want and we just have to give until nothing else remains. You can't take from an empty well, and I'm literally a drought.

"Sounds like you have it all planned out," Alpha Niklaus says, and when I turn my head to look at him, I see him facing forward, his jaw clenched.

"Don't you, with your arranged marriage?" I say. "From what I can see, you haven't met your Fated Mate or marked her, so there's always a chance at love when your Chosen Mate bears your mark. Kids, a happy family...the works."

"The works," he says with a scoff, then he turns his head and pins me with a crimson glare. "Kids and a happy family? You honestly think that's in the cards for me after you told me my future? Even if that arrangement would have meant

advancing my pack, I no longer deem it worth my time.”

The anger in his tone catches me off guard. But it doesn't seem like his anger is aimed at how his future turned out, but aimed at ... me. What the hell is his problem?

“You can always change your future, Alpha; just as I have. Besides, isn't it the Alpha's duty to carry on his bloodline even if it's with his Fated or Chosen Mate?” Why am I asking him this when I can already see how angry he is?

He looks down at his empty glass and takes a deep breath, as if he's trying to calm a storm within him. Shit, I struck a nerve, didn't I?

“I don't need you reminding me of my duty, Verena. I am well aware of what is expected of me,” he says, dragging his gaze over me before he leaves a few bills underneath the glass and gets to his feet.

“Did I say something to offend you?” I ask, confused, as I tilt my head to the side. “I apologise if I did—”

“No, you didn't; you just reminded me of something. Have a good evening, Verena,” he says, then he walks out of the bar.

Woah, my comment must have really struck a nerve for him to react like that. Once again, my mouth ran away with me and I just had to remind an Alpha of what his duties were.

Well, the upside is I think I broke whatever sexual tension existed between us, so there's that. Perhaps now things will be easier and I can move on without wondering 'what if'.