

## Scattered Dreams Chapter 6 - SIX | GETTING BACK OUT THERE

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Gio POV

"I remember her now. She was a decent lab partner when she wasn't constantly rubbing against me like a cat in heat; it was exhausting!"

"Did you tell Dr. Olivet what was going on? I had him the year before you did, and I know he would have switched partners for you if you'd said something," Matt replied.

"Nah, it wasn't that serious, and I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I just chalked it up to the curse and figured there was no reason to make her suffer just because I had to. But I do remember that I told her we were never getting together when she asked me to the spring formal."

"Wait. So Sasha asked you out? You can remember that?" Alaia asked.

"I can now. We were partners for a few months, and like I said, I tried to stay friendly with her the entire time, she was a relevantly cool girl. Anyway, one day she came to class with a huge grin on her face, and I could tell she was excited about something. When I asked her about it, she said she was excited about the dance that was happening that weekend and asked me if I was going. I didn't have a girlfriend, didn't want one, and didn't want to be in a room with a bunch of hormonal girls, so I told her no. She was disappointed, but she was also determined because she brushed it off and asked me to go with her anyway. I hated her at that moment because she was making me do something I didn't want to do. It was either going to give in and go to the stupid dance or break her heart over something she really wanted. I chose the latter, and she barely spoke to me for a month. I got the evilest stares from her in class and the hallways, and it wasn't until I gave her some chocolate biscotti I'd made that she calmed down and went back to being cool again," I recalled.

"It's amazing that you can make chocolate biscotti, Luca can make a carbonara I'd murder someone over, and Matt can barely make a sandwich. You all grew up in the same house," Alaia thought out loud.

"I was a little busy learning how to run a wolf pack, bean. I didn't have time for home economics!" Matt replied, clearly frustrated.

"I know Matty, and you're incredible at absolutely everything else, seriously. If you could cook like your brothers, you'd be too perfect, and Taylor would be fighting women off of you left and right," she replied.

"Yeah, yeah, Matt's perfect. Anyway, back to Sasha. She was so cold when I turned her down; it was almost scary. Dad always gave mom sweets and chocolate when he pissed her off, hence the biscotti, but if that didn't work, I was going to have to talk to Dr. Olivet about switching partners or even classes. And she was a redhead then, when did she switch to blonde? And how come I never noticed that it wasn't her natural hair color?" I thought aloud.

"Does the carpet match the drapes?" Demetrius asked from his spot on the couch. How I continually forgot that he was here was crazy, but he always managed to announce himself in the most perverted fashion.

"I'm not discussing Sasha's pubes with you D, what the hell is wrong with you?" I asked.

"I'm going to assume she probably doesn't have a carpet. I mean, do chicks bleach their carpet?" he turned to Alaia and asked.

"That's probably not the best topic of conversation to have with your Luna, Demetrius, but since I'm the only female in the room, I'll humor you with an answer. Yes, some chicks bleach their carpets," Alaia replied.

"Please ignore him, Luna, he's an idiot," I interjected. "Anyway, there's so much I just don't know about her, and it's frustrating as hell. Now that the blinders are off, I see that I was living with and sharing my life with a complete stranger. I gave her everything, and all I got in return were lies. How am I supposed to move on from that?"

"You use it as an opportunity for growth and learn from it. It happened, and you can't change the past, but you can take everything that transpired and use it to make you better. Otherwise, she wins," Matt told me.

"I think she loses too. I mean, look at all the shit she had to do to get me, and here we are now. I'm pretty sure I hate her, and she's supposedly 'recovering'

from an abortion. I don't think either one of us can call ourselves winners at this point."

"Maybe not right now, but eventually you'll find your real mate, and you'll get the happiness you deserve. Then your history with Sasha will just be a blip on the radar."

I stretched out on my living room floor and shut my eyes. I was a smart guy, a strong fighter, and an all-around compassionate person. My parents raised both my brothers and me to be the best men possible, and here I was dealing with over six years of lies and deceit. I didn't understand what I had done to deserve this or provoke Sasha. Maybe I was too nice in the beginning; perhaps it sent mixed signals to her. Either way, it was unfair to both my real mate, who I could be happily married to with kids by now and me.

Suddenly I became furious and when I realized why I wasn't shocked at all. Sasha had hurt my mate. Maybe not physically, but surely mentally and emotionally. She was out there somewhere looking for me and never being able to find me because that bitch wanted me for herself. How many nights did she cry because she was still single? How many times did she wonder if she would ever find me, or if she was meant to be alone forever? Had I already met her and not even known? There were so many questions, and I didn't have a clue how to begin to find the answers.

"Stop thinking so hard; you'll break your brain. We'll figure everything out; I made you that promise. I haven't let you down yet, and I don't plan to start now, so just trust me," Matt looked over and said.

"Fine. This is making me crazy anyway, so I'll gladly let you take the lead here if you want."

"I'm not doing all the investigating myself, Gio. If you haven't forgotten, I have two demanding jobs, five kids, and a wife who I refuse to neglect. I'm helping you, not doing the work for you. You're going to have to get your hands dirty on this one, whether you like it or not."

I wanted to complain so badly. I didn't want to have to deal with Sasha ever again; I wanted to be done with her. But Matt was right, he had a life of his own that he needed to get back to, and I was a grown man. I had to do this so that I could close this chapter of my life and move on. It was the only way.

"Thanks, Matt. Now go home, you and the Luna. I'll be alright, and we can start tackling everything in a few days once all my memories have returned."

"I can do that. Taylor has already called me three times today, asking for updates on the kids. You'd think that she'd be enjoying this extra quiet time at home, but she's just like mom, always checking in on her children. I see why mom and dad love her so much."

"She's a good one for sure. Now we just need to find my own Taylor so that we all can have what you've got."

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Matt, Alaia, and the kids had left for the main campus a few hours ago, leaving Demetrius and me time to finish my rotations and handle the few small issues that cropped up during the day. Thankfully, the pack decided to act like adults, so the day was calmer than usual. Now we were relaxing in my back yard, enjoying a gentle summer breeze.

"Why don't you come out with me tonight? We don't have to do anything crazy, and I won't even try to bring any girls back with us, but you need to get out of the house for a while and unwind. We can just go for a few drinks at a local bar," Demetrius suggested.

My quick response surprised both of us. "Absolutely, I was going to cook dinner, but we can just grab something while we're out; I can be ready in forty-five minutes," I stated.

"Yeah! That's what I'm talking about Gio! Just like old times, G and D, on the prowl hunting for the ladies!"

"You just said that you weren't worried about women, what happened to that?" I asked with a laugh.

"I never once said I wasn't worried about women, that's blasphemy and you should wash your mouth out for even saying it. I said I wouldn't try to bring any home with us. There is a difference, and that means I've got to up my game and see what I can get accomplished before last-call."

He stood up and left me in the yard while he went to begin getting ready for the night. At that moment, I decided to open myself up to the possibility of dating. I'd never had the opportunity to date before, I was mated just a few

days after turning eighteen, and I wanted to see what all the hype was about. I wasn't planning to run through women, or dive into anything too serious, but I could talk to them and see what they were about, while still keeping my guard up. No matter what, I would protect my heart so that my mate wouldn't be stuck with a broken man. I didn't know who she was, but I knew that she deserved better than that, and I'd make sure she got it.

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Two hours later, Demetrius and I were at some place called The Anchor Bar, drinking some of the most potent drinks ever poured. He was shamelessly flirting with the bartender, seemingly causing her to be more than a little heavy-handed with the liquor she was serving up.

"So, is it the bartender you've set your sites on? I mean, she's at work dude, how can you expect to accomplish anything with her while she's on the clock?" I asked Demetrius.

"I'm guessing you've never had sex at work, but it's the ultimate thrill, especially if someone almost catches you. Women love the thrill, they crave it, just like Ms. Kya over there is craving me."

"Right. And did you ever stop to think that Kya is probably friendly and flirty with everyone? She's an attractive woman who lives off tips, and idiots like you are a dime a dozen," I replied.

"Maybe, but she's only smiled at you once; her focus has been solely on me this entire time. Even your curse can't keep her eyes off me; she wants me bad, so who am I to deny her?"

"She's marked, and from her scent, I'm pretty sure she's pregnant. She's been eying the wad of cash you flashed when we sat down, not you. Your investigative skills are trash, man."

Demetrius craned his neck and frowned as he finally noticed the mark on Kya's neck. "Fuck! I've wasted over an hour with this chick, and last-call is quickly approaching. Okay, it's time to get serious, I'll see you in a little bit, Gio."

He picked up his glass and moved into the crowd, looking for his next victim. "Aww, where did your friend go? His pickup lines got more and more

entertaining with every drink I poured him," Kya said with a smile as she walked over to stand before me.

"He finally realized that you were taken, so he's off to find someone more obtainable," I replied.

"Ahh, I see. You told him, huh?"

"I did. He's my best friend, and I couldn't stand to watch any longer."

"You're a good guy, I can tell. Anyway, this is from the lady at the end of the bar. It seems that she's had her eye on you since she walked in, but you haven't noticed her yet."

Kya sat an Old Fashioned in front of me and pointed to the woman who'd sent it over. She was beautiful, that was the first thought that crossed my mind. And it probably had a lot to do with the fact that she was nothing like Sasha. The mystery woman had waves of thick brown hair cascading down her back, huge light brown eyes, and a perfect white smile outlined by plump and perfect lips. Her skin was beautifully sun-kissed like she'd just spent a week on someone's beach, and her smile was warm and inviting.

"Thanks, Kya. I've noticed her now and think I should go introduce myself," I replied.

"That's a good idea, have a good time," she replied with a wink.

I picked up the drink and made my way over. As I got closer, I began to smell fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies, and my mouth instantly watered. This was my favorite smell in the entire world, and the mystery woman was literally oozing the scent. My heart began to race, and my mind was reeling. The mate vibes were strong; everything in me as telling me that this girl could be the one. But I needed to be careful; I wouldn't let myself get carried away just yet.

"You're even better looking up close and tall, too," she said with a smile. Her voice was smooth as silk and was like music to my ears; it was almost intoxicating. "I'm Jasmine, do you like Old Fashioned's?"

I shook myself out of the haze so I could finally speak. "I'm Giovanni, and yes, I love Old Fashioned's. It's my favorite drink, actually."

"Nice, you looked like a refined whiskey type of guy," Jasmine replied.

I took the seat next to her and just stared at her face, I'm sure I looked like a complete creep, but I couldn't help it. It was like someone had taken everything I'd ever wanted and placed it in front of me in this woman. "Do I have something on my face? You're staring pretty hard, sir," Jasmine chuckled and said.

"I'm sorry, you're just so beautiful," I replied. Jasmine blushed and tucked a lock of that beautiful hair behind her ear before she looked back at me and smiled.

"Thank you. You're beautiful too if you don't mind me saying that. I know men prefer to be handsome, but you're probably the most beautiful man I've ever seen."

"If it means I get to enjoy your company, I'll gladly be pretty, cute, adorable, sexy, whatever you want," I replied.

Jasmine tossed her head back and laughed, placing her hand atop mine. For the first time since seeing her across the bar, I was disappointed; there was no spark. She checked off every single box that I would expect from my mate, but without that spark, I knew she wasn't the one.

"Is everything alright? You lost that gorgeous smile of yours for a second."

Well, she may not be the one, but I would still get to know her. I'd promised myself that I'd try, and this woman was as close to perfection as I could ask for. "I'm great. So, tell me, Jasmine, what's an angel like yourself doing here?" I asked.

She smiled again as we seamlessly struck up an hours-long conversation. By the time the bar announced last-call, I felt like I'd known her my entire life. We exchanged numbers and made plans to meet up the next night, and I went home, feeling a renewed sense of positivity at the thought of sharing my life with someone again. If I could connect with Jasmine like this, when I finally found my mate, it was going to be the most incredible experience in my life.