

## Chapter 9 - Mean Girls

### Paisley

It appears that Marissa has made it her goal in life to be the bane of my existence. Almost every time I step outside my cabin, her or one of her mean girlfriends goes out of their way to taunt or torture me. Females who had previously been friends of mine, are now siding with Marissa. I say siding with Marissa, but I am not even competing with her. She thinks she has won the gold, but in my opinion, it's fool's gold and I want no part of it. Sure, my heart still aches and pride hangs in tatters, but I don't desire any male in my life right now. Maybe never. And especially not Miles. I have lost all faith and respect that I had in him.

I gather up my school bag with the homework I graded last night, along with my cell and filled water bottle. Closing the door behind me, I locking it. I turn to take the short walk to the school and run into a couple of females blocking my path. These two are members of Marissa's mean girls club.

"Morning, girls." I try for the civil approach. "Out for a walk?"

"Marissa wanted us to stop by and check on you." Valerie sneers at me. "We need to make sure you aren't encroaching on her territory by sni ing around Miles."

"I have no interest in Miles, whatsoever." I truthfully bark as I attempt to go around them.

Hannah steps into my path, her hand whips out, slapping my face. "Liar!"

I stagger back and fall to the ground, throwing my hands out to catch my fall. Pressing my palm to my burning cheek to cool the sting, I cast an accusing look at these former friends. "What is with you guys? I have done nothing to either of you, nor have I done anything to Marissa." I struggle to stand.

"That's not what Marissa says!" Hannah snarls in my face. "She told us how you are throwing yourself at Miles and other mated males in the pack and you're sneaking out at night to meet them. We are not going to let you be a homewrecker, skank!"

"If that's what she's saying, she's lying." I retort angrily. "If you will recall, Marissa took my fated mate from me, not the other way around! If I were having a airs with mated males, their mates would be having symptoms of Cheating Mate Syndrome. Is Marissa vomiting almost non-stop? Does she have lesions or scars on her stomach?" I yank my shirt up and show them the scars on my torso. Hannah jumps back and gasps. "Does she?" I scream. "No! These are the scars from Miles and Marissa cheating on me! So, leave me alone!" I snatch up my dropped items and shoulder check Hannah as I charge by her.

Marissa is a piece of work. She appears to be one of those females who thrives on drama. I have seen it before in others, always lying and causing contention so she can sit back and enjoy the show. If you ask me, she needs medication. I know we shi ers aren't supposed to be susceptible to human diseases, but mental health is a real problem amongst some and Marissa is living proof of that.

I almost laugh when I think that Miles gave up his fated mate bond with me to be with her. I loved him and was a loyal mate who would never have cheated. Unlike Marissa. If all the rumors are true about her past, she cheated on him continuously when they were together before me. They have only been legally mated for a month. I wonder how long it will be before she resumes her cheating ways.

As I enter the schoolhouse, I try to avoid looking at anyone as I drop my things o at my desk and head to the teacher's lounge to use the private bathroom. Looking at myself in the mirror, I see that my eyes are red from crying and there is an angry handprint on my cheek. Washing the dirt and blood from my palms, I splash cold water on my face and dry it. Next, I wet a few paper towels and make a compress to soothe my eyes and cheek. Coming out into the break room, I add a few pieces of ice to the towels and press it to my face.

The principal, Ms. Jenkins walks in. "Paisley, what is wrong? The other teachers told me you were crying and covered in dirt."

I remove the compress, looking down and sure enough, my clothes are filthy.

"Your face, Paisley. Did someone hit you?"

"It's fine. I'm fine." I protest.

"No, you are not." She grabs my free hand. "Your hands are bleeding. What happened? You need to go to the clinic for treatment now."

"No. No. It's just scratches. See, they are already healing."

"Paisley, Jenna Roberts says she saw Marissa's friend, Hannah slap you. You need to make a report. Rumors are that they harass you every day." Ms. Jenkins says so ly. "Please don't let them get away with it."

"Ms. Jenkins, it doesn't help." I cry. "Marissa is manipulative. She made it look like I pushed her down in front of Miles the other day and he actually believed her...or chose to believe her. We lived together for a year and Miles knows me. He should have known I would never harm another person. But he chose to believe her over me. I am not sure what I can do, but give them a wide berth and hopefully, she will eventually tire of her vendetta against me."

"Oh, Paisley." She shakes her head and exits the teacher's lounge, while I head to my classroom to get to work.

### Marissa

Miles and I are getting ready for a pack party in the main room. I am looking forward to having some fun. I think terrorizing Paisley is my favorite pastime right now. I have to keep myself busy doing something to spice up my life since I have had to settle down to one male only. B-o-r-i-n-g!

I plaster on a little red halter dress and add a pair of kitten heels. I know I look spicy as several of the guys in the pack have enjoyed when I have worn this dress in the past. I just need to be careful now because Miles and I are actually mated. I witnessed first-hand what Cheating Mate Syndrome does to the body and while it's not me suffering the pain, I just don't want to get caught. I have a sweet setup here as the Beta's mate.

"Are you ready to go down to the party?" Miles asks as he wraps his arms around my waist. He is dressed in a pair of distressed jeans and a white t-shirt that accentuates his tall muscular build.

"I am ready when you are." I purr up at my handsome mate. I do love Miles and I always have, but I love having fun a little bit more.

Miles takes me by the hand and we make our way downstairs. Let the games begin, Paisley. I chuckle to myself. I have been plotting little surprises for Paisley all week. From my perch on the stairs, I immediately scope out the room to see where my players are located. Over in the corner, talking to a group of older females is the lovely Paisley. Across the room, at the bar, is my girl squad and they already have a bullseye on Paisley. I giggle as I watch them, heads together, conspiring. I started rumors that now that Paisley is single, she is out to trap one of their mates and that has really fired them up.

Glancing around the room, I see a few of my paramours eyeing me. I dole out a few smiles, but I remind myself I have to be careful.

Perhaps I need to see Rachel, the med tech, about getting a prescription of Amra to sneak in Miles' diet, so I can sneak around.

Amra is the drug they developed to ease symptoms of Cheating Mate Syndrome.

The great room is filled with laughter and babble as the shi ers mingle. The breakfast bar and nearby tables are filled with platters of various foods and desserts, as well as a fully-stocked bar.

While the party has just begun, I can't wait another minute to pull o my mean-girl pranks.

I watch as Valerie approaches Paisley and pulls her toward the drink bar to unfold our plan.

I can hardly keep a straight face as I watch Paisley take a sip of the spiked cocktail Hannah concocted behind the bar. The expression on Paisley's face is priceless. She loves the drink and downs it. It will only take a few seconds for the drug to hit her. I laugh as the rest plays out.

At the bar, on a top shelf, is a large container filled with red fruit punch, cleverly placed at the edge so it will be easy to tip over. As Paisley staggles from the barstool, grasping her head, Hannah gives the shelf a nudge with her hip. The container tips and red liquid washes over Paisley.

### Paisley

"Paisley, Hannah and I wanted to apologize for our behavior on the trail the other day. Come with me to the bar, Hannah has made one of her special mocktails for you."

I am not an idiot, I know something is up, I just don't know what. Marissa is standing on the stage, watching over the party like she is the queen. Her stare settles on us, her face set in a smirk. Miles has joined the party and le her on the stairs.

Hannah reaches me a pretty pink drink. "No alcohol, right?" I ask as I sni the drink.

"Cross my heart." Hannah promises.

I hesitantly take a sip. "Oh, that tastes great." Maybe they are being sincere. So, I smile and relax. "Yum. What's this made from?" I toss the drink back and down it in a couple of swallows.

Hannah looks at Valerie with her eyes bugging out. "Just some juices." She gestures to the stock behind the bar.

"Ooh." I begin to feel a bit dizzy and grab the bar. The shelf above the bar begins to wobble and a container on top pitches over. Red liquid pours down like a waterfall, drenching me as I scream in surprise.

There is stunned silence all around me, then an eruption of laughter from the guests. I tried to stifle my tears as I look around me in horror, wiping the liquid from my face. "You two are unbelievable!" I cry.

Knight approaches me with a handful of napkins to attempt to dry me o , the laughter settling in the awkward attempt. I feel a rush of embarrassment as I look to the stairs where Marissa and her cronies are doubled over with laughter. I glance up at Knight and burst into tears as I race out of the party.