

## Chapter Fourteen

### Garrett

I don't think I've ever driven the Bugatti so slowly. I reverse out of parking spaces faster than I'm driving now with my mate and our unborn son strapped into the front seat.

I'm bringing Ava back to my place to rest for the night, and then I'm booking us a plane ticket and getting her the hell away from my lunatic siblings. I don't care where we have to go. I'll do whatever it takes to protect my little family.

A string of profanity slips out of me when I pull through the front gate. All the lights are on downstairs, and Chaston's douchey Mercedes G-Class is parked behind Anders's Phantom.

It looks as though my sister brought in the entire psychotic Von Horton brain trust to consult on me.

I kill the engine and get out to help Ava, trying to keep my wolf in check. He's still revved up from seeing her hurt, and it's only going to take one wrong look from Chaston to send him over the edge.

The house goes silent when we walk in, and I know my siblings heard us pull up. I have half a mind to take Ava straight upstairs, but I'm the alpha of this family. No one tries to hurt my mate and gets away with it.

I guide her straight into the kitchen, where my siblings are gathered around the bar. Three sets of eyes snap onto Ava, and I have to avoid the urge to put myself between my mate and my siblings.

"Robert is dead," I announce, my tone low and even. "I killed him."

Chaston's and Anders's eyebrows shoot up, but Hyacinthe merely rolls her eyes.

"What a waste," she sighs, throwing back a pill and washing it down with a swig of black coffee. "Robert was actually useful."

"You should have thought about that before you sent him to do your dirty work."

"I was only doing what's best for this family," says my sister in a cold tone. "What's necessary for this family."

“Need I remind you who’s in charge here?” I snarl, my temper getting the best of me. “You — don’t — make — the decisions.”

Hyacinthe lets out a haughty little huff. “Somebody had to do something,” she sniffs. “This . . . girl is an embarrassment.”

I know Hyacinthe meant to say “human.” Inside, my wolf snarls.

“She’s a gold digger and a liability.”

“Don’t you dare speak of my mate that way,” I hiss.

For the first time tonight, my sister actually looks surprised. “Your mate?”

She lets out an incredulous trill of laughter. Then she stops and inhales deeply, trying to separate my scent from Ava’s. She can’t.

Hyacinthe’s face turns to stone. “What, just because you knocked her up, you’ve decided to mark the little slut?”

This time, a real growl bursts out of me, and I lunge across the counter. My hand closes around my sister’s throat, and I slam her against the kitchen cabinets. Hyacinthe headbutts me, and I shove her to the side — slamming her head against the immaculate quartz countertop.

The move probably would have knocked a human out cold, but my sister is durable the way all shifters are.

“Ava — is — my fated mate,” I snarl, bringing my face so close to my sister’s that I shower her with my spit. “She will bear my pup, who will likely grow up to be alpha of this pack.”

Hyacinthe glowers up at me, and I dig my thumb into the side of her throat until she winces. I lower my voice to barely a whisper, throwing the alpha command behind every word. “You will not do or say anything to hurt her — ever again.” I press my thumb in harder. “If you ever disobey me, I will rip you apart.”

I release my sister, and she slumps against the counter, grasping at her bruised throat. Her eyes are the same liquid silver as my own, and I can feel her wolf rising to the surface.

I hold her gaze in a challenge. I’d love nothing more than to fight her wolf. But then she averts her eyes, submitting to my command.

“The same goes for the two of you,” I snarl at my brothers. “Ava is off-limits.”

“You can’t be serious,” Chaston drawls. “You expect us to make nice with this human piece of —” He breaks off at the look on my face.

Anders is the last to speak. "Father won't stand for it," he says, taking a sip of his coffee and grimacing. "He'll disown you — alpha or not."

"I don't care," I say, and I realize I mean it. "Ava is pregnant. We're going to have a son, and I'll be damned if I let him anywhere near the likes of you." I toss a disgusted look at Hyacinthe before moving my gaze to my brothers. "I'm finished with this family."

Anders lets out a low mocking chuckle. "It's a cold world out there without a trust fund, little brother."

I bristle at his condescending tone. Anders has always had a stick up his ass, and I can tell it grates on him that I'm his alpha.

"I don't need anything this family has to offer."

"Bullshit!" Chaston laughs. "You'll have nothing. Well, except that ridiculous car of yours." He turns to Ava with a faux-sympathetic expression. "I hope the two of you will be very happy together, scrubbing toilets for the rest of your lives."

"Go to hell, Chaston," I snarl, tightening my grip on Ava. "Father hasn't disowned me yet, and I'm still alpha here." I narrow my eyes, fully fed up with my siblings. "Get out."

"What?" Anders looks at me as though I've lost my mind.

"You heard me," I growl. "Get out — of my — house."

My wolf must be showing again, because my siblings don't argue. Hyacinthe stalks around the bar with bitter hatred in her eyes. Chaston just looks dumbstruck.

It's strangely satisfying to watch my siblings file out of the house and climb into their respective cars. I wait until I hear the sound of their engines fading into the distance before I finally let myself breathe.

"You don't have to do this," Ava whispers, breaking the silence.

When she turns to face me, I suck in a breath. Tears are streaming down her cheeks, and she's hugging her arms around herself.

"What are you talking about?" I ask, closing the distance between us and cupping her face in my hands.

She shrugs. "You don't have to give up all of this just to be with me."

"I'm not giving up anything," I say, horrified that she feels guilty. I shake my head, searching for the right words. "You have given me everything."

“But your family . . . your fortune.”

“What family?” I cry. “My siblings are nothing but money-grubbing vultures. Chaston and Anders only came because they were hoping this would piss off my father enough that he’d pass me over for CEO.”

“But . . . your inheritance.” The cutest little crease appears between her brows, and I know Ava’s not thinking about herself. She’s thinking about what I’m losing — what I might be sacrificing for her. “Won’t you miss . . . having money?”

“I have enough,” I tell her. And I mean it. The Roadster alone is worth nearly eight mil. That will be enough for us to live on until I figure out our next move.

“I’ll go get a job,” I tell her. Of course, I’ve never actually had a job, but I’m sure I can figure that out.

Ava is giving me a disbelieving look, as if she knows exactly what I’m thinking.

“I’ll work for one of my father’s competitors,” I add. “I’m sure they’d be interested to know the areas we’ve had on our radar for drilling. That’s not the point . . . I don’t care what I have to do. I’ll do whatever it takes for you and for him.”

“You say that now,” Ava mutters. “But what about in five years when —”

I cut her off with a kiss. My mate worries too much. Five years is nothing compared to forever, which is how long I plan on loving her.

I kiss her until I feel her body relax and scent the sweet musk of her arousal. I pull back to look her dead in the eyes, needing her to understand. “I love you, Ava. And I don’t need the Von Horton fortune to be happy. All I need is you.”