

Fatal Temptation: Between Two Alphas

novel Chapter 41

Chapter Forty-One

I wake up. I'm sprawled on the floor and panting. Eric and Cameron are trying to calm me down.

Nala growls at them.

"Mia!"

I snap at their hands and trot out of their grasps.

"Mia!"

"Wait!"

I ignore their calls for me to stop.

"What did you see?" Dr. Glass asks. She blocks the door. Her eyes are sharp and knowing and I hate that this woman forced me to confront things I did not want to see.

I shift back to human.

I pause and turn back to the room. I take in Ashley where she lies, lifeless. Dr. Lee with his crunched brows and worried frown. Cam and Eric...they look indignant. Like how dare I walk away from them. How dare I not sit there like a good dog and do whatever they say.

Fuck that.

"I'm not going to talk about it," I tell them all. "Don't bother asking."

I haven't pledged myself to either male.

They can't make me talk.

I don't belong to either pack—their Alpha powers won't work on me.

Eric growls.

Right now I need answers... and there is only one person who can give them to me.

"She'll calm down," I hear Cameron say as I push out the double doors.

Not likely.

I storm down the hallway.

There's a storage room off the main corridor and I grab a towel from the shelf and wrap it around my body. It's not a replacement for my clothes, but I've been on display enough for one day, and just this little bit of modesty goes miles for making me feel less vulnerable.

I skirt around the back of the building, and avoid the square. I enter the main packhouse where my father used to reside and take the back hallways to reach the stairwell.

Ashley's face is burned in my mind. The shapes of her features, the cut of her jaw.

With her height and graceful features, I don't quite see the similarities. But on closer inspection, we have the same brows and chin. The same high cheeks. Our eyes have the same shape but are different colors. I still can't believe that she could be my sister. But I'm not really sure why she'd lie to me.

Maybe just to mess with me?

And she'd said, 'an eye for an eye.'

But if my—our—mother is indeed some kind of seer that gave a false prophecy that led to her downfall...

I'm not sure I can even blame her.

She lost...everything.

I tuck the towel tighter around my torso before jogging up the three flights of stairs. My feet don't make much noise on the carpeted treads, and for the most part, the main house is silent.

Some servant is vacuuming in a distant part of the house and there is the loud tumble of clothes in a dryer. But I'm not focused on those domestic chores, it's the other sounds I'm distinctly listening for. To sense if Eric or Cameron will follow, or worse, if they'd send some underling to do their dirty work for them.

Thankfully, neither dares.

They must know I'm really upset and if they forced their will, the damage would be irreparable. I'm no pack's puppet. And regardless of what I might feel, I can't be used or manipulated.

Not anymore.

My steps are heavy as I approach my dad's old room. He has a new house now, I know, likely since Ashley moved in here.

"Sonofa—"

I cut off the word, but a litany of swear words are ready to pore out.

"Can we call Auntie Morgan?" Aaron asks. "She has a spell for cleanups."

"Yes," Jacelyn agrees. "We need to learn that. It can do all our chores."

I suck a deep breath.

My patience is spent.

My feet are bleeding.

I'm pretty sure my kids are just fucking with me at this point, and I love them more than life itself, but between the scare of them getting hurt,

finding them up here—alone—and now the many chunks of glass wedged in my feet...

“Hey, babies... Mommy’s going to need a minute.” I roll my body until I’m at the foot of the bed. I can feel the blood dripping from my heels onto the floor. I drop one of my arms over my eyes. I don’t want to see this mess, and I don’t want to deal with it.

One of the kids jumps up and down.

“Nope. Nuh-uh. Time out.”

They both freeze.

“Two minutes,” I tell them. “Starting now.”

They know not to argue or disobey once the countdown starts or that just resets the punishment. So I take the first thirty seconds and just breathe. My kids are fine. I’ll be fine. The pain in my feet actually grounds me more.

“Okay,” I say when I feel less likely to growl. “Let’s start at the beginning. Why are you both up here?”

“Because you needed to see the way,” Aaron says.

“No,” she corrects him. “The path. Mommy needs to follow the Path.”

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Chapter Forty-Two

It’s the same thing Dr. Glass told me and it sends shivers down my spine.

“Mia!?” It’s my dad.

His boots crunch over the glass as he comes into the room.

He grabs my one foot and then the other. “What happened?”

The kids see this as a ‘get out of jail’ opportunity and they launch themselves into his arms. He drops my foot like it’s on fire and catches Aaron. Jacelyn’s climbing his neck like some kind of squirrel.

I drop back on the bed and cover my eyes again.

“Hey kids, why don’t you head back downstairs? Your Aunt Claire is looking for you and she’s pretty frantic that you took off when you were supposed to be napping.”

“Note to self, Dad,” I tell him. “The kids haven’t taken naps since they were two.”

“Good to know.”

He walks them to the door and sets both kids down in the hallway. He puts his hands around his mouth and hollers “Claire!”

Even without wolf hearing, I catch her cry of relief.

“Go on now,” he tells them.

They take off running. They caught a break here and they aren’t about to test my patience at the moment.

The crunch of glass comes again.

The bed sinks as my dad sits down beside me again. He pats my knee. “You okay?”

Define okay...

Nope. Definitely not.

“Mia?” he’s worried now.

I drag my arm away from my eyes. “Honestly, dad? No. Not really.”

He nods. Then he lifts my foot and sets it in his lap. He gently pulls out the shards of glass. “The last time I got to bandage one of your wounds, you were eleven, and you’d fallen trying to chase Cameron up a tree.” He doesn’t look at me as he says it.

I remember that.

He grunts.

“It’s a map,” he says quietly.

“What?”

“On the back of this painting. Your mom made it for me. It wasn’t long after she had you. She painted it, spent days. ‘One was art and the other was her heart,’ she said.”

My dad uses his forearm to wipe his eyes. “Seeing you on that mountaintop...I hated myself. What kind of man was I—what kind of father would let a man hurt his daughter like that and do nothing?”

I’m in shock.

“Adriana was clear. It was the first vision she ever had. Right after you were born. She never told me anything else, never spoke about her gift again or anything else she had seen. The only thing she’d said to me was that you had to leave... to be reborn. For your true role to be revealed.”

“Please,” I interrupt him. “I can’t handle any more prophecies.”

He rises from the bed and crosses to the painting where it lies on the floor. He leaves bloody fingerprints on it when he grabs it and shakes off the rest of the glass. Then he lays it out on the bed, with the landscape portrait side up.

“The back is the map... and a message from your mother.”

“Dad, I don’t want to see it. I am not getting dragged into this shit.”

He nods. "I understand. I denied her too and said I wanted no part of it." He sighs. "You'll learn, as I did... we don't have to believe any of it. But that won't stop us from seeing it."

"So the future is what... set? Then what is the point of anything?!?"

He walks away, resigned.

"Dad, she had another baby. That girl... who came here and tried to kill me. She's my half-sister."

He pauses. When he glances back over his shoulder at me, he looks old and broken. "I always knew I loved your mother more than she loved me, Mia." His small smile is so sad. "I'm sorry for what Ashley did to you."

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Chapter Forty-Three

JACE

"You won't make it past the first ward without me, Jace."

Morgan has her hands on her hips and she's glaring at me. Or, well, she's trying to. Ever since she confessed about wanting my protection and me realizing that she could've decimated my packmates and chose not to, I'm feeling decidedly affectionate toward this woman.

So even though she's pissy and trying to be a hardass with me, I'm kind of past seeing her that way. "You're a marshmallow, Morgan."

She sucks in a breath like I just called her the most vile insult known to humanity.

I stalk her across my bedroom. I came up here to pack to leave for California and she followed, making twenty different arguments for why she should go and I should stay.

“Did you just call me a marshmallow!?”

I drop my duffel bag and grab her hips. I can feel the bones and I let my hands drop lower to where her thighs fan out. I flex my hands there. “Yeah, that’s what I said. You’re soft,” I squeeze again. “And sweet.”

She sputters.

I drop a quick kiss on her mouth because I'm a sucker for those lips...

“Jace, wait. Seriously. You don’t know what you’re getting into. This is a multibillion dollar corporation and the security is state of the art. That’s before we get into our magic failsafes. I helped lay those foundations. I wove those spells. I’m not being arrogant here. You want to get in and make it out alive...I’m your best shot at making that possible.”

I consider what she’s said.

My brother’s still mixed up with Alpha MacPhearson and there are way too many enemy wolves on site for me to take any sizable contingent of men.

For that matter, pharmaceutical security is going to need skills more in Jacob’s or Mia’s wheelhouse, and much as I’d love to have Mia help, Cam’s not going to let her out of his sight, let alone across the country onto Eric’s range.

“Just admit it,” she says. “You need me.”

I do need her. Just for things beyond reconnaissance or breaking and entering.

I’ve tortured and maimed.

I’ve been the spear of our armies for the better part of my life. I haven’t always agreed with orders, but I’ve followed them. I can be ruthless,

cruel, as vicious as any other alpha who'd make a decision and not give a damn about the consequences.

I hope she never has to see that side of me. But she needs to know that it exists. I like to think of myself as reasonable, but when push comes to shove- "I'll do whatever it takes to save my niece."

Her hands cup my cheeks. "You're a good man, wolf."

I snort.

She's teasing me. But... "I'm not, Morgan. I've done things I'm not proud of."

She pats my face. "Talk to me after you've swindled your best friend out of her afterbirth." She shudders.

I laugh. I can't help it.

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Chapter Forty-Four

CAMERON

"Is he dead?" I ask.

Eric MacPhearson leans against the bookcase in my room. After the shitshow in the hospital wing, I suggested that he and I talk.

He doesn't ask 'who.' "No. He escaped."

"How severe were your losses?"

"Why do you ask? Thinking of westward expansion?"

I smirk. "No. We've been content here."

It's true. This is Big Sky Country. Winters are cold and long—perfect for our wolves. We're in a remote area with our pack spread out across lands that range for fifty miles in each direction. We have an infrastructure, a corporate base, our agricultural and ranching operations, even separate schools that are state-accredited for our kids.

“Bigger isn't always better.”

He laughs.

“You know what I mean.” I purposely lobbed that softball, thinking to lull him further with some humor. We'll never be friends. And given that he wants Mia, it's a miracle I haven't already murdered him.

But he is, for all intents and purposes, a 'neighbor' and a fellow Alpha if nothing else.

If we're at this lull in our hatred, I might as well make the most of it.

“Your goal... this unified nation...you know it will never work, right? It defies our very natures as wolves and Alphas. You will always face resistance. You will always have some young pup-like Philippe—seeking to make you pay for your actions. War begets war, Eric.”

I go to the wet bar in the corner of the room. It's still morning, but I don't even care as I pour myself a drink. Holding to the notion of making the most out of this conversation, I pour a second whiskey and hand it to him.

He holds the glass up in a mock toast and takes a sip.

“You have to know,” I go on. “That there isn't a wolf in this pack that won't go to war at the tiniest provocation. If I so much as issue the command, they'll mobilize as one unit.” Now I pull out the bigger guns in my proverbial argument. “You've made many enemies in your zest to control the West Coast. You've just seen what one family can do—and Ashley and her brother, they come from a peaceful pack. You sure you want to keep this up? You might find there are others who won't bow down—or stay down—so readily.”

He slugs back the drink and walks past me. Making himself at home, he grabs a second glass and this time reaches for vodka instead.

“You’re a dick for pouring whiskey. I don’t think I’ve touched the stuff since that summer when we drank a case of it. I’m pretty sure I puked enough that night to feed the seagulls on the beach for a week.”

One summer.

It’d been one summer in my first college years when my father sent me to Stanford. Eric had been finishing his masters.

Wolves sense wolves and we’d torn up the coast for a few weeks. It’d all been in good fun and we’d gotten along all right, as two guys with big shoes to fill as we stepped into our respective Alpha heritages.

We never kept in touch.

Never talked or emailed or bothered with social media.

He takes another sip and considers me over the rim of his glass. “Why haven’t you killed Ashley? Seems like a win/win for you,” he goes on. “Kill a traitor, free up the bond. Fully mate Mia.”

I’ve thought about it.

Eric rubs his eyes for a second. “It’s all so interconnected, isn’t it? Like some intricate web and we’re all fuckin’ stuck in it.”

Yes. I tend to agree.

My body tenses. We may have some common enemies, but that does not make this Alpha my ally.

“What did she tell you?” I ask carefully.

“She said I’d be forged in darkness and made to unite our world in light.”

“Lofty.”

His mouth twitches. “That’s not all she said.”

“Enlighten me.”

“She said ‘the moon-marked mother would belong to me.’”

I take a second to rein in my anger. “If you think I’m just going to hand over my mate...”

“She’s better off with me,” he says.

“You’re delirious.”

Eric purses his lips and is quiet for a moment. Then he says something that stops me completely... “We could share her...”

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Chapter Forty-Five

JACE

Morgan boards the plane and makes herself comfortable in the back. This is one of our

Corporate fleet, a Cessna Citation XLS. It’s decked out and I smile at her as she reaches for the basket of snacks.

When she took me by the hand, I’d been hoping she’d lead me to bed. But bless this witch, she dragged me out of the house and in short order we are readying to break into her coven’s laboratories.

Jacob climbs the steps and boards.

He takes one look at her, one at me.

“I’ll debrief you while we’re en route.”

He shrugs.

It's one of the things I like most about him. This wolf can roll with the punches. He introduces himself to Morgan then takes his seat at the rear of the plane where he begins setting up his electronics.

"You know how to fly this thing?" Morgan asks.

She looks more curious than worried.

"I finished my training hours last week," I tell her.

She snickers.

Jacob glances between us. He arches a brow.

I let one side of my mouth lift up.

Yeah, I fell for a witch.

He grunts.

Conversation complete.

Pretty much the same kind of conversation that took place when I told him I needed his skills for a trip to California.

"Dangerous?" he'd asked.

"Yup," I said.

"Okay."

"We're wheels up in two," I say as I continue my pre-flight analysis.

"Might want to rethink that, boss." Jacob points out the window.

What? "Why?"

And then I see them.

Michail and Declan.

They've parked in the hangar and are walking across the tarmac.

I brace myself for what could be a fight. These wolves are my friends but their loyalty to pack is absolute. And I have no clearance for this.

Sure, Cam told me to 'Deal with it,' but I'm taking a whole lot of liberty with that decree.

"Oh... great," Morgan mutters. "More friends."

She isn't really angry about it, but I do think she's less comfortable than she was when it was just me, her and Jacob.

The wolves of my pack haven't exactly been kind to her and that whole burn-her-alive scenario at the Circle was probably going to take a few minutes to forget.

"We're all on the same team," I remind her. And that's true, at least in our goal to save Merilee. Outside of that goal, I'd be lying. She's made a lot of enemies.

I can't even say I'm sure of Michail's or Declan's motives as they approach now.

I join my thoughts to theirs. If you plan to stop us...that's not happening.

I brace for a fight that may be coming. These are two of the fiercest wolves in our pack.

Declan sighs in my mind. That's insulting, Jace.

Morgan can't hear our thoughts. She doesn't know that these wolves are here to help. She rolls her hand and a ball of fire appears in her palm. She winks at me.

I grin.

Michail boards first. He's wearing sunglasses and one of those Tommy Bahama shirts that make sense on a retiree but somehow cool on him. He eyes the flameball Morgan's bouncing and instead of taking offense, he just laughs. He goes to sit beside Jacob.

He doesn't say a word to me. Not in my mind, not out loud.

Which is his own message I suppose.

It's the equivalent of, "You didn't ask, but I'm coming anyway, asshole."

Okay.

That was a heavy burden for him.

Who's to say what would've occurred had I stayed? Cam was cursed. Ashley was vicious and vengeful.

Maybe I would've lost my babies.

Maybe I would've died at one-or both-of their hands.

I rub my head. The mental gymnastics are exhausting.

A note. Get back to writing the note. My dad's letter was simple. I told him I needed to leave. He knew why. I signed it that I loved him.

This second letter... the pen stills as I write my kids' names.

Jacelyn, Aaron...

There are a thousand things I want to say. Comforting things, encouraging things, apologies and explanations.

How does a mother craft her last words to her children?

No.

I can't think like that. I will come back. I will survive.

I love you always. And will be with you forever.

I want to tell them to be strong, to be happy. To find joy in every day. But they're kids and they need me, not some note with a bunch of fortune-cookie sayings. God, I can be so dramatic sometimes.

I content myself with the knowledge that my kids know that I love them. And, much as I hate to admit it, here among Healmsworth Pack, they'll be surrounded by love too.

I'm not sure what tomorrow will bring. Or even if what I'm doing is right or will make any difference. But everyone else seems to know more about my life, my body, my future. And it's time I found some answers for myself.

I shove some of my old clothes into a bag.

There isn't much to grab. Some jeans, a pair of shoes. I can hit a store for whatever I might need. As for money, I have a few accounts I can access.

I'll need to get off packlands first...

I calculate the shortest route to the main road.

With my mind made up, I head out of the house.

"Well, well, well... where do you think you're going?"

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Chapter Forty-Six

MIA

"Damn it, Corinne!" I hold my chest. "You scared me."

She crosses her arms.

"Going somewhere?"

I don't owe this woman answers, and I definitely don't trust her. She may be Eric's sister, but she's dangerous and ruthless and not beholden to me in any way.

"You do realize," I remind her. "That you tried to kill me last time we met."

"And I recall," she drawls, "who threw the first punch."

Fair.

"Excuse me," I say and attempt to move around her.

She blocks my path.

I made it out of the packhouse and avoided the many many wolves assembled in the square. And through some minor miracle, I've not run into Cam, Eric or my kids.

She's wasting time that I don't have to spare.

"Where you going?" she asks.

I shrug. "Nowhere."

She tsks.

I debate turning around and cutting across the other side of our land. It's several miles to the nearest road. And it's not a county road, just a working track between the fields.

"I hope," she says tapping one finger against her chin, "that you aren't thinking of running off somewhere alone. Because that would just be stupid. A girl tied to two Alphas, who could be leveraged against either of them. A female who can't wholly regenerate...out on her own...that's just a danger to everyone—and most of all herself."

I swallow and my throat feels like it's gone bone dry.

“Leaving would be stupid. Reckless even. With Ashley’s family having infiltrated this pack, and ours, potential enemies all among us... you wouldn’t do something like that, right, Mia?”

I’m not about to lie or explain. “Excuse me.”

She whistles like a mountain bluebird.

All at once, several Ravens come running. They close ranks around us.

“Damn it, Corinne. You’re making a scene!”

We are behind the giant storage building, but that’s not to say someone won’t notice or suspect, seeing as how Corinne’s crew would definitely garner attention.

“Oh, shut up. I’m doing you a favor.”

I sling my bag over my shoulder. “How’s that?”

“You want to get out of here, right?” She inclines her head to one of the Ravens. The girl is mid-thirties, blonde and built like a wrestler. “How do you think you’re going to manage that? Running away on foot? That won’t be easy to track or anything.”

She’s back to tapping her chin again. “Or maybe you want Ashley’s allies or her brother, or any number of rogues or vamps to trail you.... I can’t imagine your precious Cameron would let you off these lands.”

“Leave him out of it.”

She sighs. “Stop the nonsense, will you? I get it. You need to go. I’m trying to help you. Why are you making this so difficult!?!”

As she says it, a large SUV rolls up. The doors unlock and the Ravens start piling in.

“Shotgun!” she calls.

I see the two wolves at the end of the road. They're moving a herd of cattle from one pasture to another. Yes, they're on patrol, but they're also working the land.

"They were chill when our entourages rolled in, after things calmed down. I think the cars were easier to search, and less concerning than how half of us air-dropped. But they might not be so cool, if the alarm about her has already been given."

"Turn south," I say.

"And if they try to stop us?" she asks.

Corinne laughs. "Floor it."

Corinne and the driver turn on the charm. It's like a switch flips and they go from badass warriors to sultry women. The blonde lets her hair down and it's a tumble of sex kitten waves.

Corinne just smiles.

But it's a real smile and she bats her eyes a bit.

It transforms her face into some innocent affection.

These women are good.

"These are average pack members," I say. "They have families." I don't know if these women plan to flirt or fight if the patrol stops us. And I don't want anyone hurt because of me.

Corinne smiles bigger. I see her reflection in the rearview mirror. "We're driving out of here. I didn't say we were driving over them."

She smiles and waves.

Both wolves share a look, and I'd bet they're letting the Alpha know that a black Escalade is leaving pack territory.

They'll know I've gone.

And they'll come for me.

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Chapter Forty-Seven

MIA

We drive for hours.

Thirty hours.

The benefit of five women in a car is everyone can take a turn at the wheel. The downfall is ...five women in a car.

Who was hungry, tired, bored, thirsty, had to pee.

In some ways it was the most awful thirty hours of my life. In others... I'd never had an experience like this. Singing loud and eating junk food. Talking about dating and mating and what it is like to have pups.

After the initial worries of Corinne double-crossing me passed... part of me was actually having fun.

I've lived outside of 'pack' which is a concept none of them have ever experienced. They were intrigued by my job, my boss Alex, and the kind of independence I'd had.

And I learned about them. Rachel migrated into their pack by way of a Chinese pack that settled in the Bay Area. Jessica was born in Cali and had a mate back home. The driver, Lianne, had recently found her mate. They were having a formal mating ceremony in the spring-or whenever things calmed enough. They weren't waiting though, they were already trying to have a family.

Just talking about it brightened the woman's face.

I'd had friends when I grew up but in the aftermath of what happened with Cam, no one reached out or kept in touch. Not that I would've been easy to find, but I feel like someone could've tried.

I'd befriended Morgan... and look how well that turned out for me.

"You feeling sorry for yourself again, Two-fer?"

My hands tighten on the steering wheel.

It's late into the night and my turn to drive.

Corinne smirks.

I'm not even going to mention that two-fer comment. If she keeps that shit up, we're definitely going to fight. Part of me wants the rematch, while the more sensible side of me acknowledges that I probably wouldn't win.

I glance in the mirror, the rest of the women are asleep.

"I still don't know why you agreed to come with me."

"Because my brother told me to protect you."

"And you didn't question it?"

Corinne looks away. Her features fall as she closes her eyes and rests her head against the window. "He's all I have left of my family."

You need to tell me where the fuck you are, Mia.

It's Cam. He's in my head again.

I ignore him.

Eric tries to engage me a few minutes later, but I ignore him too.

"Is that my brother again?" Corinne asks. She's amused.

"Is he hitting you up too?"

She grins. “Only every ten minutes.”

“He hasn’t demanded you to tell him where we are yet?”

Okay, that doesn’t sound ominous or anything.

“This is a major tourist attraction, Corinne. I seriously doubt anyone is going to try to abduct me in the middle of Bourbon Street.”

She sighs. “That’s the thing...the vilest creatures aren’t the ones we run from. We can fight those... The worst evils are the ones that we seek out. The ones we invite into our homes.”

A chill slithers down my spine.

“I know you’re here for a reason. And I’m not pestering you for what that may be. You left your kids, so it has to be important. Just...”

“Just what?”

“Don’t do anything stupid.”

I expel a deep breath. “You do realize how rude and inherently insulting that statement is.”

“Uh huh.” She points to an exit. “Take that right. It’ll bring us into the Garden District.”

There are smells and sights aplenty. Old, old homes with bright colors and elaborate woodwork. Grand houses with balconies and wrought iron railings. Bougainvillea blooms on rooftops and pretty flowers hang from giant baskets and window boxes.

Cobblestone streets bisect the major roadways. It’s a blend of the Old World dropped into a modern city.

I roll down the window.

The air is balmy here. Way warmer and wetter than in the northwest where we came from. It smells damp and musty and there's something pervading it all.

My nose wrinkles.

"Death," Corinne says quietly. "You smell death."

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Chapter Forty-Eight

JACE

"Covens can sense magic," Morgan tells me.

We're about thirty miles from the airport and I've been cleared for landing.

Morgan's hands twirl and move. A bright blue tendril of ...something...manifests in her hands. "I'm going to mask us. It won't do much up close, but for avoiding the initial recognition, it'll give us a chance."

She extends her hands, first toward my men, then herself, lastly in a delicate wave she lets her fingers point toward me.

I don't feel anything.

Don't see anything different in the reflection of my appearance.

"Try not to look so disappointed, wolf."

I grin.

"That's it?" whatever spell she cast, it was decidedly anti-climactic.

“Yup.”

“Huh.”

She blows me a kiss.

I hate to admit it, but I know we can't pull this off without her. We're prepared to try to do it, but on a bone deep level I think we all recognize we're out of our element.

Touching down, I taxi toward the designated hangar. Unlike a commercial flight, we don't have all the steps or security or clearances to obtain. Ground traffic patrol relays instructions. A ground crew points and directs.

I guide us into the hangar we reserved. We leave the jet. Michail locks it up.

Jacob has a car waiting for us when we exit the small airport building.

You sure about this, Boss.

It's Declan.

Michail just looks bored. But that's the way he gets when he's working hard to keep himself calm. This wolf has a light trigger for his aggressions and when he knows a fight is coming, he often erupts before it.

Declan is pensive. He glances at Jacob. Out loud he says, “What are the schematics, Jake?”

Morgan inclines her head toward the driver and arches a brow.

We revert to our internal conversation.

There are several service entrances, Jacob says. We could likely enter one of the shipping bays. Either like we're dropping supplies or picking up a shipment. From the security logs, deliveries happen daily. And twice weekly, we see pickups. Depending on our ingress.

It's the egress that's going to be a bitch, Declan says.

Morgan puts her hand on my thigh. "I know the way out."

Is she hearing us? My brows draw together.

"Make your dinner reservations for tonight," she says to all of us. "The whole family convenes for mass tomorrow."

Oh. So the coven will converge tomorrow. "At the restaurant?" I ask.

She nods. I think I'm in love. I'm pretty sure she just dropped lingo from John Wick into this conversation.

The restaurant is the lab. The dinner reservation confirms we attack tonight.

I'd hoped for more time for reconnaissance. But it seems like we have a handful of hours to prep and initiate our plan.

"Okay." I kiss her forehead. "We'll go. Tonight."

* * * * *

MIA

The map that was in my dad's room, it just gives a layout of the city. There aren't any indicators of where to go or when. It's pretty stupid of me to even think that my mom would be here. Although... Seer.

"Don't overthink it," Corinne says. "We're here. Let's do whatever you came for and head back out."

That's just it. I don't really know what I came here for. To confront my mom, I guess. But then what?

I hear it then, a lulling melody. It's so early, there is still mist clinging to the side streets where the sunlight hasn't reached yet.

I turn the wheel without thinking.

Corinne slaps my arm. “What the hell did I just tell you!?”

I pull the car to the side of the road and block a driveway.

The other women are stirring now.

We need a plan. But when I glance back at Corinne, she’s pale and almost shaking. It’s clear she’s scared of something and from the way she talked about this city, she doesn’t want to be here.

“What aren’t you telling me?”

She doesn’t answer.

I wave my hand in front of her face.

I smell it then, again.

Death.

“She’s close,” Corinne whispers.

She...not it.

Chills run up and down my arms.

“Why don’t I drive for a while?” Corinne unbuckles her seat belt. She’s out of the car and coming around my side before I can respond.

“What is this place?”

“Breakfast.”

“I don’t believe it!” The man that steps out of the mansion is huge. At least 6’6” and built like Jason Mamoia.

“Close your mouth, Mia,” Corinne teases. “You already have Two.”

She walks up to him and he lifts her off the ground, twirls her once and kisses her passionately.

It's...hot.

Rachel nudges my shoulder. "They're like that. You'll get used to it."

Corinne has her legs slung around this guy's waist and from the way she's riding him, I think they might be a few seconds away from having sex in the courtyard.

"Put her down, Theo." Rachel moves to the back of the SUV and grabs their bags. "I want a shower. And we're hungry."

He draws Corinne to his side, but it doesn't look like her feet really touch the ground.

I sniff the air.

He isn't human.

He isn't a wolf.

"What are you?" I blurt.

His green eyes crinkle. His hair and skin are dark but there's no telling his age. His smile is bright.

He ignores me and lifts Corinne's chin until she stares at him. "Have you accepted my offer then?"

She shakes her head.

"Foolish girl," he chides. "You've no idea what you're missing."

She shrugs. But I can sense she's sad.

And there's a flicker of fear.

I didn't even like this woman a day ago, and now I feel connected to her. I don't want her to be scared. I don't want something to happen to her.

I don't want anyone to get hurt over me.

Theo glances at me again, and it's like he sees straight through me. "They've been waiting for you."

He holds his hand out and we walk through a trellised tunnel into another courtyard. This place is huge. A mansion with multiple levels and these beautiful gardened terraces and squares in the center of each wing of the building.

I follow Corinne and the Ravens through.

My blood runs hot—then cold.

And what I see stops me in my tracks...

Fatal Temptation: Between Two Alphas novel Chapter 49

Chapter Forty-Nine

MIA

"Cam!? What the hell are you doing here!?"

Cameron stands behind a table loaded with pastries and fruit and crepes. He walks toward me and he looks lethal.

The Ravens give him room and Corinne and Theo have already moved to sit at the head of the table.

"So much for a girls' trip," Rachel mutters as she abandons me.

I catch several other people—creatures?—but my attention is glued to Cameron.

He comes at me like a linebacker. One second my feet are on the ground, the next I'm up against his chest and held tight. He barrels out of the courtyard, through that trellised bridge and out into the front square.

“Cam, stop. Put me down.”

He keeps moving.

“Cam!” I hit his shoulder.

When he finally sets me down at the far end of the square near where we came in, his green eyes are furious. “Don’t you ever pull a fucking stunt like that again.”

Nala growls.

I shove out of his arms. “I’m not bait. Or an experiment. Or some object. You don’t own me.”

I’m still angry over what he allowed Dr. Glass to do. Although, if I’m being fair, I don’t think either of us were really expecting her to just jab me.

“I’m not yours anymore, Cam.”

He grabs my arms.

The next second his mouth is on mine and he’s kissing me.

It’s a dark kiss, desperate.

He stops for the briefest instant. “Mia.”

His scent and strength begin to wear me down. But it’s that sharp, slight scent of fear that takes the fight out of me. He was afraid—for me.

The minute I kiss him back, his whole body shudders. He murmurs my name.

Then I’m held even tighter even as his hands are tugging and skimming over my body.

“Get a room,” someone yells.

We both jerk apart and see on the second floor a huddle of--vampires?!-- watching us. Their scent and movements give them away.

The female shrugs. "We love a good show. But you're loud. And it's our bedtime."

Right. Night creatures.

They don't seem bothered by the sunlight though.

I don't see any burning flesh or peeling skin.

The brunette female and her companions, another beautiful woman and a bearded man, all three stroll back into one of the many rooms lining that balcony.

I don't take my eyes off the vamps, even after the door closes behind them. Eric's lands were attacked by them. We've patrolled our lands and the surrounding human cities to keep them in check.

Vampires are our enemies.

"What is this place?" I ask him.

"It's like nowhere else you've ever been," he says, staring pointedly.

He's already dragging his shirt off as he turns back to me.

"What are you doing!?"

His eyes flash to Conn's and that golden glow tells me what I need to know.

He's done playing games.

"I'm doing, Mia, what I should've done the minute my eyes opened and you were within my reach."

His huge arms flex. The muscles in his chest and abs ripple. He's wearing pants but there is no missing the giant erection straining against the fly of his jeans.

His hands go to his belt and he slowly unbuckles it.

"W-whose room is this?"

He shrugs. "Doesn't matter."

I gulp.

"Take your clothes off, Mia. If you don't like the bed, I'll take you on the floor or against the wall."

Gods, the things he says.

My nipples tighten even as I'm debating if I can let myself get close to this man again.

I'm on a giant four-poster bed. It has a canopy and really thick navy blue brocade fabric. There are too many pillows to count. The walls are white. The room is huge. It has a reading nook. A chaise lounge. A sitting area with couch and tv. On the other side of the bedroom area is a huge marbled bathroom. There's a shower with dozens of heads, and a tub that looks deep.

"You don't need me," he throws my words back at me. "You don't want me."

"I didn't say that."

"Let me finish." His chest is all muscle, and I remember so many nights, lying in his arms, falling asleep to the sound of his heart beating. "You don't need me, but I need you." He starts toward me. "I've always needed you. And I'll want you until I draw my last breath."

Fatal Temptation: Between Two Alphas

novel Chapter 50

Chapter Fifty

“Don’t do this.” I shake my head. “Don’t say those things to me.”

It’s like when we were in that dream space. His love was pure. And I believed. But I could allow myself to do that then, when we were in some fantasy space.

I can’t go down this path with him now.

The reality is... this man has the power to break me.

I survived once. I’m not sure I could again.

“You’re mine, Mia. Your goddamn name means mine. You are my life! You are my mate!”

Finally the words.

For years, I wanted them. I waited for them. How many times did I wish for him to say those things? To come to his senses and see that I was made for him and he for me.

Even with the edge of anger beneath them, they warm my heart. Part of me—even when I was rejected and alone—was tied to this man.

I never really got over him.

Did I want to?

“Please,” he says. “Don’t push me away.”

And it’s that simple plea that changes everything.

I hold out my hand.

His smile is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

Cam is on me in the next instant.

His huge body pushes me into the soft mattress.

The sheets smell like fabric softener and dandelions. Then there's only Cam. Earth and air and musk. Sweat and desire and need.

His cock is already at the junction of my thighs.

I'm wearing jean shorts and a tank top.

He tears the shirt over my head in a motion so quick my head bounces against the pillows, and my bra is gone next. Then he feasts.

His teeth drag across my nipples. His palms hold them together while his fingers pinch the tips. He alternates between one and the other, his mouth hot and wet, his teeth biting with the exact amount of pressure.

I feel my body flood with heat.

He lifts his head for a second, gauging my reactions and whether or not I'm ready to give myself to him.

Can I deny him this? Can I deny myself?

But what does it mean if I give myself to him right now?

"Stop thinking, Mia. Stay in this moment with me."

His voice is harsh and almost desperate. Like he's been imprisoned and this is the first chance to finally feel free.

I guess he has been.

Before I can reply, he's pulling the shorts and panties off my legs. My shoes are flung across the room. His mouth dips to my core. He breathes deep.

That first lick is a sliver of heaven.

The second lets me know it's going to be the most sinful kind of hell.

It's hard and engorged and even knowing we used to do it all the time and that I've had kids, I'm still thinking about whether or not he is going to fit.

He smirks. "I've missed you so much, honey."

Then he's spreading my legs open, touching and arranging my pussy just so before he lines up his cock and pushes in.

There's fullness and stretching and a pleasure that borders on pain.

"Easy," he murmurs. "Your body will remember."

"I don't think this is something that relates to muscle memory."

He laughs and it has him twitching inside me and suddenly I'm laughing too.

His smile is bright, and real, and so familiar it makes my heart sing.

He grabs my hips and adjusts the angle, making the thick head of his cock rub right against my g-spot and I swear I see stars.

He laughs again and tells me I'm beautiful. "You're the most beautiful thing I've ever seen."

Then there is no talking. Just his body thrusting harder and deeper. His hands touch me everywhere. His hips angling so every stroke rubs me on the inside and out

I'm convulsing around him in seconds, the orgasm so intense I'm gasping for air and arched off the bed.

He shoves me back down and fucks me steadily through it. Praising and thanking me and muttering all sorts of sexy, dirty things in my ear.

He roars as he comes inside of me, and I shake and clench around him.

I'm mindless, drowning in ecstasy.

My eyes close as I'm lost to the pleasure and then I feel the sharp bite of his teeth.