

Chapter 13

ALIA

I rose from my bed as soon as my eyes flipped open. I don't usually wake up early, but then today was different. The Beta would be eating breakfast with my brother and his Beta and Gamma, so I might as well join them.

After a quick shower, I slipped on a spaghetti strap cream dress and a white cardigan, pulling my hair up into a clean ponytail. I kept my face bare of anything and just put on my sandals and rushed downstairs, towards the kitchen.

I smelled him even before I reached the dining area. At least he was there, so all my efforts won't be wasted. But before I could reach him, I tried sniffing the air again, hoping that Carrie wasn't around to get his attention. Well, lucky day, I didn't smell her at all. She might still be sleeping.

"Whoah! The princess went down from her tower and decided to grace us with her presence for breakfast! What an honor!" Gamma Carlos stood up from his seat and bowed down in my direction while I rolled my eyes at him, going directly to my seat beside Beta

Paul.

My mate was seated beside Gamma Carlos, making him sit directly in front of me. He just raised his head and didn't say anything. His face was void of any emotions.

Grumpy in the morning?

"Where's Caspian?" I asked Beta Paul beside me as I sat down, ignoring Gamma Carlos' antics.

"Still in office." He said this casually as he put food in his mouth.

"I'll call him then." I rose from my chair, but Gavin stopped me.

"No need, he'll be here soon. I was there with him a few minutes ago, and he said we could eat ahead. He'll just finish something. Good morning, Lady Alia."

"I see. Good morning, Beta." I answered with a poker face, my eyes roaming his features as he took a bite of his bread.

I was so lost in staring at him until someone broke the trance.

"So, to whom do we owe the pleasure of having you here in a very nice dress compared to your usual outfit in the mornings?" Gamma Carlos blurted out.

It seemed like he wasn't done with his teasing, to which Beta Paul snickered, making my mate's forehead crease.

"Excuse me, I didn't get what you were trying to imply." I snapped at him as I forked portions of bacon onto my plate.

My eyes darted to the empty glass in front of Beta Gavin. My hand automatically grabbed the milk and pushed it in his direction. If my brother's Beta and Gamma noticed my action, nobody said a word.

Gavin didn't say anything, just took it and poured it into his glass, a smile tugging on his lips.

"Well, you would usually come down in the mornings with your Tinkerbell pajamas, so it was unusual to eat breakfast with you in a dress." A coy smile played on the Gamma's face.

"Except yesterday, when she went down wearing a man's shirt." Beta Paul added, pointing his fork towards the Gamma in front of him.

"Ahh that blue shirt, which was too big for her." He nodded, while I could feel my face starting to turn red.

"And I tried to get a whiff of the scent to find out who owned it, but she was too fast and ran away before I could catch her. Too bad! I wanted to know who the

mystery guy was."

I could feel my tongue stuck in my throat and all I could do was glare at them. They were too talkative for males, and this was way too humiliating. I was hoping Gavin wouldn't realize it was his blue shirt I had yesterday morning, but by the look of the smirk on his face, he had already caught it.

"And your point is?" I tried to compose myself, acting like it was nothing, but deep inside, I wanted to kill both of them for humiliating me.

"Our point is, we're happy that our baby Alia is finally growing up. Ditched those baby pajamas, dresses suit you better." Gamma Carlos said it nicely and then winked.

"But it doesn't mean that you can go around wearing a guy's shirt. That one doesn't sit well with us. And if your brother found out..."

"What if I found out?" My brother's cold voice came out of nowhere, and I felt my shoulders tense. I glared at Beta Paul before I followed my brother's movement as he made his way to the head of the table, where his Beta and Gamma were sitting on both his sides.

"If you find out that I intentionally ran away from

your men at the bar last time, it was because I hated being followed. So now that you know, am I forgiven?

"I fluttered my lashes at my brother.

Caspian just shook his head and started fixing the food on his plate. "We'll talk about that some other time." He then lifted his head and looked at Gavin, who was busy eating his food. "I hope they don't tear off your ears, Beta Gavin. They're like that, bickering since we were kids."

"No problem. I grew up with a group of males as well, including Alpha Jacob, so I know how it is." A smug smile curved on his lips as he answered my brother, while his attention was still on the food he was eating.

"Do you have a sister?" Beta Paul asked.

"No. I'm an only child." He replied.

"Lucky you. I had Carrie for a sister, plus this princess here, Alia. They thought they ruled the world." Beta Paul chuckled.

I rolled my eyes while eating my bacon. My eyes shifted to Gavin, waiting for his reaction.

"I know exactly what you mean. We have Clair, Luna Clair. She is Gamma Aaron's younger sister and she would always boss us around, and we couldn't do anything since she got the Alpha wrapped around her

fingers even when we were just kids. No wonder they end up together."

I swallowed hard at his story. Damn it! Why does he need to include Clair all the time? I tried to find bitterness in his words, especially when he said Alpha Jacob and Clair ended up together, but I couldn't find any. But still, it was enough to dampen my mood.

"Exactly like that. They used their...." I didn't hear the rest of Gamma Carlos' words since I stood up already.

"Excuse me," I said, almost in a whisper.

"Alia," my brother called after me. "You haven't eaten anything yet." His eyes shifted from my plate to mine.

"I'm not that hungry, Cas," I said, smiling at him before walking out of the kitchen towards the garden at the back of the packhouse.

I sat on the bench and looked at the forest in front of me. What made her so special in his eyes?

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GAVIN

I shouldn't have brought up Clair. I fucked up again. 4

Claiming and Clair. Not a word about them ever again. 8

I watched as her mood dampened at my stories, and it was too late to take it back.

In the end, she left, and the almost perfect breakfast turned bad. No one to blame but me again. Me and my big mouth.

As soon as I was done with breakfast, I excused myself since they were still engaged in a conversation regarding their pack. I went around the packhouse trying to scent her until I found her at the back, which looked like a small garden overlooking the forest.

She was sitting on the bench and had her back to me, but by the way her shoulder tensed as I was approaching, I could tell that she must have scented me.

"Do you mind if I sit beside you?" I asked, but she just shrugged her shoulders.

"Are you not going to see your men at the training ground?" She asked as I sat beside her.

"I will later. I was there before breakfast, so I saw them earlier. Your friend Cassie was there, by the way. And I thought I would see you there." I told her, leaning my back against the bench, but my head tilted in her direction, letting my eyes gloat over her perfect face.

She snapped her head in my direction and caught me staring at her.

It stopped her from saying anything, but once she composed herself, she crinkled her nose and asked. "Carrie, you mean? The black-haired, tall girl who was clinging to your arm yesterday? Carrie? Was she on the training ground? What was she doing there? She hated sparring or training."

"Yes, that girl. I don't know." I shrugged my shoulder.

"She was probably there to get your attention." She huffed and turned her attention back to the forest, crossing her arms on her chest.

"Aren't you required to train? You don't attend training yourself?" I asked her, ignoring the irritation in her voice.

"No. We could if we wanted to, but Dad never forced me. Caspian as well."

"You should. It's for your own protection. You never know when the danger will come and Caspian won't be around you all the time to save you." I leaned forward, arms on my thighs, my eyes trying to catch hers.

She just took a deep breath and closed her eyes. "I

should probably do that. Look after me. No one's going to do that for me now."

I swallowed hard with her words. It was simple and could mean anything, but it broke my heart. It felt like she was telling me that I couldn't and that I didn't have the right to protect her at all. I made her think that way. ⁴

I didn't say anything. We stayed there in silence, her gaze on the forest while mine was fixed on her.

After a while, a small smile tugged on my lips. "Tinkerbell, huh?"

She rolled her eyes, turned her body towards me, and slapped my shoulder.

Sparks.

"Don't say anything bad about her, I like her." She glared at me, a smile slipping on her luscious lips.

"I didn't say anything. She's cute... and annoying." I chuckled, enjoying the smile I saw on her face.

"I took home your shirt." She blurted out all of a sudden and bit her lower lip, her fingers fidgeting with each other as she looked at me under her long eyelashes like she had just confessed the crime of the century.

"I found that out already." I scratched my head, a sheepish smile now on my lips.

To be honest, I was flattered that she took my shirt. It was more discreet than her ripped underwear that I kept with me. But she doesn't need to know that. 5

"I didn't mean to take it. I subconsciously put it in my bag when I was fixing my things..." She was trying to explain, while her cheeks were starting to blush.

"It's okay. You don't need to explain." I chuckled.

"It was for my wolf. She wanted to smell you." She pursed her lips into a thin line and looked at the forest ahead of us.

"What's your wolf's name?"

"Sky."

"Lovely name. I bet she's beautiful too. My wolf, Kurt, would love to meet her one day." I looked at her, trying to gauge her reaction, but she didn't show any emotions this time. "Of course, only if you agree."

She turned to me and smiled sweetly, but I could see the pain in her eyes. "I don't think that would be necessary or ideal. It would be better for both of them if they didn't meet."

"Alia..." I brushed my palms through my hair and leaned back on the bench. I couldn't find the right word to say what I wanted to. "Can I explain... About the claiming?" 3

"No. It won't help anything. We don't need to pretend. And I don't want to give you the impression that I want you or that this is leading somewhere." She said, in a calm tone, that if she was lying, I would still believe her. 6

"I know Alia, you were clear with that the last time we were together. I get it." I stood up from my position and placed my hands in my pocket. "I need to go back to the training ground. I'll see you around." 5

I turned and walked away, my shoulders slumped in defeat. Why do we always end up in bad conversations? I was starting to lose hope that this would ever work. That she would let me into her life.

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