

03 - Breakfast

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Hailey's POV:

I wish I could vanish from existence.

I woke up this morning and realized I was in his hotel room. Aiden's scent lingered everywhere, even in bed. I nally had a good night's sleep after many years. I couldn't shake the feeling that Aiden was somehow connected.

I quickly decided to get ready for the day. Perhaps I could put my suitcase in my actual room before breakfast. I wrote a note to Aiden. Thanking him was the minimum I could do.

I went to the front desk, carried my suitcase to my room, and bumped into Jared and Zino on my way to breakfast. They were in deep conversation, so I decided not to interrupt.

As soon as I sat down, I felt someone's gaze on me, but I couldn't bring myself to look up. In order to prevent myself from fainting, I decided to grab some breakfast.

I could detect his scent before he accidentally bumped into me. He had a smirk that indicated it wasn't an accident, but I knew it was something I could have done, so I found it amusing.

"Would you also like to have some yogurt?" I asked with innocence.

"Yes, do you think it's possible, or do you already have everything?"

He responds, making me laugh!

Since I have to wash my hands anyway, I offer him my bowl, but instead, he licks my ngers clean. I'm taken aback by his action. I feel a sense of intimacy when he looks at me.

The thought of him using his tongue in other places makes me want to break eye contact if I want to leave this place with a straight face.

With a playful wink, he says, "There we go, all sorted." His voice is more seductive than ever. He's mistaken if he believes he can label me as crazy. There's no doubt that he did this on purpose, and we both know it.

"Thank you, but if you hadn't purposely bumped into me, there wouldn't have been a problem," I playfully replied.

A cheerful grin appears on his face. "Okay, you've got me. I was hoping we could chat today since we didn't get a chance yesterday when you decided to sleep on the oor."

I didn't make the decision to sleep on the oor. I would have denitely stayed in bed with him if I had decided to stay. He was aware that I didn't stay in the room willingly, but I appreciated his attempt to make me feel comfortable about it. I intended to make a light-hearted comment, but my mind went blank. My cheeks blushed as I considered the thought. But ultimately, could it cause any harm?

"I guess I owe you that after last night." Was the answer I came up with.

His hand strokes my face as he whispers in my ear. "You are gorgeous, Hailey."

I feel even more self-conscious. Savoring the moment, closing my eyes and taking in the gesture and words. I allow myself to let go for once, and Mara calls out to me from across the room.

I didn't want Mara to embarrass me by jumping to conclusions, so I needed to get Aiden away quickly.

"I'm sorry, I have time tonight. Do you want to grab a drink, then?" I whisper my question.

Just before Mara pounce on me, I can hear him say it is all his pleasure.

"Hailey!!" Her enthusiastic shouting continues.

"Good morning, Mara. What's the reason for all the noise this morning?" I try to act as calmly as possible.

"I haven't seen you in... I don't know how long. I'm permitted to make noise!" Mara replies.

"You know we're in a hotel full of werewolves, right?" I say as I hug her. "Nice to see you again. Where's your mate?" I ask with the hope that I can distract Mara from Aiden and that he will take the hint he should leave.

"Vince is talking to Jared and Zino," pointing to the men behind Aiden. Which immediately turns her attention to Aiden. I can see it in the way she glances at him. She's judging him from head to toe. Whether he's good enough for me to even be talking to me.

You would think that since she is my in-law, she would be completely pro-brother, but nothing could be further from the truth. Mara has nothing good to say about Kelvin and his behavior and has encouraged me from the start to get back at him, where I could hit him hard. An eye for an eye.

"Who do we have here?" Mara asks, still looking at Aiden.

"Oh, sorry, Mara, this is Alpha Aiden. Aiden, this is Luna Mara." I introduce them to each other. Aiden didn't tell me he's an Alpha, but I have noticed his aura. Aiden is genuinely neat and polite to Mara.

"Nice to meet you. Be nice to Hailey," she warns him, but the words that came out of her mouth afterwards! "You did good, girl!"

Multiple times I try to swallow the lump in my throat before I even get a sentence out, "Wh-what d-do you mean?" I stammer.

"You know exactly what I mean." Mara winks.

"Mara, I'm going to stop you right here. I met Aiden last night, and that's it. We were just talking, nothing else!" I have to explain this very clearly to Mara. Not only because I know we'll be together for the next three days. When Mara starts talking, everyone, including Jared and Zino, will think I'd slept with Aiden. That, and I don't want to spread rumors that would make Kelvin come back sooner than I could reject him.

The only other option to break the mate bond is when he dies. He has enough on his plate to be sentenced to death. His death could also be mine. Our bond has already suffered so much. The ghts, the living apart, and I haven't even mentioned Kelvin's cheating.

"Too bad. What isn't can still come, right?" Mara says, only to immediately walk away. Probably back to all the men at the table.

"Nothing happened, huh?" Aiden asks me softly. I looked at him with fear, wondering if something happened that I don't know about.

"You t just ne in my bed, in my arms," he says, walking away too. Leaving me standing here, completely shocked!

As I walk back to the table, I am lled with amazement. The table and chairs at our table are rearranged so that Vince and Mara can dine with us.

Zino came right up to me. "What's the matter?" He asks with a sense of unease.

"It's nothing," I attempt to reassure him. There's nothing really there. I'm confused, but it's not unpleasant.

"Liar!" Zino states.

"Do you like him?" he continues through mind link.

"I don't know. I shouldn't and I can't." I mutter.

"Hailey, it's okay. Saying you like the guy doesn't mean you're committed for life; you deserve to have some fun after all those miserable years." Zino's words closely resemble what Jared told me yesterday morning. Zino hugs me before heading to the buffet.

As soon as Zino walks away, Vince approaches me and gives me a hug.

Vince's encounter with Mara occurred while he was on a business visit. About eight years have gone by since that time. Vince spent a week with us to reassure Mara's parents before taking her back to his pack. Throughout that week, we spent a lot of time together and, similarly to how I view Mara as a sister, I see Vince as a brother.

My personal village consists of individuals who love me not because they feel obligated to, such as Kelvin, but because they have chosen to do so.

"You look good, Hailey. Are you okay?" Vince pets my head, in the manner of a faithful Labrador, and inquires.

"Yes, things are going well. Business is doing well. It seems like Dad is going out more often than before. Finding my biological father is important to me, to bring closure to that last chapter." I summarize it for him.

Vince acknowledges with a nod. "So, is the next step for you to start enjoying life?" He asks, his stare insistent, as if trying to see through my mask and into my soul. To determine whether or not I'm telling the truth.

I turn away from him and take a sip of my coffee, unable to look at him any longer.

Meanwhile, Zino brought back two plates of food and gave me one of them.

"Eat, yogurt and butteries won't be enough!" After saying that, he sits down and starts eating immediately.

Some faces show a grin in the corner of my eye, but no one is doing or saying anything. I opt to overlook all of them.

I'm honestly unsure of what action to take. My purpose for coming here was to meet my biological father, be recognized, and reject Kelvin. Falling in love with the rst Alpha I come across is not a good idea.

I wasn't in love with the man right away, but the way people reacted to me talking to him showed I was acting out of the ordinary. And then they didn't even know what happened last night. Well, what happened? How we met in the rst place.

I tried my best not to smile widely while at the table. Thoughts from yesterday... No, stop Hailey! I scold myself.

Breakfast was longer than usual because we were all chatting. Snacks were placed on the table for everyone to grab what they liked.