

## CHAPTER 49

9 Ava: Selene's Secret Vice Selene's presence helped me sleep like the dead. Waking in the morning in a room outside of the hospital is nicer than I want to admit to Clayton, after trying to refuse this apartment. Stretching languidly, I take a moment to bask in the luxury of the king-sized bed, reveling in the silky sheets caressing my skin. A contented sigh escapes my lips as I roll onto my side, only to find myself face-to-face with Selene's piercing blue gaze. "Morning," I murmur, reaching out to scratch behind her ears. Morning, pup. Her tail thumps against the mattress in greeting. Sleep well? "Like a rock." I glance around the lavish bedroom, my eyes lingering on the plush armchairs positioned near the floor-to-ceiling windows. "It's going to take some getting used to, living in a place like this." You deserve nice things, Ava. Selene nuzzles my hand. Although, I must admit, I miss the simplicity of your old apartment. 15:01 1/8 49 Ava: Selene's Secret Vice Is it possible to feel nostalgia after only a week away? Because I do. "Me too. We won't be able to go back for a little while, right?" Selene's ears flatten against her head. Not until the alpha sends you home. Pushing aside the melancholy, I swing my legs over the edge of the bed and stretch again, relishing the freedom of movement. No sore back or hips, and no tense neck after sleeping on near-flat pillows. "So, what's on the agenda for today?" Selene hops off the bed and trots toward the door. Well, you don't have a job to go to anymore, so I suppose you could be a couch potato for once. I can't help but laugh at the mental image. "A couch potato? Really?" Why not? She glances back at me with a wolfish grin. There's a new shifter romance show that just started. We could binge-watch it together. Raising an eyebrow, I follow her out of the bedroom and into the spacious living area. "A shifter romance show? Somehow I doubt it'll be an accurate 15:01 2/8 40 Ava: Solono's Secret Vice representation of our lives." Selene hops onto the plush sofa, making herself comfortable. You'd be surprised. From what I've heard, it's quite steamy. Heat rises to my cheeks at her suggestive tone. "Steamy, huh? I'm not sure I want to watch something like that with you." Oh, come now. She gives me a pointed look. After everything we've been through together, a little on-screen romance shouldn't faze you. Shaking my head in amusement, I join her on the couch, tucking my feet beneath me. "Alright, alright. Let's see what all the fuss is about." With a few taps on the remote, the large flatscreen flickers to life, and the opening credits of "Fated Mates" fill the screen. Selene's tail thumps excitedly against the cushions, and I can't help but chuckle at her enthusiasm. "Okay, let's see what kind of steamy shifter romance awaits us." Just wait, Selene promises, her eyes glued to the screen. This show is going to make you wish you had a 478 49 Ava: Selene's Secret Vice mate of your own. I roll my eyes. "I have one. He didn't want me. I don't think our love affair is meant for an audience." a Selene scoffs at my words. A fated mate doesn't count when they're too stupid to appreciate what's right in front of them. A surprised laugh escapes my lips. Trust Selene to put things so bluntly. "You're right." Before I can say anything further, a sharp knock echoes through the apartment, causing us both to turn our heads toward the sound. Frowning, I rise from the couch and make my way to the door, curiosity piqued. When I pull it open, I'm surprised to find Ivy standing on the other side, her expression unreadable. I'm not sure how to greet her, so I just say, "Hello," and stand there like an idiot. Her gaze sweeps over me, assessing my appearance with a critical eye, unimpressed by my pajamas. An impatient expression crosses her features as she arches a perfectly groomed eyebrow. 15:01 40 Ava: Selene's Secret Vice "Well? Are you going to invite me in, or shall we conduct our business in the hallway?" Her tone leaves no room for argument, and I hurry to step aside, gesturing for her to enter. "Of course, please come in." As Ivy brushes past me, Selene lets out a snort from her spot on the couch, drawing Ivy's attention. Surprise flickers across her face when the husky doesn't back down from her intense stare. "Where did you get that dog?" Ivy asks, her eyes narrowing. I glance at Selene, who meets my gaze with a knowing look. "She's just a stray who showed up one day. Ran away from her old home, I suppose. Huskies are like that." Selene's tail thumps against the cushion, almost as if she's agreeing with my explanation. Ivy, however, doesn't seem entirely convinced. "A stray, huh?" Her lips purse as she studies Selene, who simply stares back at her, unfazed. "Well, I suppose that explains her lack of manners." Before I can reanand Calana leta out a low growl her 15:01 5/8 40 Ava: Selene's Secret Vice hackles rising. Ivy's eyes widen, and I quickly step between them, shooting a warning glance at my canine companion. "Selene, enough." I turn to Ivy, offering her an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry about that. She can be a bit protective sometimes." Ivy regards me for a moment, her expression unreadable. Finally, she shakes her head and waves a dismissive hand. "No matter. I didn't come here to discuss your pet." "Then why are you here?" I ask, unable to hide my curiosity. Ivy's gaze meets mine, and I'm struck by the intensity in her eyes. "I wanted to see for myself how you're settlingwww.Ñoσ(ε)IWorm.©óM

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n." I blink, taken aback by her words. "Oh, um... well, it's certainly a nice place. A bit too extravagant for my tastes, but I appreciate the gesture." "My brother has a tendency to go overboard," Ivy says with one of her too-warm smiles. "But he means well. He wants to ensure you're comfortable and well-cared for." ing. Ivy's eyes widen, and I quickly step between them, shooting a warning glance at my canine companion. "Selene, enough." I turn to Ivy, offering her an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry about that. She can be a bit protective sometimes." Ivy regards me for a moment, her expression unreadable. Finally, she shakes her head and waves a dismissive hand. "No matter. I didn't come here to discuss your pet." "Then why are you here?" I ask, unable to hide my curiosity. Ivy's gaze meets mine, and I'm struck by the intensity in her eyes. "I wanted to see for myself how you're settling in." I blink, taken aback by her words. "Oh, um... well, it's certainly a nice place. A bit too extravagant for my tastes, but I appreciate the gesture." "My brother has a tendency to go overboard," Ivy says with one of her too-warm smiles. "But he means well. He wants to ensure you're comfortable and well-cared for." 49 Ava: Selene's Secret Vice There's something in her tone that sets me on edge, but I can't make it out. Selene's growl echoes in my mind. "Well, you can tell your brother that I'm doing just fine," I say, trying to keep my voice light. "I don't need anything extravagant. Just a safe place to stay for the time being." Ivy regards me for a long moment, her gaze sharp and assessing. Finally, she nods, seeming satisfied with whatever she's gleaned from our interaction. "I'll be sure to pass that along," she says, turning to leave. "Enjoy your stay, Ava. And do try to keep that mutt of yours under control." With those parting words, she's gone, leaving me standing in the middle of the living room, wondering why she'd even come by in the first place. Mutt? I'm papered! Selene's ears twitch in irritation, her tail thumping hard against the sofa. Ah, I missed the intro because of that witch! When someone knocks on the door again, I assume it's Tu hut Clouton's the one at the door this time 50 Ava: The Grey Girl

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