

MY ALPHA'S WOLFLESS DAUGHTER

Chapter Sixteen

Ayla

I got lost on my way to find the dining room. The same young woman who brought me my bags found me and led me to where we would be eating. I guess we were eating in a private dining room away from the others who live here. I must be blind because I have seen no one since the woman who took the tray from me this morning.

The woman was about to open the door for me before I stopped her. I needed a moment to prepare myself for this conversation with my grandmother.

“I just need a moment. Thank you. I appreciate your help.” I told her.

“My pleasure, Miss.” she bowed her head before she

left. Why would she bow? Did she nod or bow earlier? Ugh, my head hurts and my mind is racing with everything I don't understand.

Taking a few deep breaths, I tried to calm my nerves enough to enter the room. I knew I was hungry, but my stomach was in knots.

"I can do this," I whispered to myself before I pushed the door open. As soon as I looked around the room, I felt like I was going to throw up.

But I squared my shoulders and, with my head held high, I walked in. My father, grandfather, Will, and Nate sat on one side of the table with my uncle at the head. The mermaid queen, king Samuel, and his son sat across from the others. My seat was between my father and Nate. The thought brought a smile to my face. I'm glad my father and I have a chance to have a relationship.

Nate stood up and closed the distance between us before I made it to the table. He was casually dressed in jeans and a tee. And oh, did he look delicious. He wrapped an arm around my waist before kissing my cheek.

“You look beautiful,” he mumbled against my cheek.

“Thanks. You don’t look bad yourself.” I whispered, looking up at him, a hand on his chest.

Nate led me over to my chair, but before I sat down, I moved over to my uncle and leaned down to kiss his cheek.

“No Luna tonight?” I asked him.

“She’s with the pack,” he answered.

“I hope everything’s okay,” I told him.

“Nothing we can’t handle. And the pack is a little on edge with all the mermaid royalty we have with us.”

He said while I gave Jim, Will, and my father a kiss on the cheek. I finally said, down between my father and Nate. Nate rested a hand on my thigh.

“What, no love for me?” Prince Silas chuckled.

“I think your ego will survive,” I told him and he laughed.

“You really are something,” he said before taking a sip of his drink. Duke let out a growl and Nate squeezed my thigh, not liking my interaction with Prince Silas.

“Oh, calm down, Wolf Toy. I want my claim to actually love me, so I’m not miserable. It’s just refreshing to meet someone who is worth just as much as me and

who isn't chasing me for something." He said, giving Nate a pointed look.

"I'm going to look over the wolf toy comment and ask, what the hell are you talking about? Worth? I don't understand." I said, and he looked at my grandmother before looking back at me.

"The western sea kingdom is worth over two billion dollars." He answered and I'm sure I blacked out.

"I'm sorry, billion? As in a b and not an m?" I stuttered out, shocked.

"Ayla, money is not an issue, if that's what you are worried about." My grandmother said, and I punched the bridge of my nose.

"Honestly, I wasn't really thinking about money. I have way too much to worry about. And it's not my money.

It's the kingdoms." I told her, looking at her.

"We can talk about finances later. But right now, I would like to hear your concerns over my proposal."

She asked, less bitchy and judgmental. It was freaking me out. I don't like this new version of her.

"Can you please explain the claim to me? I know how it happens and you say it's until death. Is it stronger when it's two mermaids compared to a mermaid and a wolf?" I asked her.

"It is unbreakable when it is between two mermaids. When it's anyone else, it's broken when one of them dies." She explained.

"Is there a way to break it besides death?"

"Not that I know of. Maybe witches have tried, but nothing successful." She answered.

“And is that why you want me claimed by a mermaid? Because the claim is stronger? But what if I’m claimed by another? How many claims can one have?” I rambled out.

“Girl likes to party.” Prince Silas snickered, and I pushed my lips into a line.

“That’s not what I meant. I’m trying to understand the claim.”

“I’m not sure how to answer your question. Yes, a claim with another mermaid would be stronger. And once a claim is made, there is no going back. For us, it’s forever, even after death. We can be with another, but it’s not the same. And if anything happens to your claim, children are no longer possible.” She answered.

“Then how can I be claimed?” I breathed out.

“After eighteen, it could be anyone you had s*x with, but with the wolf on your chest, I think it’s the wolf beside you.” She pointed out.

“f**k, I need a drink. Okay, so then what is the plan? How would I even be with Prince Silas? Not that I’m even thinking I would be. Don’t get any ideas, pretty boy. I’m claimed.” I pointed at the smug prince.

“He would reject you. Wolves can reject even after marking.” Grandmother said and Duke let out another growl while Nate was digging his fingers into my thigh, harder than before. I rested a hand on him to calm him.

“Not going to happen.” He growled.

“Stop. You will be gifted another. It’s not a big deal.

And this way, she can be claimed by another who will be forever. Then king Kaden won't stand a chance.” She retorted.

“But if I was to claim him, his rejection wouldn't work.” I pointed out.

“Ayla, we all wish to claim someone we love, but in your case, it could be disastrous. Being a Black Pearl, you have a claim over all the kingdoms. You need to pick a king to stand by your side.” My heart was racing in my chest at what she was telling me. My lungs constricted, and it felt like I was about to have a panic attack.

“I need to get some air.” I breathed out, getting up from the table.

“Ayla, I know that wasn't what you wanted to hear, but it's for the best.” She tried to reason.

“I’ll work with Prince Silas to come up with a plan against King Kaden. And I’ll need Xander, but I’m not just giving up my mate because you think that’s best.” I told her.

“And what happens if King Kaden gets you? Do you want to be forced to rule beside him? This way, at least you have a choice.” She called out when I had almost made it to the door.

“If he gets me, I’ll kill myself, if I can’t kill him. Then it will be up to Prince Silas to take him out if I can’t,” I said before I left.

I found myself standing on the beach, watching and listening to the waves crashing on the shore. How the hell can this get any more complicated? I plopped my ass in the sand, sitting cross-legged as I tried to figure out how to have both. The last of the full moon was

rising, and I missed my mom. She had a hand in this mess, but I need her right now more than ever.

Nate would have to give up his entire world for me and then, in time, he would resent it and me. And how could we do this long distance? Is that even an option? Would Nate really get another mate? My heart twisted painfully in my chest at just the thought of him being with another.

“Mom, what the hell were you thinking?” I cried out, unable to hold back my sobs. The cool wind blew, and I shivered.

How was I going to get through this?

Future Beta Nate

I watched as Ayla left the dining room, and I was furious. Just because I could be blessed with another

mate doesn't mean I wanted one. I have Ayla and she's all I need. I went to stand to follow her when Alpha Atlas spoke.

"Sit, Nate. We all need to talk about Ayla's future." He commanded. I tried to fight it, but he threw out more of his aura and I sat down, gritting my teeth. I could tell the alpha was also pissed, and it surprised me how well he was maintaining his composure.

"We all want what's best for Ayla. But if King Kaden gets ahold of her, he will force her to claim him. And I know none of you want that. And then there are the hunters. They will descale her until no more scales grow back and then kill her. I'm not saying you aren't a powerful wolf, but you can't protect her when she is in the water, and that's where we need her right now." Her grandmother said.

"And you think this guy is for the best?" I growled out.

Just saying the words made me want to be sick.

“I think I made my stance pretty clear. And there’s always Prince Chase of the Southern sea.” Prince Silas shrugged.

“Alpha, say something. This is your daughter we are talking about?” I yelled.

“And I can’t make this choice for her. Do you think I want her to be forced to be with this King Kaden? But I can’t protect her in the water and neither can you.” He growled out, frustrated.

“If she decides to choose you, Xander and I will keep her safe,” Prince Silas stated, and I snapped my attention to him.

“Why the hell would you do that?” I growled.

“Because she’s still one of our own. She’s the future queen of the western sea and maybe all of us. And why would I want something to happen to her? I may be an ass, but I’m not cruel.” He retorted.

“That sounds reasonable for now. We have until the next full moon to get a plan in motion. I brought some books with me. And if she has any more questions, she can ask me or Xander. Also, I have a bank card for her. I only want what’s best for my granddaughter. I lost my daughter and husband, and she’s all I have left.” She placed a few books on the table, with a black card on top, and went to leave.

“Silas, we should get the kingdom ready for what’s coming,” King Samuel told his son.

“For what it’s worth, Nate, I’m rooting for you,” Prince Silas said before downing his drink, and they all left. I was left stunned.

Maybe I read this guy all wrong, but that doesn't mean I want him near my mate. This could all be an act to win her over and then I would be forced to reject her. But how the hell were we going to make this work? My head was spinning as I rested my head on my hands.

"Son, I know this is hard." My father said beside me, trying to comfort me.

"No, you don't, none of you do!" I yelled, standing from my seat. I paced the room.

"None of you would ever give up your mates. Not willingly. And now I'm being asked to give up mine. Why the hell would the goddess give me her just to take her away!" I shouted.

"Nate?" I heard Ayla. I spun around to see her by the

door. Her eyes were red, and I knew she had been crying.

“Where did everyone go?” She asked.

“Ayla bear, come sit. Queen Andrea left some books for you, and I’ll give you her number if you have any questions.” Her uncle said. Before she walked past me, she stopped, placing her hand on my chest.

“Nate?” She looked up at me, her grey eyes looking like a storm. I gave her a nod, not trusting my voice or my anger. I know none of this is her fault.

She leaned up and kissed my cheek before walking over to her uncle. He handed her the black card. She looked at it, confused.

“A gift from your grandmother,” Alpha Matt told her. Ayla held on to the card as she flipped through one of

the books that were placed by her uncle on the table. I walked closer to her, but not as close as I should have. She is my mate and how was I going to give her up?

“Sweetie, you have until the next full moon to decide. We have to get back to the pack. We have already pushed the mate ball we were supposed to be throwing to tomorrow night. It’s supposed to be held under a full moon but I asked for it to be changed,” Alpha Atlas said. Ayla looked away from the book to her father.

“Thank you.” She breathed out.

“Could I stay here another night?” She asked her uncle, and he nodded.

“Of course, you and Nate are welcome to stay as long as you want. My pack is always open to you.” He told

her, and she gave him a small smile.

“Dad, can I visit your pack tomorrow?” Ayla asked my alpha, and I thought for sure he would say no, but he gave her a smile.

“Anytime, sweetie. But please stay with Nate. I’m not sure how much the hunters know.” He said, and she nodded.

“I’m going to head to the library. It seems I have a lot to learn and not a lot of time to learn it. I’ll see you three tomorrow.” She said, picking up the books. When she walked past me, she reached for my hand.

“If I have to learn this, you have to, too.” She said, giving me a small smile.

“I’ll meet you there. I just want to say goodbye to my dad.” She nodded when I told her.

“I’ll have someone bring you food. And follow the hallway, two rights, and a left.” Alpha Matt called out.

“Thank you,” Ayla said before she left the room.

“Son, what’s wrong?” My father asked as soon as the door closed behind Ayla.

“I don’t think I can do this. How can I spend time with her just for her to ask me to reject her?” I said, still staring at the door. My heart twisted painfully in my chest. I don’t know if I could live without her.

“Nate, go learn and make this decision together. At least then you’ll have answers. Not knowing will drive you mad.” My father said he had moved from the table over to me.

“Everything will work out, Nate. Have faith.” My father

said before he gave me a hug.

“Whatever the two of you decide to do, make sure you both agree.” He told me, pulling away. I gave him a nod. Before I left to find the library, I nodded my head to the others. I followed her scent to the library.

Opening the door to the library, I found my mate curled up on a couch in front of the fireplace. The fire was going strong, and the ocean crashed in the distance. The orange hue from the fire made Ayla look angelic as she read one book her grandmother left.

I sat down beside her, and she moved her head to my shoulder. She let out a sigh as she got comfortable with me. I didn't know what to do. I don't think I can love her for a month just to let her go in the end.

“Nate, please hold me?” She whispered, and I could

hear the pain in her voice. Moving my arm, I wrapped it around her shoulders and she snuggled into my chest.

“Would you really get another mate?” She asked, her voice cracking, and she sniffed.

“I don’t want another mate. I’ve been waiting for you. There’s a reason we were matched.” I told her, kissing her head.

She sat up to look at me. Her eyes were cloudy with unshed tears. Seeing her in so much pain churned my heart painfully as I watched her try not to break down.

“It would be easier if you rejected me.”

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