

Chapter 148 Esme

I am in pieces, I didn't realise just how difficult leaving Gabe would be. I did this to protect myself, my family and the arrangement we had with the pack which allowed me to come to university, but I did not consider the effect the mate bond would have and leaving my mate behind..... it was hurting me so badly..... Kya is on edge, she is skulking at the back of my mind, not happy at me for leaving her mate, the one she has been waiting so long for.

If I was finding it this hard, I can't even imagine what I have done to him, and I hate myself for that. He will know by now, and I imagine spoken to Lola to find out some information. I want to explain to him, but I stupidly didn't even get his number. I will message Lola and ask her to get it for me. Though I don't know that he will want to talk to me and who can blame him.

My heart is in pieces. We need to find a way around this. I want him so badly. Being with him last night in the club, with his friends, felt so good, like I was meant to be there, I wanted that for myself. I don't want that to end. I want to fight for that. but then I can't risk my degree, I had to fight so hard to be allowed to go to university and Alpha Jace could so easily take that away from me, and I don't doubt for one second that he would if he felt I was not doing what he wanted.

He was such a sick and twisted Alpha, him and the ones before him. They had never run our pack in a normal manner, how they had got away with it for so long I do not know.

I needed to see that Lola was ok, she still had not got back to my messages. I dialled her number.

"Hello" her voice sounded like she was trying to whisper.

"Lolly?" I ask "Are you ok?"

"Esme? What the hell happened? Do you know the mess you left here?!" she demands.

Ok, I guess that was to be expected. I did kind of leave her there in the middle of everything, having to explain it all.....

"I had to go Lol, don't be like that. Mami said I could not be with him, that Alpha would not allow it. That they would stop my degree, you know the arrangement they made for me to do the degree, Alpha is covering the cost of it. I have to do what he wants. I didn't want to leave him. I hated it. I am hurting so bad. Please make sure he knows that" I explain.

"I have tried, but he is in bits Esme. I don't think he understands. We need to try to sort this. My Mami and Papi told me to let Manuel mark me. So I have. Surely if you did the same then Alpha would have no say" She says.

"Oh yeah and lose my place on the degree? I can't risk that Lolly, I thought you would understand that. Plus Alpha would make Mami and Papi pay them back, they can't afford that. So I have to stick to the arrangement we have with them. Which is why I had to run. It isn't the same as for you" I try to explain, wishing with all of my heart it was as straight forward for me as it was for her.

I would love for nothing more than to be able to have allowed Gabe to have marked me last night or this morning and dealt with the consequences at a later time like any normal pack member does when they meet their mate. But no, we have to come from a screwed up pack, with screwed up standards and screwed up rules.

“Hmmm” is all I get in response, so I assume she doesn’t agree with me. And that bothers me.

Normally Lola and I agree with most things, we have always been really close. So for her not to have my back with this hurts I have to say. But I know she will be fighting their mate bond here too. And she will be trying to be loyal to her mate, and Gabe is her mate’s cousin, and no doubt they will be worried about him right now, if he is struggling with what I did.

“Are you coming back here today Lol?” I ask.

“I don’t know what’s happening yet. We are going to the pack at some point to speak to Alpha I know that much. Maybe you could come Esme?” she says, almost begging.

It is clear she wants me to try to make this work with Gabe. Do they all think I don’t want him? I want him more than anything else! And I want him to know that too. Not that it will change anything, I can’t But I have to stick to the arrangements I have with the Alpha. He is funding my degree, and I have no way of paying them back. We are just a small, basic warriors family in pack and don’t have the funds to cover the cost of the degree so Alpha had used that as a way to control the situation and manipulate me when he already did not want me going to university.

“Lolly please don’t be angry with me” I say

“ I am not angry with you Esme, but I do think you are making a mistake” she says curtly.

I don’t think we are going to see eye to eye on this. As much as that frustrates me.

“Look Lola, I will let you go then, you know where I am ok? I can’t change my mind, Alpha has me in a position that I am stuck, you know he does” I explain. “I want nothing more than to be with Gabe, my heart is breaking right now but I need to follow the arrangement with pack to protect Mami and Papi too”

“Is that Esme?” I hear Manuel’s voice.

“Yeah” Lola responds.

“Esme?” Manuel is suddenly on the phone “Why did you leave Gabe? You know he is a good guy right? He would do anything to help you, to support you, to get you here with him, running out on him was harsh. He is broken now because of what you have done. Why didn’t you just speak to him?” he blurts out.

And hearing that makes me want to cry. I am usually tough, usually strong, but hearing how good of a guy he is, which I could tell just from the time I spent with him and hearing he would support me and do whatever he could to get me here with him makes me feel terrible. Because I cannot put my degree at risk, I cannot put my family at risk. They do not know what our Alpha is like. He is sick, and twisted, he could hurt my family and I cannot put them at risk because of me. I cannot put my need for happiness first. Not this time.

“It isn’t as simple as that Manuel” I say.

And then I hang up.

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Chapter 149 Manuel

Chapter 149 Manuel

Esme hanging up on me, irritates me. I look to Lola.

“What was that about? She hung up on me.

Said It isn’t as simple as that and hung up” I explain.

I can feel my heart racing, but this time it is out of anger, not out of passion and need for my mate like it has been the last few hours.

It is sheer anger, and annoyance, wanting to protect my cousin. Hating that he is hurting and not knowing what to do to help him.

Lola rests her hand on my arm “Guapo, calm down. I know you are upset, I know you are worried for Gabe, you all are, I am too if I am honest. I don’t get this with Esme if I tell the truth. She said she needs to protect herself and her family from Alpha” she tells me.

Protect them? Why do they need protecting? What sort of Alpha is he if his pack need protecting from him? The more I am hearing about him the less I am liking him, and the more suspicious he is sounding. How their pack has maintained itself and kept running is questionable quite honestly.

There are rules and regulations werewolf packs have to follow, and the werewolf council are the ones who ensure this happens, so how has this pack slipped through the net so to speak? It just does not make sense.

The fact it preliminary made up of chosen mates and arranged marriages is suspicious, just to keep the pack members within pack so he can run the pack how he likes is not normal. Well he will not be having my Lola back, I would fight for my girl, fight to the death to keep her by my side if needed and I know my friends would have my back on that too. The thing is I know Gabe would have done the same for his mate, but there seems to be some deeper tie to the pack for her which she is not able to risk.

Knox needs to discuss this with his Dad like he said and see if they can report the pack and help Gabe this way. I hope they can. I do not want my cousin losing his mate. I could see a change in him already this morning, and it was not a change I liked. He looked lost. Gabe was never lost, he was always one who was reliable, dependable and strong. That is what made him such an effective and steadfast warrior for our pack. He had been like that since he had first shifted, since he got his wolf, Aspen when he turned 17. And he had got stronger as he trained with his wolf.

So seeing him looking lost this morning bothered me, there was an empty look in his eyes, in his face and that was not the Gabe I was used to. That was not the assured, confident, reliable man we knew. This felt like a lost spirit, a broken soul, wanting to be on his own. And usually Gabe loved being surrounded by others.

I truly hope this was fixable between Gabe and Esme, and quickly before it had a long-term effect on him, because just since last night it had changed him, and in a critical way which I fear there was no coming back from. If she wants Gabe like she says she does, like Lola tells me she does,

then surely we must be able to help them somehow. I want Gabe to be happy too, he deserves happiness, I know Abuela enjoyed teasing him his mate would run away when she met him, I never dreamt for one second it could actually happen. And now Gabe seems to have accepted that it is what he deserves.

“Guapo, I don’t know if things will be ok for them or not. We need to see if Alpha Knox can help”

Lola squeezes my hand.

“Yeah he said he would discuss it with his Dad, as I think he has dealt with your pack in the past when he was Alpha. He is thinking of reporting the pack though, Carino, so be prepared for that” I warn her.

“To the council?!” she sounds surprised.

“Yeah. They are not happy with how they treat the women on your pack, they are thinking of if it was their sisters or their mums. They want to protect you and Esme.” I explain what Knox had told me through link earlier.

“But the council could shut the pack, that would cause so much trouble! They have managed to keep the council away for so long” she says in shock.

“Well, that is nothing they don’t deserve Carino, you know that. They should have been shut a long time ago.” I smile softly.

“But they will split everyone up. What about my family” she is chewing her lip, obviously worried.

“It may not happen yet beautiful, but perhaps warn them ok? And if it did I am sure Knox would have your family here in a heartbeat for you and Esme” I tell her.

She is still sat chewing her lip, I know this is a sign of nerves as Lilah does the same thing. Must be a universal sign of anxiety for women. I wrap my arms around her, wanting her to feel safe and reassured. It is important to me that my mate feels safe and content with me, I want her to be happy I want her to feel loved and secure. I want to be the best mate I can be..... hopefully then she would never contemplate leaving me like Gabe’s mate had done to him..... because she had done that to him even with him being a good mate.....

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Chapter 150 Knox

Chapter 150 Knox

I think we need to sort things out to try to speak to Esme, so I have got her number from Lola.

Gabe has asked me that he does not speak with her, so I am wanting to talk to her to see if we can do anything as a pack, I do not want my friend to lose his mate, I do not like to see him

struggling, yet if I am entirely honest, he seems to have given up hope already on ever being able to fix this.

Surely there has to be a way. We can fix this, she seems to like him from what Lola had told us. I

will see what she says when I speak to her in person too before seeing what else I can decide.

Then I am going to discuss things with my Dad, get his advice because I think I need his experience on this. Because how their pack is run has completely thrown me, I have never come

across that before and it doesn't seem normal, and it bothers me.

It is not the way the werewolf council expects packs to be run, so I think we need to be reporting them. If my Dad agrees then that is what I will be doing. If that means I am responsible for shutting down a pack then so be it. Because I imagine there is a lot more goes on behind closed doors that we do not know about, and that is really bothering me.

The fact they stop women leaving or furthering their education is not normal in itself. That is restricting their lives and it isn't fair nor right. I imagine my sisters in that situation, having to fight for their education and it infuriates me.

I dial the number Lola has given me, and hope that Esme will speak to me, and be honest too, as that is what I need of her.

"Hello?" a voice says questioningly. She probably doesn't recognise my number. Maybe she is hoping this is Gabe?

"Esme? This is Alpha Knox." I say kindly, wanting her to feel relaxed and at ease to talk to me.

"Oh." The tone of her voice tells me she is not impressed I am calling.

"Look I am not calling to give you a hard time ok, I realise things are likely difficult for you, I am just wanting to see if I can help in any way ok? You have been fated to be within our pack, like Lola, at present you are struggling to make that choice, I know your Alpha is not the easiest, but I want to see if I can help, so the choice becomes easier for you?" I try my best to explain.

"Alpha Knox, I appreciate that you have called, but I am not sure what you think you can do" she says softly.

I sigh, because to be honest I am not sure either. I was kind of hoping she may be able to give me some idea.

"Esme, will you be honest with me?" I ask her.

"I can try" she says quietly.

I guess that is all I can ask of her. "Did you want Gabe as your mate when you realised who he was?" I ask.

I hear her gasp slightly at my question, then she pauses before answering me "I still want him Alpha Knox. But I can't have him, I need to protect my family, I have an arrangement with my Alpha. I cannot go back on that, and unfortunately, my happiness will be the sacrifice. I was likely never good enough for Gabe anyway"

"What is the arrangement?" I ask her.

"He has funded my degree, my family could not afford to send me to the university I went to for my medical degree, so Alpha has used that against me I guess you could say. Basically, paid for it, but it means I have to go back and be a Dr at our pack hospital. If I don't my family will be punished and I cannot let that happen. So there is no way I will be staying with Gabe I am afraid, as much as I want to." Esme says, and I am certain I can hear tears in her voice.

"What if we paid off the course instead?" I suggest.

Knowing the business has funds to do this, and we would happily have her come and be a Dr at our pack hospital.

"I truly do appreciate you offering to help me, when you don't even know me, though I know this

is for Gabe more than me, but please understand Alpha Knox, I have to protect my family. If I were to accept what you are offering, my Alpha would still find a way to punish my family, to make them suffer. And I cannot do that to them, just so I can be happy. I love my family too much. I am sorry.” She sobs.

I can’t blame her for that, if I was in the same situation, and I was needing to protect my family I would do the same thing. Plus she comes from a large Latina family by the sound of it like Gabe and Manuel, family means so much to them.

“I understand. I want to help though Esme. Does your Alpha even know about Gabe yet?” I ask.

“No and he won’t be finding out. I assume he will be finding about Lola and Manuel soon enough as Lola told me they plan to go home marked and mated. I warn you Alpha Knox, that will not go down well. Our Alpha does not allow fated mates unless they are from our pack, mates on our pack are all chosen or arranged so nobody has to leave the pack. It is so he can run the pack the way he does.” She says anxiously.

“Well if they are marked then Lola is no longer part of his pack so he can do nothing about that, I plan to send my Beta down there with him and some warriors, do not worry. If needs be I will deal with it. Your Alpha wants to watch who he irritates, or else he will find himself in deeper trouble than he cares to imagine.” I say.

I don’t want to let her know that I plan to report him to the werewolf council just yet in case she betrays my trust and forwarns him, and gives him chance to cover things up before they have chance to investigate. I need him to be at his worst when they come to investigate, knee deep in shit so to speak so he can be charged and punished with as much as possible.

“Well be careful Alpha Knox because he is a sly fucker, that is all I will say. He is not a normal man or werewolf.” She warns me.

“You sound like you are scared of him Esme” I question.

I hear her sigh “You want the truth on that? Everyone on pack is scared of him Alpha Knox. Like I said he is not a normal man, or werewolf and as you know, he is not a normal Alpha either.

Retributions are cruel in the pack, and he seems to get some sort of pleasure from it. I doubt that will ever change. As one Alpha is the same as the next”

The more I hear of this pack the less I am liking the sound of it, and the more urgent it is in my mind that I get it closed down.

“Well Esme, I just want you to know that if you need us to help we will. Gabe is heartbroken, as you can probably imagine, I am not going to lie about that. And it hurts me to see one of my closest friends hurting like that, I will do whatever I can to help him and that means helping you.

You seemed genuinely happy the two of you last night when we were all out. You seemed such a good match. I don’t think you should be throwing that away because of an Alpha who has a power trip. You have a pack here that is willing to help you fight, willing to stand up for you, and your family if you need us to. So please think about that. If not, take care of yourself, ok?” I tell her.

“I appreciate that Alpha Knox, but as I have said, I need to think of my family. My happiness is irrelevant when their safety is at risk. Goodbye” and she hangs up.

I have a feeling she didn’t want to listen to my arguments on this. And she didn’t want to hear me say that Gabe was struggling. I have a feeling I am unlikely to speak to her again. She seems pretty determined to stick to her guns. So unless I am successful in reporting their Alpha to the werewolf council, I am unsure of how things could work for her and Gabe. And I hate that thought..... my heart is breaking for my friend

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