

## Chapter 171 Manuel

We walk through the main doors of the packhouse. It is a very run-down building, paint peeling off the window frames and doors. Tiles are coming off the roof. The building was in serious disrepair. It really made you realise how lucky we were that we had such a nice packhouse and nice packlands.

All the buildings within Midnight Forest were well maintained and had been for as long as I can remember, and likely long before that too. That is just how the Winters family ran their pack.

I went to hold Lola's hand but she resisted, putting her hand in her pocket instead. I think me jumping to conclusions and overreacting to what the Alpha had said had upset her, and she was not going to be happy with me for sometime.

What if she didn't forgive me? She may decide she didn't want to be my mate after all? Could that happen? Could I have messed up just by me over-reacting? Because I disliked my mate being called a whore?! Surely any male would dislike that?

I know I am clueless with women. I have never been naïve about that fact, but surely she would let me explain, and let me make it up to her, wouldn't she? What Jake had said made total sense. I do need to reign my temper in, reign in my protectiveness and overthinking. All the new things that the mate bond had brought along with it, that I needed to adjust to, and get used to, learn how to control them, learn when there was no reason for them, they were all well out of control right now. Maybe it is because my emotions were heightened by what we were headed into.

Or maybe it was because I was terrified I was potentially going to be losing my mate at the end of all this. Not that Lola knows that part of it yet.... No not yet, she isn't going to know that at all, I don't want her thinking I am pathetic. She should think her mate is strong, shouldn't she?

But having all those new things to get used to from the mate bond, all heightened and at their worst right now, when I need to be focused, means it could not be a worse time really. So yeah, Jake was right, I need to straighten my head out and refocus. Focus on what we are doing so I can make sure we are safe.

"Where do you think we should go and wait Lola?" Alpha Jacob asks.

"There is the lounge, we could sit there, I don't think it will be long until Alpha and his team are here though" she says. I can tell from her voice she is anxious.

We follow her through the building, which is just as run down inside, tattered carpets, worn wallpaper, and scraped woodwork. The packhouse definitely needed a refresh.

"You ok, dude?" Jake asks, his hand suddenly on my shoulder.

"Not really, I think I made Lola mad. The Alpha is sending me insane. And I just want to be at home and have this all done with" I admit. I know I can be honest with Jake. Having confided in him on so many things in the past.

"It will be ok Manny. I understand why you freaked, any guy would hearing that said about their mate. That is why the Alpha said it. Lola will understand, she is likely more sensitive because she is on edge. Give her time. And as for going home, hopefully it wont be too long" Jake smiles, as we walk into a large room edged with faded old grey sofas.

I assume this is the lounge. Though nothing in here would make you want to chill out and relax in here like you should in a lounge. There is the sofas and a large TV and very little else other than an old coffee table and some book shelves along the back wall.

Everyone sits themselves down, other than Lola who is stood by some large windows, overlooking a big garden. I go to stand with her, placing my arm around her when I am stood alongside her. She flinches slightly at my touch. Which makes my heart sink.....

"Carino, I am so so sorry if I have upset you. I was not thinking badly of you. I was thinking badly of the things he said. He made me angry. I wanted to know why he was saying such nasty things about my beautiful angel and it hurt me, and I was overthinking. Please don't hate me" I say, and I can feel I am literally fighting back tears.

Dammit. I am way too sensitive. It is no wonder the guys tease me for this.

Lola looks up at me "Are you nearly crying Guapo?" she whispers.

I try to blink away the tears and shake my head. Not wanting her knowing I was.

I see her smile slightly. "Oh Manny, you big softy." She wraps her arms around my waist, pulling me close for a cuddle "I know what he said hurt you, it hurt me too. That is why he said it. It would hurt any man hearing that about his mate. Again, that is why he said it. We need to be careful how much we let him get into our heads, ok? And I don't think I could hate you."

I pull her close to me, suddenly feeling calmer and more secure about everything. With my mate, my girl by my side, maybe we could get through this. We just needed to be there for each other..... And not let him win.....