

Accidentally Pregnant By My Alpha Best friends

We Listened to the Darkness by Sorin Pax 221

221–Claimed By My Alpha Mate

Madeline:

“Baxter, you are emotional,” I uttered, once again trying to remind him what it meant to marry me.

If he had stepped forward earlier and wanted to marry me when Elgin and Graham rejected me, I would have thought it was not a big deal, that I would just marry him and then leave him.

But now the tension was high. There were strict rules, one being that he would be forced out of the pack if he married me.

And for some reason, he looked completely careless about such a serious outcome.

“Shush,” Baxter murmured, gently placing his warm finger across my cold lips, and my eyes widened even more.

Even the crowd gasped. They were disgusted that an alpha stood this close and acted so affectionate toward a whore’s daughter.

“Just like you have every right to choose what you want for yourself, I have the right to choose what I want, and I want you,” he remarked.

This time, his voice was more firm, as if warning me not to try to stop him again.

At that moment, I felt as if he was only doing this because he saw how humiliated I had been, so maybe he wanted to stand by my side to show support.

That was the only explanation I could come up with, because if I tried to believe what he was saying, it would mean that everything I had thought and felt was something he had shared too.

However, he did not even wait for anyone else to stop or interrupt him.

“I, Alpha Baxter, accept my fated mate as my wife, as my only one, and as my partner forever,” he declared loudly, making the small twitch in my heart feel more alive than ever.

The rejections had felt really hard, but the acceptance began to shake me.

A bubble of energy ran through my entire body.

Baxter released my hand and suddenly grasped my arms, pulling me closer and placing my hands on his chest.

We were so close that the only thing between us was our breaths.

“What is this Alpha doing?” someone from the crowd remarked loudly, growing anxious at an Alpha ready to lose everything for me.

“Baxter, your mother is calling me. Please attend this call and listen to her first,” Elgin made one last attempt as he rushed upstairs, holding the phone out to Baxter, who still did not look away from me.

“Accept me,” Baxter responded to me instead of answering Elgin.

“Did you not hear me? Your mother is calling. Please talk with her. She will knock some sense into you,” Elgin urged, shaking the phone toward Baxter again.

Baxter still had not looked away from me.

That was when someone shouted, a loud cry with no words. It was Yuvonne.

1/3

221-Clamed By My Alpha Mist

+25 Bonus

She burst into tears before dropping onto her knees.

“Baxter, Yuvonne has passed out,” my stepmother tried again to get his attention. 2

There was chaos around him. On one side his mother was calling.

On the other his fiancée had collapsed. His friends were against the idea.

Yet he remained calm, not responding to anyone and only tightening his hold on me.

“If you do not accept it, I will go rogue, with or without you,” he warned, because I guessed he understood that him losing his place in the pack was what held me back.

“Okay, listen to your mother first,” Elgin uttered as he lifted the phone to take the call.

However, before his mother could speak, Baxter removed one hand from my arm, snatched the phone from him, and threw it across the aisle, shocking everyone. 1

Elgin gasped and stepped away.

At this point, even I knew there was no stopping Baxter.

“I accept Baxter as my husband, as my mate.” Those words left my lips, and instead of showing any weight from what he had done, he smiled.

His face looked relaxed, as if this had been his greatest achievement.

The fireworks planned for the ceremony still went off.

The loud sound of music filled the air, because the workers seemed unsure whether to stop the arrangements or continue, since even after the cancellation Lord Eldon had stated that everyone would still enjoy the feast.

Now that the wedding had happened, it seemed more fitting to continue.

Many guests wore bitter expressions, shaking their heads and staring at Baxter with disbelief and disappointment.

Baxter stepped closer and placed his hand on my back.

His touch was so warm that I began to melt. I could not even breathe correctly.

He leaned in and brought his mouth near my neck. His breath warmed my skin for a brief moment.

Then he bit gently into the side of my neck, marking me.

The sensation made my entire body tense. My fingertips curled inward, and it felt warm and very intimate at the same time.

My knees almost gave out.

I had thought the mark was supposed to hurt, but instead something began to rise in me, quiet emotions I could not explain.

My body started to twitch, as if I wanted him to keep holding me, to not only mark my neck but every part of my body.

The crowd went silent in my mind. All I could focus on was Baxter holding me.

When he finally began to pull back, I realized I had been claimed by a man who had taken such a confident and bold stand for me that I did not think anyone else could have done it.

Ruby Walker

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222

222—A Dream Come True

Baxter:

The chaos in the hall on the day **of** her wedding felt so unjust to me.

She stood there in that gown trying to stay steady while everyone stared at her, as **if** she had done something

wrong.

Seeing her upset broke something inside me. I had already been struggling to breathe while watching her marry

Ron.

It **felt** like someone was crushing my chest.

So when everything fell apart, I hated myself, because a part of me believed that maybe the silent wish inside me, the one hoping the wedding would stop, had come true.

But I never wanted it to stop like that, not because someone humiliated her.

Whoever broke that news was going to be on my hunt list.

But for now, I watched her stand there alone without a groom.

I did not care about what had happened years ago.

I did not care about what she had told her friend when she was only eighteen.

I was not that boy anymore. She was not that girl anymore.

She was now a woman, the most beautiful bride I had ever seen, the bride I wanted to claim so badly that it hurt to look at her standing alone. 1

“So those words that she said about you do not bother you anymore?” my wolf wondered, not because he wanted to challenge me, but because he wanted to understand what was going on in my head. 1

“I do not care. Forget them. This is my chance. I am not going to miss it,” I replied to my wolf.

3

Although those words she once said would always stay in my memory, it was not because she had hurt me.

It was because I had been worried she did not want me.

So when she accepted me, something lit inside my chest.

A feeling rushed through me like hot heat. I felt alive in a way I had never felt before.

After I marked her, I pulled back slowly. I had achieved everything.

Making her my mate felt better than becoming alpha of the pack.

I touched her neck with my fingers to clean the little blood.

She was still breathing shakily, staring at me with her beautiful eyes widened.

I could not look away from her, that was how gorgeous she looked.

I had never seen beauty like this up close. For the first time in my life, I felt completely fulfilled.

I felt as if I had achieved everything. I was finally a successful man.

1/3

222-A Drtram Come True

+25 Bonus

But Lord Eldon grunted from the side.

“For someone who is going to lose his crown, you look very pleased,” he remarked.

And he was not wrong. I wanted to smile even wider and tell him that it was true.

But I kept my gaze on Madeline. She stared back at me with furrowed eyebrows, trying to understand where I was coming from.

Even then, her eyes softened when she met mine again.

It even surprised me that I felt nothing about losing the crown.

Or about losing the luxuries and going to stay in the woods.

That would mean I would have to work from morning until night.

But then I wondered how it would feel to be known as her husband.

To have someone no one else could claim.

Then I finally turned to the guests.

“Do not worry about my mate anymore,” I announced. “I will take her to the woods and I will stay there with her.”

Murmurs broke out instantly. People still looked disappointed.

Yuvonne’s mother stood in the crowd, staring at me as if she searched for an answer.

Her face looked tense, angry, and hurt. Well, it did not matter anymore.

I held Madeline’s hand and noticed that she did not resist this time.

I guided her away from the platform, stepping past the scattered guests and toward the hall outside.

The sound **of** her gown brushed the floor as it followed behind us.

I turned slightly to check on her and noticed how it flowed with every step.

I watched her hair move back in soft curls.

She looked at me every few steps, as if she wanted to say something but could not find her voice.

At that moment, I began to feel the warmth of her hand.

I wanted to take her fragile body in my arms and do things to her that were unimaginable, things that would bring both of us pleasure, but even as my wife she was still a forbidden fruit for now.

And I wanted to respect every decision she made.

We reached the room where the children waited. The nannies opened the door and moved aside quickly.

They walked out the moment they saw us step inside.

“Mommy, did they hurt you?” Bodhi rushed toward her.

Her eyes turned glossy immediately.

I finally let go of her hand so she could crouch down to her children.

2/3

She hugged them tightly. However, at that moment, a strange worry stirred inside

What if she was upset with me?

What if the things she said when she was eighteen were true?

my chest.

What if she still did not want to marry me because she believed I was not man enough?

Sudden guilt hit me when I realized she might have been so miserable that she felt forced to accept a man she thought was not man enough for her.

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223

223-I Will Be A Man Enough For Her

Baxter:

Madeline **was** speaking softly to the children. She explained to them that she had married me instead.

I stood in the corner, letting her interact with the children without interfering.

That was when my phone began to ring. I stepped back and checked the screen.

It was Karla, Yuvonne's mother.

"I will take this call and come back to you, okay?" I told Madeline, who gave me a nod.

I walked out of the room after the excuse and answered the call.

"What is it, Karla?" I replied in a bitter mood.

As I stepped past the main hall, I began to hear the noises from inside.

The guests were eating as if nothing serious had happened.

I could hear plates clattering, people laughing, and some of them even complimenting the food, although I knew that Ron and his grandmother were gone.

I had seen the resentment on Ron's face.

I could tell he had really wanted the wedding to continue, but if he had stayed, his grandmother would have been left without support.

And since I knew Lord Eldon was bitter toward her and always found her a nuisance because, as a woman, she did not follow his rules, Ron had probably felt worried for her.

As for the rest of the guests, they did not seem bothered at all.

"If you are done taking care of the woman who has too many people to take care of her, you can at least come and look at Yuvonne," Karla remarked bitterly from the other side.

I realized someone had passed out. I had honestly forgotten about Yuvonne.

The moment I accepted Madeline, it was as if my mind stopped remembering anything else.

“First of all, do not refer to my wife like that. Second, too many people cared for her? Are you kidding me? Did you not hear the way people spoke to her?” I argued, even though I knew she would not take it seriously.

“Anyway, we are outside and Yuvonne is out of her mind. At least come have a word with her,” she added, her tone changed.

I scoffed and began to head out to the lot. I saw the car parked with the door open and Yuvonne sitting in the backseat.

Her eyes were wide, and her hair clung to her face.

She looked completely out of control. The moment she saw me, she stumbled out and rushed toward me, wailing loudly.

“Why did you do that? Why did you betray me?” she cried as she grabbed my coat, her hands shaking badly. “I was the one who was there for you when you needed someone. She was not.”

1/3

223+W Boy & Man Enough For Her

+25 **Bonus**

She let out a cry and tried to shake me, but it was not **easy** for her to move me at all.

I stayed still. My hand remained in my pocket. I watched her without reacting.

There was nothing else to say to her.

She kept pulling on my coat, trying to cling to me and asking for answers.

“Take her home. She is **in** no state to stay here,” I told Karla, noticing how Yuvonne’s father was pacing aggressively nearby.

It was not as if I had ignored him. After he told everyone he suspected that Madeline was not even his daughter, I felt disgusted with him.

It made sense why Madeline did not want anything to do with her father and her stepmother. He was not even her father at this point.

“She does not need to rest. She needs you,” Karla replied in a harsh tone. 1

“She has you all. You can take care of her. My wife is in the room alone. I will be preparing for her departure to the woods. Do not expect anything from me right now,” I replied sharply, trying to make them understand that I had a far greater responsibility than taking care of Yuvonne, who already had a parent.

Karla stared at me as if she had not heard me correctly.

Yuvonne cried harder, reaching for my coat again, but I stepped back.

Her hands slipped away from me and she fell into her mother’s arms.

I turned around and walked back inside.

When I entered the room, Madeline sat on the bed with the children curled beside her.

Bodhi was half-asleep, Gina had her cheek pressed on Madeline’s arm, and Elara’s eyes were drooping.

They looked exhausted, like the entire *day* had drained them.

Madeline lifted her head and watched me with worry in her eyes.

“What now?” she asked quietly.

“It is fine. We will stay in a motel for tonight. I will find a place for us to sleep. Then we will plan everything from tomorrow,” I replied.

I remembered the distance between us all these years.

A part of me refused to let her think that way about me tonight.

“By the way, do not worry, I will make everything right,” I told her, stepping closer so she could see that I meant every word.

At that moment, she looked at me as if she wanted to believe me.

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224-I Fell In My Own Trap

Yuvonne:

I watched Baxter walk away from me without reacting to my breakdown.

Not once did he look back or hold me in his arms.

Not once did he try to explain his actions to me.

My tears stopped for a moment as I turned to my mother in disbelief.

She stood still with her lips pressed tightly together.

Then I turned to my father, who stepped closer and placed a hand on my head as if I were a little girl who needed

comfort.

I did not need anything but Baxter.

“We should leave now,” my mother uttered, reaching for my arm. “Right now he seems too emotional. He is stuck in his hero syndrome to save his mate. He will come around once he goes into the woods and realizes he has lost not just his crown but all the luxuries that came with it.” Her voice was calm, as if she believed everything she said.

I pulled my arm away from her and shook my head wildly.

“No, that is not what I expected,” I cried, rubbing both my hands over my face. “I wanted Madeline to be embarrassed. I wanted her wedding day to be remembered as a bad memory. But I never thought the council would stop her from marrying Ron and push her into going rogue.” I complained because this was not how I expected my plan to go.

“That is why you were supposed to let things happen on their own,” my mother replied in a firm tone. “Why did you have to intervene?” she hissed at me.

“Because I set the trap for her, not for myself, but then I fell into it,” I cried louder.

My mind went back to Kaylee and Silver.

I remembered how relieved they looked, as if everything had worked out perfectly for them.

And it had.

Their husbands rejected Madeline, and now Madeline was pushed even farther from their sight by being sent into the woods.

They got everything they wanted. While I was left without my mate. 2

I took out my phone and tried to **call** them, but neither of them responded.

Each call went silent after being cut off. My chest felt heavy and my breath grew shaky with anxiety.

I looked around and began to walk back toward the hall, moving briskly.

“You will not cause any more drama, just stop,” my mother warned me, coming after me quickly to grab my wrist. “Do not make more mistakes.”

“I just want to speak with them,” I uttered, pulling my hand free. “Just once,” I requested.

1/3

224-1 Fell My Own Trop

425 Bonus

Before she could pull me back again, I hurried into the hall. All the eyes turned to me.

Some looked at me with sad, sympathetic expressions, because they knew my husband had openly declared war on everyone by choosing a whore’s daughter over tne.

I felt **so** belittled.

1

Silver and Kaylee stood near one of the decorated tables, eating quietly.

Their mates were sitting nearby.

Elgin and Graham looked uncomfortable, staring down at their plates as if they were embarrassed or shocked that what they could not do, their friend had done.

The moment I started to walk toward Silver and Kaylee, I straightened up.

I could tell they were preparing for whatever I was about to say.

“I need your support,” I requested, lowering my voice but not the urgency. “Please, I need to speak with both of you.”

“Not right now,” Silver whispered, glancing around to make sure the council leaders were not listening. “There are too many eyes on us,” she warned me. 2

The coldness from her stung. They had never spoken to me like that before.

They used to answer me instantly, acting as if we were best friends.

Now they did not even ask how I was after my mate married someone else in front of everyone.

“Fine,” I muttered, clasping my hands together and pulling myself together. “Then when can we meet? I really need my friends with me.” My voice still came out broken.

Kaylee adjusted the sleeve of her dress and then fixed her posture.”

“I have a full week of appointments, so I cannot promise anything,” she spoke in a calm and deceptive voice.

Not once did she look at me like a friend worried about her friend’s mental health.

My eyes moved to Silver next. Fine, maybe Kaylee had an excuse.

I wanted to know what Silver would say.

“I can meet you, but let us do it when Kaylee is also free. **It** will be unfair if just the two of us go out,” Silver excused, making no sense at this point.

I did not want to meet them for gossip.

I wanted to meet them so I could have a friend with me, someone who could help me with this mess and possibly come up with a good plan to push Madeline out of my man’s life.

Because **at** this point, we had planned it together.

They got the free entertainment of watching Madeline get humiliated. However, I lost something.

“Come on, Yuvonne. You need to understand we have responsibilities too,” Silver uttered.

The difference in their voices hit me hard. It felt like they were slowly pushing me aside, treating me like I was

unnecessary.

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225

225—Humiliated Me **For** Her

Yuvonne:

I stared at both of them, hoping at least one would show me concern.

However, since they were not talking to me, I began to overshare.

“I did not expect things to go this bad,” I whispered, my voice shaking. “I am so helpless,” I uttered.

However, they watched me cry. Not once did they comfort me.

Then my eyes moved toward the hallway separated from the hall, and I noticed Baxter appearing with Madeline.

They stopped briefly and turned around, probably to check on the kids.

And I realized he was now taking her to the woods.

I forced myself to look away from Baxter and have a few last words with my friends.

“That was wild,” Silver remarked, and I could tell she had seen Baxter and Madeline together. “Who would have thought it would end up like that? It seems like the only person who truly lost today is you.”

Her words made my cheeks burn. I felt belittled and very stupid for thinking they were on my side.

Their tones were indifferent. Before I could respond, my mother appeared behind me.

She wrapped her fingers around my arm firmly, announcing her presence.

“Lets home,” my mother muttered.

Both Silver and Kaylee looked at my mother, and I noticed how my mother looked at them.

She had never supported me befriending them.

“But I-,” I tried to speak, but my mother grabbed me and pulled me even harder, making me stumble after her.

Once we were out of the hall, I pulled my arm free again.

“Why did you pull me away?” I argued with her. “I was talking to my friends,” I hissed, still not ready to accept I had fucked up.

However, my mother let out a dry laugh before she gently smacked the back of my head. “They are not your friends, you idiot,” she replied. “They were using you.”

Her words made me freeze and stare at her in disbelief.

“No, they were genuinely concerned. We plotted together. We planned everything against Madeline together,” I said to my mother, shaking badly.

“Exactly,” my mother replied, rolling her eyes. “That is why they were with you. Now that Madeline is no longer their problem, you will see how fast they reject you. You should have listened to me instead of making new alliances.”

She finished, making my breath quicken. Her hand brushed my shoulder as she continued to walk.

“It is fine though,” she remarked. “I will take care of everything like I always do. Baxter will be in your arms very

soon.”

1/3

225 Rullicact Me For Hor

+25 Bonus

Her confidence filled the air while I followed her with my head down.

Once we reached the car, I began to feel even more lonely.

However, I was not ready to leave yet.

I knew Baxter and Madeline were going to step out of the wedding hall at any moment.

“Come on, let’s go now,” my mother insisted.

My father was already in the car waiting for me to step inside, but I refused.

“Come on, Yuvonne. Do not embarrass yourself more,” **my** mother urged me **at** this point.

However, the moment I saw Baxter and Madeline come out, with Baxter carrying two of her daughters and Madeline holding Bodhi in her arms, I felt enraged.

They looked like a perfect, happy family. I began to move swiftly toward them.

“Baxter, I need to speak with you,” I approached him, wiping my tears.

He halted next to his car and turned to look at me.

The strange look he gave me broke something inside me.

I had been there for him years ago.

9

Every day and night I stayed in the woods with him. How could he be so selfish and cruel towards me?

Even Madeline paused and turned to look at me. I noticed the firm look on her face.

Baxter glanced at me once before he opened the backseat door to place the kids in their seats.

The fact that he had already arranged the seats in the back made it seem like he was too excited to leave with her.

Once the children were inside, he closed the door and opened the passenger door for Madeline.

However, she refused to get in, standing in front of me like a royal bride.

“What are you looking at, huh? Are you happy now? You finally stole my man,” I yelled at Madeline, unable to hold myself together.

The moment I screamed, Baxter stepped between us as if I were some dangerous woman attacking his innocent

wife.

“Go back to your mother. Go back home,” he shouted at me, pointing toward the car.

I flinched at his sudden outburst.

“You’re yelling at me for her?” I whimpered, watching him act so distantly toward me.

It was **one** thing to want to help someone, but **to** completely forget about your own fiancé?

He was disappointing me.

“Why did **you come** here screaming at her? Do you not know she is already going through a lot?” he yelled back.

My head snapped toward the entrance of the hall, where Silver and Kaylee had stepped outside after hearing the

commotion.

Some of the other women had also gathered.

“Go!” Baxter barked again before he turned to face Madeline, giving me his back.

“Come on, get inside the car. You will catch a cold,” he told her.

His tone shifted so quickly that I could not understand it.

The difference between him yelling at me and speaking to her felt too much to grasp.

He helped her sit inside the car gently, closing the door with care, before turning to give me a harsh look.

Then, without saying another word, he strode to the driver’s seat and got inside, leaving me standing there tearing up miserably, feeling humiliated in front of everyone.

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226

226-My Ex Returns

Silver:

When Yuvonne appeared out of nowhere to confront us, I began to lose my patience with her.

But I kept my calm posture toward her. I knew she was suffering.

The poor woman had fallen into her own trap.

I wanted to laugh in her face and remind her that a mere omega like her could not possibly come up with a good plan.

What did she think she was, comparing herself **to** me?

My plans would never miss. However, I kept myself composed.

She kept trying to ask us to meet her, but there was no reason to meet her anymore.

We already got rid of Madeline, so why would we waste our energy on her?

Besides, I was sure even Kaylee would agree that we had realized messing with Madeline could get some dirt on us next time.

So we were going to stay away from her. She was out of our husbands' lives, not our problem anymore.

Once Yuvonne's mother appeared and dragged her away, I turned to look at Kaylee.

"This is why I don't hang around with people like them. Did you see the look her mother gave us?" I told Kaylee, who had her arms folded over her chest, glaring at Yuvonne and her mother as they wandered off.

“Disgusting people,” Kaylee remarked.

“Let’s go and sit with our husbands. It seems like they are mourning,” I commented, watching Graham and Elgin sit silently.

They could barely eat, but they were only putting on a show. I could tell.

They wanted to believe that they had made the right choice, and I was sure they did.

I mean, why would Graham and Elgin want to go stay in the woods and take care of a woman they had already slept with?

What reason would any alpha have to leave his crown for someone like Madeline and three little burdens?

Kaylee and I both wandered over to our husbands and sat beside them.

“You see, this is what happens when you lack intelligence,” I commented, directing my words at Elgin and Graham.

The two lifted their heads from their plates to stare at me.

“What? I’m not saying anything wrong. I’m the one who is giving my mate not only the love of a family but also an extra pack,” I remarked.

The minute I said it, I watched Graham frown and turn toward Elgin.

“What is she talking about?” Graham asked him.

1/3

220 My ix Returns

+25 **Bonus**

Elgin straightened his posture, looking almost proud to share the news with his best friend.

“Oh yeah, I’m taking over Silver’s father’s pack under mine,” he replied.

The moment he confirmed it, Graham swallowed.

He paused for a second, and there was a hint of jealousy in the way he looked at Elgin before he forced himself to shake **it** off.

“Oh, congratulations. That is a big move,” Graham replied, but his tone sounded dry.

The pride on Elgin's face when Graham congratulated him told me he understood that marrying me was the biggest move he had made.

I even glanced at Kaylee and wondered how she must feel to be born from a royal beta instead of an alpha.

Well, why did I care? Among these three friends, Elgin was the lucky one.

The dinner ended and I heard that Baxter and Madeline had left with the children earlier.

Thankfully, neither Elgin nor Graham tried to ask for Madeline, although they did express some worry for Baxter.

Once we reached home, I tucked my daughters into bed and returned to the bedroom with Elgin.

Finally, our relationship had shifted into something more proper and intimate.

I climbed on top of him and rested my head on his chest. As his breathing slowed, I asked him,

"What are you thinking about?"

"Baxter is so stupid," he uttered, making me smile.

"Why so?" I questioned, even though I already knew.

"Why would he leave everything behind?" he replied, staring at the ceiling.

"Don't worry. Very soon he will realize what he has done. He just wanted to come off as a hero. He had been known as a big bulky man and never achieved anything in his life. You have children, Graham has a wife and a child on the way. Baxter was going in no direction, marrying an omega. I guess he needed to prove himself, so don't worry, he will come around," I stated as I gently patted Elgin's chest.

Then I rolled off him and lay down to sleep.

At midnight, my cell phone started beeping and the alert looked urgent, so I reached for it.

With my eyes still half closed, I checked the screen. The text did not please me at all.

Dad: Silver, did you tell Elgin that he will have to demote his own royal beta and hire my royal beta's son, Mathew?

The name Mathew and the demand from my father would upset Elgin.

My father was now trying to take control over Elgin's pack matters after handing him a pack.

And this would cause trouble for me as well, because Elgin did not know that Mathew was my ex-boyfriend.

Hiring him and keeping him close would make Elgin uncomfortable.

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227

227—First Wedding Night

Madeline:

The drive was long. Even to reach the pack's border, we had to sit in the car for half an hour.

During that time, my kids had fallen asleep in the back in their seats.

I had no idea Baxter had packed some food from the wedding to help the children.

We fed them in the car, and even though he urged me to eat too, I could not.

The events of the day kept running through my mind.

Once in a while, I felt like tearing up, but I reminded myself that I was a mother now and had to stay composed.

When the headlights caught the wooden sign that marked the rogue territory, I sat up and pinched the space between my fingers.

The board carried the name of the pack we had just been banned from.

In fact, we have been banned from every pack now. Baxter must have noticed because he glanced at me.

“It is fine. We will be alright,” he told me, keeping one hand on the steering wheel while he watched the road.

“Why did you do that? Why did you jeopardize everything?” I shifted toward him in my seat, my dress gathering under me. 1

“I told you why I did it,” he replied, brushing his thumb across his eyebrow while he kept his eyes forward. “Do not keep asking me the same thing.”

“I don’t believe it,” I muttered, folding my arms across my chest.

I had worn his coat, which helped me stay warm.

“Well then, there is nothing I can do except prove it with my actions,” he remarked, and goosebumps rose on my

arms.

Thankfully, the coat covered them, so he would not see how even a simple sentence from him affected me.

“What are we going to do now? Where are we going to sleep?” I asked, changing the subject and letting out a small grunt while looking out the window.

“Why do you care? My arms are strong enough to keep you warm,” he replied. 1

The minute he said that, I snapped my head toward him.

I caught the small smile on his lips even though he kept his eyes on the road. He knew he had pulled a reaction from me.

“I am serious,” I hissed at him.

“There is a rogue motel nearby. We can stay there for a few days,” he explained. His fingers tapped the steering wheel lightly, almost as if he was counting the distance. “They only let rogues stay for two days. It is not permanent. It is only a small help for anyone who goes rogue.”

“What are you thinking?” he asked once he noticed how I kept opening and closing my mouth.

“I did not know people were going rogue here. I mean, I knew rogues exist, but I did not know there would be a

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motel for them. When did werewolves become so accepting of anyone wanting to leave a pack and start over in the woods?" I asked, remembering how difficult it used to be when I lived here before I gave birth.

"It is not that simple. Rogues have started a war. You must have heard that they are violent now. They attack pack members who wander near rogue territory. They steal from them. So the packs decided to build a motel to help rogues who are in real need. It is complicated," he explained.

A few things he said already gave me shivers in my spine.

"How are we going to live in the woods with three children, Baxter?" I asked, and sadness took over me.

"Madeline, you and I can protect them. You are strong enough. I am strong enough. Do not worry about that," he replied.

The way he included me instead of acting like he would protect us alone gave me unexpected hope.

At least he respected me.

"All right," I whispered, letting out a tired sigh. I did not know what else we could do.

After two days, we would be in the woods with nothing planned.

The car turned into a cracked lane. The motel appeared ahead. It was shaped like a wide U.

The rooms lined the three sides, all facing the parking lot in the middle.

A narrow office stood at the entrance, and the rest of the area was filled with rooms.

I also noticed a vending machine near the office, so at least the kids could get something to eat if needed.

The moment Baxter parked, he gestured for me to stay inside while he went to book us a room.

I stayed in the car and watched him step out and walk into the office.

After a few seconds, he returned with a key in his hand. His posture stayed straight.

His shoulders lifted as he inhaled the cold air and scanned the empty parking lot.

He adjusted the collar of his shirt as he reached my door and opened it for me.

“Let’s take the kids inside,” he told me.

I gave him a nod and stepped out of the car. He slid his arms under Elara and Gina, lifting them both against his chest.

Their cheeks rested on his shoulders and he shifted his hold to steady their heads.

I opened the opposite door and leaned in, gathering Bodhi into my arms.

Together we wandered into the room. The moment the door opened, I realized how messy this would get.

There was one couch and one bed against the wall. The bed was only big enough for my three children.

What did that even mean? Did Baxter and I have to share the couch?

Ruby Walker

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We Listened to the Darkness by Sorin Pax

228

[1,032 words]

228—Cuddling Is The Only Option

Madeline:

The motel room did not smell bad. It seemed they had used air freshener.

The bedsheets were clean. It was a small room, but it looked neatly arranged.

There was one queen-size bed against the wall and a couch beside it with a window behind it.

There was no closet and no carpet.

There were no extra chairs, only two thin blankets, one already on the bed and one folded near the couch.

After we placed the children on the bed, we covered them with the blanket.

My kids were little, and I could squeeze next to them, but I knew they would get uncomfortable.

We had to ask for many pillows, and since my kids moved in their sleep, we needed to place pillows between them.

Once I set everything up, I realized there was no space left for me on the bed.

After tucking the children in, we stepped back from the bed and our eyes landed on the couch at the same time.

It looked wide, but not wide enough for two adults without brushing against each other.

Someone could sleep on it only if they cuddled and stayed close.

We shared a brief glance and then looked away.

“I will take a shower,” I murmured, rubbing my arm.

“Okay,” he replied without lifting his eyes.

I slipped into the small bathroom. The floor was cold. Some of the tiles were cracked.

I leaned the gown against the wall and stepped under the water.

Once the steam touched my skin, my muscles eased.

Still, a strange agitation kept rising inside me, something that had started after he marked me.

A timid pull kept building in my body, almost like I was craving something I should not.

I tried to push the feeling away and focus on anything else.

Once in a while, the feeling struck again and my body shuddered.

By the time I finished, I noticed the bottom of the gown had soaked up water from the floor.

It dragged as I lifted it in my arms.

“I cannot wear this,” I sighed.

I would catch cold if I put it on again. The gown was huge and now it was wet.

I would also have no space to sleep if I tried wearing it on the couch.

I set the gown aside and gently knocked on the door to get Baxter’s attention.

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228–Cuck\$ngs The Only Option

+25 Bonus

I waited until I heard a light knock from the other side.

“Do you need anything?” he asked.

I opened the door a little and leaned toward the small crack.

I saw him standing outside, but he kept his gaze down and away from me.

“The gown is soaked,” I uttered. “I cannot wear this. What am I supposed to wear now?” I asked tiredly.

Baxter cleared his throat and ran his fingers through his hair. He still refused to look at me.

“Do you have your undies on?” he asked.

I grunted at once.

“I am not coming out just in that,” I replied quickly.

I was wearing a white bra and the tiniest panties and that was it.

“Then wear my coat on top of it. That is what I am trying to say,” he commented.

I groaned awkwardly but knew I had no other choice.

“I left it on the couch,” I pointed out, waiting behind the door and growing colder.

He walked to the couch and grabbed the coat.

When his eyes accidentally lifted toward me, I pulled back behind the door again. I only slipped my hand out.

He returned and passed me the coat. His fingers brushed lightly along my skin.

I pulled my hand back fast, almost like something had sparked between us.

I shut the door and slipped into the large coat. It swallowed me completely.

The hem reached just below my underclothes.

If I kept my arms down, the upper part of my thighs stayed covered, but my legs were bare.

I took a breath and reminded myself I could not stay in the bathroom forever. Baxter would need to use it too.

When I stepped out, he was not paying attention. He was taking off his shoes while sitting on the couch.

His

gaze moved down and then up, and he froze. I grunted softly and crossed my arms.

He turned away immediately, stood up and rushed past me while rubbing his neck, and disappeared into the bathroom.

I started to wander around the room, trying to figure out where to sleep.

Baxter came out, wiping his hair with his hand.

He seemed to notice the way I kept staring at the couch, as if I was trying to decide what to do with it.

“It is fine, you can sleep on the couch,” he told me.

“Where would you sleep?” I asked him.

“I will sleep on the ground,” he replied, and my eyes widened.

2/3

228–Cuddling is the Only Option

+25 Bonus

“But then take the blanket, put it underneath you, and roll it over you,” I suggested.

I would have given him a pillow too, but he shook his head again.

His hands settled on his waist as he stared at me.

“You will catch a cold,” he muttered, “You are practically-,” then paused and looked away. “Naked.”

I looked down at my chest and realized the coat had loosened. Half of my breast had slipped into view.

I pulled the coat together and folded my arms across my chest.

If I lifted my arms too much, I would be fully exposed.

An awkward silence settled between us before he cleared his throat.

“Unless you are okay with us sharing the couch,” he uttered. “We can cuddle or something. It will be warm.”

His suggestion hit me like a silver bullet.

Ruby Walker

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We Listened to the Darkness by Sorin Pax

229

229—Let’s Sleep Naked

Madeline:

“No,” I argued, shaking my head at the idea.

“I don’t want to,” I replied sternly.

“Fine, I’ll go sleep in the car then,” he muttered, staring at me for a moment before looking away.

Before I could respond, he moved toward the door and stepped out.

The door shut behind him. I strolled over to the couch and lowered myself, pulling the blanket to my chin

For the first few seconds, I only absorbed the warmth, but then guilt started to crawl into my chest.

He had done so much today and I was still pushing him away.

I lifted my head and glanced toward the window. Then I rose to my knees and opened it just a little.

He was inside the car, adjusting the seat, trying to find a position that might fit his tall body.

It seemed like it was not going to work. He let his head fall back against the headrest with a tired breath.

I closed the window again and dropped back onto the pillow, but I could not stay still.

A few minutes later, I got up once more and peeked through the window.

This time, he sat in the front seat with his elbow resting near the glass.

His finger traced the edge of his lower lip while he stared into nothing.

“He left everything for us and you’re making him sleep out there?” my wolf asked, and I sank onto the couch slowly.

“And you did not even mark him back,” my wolf remarked. 1

“What does that mean?” I wondered in confusion.

“Your body will feel pressured. You already feel it. That tension will only grow with time. The more you wander around him, the more you will feel this agitation. It is not like pain, but it is more like going in and out of heat,” she explained.

As my wolf told me this, I felt shaky in my body. Even though nobody was watching, I quickly hugged myself to cover my chest.

“What about him? Is he feeling the same?” I asked, sitting with my legs tucked under my thighs on the couch, staring out the window.

“No, he is feeling worse. He marked his mate, who did not mark him back, so he is feeling more pain than arousal, ” she replied.

As she spoke, I felt even more guilty than before.

“If you want to repay him for his kindness, let him come inside. The closeness will ease the strain for both **of** you. Your heat will temporarily fade and his pain will too,” my wolf whispered softly, and I chewed my bottom lip.

After watching him for a few seconds, I finally gave in and rose from the couch.

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+25 Bonus

My hand trembled slightly as I pulled the door open. I noticed how Baxter’s eyes narrowed **from** across the **lot**.

He pushed the car door open quickly and hurried toward me.

The cold wind reddened his cheeks, the **tip of** his nose, and even his jaw.

When he reached me, he set one hand on the door frame, blocking the breeze from hitting me as he stood before me like a giant brick wall.

“You need anything?” he asked me, his voice low as he leaned close.

His warm breath mixed with the cold air.

His body filled the doorway completely and his shoulders nearly brushed both sides of the frame.

“You do not have to sleep in the car,” I uttered quietly.

“Then where should I sleep?” he murmured, his voice very low while his eyes stared straight at my lips.

It was not teasing. His tone felt heavy, but I could tell he was trying to guess what I meant.

“Well,” I paused, biting my bottom lip, “we can share the couch.” I finished the sentence while turning my face to the side.

I was sure my cheeks were red.

He kept staring at me before I stepped back and he strolled inside.

He turned around and shut the door behind him while I moved toward the couch and pulled the blanket aside, avoiding his eyes because his coat barely covered my legs.

“You can lie down first,” he remarked quietly, brushing a hand through his hair.

I nodded and sat down on the couch, then slowly lay down.

There was enough space for the two of us, but only if we stayed very close.

Baxter wandered toward me and lowered himself onto the couch in front of me.

He placed the blanket over both of us.

Then I noticed how he reached over the back of the couch from above me to hold onto it.

I realized he was trying very hard to stay on the edge. So I did what I had to do.

While keeping my eyes on his throat so I would not look directly at him, I gently placed my hand on his shirt and started to pull him closer.

I noticed the way he groaned a bit. Then his hand moved away from the backrest as his body pressed against mine.

My hands curled into small fists against his chest.

Our bodies were now completely pressed together from the front, my face resting on his chest.

After a few seconds, he lowered his hand and set it on my back.

However, I noticed he started to get a little irritated.

“One thing,” he mumbled, “those buttons are digging into my body.” He whispered this while adjusting the coat

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draped over me.

I realized the buttons were big, and they were even causing me discomfort.

And I wondered if I now had to take off my coat.

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We Listened to the Darkness by Sorin Pax

230

230—I Am In Her Man's Arms

Madeline:

I looked down and clutched the coat. The fabric had folded in a way that the buttons pressed against him.

Some of them were even colliding with the buttons on his own shirt.

My face warmed at the connection between our buttons.

He tried to tell me that only fixing them would be fine, but even I felt uncomfortable in the **coat**.

It's all right, I will take it off," I told him. "Just close your eyes, okay?" I added, and he instantly closed his eyes.

Now that he lay in front of me with his eyes shut, I felt as if I were committing a sin by staring at his face so openly.

I slowly lifted myself by pushing my hand against the couch and sat upright.

I started to unbutton my coat, but staring at him while taking off my coat gave me goosebumps and unwanted thoughts.

I took off the coat and set it aside.

“Just tell me when you are done,” he mumbled, probably after I had taken too much time.

I kept an arm crossed over my bare stomach and lay down under the blanket again.

“You can look,” I whispered.

He opened his eyes and stared at my face in silence.

We lay there quietly until I began to shift because something was brushing against my bare stomach and causing an itch.

“What happened?” he asked, sounding a little tired.

“Your belt,” I complained.

“It keeps hitting my stomach,” I added.

Baxter pouted and let out a low strained sound before he sat up.

The moment he moved, I quickly grabbed the blanket to cover myself.

“I’ll take it off,” he remarked.

I gave him a small nod. He brought his hands to his waist and worked the buckle open.

The soft clink of the metal echoed in the small room.

He pulled the belt free in one smooth motion and set it on the ground.

“Better?” he questioned as he lowered himself beside me again.

I gave him another nod and he shifted closer.

This time, when he placed his arm around me because he had nowhere else to rest his hand, his cold hand touched my warm skin and I almost jumped toward him.

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+25 Bonus

An awkward silence settled again.

He gently adjusted his legs and I could understand how uncomfortable he must have been in those tight pants and

shirt.

He looked so stiff.

“You can take off your clothes if you want,” I told him.

The moment I said it, I noticed the way his fingers curled on my back.

I kept my eyes closed while waiting for his response.

“If I took off my clothes, trust me, Madeline, there will be mistakes that will happen,” he warned.

As soon as he said those words, my eyes snapped open and I looked straight into his eyes.

I closed my eyes shyly, and he pulled me closer and this time I felt his breathing against my ear.

I realized he was leaning on top of me now.

“What? You don’t want me to take off my clothes anymore?” he questioned straight into my ear.

I began to gently curl my fingers against his chest.

I noticed the way his body tensed up from my small movement.

“It’s okay, you can keep them on,” I whispered.

The minute I said those words, I noticed he pulled back.

Even though I did not want to get intimate because I remembered that this marriage was for a reason, him stepping back made me wonder what I did wrong.

He hugged me and began to breathe softly, which gave me the idea that he was falling asleep.

I kept wondering what our future would be like.

Previously I wanted to find out about my wolf and then ask for a divorce.

But now I had been kicked out of the pack, so even if I proved my wolf to be non-hostile, it would not matter.

Then another worry formed in my head.

Just because he married me does not mean he is done with Yuvonne.

This was only a deal.

It had been a deal with the other alphas too.

“Screw her,” my wolf muttered, talking about my sister.

“You know she is the one who leaked the diary pages,” my wolf said.

I grunted because that was the truth.

“How could someone be so full of hate?” I asked her.

“Your sister is not just someone. She is the biggest witch and bitch of all time. But look what happened. We have her fiancé in our arms,” she bragged.

2/3

The way my wolf chuckled and showed off about being in Baxter’s arms made me frown at her.

She was so evil, but I guessed so was everybody else.

“Oh please, do not act like you do not know what I am talking about. Remember when we were walking down that aisle? You were thinking about how you wanted to walk down the aisle with Baxter as his bride,” she reminded me and I bit my bottom lip.

She chose violence when she confronted me for my contradictory behavior and I quickly closed my eyes to pretend I had fallen asleep.

“This is just one night. Remember, tomorrow night who knows what else will happen,” she teased before we both fell asleep.

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