

Chapter 26

"I'm telling her you said that," Danielle deapans.

"Please don't," I blurt out, catching myself a second too late. Why did I panic? It's not like I'm afraid of her. She doesn't care about me, she sparks nothing but tainted memories for me.

"Aeliana, just the girl I've been wanting to see," Danielle says.

"Hi," She pauses, a few feet away from us.

My eyes drop to her feet.

They're bare. Could Danielle be right about her doing this unconsciously? Surely, she could have worn those huge house shoes females love so much but no. Here she is, barefoot and rocking a gym outfit. "You're not wearing shoes."

"It would appear so." She says, "That is such a great observation, Alpha Kingston."

"You shouldn't walk around barefoot," I say, ignoring her sarcasm. The matter is serious, she could have gotten badly hurt the other day, and those kinds of accidents are likely to repeat themselves. Glass breaks often.

Aeliana's gaze drops to her feet. "I'm not barefoot. I'm in socks."

"Socks," Danielle says, but not in a normal tone, it's deep and strangled. The two break into laughter, "I love that joke, but seriously why aren't you wearing shoes, Luna Aeliana?"

"I don't have house shoes," she says. Oh, now she answers. "My closet is boots, heels and shoes I outgrew."



"You should go shopping," Danielle offers, "I'm going later this afternoon, would you like to come?"

She doesn't answer instantly, but when she does, she declines. "Umm, no thanks."

"Daniella, don't make offers to ingrates."

Danielle gasps, smacking my arm. "Hey, don't say that."

"She is," I shrug.

Aeliana glares at me, then shifts to Danielle with an entirely different face. "I'll come with you." 1

"Great," Danielle beams. "King give her your card."

My card? "What for?" I frown.

"Shopping?" Danielle frowns too. "You don't expect her to use her money right?"

Before I can speak, Aeliana does. "I don't need his money, I have mine." She says, arms crossed over her chest, like it's supposed to hurt me. And it does strike a nerve, I am fully capable of financially supporting her. "I can pay for my things."

"But you have a husband now, that's sort of their biggest redeeming quality." Danielle jests, "Alpha, why isn't the card in her hand yet?" She pauses, an eyebrow raised at me. "Give her your black debit card."

"Audrey has my wallet," I lie, watching Aeliana for a reaction. For someone who had no interest in my card? Her whole demeanour shifts, something flickers in her eyes, something raw and frightening. "You should see her if you want a card."



"Excuse me, Daniella." She forces a smile. "You can fetch me when you're ready to go." She says, her feet heavily stomping as she walks away.

Satisfied, I smile.

"What was that?" Danielle whispers.

"What?" I frown, feigning ignorance. My wallet is with me, I know Aeliana wouldn't ask Audrey for it so I was trying to get a rise out of her when I said it.

"Telling her to get it from Audrey? Are you setting the girl up for a beating? You know how fragile your Audrey is. She'll cry if Aeliana—" she pauses, interrupted by Rowan's arrival.

"Oh my!" Rowan gasps, "There you are. Whispering with my wife? I was hoping you'd stop once you got your own." He says, sweeping her off her feet only to kiss her and set her down again.

Danielle reaches for his head, gently touching his hair. "Love the haircut, baby."

This is what I thought my marriage ought to be, a bond as strong as theirs and a fire that never dies. Rowan and Danielle have had nothing but good days, they never fight, they stick together, and they notice the little things. Instead, I get a wife who scares me, one who couldn't care less about our union. 2

"She noticed," Rowan says with a Cheshire grin. "Did your wife notice too?"

I clear my throat, "We have somewhere to be."

His grin widens, "So that's a no? How does that make you feel, big guy?"



"Babe, don't say that." Danielle pouts, "You could only dream of getting this much affection from his wife. Don't rub salt in his wounds."

Rowan laughs, kissing her. "What's the matter, Kingston? You should be grateful I'm letting you experience a bonded love, this is as close as you'll get to it."

With an eyeroll, I leave the happy taunting couple. They're rubbing salt in my wounds, making fun of the one aspect of my life that I have no solid control over. "Are you going to cry in your car?!" Rowan teases, laughing it off.

I make a mental note: Taunt Rowan when Danielle has him sleeping in the guestroom.

Let's see if these jokes are still funny then.

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