

Chapter 30

KINGSTON

I spend my morning in a meeting, trying to move my inauguration up against Father's wishes. He has granted me what he wants to so badly call my honeymoon vacation, a whole month in which I'm not to involve myself in pack business. My focus should be on Aeliana and nothing else. It takes a while to convince them it's unnecessary. Aeliana will be here for the rest of my life, and the pack might not exist if I focus on her. When I do convince them, I'm roped into having breakfast with my mother.

Thankfully, she doesn't mention Aeliana once. She simply complains about her day, how exhausting her Luna duties are—which I think is a hint for me to have Aeliana trained as soon as possible, something she will have to learn from her if need arises.

Out in the driveway, I'm carrying a special order she made just for Aeliana. "Don't forget, we have an early dinner tonight at Damien's."

"I won't forget mom, it's Alex's birthday. I will start off in a few hours, I just have to pick up Audrey from—"

"You're bringing her?" She frowns, genuinely confused.

"Yes. She always comes."

Mom shakes her head, "Things are different now, King. You're married, you should bring Liana."

"What?"

She pauses, an eyebrow raised at me. "Were you planning on not bringing her?"



I don't respond, I wasn't planning on bringing her. Aeliana has no business with my nephew, she doesn't know who he is.

"King, you have to," she demands, her tone now scolding. "She's your wife. You two are a package deal. Wherever you go, she must too."

"I married her, Mom. You can't force me to spend time with her, I can't enjoy her company. I told you I didn't want her but you—"

"I want her," she snaps.

"You should have left dad then," I counter, a bit too quickly and harshly.

Mom's fave furrows, "Kingston, what's going on with you?"

"I'm sorry," I sigh, massaging my temples. I've not been much of myself since Aeliana came back. "I've just been under a lot of stress lately."

"Well, bring Aeliana along." She says, and it's not a suggestion but an order, as if I don't bring her to the party she will have my head. "And ask Audrey not to come."

"Mom."

She shrugs, "You said it yourself, they don't get along. Audrey will make her uncomfortable, so it's best we avoid another situation like what happened at the restaurant."

"No," I stand my ground. "I won't uninvite Audrey to something she's been coming to for years just because Aeliana doesn't like her. If anything she should be left out, Audrey has been a present part of our lives and I won't cut her off just to make space for Aeliana." 2

Mom kisses her teeth, "Fine, bring her." She says, almost annoyed by the idea. How could her attitude towards Audrey change so fast? "But



bring Aeliana too. She's family, Audrey isn't and as much as you'd like to change that, you won't be able to. Get that into your thick skull."

I nod. "Anything else, mother?"

"Nothing from you," she scoffs. I can't believe Aeliana is driving a wedge between us. "Just make sure my new daughter comes and Audrey should make cupcakes."

I almost laugh at that. She loves Audrey's baking, and Aeliana doesn't know her way around the kitchen so I guess she can't replace her in that department. "I thought you didn't want her there."

"Of course I did," she argues. "But I was doing your job of worrying about your wife's comfort. Anyhow, relay my messages."

"Yes, Ma."

She kisses me on the cheek and gets into her car, leaving me with a warning glare, the kind I always received as a child whenever I was skating on thin ice with her.

A few hours later, I've told Audrey to make the cupcakes for Alex's birthday which she has already done, sixteen dozen cups, ready and frosted. I have someone bring Aeliana the lunch Mom ordered for her and ask her to be ready by four thirty.

I'm counting on her not showing up but when it's time to leave, I see her coming out of the house with Danielle. My gut does that strange thing it does whenever I see her, I can't name it but it's easily become the emotion I dread. I feel it when I see her out in the garden, sipping coffee or wine while she stares at the trees, her pencil tapping against her notepad. I often watch her, she doesn't realise I'm there, and she appears to be in her own world half the time.