

Chapter 32

We don't speak the rest of the drive, and when we arrive, he steals her away to give a tour of my brother's wife. Most of the guests are yet to arrive but Audrey is already here, she came in early to help set up for the party. She's always been so thoughtful, and up until a few weeks ago, we all appreciated her and now it seems like Aeliana is replacing her. 3

The first thing we do when nearly all the guests arrive is sing Happy Birthday to the birthday boy before he and his friends fall asleep. After that, everyone goes on to do their own thing. Audrey stays by my side, clinging to my arm, while I nod at conversations and reminisce about my kiss with Aeliana.

I was so scared when Rowan told me she was crying by the staircase, I had been with Audrey, helping her with her vibrator. She was throwing herself at me but I couldn't bring myself to have sex with her. I haven't gone that far with her since I married Aeliana, regardless of the terms of our marriage, I still can't bring myself to be disloyal to her. 3

"Excuse me," I tell the men at my table. They've been too long, saying way too much about nothing I care about. On a good day, I would care for it later, but right now my brain seems to have stopped working and I have Aeliana to thank for it. I can't seem to focus now that she's no longer in my sights.

Audrey follows me outside, her heels clicking as she runs towards me. I spot Aeliana, standing with Damien by the cotton candy machine. "So, what do you think?" Audrey asks.

I nod. "I agree with you," I say, I don't know what she said nor am I interested in hearing it again. My attention is fixed somewhere twenty feet away, watching my mate like a damn predator. Damien says something that makes her laugh, truly and freely laughs. The realisation



that I haven't seen her laugh this hard since she returned, or at all. At least not in any way that spikes joy.

Aeliana looks alive.

Damien slings an arm around her shoulders points her towards something, making her laugh even harder. I can't hear the sound of her laugh through the buzzing music and the sound of children screaming.

I flinch at how close they are.

"That's just wrong on so many levels," Audrey tsks. "Did no one tell her Damien is married now?" 1

Something vicious unravels in my chest. I want to cross the lawn, grab Damien by the collar and shove him away from her. I'm starting to like it less and less by the second. That's my wife, my mate, my laughter and yet he gets to hear it without so much as trying. I feel an overwhelming need to force her into looking at me. 1

Audrey presses closer, her head against my arm. "If she keeps this up. People will start to talk about her past again." She sighs. "Who flirts at a child's birthday for crying out loud that too so openly." 1

Aeliana whispers something to Damien and again. They both laugh. My jaw clenches, why is he making her laugh?

I don't think I've been this pissed in a long time. The two people who get on my nerves the most have teamed up to torment me, and they're clearly enjoying it. It.

I hate him for making her happy.

Every time she laughs at—or with him, I choke a little, making it harder to stay calm.



Damien leans into her and says something, that makes me snap.

I'm going to kill him.

Not really. But I can probably just maim him a little. Enough that he'll remember not to touch what's mine. 1

Her feeding him some of her cotton candy is my final stroll. My feet move before my kind fully register it. 1

Aeliana is mine.

The circumstances surrounding that truth for matter, Damien doesn't get to be this close and comfy with her. The twat sees me coming and instead of fleeing, his smile widens. He knows exactly what he is doing.

Aeliana follows his gaze and our eyes lock. She appears to be startled but then her smile fades. I stop a few feet away. "Having fun?"

Aeliana pats Damien's shoulder and smiles, "Thanks for the chat, D. I'll grab a snack."

"You're welcome, A." Damien retorts, a little too excited. 1

D? A?

Since when do they have pet names for each other? And why does he look so smug about it? Before I can warn him against being touchy with my mate, my nephew interrupts us. "Daddy, daddy, look!" He beams, showing Damien a car key.

Damien ruffles his hair, he makes a good father despite how mature and reckless he often is. "Whose is that?" 1

"Mine," Alex beams, holding the keys to his chest. "Look, Uncle

Kingston."

I stare down at the keys, Mercedes car keys. "Nice huh?" My father asks, joining us. "I bought him a car."

"I'm going to show mommy!" Alex says, galloping away. Yes, galloping with excitement.

Once Alex is gone, I turn to my father. "The kid gets a car for his fourth? You gave me a signed card." Damien frowns.

"Your mother gifted you a paid vacation, and you had fun. Made Axel a sibling."

Damien smirks, silenced now. "Don't you think a car is too big a present for Alex, Dad?"

"He is my grandson," he says, waving me off. "Nothing is too big."

Damien snickers, "Yeah we see that, remind us to be reincarnated as your grandkids in our next lives because the son treatment isn't cutting it for us." 1

Our father laughs, his gaze shifting to me. "And you, you should be thinking of gifting him a cousin to play with."

I almost laugh at that, a cousin? The boy has a higher chance of being eaten by a zombie or stomped on by Bigfoot. "He has Ryder."

"A blood cousin," he says.

"He has those." I counter. Only one of my sisters doesn't have children, but Vittoria is fifteen. My other sister has children, and so does my brother Callum. Alex has plenty of cousins.



Father shakes his head, "Not nearby."

"Dad," I groan, my tone heavy with defeat.

Damien slaps my shoulder, "He has a point."

"Exactly, if you start now, you should have one in the next six months at most."

"No." I immediately argue. "I am not having kids. When do I get a break from you and your suggestions, Dad? First the wedding now this."

"Don't worry, your mom will help to convince her."

"I'm not having kids with her." Not that she would ever allow me to. The thought makes my heart skip an actual beat, but I erase the thought before it multiplies and finds a home in my mind. There's way too much of Aeliana as it is.

Damien hums, "That seems too certain. What if she's already pregnant?" He asks, an eyebrow raised at me. "Newlyweds fuck like rabbits. And I caught her throwing up a while ago."