



Chapter 6



The silence stretches like taffy in hell. They're both staring at me like I'm a Netflix documentary, and I'm standing here trying not to have a complete mental breakdown.

"It's been a long time..."

Understatement of the fucking century. But what else do you say to the two men who railed you into another dimension eight years ago and are now your bosses?

Hey, remember when you both—

Nope. Absolutely not going there.

But I can't afford to fall apart. Not in front of them, not after everything.

I straighten my spine, step away from them pulling out my legal pad, and click my pen with deliberate precision. "I understand you have a case you need handled. Parameters?"

They both blink at my aggressive pivot to professionalism. Like they expected me to what—collapse? Beg for their forgiveness? Run screaming into traffic?

Been there, done that, have the single mom trauma to prove it.

Kieran recovers first, his ice-king mask sliding back on.

"The Silverton acquisition." He takes a folder from his desk thick enough to use as a weapon. "Sixty million tech merger. Shareholders crying breach of fiduciary duty."

His eyes are doing that thing where he's cataloging every change like I'm a spot-the-difference puzzle. "You'll be lead counsel. Reporting directly to us."

Lead counsel on sixty million? Either they're testing me or setting me up for the most spectacular professional face-plant in Seattle legal history.

This is purely human corporate law—the kind that pays obscenely well because rich humans love suing each other. No pack politics, no supernatural complications. Just money and egos.

I can work with that.

"High stakes." Lysander's suddenly closer again, pretending to review papers while basically bathing me in his pheromones. "Think you can handle it?"

I handled pushing three of your potential children out of my body in one go. So yeah, I think I can manage some paperwork.

"I've handled bigger." Another lie.

My biggest case was maybe two million, but they don't need to know that. I grab the folder and get out before my knees give up on the whole standing thing.

The first workday drags like torture and becomes an exercise in psychological warfare disguised as professional development.

I can feel them cataloging every difference in me—the way I no longer drop my gaze when Lysander appears to "discuss the case," how my shoulders don't curl inward anymore just from

Kieran's presence.

The designer suit Rosalie helped me buy secondhand.
The competence I wear instead of fear. The spine I grew
somewhere between midnight feedings and law school finals.

They remember my younger self. Broken and subservient,
terrified of my own shadow.

That girl is gone.

Around three, I catch a flash of something on Kieran's face
when I cross my legs under the glass conference table.
Something with the kind of intensity usually reserved for
defusing bombs.

Heat flashes across his face, pure hunger, and my traitorous
body responds like it's been programmed. I hate myself for the
way my pulse spikes.

*Down, girl. We do not get horny for men who spent two years
making our existence miserable. That's not a kink we're
exploring.*

The meeting dragged on for another hour and I texted Rosalie
under the table "*Coming home late*" while both brothers kept
finding excuses to move closer to me.

Kieran keeps finding excuses to stand behind my chair to point
out jurisdictional issues while his body heat tries to melt my
professional façade. His cedar scent floods my system like a
drug I've been desperately avoiding.

Close enough that I feel every breath, close enough that if I
leaned back a fraction...

Close enough that I feel every breath, close enough that if I leaned back a fraction...

Stop it.

Lysander's methodology is different but equally devastating.

"Accidentally" grazing my fingers during document exchanges, each touch sending electricity shooting up my arm like I'm a malfunctioning power grid. To any observer, it's normal business interaction.

To me, it's predators testing how close they can get before I snap.

By the time I escape at seven, I'm shaking so hard my car keys sound like maracas. The drive home is forty minutes of deep breathing and reminding myself that mortgage payments require employment.

My apartment finally comes into view—warm lights against Seattle's perpetual drizzle, safety, sanctuary, the place where I'm Mom instead of whatever masochistic game today was.

"MAMA!" The door barely opens before three tiny bodies launch themselves at my knees.

Orion immediately starts his volcano presentation, complete with hand gestures and that serious expression. "Did you know that Mount Vesuvius erupted at approximately 1,520 degrees Celsius? That's hot enough to instantly vaporize human tissue!"

"That's... very informative, baby."

Luna waves her spelling test like a victory flag, pride radiating

from every pore. "I got the bonus words too! Even 'necessary' which everyone else missed!"

And Phoenix just clings to my leg without words, her grip pure Alpha strength wrapped in seven-year-old desperation.

Rosalie extracts me from the pile, herding them toward bedrooms.

"Homework done, dinner consumed, only one minor incident," Rosalie reports, looking like she's survived several natural disasters. "Phoenix tried to make the remote levitate when Orion hogged the TV."

Shit. "Success?"

"Almost. Ice cream saved the day."

After bedtime stories and kisses—Orion negotiating for "just one more chapter," Luna asking if I'm sad about something, Phoenix finally releasing her death grip—

I collapse on the couch. Rosalie already has wine poured, bless her.

"So," she says carefully. "Want to tell me why you look like you've seen a ghost?"

I take a long drink. Then another.

"The co-CEOs." I take a massive gulp. "Kieran and Lysander Fenris. They're... Rose, they're them. The ones from that night."

I don't need to say more. Rosalie knows the whole story, the only human who does.

only human who does.

"The baby daddies..." she whispers. Her wine glass stops halfway to her mouth. "Holy shit, Thalia. What are you going to do?"

"Keep my head down. Do the work, bill the hours, pray they never find out about the triplets." I drain my glass and pour another. "It's just a job. Just surviving, like always."

"Thalia..."

"I mean it." My hands are shaking again. "They can't know. If they find out..."

"They'll take them." Rosalie finishes the thought I can't say out loud.

I look toward the hallway where my kids sleep. "Alphas don't leave their bloodline running around unacknowledged."

We sit in silence while that truth settles between us. "Did they recognize you?" she finally asks.

"Immediately." I laugh, but it comes out broken. "Kieran shattered his coffee mug with his bare hand. Lysander went completely feral." I set down my glass before I break it too.

"They've been circling me all day like I'm prey."

Her face does the thing where it cycles through emotions like a slot machine.

"The absolute worst part?" I laugh, bitter. "Some fucked-up piece of me is thrilled they found me. How's that for Stockholm syndrome?"

Commented [Ma1]:

syndrome?"

Rosalie's quiet for a long moment and pours more wine. Then:
"Thalia, you can't keep working there. It's too dangerous."

"I don't have a choice." The words taste bitter. "You know what happens if I quit—I'm blacklisted, can't get hired anywhere in the Northwest. We'd have to move again, uproot the kids, and I'm out of money for fresh starts."

But even as I say it, I remember Kieran's burning stare when I crossed my legs. Lysander's hand brushing mine, that flash of possessive hunger. The way my traitorous body still responds to them after eight years.

We sit in the wreckage of what this means. Two Alpha heirs who've apparently been searching for me for eight years, now with daily access.

Three children who are the spitting image of their father. A past that's caught up with a present I can't afford to lose.

End *of* *The* **Chapter**

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