5. Cora

I woke up to tiny beams of light hitting my face.

I groaned, turning onto my side and feeling the chill of the hard tile floor beneath me.

Wait a minute-floor?

Why was I lying on the floor?

I opened my eyes, immediately regretting it, when the rays of sunlight assaulted my pupils.

I shielded them and looked around to figure out where I was.

I was home, but apparently not all the way inside.

I was sprawled out at the entrance of my house, without my shoes on and my keys scattered around me.

Using my foot, I closed my door, praying to the Goddess no one saw me like that.

I felt so f*cked up, but I couldn't even remember drinking that much, or maybe it was hitting me harder since I hadn't drunk in so long.

I don't know.

The last thing I remember is going through Chris's house.

Then everything just fades away after that.

I felt the room swirl for a second while I tried to sit up.

I swear on everything the Moon Goddess has created I'm never drinking again.

I can't believe I blacked out like that.

I hit my head with my open palm, instantly regretting it when a sharp pain shot through my skull, but I didn't mind the cool touch my hand brought.

I forced myself to my feet and shuffled into the bathroom, where I started the shower and faced the mirror.

I peeled off my clothes one by one as I waited for the water to heat up and froze when I saw the various kiss marks scattered across my chest, arms, and stomach.

My hands frantically roamed over my neck until I felt a small incomplete bite mark near my nape - a place where Alphas often mark Omegas.

The mere thought of an Alpha having their way with me while I was unaware made my stomach turn.

I couldn't remember the rest of the night, so I wasn't even sure if I consented to whatever happened.

A hot tear rolled down my cheek, bringing along the sharp pain in my eyes before I was completely sobbing in front of the mirror, looking over all the places my body had been kissed and marked with teeth.

A snapshot of skin connecting with skin flickered in my head, and the feeling of being comforted and loved washed over me.

In an instant, all of my fear and worry vanished.

But that didn't last long once rationality hit.

Deep down, I knew I shouldn't be feeling this way when I don't even remember who I was with last night.

This left me uneasy about this situation, where I couldn't even trust my own emotions.

The scent that clung to my skin was one my body recognized, yet the fact that I couldn't remember it scared me.

I stepped into the shower and let the scalding hot water hit my back before I scrubbed myself, trying to erase all evidence of what had or hadn't happened.

Red marks blossomed all over my body from how hard I scrubbed.

When I was finally clean and comfortably numb, I got dressed for my shift at the cafe.

I didn't even have to try and resist my hunger today since I had no appetite.

I grabbed my bag, whispering small thank yous' as I saw that I still had my phone.

Bully for me that I lost my favorite pair of V*ns shoes last night, but the fact that I didn't lose my phone was a small win.

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As I made my way to my job, my mind kept drifting back to the previous night.

Before I knew it, I was standing in front of the alleyway Leon had taken me into the day before.

I felt a tug in my core at the thought of seeing him again.

I decided to take a peek around the corner to satiate this concern.

I inhale deeply and lower my head as I peer around the wall.

Nothing.

A flood of breath left my body as I exhaled in relief.

'What were you even expecting, Cora?' I scolded myself internally.

Leon wasn't a creep who lurked in alleyways or anything like that, though the thought of him slumming it around like some perv made me laugh.

When I arrived at the cafe, I saw Lee talking to a customer while giving them their iced coffee.

His charming smile made the young woman blush as she grabbed the cup from him.

"Have a nice day, and I hope you have time tomorrow to come by and use that punch card." He smiled warmly, and the girl nervously mumbled a thank you and almost bumped into me trying to leave.

I shot Lee a questioning look, silently asking him what that was all about.

He responded with an expression of innocence like he had no idea what I was referring to.

"You're gonna end up turning this cafe into a Lee Evans Fan Club. You know that, right?"

He laughed, shutting the register and giving me my apron.

"Might as well make use of my charms! My good looks help me convince customers to add a few more dollars onto their orders when I'm extra nice to them." He winked.

I rolled my eyes and pulled my hair back into a high ponytail, preparing to start my shift.

I gave a toothy grin to the next person in line, an elderly woman with short gray locks who asked for a London Fog with honey in hushed tones.

As I wrote down her order, I felt the hairs on the back of my neck rise.

I wasn't entirely sure, but I felt like Lee was watching me, and I couldn't tell if it was just my overactive imagination or if there was something to focus on.

When I spun around, I noticed the corner of Lee's face looking away from me as he continued to make the customer's order.

This confirmed my suspicions, but what was he looking at?

My hand instinctively moved to the back of my neck, feeling the exposed bite mark.

I didn't know if he noticed it, but a part of me believed he did.

For the rest of the shift, it was just Lee, me, and the obvious tension begging to be cut.

The air hung heavy with unspoken thoughts until it was almost suffocating.

I peeked at Lee, who was cleaning a cup with a hand towel, lost in deep thought that he didn't even notice me sweeping obnoxiously, trying to get his attention.

I watched his features closely, appreciating the way his skin glowed with a peach hue.

His jawline was sharp, and his full lips were slightly apart as he deepened his thought.

He made being handsome look easy; it was a natural state of his being.

I only wished that I could hear what was going on inside that head of his.

He's been quiet ever since I caught him staring at me.

His usual self would have asked me how my day off was and a hundred other questions to quench his curiosity about me.

It was strange to see him so focused.

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As the day passed, it was almost time to close the cafe.

In an effort to put away the untouched coffee bags and other supplies I had used that day, I was desperately searching for the keys to the back storage room.

When I couldn't find them, I called out to Lee for help.

The moment his name left my mouth, I felt a rush of adrenaline that made my heart thump rapidly against my ribcage.

My whole body erupted in goosebumps.

Suddenly, an image flashed through my head of me rocking my hips on top of someone moaning, "Lee…Lee."

The same force that drew me to the alley before seemed to be calling me again.

I was suddenly breathless as arms wrapped around me from behind.

I looked up to see Lee's worried face only inches from mine.

" Cora? Are you all right? Can you hear me?" His voice sounded far away.

I was still feeling a little dazed, and it took me a few seconds to pull myself together.

When the room was no longer spinning, I managed to stammer out, "Yeah… I'm okay...I just-I have a headache".

He walked me over to a table and helped me into the chair.

"Here, sit down, and let me get you some ice water." He was kind, even in moments like this when I felt burdensome.

But I knew that he treated everyone this way - not just me.

As quickly as he left, he returned with my water and put two straws inside.

I raised my eyebrows in question.

"What? I know you like your drinks with two straws. Is there a problem?" He casually replied.

I shook my head in response and took a sip.

That made me feel good inside, knowing he noticed something so tiny like that.

"Are you feeling better now?" He asked, worry still sprawled over his face.

Before I could answer, I noticed his eyes trailing down from my face to my neck and landing back on the bite mark.

His eyes grew dark, showing a foreign emotion on his usually cheerful face.

Was he actually angry?

I dipped my head to the side, trying to draw his attention away.

My face flushed red, knowing he was staring at the mark.

I supported my weight against the table, propping up my chin with one hand.

"Yes, I'm fine," I said calmly. "I just had a weird moment back there because of the pain from my headache. Nothing to worry about."

He placed the back of his hand to my face.

"I don't know, you look really red, and it feels like you're running a fever. Are you feeling sick?"

His questions made me more self-aware, which caused me to blush due to the embarrassment, but I wasn't going to tell him any of that.

I lied and said, "Yeah, I've been feeling a little under the weather lately, so maybe that's what it is."

He looked at me skeptically and asked me to hold on before heading out the front door.

I watched him sprint to the pharmacy and come out with a handful of items in mere seconds.

The dude was speedy.

I mean, yeah, we're not normal, but that was fast, even for a wolf.

When he made his way back in record time, my amazement was still clearly visible on my face.

"What?" He brushed me off.

My eyes were still wide with wonder.

I said, "How the f**k are you so fast?"

His only response was an offhand shrug and a guess at his own answer: "Mmm…genetics, I guess?"

He set the bag on the table, opened the fever reducer, and said, "Open your mouth, please?"

I swallowed hard at his words and obediently did as I was told.

Gently, he placed the medication on my tongue and used his thumb to push up my chin to close my mouth.

His fingers brushed against my lip line, and a vivid memory of last night came rushing back.

This time, someone's fingers slid into my mouth as they thrust repeatedly into me.

I shuddered in pleasure from the fleeting thought, and I felt Lee's pheromones begin to fill the cafe.

The smell of oak and mint overwhelmed me.

Could he feel my arousal?

I looked up to meet a pair of golden eyes staring back at me that seemed so alien, shining excitedly.

More beast than human.

Oh, sh*t, can he smell me right now?

My stomach flipped, and I felt like I couldn't look away – Lee's eyes were captivating.

The mere power behind them pinned my arms and legs with a firm grip, leaving me trapped in the chair.

An Alpha trying to spread its pheromones meant one thing—it wanted to possess me, to ignite desire within me, and pull me into its carnal lust.

I could feel the place between my legs stirred with excitement, and for a split second, I almost lost myself, but the memory of last night of me panting and begging to be f*cked, stunned me enough to leash in the desire.

I went pale, and a chill filled my gut when the realization hit.

Was it Lee who I slept with last night?

If I wanted to take a step back and be rational here, then this seemed like the only logical explanation.

Otherwise, why would these memories be violently triggered in his presence?

I was trying to process what was happening, all while watching Lee's eyes darken.

A reflection of his innermost salacious thoughts about me.

My throat burned from his scent, and I parted my lips to speak, but nothing came out.

Finally, a honk from outside broke our connection, and I was left feeling empty and confused in a cloud of lustful emotions.

I've never been happier for such an abrupt interruption.

Lee raked his fingers through his hair and then back along his face.

He looked drained, probably from the same mental effort I had to put in not to throw my body on top of him.

He cleared his throat and quickly said, "Sorry, I didn't mean-" His voice trailed off.

Then he scrambled to pick up the bag and the trash from the pills and headed towards the back.

I caught a glimpse of the bulge in his pants, and the blood had no problem returning to my face now.

I sat there and concentrated on calming my breathing, rubbing my hands against my legs to stop the prickling feeling rushing through them.

Then I got up; since my shift was over, nothing was keeping me here anymore.

As I started to walk, my legs felt weak and unsteady.

Struggling to maintain my balance, I slowly made my way to the back of the room to collect my stuff so I could leave.

The urge to crawl into a deep, dark hole was immense and honestly didn't sound so bad right now.

I could live with being in a hole until I died out of embarrassment.

It seemed like a good plan.

My legs were still feeling wobbly, but I forced myself to keep going until I reached the back.

Cautiously, I peeked in to try and spot Lee - but when I didn't see him, I figured he was in the restroom since the light was on in there.

I quietly picked up my purse, put it over my shoulder, and then tiptoed back to the exit, carefully avoiding the restroom.

I was halfway across the room when I heard muffled grunting and moaning coming from the restroom.

My eyes widened when I realized what it sounded like.

'Oh, I really need to leave. Goddamit, why did I come back here?'

'Okay,' I took a calming breath in.

Let's not go crazy and jump to any conclusions here. Just because I heard moaning doesn't automatically mean my boss is in there jerking himself, right?

He could be in pain or something, in which case I should knock on the door and ask him if he's alright. Right?

Nah. I think he's fine.

Otherwise, he would have called out to me.

I'm sure of it.

As soon as that thought passed my mind, a faint whisper echoed: "Cora...oh Cora."

Without hesitation, I shut my eyelids tightly as if attempting to disappear from the situation.

I know that sounds dumb, but what was I supposed to do at the moment?

Answer him? Nope.

I needed to just mind my business and leave.

The memories and visuals of the night before flooded my mind in waves— except something was different.

The voice that shouted my name didn't seem like Lee's, yet I couldn't be sure it wasn't him.

I forced these thoughts away and shuffled towards the door.

When I pushed the door open to leave, I turned back and yelled, "Thanks for the medicine, Lee! I'm gonna go now since my shift is over!"

I waited motionless for a response.

I wasn't even sure I was breathing at the moment.

When silence answered me back, I took that as my cue to leave, and I did.

Nothing like crazy, awkward s****l tension to get a girl running.

The way back home seemed to drag on forever, and my mind swirled with what had happened that night, the awkward moment with Lee possibly m**********g in the restroom and also him potentially being my partner last night.

The latter would make sense if that were true.

Since Lee is an Alpha and, the feeling I got last night felt familiar and Alpha-like.

And Lee is definitely a familiar Alpha.

I slapped myself on the forehead with my palm, frustrated about getting blackout drunk and not remembering what happened.

Trust me. The lack of responsibility on my end did not go unchecked.

Either way, if we shared a bed last night, Lee would remember it.

Was that why he was acting so strangely today?

But he didn't say anything nor throw me a bone about it.

Unless he was also blackout drunk.

Ugh, my head throbbed all over again.

How was I supposed to face Lee now?

He was my source of income!

Should I mention it to him or just drop it?

Would it be better to wait for him to bring it up?

From the few details I could recall, it seemed like we both enjoyed it, but that's not what matters.

I kicked at the rocks on the pavement, aggravated by all these useless thoughts that did nothing for my situation.

I had finally made it back home exhausted and sweaty, but instead of walking straight into the restroom, I skipped that and the kitchen and just went directly to flopping myself onto my bed.

No shower, no food.

I didn't even take my shoes off.

I just wanted to let sleep wrap me in its arms and lull me like a baby.

I was over today.

I was definitely over whatever the hell was last night, and f*ck it, I was done with my whole life, and before the dread of tomorrow could fully sink in, my eyes were already closing on their own.