

#Chapter 4: A Deal

Ella POV

I woke early the next morning, having decided to attend the opening of a new shopping center in the capital. I knew Alexander would be making an appearance there, and I hoped for a chance to speak with him.

As I stood before my closet, preparing to get ready, I felt a headache forming. Everything was so brightly colored and attention-grabbing.

I had to remind myself that I was 20 again. At this point in my life, I had focused on having fun and was eager to express my personality. I wanted to seem edgy, but now I feared I only came across as naive.

That wasn't the impression I wanted to leave today. I needed to be taken seriously, especially by Alexander. Other than the proposal, this would be my first public appearance since coming of age, and I wanted to project confidence and maturity.

After spending some time going through my closet, I found a pale yellow dress that wasn't frilly or covered in gemstones. I put it on and examined myself in the mirror. With the right styling, it could work.

I continued to dig through my clothes and found a dark gray half-jacket, a pair of gray shoes that matched, and a belt that complemented the look.

I kept my jewelry simple, wearing stud earrings and a pendant. It wasn't my best outfit, but I looked mature and put-together.

Once I was ready, I went downstairs for breakfast. I could tell right away that my pack members were taken aback by my appearance.

"You look nice," I heard someone say. "What's the occasion?"

"You look so much more mature," someone else chimed in.

I smiled. "I wanted to go to the opening ceremony for the shopping center today, and I thought I should try to look nice."

My father smiled at me. "Are you sure?" he asked. "There will be Alphas, Betas, and Gammas there. Normally, you hate interacting with other high-ranking wolves."

I smiled back at him. It was true—when I was that innocent Alpha daughter, I hated attending formal events where I felt like I was being stared at and put on the spot. It was hard for me to know how to behave, and I was always afraid I'd embarrass myself.

This time, however, I was ready.

"Well, I think it's a good idea for me to start meeting with others and forming stronger relationships. After all, it will be beneficial for the pack's business in the future if I'm on good terms with the others."

I could see that my mother and the others were staring at me in surprise, but my father just continued to smile proudly at me.

The rest of breakfast was uneventful, as was the hour-long drive to the Capitol.

It felt strange to be back here. The Capitol, where the Alpha King resided, was a bustling metropolitan area where many Alphas had their businesses, so I'd spent a significant amount of time here throughout my life.

But once David became king, the Capitol had become my home.

I pushed those thoughts aside as we arrived at the shopping center. It had been built by Alexander's pack, and the moment I saw it, I realized it was a luxurious playground meant to showcase their wealth.

With a large crowd expected, we didn't want to get stuck in any long lines, so we arrived ahead of time. There weren't too many people here yet. A podium with a microphone was set up for the official opening, but there was no sign of Alexander.

I made my way to the front and approached one of the workers who was unwinding wires and setting up microphones. "Excuse me," I asked. "Do you know where Alpha Alexander is?"

The worker glanced at me curiously before recognition dawned on his face. "He's in his office, resting up for his speech. He's very busy today and will probably be back on the road as soon as the speech is over."

I frowned. I needed to make sure I got the chance to speak to him today. "Thank you," I said.

I told my parents that I needed the restroom, and then I headed toward a nearby building, which housed the local headquarters for Alexander's pack.

I walked toward the restroom, and, once I was certain no one was paying attention to me, I hurried down the hallway. Luckily, I found my way to his office easily. It seemed my timing was good because Alexander and his Beta were walking down the hallway as I approached.

I strode confidently up to them, but his Beta stepped in front of me. "I'm sorry," he said, looking at me with a forced smile. "The Alpha is very busy today. We might have time for a quick photo, but that's all."

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes at his arrogance. "I'm not a fan," I said pointedly. "My name is Ella. I am the daughter of the Rowanwood Alpha. I'm here to discuss a collaboration with Alpha Alexander."

The Beta's demeanor shifted as he turned his attention to Alexander. "This is David's fiancée," he said, referring to me. "The news of their engagement was just announced recently."

Alexander looked at me curiously. "What kind of collaboration are you proposing?"

I glanced at his Beta, then stepped closer. Alexander looked amused by my boldness, but I ignored it as I rose on my toes to whisper in his ear. "I want your help taking David down."

Alexander smirked, his expression mocking. "You really are the naive little princess I've heard about," he said. "If you're having a lover's spat, you'll have to deal with it on your own. And if you're trying to lure me into a trap, you'll need to be much more creative."

He turned, motioning to his Beta, ready to brush past me. But as he did, all the pain from my relationship with David and his betrayal came rushing back, twisting in my chest. I took a deep breath to keep myself calm and looked Alexander squarely in the eye.

"There have been unforgivable actions from David that I cannot disclose," I said firmly. "This is not a petty lover's spat."

Memories of my past life owing back, sadness and hatred of being killed by my dear husband and best friend overwhelmed me once again.

"It was about my pack, my family, and... everything."

Alexander paused, his expression shifting slightly. I could tell he somehow felt the depth of my emotion.

"You want to be the Alpha King," I continued. "I can help you do that."

"You sound confident about that," Alexander remarked. He stepped a little closer, and his eyes moved over me slowly. "My pack is powerful enough to let me win. Why would I need you?"

I felt heat rise to my cheeks due to our proximity and the appraising way he was looking me up and down. I didn't let that distract me.

"David might not be your biggest competition now. But our pack will merge after we get married, giving him the most power and sway," I explained as calmly as I could. "You, on the other hand, are known for being unserious. And the rumors... well, I don't need to remind you what they say, do I?"

Alexander's eyes darkened as he stared at me.

I quickly continued, not wanting to push him too far. "If you help me, once I become the Alpha of Rowanwood, I will put my full support behind you. I can help reshape your public image, and my status will gain you the support you need."

Alexander was silent for a moment, considering my words. Then he smirked. "I'm interested," he admitted. "But your offer isn't enough to justify the risk."

"After what David has done to me, I'll accept anything," I said. "Any terms. I only have one condition—I will never give up my pack's Alpha inheritance rights."

"Anything?" he asked, his voice low.

"Yes," I confirmed.

In an instant, he closed the distance between us, his hand landing on my waist, pulling me closer.

"If so, marry me instead," he said, "after you separate from David."