

Chapter 61 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alexi POV

It turned out that adjusting to life after being a werewolf was easier than I thought. I definitely was not an average human: my endurance, strength, speed, and stamina were on par with any other wolf in human form. I could still run ten-mile warm-ups with the pack without becoming winded. And when I trained with them, we could trade blows with only the small issue of Alaia occasionally having to heal a broken nose or swollen eye afterward. Also, my senses were still heightened. I could see, hear, and smell just as well as I could before the ritual.

But, I think the coolest thing was that I could still send and receive mindlinks. I was worried I wouldn't be able to connect with my pack easily, but whether they were in their wolf or human forms, we could still communicate. I was a member of this pack in every way. I just couldn't shift into a wolf.

After the ritual, we all fell into a regular routine around the house. Xander made a push to get the room completed, and within a couple of days, there was space for all three of us. At first, it was odd sharing a place and a mate. All my life, I had been so possessive over what was mine, but now all that was gone just because Alaia wanted it that way.

We had become a family.

I was borrowing Alaia's office, preparing myself for my junior management interview on Monday morning. I had gotten the call the day after the eclipse and had been practicing interview questions for a couple of hours a day ever since. Since I no longer had my beta role to look forward to, I needed to find something to keep myself busy and earn an income. Even though I was living in the packhouse utterly free of charge, I was still raised to earn my keep. Soon enough, I would be a husband, then hopefully, one day, a father, and I had to provide as well as protect.

There was a quick knock on the door before Xander poked his head in. "Are you practicing for the interview again? You are going to drive yourself crazy, Lex."

"I really want this job. And from the people I've talked to, the hiring manager hates when candidates are not prepared. That won't be me."

He sat down and crossed his leg over his knee. “You really need your own office, Man. ‘Luna luxury’ doesn’t really suit you.”

The room was way too feminine, but it was quiet and had everything I needed. “Once I have a job, then I’ll think about an office. Until then, I’m fine here.”

I looked at the time, then up at Xander, and gave a knowing smile. “So, why are you here? I know what’s going on down in the backyard. Shouldn’t you be there as well? Don’t try and use me as a way to get out of it.”

It was the day of the baby shower, and the house was overrun with overly excited women going gooey over tiny socks and shoes.

Xander had been trying to find a way to not attend for days, but none of his escape plans panned out. “Alaia has Kade and Matt out there wearing headbands with little bumblebees bouncing around on them. My two top guys! When I saw that, I had to leave. Who knows what they have planned for me? Probably an entire fucking bumblebee suit or something like that. No. I’ll just go down when it’s time for the gender reveal. She doesn’t need me right now anyway, right?”

I couldn’t help but laugh. You would have thought the backyard was full of rabid vampires or something, but it was just a bunch of women and fake bumblebees.

“You laugh now because you’re not required to be out there. But the next time, and we both know there will be a next time, we won’t know which of us is the father. So, we’ll both be down there in the lion’s den. Laugh at that.”

Shit! He was right. We needed to stick together here; otherwise, the next time would be twice as bad. “We’re doing a mock interview. I’m sure you’re probably more particular about your employees than the hiring manager. Here, take these questions I printed out, and let’s go over them.”

Xander took the papers and laughed. “That’s good and all, but can’t we just say we were interviewing, but just hang out instead?”

“Besides the proposal, when have you ever been able to keep anything from her? Seriously?”

“Right. Okay, let’s do this.”

We ran through questions for about fifteen minutes before we received a joint mindlink.

Alright, guys, I know you’re hiding out in my office. And do not ask how just know that I have my sources.

Hello, beautiful angel. Are you enjoying your party?

Don't try and charm me right now, Alexi. You and your friend, get your sexy asses down here now.

Wait? Why? You said I didn't have to come.

That was before you helped Xander hide out. And before his mom and sister decided to paint a beehive on my belly. Xander!

Yes, little one?

Get down here. It's your fault these babies are currently using my bladder as a trampoline. If I have to be uncomfortable for the next two months, you can be for two hours.

I'll be down shortly, baby.

Both of you. Don't make me come up there and get you. Love you. Bye!

"Damn, she sounded just like her mom. She's got this chastising parenting thing down already," I said with a sigh.

"Well, at least I'm not alone in my misery. Let's go before she actually comes up to get us."

"I feel like you did this on purpose. Misery loves company and all that."

Xander just smiled as he left the room.

And I actually thought we were becoming friends. Asshole.

Alaia POV

If I weren't so miserable, I would really have tried to murder my fiancés. Both of them. Here it was the middle of August, and my bump was a full-blown belly. The twins had doubled in size in less than a week, and my bladder was taking a severe beating. And my men had the nerve to hide out in my office? In the air conditioning? Nope. Not today. We were all in this together, even Alexi.

They both walked into the backyard with ashamed looks on their faces.

They had better be ashamed.

I stood up and met them halfway. "Nice of you to join us, gentlemen. If you'd go see Kimmy over there, you can both get your bee-themed attire. Then meet me under the tent." I walked away before they could complain. No one had the right to complain to me. Not for the next two months.

I returned to my spot at the table and looked out over the yard. My mom, Katherine, Lauren, Jordyn, and Cassie were huddled around the game and gift tables, laughing and talking with other guests who had come out. They were so excited about the babies. It warmed my heart to see they were so loved already.

Matt and Kade were still wearing their bumblebee headbands, and whenever I saw one of them walk by, I had to giggle. They were good sports and didn't complain when I gave them to them, too much. They were going to be amazing uncles, and I was really looking forward to seeing them in action.

But when I saw what Kimmy had forced her brother into? Oh, my goodness! He walked over to me, wearing a yellow and black-striped T-shirt that read "Daddy to Bee" across the chest. Somehow, she also managed to put a top hat in the shape of a beehive on his head. This was priceless. I tried to cover my laugh but failed.

"I really hope you're happy right now, little one. This is humiliating, and it's hot as hell out here." He pouted and walked over to the seat beside mine.

"Oh, suck it up. You didn't have your belly painted and then be told that it had to stay out for the entire party. And you want to talk about being hot? My hormones are so out of wack that I'm burning up one moment and freezing the next."

His grim expression softened a bit, and he leaned over to kiss my cheek. "You're right, beautiful. How are you doing?"

"I'm alright. I'll need a shower and nap when this is all over, but your mom and Kimmy put a lot of effort into this. And it's a really nice party."

"Are you excited to finally find out what we're having?"

I couldn't help bouncing up and down in my seat. "Yes! I hope they are girls or at least one girl. I'd love to have a mini-me walking around here."

"Well, I don't think we have to wait too much longer to find out. Kimmy is setting up the big reveal now."

I looked over to where Xander pointed and saw Kimmy setting up a table, but there was something else that caught my eye. Alexi stood next to the food table, and one of the caterers was literally rubbing her breasts all over him.

"Who is that?" I asked, pointing her out to Xander.

"Uhh, not sure, baby. Do you want me to get rid of her?"

"Nope. I've got this." I pushed up and walked over to the duo.

“It was nice to meet you, Lily, but I’ve got to go now,” Alexi said, trying his best to get away from her.

“You can come with me. I’ll be off in twenty minutes, and we can go anywhere you want, gorgeous.”

She reached up to touch his face, but before she made contact, I snatched her wrist away. “Do. Not. Touch. Him.”

She yanked her hand out of my grasp and shot me a dirty look.

“Do you not see that this is a marked man,” I asked while trying to calm down.

“Yes, I see that. What’s your point?” Lily replied with a sneer.

Alexi stepped forward to say something, but I held him back. “My point, Lily, is that you are on my territory, in my home, flirting with my fiancé. If this were any other situation, you’d be a bloody heap on the floor, but today is your lucky day. If you leave now, you might just get to keep your job. But I promise you, if you say one more thing out of line, or even look at him again, losing your job will be the least of your worries.” I grabbed Alexi’s hand and pulled him away before Lily had a chance to respond.

Guys? Can one of you make sure this slutty bitch of a caterer is escorted off the property, like now?

Could you describe this ‘slutty bitch caterer’ in a little more detail for me, bean?

I sent them a mental image.

Her. Gone. Now.

We’ll take care of it.

Once that was done, I looked up at Alexi, who was smiling down at me. “That was so fucking sexy, angel. If all of these people weren’t here, I’d be balls deep in you right now.”

I looked him up and down before my eyes stopped on his shirt. Kimmy was a comedic genius. Alexi’s shirt had a bumblebee on it that was holding its arms up in an “I don’t know” pose. Underneath, “_____ to bee” was written.

I bent over laughing; tears ran down my face.

“Angel, how is anything I just said funny to you?”

His face showed that my reaction actually hurt him, so I knew I had to fix this, and quick. “I’m sorry, baby. There is nothing I’d like more than feeling you deep inside me. I just got distracted by your shirt, that’s all.”

He looked down at it, and it seemed like he was just then noticing what it said. “Fucking, Kimmy!”

“Don’t worry about it; you look adorable. And I can’t wait to rip that shirt off you later and lick all over every square inch of skin underneath. But, until then, come with me. It’s time for the gender reveal.” I took his hand and walked over to the table Kimmy had set up.

She handed me a large Styrofoam bumblebee with a needle on its butt. On the table were two balloons painted as beehives. “Alright, everyone, please gather around,” Kimmy yelled out. “It’s time now to find out what our little pups are. Luna, when you are ready, pop those beehives open!”

She was so excited; I had to admit it rubbed off on me a bit. I walked over to the first hive and brought the bee down on it. When it popped, blue glitter exploded all over the place.

“Baby #1 is a boy!” she yelled out.

I looked over at Xander, who had the biggest smile on his face. He would get his baby boy. He would tell me that he didn’t care what we had, but I knew he wanted a son.

“Here, babe, you do the next one,” I said, passing the bee to him.

He took it and walked over to stand next to me.

I secretly began to pray in my head. Please, please, please be a girl. Give me just one. Please!

Xander slowly brought his hand down and pop! More blue glitter rained down over us.

In a shocking case of deja vu, I just stood there speechless.

But the guys? Oh, the proud uncles and super proud daddy were at it again, cheering and celebrating the gross imbalance of penises to vaginas in our household.

All around us, people cheered and celebrated. I caught sight of Jordyn in the crowd and shrugged my shoulder at her. We didn’t need words, we both knew that we wanted to play dolls and dress up with someone, but that would have to wait.

She smiled at me, then mouthed, “Congratulations.”

Two little princes. I wasn’t expecting it, but I knew I couldn’t ever be disappointed. I loved them immensely already. I rubbed my swollen belly and smiled.

Two sons and two husbands. Things were about to get extremely interesting in this house.

SIXTY-TWO | OLD PROMISES

Chapter 62 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

I swear these little boys seemed to double in size every five minutes. It had been two weeks since the baby shower, and my fingers looked like juicy little sausages. I was sure my toes did as well, but I could no longer see my feet. But I didn't have to see them to feel them. And they were always sore; Xander and Alexi had rotating shifts massaging my feet and legs. That part was pretty nice. With only about six weeks left to go, I was trying to make a push to finish the nursery in time.

I would get drained quickly, so I could only spend small bits of time getting everything how I wanted it. Both Xander and Alexi had suggested bringing in a designer to do the work for me, but I refused. These are my little boys, and I wanted to be the one to make sure their room was perfect, not a stranger. I had just stepped up on a small step ladder to connect a fluffy little cloud to one of the mobiles when Alexi and Xander walked in.

When they saw me, they both rushed over, which scared me and made me almost lose my balance. "What's wrong?" Lately, I had begun to worry over everything, and it drove me crazy. My mom told me that she was the same way in her final weeks of pregnancy, so that made me feel a little better.

"Why are you climbing a ladder, angel? What would happen if you fell off that thing?"

I looked at the ladder, then back at Alexi, so confused. "It has three steps, Alexi. I don't see the issue here."

"Little one, your balance isn't the best right now. Please just let someone else do the reaching for you. Just until the boys get here."

Before I could answer, Alexi had taken my tiny ladder and left the room with it, probably to destroy it. I had really liked that ladder, too.

Xander then stepped over and took the cloud from my hand.

"Where do you want it, princess?"

I showed him where it should hang, and he quickly put it in place. Perks of being six-and-a-half feet tall, I guess. I went and took a seat on my rocker to give myself a short break. “So, what are you and Alexi up to today?”

“Well, I have to head over to the Crescent Moon pack today to meet with Alpha Jackson. There have been more rogue sightings between our territories, and we need to work together to figure out the next steps.”

After we had the ritual and killed Max, the few surviving rogues who were part of his Blood Moon pack also died. It was weird like they were all tied to him in a way and could only live if he did. Anyway, after that, a new surge of rogues had since cropped up that had the area Alphas more than a little worried.

“How come you didn’t tell me you were leaving today? I could have come with you.”

Xander came and kneeled before me. “I did tell you, baby. A few times. You even saved it in your phone.”

I picked up my phone and took a look. Sure enough, “Xander goes to Crescent Moon” was shown in my reminders. Damn this pregnancy brain. “Oh. Right. Sorry about that. When will you be back? Is Kade going, too?”

“We should be back tomorrow morning. I’m not sure how long things will go today, so staying over for the night is in the plan. And yes, Kade will be with me, and you’ll have Matt and Alexi.”

“You sure you don’t want me to come?”

“I’d love you to come, but you need to stay here. With the rogue situation, I don’t want to put you and the boys in any unnecessary danger. I know you are safe here.”

I understood completely. I wasn’t as fast as I used to be, and my balance really was absolute shit. I needed to stay put for now. “Okay. You guys be careful, okay? And let me know when you get there.”

Just then, Alexi walked back into the room, dressed for work.

Shit! Today was his first day, and I had forgotten that, too. He had on a dark blue, three-piece suit that looked like it was custom made for him. It fit his muscular frame beautifully. He had neatly combed his hair back but had a small bit of scruff on his face. He looked sexy and professional. “Well, don’t you look handsome. Your employees better keep their hands to themselves.”

“I’ll make sure to set the tone of ‘untouchable’ right off the bat, gorgeous.”

“You know you didn’t have to get that dressed up, Lex. Your office is business-casual,” Xander said.

“Well, I’m a manager, so I need to look like it. I don’t want to blend in and look like just any other employee. And you know what they say, ‘Dress for the job you want, not the job you’ve got.’ I want that CFO position.”

He was so ambitious, and I loved that about him. He wasn’t one to take no for an answer. If he wanted it, he would get it.

That was probably how I ended up with two mates.

“We’ll see how you do as a manager; then we’ll talk about CFO,” Xander laughed.

Alexi checked his watch before he leaned down to kiss me. “I’ve got to go, angel. I want to be a little early to get my office set up how I want it. Stay off your feet today, and no more climbing.”

He gave Xander a quick salute before he left the room and the house.

“He’s going to take my job one day; I can already feel it. Anyway, Kade and I need to head out as well. It takes a few hours to get to Crescent Moon, and it would be rude for me to show up late. Matt will be up in a few minutes to help with anything else you need to have done up here, okay?”

“Sounds good. Have a safe trip. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

He then leaned over and kissed my belly. “Xayden, you and your brother be nice to Mommy. She doesn’t need any of the acrobatics today, got it?”

One of the twins kicked the hell out of my bladder in response. They always responded to their father’s voice. It would be sweet if it weren’t so damn painful. “Xayden? When did you come up with that?”

“It just works. My father is Xavier; I’m Xander; my firstborn son will be Xayden.”

I smiled up at him. “I love it. Xayden it is.”

He smiled brightly in return, then stood to his feet. “Remember to relax, okay? You’ve got plenty of help around here. The nursery will be ready well before the boys are born.”

“I promise. Now go, we don’t want you to be late.”

One more kiss, then Xander was out the door.

I closed my eyes and began to softly glide in my chair while rubbing a small knot on my belly. It was either a foot or an elbow; I could never be sure. I guess I had fallen asleep because I woke up to find myself being carried to my bed by Matt.

“Hey, bean. Go back to sleep. I’ll make sure no one disturbs your nap, okay?”

“You’ll always be my favorite, Matty.”

He chuckled, then placed me in bed before closing the curtains and stepping out.

As I drifted off, I tried to decide what I loved more: naps or Matt. I think it was a toss-up at that point.

Xander POV

The trip to Crescent Moon was stressful. I hated the idea of leaving Alaia behind. And with Alexi working now, that was one less person home to protect her. But this meeting was overdue. The rogues were getting out of control and needed to be dealt with.

Kade and I were riding in the back seat, and I looked over at him. “Kade, did you make sure the patrols increased their rounds today? And that they worked the perimeter of the packhouse as well?”

“You know what? A few months ago, my best friend was in a coma for three whole weeks. And I had to do his job—all of it. And on top of that, I had to find his pregnant mate who had been kidnapped by a possessed wolf. Somehow, I managed to do all that, but can’t even organize simple patrol rounds now. I’m really slipping, man.”

“So, is that a ‘yes’ to my question?”

Kade sighed before he answered. “Yes. Patrols have been tripled until we return. Henry and his team are working at the packhouse. And Matt knows that he has to know where bean is at all times. Your family is safe, Xander.”

“Good. And I’m sorry. Alaia’s just really vulnerable right now, and I have a feeling that the rogue issue is not a coincidence. The elders said that someone would try to use her for her powers and that they would continue to grow. Maybe someone is making a play to get Alaia.

“I get it, man. But Alaia is ours, too. We’d never leave her exposed. She’s safe.”

I leaned my head back for a moment and breathed. I had a family to protect and was determined to do so. No matter what.

Kade and I spent the rest of the trip looking over territory maps, circling clusters of known sightings, finding possible places for the rogues to camp out, and attack routes for these hypothetical campsites. We had to be ready for everything, and this was one situation where I refused to leave anything up to chance.

When we finally arrived, Crescent Moon's patrols cleared us across the border and escorted us up to the packhouse. It was smaller than mine, but their pack was a third of the size, so it made sense.

Alpha Jackson Beck was waiting there to greet us. "Xavier, Kade. Thanks for making the drive. I know it can be rough sitting in the car for so long," he said.

"Thanks for having us. And don't worry, we made the most of the trip, so it wasn't too bad."

He looked around me and into the back of the truck. "Did you not bring your lovely mate? I've heard so much about her. I was anxious to meet her for myself finally."

I instantly became suspicious. Who would have been telling him about Alaia, and why did he want to meet her? I had to play this cool; there was no room for mistakes. "No. It was decided that she would stay home this time. Much safer that way."

His forehead creased into a frown before he hid it behind a forced smile. "No worries. Maybe next time. Come on in. I've got lunch set up in the office, and we can get straight down to business."

What the fuck was that?

I don't know, but keep your eyes and ears open, Kade. Something is going on; I feel it.

When we stepped into Alpha Jackson's office, there was a second man already seated.

I had never seen him before, and from the way Jackson seemed nervous around him, I assumed he wasn't his Beta. "I wasn't aware that there was anyone else joining our meeting today," I said, looking Jackson in the eye.

His eyes flicked from mine to the stranger before he gave a nervous chuckle. "He was a last-minute addition. I apologize for not warning you sooner."

More red flags.

"Does he have a name?"

Before Jackson could respond, the stranger stood. "Where is your mate, Alpha Xander?" he said, completely bypassing an introduction.

This was starting to piss me off now. "I do not know you or your intentions. Why would I tell you anything about my mate?"

“Well, that’s simple. The Amethyst Wolf was promised to my family centuries ago. And now I’m here to collect.”

My wolf leaped to the surface, and a growl ripped from my chest. “You will not touch her. Whatever you think you were promised, you’re wrong. If you come near my mate, I will kill you.”

“Alpha Xander. There is no need for threats. I simply came here as a friendly gesture of goodwill. And I needed to confirm that she was, in fact, the Amethyst Wolf. Meeting her in person would have been preferable; however, I can smell her on you, so her identity is confirmed. I can also smell that she is with child—”

“Choose your next words very carefully.”

He simply lifted a hand, waving off my warning. “I mean the children no harm. I only want her. After she gives birth, you can hand her over and keep your sons, or stand in my way and watch everyone you love die before I take your mate. The choice is yours.”

Before Alastair had the chance to shift fully, the stranger was gone, leaving behind a cloud of red smoke. I turned toward Jackson in a rage. “What the fuck was that? Did you drag me all the way out here to set me up? Who was that?”

“Xander, please calm—”

“If you tell me to calm down, I’ll rip your fucking throat out. Who. Was. That?”

“That was Vincent Edwards. He’s a hybrid. The illegitimate son of a high standing vampire lord and a rogue werewolf. He has my mate, Xander. I had no choice.”

He had drawn me here under false pretenses and pulled me away from my mate. He knew someone was after her, but he chose to still leave her exposed. I wanted nothing more than to coat his entire office in his blood, but I had more pressing issues.

“Kade, call the car. We’re leaving right now.”

Before I could leave the room, Jackson spoke again. “Alpha Xander. Be careful. If he gets his hands on her, he will drain her of her powers and kill her, without a doubt. With her powers, he’d be unstoppable.”

Alaia POV

I shot up in bed, drenched in sweat, with my heart racing in my chest. Was that a dream? It felt so real. Maybe a premonition?

I needed to speak to Xander. Now. I grabbed my phone and called him up.

He picked up on the second ring. “Little one, I have to call you back. I’m dealing with a situation here.”

“Is the situation named Vincent Edwards?”

“How did you . . . ?”

So, it was real. And now we haad got a big fucking problem on our hands.

SIXTY-THREE | REINFORCEMENTS

Chapter 63 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

I had no idea what was going on, but I needed to find out. As quickly as I could, I swung my legs out of bed and pushed myself up. I made it to the stairs before I remembered my shitty balance and decided to sit and scoot down—three flights of stairs. By the time I reached the second floor, my ass was beyond sore. I had given up.

Matt, could you come to help me, please? I’m on the second-floor landing.

A couple of minutes later, Matt was racing up the stairs with a look of panic on his face.

“I’m fine. I didn’t fall, and I didn’t exactly ‘walk’ down, either so there’s no need—”

“I just got off the phone with Xander. Come on; we’re going up to his office.” He scooped me up and raced back up all those stairs I had worked so hard to get down in record time. When we reached the office, he sat me on the couch and went behind the desk and pressed the panic button, completely locking the room down.

“Uhh, Matt? Is all this really necessary? We don’t even know who the guy is. It could all be some sick joke.”

He looked over at me quizzically. “How do you know what’s going on already? Xander just told me to get you somewhere safe, and he’d explain when he got here.”

“Well, I had a premonition or vision or something while I was napping. I saw Xander’s meeting at Crescent Moon.” I filled him in on what happened and watched as his usual happy and sweet face grow angrier and angrier.

“Who the fuck does this guy think he is? Threatening my Luna and my pack?”

I thought I’d never see this. For my first time ever, I saw Matt seething with rage. I walked over and held his hands in mine. “Calm down, Matty. We’re going to get through this just like everything else. Okay?” I smiled up at him, and soon his face returned to its normal pretty state.

“I’m so sorry, bean. I never wanted you to see me like that.”

“No worries. I’m sure Xander will be even worst. So, how long are we locked in here exactly?”

“Until he gets home. So, a couple of hours, maybe?”

I hoped there were at least snacks. I would absolutely need snacks.

I heard footsteps running down the hall, then someone banging on the other side of the door.

Matt pushed me behind him and prepared to shift when we heard Alexi’s voice.

“Alaia, baby, are you alright? Open the door and let me in.”

I relaxed a bit and started walking toward the panic button.

“No, bean. Xander said not to let anyone in until he gets here. We can’t open the door.”

“You’ve got to be kidding, Matt. It’s just Alexi. I’m letting him in.”

“Alaia, I have orders. Please.”

Matt was seriously freaking out about this. I’d never seen him act this way before.

More knocking came through the door. “Guys, this isn’t cool. Open the door.” I could hear the frustration and worry in Alexi’s voice.

“Matt, Xander gave you orders, and I respect that. But Alexi is my mate, and I’m not leaving him out there worried about me. It’s not fair to him. So, please, open the door. I’m asking you as your friend, please don’t make me order you as your Luna.”

Matt let out a deep sigh before he finally walked over to the door.

“Press the button, bean. If it’s anyone other than Alexi, I’ll tear them to shreds.”

I sat behind the desk and unlocked the door.

As soon as it clicked, Alexi rushed in and ran straight into Matt, who was blocking his path. “What the fuck, Matt? Move.”

He just stood there for a few more seconds, looking Alexi up and down.

“Matt! It’s Alexi; I can smell him. I know it’s him. Let him pass, please.”

His shoulders fell before he finally stepped out of the way.

Alexi looked beyond pissed, but he ignored it momentarily to come to check on me. “All you alright, angel? Xander called me and told me what happened.” He looked me over from head to toe, then stood me up before taking my seat and pulling me into his lap. He pressed his face to my neck and inhaled my scent, calming himself down.

“I’m fine, Alexi. Nothing has happened. It was just a warning or a joke. I’m not really sure which yet.”

“It’s not a joke, baby. Anyone trying to take you away from us is not a joke. And what the hell is wrong with you, Matt? You were just going to leave me out there?”

“I had orders, Alexi. You may not like it, but that wasn’t my concern.”

I could see this going bad real quick. Matt was the Gamma, and technically Alexi held no rank. But he was my mate and had every right to be by my side. We were in some weird gray area. “Cool it, guys. I’m not going to have you two at each other’s throats. Not right now. Alexi, you know Matt can’t go against Xander, an order is an order. And Matt, you have to understand where Alexi is coming from. How would you feel if an ‘order’ kept you from your mate? We just have to be more specific moving forward.”

Both of them nodded their heads and relaxed a bit. Disaster averted; thank goodness.

I then tried to lighten the mood more with a change of subject. “So, how was your first day? Did you fire anybody?”

Alexi laughed, and I felt the last bit of tension leave the room. “No, I didn’t fire anyone. I barely saw the staff, actually. It was mostly administrative today. Getting me into the system, payroll, that sort of thing.”

“Do you like your office?”

“Yeah, it’s cool. Not as fancy as Xander’s, obviously. I don’t have any interrogation rooms connected to mine, but it’s nice. I need a picture of your beautiful face on my desk, and it will be perfect.”

“You two are gross,” Matt joked.

“We are, aren’t we? And I love it.”

“So, when can I come to see it? Come to think of it; I’ve never seen Xander’s office, either. I can come to visit both my guys.” I smiled at him, but it wasn’t returned.

“What’s wrong?”

“You can’t come to the office, angel. What if that asshole comes looking for you there? No, you should stay at home where you are protected.”

I couldn’t live like this. Locked in a glass cage under the guise of being protected. I wasn’t some fragile flower, and I wouldn’t have the men treating me like one. “Alexi, listen to me. I’m not staying locked up in this house forever. I won’t do it. I have a life, and I’m going to live it. Starting by going down to that office and making all the women green with envy when they see that not one but both of the sexiest men there belong to me.”

Alexi laughed and kissed my nose. “We’ll see what Xander says love, but I’m sure he’ll agree with me.”

Yeah, we’ll see. They wouldn’t gang up on me, not with this. But I let it go for now. I leaned my head against his chest as he began to rub circles on my back and belly. Soon enough, I had drifted off in his lap.

Xander POV

I rushed back home as quickly as I could. I was livid at Jackson for what he had done, and when this was all over, I’d deal with him accordingly.

Kade calling my name pulled me out of my head and back to the present. “What’s up?”

“Everything is quiet at home. Alexi made it back, and he’s in the office with Matt and Alaia. Although he almost had to fight his way in.”

Shit. That was on me, and I’d fix it as soon as possible.

“In any matter regarding Alaia, Alexi’s orders are just as valid as mine. Make sure the entire pack knows it. When it comes to our mate, he is Alpha as well.”

“I’ll spread the word. So, what’s our play here? This guy seems serious, but he did say that he only wants her after she’s had the babies. So, that gives us roughly six weeks to figure it all out, right?”

“I don’t even know. We need to find out everything we can about Edwards and hybrids. I can handle a cocky asshole wolf trying to take my mate, but this is on a different level. We’ve got to be smart at all times.”

“We’ll start researching when we get home. I know the library has a lot of books that should help. Did you want to let Aaron know what’s going on? He would absolutely want to help when the time comes. And he may be able to find something out, as well.”

“That’s a good idea. I’ll do that now.” I made a quick call to Aaron and filled him in. We had become more like sister packs than allies, and as Alaia’s brother, he had every right to know of any threat to her life. He offered to send a team of his top warriors to help with patrols and security, which I gladly accepted. The more eyes we had on the area, the better.

Once that was all done, I hung up and let Kade know to be prepared for the new arrivals.

I sat back and closed my eyes, running through different scenarios of how this could all play out. The only one I was satisfied with was Vincent lying dead at my feet. Anything short of that would be a failure in my eyes.

We finally made it back home, and before the car had come to a full stop, I jumped out and ran to my office.

Matt, open the door. I’m on my way up to you now.

Yes, Alpha.

I heard the lock click just as I was reaching for the knob. When I walked in, I found Alexi sitting sideways on the couch with Alaia curled up in his lap, asleep. “How is she?”

“Better than we are. She thinks we’re all overreacting,” Alexi answered while stroking Alaia’s head.

I walked over and touched her face; I just had to feel her warmth to know for sure she was alright. Once that was done, I went and slumped behind my desk. I didn’t realize how wound up I was until I got back here and saw her okay.

“Alexi, I want to personally apologize for earlier. I was so focused on keeping her safe; I didn’t even think of how you may feel. I’ve made it clear that any matter regarding Alaia moving forward, your word is just as powerful as mine.”

“I appreciate that, Xan. It’s tough feeling powerless when it comes to her. I’m happy you understand.”

Kade came in a short time later providing an update. “Aaron’s team should be here within the hour. I’m having all eight of the guest rooms on the second floor prepared since they’ll likely be here for a while. Our guys have been briefed, and I have a few people in the library looking for anything that may help us out. We’re covering all our bases.”

“Make sure Geoff and the kitchen staff know of the new arrivals. It’s going to be a lot more mouths to feed around here. Also, see if we can get a welcome dinner put together for them. I want them to know how much they are appreciated.”

“On it.”

Kade walked out, and I looked over to see Alexi smiling at me. “What?”

“Nothing, it’s just that you’re a pretty good Luna as well as Alpha. That was sweet.”

“Fuck you, Lex. I know how to be hospitable, and I had to run this house and pack for three years by myself, so I learned a thing or two.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“I’m ignoring you now. So, do you think you’ll be going into the office tomorrow?”

Alexi signed and looked down at Alaia. “I want to. I just got the job and don’t want to miss any days so soon. But I want to be here for her.”

“Listen, she’s covered—110 %. If anything even looks like it’s going to happen, we’ll let you know immediately. But she’ll hate herself if she thought she was keeping you from something so important to you.”

“Nothing is more important than she is.”

“We all know that. And you and I both know how our mate is. She’d want you to continue to go.”

Alexi chuckled lightly before he said, “She wants to go, too.”

“Go, where exactly?”

“To the office. Angel feels the need to stake her claim on the two of us.”

We both laughed. Alaia had every bit of our hearts, but she still felt like she had something to prove to the rest of the world. There would never be any other woman for us, but if she wanted to stake her claim, who was I to argue?

“How about all three of us go in tomorrow? It’ll be a lot of activity around here, making sure everything is safe and secure. Letting her get out for a little while before things get too crazy will be good for all of us.”

“That sounds perfect, guys.” Alaia sat up in Alexi’s lap and smiled at us. She’d probably been awake this whole time.

“You heard all that?” I asked.

“Just what I needed to hear. So, what time do we leave?”

SIXTY-FOUR | PROPERTY OF THE MRS.

Chapter 64 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

When I woke up that next morning, I was all alone in our huge bed. Both spots had gone cold, so I knew the guys had been gone for a while. I sat up and grabbed my phone on the nightstand and saw that it was 6:15 AM. They would likely be at training getting everything situated with the patrols.

I decided to take a shower before they came back so I could be ready when it was time to go into their office. I was excited to see where they worked and to get out of the house for a bit. It seemed like all I did these days was a nap, and it was getting annoying.

Twenty minutes later, I was freshly cleaned and in my closet, searching the mountains of clothes when they both came walking in together. If the look of them was any indication, they were indeed training. They were covered from head to toe in blood, sweat, and dirt. Why were they always so dirty afterward? Did they just roll around on the ground for the hell of it?

Anyway, they were sweaty and dirty. Alexi’s nose was bleeding, and his lip was split. But he obviously didn’t care, because he was laughing with Xander about the morning session as if they didn’t just finish trading blows with a bunch of wolves.

“Why is someone always bleeding? Can’t there ever be a training session where one of you doesn’t break your nose or crack a rib?”

“Where’s the fun in that, angel? We might as well just hop on the treadmill if that’s the goal.” Alexi laughed.

I rolled my eyes and walked over to him.

Xander passed me on the way to the bathroom and gave me a quick good morning kiss.

I grabbed his arms and looked him over for any significant injuries.

“I’m fine, little one. Nothing a hot shower won’t fix.”

“Wish I could say the same for your friend.” I moved over to Alexi and held his face, moving it left to right to see just how badly he was hurt. “Who did that? It seems deliberate,” I asked, looking at his nose and mouth.

He shrugged a shoulder. “Brandon, but he’s got a few bruises of his own.”

“And he can heal them. You can’t.” I made quick work of getting him back to normal before I stepped back and gave him my serious look. I’d been working on it a lot lately; I had two sons on the way and needed to be ready to lay down the law with them.

“What’s that look for, angel?”

“You’re not a wolf anymore, Alexi. Your body can’t heal like it used to. You can’t keep doing this and act like it’s no big deal. What will happen if I’m not around to fix you up?”

“Why wouldn’t you be around? Wherever you are is where I’ll be, always.”

“You know what I mean. Just take it easy. You’re not invincible.”

“That’s no fun, but fine. I’ll try to get fewer black eyes each day.”

“Good, now go shower. You stink.”

He went to the second adjoining bath to clean up, and soon both were clean, polished, and dressed for the office. Seeing them both dressed up reminded me of the night they proposed. I’ll never forget how perfect they both looked. And they were looking just as delicious now.

Maybe just a quick taste to start the—

“Little one? If you keep that up, we’ll never make it out of here. So, do you want to go in this morning or not?” Xander asked, raising an eyebrow.

Damn him.

“Fine! Let’s go down and grab breakfast. Do I have time for that, at least, sir?” I said “sir” with as much sarcasm as I could. He couldn’t just ruin my morning fantasy and get away with it.

He stepped over to me and tilted my head up. “Yes, you have time for that. And later on, I’ll have to do something about that smart little mouth of yours. Don’t test me, Ms. Miller.”

Jackpot!

He leaned down for a kiss before he left the room.

Alexi was standing there, smiling at me.

“What? What do you have to add now?”

“Just know that I know that you did that on purpose. I’ve known you your whole life, and I know your tricks. Not a very angelic thing to do, angel.”

I smirked. “I have no idea what you’re talking about. Now let’s go, I’m starving!”

Xander POV

A couple of minutes after leaving the bedroom, I go downstairs to see the dining hall packed with hungry wolves. Aaron had sent fifteen in total, so it was a little crazy while everyone got used to the new routine. I had my guys continue their rounds last night to allow the Opal Moon team time to rest before they stepped in to help. But now they were all here together. All of the Opal Moon team had known Alaia and Alexi since childhood, so it was easy to make them feel comfortable in our home.

Geoff and Mrs. Dyson had come through big time with breakfast. We had every kind of pastry, bacon, sausage, ham, eggs, French toast, pancakes; the list went on. It looked like a thanksgiving feast on the table before me.

After everyone was seated, I got all of their attention. “I hope you’ve all settled in and are comfortable in your rooms so far. And I want to thank you all for coming over to offer your help to us. I know your Alpha commanded it, but you being here is still appreciated.”

The leader of the team, Brandon, cleared his throat before addressing me. “Alpha Xander? Alpha Aaron didn’t have to command us to come. We all volunteered. Actually, over fifty of us did. We all grew up with Alaia and Alexi—they are our family. And you do all you can to help your family. So no thanks are needed.”

Both Alaia and Alexi smiled over at the team. Knowing that they were here in their own accord made taking them from their families just a bit easier.

I nodded in acknowledgment before we all dug in and soon had a comfortable flow of laughter and conversation echoing through the room. Watching Alaia and Alexi interact with their old pack was a lot of fun. They traded embarrassing stories back and forth that had all of us in tears

by the end of the meal. Unfortunately, we had to get going, so Kade, Matt, Henry, and Brandon took over and began the task of getting everyone where they needed to be.

The three of us quickly made it through morning traffic and arrived earlier than planned. Walking into the lobby, I gave Alaia a quick overview of the setup.

She was walking between Alexi and me, holding both our hands and the looks from some of the receptionists were less than friendly. I wouldn't have anyone looking down at my queen, especially not someone whose paychecks I signed.

Alexi seemed to have a similar thought to me. "Xander, I think maybe you have some messages to check at reception," he advised.

I smiled at him as the three of us walked over to Rose, who was currently shooting daggers at Alaia.

"Good Morning, Mr. Black, Mr. Kostov. How are you gentlemen doing today?" Rose asked without even acknowledging Alaia's presence.

"Rose, is this how you treat all guests who come into our offices? Giving them dirty looks, then ignoring them completely? Is this what I pay you for?"

Her face went pale as she looked between the three of us. "No, sir. I just wasn't aware that you had a guest with you today, that's all. Is this your sister?"

I felt Alaia's hand stiffen at being called my sister. We looked nothing alike, and Rose knew it.

"Why don't you ask her directly? She does speak."

She turned a slight shade of pink with embarrassment before she finally looked at Alaia. "Good morning, miss. May I have your name for the guest logs?"

The look on Alaia's face was priceless. She loved every minute of this. "It's Alaia Miller. Soon to be Alaia Kostov-Black. I'm his fiancé," she said, pointing to Alexi. "And his," she added when her finger turned my way.

Rose's jaw dropped as she tried to process what she had just heard. "I-I . . . I apologize, Ms."

"Kostov-Black. You may want to write it down in case you forget again," Alaia offered.

"Yes, ma'am. I'll do that. Is there anything else I can assist with this morning?"

"You haven't really assisted with much, so I think we can take it from here. Thanks." She offered her sweetest smile before we walked away toward my private elevator.

“Are you happy now, little one? Was that savage enough for you? If not, there are plenty of women on our way up that you can taunt.”

She laughed then kissed our cheeks. “That was more than enough. I think I marked my territory pretty damn well back there.”

“I’d have to agree, angel. I loved watching you. It was very sexy.”

I could see the look in both of their eyes; this was about to get real dirty, real quick.

“Do not do that in my elevator. Save it for one of our offices, that’s why they have blinds. And soundproofing.”

They both laughed.

“One day, angel and I will desecrate this elevator, Xander. Just you wait.”

It seemed that word spread through the building pretty quickly about the bosses and their shared fiancé because when we stepped off onto Alexi’s floor, a few people were trying to hide their whispers behind fake coughs and well-placed hands. Too bad, we were werewolves and could still hear everything that was said.

Nevertheless, we quickly made our way across the floor to Alexi’s office. This was my first time seeing it as well. It was larger than my office at home, with a beautiful view of the city.

“Well, this is it. It works for now, but I’m trying to get it moved up a few floors so I won’t get too comfortable,” Alexi told us with his signature cocky smirk.

The blinds were currently open, and I felt like a fish in a fishbowl. Instead of working, the team was standing and blatantly staring in our direction, desperate to see anything.

“Mr. Manager, it appears that your team isn’t in a working mood. What do you suggest we do?”

Alexi smiled at me before he strode out of the office and closed the door behind him. He then casually leaned on a wall and began addressing his team.

We couldn’t hear anything that was being said thanks to the soundproofing, but the looks on the people’s faces told a story all their own. When he was finished, they all quickly sat back in their chairs and began to work diligently.

“Nicely done, babe. I have no idea what you said, but clearly, it did the job,” Alia stated.

“Just a bit of morale-boosting, that’s all.”

When we eventually moved to my floor, all the fun stopped as it was mostly empty. My office was on the executive level, so we just took a little time for Alaia to rest and have some lunch. I didn't have anything that needed my attention today, so I was able to spend uninterrupted time with the two of them. In such a short time, Alexi had become like a little brother to me, and it was good to spend some stress-free time with him and Alaia. Especially since we all knew that would be coming to an end very soon.

It seemed like I had spoken too soon because, within the next couple of seconds, I got a message from Kade. Three rogues had been caught trespassing dangerously close to the packhouse and were currently locked up in the cells.

"Guys, we've got to get home now. Rogues were caught on our land, and I've got some work to do." CEO Xander was gone for the moment, and it was time for the Alpha to get some answers.

SIXTY-FIVE | OFFICE ACTIVITIES

Chapter 65 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

Arriving back at the house was interesting, to say the least. The usually quiet house buzzed with activity and warriors from both packs that could be seen everywhere I looked. It all seemed like overkill, in my opinion, but I knew it made the guys feel safer, so I let it go.

Matt came and snatched Xander as soon as he was through the front door, so I opted to head up to the room for a nice soak in the tub.

I could tell that Alexi was torn. He wanted to go and see what was happening with the rogues downstairs, but he also wanted to come with me upstairs. "Babe, how about you help me up to the room then get changed and go see what's happening? You won't be able to relax until you see for yourself, and I just plan to sit in the tub until I'm a shriveled prune, anyway."

"Are you sure you don't need me?"

"I always need you, Alexi. But I want you to go and satisfy your curiosity. You deserve to know why there are rogues in our home just as much as anyone else."

He smiled like a child who had just been passed their favorite toy. "You're amazing, angel. Come on, let's get you upstairs and settled in." When we got to the room, Alexi had me sit down while he ran my water for me. He went and changed his clothes, then came back to get me and

help me into the tub. Once I was settled in the warm fragrant bubbles, he gave me a quick kiss before turning to leave. “Do me a favor and link one of us when you’re ready to get out. I don’t want you to slip when you’re stepping out.”

Before I could answer, he was out the door, and I was in bubbled bliss. When I allowed myself to shut my eyes, I began to feel a tingling at the back of my head. There was a quick flash of light before my vision cleared and I saw a tall, pale man with long blond hair dressed all in black with an almost-regal quality to the way he moved. He had jet black eyes and long, claw-like fingernails. He could be considered handsome if the aura of evil flowing off of him wasn’t so strong.

I watched as he walked into a dark dungeon and stood over a frail and sickly looking woman huddled on the dirty floor.

When he spoke, it sent chills down my spine. “Rachel, why must you make this harder on yourself? If you want to return to that deplorable mate and sad life of yours, you will do as I command.”

Rachel lifted her head defiantly and looked him in his eye. “Never! I will never betray my mate or my kind. You disgust me, and I will not produce you an heir!”

The man in black’s face twitched slightly, showing his displeasure with what he was hearing. “Well, that’s unfortunate. No matter, though. You will give me a son. Whether it’s by choice or by force is of no consequence to me.” In a blink, he raced across the room and buried his teeth into Rachel’s neck.

Blood poured from the point of contact, and soon she was limp and unconscious in his arms.

I sat up in the bath and took a moment to return my breathing to normal. Another vision in less than twenty-four hours and I didn’t understand why or how they were coming to me. I wanted to tell Xander and Alexi, but I didn’t want to bother them. Besides, I didn’t even know who this vision was of, or if it even mattered. No. I would hold this to myself for the time being. They had enough to worry about with the rogues. I would figure this out on my own. Hopefully, my decision wouldn’t bite me in the ass.

Xander POV

Down in the cells, the rogues who the patrols had captured were almost rabid. They had to be restrained in our most substantial chains for us to gain control over them.

I stood outside each of the three cells, studying them. I had never seen anything like this before and didn’t know what to make of it.

“They’ve been like this since they were found. If we hadn’t restrained them, they would have killed themselves trying to escape,” Kade said while coming to stand beside me.

“Was anyone hurt? If they are this violent chained up alone, I can only imagine how they reacted when they were found.”

“Nothing major. We got a few guys with some deep bite wounds and claw marks, but that’s it. They’re at the hospital just to get cleaned up and should be out within the hour.”

Alexi joined us a minute or so after and silently listened to the update.

I was hearing everything Kade was saying, but my focus had been drawn back to the wolf before me. All three rogues were in their human forms, which made seeing the puncture wounds on their necks that much easier.

“Look at that,” I said, pointing in the cell.

Kade looked on, confused, trying to see what I was seeing.

“Their necks. All three have bite marks. Those aren’t marks made by a mate. They are too narrow,” Alexi answered, stepping a little closer to the cell.

“Exactly. A vampire made those marks,” I replied.

“But why would a vampire do something like this? They aren’t fans of werewolves at all, so why bite one and not kill it?” Kade asked.

“Probably to have them do whatever all this is. It’s clear these rogues aren’t in their right mind, so maybe they are being controlled. Maybe all the rogues we’ve seen lately are under someone else’s control.”

Damn, Alexi would have made an incredible Beta. He thought about things in ways no one I had ever known did. Human or not, he’d have some position and rank in this pack. I’d make sure of that.

“Look who’s two for two. We need to find out who, why, and where. I’m guessing this is the work of Vincent, but we need to be sure. If it is, maybe these three can lead us back to him.” It felt like this was our first real break in the whole Vincent issue. We just needed to be smart.

“Kade, make sure these three are completely secure. We need them alive until this is all over. We’ll sedate them if we have to, just keep them alive. Lex, come up to my office. I want to talk to you about something.”

Alexi got to the office and stretched himself across my couch. Looking at how comfortable he was made me realize I was still dressed for work while he no longer was. “When did you get to change?” I asked, completely distracted from the task at hand.

“Before I came down. I took Alaia up for a bath. I didn’t think I needed to be in business mode while meeting our new guests.”

“Right. The new guests. So, I was impressed by your take of the situation down there. None of us can really know what a rogue’s intentions truly are, but you have a way of reading a room that none of the rest of us have.”

“I have a history of being a screw-up. I guess I just know how the other side operates a little more than most,” he responded.

“You’re an asset, Alexi. And I want to make you the Head Strategic Adviser for the pack.”

Alexi slowly sat up, then turned toward me. “You want to do what?”

“You heard me, Lex. We will need all the help we can get to figure Vincent out, and I want you at the table when we do.”

“Can’t I just pop in like I did downstairs? You have plenty of help already; you don’t need me.”

“The pack needs you. I’d never think of replacing Kade or Matt. They are invaluable to me, but we need you as well. The fact that you’re no longer a wolf wouldn’t matter. You can see the battle from the outside, route the warriors, and give us the advantage.”

He looked like he was considering it, but something was holding him back.

“How do you feel about your current rank in the pack? You were raised to be #2.”

A flash of hurt crossed his face before he shrugged a careless shoulder. “I’m fine. I’ve got Alaia.”

“Don’t bullshit me, Alexi. You’re not fine. Yes, you’re happy to have Alaia, but she was happy just to have me. She also wanted you. And you also want power.” That seemed to gain his interest a little more. “Why do you think you’re already aiming for one of the highest positions at the company? You’re made to be at the top, Alexi. This position will put you there.”

“And exactly where is there?”

“Right below me.”

“That’s the position of a Beta. I don’t understand.”

“Kade would still be Beta like I said, that’s not going to change. He’d answer only to me. The same would go for you; you’d answer only to me. If the two do you clash over a decision, I would be the deciding vote.”

“I don’t want to do this just for rank, Xander. Give me some time to think it over. You know this will ruffle more than a few feathers, and I’m not a fan of stepping on someone else’s toes just to get what I want.”

“And that’s exactly why you’re perfect for the position. Take all the time you need, but I won’t accept anything less than a yes here.”

When things were wrapping up with Alexi and me, we heard a small knock on the door before Alaia poked her head in. Even though I knew she had just had a bath, she looked stressed over something. With all that was happening, I could understand, so I chose not to press her on the matter. Alaia knew she could tell me anything, and she would share her concerns with me when she was ready.

“Are you two busy? I wanted to work on the nursery and figured I could easily recruit one of you for help,” she said in her sweet voice.

“No, we’re all done here. Did you enjoy your bath?” I asked.

She smiled over at me and nodded her head. “It was nice. Just what I needed.” She walked over, sat in Alexi’s lap, and snuggled into his chest before she looked up and asked him, “So, what were you guys discussing? I always get worried when it’s just you two without Kade and Matt. You’re usually up to no good.”

He laughed and kissed her neck. “Xander just had an idea he wanted me to think about, that’s all.”

“And?”

He kissed her neck again before lightly running his nose up and down the side, making her shiver. “And I’m thinking about it.” His fingers ran up her arm, then her neck, before he wrapped them in her hair and pulled her forward for a kiss.

I watched his mouth move from hers to reveal her perfectly swollen lips. I loved to taste her lips when they were like this. But this time, I’d just watch.

Alexi POV

I didn't know what came over me, but when Alaia came into the office and sat in my lap, I had to have her. When we were in my office, I had wanted to bend her over my desk and take her as hard as she liked, but I didn't want to make waves in my first week. But, now I was home and could do what I wanted. And there was a desk right here that I could easily take advantage of.

My hands found the thin straps of her shirt and gently slid them over her shoulders. Her skin was like silk and smelled so sweet. I needed to taste her.

“Would you stand up for me, angel? Put your hands on the desk, okay.”

She looked at me, surprised, and unsure if I was serious or not.

“Angel?”

“Y-Yes?”

“Hands. Desk. Now.”

She nodded and stood to her feet with my help. Once she had her hands in place, I walked behind her and ran my hands up and down her arms, sides, and hips. She looked over her shoulder at me, but before she could speak, I stopped her.

“Eyes on Xander. Don't take them off of him, okay?”

“Okay.”

As soon as she was facing the front again, I hooked my fingers in her waistband and slowly pulled down. The sight of her warm caramel skin being revealed to me drove me mad. Everything about this woman turned me on, almost painfully so. “Lift your feet, baby. Pants off. I want to see all of you.”

She did as she was told, and soon she was standing before me, bent over the desk, and naked from the waist down.

I fell to my knees behind her and let my hands roam her curves. Her hips, her thighs, and her plump round ass. Every part of her was worthy of worship. The smell of her juices pulled me in, and before I registered what was happening, I had leaned forward and run my tongue the length of her, bottom to top.

I heard her gasp at the contact before her whole body shuddered.

I gently placed a hand at the small of her back and lightly pushed down, creating a sweet dip in her back and exposing her sexy little button to me. Softly, I flicked the tip of my tongue over her clit. Once. Twice. Three times.

I knew her and her body: she wanted pressure, friction, constant contact.

But not yet. I just wanted the flavor of her. And I wanted to tease her a bit. Again, I ran my tongue up her slit, but when I felt how wet and hot she was, I slid my tongue as far as I could inside her hole. The need to drink her nectar was almost primal. At that moment, I was sure I couldn't live without it. I took a firm grip on both her hips and began to pull her back on my face, plunging as deep as possible. My tongue took on a life of its own and began to twist and roll. It seemed I was determined to lick every piece of her, inside and out.

She was so tight, her muscles continuously clamped down on me, but because she was soaking wet, it was easy to continue my mission.

Then I pulled my face back and just admired the sight before me. The gateway to heaven was between this woman's thighs; of that, I had no doubt. I took my thumb and entered her weeping hole, which welcomed me with a loud slurp. I circled and twirled it around before removing it and pressing it lightly against her rear entrance.

Her body tensed up at the feeling—she clearly wasn't expecting it.

One day I would take her here, but not before she was ready. And not before she wanted it just as I did. "Just relax, angel. Trust me."

She took several deep breaths, and I could feel her body relax under my touch.

I kept my thumb in place and leaned forward to nip down on her clit gently. When I did, her tight little hole loosened just enough for me to slide inside, just past my fingernail.

Her back arched, and again she gasped and moaned in pleasure.

I started making small circles inside her, and at the same time, wrapped my lips around her bud and started to suck and slurp at it.

Her moans were loud and incoherent. Her breaths were coming out short and choppy as she tried to keep her hands in place and her knees from buckling beneath her. She shifted her weight and centered her left arm on the desk to hold her up. With her right hand, she reached around and grabbed the back of my head, pulling my face deeper into her folds. When she began to roll her hips and grind on my soaked face, I knew she was close.

I pressed down with my thumb that was still in her ass and sharply sucked her clit into my mouth while flicking my tongue across its tip.

She screamed as the orgasm took control, leaving her senseless. She had to go down onto her elbow as her violently shaking arm could no longer support her top half. She continued to spasm as I pulled my thumb out and finally stopped the assault on her clit.

When I stood up, I saw Xander with his hand on either side of her face, kissing her and looking deep in her eyes. While she was distracted, I dropped my pants and positioned myself at her

entrance. I wanted to feel her cum around my dick while Xander watched her beautiful face contort in ecstasy.

I closed my eyes as I slowly slid between her slick lips. I couldn't help the groan that escaped my lips as I bottomed out. It didn't matter how many times we did this dance; I was always blown away by the feeling of her.

I leaned back and looked down. Her tiny pussy looked bloated when I gazed down to see my cock buried in it. The simple sight was enough to turn me on even more. Pulling my hips back slowly with a loud slurping noise, I took hold of her round hips before I shoved myself all the way inside and began fucking her slowly but deeply. I gave long thrusts and made sure that I pushed as deep as possible and only stopped pulling out when the head of my dick was barely inside of her.

The slow pace allowed me to feel every ripple and fold of her velvet box.

Her guttural moans when I sunk all the way in and tapped the entrance to her womb added [ER1] fuel to the fire burning for her.

I lived for these sounds; they were sweet music, and I wanted more. I pulled out, reached down, and lifted her left leg, placing it on the desk.

With the change in position, Alaia again turned to look behind her before Xander drew her attention back. "Look at me, little one. Focus on my face. Let me see you."

She sharply nodded her head at him.

"Let me hear you, too, baby."

"Okay," she finally whispered.

In one swift motion, I entered her again.

The change in angles allowed me to hit spots that were previously neglected. I increased my speed slightly, but continued to give her full deep strokes.

Her honey ran down her leg as she gushed more and more from her center. I felt the signature clenching of her walls and trembling of her core that told me she was getting close again.

My hips were now rotating as well as thrusting. In and out, up and down, round and round, my dick was touching every part of her sweet flower.

Faster. Harder. Deeper.

She reached over and dug her nails into Xander's arms as her back dipped, and her second orgasm tore through her. She wasn't done yet, and neither was I. So, as she rode her climax, I continued my assault.

I readjusted my footing and my grip.

Faster. Harder. Deeper.

Alaia was coming back to back within just a few short minutes.

Holding on to her tightly, I slammed myself into her, and by now, she was almost screaming as my hips slapped against her sexy round ass, hard and long cock plunging so deep inside her that it felt like it was in her belly.

My angel rode orgasm after orgasm, her knees weak and about to give while I deliciously fucked her from behind. Her sounds were beyond incoherent; they were animalistic—a direct effect of us satisfying our most basic needs.

I reached underneath her body and brought my hand up and around her neck, pulling her up and flush against my chest. “You are exquisite,” I whispered as I ran my tongue along her neck and up to her ear.

She breathlessly called my name. It was a plea, but for what I wasn't sure.

“Are you ready, angel? You're going to cum with me.”

She nodded. “Yes, I'm ready.”

I squeezed down a bit tighter on her throat and began to collide my hips into hers wildly.

The force would have been enough to move the desk if Xander hadn't been sitting on the other side.

Just before I felt myself explode, I reached up with my free hand, grabbed her hair, and pulled back, exposing her neck. I plunged my teeth into her flesh, where her neck and shoulder met, finally marking her as mine.

She let out an ear-piercing scream, then began to greedily milk my dick of every drop of its life-giving seed.

My entire body felt like it was on fire as the orgasm overwhelmed each and every one of my cells. Never had I experienced an orgasm of this magnitude. Every muscle flexed and forced a constant stream to paint my angel's inner walls. When I finally exhausted all that I had to give, I removed my teeth from her skin and slipped out of her. My legs were gone. I crumpled to the floor and laid out on my back. “Holy fuck.” It was all I could get out while I fought to regain my breath.

Alaia was still half propped across Xander's desk, unable, or maybe just unwilling, to move.

From my spot on the floor, I heard Xander speak to her. "Are you alright, little one?"

"Mmm-hmm. Better than alright, actually."

He then stood up. "When I told you to save it for one of our offices, I didn't really mean this one, Lex."

"Next time, be more specific." I laughed back at him. But not to worry, if I had anything to do with it, every office we possessed would be broken in just as this one was.

SIXTY-SIX | TAKING THE ADVANTAGE

Chapter 66 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alexi POV

We had been going for weeks trying to find out all we could about Vincent and his family's claim to Alaia, but we continuously came up empty. It was like he was a ghost or a phantom. The only people who had ever heard of him only heard rumors or far-fetched stories that never panned out. We were three weeks from Alaia's due date and were becoming more and more worried. There were no more rogue sightings on our territory, but they were still out there. When the time came for Vincent to make his move, he would do it through the rogues, of this much we were sure.

It was around 3:00 AM, and we were five hours into a strategy meeting. Everyone was exhausted, and the ideas we were coming up with were increasingly worse than the ones before it.

Kade was standing and looking at the territory map, trying to explain some trap door idea he had. It sounded insane.

Out of nowhere, it hit me. Alaia! I shot up from my chair, which caused the room to turn in my direction. "Sorry, Kade I didn't meet to interrupt whatever that was you had going up there."

"You did me a favor, don't even worry about it," he said before he gladly took his seat.

"We have been going about all of this totally wrong. That fucker wants Alaia because of her powers, and we've been sheltering her instead of utilizing her."

“Alexi, I don’t think I like where you are going with this,” Xander warned.

“Wait, just listen. You kept the rogues alive so that they could lead us back to Vincent, but they are still bat-shit crazy down in the cells. They haven’t given us anything,” I continued.

“What’s your point, Lex?”

“Sedate one, heavily. Then have Alaia come in and try to read his memories. We all know that her powers of communication are incredible. I believe she may be the key to us cracking this.”

Xander stood from his seat, clearly frustrated.

“So, you expect me to send my heavily pregnant fiancé down to the cells to ‘communicate’ with a rabid rogue,” he asked.

“No. I expect us to ask our heavily pregnant fiancé if she is willing to help by doing this. We’ve gotten nowhere Xander, and time is running out. She’s our best option, and you know I wouldn’t suggest it if there was any other way.”

Looking at the other faces in the room, I could tell they agreed with me, but no one was willing to tell their Alpha to send his mate into the lion’s den.

No one but me.

“I don’t like this idea. Come up with something else,” Xander said before dismissing me and turning back to Kade.

“Kade, you’re back up. Show us whatever that was you were doing up here again.”

“Xander,” I called to him.

“What, Alexi?”

“You’re going to risk us doing whatever that was Kade was mumbling about, no offense, man,” I said, turning to him, “over just asking her what she thinks? You’ve got to trust her and the rest of us more than that.”

Xander was getting angry now, but I didn’t care. She was my mate as well, and I wasn’t going to let anything happen to her just because we were too scared to try all we could.

“She’s my mate, too. I love her just as much as you do. I’d never put her in harm’s way if I could help it. But we can help this.”

“We’re not doing it, end of discussion.”

I sat down and just stared at him. Xander was being ridiculous, and he knew it.

“Why would you offer me the position of Head Strategic Adviser if you won’t take my advice, the only good advice we’ve had in days?”

“Alexi, you're getting dangerously close to crossing a line. Tread carefully here.”

“I want to try Xander.” We turned to see Alaia standing at the door. She was obviously tired and uncomfortable, but there was strength there. She looked over the room before she softly asked, “Would you gentlemen please excuse us for a moment? I promise I won’t hold up your meeting for too long. Actually, no. All of you go to bed. It’s too late for anyone to be up trying to strategize, your brains need to rest and recharge. Go to sleep; now.”

Kade, Matt, Henry, and Brandon all happily stood and shuffled out of the room. “Good night, Luna,” they said as they passed by.

Once they were gone, she closed the door and walked over and curled up on the couch.

“Angel, why are you awake? You should be in bed, not roaming the halls this late at night.”

“I’m awake because I had to pee. When I woke up, I saw that neither of my fiancés was in bed with me. So, I came to find you. Imagine my surprise when I see that you’re still in this meeting, and one of you is refusing to let me try and help my family.” She then looked over at Xander. “You guys can’t keep doing this night after night. It’s only going to wear you down and weaken us. Xander, Alexi is right, and you know it.”

Xander opened his mouth to protest, but she stopped him before he could.

“Clearly, I need to step in to help save my own ass. I know you guys have done all you could, but Vincent covered his tracks, and well. You can only do so much, and I know that I can find him.”

“Alaia, you’re in no state to do this. The pups are taking so much out of you these days. Even walking around is getting tougher for you. Now you want to interrogate rogues?” Xander said, trying to reason with her.

“I’m not too pregnant to sit and touch, not interrogate a rogue, Xander. Later on this morning, you two will sedate him, chain him down, and stay in the room just in case. You’ll keep me safe, and I’ll take it from there. End of discussion. I’m doing it.” She then pushed herself up and started toward the door. “Oh, and I expect both of you in bed in the next ten minutes. It’s already hard enough getting and staying comfortable; I don’t want to be alone as well.”

When she was gone, I looked over to see a defeated-looking Xander staring behind her.

“Maybe next time you’ll just listen to me, then you won’t have to be scolded by the principal.”

“Fuck off, Alexi. I don’t have time for your shit.” He grumbled a few more niceties to me before he slammed his laptop shut and walked out the room with me close behind. “Oh, and you haven’t

even accepted the position of head adviser. Until you do, don't pull something like that again," he warned.

I didn't see the need to antagonize him any further, I had already gotten what I set out for. "I apologize if I crossed the line. And I'll have an answer for you soon."

We finally made it to bed and were both asleep within minutes.

Alaia POV

I continued having these visions, but I didn't know how to stop them. Each one felt more real than the last, almost as if I was physically there witnessing everything first hand. But I also felt closer to figuring it all out. I knew I could crack this if I tried—just a little bit longer.

I was downstairs with the guys playing with the food on my plate. My appetite had slowed down considerably, and I think I was because I had nowhere to put the food. These little boys had taken up every bit of space they could, and my poor stomach and bladder felt like they had been squeezed down to a fraction of their former size in accommodation.

Finally, I push my plate away and look over to Xander. "I'm ready when you are."

"I'll never be ready for this, Alaia."

Ugh! He'd really put me in a bubble if he could. "Xander, listen to me. I trust you and Alexi to keep me safe. So, come on, let's get this over with so we can finally find Vincent."

He took my hand and kissed my knuckles before helping me to my feet.

We got down to the cells, and I saw that Kade and Alexi were already there. They had the rogue strapped down to a large table with his arms, legs, and neck tightly chained down. They also placed a cloth sack over his head. I guess to shield me, but from what I wasn't sure.

Alexi placed a chair right up by the rogue's head and helped me sit. In the corner of the room, Kade shifted into his wolf and waited. Xander stood right next to me, but never took his eyes off the figure lying before him. If this guy had even involuntarily twitched, it would have probably been game over for him.

"Okay, you three, just relax," I told them. I took a deep breath and placed my hands on either side of the rogue's head. I felt a sharp jolt run up my fingers, but it wasn't painful. It felt like I was establishing the connection, so I continued. At first, everything was a blur, but eventually, it all became clear. I quickly flipped through the last few weeks since he had been found. When I finally got to memories showing him running free, I slowed down.

He lived alone in the woods, far from most packs, and never caused any trouble. And he definitely wasn't rabid. Scenes flashed by. Him hunting, hiding from patrols, a flash of a figure in black.

Wait. That's it. The rogue was at a small creek cleaning his recent kill when a hooded figure approached him from behind. I could only see a portion of his face, but I was sure it was Vincent. Before the rogue could react, Vincent was on his back and had sunk his teeth into his neck. When he was unconscious, I watched as Vincent dropped a vial next to the rogue that exploded into a cloud of red smoke. The rogue was then up on his feet and following wordlessly behind Vincent. No words were spoken, but I made sure to remember the creek. Maybe this would help.

When I broke the connection, I looked to Alexi and Xander and told them what I had seen.

"I want to see the other two. I think if I can find out where Vincent found them all, we can narrow down where he is hiding out."

This time Xander didn't argue. He ordered the other rogues sedated and restrained before I went to their cells and repeated the same thing all over again.

Rogue two was attacked outside of an abandoned sawmill. Rogue three was passing through an overgrown cornfield with a long stone wall lining the west end. Just like the first, no words were spoken, and after the vial of red smoke was dropped, the rogue stood to his feet and followed Vincent.

When I was done, we went to Xander's office and pulled up a map, trying to find the places I had seen. Lucky for us, they were not too hard to locate and formed a triangle pattern when laid out geographically. We now had a search area for Vincent.

It was then that I realized how exhausted I was after reading three scattered and rabid minds. I curled up on the couch and was closing my eyes when Matt rushed into the office.

"They have healed, guys. Whatever Vincent did to them, Alaia undid. We can question them now."

I was amazed, to say the least. I didn't think my powers had grown that much, but I was also relieved. I snuggled down and shut my eyes. I had done my part; now, the guys would take over.

Xander POV

I had to admit that I was surprised at how well Alaia did. The rogues never once moved while she was in the room with them; it was a smooth and seamless operation. One that we could have done weeks ago had I not been so stubborn. I had thought of utilizing her powers, but my fear of her or the pups getting hurt overshadowed all rational thoughts.

Hopefully, we weren't too late to make good use of this break.

I stood outside the cells and watched as the rogues sat calmly and spoke to Kade, Henry, and Matt. There was no foaming at the mouth, no snapping of jaws. They were just as calm as the rest of us.

Alexi came to stand beside me and looked on at the interrogations in silence. He hadn't hit me with an I told you so, but if he did, I wouldn't fault him for it. "Lex, I want to apologize for how I reacted earlier when you brought up this idea. I know you love her as much as I do. I've just got to learn to see how strong she really is like you clearly already do."

"Don't worry about it, man. You see it now. That's what matters."

Just then, Kade walked out of the cell and stood before us. "He told us everything, Xander. Once Vincent put them under the spell, they were like zombies, but they still saw and heard everything that was going on. This is it. It's the break we were waiting for."

SIXTY-SEVEN | SEBASTIAN

Chapter 67 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alexi POV

I couldn't say for sure why, but I'd left Xander without an answer on the adviser position for over three weeks now. I'd thought it over and gone back and forth on my decision, but I felt like it was time to let him know finally.

I found him in the nursery hanging curtains while Alaia supervised. These were the fourth set of curtains to be put up in the room because the other three didn't work for her once they were in place, so they were promptly replaced. When he finished, he stepped back and looked over at Alaia, who was gliding in the rocker with her eyes closed.

"Babe, what do you think?" he asked.

She opened her eyes and looked over the entire space.

When she scrunched her nose and tilted her head to the side, we both held our breath. This wasn't a good sign. But then she smiled her brightest smile and began to bounce on her toes. "These are perfect! I knew we'd get it eventually."

Xander let out his breath and bent down to clean up the packaging left behind.

The nursery was finally done, with just under three weeks to go.

Alaia had painstakingly picked out each and every detail.

The room had a sky/heaven theme because, according to the mommy to be, the boys were her angels. Clouds, angel wings, little golden halos, decorated the powered blue, gold, and white space. It was something for her to be proud of; she said she wanted to put it together on her own, and she had.

“Xander,” I said, pulling his attention to me. “I’ve decided to take the adviser position. What do we need to do to make it official?”

He looked over at me, then at Alaia. “Little one? Would you make it official for us, please?”

She nodded and shut her eyes.

Blue Moon pack, I’m honored to announce that Alexi Kostov had accepted the position of Head Strategic Adviser. Please join Xander and me in congratulating him on this new endeavor. I’m sure he will do great things for us all.

She then opened her eyes and smiled. “Done.”

“Well, that was anticlimactic,” I mumbled.

Of course, Xander heard me and had to reply. “You shouldn’t have taken so long. You knew you wanted the job when I offered it.”

“Maybe! But it was a big decision and required some thought.” I looked over to see Alaia and find out whose side she was on and noticed her eyes clouded over with purple outlining the iris.

“Angel, are you alright?” I asked while moving to kneel in front of her.

Xander was soon right next to me and had taken one of her hands in his.

Alaia was in her own world. She didn’t acknowledge our presence at all.

“Should we take her down to the hospital, or call the doctor up?” I asked.

“The doctor is already on the way; I just linked her. She’s probably having another vision, but it’s better safe than sorry.”

Right when the doctor came into the room, Alaia screamed out as a large gash opened on her arm and began pouring blood.

Alaia POV

While sitting and listening to the guy's bicker back and forth, I felt that tingle in the back of my mind and knew another vision was coming. I had grown used to them at this point and knew how to transition in and out easily. Once again, I found myself in the dungeon with Rachel and the man in black. She was huddled in the corner with her knees pulled up to her chest. The room was moist and dank, and it smelled like mold, mildew, and human waste. The sounds of her cries bounced off the walls as she begged for her life.

“Please, Sebastian, just let me see him. I did what you wanted and gave you an heir. Just let me see my son!”

So, he finally had a name. Sebastian.

“He isn’t your son, you filthy mutt. He is mine, and only for purposes that are none of your business. Yes, you have done your part, and now I have no use for you.”

“No, no, no, no, no! You said you would let me go back to my mate. You said you’d set me free!”

Sebastian was edging closer to Rachel, who tried to make herself as small as possible on the floor.

I felt my feet pulling me to follow him. I just had to see what would happen. I knew this mattered to my situation in some way.

Sebastian leaned over Rachel’s body and whispered in her ear, “The boy will be named Vincent, and he will one day hold unimaginable power. But first, this bitch has to die!” He swung around and slashed his hand across my arm.

White-hot pain shot through me and jerked me from the vision.

When I opened my eyes, I saw Dr. Bennett standing over me with Alexi and Xander directly behind her.

“What the fuck just happened? How can she be attacked like that? We were right there, no one else was in the room,” Xander roared at her.

“Alpha, you need to calm down if you expect me to treat our Luna. All of this is not good for her or your pups, so just cool it!”

I think we were all surprised at the way she handled Xander. This lady was tough. I liked her. Until she touched my arm with an alcohol swab, and it felt like she had set me on fire. Again, I screamed out before looking down at the gash she was trying to treat. It had just happened, but it

looked infected already. It was oozing green puss and smelled horrible. I had to fight to keep from gagging at both the sight and the smell.

“I’ve got to get her down to a sterile room. This wound is not normal, and at the rate the infection is spreading, she can be in septic shock within the hour.”

Before she could say another word, Xander had picked me up and began racing down to the pack hospital.

There was a slow burn simmering underneath my skin. I could feel it working its way past my elbow and up to my shoulder. This was really bad.

We made it to the room, and Xander placed me on the bed.

Again, Dr. Bennett tried to clean the gash, but the pain was excruciating. It felt like my heart was going to beat out of my chest every time she touched it.

“P-Please. Don’t touch it. It’s so much worse when you do,” I gasped out.

“Luna, if I don’t clean this wound, the infection will kill you. And your pups. I need you to bear down. I’ll try to give you something for the pain.” The thin syringe barely pricked my skin but felt as if she was peeling my flesh away with a dull and rusty spoon.

Everything she did to help only hurt more. This wound wasn’t meant to heal. It was meant to kill me slowly and painfully. I had done this to myself.

Dr. Bennett realized we were fighting a losing battle. She quickly hooked me up to the many different monitors in the room before pulling an oxygen mask over my face. She turned to Xander and Alexi. “I need you two to stay calm; I have to do this. Just know that.”

She turned and looked me in my eye. “Forgive me, Luna . . .” Quick as a flash, she jammed her syringe in the middle of the wound and injected the medicine.

The torture that followed was so great that my eyes rolled back, and I was overcome by blackness.

Xander POV

How did this happen? One minute she was laughing and joking, enjoying the finished nursery, and now she’s passed out in the pack hospital.

When Dr. Bennett injected the painkiller, I heard the monitors go crazy as Alaia’s heart rate soared. Then she went still.

“I can get this cleaned now. I’m going to give the Luna something to keep her asleep for a little while that won’t hurt the babies. But the way she was reacting to my touch before, her heart would have failed if we kept it up,” the doctor told Alexi and me.

He stood in the corner with a look of pure rage mixed with terror on his face.

I probably looked exactly the same.

“Would you two like to wait—”

“No!” we both yelled in unison, cutting off the thought before it even fully formed. There was no way we were leaving her like this.

“Okay, just stand back and let me work then, please.” A nurse came in the room, and together they hooked Alaia up to two fetal monitors and started an IV on her. “There is a very mild painkiller in the IV. I’ll also use a local anesthetic, so we don’t have too many drugs in her system.” Dr. Bennett took a scalpel and cut away the dead and infected flesh. It had only been ten minutes max, but somehow the gash looked like it was weeks old. Once done, she stitched the clean, fresh skin back together and wrapped it in sterile gauze. “I’m also adding an antibiotic to her IV. I think I got all of the infection, but I want to be sure.”

When I looked at Alaia’s tear-streaked face, my heart broke, but at least she was resting now and not in pain.

“Thank you, Dr. Bennett. Are they all okay now?”

“The babies are perfect. Their heart rates were a bit elevated at first, but they are back to normal now. The Luna’s heart rate and blood pressure have stabilized, so she’s not in any pain. We’ll just have to wait and see if any infection remains, but I’ll keep a close eye on her. She’ll have to be with us for a few days.”

I’d keep her here forever if it kept her alive and healthy. I sunk into the chair next to the bed, and this time it was Alexi who stepped up to speak to the doctor.

“Thank you again. We’ll keep Alaia here as long as possible. We want to make sure she’s perfectly healthy as well.”

Dr. Bennett checked all the machines and connections again before she left the room, leaving us in silence.

“Xander, what was that? It’s like the vivid dream she had with me when she marked and scratched me. But those healed. Why didn’t she heal?”

“I have no idea, Alexi. But I will find out or die trying. Whoever is responsible for this is going to feel just as much pain as they put her through, then they will feel more. On my honor.”

Chapter 68 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

I woke up a few hours later, my throat raw from all the screaming. When I opened my eyes, I saw Alexi sitting in the corner, working on his laptop while Xander was asleep in the chair in another corner.

“Could I have some water, please?” I croaked out.

Alexi’s eyes shot up, and he was instantly standing next to me with the cup of water. “How do you feel, angel? Should I call for the doctor?”

He helped me sit up, and after I gulped the water down, I passed the glass back and shook my head at him. “I’m okay; we don’t need to call anyone yet.”

“What happened, Alaia? You scared the shit out of Xander and me. We thought we were losing you.”

I figured I couldn’t hold this any longer. I had to tell them what I knew and what I had been doing. “Will you wake Xander up, please? I might as well get this over with all at once.”

He looked at me suspiciously. “Get what over with, angel?”

“I’ll tell you in a moment. Just wake him up, please.”

Alexi gave me another questioning look before he walked over and shook Xander awake.

I had lifted the back of my bed, so I was now sitting comfortably, preparing myself for the hell that was about to come.

Xander walked over and placed a hand on my cheek.

“You look better, little one. I’m so relieved.”

“Thanks. I feel better, too. Sit down; I want to talk to you two.” I scooted over and pulled them both to sit on the bed with me. This was it, now or never. “Okay, so what you guys saw was one of my visions. Since the one I saw of Xander at the Crescent Moon pack, I’ve had them more

regularly. Once every other day or so, to be specific. The visions have always been of the same person. Well, the same two people. A vampire named Sebastian and a rogue wolf named Rachel. They are Vincent's parents."

I paused and looked at them. There were no words to describe the anger painting their features. I could tell they wanted to shout and rage at me. I didn't know if it was the pregnancy or recent ghost attack, but something kept them from doing it. I was thankful for that small miracle.

"Alaia, please tell us you're joking. You can't have been so stupid as to have visions of Vincent's parents and not think it was worth sharing with us, knowing that we've been trying everything to find him. Please . . ." Xander begged.

A lone tear slid down my cheek. I wasn't using my tears to guilt-trip them. No, I was ashamed of the idiotic decision I had made that could have cost the life of my babies. My own life. "I'm so sorry. At first, I didn't know the people I was seeing were his parents. It was this last vision that revealed that to me. And I didn't want to burden you two. There is already so much on your shoulders, and you have been so busy lately-" I trailed off. I didn't even know what else I would have said to justify my actions. There was no justification. I had placed our children in danger. Nothing could ever begin to explain that.

Xander stood up, and without another word, walked out of the room. He couldn't even look at me, and I understood.

I reached out and took Alexi's hand.

His eyes stayed on our hands. He couldn't look at me either.

"Alexi, please forgive me. I'm so, so sorry. If I had known, I would never have done this. I'm begging you."

He took a deep breath and looked up at my face. "I need to go check on Xander. Then I'll send the doctor in to take a look at you since you're awake." He gently removed his hand from mine and left the room.

I was devastated. I felt like I had lost them both, and I had no idea how to get them back.

Xander POV

I was beyond angry; I was livid. And I wanted to hit something, hard. When Alexi walked over to me, my first thought was to hit him, but he was in the same boat I was. "How is she?" I asked. I at least needed to know she was alright.

"Physically she seems to be fine, emotionally, though . . . that's another story."

“Why would she do something like this? She knows she can talk to us about everything. But she hides the fact that she’s having visions of vampires and rogues?”

Alexi didn’t answer. He couldn’t. He was just as lost as I was. He sat down beside me and shut his eyes before pressing his fingers over his lids.

We sat in silence for a while, trying to think of a reason Alaia would think keeping this a secret was a good idea.

We had nothing.

Matt walked up shortly, out of breath, and looking like he’d run the entire way here. “Is it the babies? Are they coming already?”

I just shook my head. “No babies yet. She’s in room 127. Right across the hall.” He wanted to ask questions; I could see it all over his face. But I had no answers to give. “Just go check on her. She’ll be happy to see you.”

He nodded and walked over to enter the room.

I wanted someone in there with her. She shouldn’t be alone.

I knew that Matt would be just as angry as Alexi and me, but he wouldn’t leave her side. Not at least until we had a chance to accept what had happened. “I need to work up a sweat for a couple of hours. Burn off some of this frustration. You coming?” I asked Alexi.

“Nah. I’ll stay here and do some work. I want to stay close by.”

Maybe it was for the best. I needed to be alone right now, anyway. I left Alexi there and went over to the gym, where I proceeded to punch and kick my anger away. Forty-five minutes later, my knuckles were raw from hitting the punching bag for so long. I was pouring sweat, but I was still pissed off, so I kept going.

I didn’t know who I was angry with the most. Alaia, for keeping the secret and putting herself in danger? Vincent, for trying to claim my mate as his birthright? Or whoever the fuck Sebastian was.

I didn’t even notice when Kade came into the room. “Xander. What do you need, man?”

“Just leave me alone for a while. Make sure everything is alright with the pack. That’s all I need.”

He walked farther into the room and pulled his shirt off. “Nope, I’m staying right here. Matt and Alexi can look after everyone else.”

Fine. I didn’t care.

He stood behind the bag and held it in place while I continued to pummel it. My hands were now bleeding, but I still had more to left to give. “Do you know what Alaia did?” I asked between punches.

“Yep. I know.”

“And? What do you think about it all?”

“I think you’re an idiot. You and Alexi.”

That stopped me in my tracks. “What are you talking about? She put herself in danger. The babies in danger.”

“What she did was have a vision, a few visions. She didn’t know who it was she was seeing. Is she supposed to tell you two about every single time she sees something? Get over yourself, Xander. You’re pissed because she got hurt, and you couldn’t help her. You’re scared, and so is Alexi. Rightfully so. But don’t take it out on her. She doesn’t deserve it, and you damn well know it.”

“She basically lied, Kade. She lied to all of us.”

“Bullshit, man! She didn’t lie. She just didn’t tell you something you never fucking asked about. Now get your ass showered and get back to her room. You smell like shit.”

“Who do you think you’re talking to?”

“You. Now go. Don’t make me kick your ass.” He let go of the bag and left the room, picking his shirt up on the way.

Asshole.

Matt POV

When I entered bean’s room, I could see that she had been crying. Why would Alexi and Xander leave her here alone knowing that she was upset? Something was not right, and I needed to figure it out and fix it.

“Bean, what’s going on? Why aren’t the guys in here?”

She looked up with red puffy eyes and sobbed. “They hate me, Matt. They both hate me, and it’s all my fault!”

I hated seeing her like this. I walked to her bed, pulled her into a hug, and just let her cry. I didn’t push for any answers. I just wanted to comfort her. Then I’d find out what had happened to my

family. After a few minutes, we had repositioned ourselves. I was sitting on the bed and had placed her head in my lap. I gently rubbed circles on her back, helping her to steady her breathing and calm down.

Soon, she had finally stopped crying, and only small sobs escaped her.

“You feel better now?”

“No. I can’t feel better. Not when my fiancés won’t even look at me, let alone talk to me. They can’t even be in the same room, Matt.”

She took a cleansing breath, then told me all that had happened.

Listening to her story, I had to admit that I was angry as well, but I wouldn’t let her see it. Not now. I’d have to save it for later.

Someone had hurt my best friend and Luna. That was where I would focus the anger and hate.

“Bean, listen to me. Those two love you; they will never hate you. They are probably disappointed that you kept this from them, but they do not hate you. Get that out of your head now.”

“But—”

“No buts. Alexi and Xander have fought for you from the beginning. They even fought each other. Nothing will change their feelings.”

“I messed up bad, Matt. How can I fix it?”

“We’ll figure that out later. You just rest for now and focus on getting better. I’ll make sure the guys are alright, too, so don’t worry about them.”

Dr. Bennett poked her head in the room just then, wanting to see how Alaia was doing.

I took this as my queue to leave. I slipped from the bed and walked out to the hall to give them some privacy.

Alexi was still in the same spot I had seen him earlier, but Xander was no longer there.

“Where’d Xander go?”

“He said he needed to work off some frustrations,” Alexi replied.

When I sat down beside him, I couldn’t help but blurt out. “You two are acting like dicks. She thinks you guys hate her, and that’s fucked up.”

“We don’t hate her; she knows that.”

“Maybe you should remind her. Because right now, she thinks otherwise.”

Alexi turned to me and scowled. “You know what happened, right? Are you okay with all this? Do you think her decision was the right one?”

I took a second before I answered. “Yes, I know what happened. Alaia told me. Am I okay with it? Not at all. I’m fucking pissed, actually. But I’m also not her mate or fiancé. Our emotions aren’t tied together like the three of you. She can feel how angry you are with her, times two. So, what do you expect her to think when she’s left all alone in there?”

Alexi leaned back and closed his eyes. “I never thought of that.”

“Well, now you are. Don’t be too angry with her. She didn’t do anything malicious; she just made a mistake. And she’s beating herself up about it enough on her own. Just don’t add to it.”

“I’ll go see her in a little while. I just need a bit more time to cool off. Seeing that bandage on her arm just brings all the anger back to the surface.”

I could understand that. I was here campaigning for Alaia, but Alexi and Xander had legitimate feelings as well. Maybe they all needed a little time to work through it all. But I knew they would be alright. These three were fated to be together; they had no choice.

SIXTY-NINE | DATES AND DUE DATES

Chapter 69 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alexi POV

Maybe an hour after Matt left, I went back into Alaia’s room. She was asleep, but it didn’t look peaceful, and that hurt. My angel thought I hated her, and that was the furthest thing from the truth. I loved her with every breath in my body. I walked over and placed a kiss against her temple before I pulled up a chair and sat down next to her.

My hand instinctively found hers, and soon I was leaning over the edge of the bed with my head resting next to her belly. I didn’t even realize that I had drifted off until I felt her small hand running through my hair. It had only been a few hours, but I had missed being this close to her. I had missed her touch. “Hi, angel. How are you?”

“I’m scared, Alexi.”

That response got me moving immediately. “Scared of what? The doctor said you’re healing just fine. It’s much slower than a wolf should heal, but it’s still healing. And there is no sign of infection. You are alright, baby.”

She looked at the bandage on her arm then back to me. “I’m scared you’ll never trust me again. And that we can never be the way we were before all this happened.”

I really wanted to scoop her up and hold her tight, but she was connected to all the machines, and I didn’t want to hurt her. So, I just leaned over and kissed her with all the love and passion I could. I didn’t have the words, but I knew she could feel what I felt. She was my everything, and nothing would ever change that. “I love you, and I trust you. You just made a mistake, baby. It’s not like I’ve never made any before. You forgave me for all of it, and I forgive you.”

“You do?”

I had to laugh—she was so cute. “Of course I do. And besides, who am I to judge? I can’t say if I would have done things any differently if I had been in your position.”

She breathed a sigh of relief, and I watched a little of the tension she was still holding on to melt away.

“Now, are you hungry? I can get something brought to the room for you. What do you have a taste for?”

She smiled at the thought of food. I knew that she hadn’t eaten since breakfast, and she was probably starving. “Could you ask Geoff to make me his spaghetti and meatballs? Or a pizza? He makes the best pizza. Or maybe—”

“I’ll just ask Geoff to make you anything Italian. How does that sound?”

“Sounds good. Thank you, Alexi.”

When she smiled at me, it felt like it had been years since I had last seen one. This incident had been agony, and I never wanted something like this to come between us again. I stood and walked toward the door. “While I’m gone, you start thinking about our wedding. I want to make you my wife as soon as possible.” When I walked out, I felt like a weight had been lifted from my chest.

I wasn’t watching where I was going and ran right into Xander. “Shit. Sorry, man. That’s my fault.”

“Where are you rushing off to looking so damn happy?”

I must have still been smiling, and not even realized it. “I’m heading to the kitchen to have Geoff make angel something to eat.”

He looked at me suspiciously. “That’s what’s got you grinning like a fool?”

“I may have made up with our girl. I missed her, and I’m happy to have her back, that’s all.”

“I’m on my way to do the same thing. I feel like shit right now, and I’m sure it’s because of how I left things.”

“I’ll leave you to it. I should be back in a little bit with food, so don’t go anywhere.”

Before I made it to the kitchen, the smell of garlic bread hit me. If I wasn’t hungry before, I definitely was now. I walked in to find Geoff pulling a pan of lasagna out of the oven.

He must have been a mind reader or something.

“Good evening, Mr. Alexi. Are you here to take Ms. Alaia her dinner?”

I looked at him, stunned. Alaia and I had just finished discussing dinner five minutes ago, how had he already made an entire meal?

Geoff saw my confusion and laughed. “Ms. Alaia has a fondness for Italian food, and I know she hasn’t eaten anything substantial since breakfast. Those little boys will drain her of all her energy if she doesn’t eat enough, so I decided to make her something hearty and delicious for dinner. I see I was right on time.”

“Hell yeah, you were. This is perfect. I was coming to ask for spaghetti or pizza.”

He laughed again. “Her usual requests. But I’m sure she’ll enjoy the lasagna just as much. If not, I’ll gladly make her whatever she wants.” He proceeded to place huge servings of lasagna, Caesar salad, and garlic cheese bread into plastic containers and put them all into an insulated cooler. He added some drinks and sliced fruits before handing it over to me. “You make sure she eats that. And there is plenty more if she needs it. I made this just for her, so she can have all she wants.” Geoff had a kind, father-like air about him, and it was evident that he loved Alaia like she was his own.

Everyone she met ended up falling for her; it was only a matter of time.

“Thank you so much. She’ll be ecstatic to see me back so soon. We really appreciate this.” I was on my way out when I turned back to Geoff. I had an idea. “Actually, Geoff. Could you do me a favor?”

Alaia POV

Both of my guys had come back, and they didn't hate me. I was so relieved and overjoyed; nothing was worse than the feeling of being alone.

Xander was sitting by my bed, telling me about all that had been going on with the search for Vincent when I heard a light knock on the door.

"Come in."

The door opened, and in came Geoff carrying a small table and a few other accessories. "Good evening, Alpha and Luna. I have your dinner for you. If you'd just give us a few minutes, I'll get it all set up for you."

I just looked on and nodded. I wasn't expecting a full dinner production. I would have been happy with a slice of pizza on a paper plate.

Geoff and the omega he had with him set up the table and neatly placed a white table cloth on top. A centerpiece of beautiful flowers was arranged in the center of the table before three place settings were laid out. Then came the food. Geoff pulled out the lasagna, salad, and bread, and neatly arranged it all.

When the smell hit me, my stomach rumbled and my mouth watered. I moaned out loud. I wasn't ashamed to admit it.

He popped the cork for a bottle of red wine, and after it sat for a few minutes, he poured two glasses and a third glass of grape juice. They quickly cleaned up everything and left the room. "I hope you enjoy your dinner, Ms. Alaia," Geoff added before the door closed.

The entire set up was terrific, and I almost wanted to cry, but I wanted to eat first.

"Wow. Alexi said he was going to get you food. I was thinking of a sandwich or something. I see I've got to step my game up."

"I think we both do. I wasn't expecting anything like this either."

As if on queue, Alexi entered in a clean button-down shirt and jeans. His hair was no longer messy and disheveled and was instead neatly combed back and away from his perfect face.

He walked over to Xander and me and smiled. "Today has been a pretty shitty day. I think we all can agree on that. So, I think we need a date night. We need to sit and reconnect. Enjoy each other's company for a while. And since our first date ended so well, I figured I'd try my luck again."

"This is amazing, babe. And I agree, we do need a date night. Thank you for putting this together for us."

Xander helped me from the bed and dragged all of my monitors over to the table before Alexi settled me in my seat. They then sat on either side of me, and we all dug in.

The food was incredible and seemed to melt in my mouth. “Alexi, how did you pull this off? You were only gone thirty minutes,” I asked between shoveling the pasta into my mouth.

“Just good timing. Geoff had already made everything when I walked in. I just happened to have the date night idea, and he took it from there.”

“You’re two for two with planning dates, Alexi. The next one is all mine,” Xander joked.

I didn’t care who planned what. I was just happy to be having good food with my favorite guys in the world.

We really needed this.

“So, angel. Did you think about what I asked before I left? When is our wedding happening?”

I had been thinking about it a lot. And I knew that this was what I wanted. “How about in two weeks?”

Both guys dropped their forks and looked over at me.

“Two weeks? Why so soon? And you’ll be too pregnant to even move at that point, little one.”

“I don’t need a big wedding, guys. I just need the two of you. And I want to be married before the boys get here. I thought it wasn’t that big a deal before, but I realize now that it’s important to me. They are due in three weeks; I want to be your wife in two.”

After a few tense seconds, Alexi finally spoke. “Well, if that’s what you want. I’m positive we can make it happen.”

“Great! I already found a planner who’s a pro when it comes to shorter timelines. You guys won’t have to do anything.”

“I don’t mind helping, angel. This is our wedding, too.”

“Just be there on the day. That’s all I need.”

We went back to eating our dinner and talking about what we wanted the wedding to be like. It was nice to hear their ideas, and I was happy they both wanted to take an active roll in planning. I just hoped that we could pull it off without any extra outside drama. That would be a real accomplishment.

After dinner, Dr. Bennett came back in to check my arm. Everything was still looking good, but healing much slower than it should have been. “I’d like you to stay here at least until the wound starts to close. That way, we can actively work to avoid infection. Other than that, you and the babies are in perfect health. Make sure to continue to get your rest, though. Those little guys could decide to make an appearance any day now.”

Wait . . . what?

“What do you mean any day now? We’ve still got three weeks until they are due!”

“Yes, Luna, that due date was set when we thought there was just one little pup. But multiples typically come sooner. There is only so much space in your body. I’ve measured you, and it appears that our timeline has absolutely moved up. Plus, being that you’re a smaller wolf, I’d expect them here anytime in the next week or so.”

I wasn’t ready! That was way too soon.

“But that won’t work. That’s not how I planned all this to go.” I looked at the other faces in the room, but none of them held the answers I needed. How could I pull off an entire wedding in less than a week? This was a disaster.

“Calm down, Alaia. We’ll be fine. Everything will be fine,” Xander said while rubbing the back of my hand.

I picked up my grape juice and downed it, wishing it was something much, much stronger.

“Okay, I’ve got this. It’s no big deal.”

“Don’t worry yourself, Luna, they will come when they are ready. Don’t stress over something you can’t control.”

To let me know who was really in control, both twins let off well-placed kicks at the same time.

One hit my ribcage, and the other my continuously abused bladder.

“I change my mind. It’s not too soon, these little guys have got to go. The sooner, the better.” Well, let’s see what kind of ceremony I could pull together in a few days. Hopefully, they’d at least give me that, then they could make their entrance to the world and give me my body and bladder back.

SEVENTY | WEDDING BELLS PT. 1

Chapter 70 - Once Rejected, Twice Desired

Alaia POV

Crystal, the wedding planner, and I scrambled, but somehow we were able to pull together a decent ceremony that would take place in three days in the backyard of the packhouse. Katherine helped us out with flowers, decorations, tables, and chairs. Geoff took on the task of catering the reception, and Mrs. Dyson agreed to make the cake. Everything was coming together smoothly, and all we needed was my dress.

The Thursday before the wedding, my mom, Katherine, Lauren, Jordyn, Cassie, and Kimmy came to take me dress shopping. I had been released from the hospital a couple of days prior under the agreement that I do as little as possible until the babies arrive. That was easier said than done when you were planning a double wedding. The ladies had pulled together around twenty dresses and had them all set up in my dressing room. I just had to waddle in and take a seat while they were all brought over to me to choose the one I wanted. There were so many different fabrics, necklines, cuts, and designs that choosing the right one was daunting.

After a couple of hours, I had narrowed it down to a pure pale cream, off the shoulder, floor-length, satin dress that flared out beautifully under my bust and cascaded down over my massive belly. I never thought I'd have a pregnant belly to contend with in my wedding dress, but the cut and design of this one made my reality not so bad. I looked beautiful, and the color of the dress looked amazing against my skin.

This dress was the one, and I was excited!

When all the other dresses had been packed up and returned to their shops, Jordyn decided it was time for my surprise. "As the maid of honor, it's my job to put together a bachelorette party. But since the bride is about to pop and basically on bed rest, my options were limited. So, tomorrow we will have a total spa and pamper day. Massages, manicures and pedicures, light facials, and waxing. Lots of waxing."

It sounded like a long and tedious day, but I was going to be with the women who meant the most to me in the world, so I knew it would be a fun time. "That sounds perfect, J. Thank you."

"Lies. It sounds like torture, and you know it. But you'll do it because you love me."

I had to laugh. Jordyn knew me so well; I could never hide anything from her. "True. So, what time should we all be ready to leave?"

"Everything is happening here. We'll get started after breakfast."

Even better if I didn't have to sit through a long car ride into the city. Even the smallest bumps made it feel like my uterus was going to explode, and that was not a good feeling.

With seven women to pamper, I was curious to see how it would all play out. But knowing Jordyn, she would make sure that everything went perfectly.

After I was released from the dressing room, I went to find Alexi and Xander. I hadn't seen them since that morning and was curious about what their plans for the next couple of days were.

I found them in Xander's office, along with Aaron, Kade, and Matt. When I walked in, they all immediately stopped talking and looked like they had been caught stealing cookies.

"I know you guys are up to something. You're terrible at hiding it. So, just go on and decide which one of you is going to tell me while I make myself comfortable on the couch," I said while shuffling across the room.

Aaron tried to help me, but I shooed him away. I could walk across a room just fine. I could even sit, sort of. It was the getting up part that I needed help with. Once I was settled into the fantastic leather couch, I looked around at the faces, trying to decide which one I'd force to tell me what was going on.

One face, in particular, got my attention because he was trying so hard not to make eye contact. "Hey, Matt. How's it going?"

"Damn it, bean! Why is it always me? I'm just sitting here—"

I had to laugh. It was so easy to mess with Matt, and his reactions always made me smile. "I'm just kidding, Matt. You know I love you."

I then turned to Alexi and Xander. "So, what were we talking about?"

They didn't have much choice. In forty-eight hours they would be my husbands, so they pretty much had to tell me whatever I asked them.

They looked at one another before Xander finally spoke up. "Bachelor party."

"Really, that's it?"

I looked at Kade and Aaron, who were the men of honor. "You're not taking them to Las Vegas or something like that, are you? I could pop any minute, and I'd like for them to be close by."

Kade looked surprised but quickly answered. "Uhh, no. We were just taking them to Jade City."

I gave a careless wave of my hand. "That's fine. Nothing to be so secretive about, fellas. Just don't do anything stupid and be back at a decent time."

"You don't mind that we're having a bachelor party?" Alexi asked.

“You know me better than that, Lex. I’m not here to stop you from having fun. You deserve to let loose a bit. And besides, you two are crazy in love with me. Nothing in Jade City, or anywhere in the world for that matter, will change that. So go, have a good time. Go break hearts and let the ladies know that you are off the market.”

“So, what are you ladies getting up to?” Aaron asked.

“Well, since I’m in no condition to go chasing after sexy, half-naked men, we’re having a spa day here.”

At the mention of half-naked men, both Xander and Alexi let out low growls, which pulled my attention back to them.

“Seriously, boys? Are you jealous over hypothetical men I won’t even be seeing? Get it together.”

“Are the masseuses for your spa day male or female?” Xander asked.

“I can’t say for sure, Jordyn set it all up.”

Before I could say anything else, they were both in my head, mindlinking me.

Your masseuse will be a woman, little one. No man’s hands will touch your body, understand?

Actually, I don’t. You two are probably going to be at a strip club doing God knows what, but I can’t have a massage?

Of course, you can have a massage, angel. But with the number of hormones flowing through you, you’re just a bit sensitive lately. So, it’s best if a woman does your massage.

What the hell are you guys talking about?

Don’t play coy with us. We can make you cum just by trailing a finger up and down your thigh a few times. And if any man besides the two of us touches you and makes you cum, I’ll fucking kill him. Pick a woman.

Fine! I didn’t care one way or the other anyway.

Good, then this conversation was pointless.

Thank you, angel.

I could already see how this marriage was going to go. Alexi would be my sweet, caring husband, while Xander would be the dominant, possessive one. They truly balanced each other out perfectly.

I guess the Moon Goddess knew that I needed both ends of the spectrum to truly be happy.

When our “marital spat” was over, the other three men in the room looked on uncomfortably.

“Sorry, guys. The grooms were having a caveman moment, but we’re all good now. And now I’ve got to go find Jordyn and make sure we are properly staffed for tomorrow.”

Alexi walked over and helped me to my feet before he kissed my forehead, making me melt into him.

“I love you, angel.”

“Yeah, yeah. I love you too.” I shot a look over my shoulder at Xander before I left the room. I was pretty sure I would pay for it later, but I didn’t mind his punishments. Quite the opposite, actually.

Jordyn had a few choice words for the guys, but eventually, she called and made sure a woman was sent as my masseuse. “Men are assholes. I mean, who cares if you get a happy ending to your massage? You deserve it, babe.”

“Well, they care. And when I think about it, I care, too. I mean, it’s just weird. I don’t want any other man making me feel that way. That’s just for my guys.”

“You three are sickening sometimes, seriously.” The smile on her face told me how she really felt, though. “I never got to tell you this, babe, but I’m so happy that you and Alexi found your way back to each other. You drooled over that kid for years, and I don’t know how many times I saw you drawing hearts with your initials in them or ‘Mrs. Alaiia Kostov’ in all your journals. And now, when I see how gentle and loving he is with you, I’m so happy I didn’t murder him. Best decision I ever made.” She pulled me into a tight hug while we laughed at how violent and protective she was.

“I’m happy you didn’t murder him, too, J. I’d be missing a piece of my soul if you had. So, I’m just wondering, when are you planning to tell me that you’re pregnant?”

Jordyn spit the water she was drinking from her mouth and looked over at me, shocked. She just opened and closed her mouth a few times like a fish, but no words came out.

“Breathe, Jordyn.”

“How did you know? I just found out two days ago and haven’t even told Aaron yet.”

I leaned back and rubbed circles on the sides on my belly. “Well, since I’m pregnant, my sense of smell is ridiculously strong. And you smell different, like cotton candy. But I know that you hate cotton candy, so it can’t be a body spray or something you ate. Then, you didn’t have a

mimosa today at breakfast, and you never pass up champagne no matter what time of day it is. So, the logical conclusion is that I'm going to be an aunt."

I watched as her eyes watered and tears started to fall. I was scared for a moment before she gave me her most beautiful smile. "You're going to be an aunt. I still can't believe it. I actually thought it wouldn't happen."

"Why would you think that?"

"Well, to be honest, Aaron and I bang a lot. I can't keep my hands off that man. I mean, have you seen his body? And that mouth of his? God, the things he can do with his mouth—"

"Jordyn! I didn't ask for details, please!"

"Alaia! You're my best friend, and you're the person I share this shit with. And you tell me all of your hot steamy threesome stories. Being bent over Xander's desk by Alexi while Xander watches? You're living in a sexual fantasy land! I want to share, too!"

Damn it! I really didn't want to hear about my brother's dirty deeds, but she was right, I told her everything. Sometimes even when I didn't want to. And this was my job. "Fine. Just feel free to leave out specific details of his anatomy."

She bounced in her seat, now super excited. "Cool! So, like I was saying, his mouth is magic, and my body craves his touch. Every day, multiple times a day. Almost every surface in the house has seen some form of action. With all that fucking, you'd think I would have been pregnant months ago. But when it didn't happen, I thought maybe something was wrong with one of us. But we were so happy; I didn't want to have that dark cloud hanging over our heads. So, I let it go. I'm glad I did because it just wasn't our turn yet."

I took her hand and gave a gentle squeeze. "You two will be amazing parents. And I'm honored to be the first person to know."

"Thanks, but you stole that honor. Don't forget that."

The next morning, we all had breakfast together before it was time for us to part ways. Alexi and Xander were being kicked out of the house so they wouldn't see the bride before the ceremony.

So, all the guys decided to get hotel rooms in Jade City and spend the entire day there. They were all in the garage, packing their bags in the truck when I walked out.

"Did you all leave your suits upstairs in the dressing room?"

The five of them stopped what they were doing and looked at me, confused. They were hopeless.

“You’re getting dressed here tomorrow before the ceremony starts. That way, you don’t have to ride all the way from the hotel in your suits and get them wrinkled. They should all be in the guy’s dressing room. Along with your shoes, ties, cuff links, everything.”

Still nothing.

“Guys, where are your suits?”

“We don’t know, bean. We haven’t seen them,” Kade finally answered.

“With the wedding a little more than twenty-four hours away, none of you saw a problem with that?”

They just shrugged their shoulders at me. Ugh! “Fine, I’ll have Crystal find them and get them to the dressing room.”

They seemed satisfied with that answer. Of course they were, there wasn’t anything they had to do.

“Please be careful and come back in one piece. And only Kade and Matt are allowed to touch anyone tonight, so you other three just have to live vicariously through them. Have fun!”

I heard Aaron, Alexi, and Xander groan before getting in the truck and pulling off. They were all good guys, so I knew there wouldn’t be too much foolishness tonight.

Back in the house, it was a bit chaotic. The kitchen was full of Geoff and his team prepping food for tomorrow while Mrs. Dyson was trying to rope off space so she could start the cake.

I was on my way to see if I could help in any way when Katherine intercepted me. “No. You are not to worry about this. These two have been battling in the kitchen together for years, and they will figure it out. If not, I’ll come in and settle things. Just sit down a moment, and I’ll have someone help you upstairs; then, we can get the spa day started.”

That was perfect. I didn’t have the energy to referee a kitchen match today anyway. But I still had to find the suits.

“I need to find Crystal before I go up. The men haven’t seen their suits and have no idea where they are.”

“I took care of that this morning. All six are in the men’s dressing room and will be steamed later to make sure they are all perfect. Your dress is also here and being steamed as we speak. You go relax, sweetie. I’ve got this.”

“Six? Why are there six suits?”

“We had your father’s brought over as well. We figured that was easier in the end.”

I pulled her into a hug. She was the best mother-in-law I could have asked for. “Thank you, Katherine. You really are amazing.”

She was about to answer when it sounded like hell was getting ready to break loose in the kitchen. She swung around and transitioned from mother-in-law to Luna seamlessly. “Geoff! You and your team have to clear off the island. This space is for Mrs. Dyson to utilize today. You can prep on any of the other countertops, but she has to actually bake and decorate a four-tier cake in the next few hours and needs the room. Now move it!” Within a minute, the island was cleared, and everyone was happily working together again.

Damn, I had a thing or two to learn from her.