

One Night with the Alpha King –

Chapter 5

Aurora's POV

A week passed. I kept my head down, worked hard, and avoided the top floor entirely. The other designers were friendly enough, though they whispered about me when they thought I wasn't listening.

"She must have connections."

"How else would someone like her get hired here?"

I ignored them. Let them think what they wanted. I was here for Cody, not to make friends.

On Friday afternoon, someone knocked on my office door. I looked up to see a man leaning against the frame, grinning at me. He had the same silver eyes as the Alpha. The same dark hair. The same devastating looks.

But where Jack's presence was cold and commanding, this man radiated easy charm. "You must be the famous Aurora Bluey," he said, stepping inside uninvited.

I stood. "Can I help you?"

"I'm John. John Blackthorn. The Alpha's younger brother." He extended his hand.

I shook it cautiously. "Nice to meet you, John."

"Just John is fine. We're not that formal here." He sat on the edge of my desk, entirely too comfortable. "So, you're the one who's got my brother all twisted up."

My stomach dropped. "I don't know what you mean."

"Sure you don't." He winked. "Jack never hires people personally. But he made an exception for you. Makes a guy curious."

"I'm just here to work."

"Of course you are." His eyes traveled over me, appraising. "You're beautiful, you know. Jack has good taste."

Heat crept up my neck. "John, I really should get back to work."

"Have lunch with me."

"What?"

"Lunch. You and me. There's this great place downtown, makes the best venison stew you've ever tasted."

"I don't think that's appropriate. I'm an employee, you're the Alpha's brother, and I barely know you."

"All the more reason to have lunch. Get to know each other." He stood and moved closer. "Come on, Aurora. I don't bite. Much."

There was something dangerous about his smile. Something that warned me to be careful. But refusing might cause more problems than accepting.

"Fine," I said. "One lunch."

His grin widened. "Perfect. Meet me downstairs in ten minutes."

After he left, I sat back down, my heart racing. What had I just agreed to? John took me to an upscale restaurant where everyone seemed to know him. The host practically bowed as we walked in, leading us to a private table in the back.

"You come here often?" I asked, trying to fill the awkward silence.

"Few times a week. The owner's a friend." He ordered wine without asking if I wanted any. "So, Aurora. Tell me about yourself."

"There's not much to tell."

"Everyone has a story. What brought you to the Northern Territory?"

"I grew up here. I left for a few years, and now I'm back."

"Why'd you leave?"

The question hit too close. I took a sip of water, buying time. "Personal reasons."

"Mm. And now you're working for my brother. Interesting choice for someone with personal reasons to leave."

I met his eyes. "I needed the job. That's all."

"That's all?" He leaned back, studying me. "You know, Jack has been different lately. Distracted. Ever since you showed up."

"I doubt I have anything to do with that."

"Don't you?" He swirled his wine. "I've known my brother my whole life. I've never seen him look at anyone the way he looks at you."

"How does he look at me?"

"Like he's trying to figure out whether to kiss you or kill you."

The waiter brought our food, and I was grateful for the interruption. But John wasn't done.

"Are you seeing anyone?" he asked casually.

"That's personal."

"Is it? You're not wearing a mating mark. No ring. So you're single."

"I have a son."

He raised an eyebrow. "Do you now? And where's the father?"

"That's also personal."

"You're very good at deflecting." He smiled. "It's okay. I like a woman with secrets."

The rest of the lunch passed in uncomfortable conversation. John was charming, but there was an edge to him that made me nervous. Like he was testing me somehow.

When we finally returned to the office, I was exhausted.

"We should do this again," John said as we stepped into the elevator.

"Maybe."

"Definitely." He pressed the button for the top floor. "I'll make sure of it."

The elevator doors opened, and my stomach sank. Alpha Jack stood there, his expression thunderous. His eyes moved from John to me, and the temperature in the elevator seemed to drop ten degrees.

"Brother," John said cheerfully. "We were just getting back from lunch."

"I can see that." Jack's voice was deadly quiet.

"Aurora needed a proper welcome to the company. You know how you are. All business, no pleasure." John clapped his brother on the shoulder. "I figured I'd show her we're not all cold-hearted bastards around here."

Jack's eyes never left mine. "My office. Now."

It wasn't a request.

John whistled low. "Good luck," he whispered to me before stepping off the elevator.

I followed the Alpha to his office, dread pooling in my stomach. This was bad. This was very, very bad.