

CHAPTER 55

Kai POV

God, this is so frustrating. The words on the papers are completely illegible and it's all I can do to look at them blankly. In the two hours I've spent here, I've literally got no work done. Nada. All I can think about is Langdon's last report on Winter. Was she really not eating or doing anything? Or was he just trying to wind me up? I know that he doesn't care for the way I'm treating Winter, but as the Beta, he needs to obey my will, even if he doesn't want to. I ignore the guilt that's eating inside of me that tells me I shouldn't be treating a friend this way.

Just go and talk to her. Stop being such a coward, my wolf growls in my head and I pointedly ignore him. He might have readily accepted Winter as our mate, but I'm still hesitant. Besides, she was doing fine, wasn't she? Langdon was probably exaggerating. The bastard that he is. It couldn't really be that bad, could it? Now I'm hesitating and wondering if I should contact him again. Damn it.

Oh god no. The familiar scent of a sickening perfume permeates through the air. She's the last person I want to see right now. I've been avoiding her like the plague and readily handing my credit card over, in an attempt to avoid her as much as I possibly can. I brace myself as the door bursts open and she comes sailing in. I stared at her in shock. What on earth is she thinking? Especially dressing like that? It's beyond ridiculous. God, does she not look in the mirror?

For once, instead of being turned on by her outfit, I felt repulsed by it instead. Candice has dressed herself in a large coat which she's peeled off, to expose herself in a red racy baby doll and matching G-string and suspenders. Usually, my cock would twitch and I'd get all excited seeing her like that, knowing exactly what it was she was after, even if my wolf blocked himself in my mind so he wouldn't have to see or hear anything. Her hair is in curls down her back and she's taken special care with her make-up as well. But it's all too much, all too painfully obvious that she's over-trying it. Or had she been like this all the time and I just hadn't noticed? Surely, I wasn't that blind? Was I?

"Hello handsome" she purrs and I cringe. Her voice sounds sugary sweet and completely fake to me. My Wolf is in full agreement. It's also extremely annoying and whiney. It's actually grating on my nerves.

"Candice," I said shortly, "now is not a good time" I added, pointedly looking at her ensemble with disdain. Her face contorts into a shocked expression before she hastily replaces it with a large smile. All I want is for her to leave before I say something I regret. Or do something. But she doesn't seem to get the hint.

"Don't be like that" she breathes, coming around the back of my chair as I am still, in stunned disbelief. She begins to massage my neck and I feel nothing but disgust at her touch, wanting to slap her hand away from myself and barely holding back. My wolf wants to claw her eyes out, but that's nothing new. Me, feeling this way towards her, however, is. It's also a complete shock.

I placed my hands on top of hers and forced her to stop. She makes her way to the front of me as I turn in the chair to regard her, my eyes pitch black as my wolf comes dangerously close to the surface. For once, he hasn't blocked himself from me.

Candice pouts at me, batting her eyelashes dramatically. I'm completely immune to her charms.

"You need to leave," I say gruffly and she stiffens, her own eyes narrowing now, anger clearly visible on her face.

"Why" she shoots out, her arms folded across her chest "why do I have to leave Kai? Tell me what's going on" she snarls and I slam my hands on the table, angered at her impudence. How dare she question me, the Alpha of the pack! Even if she's my girlfriend, I won't tolerate this disrespect coming from her.

"I've told you" I began furiously, still hoping to prevent myself from blowing over and losing it completely.

"I've been by your side for almost a year or is it longer" she wails, "and in that time, you've never, once, embarrassed me like this. I thought you loved me" she snuffles and I feel a pang of guilt. She's right, this is the first time I've refused her. The first time I'd felt this much disgust towards her.

But then she provokes me further. "It's that rogue, isn't it? The girl who came into the territory and couldn't speak? I'm not stupid, Alpha Kai" she mocks "I've heard the rumors and the gossip going around the pack and it says that you and she are mates!" She almost explodes as I sit silently in the chair. I should have known that nothing could be kept a secret in the pack. Winter's identity and who she was, was bound to get out sooner rather than later. But why has Candice waited until now to ask or say anything? How long has she known? Or had she just found out?

"Winter is my mate", I acknowledged heavily, and she looked taken aback for a moment, as though the news had truly shocked her. Or maybe it was because I had so readily told her the truth instead of lying to her face.

"Reject her"

"What?" I say, confused, and she leans into me, her lips close to my ears.

"Reject her" she whispers, "let me be your Luna, Kai, I'm the one you love, not her, not that pathetic little weakling" she breathes, "reject her" she demands.

I stand up and tower over her as she bites her lip, excitement in her eyes. "How dare you" I hiss as she pales. "Candice, you were never going to be Luna, not now, not ever. I had no intentions of putting you in charge of my pack with me."

She pales. "But I thought" she begins to sob, a hand to her mouth, distressed, "I thought that eventually" she trails off and goes silent as I shoot her a withering glance. Did she think eventually I'd mark her and make her Luna of the pack? A pack that despises her? Not a chance!

My head fills with an image of Winter, courtesy of my wolf who's encouraging me, doing his bit to get me to let go of Candice. Her eyes are angry now. "I've wasted all this time on you" she screams, hands clenched into fists " Do you know how hard it's been to pretend to love someone who looks like you? To not cringe when I touch those scars of yours? I endured everything so I could be Luna" she, hissed, and I closed my eyes. I should have known that was all she was after.

"Well, it didn't work out, did it," I say calmly as she continues to spit venom at me. "Leave Candice, at once. I'm afraid that we're over, done with. Stay out of the pack house and stay away from Winter, the girl who is my mate."

She drops her hands, looking defeated. "You're going to accept her aren't you" she whispers, her voice thick with emotion, "a little weakling is going to be Luna over me". She begins to laugh hysterically and I firmly steer her towards the door, watching her body slump over as she walks through the doorway. She glances back at me, hatred in her eyes.

"You have no idea what you've done," she tells me furiously. "I would have been a perfect Luna."

I gave her the stink eye. "You would have been a terrible Luna. The pack hates you", I say quietly, and she begins to sob, running wildly down the hallway as I flop back into my chair. Great, it's not even nighttime yet and I want to curl up with a drink in my hand and forget everything that's happened today.

I eyed the coat she left on the floor in her haste to get away. She has literally just run out wearing lingerie and my wolf is laughing at her expense. I feel numb though, empty. Candice had claimed to love me but had been pretending all this time. Her words washed over me and I flinch when I remember what she said about my scars and touching them. I'd just dodged a bullet and by a narrow escape from the looks of it.

I scowl as Langdon enters the study, an amused expression on his face, his eyes twinkling with humor. "Was that Candice I just saw running away in lingerie?" he asks with a low whistle. I frowned at him.

"We broke up" I muttered, avoiding the delighted expression on his face. He's never liked Candice and I knew it. I wasn't in the mood for him to give me pretend platitudes.

"Sorry dude" he mutters and I just wave it away. My heart will heal. To be fair, I wasn't really feeling that broken since Candice had spat out those insults at me. I am angrier than upset right now.

Langdon causally sits on the chair opposite to me and folds his legs over, patiently waiting. I frown. I wasn't expecting him for any meetings, so why was he here?

"Something I can do for you," I say, disgruntled, and he leans forward, a tense expression on his face.

"Sort of," he hedges, "it's to do with Winter" he adds, standing up and leaning against the doorway.

"What is it?" I growled impatiently.

"She's in the dungeon, she's now your problem. I need my space back and you're her mate, not me, so deal with it" he says in a rush, laughing maniacally and racing down the hallway before I can digest his words properly. Once I do, I poke my head out of the doorway and scream at the back of him. "You put her in the dungeon, you're supposed to be looking after her. I'll have your head for this", I threatened him as he ran out onto the grounds. Fuck. Another problem I would need to deal with. I was going to kill Langdon when I got my hands on him. Then again, I muse to myself, maybe Langdon has done me a favor after all.