

Chapter 19 Daddy Will Protect You

ELIANA.

"Eliana"

"Eliana, I'm calling you. Where are you going?" When he reached for my arms, I turned back to face Denver. "Did you really have to come in?" I muttered under my breath.

"I had it all under control. Now, Jaxon would be wondering what exactly is going on between the two of us that you had to step in and save the day" I scoffed, detaching my wrist from his.

"That's what you're worried about?" His hands fell to his hips.

"I already told you I can handle all of this by myself—" "All of what?" He interrupted. "Jaxon!" I raised my voice.

"I had it all under control."

"Yeah I clearly saw that" Denver remarked sarcastically and I narrowed my eyes at him. "Come on, Eliana. We're already passed this. I said I was going to protect you and when I saw him enter the house, I stepped in to protect you" He replied and a light scoff escaped my lips.

"That's the thing Denver," I paused. "I don't need you to protect me."

"Six years I spent by myself, all alone. I was doing well protecting myself. Nothing is going to change this time—"

"This isn't like the commune, Eliana. You know that" He replied.

"Then I'll figure it out, all on my own" I sealed my lips and for a moment, there was a brief pause. "I know why you're doing this" He said when I turned to walk away and so I came to a halt.

"I know why you're mad at me" Throwing my head over my shoulders, my eyes met his. "I was an asshole six years ago—" "That's one way to put it. Although it doesn't exactly do justice to you rejecting me does it?" I raised a brow at him.

"I'm not that man anymore" Denver added.

"Great!" I exclaimed.

"Because I'm not that woman anymore too." I said. "The woman who needed saving, that was so helpless and weak and easy for you to walk all over. The woman you looked in the eyes and rejected. I'm not that woman anymore, Denver." I shook my head.

"You don't understand. It was complicated" His voice went low and I chuckled softly. "Yeah, I understand complicated" It was so clear in my eyes that I was over his bullshit. I had been for some time now.

"Guess it was quite easier for you to break me then. I'm only making sure that doesn't happen again. You don't owe me anything, Denver. The reason you're here is because of guilt, you and I both know." I whispered.

"I treated you horribly, I know."

"I'll save you some, Denver. I'm no longer hurt by you. So there's really no need for you to be here. I was broken six years ago, but not anymore. Hell, there are some days that go by that I don't even think about it—"

"I think about it" He interrupted and his voice reverberated my body. I felt my heart thump in my chest. "I've thought about it since the morning I woke up to find you gone" Denver inched closer to me. I, in turn took a step back but my body was wedged against the hard wall.

"It isn't just guilt that drove me here, it's regret too."

"Because I never should've let you go" He continued, gazing deeply into the soul of my eyes. Denver was meters away from my face and his heated breaths lit my cheeks on fire. His hands slipped around me before I turned away.

What was he doing?

"You don't mean that" I swallowed a hard lump down my throat. "I do. I do more than I even know myself. I didn't realize how much you meant to me until you were gone" Now, those were words that could've crumbled my whole world to the ground back then.

But they didn't mean so much now, I convinced myself.

"You have a really funny way of showing it" I replied, wriggling my way out of his grasp. I didn't make it so far apart, but I wasn't so close either. He set his eyes upon me, reluctant to take them off.

"What is it now?" He heaved a sigh.

"I saw her that night. Claire, was it?" I scoffed.

"After you gave me those divorce papers that night, I guess you couldn't wait to celebrate in her arms. I heard the both of you—"

"Eliana." He called my name but I shook my head. "It's okay" I raised my arms in the air and my sleeves fell back. I shrugged it off.

"It's honestly okay" I added and even with the smile across my lips, there was still a sting in the depths of my chest as I recollected that memory. "But you know what's not okay, Denver?" I asked him.

He pressed his lips together in silence.

"You lying to me."

"Saying I meant something to you, that's not okay" I whispered. He didn't say a word, not about that night at least. "I need you to go" I walked towards the front door but he didn't move.

"What happens when Jaxon comes back again?" He croaked.

"I'll figure it out." I replied dryly.

"You said you came back for your father, and to stop Jaxon from becoming Alpha. I can help you do both" Denver said and by the glint that sparked in his eyes, I knew what he was trying to say.

"No" Without a doubt, I blurted out.

"Eliana, we could finally take him down!" I turned to face the door but he sharply grasped my arms back to him. "I can help you if we're together" He persisted. "Absolutely not!" I yelled.

"How many times do I have to tell you that I don't need your help?"

"It's the only way, Eliana." He pursed his lips with a wave of concern flashing across his face. "You know it too. Or are you just going to let them keep poisoning your father?"

As soon as he said those words, my heart sank.

"How do...How do you know about that?" I looked over my shoulders before it hit me. "Were you eavesdropping on my conversation with Ivan?" I stared at him unbelievably.

"I saw how riled up you were from a distance and I just wanted to—"

"That's a new low, Denver. Even for you" I muttered and this time, my hands pulled the door open. "You really need to leave now" I pushed yet another hard lump down my throat.

And there was a brief silence for a moment.

Before there was a thud from upstairs and a little voice calling out.

"Mommy!"

Elijah.

I batted my eyes at the ceiling and back to Denver, who had heard exactly the same thing. "You need to leave" I pressed on even further.

"What was that?" He was intrigued.

"Denver!" I called his name. "Are you not listening to me?" Desperate to drift his attention away, I yelled at him. And it worked because he looked at me at that moment.

"I heard something," He said.

"Of course you heard something, my Grandma is upstairs with Ivan. I wouldn't be surprised if they're still riled up about Jaxon. It's been a really long day and I need to leave now, Denver" He heaved a deep sigh.

Finally grabbing his coat, he did halt for a moment.

"Would you at least think about what I said?" He asked and I folded my arms, still holding the door open for him. The winds grazed through my hair. "You know there's one thing I don't understand. It's what you're gaining out of all of this—" I arched my brows.

And Denver stepped forward.

"You were wrong, Eliana. Because I do owe you something. Six years ago, you agreed to an unbelievable deal to provide an heir for me—"

"It doesn't matter now, does it? I mean I wasn't able to" There was a crack in my voice as my heart lumped in my throat. Denver gazed relentlessly into my eyes.

"I'm sorry" Those words escaped his lips and I wasn't sure he'd ever said it before.

"I was horrible to you all those years. Think of this as a way to redeem myself and make it up to you, Eliana. I want to help you and you actually have a chance at taking Jaxon down if we're together. We're a stronger force, mated." He muttered and I scoffed.

"The thing is Denver, you weren't just horrible to me." I finally looked him in the eyes because this was something that came right from my heart. "You rejected me, as your mate. You made your decision" I said.

"And although sorries can take back a lot of things, I'm afraid there's no coming back from what you did" I whispered, ripping my eyes from him.

"So no, I'll pass on your offer of self-redemption"

"And I'll find another way to both take down Jaxon and to help my Pack, without you." By this time, he'd walked out onto my front porch and I darted him one last look before closing the door in his face.

I was sure he still stayed there for a few more seconds, even as I leaned against the door on the other side. For some reason, tears cramped up in my eyes and my heart stung in a way that it only did six years ago. I clutched my chest and my words still hung in the air around me.

Then he drew away, just that same moment that I saw Elijah.

At the pinnacle of the stairs, I rushed to go meet him. I clamped a finger over his lips as I held him for a lasting hug. I didn't say a word until I was sure Denver was miles away. Then I pulled away to look into his teary eyes. Nana was right next to us with her arms folded.

"I was so scared, Mommy" There was a crack in his shrill voice and a tear dropped from my eyes. "It's okay. It's over now" I whispered.

"Who were those people?" My son asked.

"Bad people. Those were bad people" How I could ever tell him that those bad people were his family? "Like the ones in my nightmares?" He asked softly and I nodded.

"But you said they weren't real, mommy?" Elijah asked and my eyes darted to Nana. "They weren't in Tuscany, but they are here. In Oakland"

"But you don't worry, Mommy wouldn't let anything bad happen to you" I continued. "I'll protect you until my dying breath, I'll make sure of that"

"And who will protect you?" Elijah lifted his eyes to me and my heart sank at those words. "I thought you said daddy would be here" He said.

My lips fell apart at that moment as I sat on the ground. Elijah crawled into my arms with innocence rooted in his eyes and the next words he said were bound to leave a lasting effect on me.

"We can ask him, Mommy," He paused. "Daddy will protect you."