

Chapter 6

I nodded. "I'll be fine. We only have a little bit of time left. Then, we'll be opening up Carl's Automotive 2.0."

He shook his head and laughed. "Y'all better not call it that. No one will show up."

"But that's the mystery of it! Who is Carl? Why doesn't he work there? What happened to him?" I smiled as he laughed again.

"You are...something else. Go get me a damn fuel hose so we can get started."

Skipping away, I headed to the back warehouse of the shop. When I finally found the hose and pulled it, another car had shown up and Emmett was helping them, writing notes on the issues they were coming in with. I kept my head down and bee-lined for Carl.

"Here you go. I cut it to size, too."

He took it and slipped under the car, starting the tedious process of replacing it. I managed to help with my slimmer hands as I held the line in place as he maneuvered it where he needed it to be. It was cut perfectly as he reconnected everything.

"How did you know it needed to be an inch shorter than normal?" He rolled out from under the car.

I smirked. "The 2018s were a trial for a new connection hose

pathway. They didn't do it again because they realized that if there was a lot of use, the hose would crack at a specific bend. This baby is a 2018 because they also changed up the grill. Which they didn't keep for the next model, either."

Carl smirked. "Good girl."

Pride filled me. Carl had taught us so much more than Caleb. He became our mentor and while Emmett was great with cars, he was better at the customer service and business side of things. I could hold my own with the business, but the customers were still an issue. I decided my talents lay in the information and knowledge of the cars themselves and how to fix them.

Carl would quiz me while we worked, give me random crazy scenarios and I'd have to ask questions and give him the correct diagnosis. All while not having the car in front of me. Emmett enjoyed our quizzes but didn't participate, stating he needed the car in front of him, he couldn't picture it and just answer based on that.

"Alright. Pull the car out and park it. We'll do a quick detail and it will be ready for pickup."

"Yes, sir!"

I jumped in the driver's seat and chuckled. Apparently, the driver was a male wolf. I couldn't even reach the gas pedal while sitting in the chair. Sitting on the edge of the seat, I was able to reach them with my toes and pulled it out to our detail area. Parking the car, I got started on washing the outside and cleaning the inside of all the cigarette butts.

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I was covered in grease and dirt, and I lived for it. Carl, Emmett and I lounged on the couches. Emmett had a beer like Carl on the large, brown couch and I had a hard lemonade sitting in the black love seat. The day had been nonstop, and we even had two cars inside overnight.

We sat in the comfortable silence as we drank. A loud knock cut through our silence. We all froze. Emmett and I put our drinks behind us as Carl got up.

"I didn't realize it was already that time of the month." I grimaced and so did Emmett.

Carl chuckled and ran his fingers through his hair. "Goddess."

Going to the door, he opened it up and a woman walked in. She was dressed head to toe in designer but which one - I was not the girl to tell you. I could pick out a make, model, and year based on the front grate, but clothes and shoes I was at a loss.

"Carl." Her voice was curt as she stepped towards us. Her face screwed up in disgust as she looked at the two of us. "Anastasia, Sebastian, I'm sure your mother will be pleased to see you here."

I rolled my eyes, but Emmett was the one who answered. "We actually were told by our mother to leave. Considering there are a lot of Alphas coming in and out right now."

She huffed and turned to Carl. "I'm guessing you don't have

to see you here."

I rolled my eyes, but Emmett was the one who answered. "We actually were told by our mother to leave. Considering there are a lot of Alphas coming in and out right now."

She huffed and turned to Carl. "I'm guessing you don't have anything ready?"

"I do, Pat." Her face turned tight as he used her nickname. "Give me a moment, I'll grab it."

He disappeared up the stairs, most likely to his office. My eyes glared at Patricia. She was one of Francesca's group. Carl, when he talked about her, talked about their younger days. They were fated mates and apparently she was very sweet. Carl was a football player and they fit together well. A bit of a power couple. They were happy together. Carl got his shop and made good money while Patricia volunteered at the hospital. Something happened though, and Patricia became increasingly unhappy. He did all he could but it was never good enough.

We as packs don't really believe in divorce, especially not for fated mates. But there were separations. Mates lived separately from one another. Carl moved into his shop and Patricia stayed in the beautiful home on the upper side of town. She came by every month to basically collect an allowance from him. I told him if she didn't contribute to the business, why should she get almost half of it? He just would say that he didn't mind. Honestly, he still loved her

wholly and completely. Everything he did, he did for her. It was never his want or idea to leave but he did it for her.

She tapped her foot as she waited for him. Then she started to pace. "Where is he?"

I raised my eyebrow and looked at Emmett. He shrugged.

"How...how does it feel to inflict...pain...on your mate?" I stuttered but managed to get out the single sentence.

Emmett pursed his lips but didn't say anything.

"Excuse me? You ungrateful little girl."

I winced as she stepped forward. Emmett stood up. His eyes shining. But before anyone could move or say anything else, the door upstairs shut and Carl came down. He placed a hand on Emmett's shoulder, who glared at Patricia for a moment before he plopped back down on the couch.

"Here." Carl handed her an envelope and she swiped it from him.

Looking into the envelope, her lips tipped down. "What's going on here? Why is there so little?"

Carl furrowed his brow. "Pat, there is over eight thousand there. I don't know what you need. I'm already paying for the house, utilities, the business..."

"How am I supposed to buy anything with this? For a month? Carl, you're holding out! Give me my money."

I snorted and Patricia growled at me. But Carl stepped in front of her.

"That's plenty, Pat. You can get food, clothes, whatever you want since you don't work or pay anything. Please head out if there isn't anything else."

She looked a bit shocked at Carl but huffed and turned on her heel. They clacked on the concrete floor until the door slammed shut behind her.

"Goddess, I hate her." I grumbled, downing the entire bottle of lemonade I'd been hiding. Getting up, I grabbed another bottle and opened it up.

"Sky, you shouldn't say that." Emmett glanced at Carl who was staring at the door.

I sighed and walked over to him. Slipping my hand in his, I squeezed it. "Sorry, Carl."

He shook his head. "It's alright, Sky. You're right. She wasn't always like this. This happened when your father took over as Alpha."

I growled low. "If anything, I hate him even more. If I could get my hands around his neck..."

Carl turned to me, his eyes bright. "Hush, Skylar. Don't you dare. You're toeing the line enough as it is. I won't lose you, not to him. I've lost enough."

My eyes filled with tears and I wrapped my arms around his middle. He also held me, rubbing my back.

"I'm sorry." My voice was quiet.

"It's okay, Sky. Just...be careful. Please."

After a few moments, we sat back down on the couch and Emmett sighed, his head all the way back, resting against the wall.

"I can't wait to leave. If I never go on another pack's territory again for the rest of my life, I can die happy."

Carl chuckled, taking a swig of his beer. "Don't hold your breath. You find your mate and it might be a completely different story."

Emmett grimaced. "I'll take her with me. We aren't staying. I won't subject her to this life."

"I'm going to reject mine."

Both Carl and Emmett looked at me, shocked.

"Sky, you don't mean that."

"I do. I do absolutely mean every fucking word. I refuse to allow my pain and trauma and family effect anyone else. I won't subject them to who I've become because of it. I'm not like you, Emmett. You've managed to somehow still stand with your humanity together."

★ +20 BONUS

He snorted and shook his head. "Sky, that's not..."

My mouth was pressed in a thin line. "Emmett, I've killed people. I paid the price, but I killed them. I'd do it again. I don't think you could, not now at least. And that's a good thing. I'll be there for you to do your dirty work, but I don't belong in this world like that. And a mate doesn't belong next to me for that same reason."

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