

Chapter 11: Why Me?

~Alexia~

"It's nice to meet you, Alpha Declan and Luna Grace." Alexia smiled. She bowed and said, "The law Luna Grace and Alpha Declan had passed onto the council allowed many women a better education. I admire your cause."

"That was many years ago, young luna, but thank you for remembering our contribution to the nation," Luna Grace replied, also acknowledging Alexia. She turned to Kieran and said, "What a courteous luna you have, Alpha Kieran."

"Hmmm," Kieran replied.

Alexia heard it again. The kind of acknowledgment that gave her no clue if Kieran was pleased or not.

Kieran put a hand on the small of her back and introduced her to another alpha. Referring to a man with long hair, he said, "And this is Alpha Kai. His pack borders the nation's east, The Hidden Mist Pack."

Alexia saw Alpha Kai's eyes glisten at her. As she extended her hand to greet him, he took it, but instead of shaking it, he kissed her knuckles.

For a moment, Alexia thought, the surrounding air thickened. She suspected the sudden change in the mood came from Kieran.

Alpha Kai smirked in Kieran's direction, saying, "You lucky bastard. King Balthasar favors you in every way. He found you a young and beautiful mate."

Alpha Kai returned his attention to Alexia. He suggested, "If Kieran mistreats you, my dear. So you know, I am still... unmated."

There was no helping it. Alexia flushed. Alpha Kai was the youngest alpha that attended the wedding. He was as handsome as Kieran and appeared to be welcoming. Alexia tried to find the right answer, but Kieran warned Alpha Kai, "Flirt with other women, but not with my wife."

Hearing Kieran's words made Alexia's heart flutter. She had to take a deep breath and remind herself that the man was only acting out in front of them, especially since the king was three meters away.

Kieran quickly guided Alexia away from the sly alpha and introduced

her to the other guests.

After greeting the other visitors, Alexia and Kieran returned to the table where all the alphas sat. They strolled to the end of the table where the king and queen had already settled.

Alexia saw how the king smiled at Kieran. With his head down, Kieran said, "Your Highness, thank you for gracing us with your presence."

Alexia also bowed in acknowledgment, greeting, "Good evening, your highness. It is my pleasure to meet you."

"Kieran, don't you think I chose well for you?" King Balthasar said. He smiled brightly at Alexia and asked, "Is Kieran treating you well, child?"

Alexia smiled and cautiously replied, "Yes, Your Highness. I've never been so indulged all my life. The Stone Blood Pack has been very welcoming."

She purposely turned to Kieran, and their eyes met. Alexia could tell her answer surprised him.

"Good." The king proudly said, "A ruthless alpha needs a kind luna to run the biggest pack of Taplean."

Turning to the woman beside him, the king introduced, "And this is your queen, Helen."

"It is an honor to meet you, my queen," Alexia greeted.

Alexia hoped for kind words, but the queen merely said, "You may sit."

Everyone was enjoying their meal except for Alexia. She became mindful, surrounded by influential figures, much more being in the king's company. She barely touched her food as they all discussed the pending war.

"Let us have another council meeting next week," the king said. "There are matters about the recent attacks that bother me."

With a sigh, King Balthasar turned to Kieran, asking, "Kieran, how in the world are our enemies finding their way to the coast? Didn't we mine our seas?"

"It appears someone is guiding them through the mines," Kieran responded.

"If I may say, my king, I thought the same," Alpha Declan said. "The details of the mines were only made available to the council of alphas."

"Who would dare betray Taplean? It must be someone from the coast. They are the closest reach of Eswen," another alpha said. It was Alpha Blaze, the ruler of The Golden Eye Pack. From what Alexia recalled, he was the oldest alpha of all of Taplean. He did not have an heir or a mate.

"They are Eswen's first victims, the first pack to have suffered many losses. I don't see a reason for them to help the enemy," Kieran pointed out.

"In any case, Kieran, look into that," the king ordered.

"Balthasar, Kieran has so many responsibilities. Why don't our son or -" The Queen pursed her lips before looking at the table surrounded by alphas. She said, "Maybe Alpha Blaze can look into it?"

"Sure." The king acknowledged. "Let's discuss this further during the council meeting."

King Balthasar redirected his gaze to Alexia, saying, "Alexia, child. We are sorry to discuss the war in the middle of your wedding celebration. It must be uncomfortable."

"Please, don't mind me, Your Highness. The nation's security matters more," Alexia responded cordially. Then, her eyes landed on the vacant seat next to the queen. It was supposed to be Prince Caspian's seat, but no one dared to occupy it.

"Ah." As if reading her mind, the king said, "Caspian could not make it."

"My son is building his strength. He doesn't have time to attend to such trivial matters," the queen bluntly declared. Alexia swore there was a hint of irritation in the queen's tone.

"This isn't a trivial matter, Helen," King Balthasar corrected. "This is Kieran we are talking about. He is Taplean's hero. We would not be joying many years of peace if it were not for Kieran's men and his leadership."

"Thank the Goddess for Kieran," Alpha Declan announced, raising his glass to Kieran.

Alpha Kai nodded and echoed, "I could never do what Alpha Kieran does. He is ingenious when it comes to war strategies. He is a warrior that everyone looks up to." He glanced at Alexia. He teased with a wink,

saying, "Still, I am the most handsome and charming alpha in the land."

Laughter echoed around the long table that accommodated the attending leaders in the land. Even Alexia was amused by Alpha Kai's claims. Her smile brightened, and her eyes sparkled as she shook her head.

Alexia unwittingly turned to Kieran, and when their eyes met, she shut her mouth. He was angry. His eyes tightened at her like she had sinned. "What did I do?"

She dared not ask and simply grabbed her glass of water and gulped it all down.

Time was ticking, and some alphas and their mates had already left. Alexia was certain the king would leave soon, but she had yet to know why he chose her to be Kieran's bride. She did not want to bring it up while the other guests were around.

Minutes passed, and Alexia's fears came true. The king and queen bid goodbye, leaving one last reminder for Kieran. The king said, "Don't forget next week's council meeting. I shall have my people send a reminder."

"Yes, my king," Kieran answered with a nod.

The king said goodbye to everyone, including Alexia. Yet, despite meeting his eyes, the words were stuck in her throat. He went past two tables, walking side by side with his queen. His guards walked ahead of them. All guests had their heads down, in respect.

With each step the king took, her heart galloped.

'No. This can't be it,' Alexia thought. 'I have to get answers! Why did I hesitate for a simple task?'

She gathered her courage and braced herself.

Alexia knew there were rules of when to speak to the king and queen. Rae had already warned her about it. However, she lost her chances earlier. She took a deep breath, and after giving Kieran an apologetic stare, she ran in the king's direction, startling everyone.

"My king! Wait! My king!" She called, her voice strengthened to get the king's attention.

"Alexia?! What are you doing?" She noticed Kieran called for her, but she turned a blind eye. She wanted to speak to the king!

Alexia was running too fast on her heels that she tripped. To everyone's shock, the king saved her from falling face down. Alexia's eyes widened when she looked up and stared into the king's eyes. Immediately, she knew she was in trouble.

Queen Helen's eyes widened in anger as she said, "How dare you -"

"Helen, it's okay. This is Kieran's wife." King Balthasar raised his hand, suggesting there was no harm done. He glanced at Kieran and said, "It's okay, Kieran."

After the king helped Alexia up, she said outright, "My king, may I have a moment of your time, please?"

Alexia could feel Kieran's scorching gaze, but since she was already there, she had to pull through. She gulped, her eyes studying the reactions of everybody.

The guards were looking at her. The queen was glowering at her. She did not have to look to know that Kieran was angry at her now.

The king must have noticed her reluctance. He looked past her and ordered, "Kieran, give us a moment." He turned to his guards and to his wife, expressing the same. "Give us a minute."

He offered his hand to Alexia and asked, "Here, child. Let's take a walk."

They made their way to the one side of the garden where evergreens formed into arches. In that private space, Alexia sought, "My king, I'll go straight to the point -"

"You should. You don't want to keep my wife waiting," King Balthasar said. "What is it you seek, child?"

"Your Highness. Of all the women in the land, why did you choose me to be Kieran's wife?" Finally, Alexia asked.