

Chapter 18

The window slid down with mechanical smoothness. An older man peered out, hair silvered at the temples, spectacles perched neatly on his nose. His smile was mild, his tone courteous.

"Good evening, Miss Kaelani."

She stilled, every instinct flaring.

The man inclined his head faintly. "Forgive the abruptness. My name is Dr. Aldric. I serve as the physician to Mr. Julian's... estate." His eyes, keen and assessing, lingered on her face as if noting every flicker of expression. "I was sent on behalf of Mr. Jace. I believe we have some business to conduct."

Kaelani's gaze flicked around—neighbors on porches, street lights spilling across cobblestone. No one was looking, but the fear of being seen rooted her in place.

The driver's door opened. A man in dark attire stepped out, polished, impassive. He circled to the back and opened the door with a quiet click, waiting.

Kaelani's heart thudded. For a breath she hesitated, her fingers tightening on the straps of her bag. Then, forcing her face into calm neutrality, she slipped inside.

The leather seat sighed beneath her as the car pulled away from the curb. Dr. Aldric set a leather case on the seat between them, the faint clink of glass vials breaking the silence.

"Let's get to it, shall we," he said, already snapping on a pair of gloves.

She held out her arm when he gestured, the sleeve of her top pushed back. The needle slid in clean, sharp, filling one vial, then another, then another. By the fourth, her brows knit.

"Why so many?" She asked, unable to keep the edge from her voice.

"Better to run repeats," Dr. Aldric replied without looking up, carefully switching to the next vial. "False readings happen. Precaution, nothing more."

He finished the last draw, pressing a cotton pad firmly against her arm before finally meeting her eyes. His expression was soft, almost kind, but his words were too pointed to be casual.

"Tell me," he said without skipping a beat, "have you experienced any symptoms lately? Nausea, dizziness, fatigue, unusual cravings?" His pause was intentional. "Tenderness?"

Her mouth went dry. She drew her arm back, tucking it close. "No." The word came quick, clipped. "None."

Dr. Aldric's lips curved faintly, satisfied. "That's excellent." He packed the vials neatly away, as calm as if they'd been discussing the weather.

Kaelani turned to the window, the blur of lights and buildings sliding past. Her throat tightened with a thought she couldn't swallow.

She was sure that asshole Alpha loathed the idea of fathering a child with her. He had a Luna. At least, one he would claim soon if he hadn't already.

She was what he wanted, not some wolf-less nobody.

Dr. Aldric snapped the case shut and reached into his coat pocket. A small amber bottle clicked as he set it in her hand.

"Heat suppressants," he explained. "I'll call you tomorrow with your results. Assuming they're negative, you can start them right away."

Kaelani turned the bottle over in her palm, the label blank but the weight of it heavy.

He slipped a card from his wallet and offered it to her between two fingers. "When you require a refill, call me directly. I'll see to it promptly."

The car slowed, the hum of the engine dipping. Kaelani glanced out the window and let out a breath she didn't realize she'd been holding. Her house. They had brought her home.

Her fingers tightened on the pill bottle. Was she supposed to thank him? The words curdled in her throat. Instead, she managed, "Have a good evening, Doctor."

His smile was polite. "You as well, Miss Kaelani."

The driver opened her door. Cool night air rushed in. She stepped out, clutching the bottle in her hand so tight it might shatter within her grasp.

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