

# Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 1[ 2,308 words ]

*Chapter 1: Chapter 1 -*

ELODIE'S POV~

My heart broke into a million pieces as I stared at the paper right in my hands.

He signed my resignation today, and he didn't blink.

Years of standing by him, loving him only to realize I was nothing.

"Do you want me to tell him?" The voice snapped me out of my trance once more. I stiffened.

I bit the inside of my cheek so hard.

The sting in my mouth was nothing compared to the pain crashing through my chest like someone had taken a fistful of daggers and was driving them through me .

My hand curled tighter around the resignation papers. I couldn't look at the laptop screen anymore, not with the tears threatening to fall.

So I turned my head, sucked in a shaky breath, and blinked hard. My vision was already starting to blur.

God.

This hurt more than I thought it would.

"I... I don't think you should worry about it," I forced my voice not to crack. My throat burned as I dropped the paper beside my bag on the floor.

"There's no need anymore. He signed it. It's time for me to leave."

I heard the HR director sigh, and for a second, I didn't want to see her face.

But I did.

Her eyes were soft with worry as she leaned closer into the video call.

“Elodie... please don’t go.” Her voice was gentle.

“Alpha Calhoun didn’t realize it was your resignation. He signed it without even reading. You’ve been his right hand for years. He depends on you more than anyone else. He values you, Elodie. This isn’t just another role to fill. You’re not replaceable.”

My lips twitched. And not in a smile.

Valued?

Me?

I bit down harder on the inside of my lip to keep myself from laughing. Or screaming.

What a joke.

If he did, Wouldn’t he have come rushing in by now? Wouldn’t there be a single phone call? A message?

I nodded slowly and drew in a breath.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered. “I’ve thought this through. I’ve given everything I could. Even though I’ve been his Gamma all these years... I know Calhoun will find someone else. He always does.”

I blinked through the burning in my eyes and continued. “I just... I need to go back to my pack. I got word that my parents aren’t doing well. I want to be with them while I still can. I’ll stay for the next month to handle all the transition processes. But after that...”

I swallowed hard.

“I’ll be gone. Thank you so much for everything.”

The HR director’s face fell.

And that more than anything broke me. Even she didn’t even know what to say.

Then the screen went blank. Then I broke into tears.

I buried my face in my palm, sucking in a breath so sharp it scraped my throat raw. Then I stood, wiped my cheeks with the back of my hand, and walked over to the corner of the room where my boxes sat.

The villa was silent.

Four whole years in this private cliffside sanctuary—Calhoun’s luxurious little exile for me.

He gave me this place. Told me it was mine.

But it never felt like home.

My hands moved on their own as I started packing.

I didn't have much. Just a few clothes. Some books. A mug he once left on the counter and never asked back for.

I left that one behind.

The things that didn't matter and The things he'd never notice were missing. Maybe when he finally came here again, he'd toss them out.

The moment I sealed the last box, I just... stood there...Breathing.

But my heart... My heart clenched so tight I had to grab the edge of the table to keep from dropping to the floor.

Tears came again.

But this time, I didn't fight them.

I let them fall.

Because no one was watching.

Because for once, I could fall apart in peace.

I didn't even notice how tight I'd been holding a box until it hit the floor and scattered the few items I had left. Memories of nine whole years began...crashing in without warning.

My chest tightened, and I pressed a palm against it, as if that could stop the way it felt like I was being torn open from the inside out.

God, I was just a Gamma back then. A nothing. A girl with scars on her confidence and hands that shook every time someone of higher rank looked her way. But somehow...I don't know how—I passed that scholarship exam and got accepted into the elite academy run by the Nightbourne Pack.

I should've been proud.

Instead, I wished I could vanish into the walls the moment I arrived.

The halls were all glass and silver. The students? Dressed like royalty.

And me?

I couldn't even look up without catching the scorn in their eyes.

The way they stared like I'd crawled out of a sewer.

Like I didn't belong.

I remember it clearly. That first day. I was supposed to attend Advanced Political History in Room B2—but I was already turning around. I wasn't going in there. Not with them. I was going to skip it. Hide in the back gardens. Maybe cry.

That's when I bumped into Mila Damaris.

She looked at me like I wasn't dirt. She asked what class I had, and before I could stammer out a full sentence, she was dragging me there herself.

And just like that... I became part of her world.

I didn't know then.

God, if I had... maybe I'd have run.

Because if I'd known what loving someone from that world would do to me...If I'd known it would end like this...Maybe I would've said no.

But I didn't.

I followed her everywhere she wanted me to. Slowly, Mila became my best friend. She introduced me to everyone like I was someone. Even her family.

And that was the night I met Calhoun. Her older brother. The heir to the Nightbourne Pack.

God, I remember the first time I saw him.

He barely looked at me.

But I swear, something in me shifted. My wolf went wild, purring, pulling me toward him.

I thought maybe—just maybe...he was my mate.

But what was I supposed to do with that? I was a Gamma.

He was an Alpha born.

So I buried it. Deep. So deep it burned.

Then we graduated. Mila left, said she was off to Italy to expand her family's business and take on further studies. She asked me to come.

I refused and stayed. Not because I had anything left here...

But because of Calhoun, was still here.

And I was stupid enough to want to be near him.

So I applied. Took the job as his Gamma. His assistant.

And he accepted, although he kept me a little close. That should've been enough.

But then came that night. The Pack's annual gala.

Everyone was there. And I noticed Calhoun standing by the archway, eyes glassy, his fingers rubbing at his temple.

Something was wrong.

I could smell it. Something in his scent—off.

Then he staggered. Just a little. But I saw it.

And because I'm a fool, I followed him past the hall. Into the dim corridor.

I should've turned back.

I was reaching for my phone when I heard his pained growl. And then... he turned.

His eyes were glowing amber.

His wolf was trying to break through.

“Calhoun—wait—just hold on—I'm calling someone—”

But I never made the call. He was suddenly in front of me, breathing hard, his hand slamming beside my head against the wall. And then...He kissed me.

No... he didn't kiss me.

He devoured me.

And I... I let him.

I should've pushed him away. But instead, I closed my eyes and let my stupid heart believe, for just one second, that he wanted me.

Then the Morning After...

I should never have woken up.

Not in that bed. Not in that room.

For a second, the world was quiet, and for the first time in forever. Until my eyes opened.

Calhoun was there, sitting in the chair by the window. One leg crossed, arms resting lazily, as though he'd been watching me sleep all night. His dead eyes were fixed on mine, so empty they sucked the air out of my lungs. There wasn't even a flicker of emotion on his face.

My stomach clenched.

And then I realized. I was naked.

God... this was my first. I gave him my first! Pain knotted in every part of my body, not just the physical ache, but something else. Something that screamed I had made a mistake so massive I might never recover.

I tried to sit up. Even breathing felt like punishment.

Calhoun didn't move. He just leaned back, eyes still locked on me like he was watching something insignificant.

Then he spoke coldly. "I know you like me. I knew the moment Mila brought you to the family villa."

I froze. My lips parted, but nothing came out.

"No need to pretend. I know," he leaned forward. "But don't get your hopes high. I'd never like someone like you. What happened last night was a mistake... and it should stay that way."

The words hit me like a slap, but his face didn't flinch. Not even a flicker of guilt.

I was a mistake?

I should have said something. Screamed. Slapped him. But my voice was gone. My heart... sank.

Then he stood. Casually.

He walked over to the drawer, pulled something out. A black card. Tossed it on the bed like it was trash.

"Mila told me about you," he muttered, still not looking at me. "Struggling family. Gamma blood. Trying to make something out of your life."

He turned to leave, then added without flinching,

"There's enough money in there to set you up. You can thank me later."

That was the moment my tears began to sting, my throat clenching with humiliation I didn't know how to swallow.

But he didn't stop. He looked me straight in the eyes, and said,

"Don't give me that look. I'm in love. I have a mate. Let's both forget this ever happened."

He was cruel. He wasn't even trying to hide it. And I hated that I had let myself dream. Even for one night.

Because suddenly, I remembered Mila's voice in my head again.

"He's obsessed with Carmela Reyes. You know, the girl from the neighboring Pack who keeps cheating on him? He'll never stop running after her."

And she was right.

He'd never stop chasing someone who kept hurting him, and I... I was just the fool who thought maybe I could be something different.

My tears came before I could stop them.. But he didn't even spare me a glance as he began to walk toward the door.

"Wait!" I gasped, dragging the sheets with me, stumbling out of bed. I was shaking. I didn't care if I looked pathetic.

"I don't want your money," My voice cracked. "I just want a chance to prove I could be meant for you."

He stopped.

Then he turned. Rolled his eyes, and walked out.

And That was the beginning of my hell.

From that day forward, we were nothing but strangers in the day, and at night...I became his assistant. His sex toy. Nothing more.

I tried so hard. I bought gifts, small things I thought would make him smile. He never opened them. I found them in the trash. All of them.

But nothing prepared me for his birthday. That night, I sat on the floor of my room, clutching a stupid little box of cufflinks I never got to give him—while he posted a picture on his social feed. Him and

Carmela Reyes, as he kissed her.

And it hit me : I would never be enough. I would never heal from this.

I bit the inside of my cheek so hard, I tasted blood. I was done crying. I swear.

I snapped out of the past, grabbed my box of things and headed toward the door. But the moment I opened it, I gasped.

Calhoun was standing there, leaning lazily against the doorframe.

His voice was casual. Like I wasn't dying inside.

"Where are you going?"

My chest tightened. "I found a new apartment. I'm moving out."

He hummed. "I'll drive you."

I said quickly, hugging the box tighter to my chest. "It's not that far."

His jaw clenched. "I wasn't asking."

I didn't argue again.

We walked to his Porsche in silence. But the moment I stepped in, I knew something was wrong.

It reeked of floral perfume. Pink dolls...were placed carefully in the dashboard and on the seat.

He saw the way I looked at them. He rolled his eyes.

"Carmela wanted a change. I had to give it to her."

My heart cracked.

This was the car Whispered things I stupidly believed. Fucked me. And now... it was hers. Everything was hers.

The box slipped from my arms, crashing onto the floor. Glass shattered.

I scrambled to gather the pieces, but a shard sliced deep into my palm. Blood welled instantly.

"Shit," Calhoun growled, reaching toward me.

But before his fingers could touch me, his phone buzzed.

He paused. Then picked it up.

"Cal, baby, I cut my hand," Carmela whined from the other end. "It's bleeding. Come home, please."

I froze.

Calhoun sighed. Then looked down at me. "I'll call my Beta to come get you. Just stay still."

And then he was gone.

I was left there. Bleeding. On the ground. Glass stuck in my skin.

My chest squeezed tightly.

“You’ll get what you want, Calhoun. I’ll never love you again.”

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 2[ 2,279 words ]

*Chapter 2: Chapter 2*

ELODIE’S POV

It was just another Monday. But it felt like my funeral. Not literally... but something inside me—something warm, hopeful, had died long ago. And today, like every day, I was dragging the bones of what was left into the damn building just to look at him. To look at the man who ripped me apart piece by piece and still had no clue how deeply I bled for him.

God, I hated Mondays.

But more than anything... I hated myself.

For still hoping. For still waking up every morning thinking, maybe today he’ll see me... maybe today he’ll love me back.

Stupid, stupid girl.

I pulled on my coat, slapped on some lip balm so I didn’t look half-dead, and walked into the office like a ghost in her own skin. No one could tell though. I was always on time. Always put-together. Always carrying out my duties like a perfect little Gamma. Even my wolf was tired of me as she whined each day.

Meetings. Pack rosters. Investment briefings. Boardroom memos. Scheduling. I handled everything. I made sure the empire Calhoun was trying to build didn’t crumble from the inside. I was the hands behind the throne.

But he didn’t see that. He never did.

I kept myself busy all morning, burying my pain beneath back-to-back meetings and hollow smiles. I briefed the warriors. I double-checked the contracts coming in from the trading sectors. I filed the latest correspondence from the Nightbourne Pack, ironically addressed to his attention. Everything had to be perfect. Everything had to be in place.

Because I was just the assistant.

And he was the man I was slowly dying for.

It wasn't until I glanced at the clock that my heart skipped.

Shit. His meeting.

He was due in five minutes. Of course, I had to go remind him. Of course, I had to walk into his office again and pretend like I hadn't spent the entire weekend crying into a pillow while he probably spent it tangled up with Carmela Reyes.

I took a deep breath. One. Then another. Picked up a few files just to give my hands something to do, anything to stop them from shaking, and slowly started the walk down the hall.

My boots echoed against the marble tiles as I approached the thick double doors of his office. My chest tightened the closer I got, like my heart already knew what I didn't.

And then I heard it.

Laughter.

High-pitched. Feminine. Loud.

My body stopped moving.

I didn't even realize I had frozen until my fingers hovered just above the door handle.

That voice. I'd know it anywhere.

Carmela Reyes.

I swallowed. My shoulders slumped. My whole soul felt like it wanted to shrink, disappear into the floor tiles. But I had to go in. I had to do my job.

So I opened the door.

And I swear, blood drained from my face the second I stepped inside.

She was there. Sitting on his goddamn desk like she owned him.

Her Ginger hair tumbling over her bare shoulder as she fed him apple slices...apple, the one fruit Calhoun always said he hated while his hand worked effortlessly on his laptop... and the other hand was wrapped lazily around her waist like it belonged there.

I couldn't breathe.

I stood there, stunned. Stupid.

Fingers still gripping the knob like it was the only thing anchoring me to this world.

Her laughter died when she noticed me.

Calhoun didn't look up immediately. But when he did... his eyes narrowed like he was annoyed.

"Are you insane?" Carmela snapped, venom in her tone as she glared at me like I was filth on her shoes. "Do you not know how to knock?"

I blinked.

That's when reality hit. Not just of what I saw, but what it meant.

Calhoun... the Calhoun I knew. The one who hated body contact. The one who once refused to drink from the same cup I used when I had a fever. The one who never let me sit too close, who acted like my very presence disturbed the air around him—he had her sitting on his desk. Feeding him like a child. Touching him like it was nothing.

Who was this man?

He finally looked up at me again. His voice was annoyed.

"What?" he said, like I had barged in on something trivial. "What do you want? Why are you standing there like you've seen a ghost?"

I wanted to throw the files at his face. I wanted to scream and cry. But all I could do was stand there.

Frozen. Humiliated. Heartbroken. Again.

I forced my voice out, barely a whisper. "You have a meeting. In five minutes, Alpha."

Carmela suddenly began to cough violently. My body stiffened. I didn't know what came over me—maybe instinct, maybe worry...but I took half a step forward before I stopped myself. Before I remembered who I was to them. No one.

But Calhoun...

His reaction nearly shattered me.

His eyes widened in alarm. Panic...real panic...washed over his face like I'd never seen before. He immediately reached for the other mug on his table, a ceramic one he never let anyone touch. The one I'd tried to hand him tea in once and he'd refused. He picked it up...his own mug...and gently brought it to her lips.

"Here, baby. Drink slowly," he said, voice calm but hurried. He rubbed her back as she took a sip, whispering something I couldn't hear. His hand never left her body—gentle strokes on her back, soft circles behind her neck. His brows were drawn, his mouth in a tight line of concern.

And it hurt. God, it hurt so badly.

That was the softest version of him I had ever seen.

And it wasn't for me.

It had never been for me.

My eyes burned. I tried to blink it away, but the sting didn't stop. A tear slipped out before I could catch it. I sniffled, quiet and quick, hoping—praying—neither of them heard.

But Calhoun finally looked up. His eyes locked with mine for the first time in that room. I couldn't read what was behind them. Maybe irritation. Maybe nothing. But they didn't soften.

Then Carmela turned her face, tilted her chin up to him like she owned him—and maybe she did—and pressed a possessive kiss to his lips. Her hand came up and wrapped around the back of his neck, curling into his hair like she was comforting him now.

And then she smiled. A soft, smug smile.

“You're such a darling, Cal,” she purred. “You'd do anything to make sure I'm okay, wouldn't you?”

I held my breath. My nails dug into the folders I held. It took everything in me not to break down right there on the spot.

Calhoun's lips twitched into a small smile.

It was the first time I had ever seen warmth on his face like that. And it was like it had been carved for her. Only for her.

His eyes flicked to hers, and with a small, quiet chuckle, he said,

“Of course. Anything for you.”

Anything for you.

Not me.

Never me.

My hands trembled.

Then the worst happened. The thing I'd always believed he would never do.

Carmela took that same mug—the one she had just drunk from—and without hesitation, she raised it to his lips.

And he didn't flinch.

He didn't question it.

He just... drank from it.

The exact same mug. From her hand. Her lips. Her germs.

I felt a cold hit me. Like someone had thrown a bucket of ice over my spine.

He wouldn't even use a fork I used once. He wouldn't even sit beside me if I sneezed.

And now, he was sharing a damn cup.

I stood there, watching a version of Calhoun I didn't recognize. A version I never got to meet. One I begged for in silence, dreamed of having—just once—even if it was a shadow of the man before me.

But all of him had always belonged to her.

My phone buzzed in my coat pocket. The vibration dragged me back to reality—just barely. I glanced down at the screen. It was a calendar reminder. Pack Alpha council, twenty minutes in.

I cleared my throat softly and lowered my gaze to hide the burn rising behind my eyes.

“Alpha Calhoun,” I said, “some of the Pack Alphas are still waiting for your response. Most of them... they aren't in a good mood.”

I could barely lift my eyes, but I did. Just a little. Enough to see Carmela roll hers dramatically and let out a disgusted grunt.

“Ugh. Cal,” she scoffed, pointing directly at me. “I swear, I hate this Gamma of yours. Doesn't she know when to shut up?”

I stiffened.

And then his glare found me.

A harsh flick of those dark eyes that had once softened in my dreams.

“Tell them I'll join them soon,” Calhoun snapped, not even sparing me a full glance. “My future Luna nearly choked. She needs to be attended to. Now.”

My lips parted to say something—to offer to push the meeting, or maybe to suggest someone else deliver the message—but the second I took a breath to speak, he cut me off.

“Carmela comes first before any Pack meetings,” he said, sharply. Like it was a reminder. Like I'd somehow forgotten my place.

My heart clenched so painfully I had to clench my fists to keep my voice from shaking.

“Yes, Alpha,” I whispered, and quickly typed the message to the Alphas' platform to reschedule the session. I was just about to turn when Carmela let out another little groan, dragging her fingers through her hair in mock stress.

“You know,” she drawled, “I’ve heard people say Elodie makes the best broth in the office. I’d like to try one. I’ll stay back here and rest. And if I like it... maybe I’ll let her serve me again.”

My lungs locked.

Please no. Not this.

Then Calhoun spoke, “You heard her. Go make the broth. Stay with her until I get back.”

That was it. No second thought. No consideration. No look at me to see the pain his words carved into me.

I forced a smile—God, it hurt to even curve my lips—and nodded.

“Yes, Alpha.”

And then I turned. My feet felt heavy. My chest ached. My eyes burned. But I walked out. I made the broth. It only took three minutes.

Three minutes to convince myself to breathe.

Three minutes to pull myself back together.

When I came back in, carefully holding the tray, the first thing I saw made my stomach twist.

Carmela. Standing close. Too close. Straightening Calhoun’s tie with both hands, like a perfect little wife. His head bent slightly as he let her. He didn’t even acknowledge my return.

I lowered myself as I stepped in, walking past them quietly. As I turned toward her with the bowl, Calhoun brushed past me and walked out—just like that.

I brought the broth to her, placed it gently on the side table.

She barely looked at me. Just picked up the spoon, took a sip And then, her face twisted in Disgust.

“What the hell is this?!” she snapped, just before she shrieked. I barely had time to step back when she hurled the hot broth straight at me.

It splashed across my chest and shirt, scalding heat burning into my skin as I let out a sharp cry.

“Ahh!” I gasped, stumbling back, trying not to drop the tray.

But she wasn’t done.

The next thing I saw was Calhoun’s mug—his sacred mug—the one he only let her touch. She hurled it with such rage I couldn’t dodge it fast enough. It shattered right against my cheek and pain exploded through my face, my ears ringing from the force.

Glass cut into my skin. Blood trickled down. I staggered and caught myself on the wall. My heart raced. My vision blurred.

She stood. Her eyes glowing a dangerous amber. Her voice dripped venom.

“The broth is cold, Gamma. What were you trying to do? Poison me?”

I couldn’t speak.

I opened my mouth, tried to explain, but nothing came out. Just stuttering breaths and shame burning hotter than the broth that clung to my clothes.

The door burst open.

Calhoun rushed in, followed by a few staff members who gasped at the sight.

But Carmela...Carmela was faster.

She turned to him with tears already streaming down her face—like she’d rehearsed this moment. She rushed into his arms like the victim, burying her face into his chest as she cried.

“She tried to poison me,” she wailed. “I swear, Cal... just because I told her off earlier for interrupting us. She did something to the broth, I know it. I don’t feel good...”

I blinked, trembling, bleeding, heart pounding, waiting—just waiting—for him to ask me what happened.

But he didn’t.

He kissed her head. Whispered something in her ear I couldn’t hear.

Then he turned to someone behind me. Not even to me.

“Clear her desk,” he said, coldly. “Her salaries will be slashed by seventy percent. And make sure she learns to make better broth. She’ll issue a public apology to Carmela by tomorrow.”

Then he wrapped an arm around Carmela’s waist, gently tugged her closer, and walked her out.

That was it.

No questions.

No defense.

No glance my way.

Just like that, I was nothing.

And I stood there—shaking, burned, bleeding, humiliated as the door clicked shut behind them.

And my heart...shattered into pieces no one would ever care to pick up.

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 3[ 2,288 words ]

*Chapter 3: Chapter 3*

Chapter 3:

Elodie's POV ~

My body felt like it was tearing apart, every nerve screaming as I clutched my arm and tried to breathe through the stabbing pain. The burn throbbed so deep I swear it was crawling through my veins, and yet the sound that gutted me wasn't from the wound... it was from the soft echo of Calhoun's footsteps fading, his tall frame disappearing from sight without even a glance back as he carried Carmela away.

Just like that. He was gone.

I bit down so hard on my lip that I tasted blood, but it still couldn't stop the sob that broke through me. The workers nearby were whispering, their eyes darting at me in pity, but I couldn't bear to look at them. I hated their stares, hated the way they reminded me how low I'd fallen. How stupid I've been all these years. My throat burned, and before I could stop it, tears came in waves.

I wiped at my face with my sleeve, gasping, and staggered to the wall where the broom and mop leaned. My hands shook violently as I grabbed them, the wooden handle digging into my palm. Do something. Move. Just move. If I cleaned, maybe I wouldn't collapse.

I forced myself forward, bent down with the mop in one hand, broom in the other, scrubbing at the mess through blurred eyes. My body was trembling, dizziness clawing at my head until I swore the ground was swaying beneath me. I couldn't feel my legs. I couldn't breathe right.

"Elodie, stop—" a gentle voice broke through.

Before I could even react, the broom was tugged out of my grip. Another pair of hands pried the mop away from me. I blinked up to see two of my co-workers, faces heavy with pity.

"Let us help you," one of them said softly, her voice shaking with guilt. She knelt, pushing the mop away and reaching for me.

An arm slid carefully around my shoulders, steadying me as my knees threatened to give out. "You shouldn't... you shouldn't be standing like this. You're bleeding," another murmured, her eyes darting to my arm.

One of them crouched low, meeting my broken gaze. Her voice cracked as she whispered, “Elodie... I’m sorry. This is wrong. You should get this checked, please.”

I swallowed hard, my lips parting, but nothing came out. My throat was so raw, strangled. So I just gave the weakest nod, my chin trembling as more tears slipped free.

They sighed, helpless, and one of them tightened her hold around me. Slowly, carefully, she began guiding me toward the door. My feet dragged across the floor. Behind me, I could hear the murmurs start up again, so quiet, but not quiet enough.

“This is unfair,” one of the women whispered. “I passed by earlier and saw her carrying that broth. The steam was rising off it. If it wasn’t boiling hot, it wouldn’t have burned her skin like that.”

I stiffened, my chest heaving, but I kept moving.

Another voice cut in, angrier. “Carmela is a troublemaker. Even if it wasn’t hot, why would she throw it like that? That wasn’t an accident. That was... that was almost like a murder attempt! She could’ve scarred Elodie’s face forever or broken her nose.”

I flinched. My stomach turned.

Then came another sigh. “What can we say? Alpha Calhoun no longer has a mind of his own. He’s a puppet now, dancing to Carmela’s tune. She’s the real ruler of this place. And we all know it, if any of us so much as step on her feet, we’ll pay dearly. Pity poor Elodie. She’s the one Carmela always picks on.”

Their words sliced through me deeper than the burn ever could. My heart bled and bled, until it felt like nothing was left of it. My chest tightened so painfully I thought I’d collapse right there.

The woman supporting me must have felt it too, because she squeezed my shoulder gently. That tiny gesture broke me. My eyes stung, another sob rising.

“Thank you,” I whispered.

She gave me a sad smile, eyes soft with sympathy, and nodded. “Come. Let’s get you out of here.”

She led me past the stares, past the whispers, past the wreckage of my pride.

But as soon as I stepped out of the room, memories hit me.

I remembered the day we’d been at that negotiation table, the neighboring pack trying to tear apart our contract. They accused me, pointed their fingers, tried to humiliate me in front of everyone. My hands had shaken, my words caught in my throat, but before I could crumble, Calhoun had slammed his hand against the table, his eyes blazing.

“Touch her name again, and I’ll end this deal,” he had growled, his voice like thunder. “You fault her, you fault me. Do you want war? Then keep testing me.”

The entire room had gone silent. Even the opposing Alpha had paled. And Calhoun... Calhoun had turned his face toward me, his expression unreadable but his presence wrapping around me like armor.

That day, he stood beside me. Unshaken. Defiant. Protecting me with a ferocity that had made my heart soar.

I had been so stupidly excited, so sure it meant something. That maybe... just maybe... he was beginning to see me. To care.

And now...now I could barely breathe through the ache of knowing how wrong I had been.

How very, very stupid I must have been.

I don’t know what hurt more—that Carmela spit out one baseless lie with that venomous tongue of hers, or that Calhoun didn’t even blink before believing her. Not a single question. Not even a flicker of doubt. He just looked at me...looked through me and passed judgment as though I was already guilty.

My heart shattered right there. I could almost hear it crack, breaking into pieces so small they could never be put back together. I fought the urge to clutch my chest where the pain was slamming through me, but it didn’t matter. It felt like meteors crashing inside me, burning me alive from the inside out.

Why? After years of giving my everything—my time, my heart, my entire life, why was it so easy for him to throw me away? Didn’t he see it? Didn’t he see how much I loved him? How much I bled for him, silently, every single day? How every decision I made, every sacrifice, every sleepless night was to make his life easier?

Didn’t I deserve a little trust? Just once? Even half of what he gave Carmela so freely?

Or was right and wrong meaningless in his world, as long as it pleased her?

Those questions tore me apart, but his coldness—the way he didn’t even spare me another glance was the knife that twisted the deepest.

By the time my kind coworker slipped an arm around me and led me out of the building, I was nothing more than a hollow shell. I didn’t even remember walking out the doors; it was like my body moved while my soul stayed behind, trapped in that office where I had been condemned without a chance to breathe.

She hailed an Uber for me, her voice soft, her touch careful as if I would crumble if she held me too tightly. When the car arrived, she paid the fare herself and placed a gentle hand on my shoulder.

“Take good care of yourself, Elodie,” she whispered, her eyes heavy with sympathy I couldn’t bear to accept.

I gave her a weak nod, my throat too raw to form words, and slipped into the backseat.

The ride home was torture. The silence inside the car felt like a coffin, pressing in on me from every direction. The driver kept glancing at me in the rearview mirror, his brows furrowed with quiet concern as my tears slid down my face, one after the other, never stopping. Bless him, though he didn't ask. He didn't pry. He just drove.

When we pulled up to my apartment, I stumbled out, clutching my bag like it was the only thing tethering me. I left it by the door the second I got inside, too drained to care, and headed straight to the shower.

Water hit my skin, but it wasn't soothing. It was sharp, too sharp, stinging the burns and bruises Carmela had left me with. I winced over and over, but I didn't move away. Instead, I let my tears mix with the water, running down in rivers until I couldn't tell where one ended and the other began. I scrubbed, but I couldn't wash away the shame. I couldn't scrub away his face, the cold way he looked at me, the way he chose her lies over my truth.

By the time I stepped out, I was trembling, my bathrobe clinging to my damp skin. I didn't care that my hair was dripping, that my bed would get soaked—I just wanted to collapse, to sink into the sheets and disappear.

But just as I was about to crawl into bed, my phone started ringing.

My heart sank straight into my stomach when I saw the caller ID.

Calhoun.

For a second, my trembling fingers hovered above the screen, ready to swipe and answer, desperate to hear his voice even if it was dismissive. But before I could, the call ended.

A hollow silence followed, and then a vibration. My chest tightened when I saw the message pop up on my screen: "Bring me ibuprofen and warm milk with honey. Be fast."

Disappointment curled in my belly so sharp it made me nauseous. But without thinking, like the trained fool I had become, I slipped into another wear, tied my hair up with trembling hands, and left my apartment. My feet carried me on autopilot, dragging me toward the errand as if my own body refused to rebel against him.

When I finally reached Calhoun's penthouse, I wasn't prepared. A wave of nausea slammed into me the moment I stepped inside before shock could even register.

Everything was different.

The cold, black interior that had once mirrored him, his taste, his darkness—gone. The little bonsai tree I had planted with his grandfather before the old man passed... gone. In its place stood a sunflower, its bright yellow petals mocking me. Carmela. Of course.

I froze like a fool in the doorway, my eyes stinging as I took in the rest. Expensive handbags and shoes scattered at every corner, perfumes lining the glass tables, soft feminine colors layered over what used to be his.

My heart dropped so violently.

The sound of the door unlocking startled me. Calhoun appeared. He didn't even spare me a greeting. Without a word, he plucked the bag from my hand, rummaging through it. Only when he had confirmed everything was there did he finally bother to lift his gaze to my face.

"Shit," he muttered, his brow furrowing. "Your injuries look terrible. Have you had them treated?"

I swallowed hard. Slowly, I shook my head.

He exhaled, rubbing the back of his neck. "Elodie... Carmela's been having her mood swings, like she always does. It wasn't because she wanted to hurt you, alright? She's just... she's just having a rough day. Make sure you get those wounds taken care of. If you need a few days off, I'll sign the form."

A bitter smile tugged at my lips before I could stop it. "That won't be necessary, Alpha Calhoun. By the end of the month—"

"Listen to me," he cut in sharply. "I'm only concerned because you need to be strong. You'll be putting together Carmela's welcome back party, and I want it perfect."

His words lodged in my throat. I almost choked on them. My lips parted, but no sound came out. My knees felt weak. I took a step back, needing air.

He noticed. His eyes narrowed as if he was about to speak again, but then a soft, feigned whimper broke the silence.

"Cal..."

Carmela stood leaning against the bedroom door, her piercing gaze locked on me. In that instant, her face twisted—pure venom flashing in her eyes. But the second Calhoun turned toward her, she shifted. Her expression melted into one of fragility, as if she'd break apart at the smallest touch.

"Has she brought the stuff?" she asked. "I'm feeling pain all over my body, Cal. I just... I want cuddles. And massages."

My stomach lurched.

His face softened instantly. He nodded, his voice dropping gentle. "Don't hurt your feet. Go lay on the bed. I'll get the maids to heat the milk, then I'll come join you. Okay?"

"Okay," she whispered, smiling sweetly.

I stood there, silent. My chest burned. My eyes stung so badly I thought they'd burst. Watching the way his entire being softened for her—while all I ever got was indifference. I remembered the night I almost broke a tooth from clenching down against the stress, the days I tripped in his presence and he hadn't even looked twice. And when I fainted from exhaustion, rushed into the ER—how had he reacted?

He signed my leave form. That was all.

No visit. No call. No concern.

But Carmela? A whimper was all it took to melt him.

When he left with her, I felt my throat swell. A single tear slipped free before I could stop it. I turned and walked out, my legs carrying me like they didn't belong to me anymore. A bitter ache rose in my chest. By the time I stepped outside, I tilted my head back to the sky.

And just one tear fell.

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 4[ 1,645 words ]

*Chapter 4: Chapter 4*

It had been days since that last ugly scene, and I buried myself in healing—at least on the surface. I made sure every wound was cleaned, every bruise tended to, every part of me forced to look alive even when I didn't feel it.

Calhoun didn't ask. Not once. Not about the pain in my body, not about the way sleep refused to come to me unless I was completely drained. It was as though I was invisible.

So I kept myself busy. The party Carmela demanded had to be flawless, and that became my excuse for everything. If I didn't think, I couldn't feel. If I didn't feel, I wouldn't fall apart. But the pressure came at me like a storm. The staff followed me around with endless questions, decorators called me at odd hours about colors and flowers, the planners wanted confirmation on things I didn't even remember agreeing to. My head never stopped pounding. And Calhoun...when he did call...it wasn't to check on me. No. It was only to remind me of what Carmela wanted. How spectacular she expected her event to be.

By the time the four days bled into each other, I couldn't even remember what I ate or if I slept. All I knew was the migraine drilling into my skull as I dragged myself into the venue. My legs felt like sandbags, my chest tight, but I forced myself to keep moving. The party was set for 8pm sharp, and if nothing else, it had to be perfect.

The lights dazzled, chandeliers dripping like golden waterfalls, music humming softly to welcome the elites that began to fill the hall. And then, as though she'd been waiting for the perfect moment, Carmela arrived.

I don't think I'd ever seen a dress like that before. Midnight blue silk that clung to her figure as though it had been poured on her body, crystals embroidered along the bodice, catching every shard of light in the hall. The gown pooled at her feet in a sweeping train, the kind only seen on

red carpets. Her hair was slicked back, diamonds dripping from her ears, her chin tilted with that practiced arrogance. She didn't just walk in—she sashayed—her heels clicking like an anthem meant to remind the world she was the center of it. And, of course, the guests swarmed her with their praises.

“She looks breathtaking,” someone whispered nearby.

“That gown alone must have cost tens of thousands,” another added.

“Well, Carmela is Calhoun's weakness, isn't she? Look at this...look at what should have been a simple welcome party, yet here we are at what feels like a gala.”

“I remember in college,” a man chuckled, “Calhoun wouldn't let any guy look at her twice. He beat one to a pulp just for holding her hand in a group assignment.”

“Oh, yes! And the gifts—don't get me started. Carmela was showered with things that made the entire school jealous.”

“She was born lucky,” someone sighed. “And she still is.”

Their words sank into me like knives. I stood at the far end of the hall, trying to disappear into the shadows, clutching a flute of champagne so tightly I thought the glass might shatter in my palm. My eyes stung, but I refused to let tears fall. I couldn't. Not here.

And then... tranquility slipped right out of reach.

I saw the way Carmela paused mid-laugh, as though she caught a scent in the air. Her sharp eyes darted across the hall until they landed on me. And the glint that flashed through them made my stomach twist. A glint that promised cruelty. She had found her prey.

Her heels carried her straight toward me, and with every step she took, my body stiffened. My chest rose and fell in shallow breaths. I wanted to move, to slip away, but my legs betrayed me, rooted to the floor.

“Elodie.” Her voice dripped with mock sweetness as she finally stopped before me. Her lips curved, but it wasn't a smile—it was a sneer. “The decorations are decent, I suppose. The guests seem entertained. But me?” She tilted her head, her diamond earring catching the light. “I'm not pleased in the slightest.”

She leaned closer, her perfume overwhelming. “And look at you, standing here like some ornament. But tell me, how fitting is it, Elodie, that you...someone so beneath this world, are dressed so plainly? Your shoes, especially. Lower, dull. Not fit for such an occasion. So here's what you'll do.” Her eyes sparkled with malice. “You'll bend down—right here, right now and fix my heel straps. They're loose. Do it immediately.”

The world stilled. I swear it did. Conversations cut short, music dimmed into the background of my pounding pulse, and suddenly every gaze in the hall was on us. On me. Heat rushed to my cheeks,

blood boiling, shame crawling under my skin. My chest burned as Carmela's lips curled, challenging me to defy her.

I forced air into my lungs. My voice was calm when it came out, though my insides trembled. "I'm sorry, Carmela. I can't bend. My waist still aches and I'm healing slowly." My fingers tightened on the champagne flute until I thought it would shatter. "But if those shoes hurt badly, I can get your costumiers to bring you another pair. What I cannot do is bend."

The silence after that was deafening.

For a moment, Carmela just stared at me. Her face froze in disbelief, like she couldn't quite process what I'd said. It was as though the world had just tilted off its axis, and someone— me, had dared to ruin her perfect balance. I watched her eyes widen, lips parting in shock, and for a heartbeat, she looked like a spoiled child who had never been told no before.

But the shock didn't last long. It twisted, darkened, and within seconds her pretty face was flushed with rage. Her chest rose sharply as she leaned closer, her teeth gritting.

"Did you just say no to me?" she snarled, her voice slicing through the hush of the hall.

Every gaze drilled into me. My heart thundered, but I forced myself not to shrink. My nails bit into the champagne flute as I whispered, steady but trembling inside, "I said I'm sorry, Carmela. I cannot bend. I told you I'm healing. My waist... it still hurts."

And just when I thought the humiliation couldn't cut deeper, fate proved me wrong.

The doors swung open and Calhoun stepped in.

My chest tightened instantly. His commanding presence filled the hall. His sharp eyes scanned the room, narrowing the second he noticed the tension. In three long strides he was near, his entire focus locked on Carmela's face.

The moment she saw him, Carmela's fury melted like ice under the sun. To my shock, her eyes brimmed with tears... tears she summoned faster than I could blink. Before I could even process, she stumbled forward, collapsing into his arms, sobbing as though I'd struck her.

"Calhoun," she cried, her voice cracking beautifully, theatrically. "Please... look at how cold-hearted she has become. All I asked—" she hiccuped against his chest, her diamonds catching the light as her body trembled— "was for her to help me fix the strap of my shoes, so I wouldn't trip and embarrass you in front of all these guests. Elodie was always so perfect in small details like these. But tonight... tonight she refused me. She looked me in the eye and told me she wouldn't bend."

My throat dried. My heart dropped, sinking somewhere to the pit of my stomach.

Calhoun's eyes snapped to me, and the glare that burned from him nearly turned my blood cold. Rage... pure and murderous darkened his gaze as he pulled Carmela tighter against his side, shielding her like a treasure.

“Why would you be so cruel, Elodie?” His voice thundered, rattling me from the inside out. “Carmela is still healing, for goodness’ sake. She should not be stressed in the slightest. What’s so difficult about helping her with a strap? What?” His jaw flexed, fury lacing every syllable. “As far as you are my Gamma, you will do whatever Carmela asks of you. Whatever it is. If she wants her shoes tied, you bend down and tie them. Immediately. Do it now.”

The final snap of his words shattered what little pride I had left.

Around us, murmurs began to swell like poison.

“She’s just a Gamma. What right does she have to refuse an Alpha’s daughter?”

“Ungrateful thing, standing there as if she belongs in their class.”

“How dare she make Carmela lower herself to ask twice?”

“She’s nothing compared to Carmela. And yet she acts up?”

“No wonder Alpha Calhoun looks furious, imagine embarrassing him like this in public!”

Every word stung. Each whisper of theirs sliced deeper than the last, tearing at what little strength I clung to. My chest burned, my eyes reddened as I blinked back tears that wouldn’t stop stinging.

And then I saw Carmela peeking from the safety of Calhoun’s arms, her lips curling into a wicked, satisfied smirk. She wanted this. She had planned it. And she was winning.

Calhoun’s growl rumbled, silencing even the whispers. His gaze cut back to me. “I don’t want to repeat myself, Elodie.”

The final nail drove into me. My shoulders sagged, every muscle of mine screaming in shame, in defeat. My lips trembled as I forced myself to speak. “Yes, Alpha.”

The words tasted like blood in my mouth.

Slowly, painfully, I crouched. My waist seared in protest, sending sparks of agony through my body, and I whimpered despite my best efforts to stay quiet. The tears I had fought all evening finally welled and spilled, blurring my vision as my hand reached shakily for her heel strap.

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 5[ 1,637 words ]

*Chapter 5: Chapter 5*

ELODIE’S POV—

My hands shook so badly I could barely find the tiny buckle on Carmela's heel strap. I tried to steady them, tried to swallow the lump in my throat, but it was useless. Two hot tears slipped down my cheeks, falling to the ground.

And just as I reached forward, pain shot through me.

I screamed. Carmela had stomped her stiletto heel onto my fingers, pinning them down. Gasps tore through the hall. My cry echoed against the high ceiling as agony spread like fire through my hand. I whimpered, curling in on myself, clutching my throbbing fingers to my chest.

"Elodie!" Calhoun's voice snapped, alarm flashing across his face. He moved instinctively, but before he could reach me, Carmela collapsed into his arms, her fake tears pouring like a performance she had rehearsed her whole life.

"Oh, Calhoun!" she sobbed, pressing her face into his chest. "I didn't mean to...honestly, it was an accident. My heel slipped. If Elodie feels wronged, I can always go down on my knees and beg for her forgiveness."

Those words knocked my breath from me. I sobbed quietly, clutching my bleeding fingers. Pain twisted every nerve, coldness creeping into my body as though my soul were draining out of me. My knees shook.

But instead of defending me, Calhoun exhaled heavily, his face hardening as he stroked Carmela's hair. "Never mind, Carmela. It was a mistake. I'm sure Elodie understands."

His words hollowed me out. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't think. It felt like something inside me had shattered beyond repair. Was this what breaking truly felt like? I wondered if I would ever be whole again after what he had done to me. Tears blurred my vision as Carmela peeked out from his chest, her lips curling into a wicked smirk only I could see.

Calhoun wrapped a possessive hand around her waist, ready to guide her away, but she dug her heels stubbornly into the floor and whined, "Wait. I have something else, Calhoun. A collar I designed. I want Elodie to try it on for everyone."

My blood turned to ice. Calhoun stiffened, a flicker of shock flashing across his face before a deep frown settled there.

"Carmela—" he started, but she stroked his arm gently, her voice saccharine.

"It's not bad at all, Calhoun. Don't look so grim. I just want to showcase my new products, that's all." She fluttered her eyelashes at him, trying to be sweet.

I felt every blood drain from my face. My shoulders slumped, my heart pounded violently in my chest as I silently begged, prayed, for him to say no. The entire hall held its breath. My whole body trembled, waiting, hoping...

And then I saw his jaw tick. His shoulders sank. "Alright. Let her wear it," he said flatly.

The fragile thread of faith I had left in my prayers snapped. My vision blurred with fresh tears.

Carmela's face lit up instantly, her hands clapping together with childlike delight. A waiter appeared, carrying a black leather collar on a silver tray. Carmela's eyes sparkled as she turned to me, still crouched on the floor in disbelief.

"Elodie, darling," she called sweetly, "stand up, please. Don't look so alarmed. I'm not degrading you...I just want to show the world my new creation."

My entire body shook as I tried to rise, my legs weak, my vision swimming. My eyes were bloodshot, and hatred burned through me even as despair weighed me down. My lips trembled as I muttered, voice breaking, "I'm sorry, Carmela. But I'm not going to wear a slave identification on my neck. I can't and I won't."

Her face fell instantly, the smile vanishing as shock carved into her features.

But Calhoun? He sighed. That heavy, tired sound that made my chest tighten as if the air had been sucked out of the room. Calhoun rubbed his temples slowly, and when his eyes found mine, his voice was low, almost gentle, but it hurt worse than any shout.

"Wear it, Elodie. If you refuse, they'll think you defy me. And I won't have that."

My heart cracked, splintering into pieces I couldn't hold together anymore. I shook my head, lips parting with the start of another protest. "I can't—"

But his hand lifted sharply, silencing me. His jaw hardened, his voice dropping into that dangerous growl that made everyone fall quiet.

"Do it. Now."

The room held its breath. And then, as though the world had been waiting for my shame, several guests raised their phones, screens glowing, recording. Recording me. My throat went dry as Carmela's heels clicked closer. She stopped right in front of me, her smile sharp enough to draw blood.

"Bend your neck," she whispered, loud enough for everyone to hear. "Let's be fast, shall we?"

I clenched my jaw until it ached. My whole body screamed to resist, but I bowed. My head dropped low, shame burning through me.

Carmela slipped the collar down over my head, tightening it until my breath caught, until I wheezed, choking on the pressure. My vision blurred with spots until Calhoun frowned. Only then did she ease the clasp, her fingers brushing my throat like she owned me.

She stepped back, her lips curving with wicked satisfaction as she turned to the crowd.

"Behold," she said loudly, theatrically, "my new creation. Perfectly fit for a slave. People below our class shouldn't dare raise their heads at us, they belong bowing. Thank you, everyone."

Laughter rippled, cruel and sharp. Their gazes pierced me, stripping me bare, reminding me of what I was... A Gamma-born, a nothing. My wolf whimpered inside me. My body shook violently. The second Carmela's fingers unclasped the collar, I bolted. I shoved past her, past the stares, and stumbled into the restroom.

The door slammed behind me, and I slid down the cold tiles, clutching my chest as the sob tore out of me. Wailing. Broken. I didn't even know why the tears came anymore. Was it the humiliation, or the simple truth that the man I loved was destroying me piece by piece?

Time blurred. I crashed, then pulled myself back up. I washed my face, trying to erase the red in my eyes, and stepped out. My phone buzzed in my palm. A message from Calhoun.

"Where are you? Come over here immediately."

For a second, I wanted to type back: I went home. I feel unwell. But fear coiled around my throat tighter than the collar had. What if he cut my wages? What if I lost everything? I swallowed the scream lodged in my chest and turned toward the hall.

When I stepped in, all eyes shifted to me. A chill swept down my spine. The crowd parted, and there was Carmela on her feet, mascara streaking her face, sobbing dramatically. Her finger jabbed at me.

"Where is my golden bracelet cuff?!" she screamed. "My dead grandmother gave it to me! It's worth millions, it's an heirloom!"

Shock froze me in place. Then anger stirred, trembling through my veins. My voice came careful, shaking. "I didn't take anything."

"Liar!" she shrieked. "It fell when you bent to tie my straps! Gammas like you are thieves!"

Something inside me snapped. My vision went red, humiliation and rage crashing together, but before I could speak, Calhoun finally stepped in. His voice was calm.

"Carmela. Stop it. It must have fallen. I'll have the guards search for it."

Carmela's head whipped toward him, eyes blazing. "Calhoun, what are you saying? That I'm lying? If you won't search her, then we are done! You're prioritizing her over me, your true mate! I won't have it!"

My breath hitched. She turned to storm off, but his hand caught her arm, pulling her back gently. His gaze slid past me, cold, detached, and he signaled to the guards.

"Search Miss Elodie."

The floor tilted beneath me. "What?" The word cracked out of me as I stumbled back, but three guards closed in, massive hands gripping my arms, forcing me to my knees.

"Please!" I screamed, thrashing. "Alpha Calhoun, I swear...I didn't take anything! I'm not a thief! I'm not—" My cries tore into the air, sharp with pain as they yanked my arms behind me.

He looked away. He couldn't even watch. And Carmela...her lips curled with triumph.

My dress ripped under their hands. Rough fingers groped, searching, dragging me. When they found nothing, they shoved me down. I collapsed on the floor, clutching the torn fabric to my chest, sobbing as my bra peeked through the ruined cloth.

One guard muttered, "We found nothing."

Carmela sneered. "Maybe she hid it in her underwear. She's a thief!"

My blood iced. A guard's hand reached for my waist, ready to strip me bare—

"Enough!" Calhoun's voice rang out, panic flashing across his features. But before his order fully landed, another voice pierced the air.

"Found it!"

Everyone turned. A woman stood near a table, holding the golden bracelet high. "It was under here! A few tables away!"

Gasps swept the hall. My sobs filled the silence. The guards released me, stepping back. Carmela's eyes widened, then quickly softened as she ran to Calhoun, burying her face against his chest.

"Oh my goodness," she whimpered. "I...I made a mistake. Elodie... she didn't deserve that. Can I apologize?"

But I didn't lift my head. I stayed on the ground, clutching my torn dress, my shoulders shaking with every broken cry.

Calhoun's hand closed around Carmela's as he began to lead her out. His voice was flat, final.

"No need. That little humiliation won't end her life. She's fine."

And just like that, they walked away while I stayed shattered, bleeding inside, wondering how much more of me there was left to break.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 6[ 1,273 words ]**

*Chapter 6: Chapter 6*

ELODIE'S POV~

"That little humiliation won't end her life. She's okay."

Those words wouldn't leave my head. Calhoun's voice...so calm, so certain kept ringing ceaselessly in my ears. Not Carmela's cruel laughter. Not the gasps or the whispers of the guests. Just him. Over and over, like a knife twisting in my chest. My tears wouldn't stop, falling freely down my cheeks as I clutched the shredded remains of my dress to my chest, trying in vain to cover what had been ripped away from me.

The crowd that had gathered to witness my humiliation began to disperse slowly. One by one, they left me there, and no one offered to help. No hand reached out. No sympathetic glance lingered. I was utterly alone. My sobs grew louder, spilling out of me in ragged, desperate gasps. I could feel my body shaking with shame, my chest heaving uncontrollably as I watched them walk away.

I tried to stand, my knees wobbling, my body weak and trembling. And then a jacket landed squarely on my face. Blinking through my tears, I looked up to see the waiter who had carried Carmela's silver tray toss it toward me and walk away without a word. No apology. No acknowledgment. Nothing. Just another reminder that no one cared, that I was invisible, unworthy of even the smallest kindness.

I wrapped the jacket around me, but it did nothing to stop the tremors coursing through my body. Shock. Pain. Fear. Humiliation. They clung to me like a second skin, seeping into my bones.

The world outside was gray, heavy with rain pouring, and as I stumbled into it, the heavens themselves seemed to join in my punishment. Rain pounded down, soaking the jacket, drenching the scraps of fabric that still clung to my skin. My tears mixed with it, but I had no strength left to cry. My mind had gone numb. My body moved on autopilot, dragging itself across the nearly empty streets, soaked and exhausted, my vision blurring.

I was approaching a dark alley, a shortcut home when a car honked beside me. I froze, my heart thudding painfully in my chest. Slowly, I turned. There was Calhoun. Clutching the steering wheel, his gaze locked onto me with that piercing intensity I had once craved, and he waved for me to get in.

Fresh pain, hatred, heartbreak, it all surged through me at once. My chest felt like it had been torn open. I wanted to scream at him. Fuck you. Go to hell with your ride. But the words caught in my throat. Did they even matter anymore? My vision was already swimming with black dots. My body felt like it was disintegrating, piece by piece, under the weight of everything.

So I ignored him. My feet dragged through the puddles. Rain pelted my head and my soaked jacket, but I barely noticed. I was already broken. Already numb. My heart hardened a little more with every step, my soul turning colder and colder.

The honking didn't stop. My head throbbed as I tried to ignore it, my soaked jacket clinging to me like a second skin, heavy with the rain and then his voice cut through the storm.

"Elodie! Get into the car now!"

I froze. Every nerve in my body screamed. Hot, furious anger surged through me, burning brighter than the cold rain pelting my skin. In the past, I would have panicked. I would have rushed to him, eager to please, desperate not to upset him. But not now. Not after today.

I turned on my heels slowly, letting the rain wash over my face as I faced him, giving him the coldest, deadest look I could muster.

“What for?” I spat, my voice trembling with fury and heartbreak. “What’s the need for me to enter your car right now? Don’t waste your time, Alpha Calhoun. Don’t forget, I’m just a Gamma. I have no reason to be in the same car as you.”

The words hung in the air, and I turned away, trudging slowly forward, letting each step pull me farther from him, from everything I had once believed in. I didn’t care to see his expression. I didn’t care if he followed.

But then I heard a car door slamming, footsteps rushing toward me. My heart thudded in panic, but I didn’t look. I shouldn’t have to. And just as I took another step, a hand clamped hard around my wrist and yanked me backward. Pain shot through me, and I gasped, stumbling.

His glare was fire, furious and unyielding.

“Didn’t you hear me when I asked you to get in?” His voice was harsh. “Why are you so pissed? I get it, today’s been bad. Misunderstandings everywhere. But I did what I had to! I didn’t want to lose Carmela again. I’ve lost her once; I will never let that happen again. I’ll make it up to you somehow, don’t worry! You can’t just mess everything up over this little misunderstanding!”

His words slapped me harder than any hand could. They burned, and I yanked my wrist from his grip, ignoring the sharp pain. I laughed, but it was empty, hollow, and bitter.

“Have you seen yourself?” I whispered, stepping back, my voice breaking with rage and grief. “Felt no shame? Left your mate to chase after a mistress? Why? Don’t worry, Alpha Calhoun. I know my place now. I am a Gamma. Just his assistant. I would never hope for more. Happy now? Can I go?”

Something in his eyes snapped. Murderous. Furious. He stepped forward, pointing at me, shouting, his voice trembling with emotion I couldn’t decipher.

“You know that’s not what I meant! I never looked down on you! I did what I had to out there to calm Carmela, or there would have been chaos more than I could ever handle! And—”

The next words didn’t reach me. My world tilted, the rain spinning, the street fading. The last thing I heard before everything went black was him calling my name. And then pain. Then cold, wet asphalt against my body, every inch of me aching.

The morning sunlight burned my eyes as it streamed through the window. I winced, trying to open them, only to be startled by a beeping sound. My eyes snapped open fully, and I gasped.

A woman in a nurse’s uniform smiled at me warmly, checking my vitals.

“Good morning,” she said softly. “You’re finally awake.”

My throat was raw, my voice gone. I tried to speak, but she beat me to it.

“Thankfully, your... boyfriend was helpful. He brought you to the hospital and stayed with you through the night, until just a few minutes ago. He stepped out.”

A bitter, hollow laugh escaped me. My chest tightened. I turned my head slightly, staring at her, and said flatly,

“He’s not my boyfriend. He never was. And he never will be.”

The nurse nodded silently, scribbling notes. I looked away toward the window, sunlight spilling over the sky, a cruel contrast to the storm still raging inside me. My eyes stung. I pressed a hand to my chest, feeling the bitter, empty ache of realizing how foolish I had been.

How deluded I had been, thinking that one day Calhoun would fall for me. That one day, he would choose me as his mate. But not today. Not ever, perhaps.

I wanted to disappear from this life entirely, to erase myself from his world, from my own mistakes, from the pain that clung to me like a second skin.

I wanted to be gone.

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 7[ 1,749 words ]

*Chapter 7: Chapter 7*

ELODIE’S POV—

Several days slipped by, and he never came. No footsteps outside my door. No shadow darkening the hallway. No Calhoun.

My wolf whimpered in the back of my mind constantly, crying for him, but I shut her out. I couldn’t afford to listen. I had already promised myself never again. Never again would I waste another tear for him. He wanted me gone, pushed aside, replaced. So be it.

The hospital walls became both my prison and my comfort. Days passed in silence, broken only by the beeping machines and the occasional nurse’s voice. Then one afternoon, my phone lit up with a message. My chest tightened before I even reached for it. It wasn’t him. It was his Beta.

“Spend a few more days in the hospital. Rest. Take good care of yourself.”

I let out a long, shaky breath. Relief washed over me in a way I hadn’t expected. At least it wasn’t Calhoun ordering me around. At least it meant I could heal without the constant panic of disappointing him, without worrying he’d cut off what little wages I had left. For the first time in days, I felt the tiniest flicker of peace.

That peace didn't last.

When I was discharged and finally back home, my phone wouldn't stop buzzing. The office group chats were exploding...messages rolling in one after another. Against my better judgment, I opened them. And my entire mood crumbled.

Every line was filled with updates about Calhoun and Carmela. Photos. Messages. Gossip. I scrolled, and each word was another dagger.

He had bought her an island near one of the neighboring Packs. An island. He had shut down not one but two luxury boutiques so she could shop for her birthday, celebrating her for an entire week. I didn't even notice when my tears started falling—I just kept scrolling, staring through the blur.

Then came the part that nearly broke me: he had brought her to the Damaris Pack house. Introduced her to his family. For the future mating ceremony.

Bile rose in my throat. My vision blurred completely. I didn't bother to read the rest...the lists of gifts, the details of her celebrations. I tossed my phone across the room and buried my face in my hands, staying unmoving.

My wolf pressed against me, whispering comfort, but I shoved her back. I couldn't listen. Not when my chest already felt like it was splitting apart.

Wiping at my wet cheeks, I pulled the blankets to my chest. "No more," I whispered to no one. "No more." Closing my eyes, I let the exhaustion drag me down into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

Two days later, I forced myself back to the office. My colleagues welcomed me with warm smiles and soft voices, and I played along, nodding, thanking, pretending. But inside, I was hollow. I avoided him, avoided even being near his door. Weeks passed, and I perfected the art of slipping tasks to other executive assistants, keeping my distance like my life depended on it.

But like the devil he was, he found a way.

One morning, I carried a final file to his office. My chest tightened as I stepped inside. He sat behind his desk, eyes fixed on his computer screen, fingers typing steadily as though I didn't exist. I set the file down quietly, almost holding my breath, and turned to leave.

"Elodie."

His voice froze me mid-step. I turned back slowly, my stomach knotted. He didn't even look at me when he spoke.

"I'm heading out for a meeting now. Stay with Carmela. She hates eating alone. I'll be back later."

My heart sank so fast it hurt. My lips parted, ready to reject, to beg him not to do this to me again but before I could speak, the sound of heels clicked across the floor.

Carmela stepped out of his private bedroom, her eyes finding me immediately. She smirked, her voice sharp.

“You! Come over. I have several things you need to help me with.”

I turned, desperate to object, to tell him no but he was already on his feet, already at the door. Without a glance back, he opened it and slammed it shut, leaving me there.

Alone. Again. With her.

Carmela didn't say another word. She just turned on her heels, as she walked straight into the dining suite. I stood frozen, my chest tight, but in the end, what choice did I have? With a long, defeated sigh, I followed.

She slid gracefully into a seat as though she owned the world and, with a flick of her wrist, pushed a glass of wine toward me. Her long nail tapped the rim twice before she lifted her chin at me.

“Drink it,” she ordered, her lips curling. “I don't trust the wine. If it's bitter, your tongue should suffer not mine.”

The words cut deeper than I expected, but I clenched my jaw, trying to keep my composure. My voice trembled despite my effort to sound respectful.

“What if the wine is poisoned?” I asked quietly. “If you think it's unsafe, why not dump it out and request for a fresher bottle instead?”

Her eyes narrowed into slits, and she leaned back, glaring at me like I was filth. Then she scoffed, the sound sharp and cruel.

“Poisoned? Please,” she sneered. “Your life isn't that important. If it is poisoned, then you'll die, and it simply means you've done a heroic thing, you've saved me. Calhoun would be grateful for your sacrifice.”

Her words hit me like ice water, my heart turning cold in my chest. I bit down hard on my lip to stop it from trembling.

“I'm sorry,” I murmured, shaking my head. “I won't be able to taste the wine for you. Perhaps... perhaps I could go get another bottle instead.”

The air shifted instantly. Carmela shot to her feet so suddenly her chair screeched against the marble, the sound slicing through my bones. My heart leapt into my throat. She jabbed a finger at me, her voice rising in a shrill scream.

“How dare you challenge my orders? Do you think Calhoun would think twice before firing you? I've looked into your background, Elodie. You're nothing but a struggling Gamma who would scavenge from trash just to survive. One scream from me...just one...and Calhoun would come rushing in here. Then it would be over for you.” Her lips twisted into a wicked grin. “So the choice is yours. Drink it, or get fired.”

My heart cracked right there. She was right. Calhoun wouldn't think twice. He'd toss me aside like I was nothing. I couldn't risk it not when I barely had anything left to hold on to.

My hands shook as I reached for the glass. I whispered a prayer under my breath, then forced the liquid down in one gulp. The moment it hit my tongue, I gagged, it wasn't wine. It was the most bitter, vile thing I'd ever tasted. I slammed the glass down, my chest heaving, and opened my mouth to speak when a searing burn exploded in my stomach.

The pain was instant and brutal, like acid was eating through my belly. My knees buckled, and I gasped, clutching my stomach.

"Ah—!" A cry tore out of me as I stumbled back and collapsed to the ground, my legs cramping violently. Tears poured down my face as I writhed, the fire inside me unbearable.

I looked up through the blur of tears, desperate for any shred of mercy, but all I saw was Carmela, standing there with her arms folded, a triumphant grin splitting her face.

"P—please," I choked out, my voice breaking. "Help me... help—" My panic rose. The thought that I was dying here, poisoned by her, tore the scream from my throat. "Help! Somebody, help me!"

Footsteps pounded closer, and I saw Carmela stiffen. Her head snapped toward the door. Panic flickered in her eyes. She moved quickly, unscrewing the cap of the chili sauce nearby, pouring some into her hand, then shoving half of it into her mouth before collapsing to the ground with a wail.

The door slammed open. Calhoun stormed in, his eyes going wide, color draining from his face.

"Carmela!" He rushed straight to her, dropping to his knees and pulling her into his arms. "What's happening? What's wrong?" His voice shook with panic.

Carmela whimpered, tears spilling instantly as she clutched at him. "I—I think she did it," she cried, pointing a trembling finger toward me. "Elodie put chili in my drink. You know I'm allergic. She tried to hurt me."

Calhoun's head snapped toward me, his eyes blazing with fury. His voice thundered across the room.

"Elodie! Why?" he roared. "Why would you do this to her? You know she can't eat chili! Why are you so wicked?"

I couldn't even form the words through the pain. I was curled on the ground, clutching my stomach, sobbing uncontrollably. But he didn't care. He didn't see me.

He scooped Carmela into his arms without hesitation, holding her protectively against his chest. "Hold on, baby, I've got you," he whispered to her as he rushed for the door.

His Beta barreled in, his face grim. Calhoun barked the order without even sparing me a glance.

"Get Elodie. She's coming too. Figure out why she's on the ground."

I could barely stay conscious as the Beta hauled me up, half dragging me out. My body trembled uncontrollably, the fire still raging inside me.

The SUV ride blurred. I remember Carmela being cradled in Calhoun's lap, his voice soft and frantic for her, while I was shoved into the back, clutching my belly, drowning in my own pain.

Next I didn't even know what was happening. All I heard were screeching tires. A crash. Metal slamming into metal. My head whipped sideways and slammed into the glass. The window shattered, cutting into my scalp. I tasted blood before I even realized I was throwing it up.

The world spun, horns blared, people screamed. An ambulance siren cut through the chaos. My vision flickered, slipping in and out.

Through the haze, I saw Calhoun, his arms carrying Carmela, his face frantic as he carried her out of the wreckage.

"Somebody help her!" someone shouted. "There's a girl in the back, she's bleeding! She won't make it if you don't hurry!"

That girl was me.

And still, Calhoun didn't look back.

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 8 [ 1,525 words ]

*Chapter 8: Chapter 8*

ELODIE'S POV~

"Why the fuck haven't you started the engine yet?!" he bellowed, his voice trembling with panic. "My mate is hurting, do you hear me?! She's hurting and something bad might happen to her if you waste another second! Move, damn it!"

His fury rattled the air, but all I could hear was the sharp ringing in my ears, constant and merciless. My vision dimmed by the second, dark spots swallowing everything in front of me. It felt like my body wasn't mine anymore...like piece by piece, I was slipping away. My soul was tearing loose, leaving me behind in a shell that barely breathed.

A paramedic's voice broke through, desperate and shaking. "Please, Alpha Calhoun," he begged respectfully, almost fearfully, "someone is dying here. Let's get this one first, please—"

But he didn't even get to finish.

“Shut the fuck up!” Calhoun snapped. “You will take my mate to the hospital first before whoever the hell is in that car. Do you understand me?!”

That was the last thing I heard. His words carved into me like a blade. Whoever was in that car... that “whoever”... was me.

My head dropped back against the leather seat, heavy, useless. My lashes fluttered once, twice, before everything gave out and black swallowed me whole.

What came after was nothing but nightmares. Fire coursed through my veins. My chest heaved as I choked on air that never reached my lungs. I clawed against shadows in my sleep, begging to be freed, writhing in pain as if unseen hands were burning me alive.

Then, out of nowhere, I gasped. My eyes flew open, wide, a single tear sliding down my cheek.

And there, beside me, was a figure, her shoulders shaking as she cried. My heart skipped.

“Elodie...” she whispered, broken, her face crumpling as she lifted her head.

It was Mila.

She jumped to her feet, bursting into tears all over again. “Oh, my darling, look at you,” she wept, clutching the bedrail as if her legs might give out. “I thought I had lost you. You lost so much blood, Elodie. So much.”

I blinked, dazed. Surely I was hallucinating. Surely the fever in my veins was playing tricks. “Mila?” I croaked, my voice raw and unrecognizable. “Mila... is that you?”

Her head bobbed, tears streaming down her cheeks as she nodded. “Yes. It’s me. It’s really me.”

And that was it. The fragile wall I had built inside me shattered. I burst into tears, sobs tearing through my chest so violently that every rib ached. Pain lanced through my body with each breath, but I couldn’t stop. Mila bent over me, wrapping me in the gentlest embrace, her lips pressing against my damp forehead again and again as she rocked me.

“Shh... I’ve got you,” she whispered through her own sobs. “I’ve got you, my love. You’re safe now. You’re safe.”

Her words blurred into the sound of my crying until, at last, I grew too weak to fight the exhaustion. My sobs quieted, leaving behind only the hollow ache in my chest. Mila peeled herself gently away, wiping her wet cheeks with trembling hands before sinking into the chair beside my bed.

She took my wired hands into hers, her thumbs tracing soothing circles over the bruised skin. Her eyes red and swollen, looked into mine as her lips trembled.

“I heard about the accident the moment I landed back in the Pack,” she whispered, voice cracking. “Elodie... they said you bled and bled, and the doctors...” Her voice broke, and she pressed my hand harder. “They said you were almost gone. I...I was so scared. I thought I’d lost you forever.”

I forced a smile to my lips, though it felt like ripping a wound open. My memories flooded back uninvitedly to the sight of Calhoun clutching Carmela to his chest, his voice fierce and desperate only for her. His order echoing in my skull: ‘You will take my mate to the hospital first before whoever the hell is in that car.’

That “whoever” was me.

“I’m fine,” I lied, the words bitter as ash on my tongue. My lips trembled. “I... I’ll be fine.”

But my chest tightened so hard it hurt. The image of his arms around her, his panic only for her, replayed again and again until it drowned me. My smile cracked, my voice breaking. “I... I had...” The words wouldn’t come, swallowed by the lump in my throat.

Mila’s tears fell faster, dropping onto my hand as she rubbed it gently, her touch desperate, as though she could keep me anchored by sheer will. “Oh, Elodie...” she whispered.

And all I could do was stare at the ceiling, drowning in the hollow truth that I was nothing more than whoever was in that car.

Time passed by. Mila had helped me sip some soup earlier, spoonful after spoonful, her voice reassuring me that I’d be fine. The warmth should have comforted me, but it barely reached my chest. Even water slid down my throat like stones. She tried so hard to fill the silence with hope, but inside me, everything was hollow.

Then her tone shifted.

“Hey,” she murmured, almost too softly, but I heard it. “Can we talk a little? How’s Calhoun? I mean... your relationship with him. Has he been nice with you? How’s it going?”

The little appetite I had vanished instantly. The half-finished soup suddenly tasted bitter on my tongue. My chest tightened so painfully I thought I’d choke on air. I swallowed hard and forced myself to look away, acting as though her question meant nothing.

“He’s been great,” I said flatly, forcing each word out like it wasn’t stabbing me. “Our relationship is strictly professional now. As for us... there’s nothing. We’re done. We have nothing to do with each other.”

For a heartbeat, Mila’s eyes widened in surprise, but she masked it quickly, rolling her eyes like she didn’t buy it.

“Very good then,” she said with a huff. “If you’re done with him, then onto the next. Look at you, hurt but still gorgeous. This plump ass of yours? Alphas would drool. All you need to do is show the world you’re single, unmated, and boom, watch the magic happen. I’m telling you, Elodie, I’m hooking you up with someone. Don’t you worry. Who knows? Your mate might be right around here.”

A small, unwilling smile tugged at the corner of my lips at her silliness, just for a second, but the sound of the ward door slamming open ripped it away.

Calhoun stormed in, his eyes murderous, his presence swallowing the air whole. My breath caught, but I kept my expression neutral, even as his gaze locked on Mila with enough venom to burn her. She didn't flinch. She just glared right back.

His voice was low, but thunderous. "What's the meaning of what you just said? You will not hook her up with anyone. Those men aren't worthy to breathe near her. They just want to fuck her and then dump her for their real mates. Elodie is mine to protect, and I won't have her thrown to wolves who'll use and discard her."

Mila scoffed, leaning back like his fury was nothing. "Dude, please. Relax. There are still good men out there. All she needs is to go out, meet people, and maybe...just maybe...she'll find her mate. Fate works in mysterious ways. And besides... why do you care? Why does it matter who she's with? Not everyone is like you, Calhoun. Not everyone plays with two women's emotions at once. Blind as a bat, with no real taste in partners."

A vein ticked at his temple, his jaw clenching so tightly it looked painful. His voice snapped. "Don't you dare. Don't you ever try to force her into some meaningless feelings for these men. If you do, Mila...you'll answer to me."

Before Mila could retort, I broke in. "Alpha Calhoun, do you need something? Don't mind Mila... she's only joking."

"I'm not joking," Mila muttered stubbornly beside me.

But he ignored her completely. His eyes shifted back to me, unreadable. He opened his mouth, then stopped, swallowing whatever he'd wanted to say. When he finally spoke, his tone was clipped. "I came to make sure Mila gets home safely to her family. And... to check on you."

I forced a bitter smile and nodded faintly. "Thank you."

Mila moved quickly, almost shielding me. She placed a hand on his chest and pushed him gently but firmly toward the door. "Alright, time for you to go. Elodie needs rest, not more drama."

He resisted at first, reluctant, his gaze still fixed on me like he was trying to memorize every detail. But finally, he let himself be ushered out. Mila slammed the door behind him with more force than necessary, leaving the silence to thicken again.

When she came back to me, she sighed, her eyes softening. "Don't mind him, El. I know he seems cold, even cruel sometimes, but deep down? That man genuinely cares for you. More than he wants to admit."

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 9[ 1,369 words ]**

*Chapter 9: Chapter 9*

ELODIE'S POV~

The light in my eyes dimmed completely that night. I could feel it, like someone had reached inside my chest and stolen whatever little glow was left. A dull ache crept up and settled heavy in my heart, so suffocating it almost felt like breathing was punishment.

I gave Mila my usual bitter smile, the one I wore when I didn't want anyone to know how much I was bleeding on the inside. She chirped away, tossing her silly little jokes into the room, trying so hard to make me laugh. And she did, well just a little. My lips curved, my chest lifted in a small chuckle, but it wasn't real. It was like dragging a broken bone across glass.

I knew what she was doing. She wanted me to feel better. But I didn't want better. I didn't want hope or comfort or laughter. I wanted the pain to vanish completely, immediately. If Calhoun cared at all, it wasn't for me. It was because I was the perfect slave, obedient, silent, answering to his every demand. That was the kind of woman he wanted. The kind he could mold into a shadow.

But not anymore.

"Okay," Mila said finally, after making me snort at some ridiculous story she'd cooked up about a pack warrior tripping over his own sword. She stood, leaning down to kiss my temple. "I'll be right back. Just need to run up some stuff. When I'm done, I'll pick you up, I promise."

I nodded weakly, watching her leave, the echo of her steps fading until I was alone again.

Days slipped by. I wasn't discharged yet, and in those long hours, the silence became a cruel friend. Every day, I listened to the nurses gossip outside my door. They thought their voices didn't carry, but they did. Every word felt like a knife, not felt! It was a knife.

"Did you see what Alpha Calhoun sent today?" one nurse whispered excitedly.

"A whole wardrobe, all designer, dresses, shoes, jewelry. It must have cost millions!" another gasped.

"That's nothing. He cleared an entire VIP ward just for her. Said no one should disturb his mate."

"Her room looks like a palace, flowers flown in from Paris, perfumes, diamond-studded bracelets, limited-edition handbags... you name it."

"And the food, chefs cooking her whatever she wants. He even sent a piano to the ward, for heaven's sake! Who does that?"

Their laughter, their awe, their excitement, it stabbed through me.

I had been shuffling slowly toward the exit that morning, desperate for a breath of fresh air, when their words caught me. I froze in my tracks. My heart plummeted to the ground, too heavy to carry. My stupid, traitorous heart still hadn't gotten the message. I was nothing to him. I would never be.

I pressed forward anyway, brushing past them with my head down, forcing my feet to move. The air outside was cold, biting, and it burned my lungs in a way that almost felt good. At least pain reminded me I was still alive.

A few more days passed, and finally Mila called. She had promised today would be the day she came to get me discharged. I waited all morning, hours crawling by, hope rising every time my phone buzzed. But it wasn't her. By late afternoon, I was blasting her with call after call, my chest sinking lower with each unanswered ring.

At last, she picked up. Her voice was rushed, apologetic, almost frantic.

"Elodie...I'm so sorry, I can't come today. Something came up in the Pack, something serious. I...please forgive me, I just... I can't leave right now."

My throat tightened. I forced my voice to stay calm. "It's alright, Mila. Just... make sure you handle it, okay? I understand. And when you're done, please... come see me. Visit me."

Over the line, I heard chaos, raised voices, cursing, arguments that bled through the phone. Mila exhaled, the sound weary and heavy.

"Thank you, El," she whispered. "Thank you for understanding. I'll come as soon as I can, I swear."

Then the line went dead.

And the room felt colder than ever.

The day after I was discharged, I made the mistake of stepping back into the office.

Maybe I thought slipping in quietly, finishing the paperwork, and leaving for good would grant me some peace. I should have known better. In Calhoun's world, peace wasn't meant for someone like me.

I hugged the small cardboard box to my chest, filled with the scraps of a life I'd tried to build here, half-used notepads, a chipped mug, a picture frame that no longer meant anything. My steps echoed down the polished hallway, too loud in the silence, as though announcing my presence to the one person I prayed I wouldn't meet.

But fate has a cruel sense of humor.

The elevator chimed just as I reached for it. The doors slid open, and there she was... the bitch, Carmela. Draped in designer fabric that clung like second skin, holding a coffee cup like it was an extension of her hand. Her smile was already sharp, as though she'd been waiting for me.

She didn't sidestep. She collided into me deliberately, the coffee tilting, splashing across her pristine dress.

Her gasp pierced the air, fake, theatrical. “You ruined my dress! Again!” Her voice rose, carrying across the lobby. “You pathetic little thing, do you think this is funny? Do you think Calhoun will save you?”

I froze, my chest burning with humiliation as eyes turned toward us. “I didn’t—”

But she didn’t let me finish. She tossed the rest of the coffee in my face. The liquid was lukewarm but the shame scalded hotter than fire.

“What’s that look for?” she sneered, tilting her head, savoring the spectacle. “Do you think this is unfair? News flash, sweetheart, Calhoun only has eyes for me. Whatever I want, I get. Taking down some nobody Gamma girl? That’s not even worth his time.”

Her heels clicked as she sashayed past me, leaving the bitter stench of coffee on my skin and a thousand eyes burning into my back.

“Security,” she called lazily over her shoulder, “make sure she apologizes. On her knees. At the entrance. Don’t let her up until I say.”

My heart plummeted as two guards stepped forward.

“I don’t even work here anymore!” I snapped, voice cracking. “I just resigned. You can’t make me kneel like this!”

Their expressions didn’t flicker. “Standing orders from Alpha Calhoun. Whatever Miss Carmela wants, Miss Carmela gets. Save your breath for him.”

Those words shredded whatever pride I had left.

Still, I fought as they dragged me outside, the box falling from my arms, papers scattering across the floor like worthless confetti. My knees hit the concrete hard, pain shooting up my legs. Cold air bit into me, slicing through my thin clothes.

“Please...” My voice was hoarse. “Don’t do this...”

But the guards didn’t hear me. Or maybe they just didn’t care.

And so, in front of coworkers and strangers, I knelt. Hours passed, my body trembling violently. My knees bled through the fabric, the blood freezing almost as quickly as it surfaced. Faces blurred as they walked by, some snapping pictures, others whispering.

I refused to fall. Stubbornness was the only thing holding me up when my body begged to collapse.

By the time the office lights dimmed for closing, my vision had gone hazy, every breath ragged. My head hung low, my body nothing but pain.

“Elodie!”

The sound of my name dragged my head up weakly. Through the blur, I saw Mila, her expensive heels clicking against the sidewalk as she rushed toward me. Her eyes were wide, almost horrified.

“You just got out of the hospital,” she cried, kneeling beside me. “Why the hell are you kneeling out here in this freezing cold? Who did this to you?”

Her voice cracked with genuine fear, and I wanted so badly to collapse into her arms, to cling to the warmth of her concern. But my throat was dry, every word jagged as I forced it out.

“...Mila,” I rasped.

And then everything tilted sideways.

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 10 [ 1,970 words ]

*Chapter 10: Chapter 10*

Elodie's pov

My chest was still raw from the cold, but the moment Mila heard Carmela's name something in her snapped. Her face went red so fast it looked like someone had lit a match behind her skin. Her jaw clenched. For a second I thought I'd seen her fangs...just a flash..and my whole body reacted like I'd been warned.

She crouched quickly and helped me up, fingers gentle as she guided me to sit on the low pavement of the corridor. “Can you breathe?” she hissed, checking me like I was the only thing that mattered. Her hands were steady, but her shoulders were wound tight with fury. She made sure I was steady, then, without a backward glance, she stormed off toward Calhoun's office. My heart slammed against my ribs so hard I thought it would burst.

“I can't let her do this,” Mila mouthed over her shoulder, eyes fixed on the door. “Not to you.”

I pushed off the ground with shaking hands and stumbled after her. I couldn't, wouldn't, let her go alone. If Mila got into trouble for me, I would never forgive myself.

She didn't knock. She slammed the door so hard it rattled in its frame and the whole hallway seemed to flinch. Before I could catch up, she was inside, voice already shredding the air.

“Where the fuck is that bitch who dared to touch my girl?” she screamed, wild and raw. “Oh—there you are, you stupid, silly slut! How dare you?!”

Carmela stood there like a porcelain doll tipped into motion, perfect hair, a smear of faux-innocence plastered across her face. She widened her eyes so perfectly I could have vomited. She acted hurt as though I had plunged a dagger into her lily-white heart.

Mila didn't stop. Her words spilled in a torrent. "You hear me, Carmela? How dare you lay a hand on her! Elodie did nothing to you. She works for Calhoun, she's not your property. Stop acting like some senseless woman clawing for a Luna position you don't deserve. You're not worthy of him. You're not worthy of anything!"

Calhoun's expression changed in a single breath. The air tightened. He growled then bared his fangs as his eyes flared amber. "Enough!!!" he thundered, and the sound hit me like a physical blow. Mila froze mid-sentence, the muscles in her neck working as she forced herself to stop.

My heart felt like it had been folded small and put in a drawer. Calhoun turned, and for one suspended second his eyes landed on me. They scanned my hair, my ruined clothes, the dried crust of blood at my knees from earlier and I felt exposed, like someone had peeled the skin off my chest and was holding it up to the light.

Before he could say anything, though, I saw the panic flash in Carmela's face. It was quick at first, too late to be genuine and then she dove forward like a practiced actress, flinging herself into Calhoun's arms. Her shoulders shook in theatrical sobs. "This wasn't what happened," she cried, wailing with perfect cadence. "They're trying to make me look like the villain. Elodie provoked me, she and Elodie planned this! How could I make Elodie kneel? This is a setup!"

I stood frozen, every instinct screaming that she was lying. Her voice was the smoothest lie I'd ever heard. Calhoun's posture shifted to protective posture, arms tightening, his whole body forming a shield around her.

That was when Mila lost it.

"You bitch!" she screamed. She closed the space between them in two steps and slapped Carmela hard across the face. The crack of skin on skin was loud in the hallway. Carmela's earring flew off, glittering through the air, and she staggered back, stunned. She nearly went down, but Calhoun's hands were there, catching her before she hit the floor.

My hand flew to my mouth before I even realized I'd done it. I couldn't breathe properly; the world had narrowed to Mila's shaking fist, the fallen earring, Carmela's face, mouth open in hurt, eyes shining with tears and Calhoun's ironed sleeve bracing her like she was fragile china.

Calhoun's jaw clenched. He looked like he wanted to shatter something. I wondered which of us he'd do it to.

I wanted so badly to tell him that Carmela had thrown coffee in my face, that she'd made me kneel for hours until my knees bled, that she'd smiled while strangers snapped photographs of me crumpled and humiliated. I wanted to tell him the truth, the whole brutal, ugly truth. But words stuck to my tongue.

The sound of Carmela's sob tore through the hallway. She lunged into Calhoun's arms, fingers clawing at his sleeve, and all the practiced fragility she wore fell into a poisonous, trembling plea.

"Did you see that?" she cried. She tugged at his sleeves, looking up at him with eyes full of hurt that I knew were false. "The way she slapped me...your sister just struck me over a lie her friend cooked up without even checking if it was true. How can you stand there and let this happen? Fine! It seems I know where your loyalty stands now! We are done!"

The words landed like thunder. For a second the world narrowed to the four of us. Carmela, weeping on his chest, Mila pressed tight and furious, and me, bleeding from humiliation. Panic flashed across Calhoun's face in a way that made my blood run cold. I'd seen him furious before, but there was something in that panic that felt like a door slam closed on whatever small hope I'd been foolish enough to keep alive.

Then everything moved too fast.

Calhoun crossed the space between him and Mila in two long strides and struck her hard. The sound of his hand on her cheek echoed. Mila staggered, a sharp gasp tearing out of her, one hand flying to her face. I lunged forward before I even thought, arms wrapping around her as if I could hold her together with my body. She was trembling under me, the fury that had been a roaring tide in her a moment before had turned to pain.

Carmela's eyes glittered in a way that made bile rise in my throat. She wore victory like perfume.

Calhoun's voice cracked as he yelled. "How dare you slap your future sister-in-law and your future Luna? Are you insane?!" His words were raw, a kind of cold wrath that burned. Mila froze, eyes wide as if she'd seen a reaper.

Calhoun didn't stop there. He turned his gaze to me, slowly, and merciless and said, "And you! The next time you lie about Carmela, you will be fired. No discussions. No excuses." There was finality in that sentence, a blade closing on whatever remnant of me had hoped for fairness. He took Carmela with him without another look, his hand possessive on her back as they walked away. Mila stood in the corridor trembling, wiping at her cheek with the back of her hand, eyes bright and furious and broken all at once.

I let out a breath that hurt. I pulled Mila to me because it was the only thing my body knew how to do, pressing her face into my shoulder. "There's no need," I told her. "Don't fight for me. I'm leaving. I'm leaving the Pack. I'm... I'm probably moving to Paris. I can't stay here." The words fell out of me like a stone.

Mila jerked away as if I'd punched her. For a second her face went blank and then she spun to look at me, searching my eyes like she could read a lie if there was one. When she saw nothing but coldness here, her knees buckled and she collapsed into my arms, sobbing. "No...please, Elodie, don't go," she begged between hiccups. "Is it because of Calhoun? Because of Carmela? I can handle them. I'll... I'll deal with them for you. Don't leave me. Don't—" Her mouth trembled on my name until it broke my chest.

I hugged her tighter until the wordless sobs reduced to soft, strangled noises. "I'm sorry, Milly," I whispered, using the pet name that had always made her face soften. "I can't stay. Nothing lasts forever. I can't keep waiting in this place for crumbs that were never mine. I'm sorry."

Days passed quickly. Mila never left my side. We ate noodles on my sagging couch, laughed at memories until the laughter cracked into tears, and then we cried until our throats burned. She packed my shirts into suitcases with hands that shook. When she saw how steady my hand was when I sealed the zipper, she would cover her mouth and sob harder. We spoke of Paris like it was a different life and the only place I could see myself breathing again.

The night before my flight, Mila's eyes were swollen and raw. She picked up her phone, fingers trembling, and began to type a furious message to Calhoun. She stopped when I put a hand over hers. "No," I said. "Please, Mika. Drop it. There's no time." She looked at me as if I'd stabbed her, then let out a wet, defeated sound. "Okay. Okay. But I hate him."

She hated him the way you hate a storm that took your house. Her voice kept shattering. We folded into each other on the couch until the city hummed outside the window like some indifferent animal.

My phone buzzed then with a new message. I didn't want to see his name, but instinct made me look. It was Calhoun: "Where are you?"

Mila's face flamed with anger; she snatched my phone like she intended to fire back. I managed to stop her hand.

"No," I said quietly. "Drop it, Mika. It's over." The last flight metaphor found me suddenly at the center: "It's over. No more layovers for a love that won't land. I've been waiting in this emotional terminal for years. It's time I board a different flight. Stop fighting with her because of me. Your brother is crazy about her; she'll be family soon. You need to find a way to coexist." My voice broke somewhere between brave and dead inside.

Mila's anger collapsed into fresh sobs. She held me like she was trying to hold every broken piece of me together. After a long time she helped me with the last of my bags and printed the ticket, her hands steady for the first time since that slap. At the gate she kissed my forehead again and again like memorizing a map.

Before I walked down the jetway I typed out one last message. My fingers felt like they belonged to someone else.

"Nine years loving you in silence. Five years pretending it was enough. This is the end of the line. Alpha Calhoun, I'm no longer your assistant. I no longer have feelings for you. We're just two strangers now. In this lifetime, let's never cross paths again."

I hit send, watched the dots spin and disappear, then blocked his number, email, social until his presence on my devices was gone like a bad dream. I didn't wait for his reply. I gave Mila one last look, one that contained grief and gratitude and every unspoken apology. She waved like a small, fierce flame.

When the plane lifted and the city shrank to a scatter of lights, I pressed my forehead to the window and let the tears come. It hurt like being cut open and then held over the sea. But as the miles put space between me and everything that had loved me only as an object, or a convenient thing, or a shadow, I felt myself unclench just enough to breathe.