

# Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 21 - 22 [ 1,050 words ]

*Chapter 21: Chapter 22*

Calhoun's POV~

They finally turned the lights out on me.

The barista's "Sir, we're closing" was polite, the kind of politeness you give someone who's been broken in public. I didn't argue. I let the door close behind me and the city chewed me up.

Streets I'd walked a thousand times felt new and hostile and harsh and senseless to me. Every step was a replay of how I'd been a coward, how Carmela had waltzed back into my life and I'd folded like a cheap suit. The what ifs came at me in several waves: if she'd never shown up, if I'd named Elodie a week earlier, if, just once, I'd chosen the hard thing when it mattered. The questions didn't fix anything. They only sharpened the ache in my chest.

The sky tore open. Thunder rattled my bones and the rain came down like it wanted to wash the city clean of me. People scattered for shelter. I walked into the storm because nowhere else felt like shelter anymore.

I said her name until it meant nothing and everything at once. Elodie, Elodie, Elodie... my tongue was like a rosary for a prayer I'd never said when it counted. My phone buzzed in my pocket and I clutched it like a lifeline. Mila's message lit up the screen.

'It's over. Come home.'

Those words folded me inward. I didn't have a clean way to breathe around them. I dropped to my knees on the slick sidewalk, rain slapping my face, and let myself break. My sobs were small and useless against the storm. The city moved around me while I sat there and emptied out.

I don't remember how I ended up at her building. The apartment block loomed like some impossible idea I used to inhabit. Standing there felt obscene, like a thief caught outside the place he used to call refuge. I didn't have the courage to knock. So I curled up on the cold steps and let the doorway be like a thin shield. Being close to her home was the smallest mercy I could steal.

I hadn't slept properly for days. My clothes were sodden, my teeth chattering in a way that felt permanent. The cold slid into me slowly. Somewhere between numbness and sleep, I dreamed of the life I'd ruined.

In the dream she forgave me without hesitation. We left that night, no talks, no second-guessing; we boarded my plane and I announced her to the world. I proposed without theatrics because I'd finally learned how to be brave.

I woke with a faint, stupid smile and the world closing around it. Hypothermia crept in like a slow thief. My limbs folded, and the dream kept replaying, her face, the way she'd said my name, the impossible idea that love could forgive one so bone-deeply broken.

When my consciousness thinned, my smile slackened. The rain kept on. The city didn't notice me. I faded into the steps and the dark, and the last thing that hovered before everything went black was the echo of a life I'd been too proud to choose when it mattered.

---

When I came back to consciousness, it felt like my skull had been split open. Every muscle in my body screamed, my arms weighed down like lead, but I forced my eyes open. Strange ceiling. Strange walls. For a second, I thought I was already dead.

I tried to push myself up, but then her voice cut through the fog.

“Stay down.”

My heart skipped. Elodie?

Her name slammed into me like a fist. My chest cracked open and before I could think, I grabbed her, pulled her against me like a man clinging to his last breath.

“Elodie... you forgave me,” I choked, words tumbling out of me in a rush. “I know I destroyed everything, I'll fix it, I swear, I'll spend every damn day proving it. Just don't shut me out. Please. Please, I can't—”

I held her like she was air and I was drowning. But she didn't soften. She didn't even breathe the way she used to when she was in my arms.

“Get off me, Calhoun.” Her voice was cold enough to freeze my bones. She shoved me back, but not violently. “I only brought you in because of Mila. If you had died on my doorstep, it would've destroyed her. That's all this is.”

Her words sliced cleaner than claws ever could. I stared at her, desperate, waiting for something, anger, tears, anything but her eyes were dead. No fire. No warmth. Not even hate. Just emptiness.

And it gutted me.

“Elodie...” My voice broke as I whispered her name. I said it again, softer this time, begging without pride, because I had nothing left.

She didn't even look at me. Her gaze slid past me like I wasn't worth the effort.

“I called Mila. She's coming to take you home. Don't come back here. Don't look for me again. I'm done.”

“Elodie...” I rasped, desperation clawing at my throat.

Her eyes finally met mine, but it wasn't mercy, it was the cruelest truth I'd ever faced. “It ended the second you chose Carmela.”

Her voice was flat, but the finality in it was absolute. A death sentence.

My chest caved. I felt it, like something inside me split open, and all the air in the room vanished. I reached for her face without thinking, my hand shaking, just needing to touch her one last time. But she stepped back. She denied me even that.

That broke me more than anything.

“Elodie...” The name was raw, stripped of all the power I once carried. “Tell me there's something. Anything. I'll crawl, I'll bleed, I'll burn the fucking world down if that's what it takes. Just... don't let this be the end.”

Her stare didn't waver. Her lips parted, and the single word she gave me shattered me to dust.

“No.”

The sound of it hollowed me. I actually forgot how to breathe. My hand fell uselessly to my side. My vision blurred, my throat burned, and still the tears came, no matter how hard I tried to fight them.

“Okay,” I whispered, broken. “Okay...”

Something vital inside me cracked then, something that would never heal.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 22 - 23 [ 1,238 words ]**

*Chapter 22: Chapter 23*

Elodie's POV

The moment Mila's arms wrapped around me, I almost broke. It had been a month since I'd seen her, but the second she pulled me into her hug, something inside me caved.

“Elodie!” she whispered like she'd been holding my name on her tongue for weeks.

I managed a faint smile, hugging her back tighter than I meant to. “Took you long enough.”

But my voice cracked on the words.

We sank onto the couch, trying to fall back into that easy rhythm we'd always had, but nothing about me was easy anymore. My chest felt like it had been carved open, and no matter how much I tried to keep it together, grief had a way of leaking through the cracks.

She reached for my hand, her eyes clouded with guilt. "God, El... I'm so sorry about this mess. I should never have told him where you were. What the hell was I thinking?"

I squeezed her fingers gently. "Don't. Don't do that to yourself." I forced a shrug. "If you hadn't told him, Calhoun would've just sent someone to track me anyway. Better it happened the way it did. A clean break hurts less than being dragged through it slowly."

The lie tasted like ash on my tongue. There was nothing clean about the way it ended. Nothing clean about the way he had ripped my heart out of my chest, stomped on it, then dared to look at me like he owned the pieces.

Mila didn't look convinced. Her jaw clenched like she wanted to argue, but instead her gaze flicked past me. My stomach twisted before I even turned. I didn't need to. I could feel it, the heavy pull of his stare.

Calhoun. He was across the room, pretending not to look, but I knew better.

His wolf was restless, I could sense it. Every line of his body screamed that he was memorizing me, hoarding every detail, like he had any right left to.

I hated him for it. I hated myself more for the way my heart still stuttered under his gaze.

Mila's voice cut through, not caring if Calhoun overheard or not. "Real talk, El... if Carmela had never come back, would you and my brother have ended up together?"

The air froze.

I looked at Mila, then at him. His attention snapped toward me like the words were life or death. His jaw tightened, his hands fisted at his sides, his eyes desperate, hungry for an answer that could rewrite history.

If Carmela hadn't shown up, would I still be his?

The truth hit me so hard that my heart slightly caved in. I had asked myself that question a thousand times in the silence of my apartment, in the moments when my chest ached so bad I couldn't breathe. But now, standing here, with him watching me like I was the last breath of air in a burning room, I knew.

No.

Because if it hadn't been Carmela, it would have been someone else. Another distraction. Another storm he let sweep me aside. His sudden desperation now wasn't love, it was panic. Panic that he'd lost control of me.

I pushed my hair back, steadying my voice even as my heart bled. “Not a chance.”

The words came out flat, and final.

His face faltered, a crack splitting through the mask he always wore. For once, Calhoun Damaris, Alpha, billionaire, untouchable, looked human. Broken.

And it wrecked me.

But I didn't take the words back. I couldn't. If I let even an inch of softness slip through, I'd crumble right back into him. And I wouldn't survive that a second time.

Nobody asked me why. They didn't need to. The silence that followed was thick enough to choke on. Mila's hand was still in mine, and Calhoun's stare burned into my skin like a brand I'd never escape.

But I held my ground.

Because loving him had already cost me everything.

Mila dragged me back to our Pack in New York like I was half-dead, and maybe I was. I didn't fight her. I didn't fight anything. My body moved, but my wolf had gone silent, buried beneath the wreckage of what I'd done.

The empire was bleeding. The Damaris name, once untouchable, was now hanging by threads, contracts collapsing, stock falling. I sat in my office like a ghost while my sister stepped into the fire to salvage what she could. She should've hated me. Maybe she did. But she stayed.

A folder landed in front of me with a dull thud.

“Found something,” Mila said, her voice flat. “Figured you should know before you drown yourself any further.”

My hands shook as I pulled it open. Photographs. Documents. Receipts. Carmela's whole European history laid out in black and white. Not studying. Not building a future. No... but just men. Parties. Yachts. Several erased pregnancies.

The girl I thought I once loved was totally unrecognizable. Or maybe she'd always been this and I was the blind fool who painted her as pure.

I stared at the pictures until my vision blurred, waiting for rage, for jealousy, for some shred of love to stir. Nothing. Just emptiness. A flatline in my chest.

When I closed my eyes, it wasn't Carmela I saw. It was Elodie. Always Elodie. Her laugh. Her tears. The way she'd stayed late at the office, coffee in hand, looking at me like I was worth saving. Every memory of her carved deeper into me until I couldn't breathe.

And the cruelest thought of all, ten years from now, would she fade too? Would even her face blur into nothing if I let time keep dragging me forward? My stomach twisted at the idea. I couldn't lose her twice.

"I'll get myself together," I rasped, though my voice was nothing but broken gravel. I forced my eyes to Mila, forced a smile that wasn't a smile at all. "But first, I owe you something."

Before she could ask, I raised my hand and slammed it across my face with every ounce of strength I had left. The crack echoed through the office, so loud as a gunshot. Pain exploded, my skin stinging hot, blood flooding my mouth.

"Calhoun!" Mila's eyes widened in horror.

I spat blood onto the floor and met her stare, unflinching. "For hitting you over Carmela. That was my sin. We're even now."

She looked at me like I was a stranger. Her eyes softened, but she didn't know whether to hold me or hate me. In the end, she just sighed, her voice trembling. "Don't do this to yourself again. Maybe one day you'll meet someone else. Just... try not to burn yourself alive next time."

Her hope stabbed deeper than her disappointment. I didn't correct her. Let her cling to illusions. I already knew the truth. There would never be anyone else. Elodie was the beginning and the end. And I'd destroyed her.

When she left, silence pressed me down in the office like a coffin lid. My hands moved slowly, methodically, gathering the photos of Carmela like I was gathering evidence at a trial. My wolf inside me stirred then, restless, teeth bared. Not for grief this time, but vengeance.

I stood. The air in the office suddenly felt suffocating, stale. My steps carried me not upward, but down the stairs. Always down.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 23 - 24 [ 1,103 words ]**

*Chapter 23: Chapter 24*

Calhoun's POV~

Weeks had chewed Carmela down to bones and shadows. When I pushed open the basement door, the stench of damp concrete and her rotting perfume clung to the air. She was curled in the corner like a broken thing, trembling, eyes wide in the sudden light.

The moment she saw me, she scrambled forward on hands and knees, filthy nails clawing the floor, reaching for me like I was her salvation.

“Calhoun please... I’m sorry,” her voice cracked, ragged from thirst and sleepless nights. “I swear I’ll disappear. I’ll leave the Pack, you’ll never hear my name again. Just... just don’t leave me here. I can’t take it anymore!”

Her face was a ruin. Mascara smeared in black rivers down her cheeks, lips split and trembling, designer silk now nothing but rags.

Once, I had thought she was beautiful. Once, I had been fool enough to believe in that beauty. Now, kneeling there, she looked exactly like what she’d always been a parasite.

My jaw locked. I wanted to feel pity, but all I felt was fire gnawing my chest. This was the woman I had let close enough to nearly destroy Elodie. The woman I had trusted when I should have crushed her throat the moment I saw through her act.

My voice came out cold, and flat. “Pathetic.”

Her tears fell faster, body shaking with frantic sobs, but I didn’t move. I let her drown in her own desperation. Then I dropped the folder at her knees. It hit the concrete with a hollow slap.

She froze. Her trembling hands opened it, and as her eyes ran over the photographs, the color drained from her face.

Her past, the Pack in Europe she’d burned to ash behind her. The lovers she’d betrayed, the lies she’d spun, the Alpha she had sold her body out to. Every secret, every shame of hers, catalogued in full color.

“That’s... no—” her voice pitched high, wild. “That’s not me. These are fake. Someone’s trying to ruin me!”

She tore at the pages, clutching them to her chest like she could hide from the truth staring her down.

“It was Elodie, wasn’t it?” Her hysteria sharpened into venom. “That bitch couldn’t stand that you forgave me, so she made this up. She wants to turn you against me—”

“Elodie doesn’t have to turn me against you.” My words cut like glass. “You did that all on your own.”

Her sobs cracked into screaming, incoherent, as though shrieking could erase the evidence. “I was different in Europe! I was loved, I was wanted, this life wasn’t supposed to be mine!”

I stared at her, and for the first time, I understood the weight of my rage. It wasn’t just her betrayal. It was mine too, my blindness, my weakness. I had let her in. And because of that, Elodie had bled.

My hands curled into fists, claws itching beneath my skin. Every instinct in me screamed to finish her, to end this crawling, wretched creature begging at my feet. But a darker part of me whispered to let her rot. Let her taste the misery she fed others.

I leaned down, my shadow swallowing her whole. “You wanted power, Carmela. You wanted to play in the dark. Now you’ll choke on it. Alone. Forgotten. Nothing more than a ghost chained to her own sins.”

Her sobs filled the silence, into broken, ugly, and desperate sounds.

Her European escape had been her dream, once. She’d fed off men who mistook her beauty for worth, let them drape her in jewels and hide her sins with their money. But men tire of leeches. They always do. One by one, they vanished. The schools threw her out. The fake diploma she bought couldn’t fool anyone. No Pack wanted her. No Alpha would touch her name.

So she sold herself. Body for protection. Flesh for rent. Her reputation spread faster than wildfire through every Pack she slithered through, until there was nowhere left to run but back here. Back to me.

And I had been waiting.

She was on her knees now, her forehead pressed to the concrete, lips moving in a frenzy of apologies. “I’m sorry, Calhoun. I swear, I’ll vanish. You’ll never hear from me again. Just don’t... don’t leave me here. Please...”

Her voice was hoarse, broken. She trembled so violently I thought her bones might splinter beneath her skin.

I stood there, staring down at her. Once, I had bled for this woman. Once, I had thought she was my salvation. Now she was a pitiful carcass of greed and desperation.

And for a moment, watching her beg, I felt nothing. No pity. No love. Not even anger anymore. Just an ache in my chest where I used to keep my heart.

When her sobbing slowed, I finally spoke. My voice was ice.

“Get out.”

Her head snapped up, eyes wide, wet lashes sticking together. “W-what? What did you say?”

“You heard me.” I didn’t blink. “Get out, Carmela. We’re finished. Whatever this was, it died long ago. My heart belongs to someone else now. And it’s not you.”

Her mouth opened and closed, her face twisting in disbelief. She looked around the basement as if searching for guards, waiting for chains, for punishment. None came. The door was open. For the first time in weeks, freedom was hers.

And yet I saw the truth settle in her eyes, the outside world terrified her more than the dark she’d been rotting in. Out there, no one would care. Out there, she was nothing.

I turned without another word. My footsteps echoed off the walls, and with every step I took, the distance between us grew heavier. She whispered my name once, broken, like it could tether me back. I didn't look over my shoulder.

The door slammed shut behind me.

Carmela disappeared from my Pack that night. Where she went, no one knew. And for once, no one cared.

I thought I would feel lighter. I thought letting her crawl out of my life would heal something. But as I stood in the silence of my office hours later, watching the city lights burn through the glass, I only felt emptier.

After two weeks of recovery, I took back hold of the company, trying so hard my company returned back to balance and I visibly saw the relief sketched on Mila's face the moment I returned back to the company. Of course she had to be relieved. My own sister had her dreams and ambitions to chase. As well as me.

## Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 24 - 25 [ 1,343 words ]

*Chapter 24: Chapter 25*

Elodie's POV—

The air was cold that afternoon, so sharp enough to sting my cheeks as I sat on the park bench. Leaves rustled above me. Across the path, a man leaned down to kiss his mate's cheek, his hand brushing tenderly over the small swell of her stomach. The glow on her face, the way he looked at her like nothing else mattered; it twisted something deep inside me.

I should have looked away, but I didn't. My chest ached with an emotion I couldn't name, half joy for them, half something darker, heavier. Something I didn't want to admit lived inside me.

"They look happy," Mila said quietly beside me.

"They do," I whispered, forcing my eyes down to my hands. My fingers were stiff from the cold, but they wouldn't stop fidgeting. "So how's work, babes?"

Mila didn't push. She never did. "Work's the same," she said after a pause. "Alphas sending contracts they expect me to rewrite overnight. Nothing new."

I nodded, though I wasn't listening. My mind was elsewhere, three years behind me, and yet still painfully close. Three years since I walked away from Calhoun. Three years since I'd sent him that final message that had gutted me as much as it freed me:

'Nine years loving you in silence. Five years pretending it was enough. This is the end of the line.'

I'd meant it. Moon goddess, I had. I'd forced myself to mean it, even as I packed what little was mine, even as I tore my wolf in half to do it. I'd built a new life, brick by shaky brick, my own apartment, my work in tech development, quiet mornings that weren't filled with his shadow. But some nights I'd still wake with his name in my throat, extremely raw and broken, as though he'd carved himself into my lungs.

And then Dante had appeared. Six months ago at a Pack conference in New York, the Alpha of the Bellini Pack in Italy and a tech Morgul. He'd sought me out after my presentation, his interest had been immediate, not just in my work, but in me. Where Calhoun had once consumed me like a storm, Dante had been patient. Dinners that turned into long nights talking. Calls that drifted from business to personal. For the first time in years, I'd felt seen.

"Elodie." Mila nudged me gently. "You're lost in your head again."

Heat rose to my cheeks. "Dante... he asked me to go to Italy with him. To his Pack."

Her brows lifted. "For how long?"

"A year. Maybe longer." I swallowed. "He wants me to lead his AI development team. And... it's not just about work. It's personal too."

"That's a big leap after six months," she said carefully, her Alpha's instinct weighing every word.

"I know." My voice cracked, and I hated how fragile it sounded. "But when I'm with him... I don't feel small. I don't feel like someone's shadow. He sees me, Mila. Not as a convenience, not as someone to keep hidden. Just me."

I hesitated. My hands wouldn't stop twisting in my lap. Finally, I whispered, "And there's something else."

Mila stilled, her eyes narrowing slightly. "What is it?"

I forced myself to say it, the words heavy on my tongue. "I'm pregnant."

The silence that followed stretched so long between us that I couldn't even breathe. I could hear children laughing somewhere deeper in the park, leaves crunching beneath strangers' footsteps. But here, between us, it was suffocating.

"Does he know?" she asked softly.

I shook my head. "No. I found out last week." My throat burned. "I don't know how to tell him. What if he changes when he finds out? What if... what if I ruin this too? What if I destroy him the way I destroyed myself with Calhoun?"

Mila's hand covered mine, and gently squeezed reassuringly. "Listen to me. Dante isn't Calhoun. And you aren't the same woman you were with him either. You're stronger now. You'll handle whatever comes."

I wanted to believe her. I wanted to let her strength bleed into me. But all I felt was the ghost of Calhoun's name still burning in my chest, the wound he'd left raw, unhealed and still aches.

"I'm going to tell him tonight," I whispered.

And for the first time in a long while, I was terrified of both the truth and the future it might bring.

-----

The restaurant I was in smelled of charred wood and rich wine, but I barely noticed. Candlelight flickered across the table, painting Dante's face in gold and shadow. He hadn't stopped looking at me all evening, like he could sense the storm building behind my calm mask.

"You've been... somewhere else tonight," he said, his Italian accent thick, almost melodic. His hand brushed against mine lightly. "Tell me, cara. What's on your mind?"

I swallowed hard. My throat felt tight, dry. Every instinct told me to hold back, to protect myself but the truth pressed so urgently against my chest that it hurt.

"I... I need to tell you something," I whispered, my voice sounded fragile.

Dante's dark eyes softened, but there was still that quiet strength, that Alpha presence that always made me feel both safe and exposed. "Whatever it is, we face it together."

The words broke something open in me. "...I'm... I'm... pregnant."

The second the words left my lips, the restaurant seemed to shrink. His glass paused halfway to his mouth, suspended in air as though the world itself had stopped. My heart hammered so hard I thought it might escape my chest.

"Say something," I begged, my voice trembling, my hands tightening around my own.

Dante set the glass down slowly. For a long, terrifying moment, his face was unreadable. And then, slowly, impossibly, his mouth curved, softening, opening into a smile that reached his eyes, lighting the shadows in them.

"A baby," he murmured, voice low, reverent, almost in disbelief. "Our baby."

Relief washed over me in. My knees went weak, my chest loosened, and for the first time in months, I exhaled without thinking.

"You're... happy?" The words came out shakier than I intended, because even joy felt laced with fear after everything I'd lived through with Calhoun, the emptiness, the cold, the nights I cried alone.

“Happy?” Dante leaned across the table, hands covering mine, fingers pressing warmth into mine. “I’m more than happy. I’m alive, Elodie. I’m... I’m terrified, but ecstatic, and I wouldn’t change a second of this. Not one.”

My breath caught. His words should have been enough, but he wasn’t finished. He reached into his jacket, producing a small velvet box that gleamed under the candlelight.

“Dante...” My voice trembled.

“This isn’t because of the baby, Elodie,” he said quickly. “I’ve been carrying this with me. Waiting for the right moment.”

The box opened. Inside sat a diamond, so simple, and yet elegant. My chest tightened, memories of Calhoun flashing through my mind. While Calhoun had been cold, indifferent, distant... And here was Dante, who was warm, makes me feel alive, offering me everything I had once thought I couldn’t deserve.

“Elodie,” he said, his voice low and, yet tender, “I don’t believe in coincidences. Meeting you, surviving my own darkness, falling in love, this child, it’s all... fate. Will you marry me?”

Tears pricked at my eyes. My fingers shook as they hovered over the ring. I saw everything at once, the fear, the heartbreak, the scars left by a man who never cared, and the hope, the warmth, the pull of another man who would move heaven and earth for me.

“Yes,” I whispered, voice breaking, but firm. “Yes, I’ll marry you.”

Dante’s hands tightened around mine, forehead pressing to mine. His heat, his strength, his life, the Alpha’s presence I had always craved, all wrapped around me, so protective, and possessive. And for the first time, I allowed myself to feel something beyond fear. Beyond heartbreak. I allowed myself to hope.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 25 - 26 [ 1,206 words ]**

*Chapter 25: Chapter 26*

Elodie’s POV~

Six years later.

I stepped out of the airport into the cool night of the Bellini Pack. My suitcase rattled behind me as I drew in a deep breath. The clock had already passed nine. Today was my birthday.

I unlocked my phone. Messages from colleagues, friends in the tech world I'd fought so hard to rise in, lit up the screen. Not one from Dante.

My smile faltered. Two months away from him and Liora, and he hadn't even remembered. I had pushed aside crucial work on the neural network launch just to spend this day with my family, hoping for a simple moment together.

By the time I arrived at the villa, it was past ten. The house was quiet. Sabina froze when she saw me.

"Madam... you're here?"

"Where are Dante and Liora?" I asked, setting down my designer bag.

"Master hasn't returned yet... and Miss is in her room, busy."

I handed her my luggage and went upstairs, my heart tightening with every step.

Liora was sitting at her little table, pajamas rumpled, eyes glued to a tiny charm bracelet she was threading with care. I called softly, "Liora?"

She looked up and brightened. "Mommy!" But then immediately went back to the bracelet, humming under her breath.

I wanted to sweep her into my arms, to kiss her tiny cheeks, but she pushed gently away.

"Mommy, I'm busy."

I swallowed hard, the lump in my throat stinging. Two months. I had missed her so much I could barely breathe, yet she seemed so absorbed in her project she didn't even notice me.

"Are you making... a bracelet?" I asked softly.

"Mm-hmm!" she said, eyes shining. "It's for Aunt Sienna's birthday! Daddy helped me choose the charms and spell out her name. And look... see? Each letter is perfect! We even polished them ourselves!"

Sienna. The new marketing director. Dante's... favorite, it seemed. My chest tightened so suddenly I had to press a hand against it.

Liora continued cheerfully, her back still turned to me. "Daddy made other gifts too... tomorrow—"

I couldn't breathe. My voice cracked before I could stop it. "Liora... do you remember Mommy's birthday?"

She glanced up briefly, confusion flickering across her face. Then, as if I didn't exist, went back to her bracelet. "Mom, don't talk. You're messing up the letter order."

I fell silent, my arms useless at my sides. Two months. My daughter had grown in my absence, yet she barely acknowledged me. I pressed my lips together, fighting back the tears, and quietly left the room.

Sabina followed me cautiously. "Madam... I just called Master. He said he has... something tonight, and asked you to rest first."

"I understand," I murmured, but her words felt like nails scratching against the hollow in my chest.

I picked up my phone and called Dante. My hands trembled. Hours passed as it rang, my heartbeat loud in the empty room. And then a cold woman's voice rang out.

"Dante? Who's this at this hour?"

Sienna? My stomach dropped.

"Nothing," he said quickly. And the line went dead.

I sank into the sofa, gripping the phone so tightly my knuckles whitened. Two months of separation, and he couldn't even speak to me. Not a word. Not even a single acknowledgment.

The man I had loved, the warm, protective Alpha, the CEO of the Bellini Pack who had once made me feel like the center of his world had become someone else. Someone distant, distracted, and painfully cold.

I wanted to call again, to beg, to demand his attention, but I didn't have the energy. The hope I had clung to all these months drained into a hollow ache.

Tomorrow, I would try again. Maybe. All I had wanted was a quiet birthday, a meal with Dante and Liora, our little family. But even that simple wish felt impossibly far away.

I stayed there long into the night, the lights of the Bellini Pack's estates twinkling outside like unreachable stars, I felt the weight of my loneliness crushing down on me.

After hours of waiting, all I got was a single message from Dante:

[Something up?]

I hesitated, my fingers hovering over the keyboard before replying. [Are you free for lunch? Could we have a meal together with Liora, just the three of us?]

[Alright, let me know once you've decided on the location.]

[Okay.]

And then... nothing. Complete silence. Not a word about my birthday. Not a “happy birthday,” not even a simple acknowledgment. I had braced myself, told myself not to hope, yet the sting of disappointment still pierced me. I gripped the phone tightly in my hand.

I finished my routine mechanically, my movements heavy, my heart? It felt hollow. Just as I was about to go downstairs, voices drifted up from below, Liora’s voice, and Sabina’s quiet corrections.

“Is the Young Miss unhappy about Madam’s visit?” Sabina asked.

“Dad and I already promised to go to the beach with Aunt Sienna tomorrow. If Mom suddenly comes along, it would be so... awkward,” Liora said.

“And Mom is always so mean, always being harsh to Aunt Sienna—”

“Young Miss, Madam is your mother. You shouldn’t say such things. You know it would break her heart,” Sabina’s voice tried to be gentle.

“I know... but Dad and I like Aunt Sienna better. Why can’t I have Aunt Sienna as my mom?”

I froze mid-step. My blood ran cold, my chest tightened so violently I couldn’t draw a proper breath.

The rest of Sabina’s words were drowned out by the sudden pounding in my ears.

I had raised her, my little Liora, on my own for years. Every scraped knee, every late-night tear, every whispered bedtime story had been mine. And yet, in a single year of Dante building the Bellini Pack in Italy, she had grown closer to him... and to Sienna. The reality hit me like ice: I was becoming the outsider in my own family.

I had flown across oceans, pushed aside every professional obligation, sacrificed months of work to be here... and still, they didn’t need me. My gifts from home, carefully chosen with love, sat useless in my suitcase. My presence felt like a mistake, like a cruel joke I couldn’t escape.

I retreated to my room, the door clicking softly behind me. The sound of Liora’s laughter and the cheerful clinking of bracelets from below felt like a knife twisting in my chest. Sabina called up later, her voice polite. “Madam, I’m taking Liora out to play. Call if you need anything.”

I sank onto the bed, the silence swallowing me whole. The villa felt too large, too empty, too foreign. My arms ached to hold my daughter, my throat ached to speak to Dante, but no one wanted me here. My heart, once full with hope, now throbbed with a sharp, relentless ache.

The Bellini Pack in Italy, Dante’s world had room for him, for Liora, even for Sienna. But me? I was just a shadow, a visitor in the life I had built and the family I had given everything to.

And somewhere in the quiet, I realized that maybe... maybe I wasn’t welcome anymore.

# Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 26 - 27[ 1,016 words ]

*Chapter 26: Chapter 27*

Elodie's POV—

I walked through the streets of the Bellini Pack, the autumn wind tugging at my coat, it now felt like a life that no longer belonged to me. Everything looked the same, familiar storefronts, cobblestone lanes but it all felt like someone else's world. Like I was a ghost in it, unseen and unnecessary.

Near noon, a dull ache reminded me of lunch plans I had with Dante. My fingers hovered over my phone, debating whether to head home and see Liora, my little girl. Then it buzzed with a new message.

[Something urgent came up. Lunch canceled.]

I stared at the screen as the words sank in. No shock. No anger. Just the quiet, hollow hurt that had been settling into my bones for months. I wasn't surprised. Nothing I ever asked for, ever hoped for, had seemed to matter to him. Work, friends, someone else, always first. Me, his wife, and our daughter? Optional.

I felt a familiar numbness, a hollowing in my chest where hope used to live. I had come here eagerly, heart open, only to be met with indifference. Even Liora, my little girl, the one I carried for ten months through nights of pain and fear was being pulled into someone else's orbit.

I drove without thinking, my mind on autopilot, and ended up at the restaurant Dante and I had dined at countless times. Memories of laughter and easy conversations kept flooding into my mind. But when I approached the glass, the cold truth hit me hard across the face.

There they were. Dante, Sienna, and Liora.

Sienna sat close to my daughter, whispering and laughing, brushing Liora's hair back, feeding her little pastries from her own plate. Liora swung her legs happily, her eyes bright but not with me. Dante smiled as he served them, but his gaze never left Sienna. She was the center of his world, the one he wanted to impress, not me, not the child he once promised he would protect above all else.

I wanted to scream, to rush in and reclaim my place. But my legs felt heavy, my heart heavier. So this was Dante's "urgent matter," this moment I had crossed oceans for: my child being claimed by someone else.

I smiled, so bitter and hollow, my fingers tightening on the strap of my bag. I didn't move closer. I couldn't. I couldn't be the mother my daughter already didn't need. I turned and walked away.

Back at the villa, everything seemed to be crashing down on me. I sat at the desk, hands trembling as I pulled out the divorce papers I had prepared. Seven years. Seven years of believing that love, effort, devotion, could be enough to change a man who never truly saw me. Dante had been my dream once. My first. My mistake. But he had never really looked at me, not like he had at Sienna just now.

I placed the papers in an envelope and pressed them into Sabina's hands. "Make sure he reads this," I said, although my voice was low and trembling, it was resolute.

I dragged my suitcase to the car. "To the airport," I told the driver. The words were final. No second chances, no desperate hope left in my chest. For the first time in years, I felt a strange weight lift. It was painful, yes, but liberating.

I had loved a man who never loved me back. I had carried his child, nearly dying for her, only to be made irrelevant. And now, I was leaving the Bellini Pack and him... behind.

-----

Dante's POV

It was past nine when Liora and I pulled into the villa. She clung to my sleeve, moving slowly, dragging her feet. I didn't hurry her. I never did. She didn't need me to push her forward.

"Dad... what if Mom insists on coming with us tomorrow?" she asked, her voice small and worried.

I glanced at her briefly, just enough to register the question. The faintest lift of my eyebrow, maybe even a small spark of surprise—she always had a way of showing up when you didn't expect it. But I didn't let it linger.

"She won't," I said smoothly, voice calm, certain. No heat. No judgment. No comfort. That was enough for her. She relaxed almost immediately, the tension in her shoulders easing.

I drove the rest of the way in silence. Liora's small hands squeezed my sleeve once, twice, then she let go, too tired to fuss. That suited me just fine.

Inside, Sabina appeared, holding something carefully. "Sir... Madam asked me to give this to you."

I took the envelope without looking at her. "Where is she?" I asked, casually, as if it hardly mattered.

"Madam... packed and returned home this afternoon," Sabina said, carefully watching for any sign of reaction.

I paused halfway up the stairs. A flicker of surprise—perhaps she had thought I'd notice, maybe even care—but it didn't last. Of course she went back. She always had things to do. Life pulled her away. That was normal. That was fine.

“She went back?” I asked, almost rhetorically.

“Yes,” Sabina confirmed.

I nodded once and continued upstairs, the envelope slipping into my pocket. I didn’t need to read it right now. Her reasons, her explanations, her little attempts to pull at the world around me... they didn’t affect me. I assumed she had her reasons. I didn’t need to dwell.

Liora’s eyes lingered on me, catching the faint shadow of my pause. Her small disappointment, the tiny hope she carried for her mother’s presence tonight was all evident in her features. But it had entirely shattered now.

I knew the reason why. All these while, little Liora had been chattering about how much she wanted Elodie to be around her tomorrow. Although she didn’t want Elodie to join us at the beach tomorrow, she still wanted her mother to stay and accompany her for the rest of the day.

Without another word, I climbed upstairs, not sparing a glance at her direction.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 27 - 28 [ 1,167 words ]**

*Chapter 27: Chapter 28*

Elodie’s POV~

Sabina lingered by the doorway, her hands folded tight against her apron.

“Alpha,” she said carefully, her voice carrying a note of unease, “Madam didn’t look well when she left. She... she seemed angry.”

I paused for only a moment, the words settling between us. Angry? Elodie? That amused me more than it concerned me. In front of me, she’d always been obedient, measured. A woman like her getting angry, it was novel, almost laughable. Perhaps Sabina misunderstood her expressions. I knew Elodie long enough.

“She must’ve had something urgent,” I said, my tone flat, dismissive. “Don’t trouble yourself, Sabina.”

Her eyes flickered, as though she expected me to ask more, to rise from my chair and go after her. But I didn’t. Why would I? Whatever storm she carried, it wasn’t mine to bear. At least not by the time of the day. I was too tired to care for such type of irrelevant things.

I walked past her without another word, heading upstairs. The city lights poured through the tall windows. On my desk, I tossed the brown envelope and waterbed as it lay waiting, it was her handwriting unmistakable.

For the briefest second, I considered opening it. Then my phone buzzed. Sienna's name lit up the screen. A tiny smile broke up to my lips and without hesitation I answered. When the call ended, I tossed the envelope onto the bed. It slid off, landing face-down on the floor with a muted thud. I didn't bother to pick it up. I might open it later, when I am in the mood.

That night, I didn't return home. I walked the terraces of the skyscraper instead, breathing in the sharp scent of the city, watching the restless pulse of headlights below. Her absence didn't weigh on me. It didn't touch me.

The next morning, when I returned, Sabina came to clean, she found the envelope. I watched from the hall as she bent, picked it up, turned it over in her hands. She stared at him for a couple of seconds before she slipped it into a drawer, assuming I had read it.

I hadn't. At least not yet. I was preoccupied with a lot of things to start reading a mere letter, when she could easily send a text across or drop a message. Maybe later.

-----

Elodie's POV

The moment I stepped into the house, one of Dante's houses in south Bellini, the silence hit me. Not the peaceful kind, no, this one in particular was heavy, suffocating, almost mocking. Seven years of my life here, and yet it didn't feel like home. It never had.

I went upstairs without turning on the lights, not wanting to see the walls that had watched me fade into someone I didn't recognize anymore. My suitcase lay open on the bed, and I started to pack. Slowly, methodically, like if I lingered too long, the weight of every single thing would crush me.

Clothes. A few books. Toiletries. That was all I could take. How strange, to look around at rooms filled with things I once thought we'd built together, and realize none of it was mine.

On the dresser sat the two cards Dante had given me after we married, his own version of support. One for me, one for Liora. I'd never touched hers. That money was hers, untouched, pure. Mine... I rarely used it for myself. I'd walk into stores and always come out with something for him, name them... ties, cufflinks, shirts he probably never noticed. As if clothing him could make him see me. Could cloth the cracks forming in our marriage.

For Liora, I gave everything I had. For Dante, I gave everything I was. And for myself? Nothing.

My card still held more than four million. A laugh escaped me, and it was low, bitter, empty. For Dante, that was pocket change. For me, it was the proof of all the years I starved myself of even the smallest kindness just to make sure he and Liora had everything.

I transferred it out. My hands didn't tremble. I left both cards on the dresser. Tombstones of a marriage that was already buried.

Dragging my suitcase to the door, I didn't look back. Looking back meant begging, and I had begged enough in silence. I closed the door as though I were closing the last Chapter of a book I'd never wanted to read.

The apartment I went to wasn't big. Just a place I'd bought years ago, back when I was foolish enough to think Dante might one day need me to have a space of my own. I had never lived there, but someone had kept it clean. The walls smelled faintly of polish, waiting for a life that never came.

That night, after scrubbing and making up the bed, I collapsed, exhausted. My body ached, but my heart ached worse. I thought I'd sleep, but at one a.m. sharp, the alarm I had set years ago went off.

Liora.

I grabbed the phone before the sound could tear me apart. For so long, I'd set that alarm to make sure I could call her while she had breakfast in the Bellini Pack. At first, she'd cry into the phone, begging me to come, her little voice trembling with how much she missed me. But children learn. They adapt. Her tone had shifted over the years— from "Mama, I need you" to "Mama, I'm busy."

She was slipping away from me, piece by piece, and I couldn't stop it.

My thumb hovered over her name, my chest tightening as if I were being torn open from the inside. I wanted to hear her voice. I wanted to beg her not to forget me. But what good would it do? She already belonged more to Dante's world than to mine.

With tears burning at the corners of my eyes, I deleted the alarm. For the first time in years, I let the silence answer me back.

Somewhere, in Dante's grand dining room, Liora was probably eating breakfast. Maybe she noticed I hadn't called. Maybe she even felt relief. No endless reminders, no mother clinging to her over the phone. And Dante, if he noticed, he wouldn't care enough to ask why.

That thought gutted me, but I smiled anyway. A broken, bitter smile that tasted like salt and ashes.

The next morning, I walked into Dante's company and handed in my resignation. The HR director looked at me like I had lost my mind. Maybe I had. But the truth was simple: I had joined this empire for Dante. And now I was leaving it for myself.

For the first time in six years, I wasn't waiting for his approval. I wasn't waiting for Liora to run back into my arms. I wasn't waiting to be loved.

I was just... leaving. And it broke me that no one would even chase after me.

# Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 28 - 29 [ 1,352 words ]

*Chapter 28: Chapter 29*

As one of Dante's personal secretaries, Albert had seen countless resignations cross his desk over the years. Secretaries came and went, some tearful, some bitter, some relieved. But when Elodie slid that white envelope across the polished oak, something inside him tightened.

Her hands didn't shake, but her eyes... moon goddess, her eyes told a different story.

Albert had been in Dante's office long enough to know more than he ever should. He knew the whispers in the Pack, knew how cold Dante could be when it came to the woman he'd once taken as his Luna. He knew Elodie's marriage had been built on loyalty and sacrifice, but not love, at least, not from Dante's side. From hers, it had always been all or nothing.

She'd walked into this company years ago not just as his wife but determined, almost desperate, to earn her place beside him. Not as his shadow. Not as the Luna people pitied. She'd worked through her pregnancy, kept her head down through the cruel gossip, and never once demanded special treatment. Even when her heart was clearly breaking, she showed up every day polished, professional, untouchable.

Albert respected her for it. More than that, he pitied her.

And now... she was leaving.

"I'll take your resignation," Albert said, keeping his voice steady though it nearly caught in his throat. "I'll arrange a replacement."

She only nodded, quietly. No protests, no explanations. Just a soft curve of her lips that wasn't a smile at all.

When she turned back to her desk, Albert noticed the way her shoulders slumped once she thought no one was looking. He saw how she lingered over the small family photograph propped by her computer, one that held a younger Elodie, her arms wrapped around little Liora, smiling like she had the whole world in her arms. The frame trembled in her hand before she set it down gently, almost reverently.

Albert had to look away.

For the rest of the morning, he watched her pack her things into a box. Not much, really. She hadn't allowed herself luxuries. No trinkets, no clutter. Just a handful of books, a mug with faded lettering, a pen Dante himself had once given her back when there might have been hope.

Hope. That was the word that clung to her like a ghost.

Albert couldn't help thinking: this wasn't just a resignation. This was surrender.

Later, when he reported to Dante over video call, he forced himself to keep it professional. They were wrapping up quarterly reports when it slipped from his mouth before he could stop himself.

“Oh, Alpha Dante, regarding Elodie...”

On the other end of the line, Dante's pen stilled. His golden eyes flickered in the dim light of his office, unreadable, cold as stone.

“What about her?” Dante asked, his tone sharp enough to cut.

Albert swallowed, pulse pounding. A lump formed in his throat, because how could he explain the way she'd looked? How could he describe the sight of a woman who had once given everything to her mate and her Pack, quietly folding in on herself as she walked away?

He wondered if Dante would fight for her. If he would stop her. If he would even notice that in choosing to leave this place, Elodie wasn't just abandoning a job. She was leaving behind the last thread tethering her to him.

He had promised Elodie he would arrange her replacement quickly. That part was easy. But his gut twisted with unease, shouldn't Dante be told? For years, Albert had watched her struggle to win her mate's heart, watched her work tirelessly in the same company just to be closer to him, even if Dante never spared her a glance. And now she was leaving. Surely that was worth mentioning.

But then he remembered Dante's words when she first joined: He ordered Albert, “Handle her matters by the book. Don't bring her to me. Don't report anything special.”

And Dante had kept his word. He'd never once asked about her. When they crossed paths in the company hallways, he treated her as though she were any other employee. As though she hadn't once shared his home. As though she wasn't the mother of his child.

Albert's chest grew heavy.

“Report,” Dante said, his voice cold.

Silence stretched.

“Oh, it's nothing.”

And with that, Dante ended the call.

-----

Elodie's POV ~

I didn't even hear the first knock on my office door. My mind had drifted again, the numbers on the screen blurring into a haze I couldn't focus on.

"What's on your mind?" One of my colleagues, leaned against my desk, eyebrows raised.

I forced a smile, the kind that cracked at the edges. "Nothing."

"Not calling Liora today?" she asked gently.

My chest tightened. Everyone in the office had grown used to me stepping out to call her twice a day, once at dawn, once at noon. That ritual had been my lifeline. But now... I shook my head. "No. Not anymore."

She hesitated, then gave me a small nod, as if she knew better than to pry. She walked away, leaving me with the silence that wrapped around my heart like chains. Shit! It hurts.

I sat there staring at my phone, thumb hovering over Liora's name. I could almost hear her giggle, the way she'd say "Mommy, come home soon." But I didn't press the call. I couldn't, not when every unanswered ring cut me open deeper than claws ever could. I know.

After work, I picked up groceries, even bought a small potted plant I didn't need. It was something to hold, something alive, because inside I felt anything but. Back home, I cooked dinner for one, ate in silence, then curled up by the glow of my laptop, scrolling through news about the upcoming technology expo. The world kept spinning, glittering, moving forward... while I stayed stuck in the ashes.

I dialed a number I hadn't in months. "Can you reserve me a ticket for the Bellini Pack's technology expo next month?"

There was a pause, then a cold laugh. "Are you serious, Elodie? The last two times you asked, you didn't show. Do you know how many would kill for these seats? And you—" a sharp exhale, "—you waste them."

Their words stung so hard because they were true. But I pushed through, my voice low, almost pleading. "If I don't attend this time, I'll never ask again."

Silence. Then the line went dead. I knew that meant yes.

I closed my laptop and leaned back, staring at the ceiling. What I hadn't told them... what I couldn't tell anyone... was that I wanted back in. Back into the world I had left when I chose marriage, when I chose Dante, when I chose family. I had been his Luna, his partner, the one who stepped aside for the greater good of his Pack's empire. And in doing so, I lost myself.

Now, years later, I wanted to return. But who would take me seriously? The industry had moved on without me, and I had been buried in diapers, lullabies, and the slow, suffocating silence of abandonment.

For the next few days, I buried myself in work during office hours. At night, I researched, studied, tried to prepare. But I didn't call Liora. I didn't call Dante. And of course... they didn't call me.

It shouldn't have surprised me. Even six months ago, every call, every text had been one-sided, it was me reaching out, them responding out of duty rather than desire. I had been clinging to smoke.

Now there was only silence. Silence that screamed louder than words ever could.

I sat by the window that night, the city lights of our Pack sprawling endlessly below, and for the first time in a long while, I let myself cry. Not the quiet tears I'd grown used to hiding, but a raw, broken sob that left me trembling. Because no matter how strong I pretended to be, the truth was simple.

I had already lost them.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 29 - 30 [ 1,301 words ]**

*Chapter 29: Chapter 30*

In the Southern Bellini Pack, mornings were supposed to be bright, busy, filled with chatter and the buzz of the city below. But for Liora, that morning felt heavy the moment she opened her eyes. Her first instinct, as always, was to call Aunt Sienna.

She pressed the phone against her ear, waiting for the warmth of that familiar voice. But instead, after only a few words, Sienna's tone shifted to a more soft, hesitant, almost guilty tone.

"I'm going back, Liora," she said.

The words crashed through the little girl's chest, breaking her heart. "What? No!" Her voice broke instantly, tears rushing before she could stop them. "You... you can't go back! You promised you'd stay here with me!"

Sienna tried to soothe her, but the line and conversations felt unbearably cold and at the end she couldn't succeed in pacifying little Liora. The moment the call ended, Liora's trembling fingers dialed another number. "Dad," she blurted out the moment she called Dante's line. "Did you know Aunt Sienna's leaving?"

In the Pack's high-rise headquarters, Dante's deep voice came through, calmly, like he was already buried in a mountain of contracts. "Yes."

Her tears came harder. "Since when? Why didn't you tell me?"

"A while ago."

Liora clutched the pink wolf plush pressed against her chest. “Daddy, that’s so mean. You know I can’t live without Aunt Sienna. If she’s leaving, then I don’t want to stay here either. I’ll come home! I’ll—” her words tangled with sobs, “—I’ll quit school if I have to.”

“It’s already being handled,” Dante replied, almost detached.

She sniffled, confused. “Handled? What does that even mean?”

There was a pause, papers shuffling in the background, before his voice cut clean through. “We’re going back next week.”

Her heart lurched. She shot upright in bed, hair tumbling into her face. “Really? You mean it?”

“Mm.”

“Then... why didn’t Aunt Sienna say anything?”

“She doesn’t know yet. It was finalized this morning.”

Her tears slowed, replaced with wide-eyed hope. She clutched the plush tighter, her lips trembling into a smile. “Daddy... let’s not tell her yet, okay? Let’s surprise her when we get back.”

“Alright.”

“You’re the best! I love you so, so much!”

When the call ended, Liora was buzzing with joy, bouncing on the mattress, singing little songs only she understood. The storm of grief had suddenly turned to sunlight.

But the light didn’t last long.

Because as her laughter softened, she realized something. These last few days had been strangely quiet. Mommy hadn’t called. Not once.

At first, she thought it was because she had been avoiding the calls, leaving school before the last bell, keeping her phone off, making excuses because... because she was angry at her. Angry that Mommy was always too tired, too distracted, too far away to be with her like Sienna was.

But now... now that Mommy hadn’t called at all, guilt curled in her stomach like claws.

She sat there frozen, clutching the plush, staring at the silent phone. Mommy never ignored her for this long. Not when she was the one person Mommy always put first.

The thought cracked her chest open. Maybe Mommy really was angry this time. Maybe Mommy had given up on calling.

The first tear fell before she could stop it. Her small fingers trembled as she finally pressed call, her heart pounding so hard it hurt.

For the first time in days, she wanted nothing more than to hear Elodie's voice.

Liora's thumb hovered over the screen, her little heart beating so fast it almost hurt. She had been so excited moments ago, planning the surprise with Daddy, dreaming about seeing Aunt Sienna again. But then the thought struck her.

If they went back, if they returned to the Northern Bellini Pack, Mommy would make things difficult. She always did. Mommy would smile sweetly on the surface, but she would never let Liora run freely to Aunt Sienna the way she did here. She would control it, lock it down, and suddenly Aunt Sienna wouldn't belong to her anymore.

Her throat tightened. The excitement soured into fear.

Without thinking, she pressed the call button anyway. The phone rang, and her mother's name flashed on the screen. For a second, her heart leapt because she wanted to hear her. She wanted that familiar voice, the one that used to soothe her nightmares when she was younger.

But then anger surged, and before Elodie could pick up, Liora jabbed the screen and cut the call.

Her chest rose and fell quickly, hot tears burning her eyes. She hated herself for dialing at all.

In Northern Pack, far away, Elodie stirred awake in her bed, groggy from exhaustion. The sight of her daughter's name flashing on her phone had jolted her upright, her heart pounding with sudden hope. But before she could answer, the line went dead.

Elodie froze, staring at the darkened screen, confusion bleeding into panic. Liora never hung up on her. Not once.

Fear prickled through her. Something was wrong. She tried calling back.

Upstairs in the villa, Liora saw the screen light up again with her mother's name. Her chest clenched so hard it hurt. She wanted to answer, to cry into her mother's voice, but anger pressed heavier. She turned her face away and let it ring out.

Her small hand shook as she placed the phone on the desk. If Mommy truly cared, she wouldn't have disappeared for days. She wouldn't have left her feeling like an afterthought.

But ignoring the call didn't make her feel powerful. It made her feel lonelier.

When Elodie's call was ignored, panic clawed higher. She quickly dialed the villa landline.

Sabina, the housekeeper, answered, startled at Elodie's urgency. "The Young Miss should be fine," Sabina reassured, though her tone carried uncertainty. "She stayed up late last night, she's probably still in bed. I'll check and call you back."

Elodie closed her eyes, pinching the bridge of her nose, fighting back the ache in her chest. "Please," she whispered.

Upstairs, Sabina found Liora already brushing her teeth. "Your mother was worried when you didn't answer," she explained gently.

Liora spat into the sink, avoiding her gaze. "It was an accident. I pressed it without meaning to." She lied.

Sabina nodded, unsuspecting, and padded downstairs to ease Elodie's fear.

When Liora heard the report muffled through the walls, she let out a tiny snort and rolled her eyes, but her stomach twisted painfully.

She wanted her mother to know the truth, that she was angry, that she was hurt, that she missed her so much it tore at her insides. But she couldn't say it.

Liora stared at her reflection in the mirror, toothbrush still in hand. Her face was blotchy from crying, her eyes red-rimmed. She pressed her lips together, whispering to her own reflection as if her mother could somehow hear it:

"You forgot me first."

Down the line, Elodie's chest finally loosened when Sabina reported all was well. But sleep wouldn't return. She lay awake until dawn, staring at the ceiling, her heart bruised and heavy, knowing her daughter's silence wasn't an accident at all.

-----

Dante's POV-

When I returned back home, the first thing my eyes caught while ransacking the drawers for important documents was the brown envelope. The one Elodie had given.

A frown creased my brows. For days, I hadn't bothered to check to find out the content. Not bothering with it, I packed the important files I would take along and stuffed them into my suitcase and then walked down the stairs. Lincoln, my driver, was already waiting beside the car the moment I stepped out.

I signalled him, checked my Rolex and then ordered him. "Hurry, let's go to the airport."

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 30 - 31 [ 1,324 words ]**

*Chapter 30: Chapter 31*

Elodie's POV~

Half a month. That's all it had been since I walked out of the villa for the last time. Half a month, and already the quietness was beginning to feel like my only friend. No shouting, no cold silences, no reminders of a life that had slowly hollowed me out. Just me, my little apartment, and the sunlight spilling in through the windows.

I stretched, feeling the warmth on my skin, and let out a long, shivering breath. My plants needed water, my stomach a simple breakfast. For a moment, I let myself pretend life could be simple. Just for a little while.

And then the doorbell rang.

I froze, my heart lurching in a way I hadn't felt in years. I wasn't expecting anyone. Slowly, I padded to the door and opened it to see Mrs. Smith, smiling warmly, holding a basket of food.

"Freya... I hope I didn't disturb you?"

I blinked at her, then shook my head. "Not at all. I was just up."

Her smile softened. "Good. We brought some pies and pasta... freshly made. Just a little thank-you. For saving Tommy the other day. If you hadn't saved my little boy from that rogue... I can't imagine what could have happened?"

I swallowed, feeling a twinge of guilt on recalling how badly Tommy had been hurt before I found him, fighting off the rogue before help came and the rogue was killed. "It... it's really nothing. You're too kind."

She hesitated, fiddling with the basket. "We wanted to thank you properly, but... work, life... we never found the time. We feel so embarrassed."

I nodded, my smile polite but thin. After a few more words, she left, leaving me alone and the stillness and a creeping hollow in my chest I couldn't shake.

I sat down for breakfast, tried to focus on the AI system I'd been studying, but my hands trembled when a notification popped up on my phone. T University's centennial celebration.

I froze. The day I had long imagined would be full of possibilities, achievement, recognition... a hundred years of history, and I had walked away from it all.

Scrolling through the coverage, I saw faces I hadn't seen in years. Faces I had once wanted to impress, to learn from, to be remembered by. My chest tightened, my hands shook. A thousand "what ifs" flooded my mind.

If I hadn't married Dante right after graduation... if I had chosen differently... maybe I could have been there. Maybe I would have been celebrated. Maybe someone would have seen me, not just as a wife or a mother, but as Elodie, the woman I used to dream of becoming.

The thought hit me like ice. I closed the laptop, gripping the edge of the table until my knuckles whitened. I needed... air. Clarity. I had to see the campus, even if it was too late. Even if it hurts.

By the time I arrived at school after some hours, afternoon had fallen. Most VIPs were gone, but students and staff still moved through the grounds. I wandered without purpose, letting memories guide me, I felt every corner, every building tugging at a heart and that felt like my heart had been carved out and left empty.

Before I could take some steps forward, I heard someone call for me.

"Freya?"

The voice made me stop dead. My pulse raced.

"Freya?" The voice called again, and I slowly turned. My breath hitched.

-----

The teahouse I was in, smelled faintly of jasmine and old wood, but it did nothing to soothe the storm inside me. My fingers wrapped around the teacup Johnny poured, trying to anchor myself, though the warmth didn't reach the part of me that felt hollow.

"How have you been lately?" Johnny's voice was soft, but there was that familiar earnestness I remembered from our days at the Pack's academy. Like he wasn't just asking, he actually wanted to know.

I looked down, letting my eyes drift over the rim of the cup, pretending the steam could blur my thoughts. "I... I'm... preparing for divorce," I said, my voice small.

He froze. I could see it in his eyes, the hesitation, the silent question of whether he should say something, or just sit there and let me collapse.

"I'm... sorry," he finally said.

I shook my head. "It's fine." Lies taste bitter. The truth is, it wasn't fine. Not when I thought about the years I had given up, the daughter I barely saw, the life I'd paused for Dante and the Bellini Pack. Not when I realized that even now, standing in this teahouse, I felt like a shadow of who I used to be.

"What are your plans now?" he asked, leaning forward a little, earnest, sincere. "Would you consider coming back to the company?"

I wanted to tell him everything, how technology had evolved while I'd been gone, how seven years away had left me feeling incompetent, left me unsure of whether I could even keep pace. But the words got stuck. They always did.

“I’ve thought about it... but...” My voice faltered.

Johnny didn’t press, didn’t pry. He just watched me with that steady, patient look he always had. “Elodie... the company needs you. You’re still a shareholder. I hope... I hope you’ll come back, take charge again.”

I wanted to tell him I couldn’t. That even if I returned, I’d be a pale version of myself. That every day away from this life had chipped pieces off me I wasn’t sure I could rebuild. But I didn’t. I only swallowed hard, staring at the tea, swirling it around, as if stirring it could make everything easier.

“You don’t have to have it all figured out,” he said quietly. “It’s okay to fall behind. Your ability... your talent... it isn’t something ordinary. As long as you still want this, it’s not too late to start again.”

I blinked, fighting the lump rising in my throat. I wanted to believe him. I wanted to think I wasn’t too far gone. But the past six years pressed against me like a weight I couldn’t lift, the missed opportunities, the nights I spent alone while Dante ran the Pack’s empire, the daughter I longed to hold but only saw in brief, stolen moments.

“I... I...” I shook my head, a bitter laughter spilling out. “I was never like this before. Back then... I could do anything. Now...” My hands trembled slightly, and I dropped my gaze to the teacup.

Johnny reached out, lightly touching my hand. Not to push, not to judge, but just to remind me I wasn’t completely alone. “Don’t forget,” he said softly, “you were the professor’s most brilliant student. The one he bragged about the most.”

I laughed, a humorless, hollow sound. “If he heard that now, he’d probably snort and say he was forced to pick the tallest among dwarfs.”

The words should have lightened the air, but instead they hung so heavy, reminding me of everything I’d lost. My mind drifted to Dante, to Liora, to the life I had paused. To the life I might never get back. And through it all, the ache in my chest refused to fade.

I sipped the tea, the warmth doing nothing to reach the cold inside me. Outside, the campus hummed with life, the world I had once belonged to. And now it felt just out of reach, a reminder that time had moved on without me, leaving me behind in silence, in regret, in heartbreak.

I wanted to cry. I wanted to scream. I wanted to tell Johnny that it wasn’t just about AI or the company, it was about the pieces of me scattered across years I could never reclaim. But instead, I sat there, holding the cup, letting the quietness settle around us, and mourning the girl I used to be.