

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 31 - 32 [1,256 words]

Chapter 31: Chapter 32

Elodie's POV~

I should never have come back.

The Bellini University hall was buzzing with voices, old classmates laughing like the years hadn't scattered us across different Packs and lives. But for me, it felt like walking through a ghost town where every shadow reminded me of who I used to be before Dante, before I became nothing more than his Luna in name but never in soul.

Johnny sitting over there, hadn't changed much. He was still warm, still carrying that boyish charm that once made lectures bearable. Seeing him again was like opening an old wound I thought had scarred over.

We talked about the past. About our professor, the sharp-tongued old wolf who never let us breathe easy. I smiled at the memory, though it hurt. "I saw in the Pack news that he came back for the celebration," I said softly.

Johnny smirked. "Still the same. Still calling us disgraceful students."

I laughed, but it cracked halfway, before it turned into silence. My chest tightened. I missed this, the freedom, the hunger to learn, the way my world used to stretch beyond the walls of Dante's mansion.

Then Johnny's voice dipped lower. He leaned closer, eyes searching mine. "Come back, Elodie. You were born for this. Not for... that life."

The teacup in my hand rattled against the saucer. My fingers were trembling. I stared at the dark liquid, afraid to meet his eyes. "Alright," I whispered, though my throat burned with the weight of it.

Because I wanted to. More than anything, I wanted to step back into the life I left behind. I wanted to be the woman who spent nights scribbling formulas on papers, not the woman who spent nights lying awake beside an Alpha who never noticed her tears.

"I threw it all away," I said quietly, more to myself than to him.

Johnny's eyes softened. He didn't push, just asked gently, "When can you return?"

I swallowed hard. "I need to wait. Someone has to take over my current work first. It'll take time."

He nodded, patient. "That's fine. No rush. Just knowing you'll come back is enough."

But it wasn't that simple. Nothing ever was, not when you were tied to a man like Dante. He was the Alpha of Italy's most feared Pack, the Bellini Pack. You don't just walk away from a man like that. You don't walk away at all.

When Johnny finally excused himself to meet someone, I sat there alone, trying to breathe through the ache in my chest.

That's when I saw her. Amber.

Dante's sister. Bellini royalty. The Alpha's daughter who never had to fight for a place in this world because the Pack bent to her the way it never bent for me. One of the numerous people who hated me in Dante's family. Only Dante's grandmother truly saw and loved me and aside her, no one else.

She walked into the hall like she owned it, her heels striking the floor like a warning.

"Elodie." Her voice was flat, her were eyes cold.

I forced myself to sit straighter, though my insides were slightly tightening. "Hello, Amber."

Her lips curled, eyes scanning me up and down. "What are you doing here?"

"It's the university's celebration. I thought I'd..." My words faltered, because what did it matter? She'd never see me as anything more than Dante's mistake.

Amber raised a brow, smirking. "Right. You did graduate here, didn't you?" Her tone was dripping with disbelief, like the idea of me belonging here was a joke.

Her words hit like a slap. Firstly, I had seen her in the news and never expected to run into her. Secondly, This place had been mine once. My dreams were born here. Now even that was being stripped away, turned into another reminder that I no longer belonged anywhere.

She didn't stop there. She leaned in slightly, her perfume sharp. "David wants your cooking again. I'll send him to you and Dante's later."

My heart sank. David, her son, rebellious and neglected, had clung to me these last years. My cooking was the only thing he found comfort in, and even that, Amber reduced to an errand.

Once, I would've forced a smile. Once, I would've said yes, even if David rolled his eyes at me, even if he treated me more like some servant than an aunt. I'd tell myself it was for Dante's sake. For his family. For the bond that I thought held us together.

But things were different now. Dante and I were crumbling, and there was nothing left inside me to bend anymore.

So I looked her in the eye and said softly, “No, Amber. I can’t.”

Her brows shot up, her lips twisting in disbelief. “Can’t?”

I swallowed the tightness in my throat and forced the words out again, firmer this time. “I’m busy.”

“Busy with what?” she shot back, her voice thick with disdain. “You don’t have Dante anymore. You don’t even have Liora with you. What could you possibly have that’s more important than helping family?”

The words slammed into me like claws to the chest. For a second, I couldn’t breathe. My hands trembled at my sides, nails digging into my palms, but I refused to let her see me fall apart.

Family. She had the audacity to call me family when in her eyes, I was nothing without Dante. Without Liora. Without the Alpha title beside my name.

I bit down on the inside of my cheek until I tasted blood, because if I didn’t, the tears waiting at the edge of my throat would spill. And I wouldn’t give her that satisfaction.

“It doesn’t matter to you,” I said quietly, my voice barely holding.

Her laugh was cold. “I suppose not.”

Before I could walk away, voices called her name. A group of Pack elites from Bellini Pack swept in, glittering in their silks and jewels, their laughter filling the hall.

“Amber!” They embraced her warmly, then their eyes flicked to me.

“Who’s this?” one of them asked.

Amber didn’t even blink. “Just a friend.”

Not my brother’s mate. Just... a friend.

The humiliation was merciless, but worse than that, it was expected. I stood there, watching their curious stares skim over my dress, my face, my entire body and then dismiss me completely. They clung to her, their laughter ringing in my ears, leaving me stranded in silence.

Once, that dismissal would’ve gutted me. I would’ve gone home, curled into bed, and let the grief eat me alive. But tonight? Tonight it felt like confirmation of something I had always known: I had never truly belonged here.

When they finally drifted away, Amber didn’t even look back at me. She vanished into their circle.

I stood frozen, clutching my bag, the ache in my chest spreading until it pressed against my ribs, against my throat. And then, slowly, I walked out into the night.

My heels clicked against the pavement, as I walked. The city lights of the Pack blurred as my eyes stung.

I had given everything for Dante, for his Pack, for his family who never wanted me. And what did I have left? A broken bond. A daughter caught in the middle. And me, hollow, exhausted, invisible.

By the time I reached the street, my phone buzzed in my bag. The flight had landed. Dante and Liora were back.

My breath caught. My heart twisted so violently it hurt. I wasn't ready.

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Chapter 32: Chapter 33

Dante's POV~

It was nearly dawn by the time we reached the Northern Bellini Pack estate.

Liora had fallen asleep in the car long before we pulled through the gates. Her little head rested against the leather seat, soft breaths fogging the glass beside her. I carried her upstairs, past the long corridors and the cold marble floors, my footsteps echoing in a house that had been too silent for too long.

When I reached the master wing, I noticed the bedroom door stood open. The room was dark, curtains drawn tight, the faint scent of her perfume already fading.

I set Liora down gently in her room, brushed the hair off her face, and let the nanny settle her. Then I went back to my room. Flicked on the light. The bed was untouched. Empty. Sheets tucked in perfectly as if no one had bothered sleeping there.

The butler appeared just then, dragging my luggage inside. I pulled at my tie, loosened it, my voice low.

"Where is she?"

He lowered his head immediately. "Madam left on a business trip, Alpha."

I paused, unbuttoned my cuff, waited for him to say more.

He added quickly, "She took her luggage herself. That was... about half a month ago. Some of the staff said she left for the city."

Half a month. For Elodie, that was strange. She rarely traveled for business, and when she did, it was never longer than a few days. But I didn't ask again. Didn't bother. I only hummed under my breath, dismissing him with a flick of my hand.

The house fell back into silence.

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The next morning, I walked into the Pack corporation building. My return hadn't been announced. No one knew I was back in Italy.

I caught sight of her the second I stepped through the glass doors. Elodie. She froze when her eyes landed on me. A flicker of something, shock, hesitation, crossed her face before she smoothed it away.

I didn't stop. Didn't ask where she had been. Didn't even acknowledge her stare. I walked right past her as though she was just another employee in my building.

Her scent was the only thing that brushed against me. Once, that would've made her lips curve into a smile, eyes lighting up like she couldn't believe I'd come back so suddenly. She would've whispered a soft "good morning" no matter how coldly I looked at her, holding on to the scraps of attention I gave.

Now, there was nothing.

She only lowered her gaze, silent, as if she already knew not to expect anything from me.

I didn't turn back.

I kept walking, hands shoved in my pockets, as though she wasn't even there.

Elodie's POV~

Watching Dante's tall figure, his body built like an athlete, retreat down the hallway earlier this morning, had left me with a strange hollowness. He hadn't even glanced my way. No flicker of recognition, no pause in his step. Just cold indifference.

For a moment, I wondered when he had returned from the Bellini Pack in Italy. No one told me. Of course, no one ever told me anything when it came to him. But if he was back... maybe it meant the divorce could finally go through.

The thought should have felt like relief. Instead, it sat in my chest like a stone.

So I did what I always do. I drowned myself in work. Numbers, reports, endless emails, just anything to distract myself from the sound of his footsteps still echoing in my ears.

Half an hour later, Albert's call came.

"Elodie, two cups of coffee. Bring them to Alpha Dante's office."

My stomach twisted. Coffee.

Once upon a time, I had thought coffee would save me.

Back when I was desperate to soften his heart, I had studied his taste in it like it was sacred. Strong, but not bitter. Smooth, with the faintest trace of cinnamon. I practiced for weeks, my hands blistered, tongue burned, until finally... just finally... he had looked up from his desk after tasting it and said nothing, but drained the cup dry.

That was the only approval he had ever given me. And I clung to it like a starving wolf to scraps.

But I had been wrong. He didn't like me. He only liked the coffee. I was a convenience, not a mate.

Even now, he never asked me directly. His orders always came through Jake. Always distance. Always walls.

I don't know why I obeyed this time. Maybe habit. Maybe the ghost of hope I still hated myself for carrying. I brewed it carefully, my hands steady even though my heart wasn't. Two cups. One for him, and I knew instantly who the second was for.

The walk to his office felt endless. My legs were heavy, my palms damp against the tray. His door was open. The mistake was mine, I looked when I shouldn't have.

And that was when the world ended.

Sienna. Sitting on his lap. His hand on her waist. Their mouths pressed together like mine had never been welcome to.

I froze, air knocked clean from my lungs. The tray shook in my grip, porcelain rattling like the bones of a corpse. For a second, I prayed I was imagining it, but then she saw me. She pulled away, color flooding her face as she scrambled off him, smoothing her skirt.

But Dante... Dante didn't even flinch. His eyes met mine, cold as winter steel.

"Who told you you could walk in here?"

The words sliced me open. I clutched the tray tighter. "I... I just came to bring you coff—"

"That's enough, Secretary Elodie."

Chad's voice behind me made me jolt. He looked at me like I was dirt beneath his shoes. "This is tasteless of you."

Tasteless. As if I had planned this. As if I'd known she'd be here and walked in on purpose. As if I was still desperate enough to claw for scraps of Dante's attention.

And Dante believed it. I could see it in his face, the way his jaw tightened, the way his eyes hardened, disgust replacing indifference.

The tray shook harder. The coffee sloshed, spilling over the rim onto my fingers. The burn seared into my skin, sharp and hot, but I didn't make a sound. I didn't let myself flinch.

Chad's voice was colder this time. "Please leave immediately."

My throat burned, my vision blurred, but I forced myself to move. One step. Then another. The sound of porcelain rattling was the only proof I was still holding the tray.

I had just crossed the threshold when his voice cut through the silence.

"If there's a next time, Elodie... don't bother coming back to the company."

My chest caved in. I stopped, just for a second. The words hollowed me out completely, like claws ripping into what little was left. I wanted to scream at him that I didn't care anymore, that I was leaving, that the divorce papers were already ready. But my voice betrayed me. Nothing came out.

So I walked away, my burned fingers throbbing, my heart breaking into several pieces that I knew would never, ever be fixed again.

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 33 - 34 [1,169 words]

Chapter 33: Chapter 34

Elodie's POV

I'd already signed my resignation papers. All I had to do now was wait for them to find a replacement, and then I'd be gone. Out of this company. Out of his world. Out of the life I thought was mine.

Still, that didn't stop the ache in my chest as I turned to leave his office with the tray in my hands. Nobody here cared about me, no one cared about what I gave up, about what I lost. There was no point explaining, no point fighting anymore.

Just as I stepped past the doorframe, Sienna's voice floated out behind me. It was soft, honeyed, with that perfect edge of concern.

“Don’t be upset, Dante,” Sienna cooed. “I’m sure she didn’t mean it. Don’t waste your temper on her.”

Those words sliced me open. My mate’s anger, soothed by another woman’s touch. The Alpha of the Bellini Pack, comforted not by his wife, not by the mother of his child but by the woman everyone whispered was his future Luna.

My hand trembled, the tray tipping just enough for the coffee to spill, scalding my fingers again. The burn stung, but I didn’t make a sound. Pain in my skin was easier to bear than the pain splitting me apart inside. I walked quickly to the nearest sink, ran cold water over my hand, and pulled the little tube of ointment from my bag. I always carried medicine. Liora used to scrape her knees so often, and I learned to be ready for anything. But she wasn’t with me anymore. He’d taken her to Italy, to his pack, leaving me with nothing but the memory of her laugh echoing in my chest.

I swallowed hard and forced myself back to my desk. I arranged papers I couldn’t even see clearly, the letters blurring behind my wet eyes. If anyone noticed, they pretended not to. That was the thing about this company. About him. My grief didn’t matter. My place had already been erased.

And then the whispers started.

“Did you hear? The Alpha’s girlfriend is here.”

“Girlfriend? Dante’s?”

“They say she’s from an old pack in Europe. An Alpha’s daughter. Gorgeous, raised to lead.”

My colleagues turned awkward when I stood, their smiles brittle, their voices cutting off mid-sentence. But I didn’t need to hear more. I already knew who they meant. Sienna. Always Sienna.

I kept my face empty, my body steady, forcing it not to shiver, even as my heart felt like it was bleeding out in slow motion.

The elevator doors opened and there she was. Draped in luxury, confidence in every of her step, surrounded by Dante’s senior executives. They hovered around her like wolves groveling before their queen.

“Thank you for visiting the company, Miss Sienna.”

“It’s our honor, given your relationship with the Alpha.”

She smiled politely, the kind of smile that pretends to be warm but keeps you at a distance. The kind of smile that tells you she belongs, and you never did.

My group moved aside quickly, giving way. But apparently, even that wasn’t enough.

“Watch where you’re going!” one of the executives snapped at me. His tone was sharp, scolding, as if I were a clumsy intern and not the woman who once wore the Alpha’s ring. “What if you had bumped into Miss Sienna? Show some respect.”

Those words slammed into me, louder than any slap could. My colleagues stiffened beside me, shrinking against the wall, desperate not to be caught in the line of fire. I didn’t answer. I didn’t even lift my head. I just tightened my grip on the papers in my hands until they crumpled.

And then her eyes met mine.

Sienna looked at me the way a victor looks at the defeated, calmly, assured, triumphant. She didn’t need to say anything. The truth was written all over her perfectly painted face: I’ve taken your place.

And Dante... Dante hadn’t even cared enough to deny it.

Sienna didn’t even hold my gaze. She looked straight past me as though I were nothing, then glided into the elevator with Dante’s executives flanking her like guards to a queen. The doors slid shut, and with them, my air seemed to vanish.

The silence cracked only when my colleagues let out relieved breaths.

“Did you see her?” one whispered, the excitement bubbling out of them.

“Dante’s girlfriend... she’s breathtaking. Everything about her screams old money. Those clothes alone, goddess, I wouldn’t be able to afford even the buttons.”

Another laughed softly. “No wonder she’s confident. Born into wealth, raised to lead. She makes us look like peasants.”

Their words cut like claws. Still, they turned to me, as if I should agree with them.

“What do you think, Elodie?” one asked carefully.

I lowered my eyes to hide the storm burning there. My voice came out small, flat. “She’s... beautiful.”

And she was. Sienna always had been.

But they didn’t know. How could they? My father’s golden child. His other daughter from another woman. Illegitimate? No, she wasn’t. She was The daughter he chose, the daughter he loved enough to tear apart my mother’s world for.

I remembered being eight years old, watching him pack his bags, watching him walk out of our home so he could give Sienna and her mother the life he swore they deserved. He said it was to protect them from shame. What about me? What about my mother, left trembling with rage and grief, her mind splintering while I clung to her skirts, begging her not to cry?

I grew up in the shadows, in the ruins of what he left behind, while Sienna was polished into a diamond under the best tutors, the best houses, the best everything money could buy. She bloomed into the perfect Luna while I scraped myself raw trying to keep up.

And now fate laughed in my face. Even here, even in my marriage, even in my own pack... she was standing in front of me again. The woman who already had everything was now taking Dante too.

I glanced down at my hands. My fingers still ached from the scalding coffee. The burn was nothing compared to this ache inside me, this hollow that wouldn't stop swallowing me whole.

"Elodie?" one of the girls nudged me softly, concern flickering in her eyes. "You look pale."

I straightened, forcing a brittle smile. "I'm fine."

Fine. I had to be. What did it matter if Dante loved her? What did it matter if he paraded her through his company like she was already his Luna? He was nearly done with me anyway.

Our bond was just a paper waiting for ink now. And once the divorce was signed, he would finally be free to claim her, and I would...

I didn't even know what I would be anymore.

But I knew one thing: no one, not Dante, not Sienna, not anyone would see me break in front of them.

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 34 - 35 [1,229 words]

Chapter 34: Chapter 35

Elodie's POV~

That day, I forced myself not to think about Dante and Sienna. Pretending not to care had become a survival skill, though my chest still felt like it carried a weight I couldn't set down. I stayed buried in work until almost nine, staring at spreadsheets long after the words blurred.

When my phone buzzed, I almost didn't answer. It was Cara, my best friend. Her voice was slurred, words tumbling over one another. She was drunk. She needed me.

I shoved the files into a neat pile, grabbed my keys, and drove. The city lights blurred past the windshield, mocking me with how alive everything seemed while I felt half-dead inside.

Twenty minutes later, I pulled into the restaurant's lot. Just as I was heading toward the entrance, I saw her.

A little girl, small frame, dark hair catching the glow of the lights. My steps faltered. My lungs forgot how to work.

“Liora?” My voice cracked in my throat, though the word never left my lips.

My daughter. My little girl.

She was supposed to be in the European Pack, finishing her term at the academy. Dante had said the project there would keep him for months. I thought I had time, time before I had to face him again, time before I had to face her.

But she was here. Skipping through the parking lot with her braid bouncing, humming a tune only children know. And she hadn’t called me. Not once.

My hands tightened around my bag until the leather bit into my palm. I followed quietly, my heart a frantic mess inside my chest.

At the corner of the lobby, voices drifted toward me. And then her. Same Sienna. Surrounded by Dante’s friends, glowing like she owned the whole damned world.

Liora’s face lit up the second she saw her. “Auntie Sienna!”

I froze. My daughter ran, not to me, but into her arms.

Sienna laughed softly, graceful even in something as small as a hug. “Liora, you’re back too?”

“Because you came back,” Liora said brightly, “Daddy finished work early so we wouldn’t miss your birthday! We even made you a necklace together... see? Isn’t it pretty?”

The Entire world tilted.

I slipped into the nearest chair, tucking myself behind a potted plant like a coward. My chest cracked open as I listened to my little girl gush about how much she missed her. How Dante had worked late into the night, not for me, not for us, but to handcraft something for her.

I wanted to scream. I wanted to cry. Instead, I sat there, nails digging crescent moons into my skin, listening to the sound of my daughter’s laughter as she kissed Sienna’s cheek.

“It’s been a week since I saw you, Auntie Sienna. I missed you so much,” Liora whispered.

And Sienna, without hesitation, returned it: “I missed you too, little wolf.”

My throat burned. My eyes stung. But the worst hadn’t even come yet.

I heard him before I saw him.

Dante. His footsteps. I could pick them out anywhere. Years of waiting up for him, listening to those same steady strides echo in the halls long after midnight, had burned them into me.

Unhurried. Composed. Like the whole world bent around him. Nothing ever rattled Dante. Nothing ever cracked his ice.

Except her.

I didn't need to lift my head to know the way his gaze would soften when he saw Sienna. I didn't need to look to know his lips would curve into the faint smile he never once gave me.

And as my daughter clung to the woman who had everything I didn't, I realized the truth I had been running from, that Dante had already built his family. And I wasn't part of it.

I should have left the moment I saw them. I should have turned around, walked out, and spared myself the agony. But my body betrayed me, rooting me in place like a coward hiding behind shadows. A coward who could no longer speak or move.

"Daddy!" Liora's small voice rang out, bright and sweet, like bells I hadn't heard in weeks. My little girl.

And then him. Dante. My husband. No no, ex husband. He walked in with that same steady stride, flanked by his men. His friends greeted him like he was the center of the universe, and he acknowledged them with that cool, indifferent nod I knew too well. My heart clenched, stupidly still tied to every flick of his eyes, every movement of his body.

He looked at Sienna next. "Happy birthday." Just that. Short, effortless. But the way his gaze lingered on her, the faint curve in his lips... it felt like someone reached inside my chest and crushed my heart with their bare hands.

"Thanks," Sienna answered, her smile soft, familiar... too... too familiar.

"Daddy, didn't you prepare another birthday gift for Auntie Sienna? Quick, give it to her!" Liora's innocent excitement sliced deeper than any blade. My daughter's laughter belonged to someone else now. Not me. Not her mother. But Sienna.

Silence fell. I held my breath.

Then one of Dante's friends laughed, crouching to pinch Liora's cheek. "That's a private gift your daddy prepared. He'll give it to her later, just the two of them."

The others chuckled. Filthy, knowing laughter.

Dante's voice followed, calm and unbothered. "I've already given it to her."

The ground tilted beneath me. My nails dug into my palms.

"When?" Liora pouted. "Daddy, you saw Auntie Sienna without me again? That's not fair!"

Their laughter echoed off the walls.

And me? I just sat there, hidden, breaking. Because I remembered Sienna walking into his office this morning. I thought it was business. Goddess, I wanted to believe it was business. But no, he had already given her the gift. Behind my back.

Sienna, ever so graceful, touched the necklace at her throat and said with a shy smile, “Let’s not stay here. Let’s go upstairs.”

And like that, they walked away together. My husband. My daughter. My replacement. Their footsteps faded, and I was left with the silence, my heart pierced with a thousand tiny blades.

I don’t know how long I sat there, staring at nothing. Long enough that the ache in my chest turned numb, long enough that I had to remind myself to breathe.

Finally, I forced myself to move. I had come here for Cara. She needed me. So I pressed the pain down where no one could see it and dragged my body toward the elevators.

The private rooms were on the same floor. Fate has a cruel sense of humor. As I guided Cara’s drunken body into the elevator, the door slid open, and for a moment, I felt eyes on me. One of Dante’s friends, Levi. His steps faltered.

“What’s wrong?” someone asked him.

“I thought I saw someone I knew,” he muttered.

They all knew about me once. Knew how pathetically I’d loved Dante. How I was the quiet one in the background, the wife who never fit his world. Beautiful, maybe, but forgettable. Disposable.

Levi’s eyes flicked over me again, uncertain. Then he shrugged. “Never mind.”

And just like that, I was erased. As though I was a ghost. Someone they couldn’t even recognize anymore.

The doors slid shut between us. My heart cracked.

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 35 - 36 [1,184 words]

Chapter 35: Chapter 36

Elodie’s POV~

After leaving the Pack-owned hotel, I took Cara home. She'd drunk too much last night, and I couldn't bring myself to leave her alone. I stayed over, watching her sleep like some fragile thing that needed guarding.

When she finally stirred, her lashes fluttering open, she blinked at me in surprise before wrapping her arms tight around me.

"Thank you for last night," she whispered, her voice still hoarse with sleep. "Let me take you out for a meal sometime. My treat."

I smoothed her hair back and gave her a faint smile. "Go wash up. I made breakfast. It's getting cold."

She clung harder, pressing her cheek against my waist. "You're too soft, Elodie. Too warm. I could stay like this forever."

A bitter laugh rose in my throat, but I swallowed it down. If she knew how hollow I felt inside, she'd never say that.

She eventually got up, and when she came out of the bathroom, she stared wide-eyed at the plates I'd set on the table. She ate like she hadn't tasted food in weeks, her joy spilling over in the way her fork clicked against porcelain.

But then her face shifted. Her smile faded, replaced by something tight, uneasy. She froze mid-bite, staring at her phone.

"Elodie..." Her voice wavered. She looked at me like she wasn't sure if she should say it. "Is Dante... back in the Pack?"

My chest tightened. My throat burned. "Yes," I said simply.

She slid her phone across the table. My hand shook as I picked it up.

It was Levi's post.

Photos. Too many photos. A birthday gathering at Sienna's mansion.

And there was Dante. He was Standing next to Sienna. Too close. Smiling. Laughing. Holding the knife with her hand over his, cutting her cake as though it was their celebration. Not mine. Never mine.

My heart stopped when I realized, Liora wasn't in a single photo. Our daughter. His blood. Erased, hidden, like she was a stain he didn't want anyone to see.

Anyone who looked at those photos would think Dante and Sienna were the perfect Alpha pair.

And maybe that's what he wanted them to think.

The screen blurred as my eyes filled with tears I refused to let fall. My mind flashed back, cruelly back to two weeks ago, which had been my birthday. The silence. No gift. No call. Not even a glance. He hadn't come home. I'd sat alone with a cold cake, Liora asleep in her room, my chest aching with a loneliness words could never fix.

But for Sienna? For her, he moved mountains.

I pushed Cara's phone back across the table, my hand trembling. "It doesn't matter," I said, my voice thin, and broken. "Whatever he does with her... it has nothing to do with me anymore."

"Elodie..." She looked horrified. "Don't say that."

I forced the words out, even as they sliced me open. "I asked him for a divorce."

Cara's fork clattered against her plate. "What? You... you brought up divorce?"

"Yes." I managed to hold her gaze, though my vision blurred again.

She looked at me as if I'd ripped my own heart out in front of her. Maybe I had.

The truth was, Dante had stopped being mine a long time ago. I'd just been too blind, too desperate, to see it. His indifference killed me far slower than rejection ever could.

The photos burned into my mind, each smile of his cutting me deeper.

Cara had always admired Dante. I could see it in the way she used to look at him, like he was some untouchable Alpha from a storybook. And honestly... who hadn't? Dante wasn't just powerful because of his bloodline; he was brilliant in a way that scared people. He'd built empires before most wolves his age had even chosen a career. By the time he was twenty, he'd already taken over his father's company and turned it into something the entire Pack in Italy boasted about.

He was the kind of Alpha other Alphas measured themselves against. Handsome, untouchable, sharp. A man people bowed their heads for without thinking.

So no, Cara wasn't surprised I'd fallen for him. A Gamma like me, a girl who always stayed in the background, loving a man like Dante, it almost made sense. Genius to genius. Except my love had been real, raw, unpolished. His? I wasn't sure it had ever existed.

Over the years, Cara had begged me more than once: Leave him, Elodie. You're breaking yourself for a man who doesn't even look at you. But I'd always smiled faintly, shaking my head. Because when you love someone like Dante, you don't just walk away. You cling, even when your hands are bleeding.

But now? Now I'd said it. Divorce.

Cara nearly dropped her fork when I told her. "You... you asked Dante for a divorce?"

“Yes.” The word left my mouth like lead. Heavy. Final.

Her eyes widened, searching my face for cracks. I knew she didn’t believe me. She knew how much I’d loved him, still loved him, if I was honest with myself. But something in me had snapped. Maybe it wasn’t even one moment. Maybe it was years of silence, of birthdays spent alone, of cold looks and nights in an empty bed. Maybe it was the photos of him standing with Sienna, smiling like he used to smile with me. I didn’t know.

I only knew I was tired.

“It’s not really one big thing,” I said quietly, staring down at the breakfast I couldn’t bring myself to eat. “It’s... years. Disappointment piling on disappointment until suddenly you can’t breathe under it anymore. And I realized, I don’t want to live like this. Not even for him.”

Cara’s lips trembled. She pushed her plate aside and hugged me from the side, holding on like she could glue the pieces of me back together. “Then it’s for the best,” she whispered, though I could hear the fear in her voice. Fear for me.

I nodded, but my throat burned too much to speak.

After breakfast, I left her apartment. My legs carried me on autopilot, but inside I felt nothing. Or maybe too much. I wasn’t sure anymore.

The city streets buzzed with life.

I made my way toward the company, the Pack members and colleagues moving through the tall glass buildings Dante had built, the very empire that made him the Alpha everyone worshipped. And me? I was just the woman he’d once marked and then abandoned without ever truly leaving.

Even when we’d lived together, we never went to work at the same time. Dante always made sure of that. His schedule was a wall between us. It had been intentional and calculated. And now, even after moving out, fate was cruel enough to keep throwing him in my path. Twice in the last two days, I’d seen him. The same Dante. The same Alpha everyone adored. Except this time, I knew for certain, he wasn’t mine anymore.

Maybe he never had been.

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 36 - 37[1,065 words]

Chapter 36: Chapter 37

Elodie’s POV~

Today, Dante looked the same as always, tall, impossibly composed, and devastatingly handsome. And yet, his presence still hurts me. His expression didn't even flicker when his eyes brushed over me. If anything, it grew colder, like frost crawling over glass.

Not a word. Not a pause. Just that hollow glance before he looked away and kept walking.

I swallowed hard and lowered my gaze. My voice came out in barely a whisper, a pathetic habit I hadn't shaken off even after all this time.

"Alpha Dante..."

He didn't stop. Didn't acknowledge me. Just passed me like I was another faceless wolf in the hall. My heart tightened so painfully I thought it might tear open, but I forced my legs to move. I walked in after him, breathing shallowly, fighting the burn in my throat.

I tried to drown myself in the work piled on my desk, though it did little to ease the ache gnawing inside me.

By noon, my phone buzzed. My grandmother's voice, gentle and warm, filled the line.

"Elodie, the Veneto Pack, a friend of mine from there sent us lamb this morning. The weather's turning cold, you should come home tonight. I'll have the kitchen prepare a feast, just like when you were a little girl."

Her words tugged at something fragile inside me, a sliver of warmth in a world that had turned icy. My chest tightened as I whispered, "Alright, Nonna. I'll come after work."

That fragile hope carried me through the hours, though I didn't see Dante again. Not until evening, when I was packing up to finally leave, my bag already slung over my shoulder, freedom so close I could taste it, when Chad, one of Dante's secretaries, approached.

"Elodie," he said briskly, dropping a file on my desk. "Urgent. This needs to be handled tonight."

I froze. My eyes skimmed the document. Urgent? No. It was nothing of the sort. This was just a mere file that needed some little studying and then some edits, and it was simple, and could easily be handled tomorrow. In the past, I would've smiled, taken it, bent over backwards to prove I wasn't asking for favors just because of Dante.

But I wasn't that woman anymore. I couldn't keep killing myself to belong somewhere I was no longer wanted. And besides that, this asshole had accused and humiliated me yesterday. And I would no longer take any form of insults from Dante, neither from any of his aides.

I set the file back down and looked at him steadily. "I won't be doing this tonight. I'm leaving."

Chad's eyes narrowed. "Elodie, you can't just walk away from your duties. This Pack isn't your personal home. Show some discipline."

My face hardened but I kept my voice calm, even if inside I was beginning to boil. “If you think I’m abusing my position, then fire me. Right now.”

“You...” His mouth twisted in anger, but he hesitated. We both knew he didn’t have the authority, not in this domain. Not when Dante’s grandmother still treated me like her own blood. For a moment, I thought he might push anyway, but he didn’t. He stepped back, and I stepped forward, walked past him, past the suffocating walls of Dante’s company.

My heart felt like it was dragging behind me. Once, I would’ve done anything for Dante, for his approval, his smile, his smallest kindness. But now... never.

Chad stormed out of the secretarial floor, his face red with barely restrained anger. Albert, catching sight of him, leaned back in his chair and raised a brow.

“What’s got you looking like that?” he asked casually.

Chad threw his hands up. “It’s Elodie. She flat-out refused to finish the work I gave her. Said she was leaving.”

Albert froze, surprised. Of all people, Elodie wasn’t the type to slack off. He knew her, at least, as much as anyone could. She’d always been the one working overtime, never complaining, always careful not to step out of line.

“That doesn’t sound like her,” Albert said slowly. “You sure you’re not misunderstanding?”

“No misunderstanding,” Chad snapped. “She’s using her position for special treatment. I don’t know what kind of saint you think she is, but she’s not it.”

Albert frowned. His gut told him this wasn’t about laziness. If Elodie had walked away from her work, there had to be more to it. Still, before he could press further, a familiar presence cut through the air.

Alpha Dante.

He approached from the hallway, tall and commanding, the weight of his aura pressing down on the space around them. Albert straightened instinctively, the same way everyone did in his presence.

“What’s going on?” Dante’s voice was calm, detached.

Chad hurried to explain. “It’s Secretary Elodie. She left her tasks unfinished and walked out.”

Albert’s heart beat faster as he glanced at Dante, waiting for the Alpha’s reaction. Maybe, just maybe, Dante would show something, anger, disappointment, concern. Anything that proved Elodie still mattered to him.

But Dante’s face didn’t change. His eyes were flat, unreadable.

“If you’re dissatisfied,” he said coldly, “follow the procedures and terminate her employment.”

Albert and Chad both stared at him, stunned. Not because he was indifferent... that was expected... but because of the way he’d said it, like Elodie was just another name on a file.

Did he even know she had already submitted her resignation?

Wasn’t that his decision in the first place?

Confusion tightened in Albert’s chest. He’d watched Elodie love this man quietly for years, giving everything, never asking for anything in return. And now, when she was slipping away piece by piece, Dante looked as though it didn’t matter at all.

Just then, Dante’s phone buzzed. He answered without hesitation, his voice low but softer than Albert had heard in a long time.

“Sienna,” he said, already heading for the elevator. “I’m leaving work now. I’ll be there soon.”

The doors slid shut, cutting off the sound of his footsteps.

Albert stood frozen. The name clanged in his head like a bell. Sienna. Not Elodie. Never Elodie.

He looked at Chad, who looked just as lost.

“Maybe...” Chad muttered, “maybe the Alpha just forgot?”

Albert’s throat tightened. He forced a weak shrug.

“Yeah,” he said. “Maybe.”

But he knew better. Dante hadn’t forgotten anything. He just didn’t care.

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 37 - 38 [1,441 words]

Chapter 37: Chapter 38

Elodie’s POV

I don’t even know why my hands trembled on the steering wheel that night. Maybe it was the traffic, maybe it was the storm in my chest that refused to die down. By the time I pulled into the family estate, the sky had already bruised into deep gray, and the Pack House windows glowed like watchful eyes. It was past six. Late again. Always late these days.

My steps paused when I recalled about Liora. It's been days and she has not reached out to me. My sweet little girl who always clung to me and called me always, wanting me to rock her to sleep while she was younger, now had Sienna. My chest extremely tightened and the urge to break down again overwhelmed me but I sniffled and took in a very large breath and stayed still in the car.

The moment I stepped inside, my grandmother's eyes found me. Her smile wavered, just a fraction but I caught it. She reached out and brushed her fingers over my cheek, and her touch was so light it almost broke me in half.

"You've lost weight," she whispered, like it hurt her to say it.

I swallowed hard and forced a small smile. "Work has been... busy." My voice sounded thin, even to me.

Her sigh carried the weight of decades. "No matter how busy you are, child, you must eat. You'll make yourself sick."

"I will," I lied. "I'll take care of myself."

I lowered myself beside her, my head leaning against her frail shoulder. She smelled faintly of herbs and warm broth, home, comfort, safety and for the first time all day, I let my body sag. The scent of lamb soup drifted through the room, so thick and heavy, but even that couldn't stir hunger in me. My stomach has been hollow for weeks now.

She ordered a servant to bring me a bowl, fussing over me like she always did, her words soft, her eyes wet with quiet worry. I tried to blink mine dry. I couldn't let her see how shattered I was.

So I asked about the others. "Aunt and the rest, are they back from their trip?"

"Not yet," she murmured. "They're enjoying themselves so much they'll be gone another week."

"What about Uncle Jason? Is he out with clients again?"

Her gaze softened. "He canceled his dinner when he heard you were coming. He wants to eat with us tonight."

For some reason, that almost undid me more than anything. The loyalty. The way they all still tried to hold me together while I was falling apart.

Uncle Jason walked in minutes later, his shoulders carrying exhaustion like armor. He stopped when he saw me, relief flickering across his tired face. "Elodie... you're back."

I forced a smile, but his sharp eyes took me in anyway. He frowned. "You've lost weight. Haven't you been eating?"

"I was too busy before," I murmured, trying to keep it light. "I'll eat more now."

He didn't look convinced. He simply sighed, reached across the table, and kept piling meat into my bowl, like food could fix what was broken inside me.

But as I stared at him, I noticed the hollows under his eyes, the strain in his jaw. He was fighting, too. The company was crumbling, I knew it, even if he never said it. He bore it all in silence, drowning quietly while pretending to keep his head above water.

And Dante... Dante could've changed everything. One word from him, one project, one ounce of help, and Albert's company wouldn't be bleeding out like this. But Dante had never lifted a finger. Not unless his grandmother ordered it. Not unless the weight of duty forced his hand.

The truth was cruel: if his grandmother hadn't intervened those two times, Dante might have crushed us on purpose. He thought so little of me, so little of what we were that I believed he'd destroy Uncle Jason's company just to punish me for sins I never committed.

The lamb in my mouth turned to ash. I chewed, but every bite was bitter.

After dinner, when my grandmother had dozed off in her chair, I reached into my purse and slid a black card across the table to Uncle Jason. Ten million. Enough to buy him a breath, maybe a month of peace.

"Elodie," he said sharply, pushing it back. "Your uncle doesn't need this—"

"I have no use for it." My voice cracked, but I shoved the card toward him anyway. "Please. Just take it. I can't do anything else. This is all I can give."

His mouth opened, then closed again. The silence that fell between us was suffocating.

I'd always been the clever one, the girl buried in books, chasing research and answers to questions nobody else cared about. But none of that meant anything here. Not in this world. Not in Dante's world of ruthless CEOs and packs built on power and bloodlines. My brilliance was useless currency. I couldn't save Jason. I couldn't save my grandmother.

And I sure as hell couldn't save myself.

True, I had always been the gifted one. Numbers, algorithms, research, I could bury myself in it and breathe. But business? The politics, the endless boardroom wars, the smiling backstabs? I was never cut out for it. And maybe that's why it still feels like I failed.

Still, I wasn't starving. The patents I'd secured years ago in artificial intelligence, the ones Johnny and I fought sleepless nights over had grown into something huge. The company we co-founded together before my world fell apart... it still bled me dividends. Enough that even if I locked myself in a dark room and never lifted a pen, millions rolled in every year. Money without life attached.

Jason sat across from me, looking older than he should. His voice cracked when he finally spoke.

"You've bailed me out so many times, Elodie. And yet the company still..." His hands trembled against his knees. "It's barely alive. Because I lack the ability."

I bit the inside of my cheek until I tasted blood. “Uncle, companies bleed during transition phases. It doesn’t mean you’re incapable. Don’t carry the weight alone.”

Even as I said it, I heard Johnny’s voice in my head from the other day, like it had cut straight through me. “Do you even realize, Elodie? If you hadn’t chosen him, if you hadn’t walked away from us, our company would be a monster by now. Hundreds of billions. We could’ve been the alpha of the industry. Instead, you left me to fight alone.”

His words had stayed with me like claws. He wasn’t wrong. I had left. I had thrown my brilliance into a marriage that ended in ashes. I had gambled on love, on a mate bond that was supposed to complete me, and instead it hollowed me out.

And now? I sat in here, staring at my uncle’s weary eyes, realizing that my choices had destroyed more than just myself.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered, though the words weren’t meant for him. They were for everyone I’d let down. Jason, Johnny, myself. My wolf stirred uneasily inside me, pacing, restless, as though she too blamed me for ripping us away from where we belonged.

If I had stayed... if I had fought beside Johnny instead of clinging to a man who couldn’t even protect me when the storms came... maybe we would’ve been untouchable. Maybe the industry would bow to us. Maybe I wouldn’t be here, watching Jason crumble and knowing I was too broken to save him.

The silence grew heavier, pressing against my chest until I could hardly breathe. My wolf whimpered inside me, not from weakness but grief. The bond scars still burned faintly at the edges, constant reminders of promises that had turned to poison.

Jason reached across the table, his voice hoarse. “Elodie... if you could come back, if you could lead again, maybe there’s still a chance.”

His hope was a knife. Because I knew I wasn’t that woman anymore. The girl who once coded until dawn with fire in her veins, who believed she could conquer the world beside a man she loved... she had died the day her bond shattered.

Now I was just a hollow shell sitting in her place, holding scraps of brilliance and bleeding guilt into the cracks.

I swallowed hard, forcing the tears back, but my voice still broke. “If I could find her again... maybe. But right now, Uncle, I don’t even recognize the woman in the mirror.”

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 38 - 39[1,153 words]

Chapter 38: Chapter 39

ELODIE'S POV~

My uncle's voice dropped, his voice was heavy with that particular kind of shame men carry when they feel like they've failed.

"You've given uncle money many times, but the company still..."

He continued to repeat those words and yet didn't finish the sentence.

He didn't have to.

'Remained barely alive.'

The words hung there between us, unspoken but it was loud. So loud that my ears began to ring and my chest tightened tightly as though I was about to lose every damn oxygen in my body system. I watched him, really watched him, this man who had raised me when Logan decided fatherhood was too inconvenient. His shoulders were a little more stooped than I remembered. More gray at his temples. More lines around his eyes.

He looked tired.

This kind of tiredness was one that seeped into your bones after years of fighting battles you keep losing.

"It's because I lack ability," he said quietly, staring at his hands.

Something twisted in my chest.

"Uncle."

He didn't look up.

I leaned forward, keeping my voice steady even though part of me wanted to grab him by the shoulders and shake him until he understood.

"It's normal for a company to invest heavily during transformation. Don't pressure yourself too much." I had no idea how many times I had repeated those words.

He nodded, but I could tell he wasn't really hearing me. Men like him, good men like him, proud men like him, they carried their failures like stones in their pockets. Adding more weight with every passing year until they could barely stand.

I wished I could take some of that weight from him.

Maybe I could.

Eventually.

The truth was, I'd always been better with code than people.

Give me a problem to solve, a system to build, a bug to track down at two in the morning, I was in my element. But networking? Office politics? The endless dance of smiling at people you didn't like and pretending their jokes were funny?

That was exhausting.

I wasn't built for that world. It wasn't for me at all.

Fortunately, I'd figured out early on that I didn't have to be. I didn't have to pretend that I fitted in.

Years ago, back when I was still just a student, before meeting Dante, before any of this, I'd secured several patents in artificial intelligence. Good ones. Those kinds that aged like fine wine as the tech industry exploded around them.

And the company I'd co-founded with Johnny and the others? We'd structured it so that even if I wasn't actively involved, the dividends kept coming.

Throughout the year, those various income streams meant I could earn tens of millions even while doing nothing.

Not that I did nothing. But the option was there.

It was the one smart decision I'd made before my life went sideways.

Sitting there with my uncle Jason, and watching him wrestle with his shame, I thought about what Johnny had said when we met the other day.

He'd been lounging in that ridiculous ergonomic chair he'd spent way too much money on, spinning a pen between his fingers the way he always did when he was thinking.

"The AI field is developing incredibly fast now," he'd said, eyes sharp despite the casual posture.

"With your development skills back then and my operational abilities... if you hadn't gone off to get married, our company would probably be worth hundreds of billions by now."

He'd paused, letting that sink in.

"We could have easily become the industry leader domestically."

I hadn't responded. What was there to say? He wasn't wrong.

I had been good. Really good. The kind of good that professors wrote recommendations about, that companies tried to poach before graduation, that made people pay attention when I walked into a room.

And then I'd married Dante.

And slowly, piece by piece, I'd let that version of myself fade into the background.

For what?

A husband who looked through me. A daughter who wished I was someone else. A life that felt more like a slow drowning than anything resembling happiness.

Johnny had leaned forward then, with his voice dropping.

"Fortunately, AI still has huge development potential. We still have a chance." His eyes had met mine, serious in a way he rarely was. "I hope you can return soon, Elodie. We need you. The company needs you."

I need to do something that matters again, I'd thought that but didn't say it to him .

Now, watching my uncle struggle with words he couldn't quite get out, I turned that conversation over in my mind.

If I could really regain my former abilities, if I could shake off the rust and remember what it felt like to be brilliant instead of invisible, things could change. No, things would definitely change.

Not just for me.

For Jason too. For my entire family.

Once I returned to the company properly, once I helped it grow the way Johnny believed it could... I could do more than just send money. I could actually fix things. Build something. Create a foundation solid enough that Jason would never have to look this defeated again.

The thought settled in my chest like I had this small flame lit inside of me. Not hope, exactly.

Something quieter. More stubborn.

Determination, maybe. Yes, maybe it was determination to carry this out.

I'd spent years shrinking myself to fit into a life that didn't want me. Dimming my light so Dante wouldn't feel threatened, so... so everyone around me could be comfortable while I slowly suffocated.

I was done with that.

I was so fucking done.

Jason finally looked up, eyes red-rimmed but steady.

"I'm sorry," he said. "You shouldn't have to keep bailing me out. You have your own problems. Your own life."

I reached across the table and squeezed his hand.

"You raised me," I said simply. "When Logan decided I wasn't worth the effort, you were there. You and grandmother. You gave me a home when I didn't have one."

His jaw tightened.

"This is nothing," I continued. "A few investments. Some money that would just be sitting in an account anyway. It's nothing compared to what you gave me."

"Elodie..."

"But." I pulled my hand back, straightening in my seat. "I'm not going to keep doing things halfway. Don't worry uncle, I assure you.... Everything is going to be fine. We wouldn't be this broken anymore. I promise you that."

Jason stared at me for a long moment.

Then, slowly, the tension in his shoulders eased.

"You always were the smart one," he said quietly. "Even as a kid. Shark in school, your grandmother used to say. Too bright for your own good."

I laughed small, and it felt real for the first time in weeks.

"Let's hope she was right."

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 39 - 40 [1,593 words]

Chapter 39: Chapter 40

ELODIE'S POV~

I didn't run into Dante at the company today.

Honestly, I'd stopped keeping track of when I saw him and when I didn't. It used to matter. I used to notice, I used to feel something when he walked past my floor without stopping, or when I caught a glimpse of him in the elevator and he looked right through me like I was part of the wall.

Now it's just... normal.

Noon came around and I was staring at my computer screen, not really seeing anything, when my phone buzzed.

And I saw it was Nonna.

"Elodie, dear. Have you eaten?"

"Not yet—"

"Harris Garden. Twenty minutes. I'm already ordering appetizers, so don't dawdle."

She hung up.

That woman. Seventy-something years old and still bossing everyone around like she ran the world. Maybe she did, in her own way. But I loved her that way.

I smiled a little and grabbed my bag and headed out.

Harris Garden was close. A five-minute walk, maybe less if I didn't stop at crosswalks like a law-abiding citizen. The place was one of those quiet, expensive restaurants where the wealthy came to have conversations they didn't want overheard.

I was thinking about what to order, maybe the soup, or that salad Nonna always said was overpriced for a bunch of leaves when I heard a voice.

Not Dante's. The other one.

"Dante, if it weren't for your help just now, I might not have secured this contract even with all my efforts."

I stopped walking.

My feet just... stopped.

"Thank you so much for this."

I knew that voice.

I hadn't heard it in years, but you don't forget your father's voice. Even when he's spent the better part of a decade pretending you don't exist.

I moved to the side, half-hidden behind the corner of the building, and looked.

There Logan was. My father. Looking exactly like I remembered, older, sure, more gray in his hair, but still him. Still standing tall, still dressed like money, still smiling that warm smile he used to give me when I was little and things were different.

He wasn't smiling at me now.

He was smiling at Dante.

And Dante, the man who couldn't be bothered to look at me most days was responding in a tone I barely recognized.

"You're too kind, Uncle."

Uncle.

I almost choked.

Uncle?

Dante's voice was... soft. Patient. The way you talk to someone you actually respect. Someone whose opinion matters to you.

I'd been married to this man for years. I could count on one hand the number of times he'd spoken to me like that.

My nails dug into my palms.

Logan kept talking. Of course he did.

"With Sienna here by herself, her mother and I are quite worried. We'd appreciate it if you could look after her more in the future."

I let out a breath that was almost a laugh.

Almost.

Look after Sienna. My half-sister. The daughter he actually claimed. The one he showed up for, called on birthdays, introduced to business partners with pride in his voice.

And here he was, asking my husband to take care of her.

Did he even realize what he was saying?

No. That was a stupid question.

He knew exactly what he was saying.

Logan wasn't an idiot. He knew who Dante was. He knew about our marriage. Everyone in the Bellini Pack knew, it had been all over the news when it happened. Just they didn't know me in particular.

He knew.

He just didn't care.

Sienna was his daughter. I was just... someone who used to be.

Dante said something in response. Agreeing, probably. Making promises. Being courteous.

I watched as they finished their conversation. Watched as Logan got into his car, a new, nice one, and Dante stood there waiting until it drove away.

He waited. Like he actually gave a damn about the man's safe departure.

I thought about my grandmother. The one time she'd met Dante, she'd made her best dish, spent hours in the kitchen, fussing over every detail because she wanted to impress him. Wanted to welcome him into our family properly.

Dante had been cold. Distant. Answered her questions with single words and checked his watch twice during dinner.

When I'd asked him about it later, the way I'd learned to ask him about anything, he'd just shrugged.

"I was busy."

That was it. That was his explanation.

But for Logan? For Sienna's father?

He had all the time in the world.

He had warmth, and patience, and "Uncle," like the word meant something.

Then I watched as Dante left and that was when I decided to walk into Harris Garden.

After work, I went home to collect the gifts.

I'd bought them weeks ago, tea for Nonna, a silk scarf for Dante's mother, some imported chocolates for Amber. The kind of thoughtful, expensive things a good daughter-in-law was supposed to bring when visiting the family estate.

I used to put so much thought into these gifts. Used to spend hours picking out exactly the right thing, hoping that maybe this time, they'd smile at me. Really smile. The way they smiled at each other, at Dante, at anyone who wasn't me.

Now I just bought whatever looked appropriate and moved on.

The drive to the Bellini estate took an hour and a half.

The estate sat near the outskirts of the capital, nestled between the rolling hills and old trees. Beautiful, really. The kind of place you saw in paintings with mountains in the background, a lake nearby, the air so clean it almost hurt to breathe after spending all day in the city.

Perfect for the elderly, everyone always said.

Perfect for people who wanted to get away from the noise.

I parked the car and grabbed the gift bags from the backseat. The afternoon sun was warm on my shoulders as I walked toward the main house, gravel crunching under my heels.

When I entered the main sitting room, Nonna sat in her usual armchair, facing the door. Dante's mother, Stella, sat on the sofa looking every inch the elegant society woman she'd always been. Amber was beside her, legs crossed, teacup in hand.

Nonna saw me first.

Her face lit up, actually lit up, the way it always did and she waved me over. "Elodie's here! Come, come sit by grandmother."

That warmth.

God, I didn't deserve it. Or maybe I did, and she was just the only one who recognized it. Either way, it made something in my chest loosen just a little.

But Nonna was the only one smiling.

I watched it happen in real time. Stella's polite expression flattening into something cool and distant. Amber's smirk fading into that particular look she always gave me like I was something unpleasant she'd stepped in and couldn't quite scrape off her shoe.

I used to let this bother me.

I used to walk into this house with my stomach in knots, hyper-aware of every glance, every sigh, every subtle shift in the atmosphere that told me I wasn't welcome. I used to try so hard. Smile brighter. Talk softer. Be smaller, quieter, less... there.

It never worked.

Now?

Now I just walked in.

I handed the gift bags to the butler with a small nod and crossed the room to Nonna, bending down to kiss her cheek. "Grandmother."

"Ah." She grabbed my hands, pulling me down onto the seat beside her. Her fingers were warm, a little papery with age, but strong. She frowned, studying my face with those sharp eyes that missed nothing. "Why have you lost so much weight? Has Dante been bullying you?"

I lowered my eyes.

"No. I've just been busy lately."

Half-truth. Half-lie.

Dante hadn't bullied me. That would require him to acknowledge my existence. But my mood... yeah. That had taken a hit. And the past two weeks, I'd been staying up past midnight most nights, buried in artificial intelligence research. Work I actually cared about. Work that made me feel like I was more than just someone's unwanted wife.

That was probably why I'd lost weight.

Nonna opened her mouth to say something else, but Amber cut in first.

"The way you talk, people might think your work is incredibly important." She let out a little laugh. "As if the entire Bellini Group couldn't function without you."

I didn't look at her.

Stella set down her teacup with a soft clink. When she spoke, her voice was cold.

"If you find working at Bellini Group so tiring, you might as well quit." She smoothed an invisible wrinkle from her skirt. "After all, no one begged you to work there."

Amber laughed again. "Exactly! Though someone might be reluctant to—"

Nonna's expression hardened. I could feel her gearing up to defend me, the way she always did. The only one in this family who ever bothered.

But I was tired.

Tired of being the thing they kicked around when they were bored. Tired of sitting here, absorbing their little jabs, pretending I didn't notice. Tired of waiting for Nonna to fight battles I should've been fighting myself years ago.

So I spoke first.

"I've already submitted my resignation."

The room went quiet.

I kept my voice calm, still.

"Once the handover is complete, I'll leave Bellini Group."

Stella stared at me.

Amber's mouth was open, just slightly. For once, she didn't have a clever response ready.

Nonna's grip on my hand tightened.

Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 40 - 41[1,164 words]

Chapter 40: Chapter 41

Elodie's POV~

The elderly woman frowned. "Elodie—"

"Mom's here?" Liora's voice broke through the quiet tension. She had just come down from the upper floor, her soft curls bouncing as she hurried forward. The sight of her, so bright, so innocent made my throat tighten. Two weeks. That's how long it had been since I last saw her, and even now, I couldn't bring myself to smile.

Before I could say a word, Liora ran into my arms. "Mom!" Her small body collided with mine, warm and trembling, her scent a mix of wild lilies and wolf. My heart cracked. I wrapped my arms around her gently, my voice barely escaping in a quiet hum. "Hey, baby..."

That was all I could manage.

The elderly lady cleared her throat softly, her expression smoothing into something polite, practiced. She never liked scenes, never liked emotions that bled into the air.

"It's been so long since I've had tea made by your hands, Elodie," she said with that faint, knowing smile. "Would you make some for me? I do miss your touch."

I nodded automatically. "Of course, Nonna. Though it's nearly dinner time—"

Amber, Dante's sister, interrupted with a scoff, leaning back against the velvet sofa. "Oh, come on, we'll eat soon anyway. Dante and York should be back any minute now." She was dressed like she'd walked out of a fashion spread, sharp edges, red lipstick, and an attitude that could slice skin.

The mention of Dante's name sent a strange ache through my chest. I tried to keep my face steady, but my pulse betrayed me.

And then, as if my thoughts summoned him, the heavy doors opened.

Dante stepped in, tall, broad-shouldered, his presence instantly drawing the air out of the room. His aura filled the space, the kind that made even seasoned wolves lower their heads. He greeted his grandmother first, then his mother.

When his eyes flicked to me, I felt it, the way his gaze lingered, cold and fleeting, before he turned away and took a seat at the far end of the room.

My fingers curled in my lap. He didn't even nod at me.

"Dad!" Liora squealed, already dashing to him. He smiled then, that rare, soft curve that used to belong to me. My breath hitched. He lifted her onto his lap with ease, his voice gentle, affectionate. "There's my little Alpha."

And just like that, I was invisible.

Amber poured herself a glass of wine, laughing quietly with York, who was her youngest brother, the sunlight of their cold family, when he bounded in from the hallway, his boyish grin lighting up the room.

"Were you all waiting for me?" he joked, leaping over the armrest of a sofa like a pup. His energy loosened everyone's mood. Even the old lady's lips softened into something resembling warmth.

But not mine.

I just sat there, hands clasped, pretending not to notice Dante's fingers brushing Liora's hair, pretending not to feel the sting of being a stranger at my own table. Every smile, every laugh around me blurred into background noise.

Dinner was announced soon after. The small dining hall glittered with soft gold light, and the long table was already set, fine silverware, porcelain dishes, everything immaculate, like the perfect Bellini Pack image had to be.

I took my seat quietly beside Liora, across from Dante. He didn't look up. His attention was on his plate, his daughter, the family. Never me. I used to know that face better than my own. Now, I couldn't even read the man behind it.

The old lady, ever the puppeteer, smiled sweetly. "Liora, dear, why don't you switch seats with your father? Let your parents sit together." She said it lightly, but there was a glint in her eye. She'd been trying to pull us closer for years, still believing that forced proximity could fix something that had long since shattered.

The elderly lady was always trying tirelessly to bring Dante and me closer. Everyone in the pack had grown used to her quiet persistence by now. They all thought her efforts were pointless because no matter what she did, no matter how many dinners she arranged or how often she made us sit side by side, Dante's indifference toward me never changed.

I could feel her eyes on me even now, her gentle but desperate hope that one day her favorite grandson would look at me the way he once did like I was his home, his everything. But that version of us was long gone. Replaced by silence, by distance so wide it felt like standing across a canyon.

Amber, his sister, didn't even bother to hide her smirk this time. She just swirled her wine, watching us like a spectator at a show she'd seen a hundred times. She leaned back lazily, her voice dripping with mock cheer. "Let's just eat, Nonna. You'll give yourself wrinkles worrying about lost causes."

I forced a small smile, pretending not to hear. Dante sat beside me, silent as always, his presence large enough to swallow the air. His shoulders were tense, his jaw tight as he sliced through his steak with unnecessary force. He didn't look at me once, and somehow, that hurt more than anything he could've said.

The table was bright with laughter, the clinking of forks and glasses, but I felt detached like I was sitting underwater, hearing everything from a distance. I smiled when I needed to, nodded when someone spoke to me, but my hands trembled every time my fingers brushed the edge of his plate.

When I looked up, the old lady was still watching me with that same helpless expression like she wished I'd fight harder, say something, anything to stir the silence between us. She thought I was too soft, too patient with him. But she didn't know that sometimes, patience was just another word for exhaustion.

Dinner began formally, with all the elegance expected of an Alpha's household. Candlelight shimmered on polished silverware. The scent of roasted meat and spices filled the air. Everyone was chatting, Amber, York, even Liora was laughing like everything in this family was perfect. But it wasn't.

It had been over ten minutes since Dante arrived, and we hadn't exchanged a single word. Not even a glance. It wasn't unusual anymore. Everyone had stopped expecting affection between us long ago. What used to draw whispers and pity had simply become the norm, Alpha Dante and his silent Luna, living like ghosts under the same roof.

I lowered my gaze to my plate, pushing food around without appetite. I used to love family dinners, back when Dante would reach for my hand under the table, his thumb brushing my skin, steadying me whenever the pack elders' stares grew too sharp. Now, my hand just rested there, cold, forgotten.

Liora's small voice cut through my thoughts. "Mom, I want to eat the big shrimp."