

# Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 61 - 62 [ 1,352 words ]

*Chapter 61: Chapter 62*

Elodie's POV

When Dante had called me earlier, I'd assumed he was already home.

But now, listening to Liora ask where he was, I realized he hadn't been here at all.

The hotel where the banquet was held was actually closer to the estate than my apartment. And he'd left at least thirty minutes before Johnny and I did.

Which meant he should've been home by now.

Unless he'd taken Sienna home first. Unless he'd stayed with her for a while. Unless he wasn't planning on coming home at all tonight.

My stomach turned.

Then I heard footsteps in the hallway.

"Daddy!" Liora's face lit up instantly.

Dante walked in, and even though I'd been expecting it, seeing him still felt like a knife twisting in my chest.

"Hey, baby girl," he said, his voice soft in a way it never was with me anymore.

I started to shift Liora out of my arms to give him space, but she clung to me, not wanting to let go. She just reached out one hand toward him.

Dante leaned over to pick her up, and suddenly he was right there, so close I could smell his cologne.

But underneath it was something else.

A Perfume. It was Delicate and floral and distinctly feminine.

The same scent I'd caught on Sienna at the banquet.

My breath caught.

He'd been with her. Close enough for her perfume to cling to his clothes, to his skin.

I turned my face away sharply, putting as much distance between us as the small space allowed. I couldn't breathe it in. Couldn't have that smell filling my lungs, branding itself into my memory.

Dante settled Liora into his arms and placed his hand on her forehead, checking her temperature. His eyes flicked to me. "How high is it now? Has it come down?"

I repeated what the doctor had told me, keeping my voice flat. Professional. "The high fever broke, but it's still elevated. Could spike again."

"Okay."

He sat down on the edge of the bed with Liora in his lap, and she immediately squirmed. "Daddy, your jacket is scratchy..."

Without thinking, Dante shrugged out of his suit jacket and held it out to me.

I took it reflexively, a muscle memory from years of being his wife, of taking care of his things and the second it was in my hands, that perfume hit me full force. Again.

Sienna's scent, mixed with his.

Evidence of where he'd been. What he'd been doing.

I stared down at the expensive fabric in my hands, and something inside me went cold.

There was a time when holding Dante's jacket would've made me happy. When I would've buried my face in it, breathed in his scent, held onto it like it was something precious.

But that woman was gone.

I set the jacket down on a nearby chair, careful not to let it touch me any more than it already had.

"I'm going to make Liora some porridge," I said, my voice steady even though I felt like I was shattering inside.

Liora looked at me with those big, tired eyes. "The kind I like?"

"Of course, baby. The kind you like."

I left the room before either of them could say anything else, walking down the hallway on legs that felt mechanical. Automatic. From the corner of my eyes, I saw Dante's eyes flick over to the jacket I had pushed away from touching me again. Good. Let him see that.

The kitchen was empty when I got there, the staff had probably already gone to bed.

Good. I didn't want an audience for this.

I gathered ingredients methodically, rice, chicken broth, a few vegetables. Started cooking. Stirred. Watched the pot like it was the most important thing in the world.

Because if I stopped moving, if I let myself think about what I'd just smelled, I'd fall apart.

He'd been with her tonight. After the banquet. After showing her off to everyone.

He'd taken her home, and he'd stayed.

Maybe they'd talked. Maybe they'd done more than talk.

Maybe he'd held her the way he used to hold me, back when I still believed he loved me.

My hands shook as I stirred the porridge.

I pressed my palms against the cool countertop, trying to ground myself.

This was my life now. Coming back to this house when summoned. Taking care of Liora while Dante smelled like another woman. Pretending everything was fine.

The porridge bubbled gently, and I forced myself to focus on it. To make it perfect for Liora, because she was sick and she needed me and that was all that mattered right now.

Not Dante.

Not Sienna.

Twenty minutes later, the porridge was ready. I put it in a bowl, added the toppings Liora liked, and tried to carry it back upstairs but stopped.

I stood in the kitchen for a moment longer than necessary, staring at the pot I'd just finished washing. The plate of food I had just dished out. And then dropped the meal right back, probably Liora wouldn't have the appetite to eat now.

Then I forced myself to move. To go back upstairs.

When I reached the second floor and turned the corner, I saw him.

Dante was standing by the window at the end of the hallway, his phone pressed to his ear. The light from outside cast his profile in shadow.

"The fever's gone down," he said quietly. "Don't worry about it."

I stopped walking.

Don't worry about it...

He was talking to Sienna. Had to be. Who else would he be reassuring about Liora's fever at this hour?

And why would Sienna even care? What did my daughter mean to her except another piece of the life she was stealing from me?

I felt something ugly twist in my chest.

Dante hadn't even noticed me standing there. He was too focused on his conversation, his voice taking on that gentle tone, the one I used to think was reserved for me and Liora.

But it wasn't. It never had been.

I turned away before he could see me and walked into Liora's room, closing the door softly behind me.

Inside, Sabina was carefully wiping Liora's face with a damp cloth. The IV had been removed, and Liora was sleeping now, her little face finally relaxed.

She'd sweated through her clothes, and Sabina was in the process of changing her into fresh pajamas.

When Sabina saw me, she immediately stepped back and held out the cloth. "Luna, would you like to—"

"No." The word came out sharper than I meant it to. "You're doing fine. Keep going."

Sabina blinked, clearly surprised.

In the past, I would've taken over immediately. Would've insisted on being the one to take care of Liora, to change her clothes and tuck her in and sit with her until I was sure she was okay.

But now?

Now I just felt tired.

Sabina hesitated, looking at me like she wasn't sure what to do, but eventually she went back to helping Liora into clean pajamas.

I sat down on the sofa against the wall and watched, feeling strangely detached from the whole scene.

Once Sabina finished and pulled the blanket up over Liora, she turned to me. "The doctor said the fever shouldn't come back, Luna. She should be fine by morning."

"That's good," I said quietly.

Sabina lingered for a moment, like she wanted to say something else, but then she just nodded and left the room.

I stayed where I was, sitting in the dim light, watching my daughter sleep.

She looked so small. So vulnerable. And she'd asked for me when she was sick, she'd wanted her mom.

That should've made me feel needed. Should've made me feel like I still mattered.

Instead, I just felt hollow.

Because I knew. I knew that once Liora was better, once she didn't need me anymore, I'd go back to being invisible. Back to being the woman no one wanted around.

And Dante?

My hands clenched in my lap.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 62 - 63 [ 1,297 words ]**

*Chapter 62: Chapter 63*

Elodie's POV~

Since Liora was mostly fine now, I probably didn't need to stay the night.

The thought should've brought relief, but instead it just felt empty.

The porridge was still simmering downstairs. I sat in Liora's room for a little longer, watching her sleep, before I finally forced myself to leave.

When I got to the kitchen, Sabina was already there, standing by the stove. "I'll watch the pot, Luna. You must be exhausted. Please, sit down and rest."

I nodded and walked out into the hallway.

That's when I saw him.

Dante was sitting in the living room, newspaper in hand, looking completely at ease. Like this was just another normal evening. Like nothing was wrong.

He glanced up when he heard my footsteps. Our eyes met for a brief second.

Then he went right back to his paper.

Dismissed. Again.

I stood there for a moment, feeling stupid. In the past, I would've gone over and sat next to him. Would've tried to be close without disturbing him, just happy to share the same space.

But now?

Now we had nothing to say to each other.

I turned and headed back toward the stairs.

He didn't call after me. Didn't ask me to stay. Didn't even look up.

I made it halfway up before I stopped, confused by my own thoughts.

I'd been so sure he was going to confront me about what happened with Sienna at the banquet. About Johnny refusing to hire her. About how we'd "humiliated" her.

But he hadn't said a word.

Was he waiting? Building up to something worse? Or did he just... not care enough to even argue with me anymore?

I didn't know which option hurt more.

"Mommy?"

I turned to see Liora standing at the top of the stairs, looking pale and tired but awake. She was rubbing her eyes with one small fist.

"Hey, baby. You're up." I climbed the rest of the stairs and touched her forehead, it was still warm, but better than before. "How are you feeling?"

"Hungry. Is the porridge ready?"

"Almost. Let me check."

I went back downstairs with her following behind me, and when we got to the kitchen, Sabina smiled. "It's done, Luna. Perfect timing."

Relief washed over me. At least I could do this right.

I started ladling porridge into a bowl, and I was about to bring it out to the dining table when I realized Dante had followed us.

He stood in the doorway, watching.

I set the bowl down in front of Liora, and she looked at it, then looked up at me with those big eyes. “Mommy, why is there only one bowl? Isn’t Daddy eating too?”

My hand froze on the ladle.

I hadn’t thought about making him a bowl. Hadn’t even considered it.

Before I could figure out what to say, Sabina jumped in with that kind smile of hers. “I’ll get another bowl for the Alpha.”

Out of habit, I’d made extra porridge, Liora never ate much, and there was always enough left over. In the past, Dante and I would share what remained.

But that was before.

Now I just stood there, feeling awkward, as Sabina handed me another bowl.

I filled it mechanically and set it down across from Liora. Then I made myself a small portion, even though I wasn’t hungry at all.

The three of us sat at the table.

Like a family.

Except we weren’t. Not really. Not anymore.

Liora started eating her porridge, making happy little sounds because it was exactly the way she liked it. That small thing, knowing I could still do this for her, should’ve felt good.

Instead, it just made me sad.

Because this was temporary. This moment. Soon she’d be better, and I’d leave, and everything would go back to how it was.

Me on the outside. Them moving on without me.

The silence was suffocating.

Dante had already taken off his watch and rolled up his sleeves, stirring his porridge with that same careful, elegant precision he did everything with.

It used to fascinate me, the way he moved. Every gesture of his absolutely graceful.

Now it just felt like watching a stranger.

Liora took a small sip and her whole face lit up. “I missed this so much! It’s so good, Mommy.”

Sabina smiled warmly from where she stood by the counter. “Now that you’re back in the country, you can have it whenever you want.”

“Yayyy!”

Liora beamed, and for a second I saw her glance between Dante and me, like she was waiting for one of us to say something. To fill the silence that had settled over the table like fog.

But Dante just kept eating, his eyes on his bowl.

And I had nothing to say.

Liora seemed to sense the tension or maybe she was just too young to care because she leaned over and pressed herself against my arm, her voice dropping to that sweet, pleading tone. “Mommy, will you sleep in my room tonight? Please?”

I opened my mouth to say no. To tell her I needed to go back to my apartment, that I had work in the morning, that—

But then I looked at her face. Still pale. Still tired. Still recovering.

“Okay,” I heard myself say. “I’ll stay.”

Her smile was worth it. Even if being in this house felt like suffocating.

Liora only managed to finish one bowl, and Dante barely touched his. There was still porridge left in the pot when we got up from the table.

“I want to take a bath,” Liora announced.

I frowned. “Baby, you just had a fever. Maybe we should skip the bath tonight—”

“But I’m all sweaty and gross!” She wrinkled her nose. “Please, Mommy?”

I sighed. “Fine. But I’m coming with you to make sure you don’t get cold.”

She nodded eagerly and grabbed my hand, pulling me toward the stairs.

Dante said nothing as we left. Just went back to his newspaper like we’d never been there at all.

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After I made sure Liora was bathed and warm and tucked into bed, I stood in her doorway for a moment, watching her settle in with her favorite stuffed animal.

“You’re staying, right?” she asked sleepily.

“I’m staying,” I promised.

“Okay. Love you, Mommy.”

“Love you too, baby.”

I closed her door partway and stood in the hallway, suddenly unsure of what to do with myself.

I needed to change. Needed to get out of this dress and into something I could sleep in.

Which meant going to the master bedroom.

My chest tightened at the thought, but I forced myself to walk down the hall.

When I pushed open the door, Dante wasn't there.

Thank goodness .

I stepped inside, half-expecting to find all my things gone. Packed up. Erased.

After all, I'd been gone for weeks. Surely he would've cleared out my stuff by now. Made room for—

I stopped.

Nothing had changed.

My slippers were still by the bed, exactly where I'd always left them. The hand cream I used every night was still on the nightstand. My water bottle. My books.

Everything was exactly as I'd left it.

Like I'd never been gone at all.

I walked slowly toward the walk-in closet, my heart pounding for reasons I couldn't name.

When I slid open the door, I found my clothes still hanging there. Dresses, blouses, jeans, all of it. Untouched.

My hands trembled as I reached out and touched one of the hangers.

Why?

Why hadn't he gotten rid of any of it?

Did he think I was coming back? Did he want me to come back? Absolutely not.

Or did he just not care enough to bother?

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 63 - 64 [ 1,125 words ]**

*Chapter 63: Chapter 64*

Elodie's POV

Maybe he just hadn't bothered yet. Maybe because we weren't officially divorced, he figured there was no point in clearing out my things and upsetting Nonna.

Or maybe... and this thought hurt more that he just didn't care enough either way.

I pulled myself out of that spiral, grabbed pajamas and a towel from the closet, and left the master bedroom.

When I got back to Liora's room, she was sitting up in bed with her tablet, watching some cartoon. Her eyes lit up when she saw the clothes in my arms.

"Mommy, are you taking a bath in here?"

"Yeah, baby."

"Okay!"

She went back to her show, and I slipped into her bathroom, closing the door behind me.

The hot water felt good against my skin, but it didn't wash away the exhaustion. Didn't make me feel any less hollow.

I was halfway through washing my hair when I heard voices, muffled through the door, but distinct enough that I knew Dante had come into the room.

I froze, straining to hear what they were saying, but I couldn't make out the words. Just the low rumble of his voice, then Liora's higher-pitched response.

A minute later, I heard the door close again.

He'd left.

I finished my shower quickly and got dressed, my hands moving on autopilot.

When I came out, Liora was already looking drowsy, the medicine and the late hour catching up with her.

"Come on, baby. Time for bed."

She didn't argue. Just set her tablet aside and crawled under the covers.

I climbed in beside her, and she immediately curled into me, pressing her face against my shoulder.

"You smell good, Mommy," she murmured sleepily. "And you're so soft."

My throat tightened. "Go to sleep, sweetheart."

"Kay. Love you."

"Love you too."

Within minutes, she was out.

I lay there in the dark, listening to her breathe, and I felt the exhaustion settling into my bones.

But I couldn't fully relax.

Ever since Liora had gotten sick a few months ago, she'd developed this habit of kicking off her blankets in the middle of the night. And even though I was exhausted, even though I could barely keep my eyes open, some part of me stayed alert. Waiting.

I woke up what felt like every hour, sometimes because Liora had moved, sometimes for no reason at all and each time I'd reach over and pull the blanket back up over her, making sure she was covered and warm.

Then I'd close my eyes and try to sleep again.

It was a broken, restless kind of sleep. The kind that left you feeling more tired when you woke up than when you went to bed.

By the time dawn started creeping through the curtains, I gave up on trying.

I carefully extracted myself from Liora's grip, she didn't even stir and walked over to the window.

The estate grounds were quiet. Peaceful.

And there he was.

Dante, down below, going for his morning run.

I watched him for a moment, watched the easy, powerful way he moved, like he didn't have a care in the world.

He probably didn't.

He'd be gone for about an hour. That's how long his runs usually took.

I washed my face, changed into clothes I'd left in the closet, and went downstairs to make breakfast.

Cooking calmed me, in a strange way. Gave me something to do with my hands. Something to focus on besides the mess my life had become.

Thirty minutes later, I'd made enough food for everyone, eggs, toast, fruit, some of the porridge left over from last night reheated.

Sabina came into the kitchen just as I was finishing. "Oh, Luna, you didn't have to—"

"It's fine. I was already up." I handed her the spatula. "Can you finish up? I need to get going."

"Of course."

I checked on Liora one more time, still sleeping, made sure there was no fever, then grabbed my bag and keys.

I was out the door before Dante got back from his run.

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When I got home to my apartment, I ate a quick breakfast standing at the counter, just some yogurt and fruit, barely tasting it.

I was packing up my laptop and getting ready to head to Cole Corporation when the doorbell rang.

I checked the security camera and saw Mrs. Smith from down the hall with her daughter, Tommy.

I opened the door. "Mrs. Smith, is everything okay?"

She looked frazzled, stressed. "Elodie, I'm so sorry to bother you, but my mother-in-law just called, she's in the hospital, and I need to get there right away. Could you possibly take Tilly to school? I know it's a huge ask, but—"

"Of course," I said immediately. "Don't worry about it. I'm heading out anyway."

The relief on her face was instant. "Thank you so much. You're a lifesaver."

Tommy was in the same kindergarten as Liora, and it was on my way to work. It wasn't a problem at all.

Twenty minutes later, we were pulling into the school parking lot.

I was looking for a spot when I saw them.

Dante. Sienna... and Liora.

All three of them, together.

My hands tightened on the steering wheel.

Liora looked happy, healthy again, bouncing on her feet as she held Sienna's hand. She was chattering away about something, her little face bright with excitement.

And Sienna was smiling down at her, looking every bit like the perfect mother figure.

Dante stood beside them, one hand on the small of Sienna's back, guiding her away from the crowd of parents and kids flooding toward the entrance.

Protective. Attentive. Present. How remarkable... A bitter taste flooded my mouth at that sarcasm.

Everything he'd never been with me.

"Look! That's Bella!" Tommy's voice broke through my thoughts.

I couldn't speak. Couldn't move.

"Is that pretty lady Bella's mommy too?" Tommy asked innocently. "Does Bella have two mommies?"

The question hit me like a physical blow.

"No," I managed to whisper. "No, sweetheart. That's... that's just Aunt Sienna."

But even as I said it, I knew how it looked. How it would look to everyone else at the school.

Dante, Sienna, and Liora. A perfect little family.

And me? I was the outsider. The forgotten one. The woman no one even knew existed.

"Don't tell Bella that I dropped you off today, okay? Let's keep it our little secret."

She nodded solemnly. "Okay. I promise."

I found a parking spot as far from them as possible and helped Tommy out of the car.

As we walked toward the entrance, I kept my head down, praying they wouldn't notice me. Praying I could just drop Tilly off and leave.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 64 - 65 [ 1,686 words ]**

*Chapter 64: Chapter 65*

Elodie's POV~

Tommy was scared of Liora.

I remembered why. The last time Tommy had hugged me at school, Liora had gotten so jealous she'd scolded the poor girl. Ever since then, Tilly had kept her distance, always watching Liora warily.

Even now, she kept glancing nervously toward where Dante, Sienna, and Liora stood together.

They looked perfect. Like something out of a magazine, the powerful Alpha, his beautiful mate, and their adorable daughter.

A family.

I looked at them for a moment longer than I should have.

They fit together in a way Dante and I never had. Sienna laughed at something he said, her hand resting comfortably on his arm. Liora was beaming, swinging their joined hands back and forth.

They looked... happy.

And maybe that should've made me angry. Should've made me bitter.

But mostly it just made me tired.

I turned away.

"Come on, Tommy," I said softly. "Let's wait until they leave, okay?"

She nodded, staying close to my side.

A few minutes later, Dante and Sienna finally headed toward the parking lot, and I took Tommy's hand and walked into the school.

Liora's teacher was at the entrance, greeting parents and kids. When she saw me, her face lit up with recognition.

"Luna Elodie! I didn't expect to see you this morning. Is everything—" She stopped mid-sentence, her eyes dropping to Tommy's hand in mine, then flicking toward where Dante and Sienna had just left. Confusion crossed her face.

I knew exactly what she was thinking.

“Mrs. Smith had an emergency,” I explained, keeping my voice steady. “She asked me to bring Tommy this morning.”

“Oh!” The teacher’s relief was visible. “I see. That’s very kind of you.”

She hesitated, clearly wanting to say something else, probably about seeing Liora arrive with Dante and Sienna.

“I know,” I said before she could continue. “It’s fine.”

The teacher looked uncomfortable but nodded. “Of course. Well, thank you for helping Mrs. Smith.”

I said goodbye to Tommy, reminding her not to mention to Liora that I’d been here, and then I walked back to my car.

My phone rang as I was pulling out of the parking lot.

It was Johnny.

“Hey,” I answered, putting it on speaker.

“Where are you? How far out?”

“About ten minutes away.”

“Perfect. I’ll meet you outside.”

When I arrived at Cole Corporation, Johnny was already waiting by the entrance, looking sharp in his suit and tie.

The second he saw me, he opened his arms. “Welcome back.”

I smiled, a real smile this time and let him hug me.

It felt good. Safe. Like maybe I still had someone in my corner.

“Ready for your first day?” he asked, pulling back.

“As ready as I’ll ever be.”

“You’re going to be great. Come on, let me show you around.”

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But what Elodie didn’t see was the man watching from a window several floors up.

Yale had been on his phone, barely paying attention to anything outside, when movement at the entrance caught his eye.

He looked down and saw a woman, beautiful, elegant, but with something sad in the way she carried herself.

And then he saw Johnny hug her.

Before he could think much about it, his phone buzzed with another call.

It was Sienna.

He smiled and answered immediately. "Hey, good morning. When are you coming in?"

"That's actually why I'm calling," Sienna said, and something in her tone made his smile falter. "There's been a change of plans. I won't be joining Cole Corporation after all."

Yale's face went blank. "What?"

"I know, I'm sorry. It's complicated. But I wanted to let you know as soon as possible so you could adjust the team."

"Sienna, wait... what happened? I thought everything was set."

"It was. But... personal reasons came up. I hope you understand."

She sounded apologetic but firm. There was no room for negotiation.

Yale ran a hand through his hair, stunned. "Yeah. Of course. I understand."

They said their goodbyes, and he hung up, staring at his phone screen.

Sienna wasn't coming.

Which meant the project they'd been planning around her expertise was now in jeopardy. Which meant he'd have to scramble to find someone else. Which meant—

"Yale?"

He looked up to find one of his coworkers staring at him with concern.

"You okay, man? You look terrible."

Yale forced himself to nod. "Yeah. I'm fine."

But he wasn't.

He began to tap his fingers around his table, watching through the CCTV camera that had been mounted everywhere, his eyes narrowing on the woman Johnny was leading everywhere.

Oh... now this was the reason why Johnny had rejected Sienna? Because of her? That woman beside Johnny doesn't even look smart. Her dressing was a bit odd, doesn't even carry the confident aura Sienna was used to carrying. What does she even have that Sienna doesn't?

Or...

Exactly, either this shallow woman beside Johnny had bought her way through into the company and Johnny, being biased, had agreed. That was the only way Johnny would have agreed. Because to him, that woman downstairs was nothing compared to his great Sienna.

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And downstairs, completely unaware of any of this, I followed Johnny into the building, trying to focus on my fresh start.

Trying to believe that maybe, just maybe, things could get better.

Even though I wasn't sure I believed it anymore.

Johnny walked me through the office, his hand lightly on my back, guiding me past cubicles and glass-walled conference rooms.

"Everyone's excited to meet you," he said, though I wasn't sure I believed him.

We stopped in front of a large open space where about fifteen people were gathered, developers, programmers, project managers. They all looked up as we approached, curious but polite.

"Team, I'd like to introduce Elodie Miller," Johnny announced with a warm smile. "She's joining us as our senior programming architect. Some of you might not know this yet."

A few eyebrows raised. Some impressed nods. One woman actually gasped softly.

"I'm really looking forward to working with all of you," I said, trying to sound confident even though I felt like an imposter standing there.

Johnny started going around the room, introducing people one by one. Sarah from UX design. Marcus, lead developer. Chen, who handled backend infrastructure.

Then we got to a man standing near the window, tall, sharp-featured, arms crossed over his chest.

"And this is Yale," Johnny said. "One of our top algorithm specialists."

Yale didn't smile. Didn't offer his hand. Just looked at me with this cold, assessing expression.

"Nice to meet you," I said anyway, extending my hand.

He glanced at it but didn't shake it.

The room went awkwardly silent.

“Yale?” Johnny’s tone held a warning.

“I have a question,” Yale said, ignoring Johnny completely and focusing on me. “What’s your educational background?”

I blinked, caught off guard. “I have a master’s in computer science from—”

“And your PhD?” he interrupted.

“I... haven’t completed a PhD program yet.”

The judgment in his expression was immediate. “I see.”

Johnny stepped forward slightly. “Yale, that’s not—”

“I’m just trying to understand,” Yale cut him off, his voice getting louder. “We had someone lined up to join this team. Someone with a PhD from one of the top universities in Europe. Someone with an incredible track record. And now she’s suddenly not coming, and instead we get... this?”

Each word felt like a slap.

“Yale,” Johnny said sharply. “That’s enough.”

But Yale was on a roll now, and nothing was going to stop him. “You look pretty young, Miss Miller. If I didn’t know better, I’d think you hadn’t even finished your undergrad.”

Heat flooded my face. I could feel everyone staring.

“My age doesn’t—”

“What institution did you get your master’s from?” he demanded. “Is it even ranked? Or is it one of those programs anyone can get into if they pay enough?”

“Yale!” Johnny’s voice cracked like a whip.

But Yale ignored him, stepping closer to me. “Let me guess, you haven’t been accepted into any PhD programs because you’re not actually qualified, right? Or maybe the school you went to was so mediocre you’re embarrassed to mention it?”

I opened my mouth, trying to stay calm even though I felt like I was being torn apart in front of strangers. “I haven’t pursued a PhD yet, but—”

Yale laughed. Actually laughed. It was harsh and mocking and made me feel about two inches tall.

“But what?” he sneered. “You’re going to tell me that even without a doctorate, you’re somehow just as good as the rest of us? That your ‘expertise’ makes up for your lack of credentials?”

My hands were shaking. I clenched them into fists at my sides.

“Or is it just that you’ve got a pretty face and you’re used to men telling you how special you are?” Yale continued, his voice dripping with contempt. “Is that why you think you deserve to be here? Because someone’s been sweet-talking you into believing you have actual skills?”

The room was deadly silent now. Everyone was frozen, watching this trainwreck unfold.

I felt like I couldn’t breathe.

All the pain from this morning, from seeing Dante and Sienna with Liora, from being invisible in my own daughter’s life, from feeling like I didn’t belong anywhere, came crashing down on me all at once.

And now this stranger was telling me I didn’t belong here either.

“Yale!” Johnny’s voice was furious now. “You’re out of line!”

Yale yanked the ID badge from around his neck. “I’m resigning.”

“You what?”

“I quit.” Yale threw the badge on the nearest desk. “I thought you valued talent, Johnny. I thought you kept personal feelings separate from business decisions. Clearly, I was wrong about you.”

He started walking toward the exit.

Johnny looked torn between fury and shock. “Yale, take some time to cool off. If you want to come back after—”

“I’ll never set foot in Cole Corporation again,” Yale spat over his shoulder.

And then he was gone.

The silence he left behind was suffocating.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 65 - 66[ 1,448 words ]**

*Chapter 65: Chapter 66*

Elodie’s POV

I looked at Johnny, silently asking if we should go after Yale. If we should try to fix this.

Johnny shook his head firmly. A clear message: Let him go.

I understood why, even if it hurt to watch talent walk away. But I also knew what Johnny wasn't saying out loud, Yale must have had feelings for Sienna. It was written all over his face the second her name came up. The way he'd defended her so fiercely, the way he'd looked at me like I was the villain in this story.

He'd already made up his mind about me before I'd even opened my mouth.

And the worst part? I couldn't even defend myself properly. Couldn't tell them that I'd built CUAP, that it was my code, my architecture, my vision that had become legendary in this industry.

Because of the confidentiality agreements. Because of the government contracts tied to it. Because my identity as CUAP's creator was classified information that couldn't be revealed without clearance.

So I had to stand here and take it. Had to let Yale and probably half this team think I was just some unqualified woman Johnny was doing a favor for.

It was humiliating.

Johnny cleared his throat, drawing everyone's attention back to him. His voice was steady, authoritative. "I know some of you might have questions after what just happened. But let me be very clear, Elodie's credentials speak for themselves, PhD or not. I've personally reviewed her work, and I can guarantee that her technical capabilities are more than sufficient for this role."

The room was silent.

Nobody said anything, but I could see the doubt in their eyes. The skepticism. The way some of them exchanged glances that clearly said, Sure, boss. Whatever you say.

They thought I'd gotten here because I was sleeping with Johnny. Or because I had some connection, some shortcut that let me skip the line while more qualified people got passed over.

Like Sienna.

God, even here, even in this completely separate part of my life, she was haunting me.

"I expect everyone to give Elodie the same respect and support you'd give any other team member," Johnny continued. "We're a team here. We work together. Is that understood?"

Murmurs of agreement. Nods. But the energy in the room had shifted, and we all knew it.

I could feel the weight of everyone's judgment pressing down on me.

They didn't know the full story, how could they? Yale had apparently recommended Sienna to Johnny, but he'd kept the details vague. So to them, this whole situation probably looked exactly

like what they were thinking: another unqualified woman getting hired because of some personal connection.

And apparently, this had happened before.

I caught fragments of whispered conversations as people filtered back to their desks. Something about a woman last year, some executive's mistress who'd claimed to have a master's degree from a prestigious university. She'd talked a big game, acted confident, charmed everyone.

Until they'd actually asked her to do the work.

Turned out she couldn't even explain basic concepts. Couldn't answer simple technical questions. Some people had started wondering if she'd even graduated high school, let alone gotten a master's degree.

It had been a disaster. An embarrassment.

And now they thought I was the sequel.

The unqualified woman who'd somehow convinced Johnny to kick out a talented colleague and hire her instead.

God, I could see it written all over their faces.

Johnny, seemingly unbothered by the tension, turned to a guy named Simon who'd been working with Yale. "What projects has Yale been involved with recently?"

Simon ran through a quick overview, some algorithm optimization work, a few debugging tasks on the main platform, and a security protocol review.

Johnny nodded, then looked at me. "Since Yale's stepping down, would you be able to take over his remaining tasks?"

Every eye in the room turned to me.

This was a test. I knew it. Johnny was giving me a chance to prove myself right out of the gate.

But it also felt like he was throwing me to the wolves.

"Sure," I said, keeping my voice steady even though my heart was racing. "I can handle it."

I turned to face the team, forcing myself to meet their skeptical gazes. "I'm looking forward to working with all of you."

The smiles I got back were polite. Professional. Completely empty.

They were hoping I had some actual skills so they wouldn't have to pick up all the slack. But they clearly weren't holding their breath.

Simon looked particularly pained. He was the one who'd been working directly with Yale, which meant he'd now be stuck working with me, the woman who'd "stolen" his colleague's friend's job.

"All the materials are here," he said, his tone carefully neutral. "If you have questions, just ask."

The \*if you have questions\* felt loaded. Like he was already assuming I'd have no idea what I was doing.

"Thank you," I said quietly. "I appreciate it."

Simon nodded once and walked away.

\*\*Third Person POV\*\*

The moment Yale left Cole Corporation, he pulled out his phone and dialed Sienna's number.

She answered on the second ring. "Yale?"

"Sienna, did you know Elodie Miller just started working at Cole?"

There was a pause on the other end. "What? No. I had no idea."

Yale frowned, confusion settling over him. "You didn't know? But I thought—wasn't it because she pushed you out that you couldn't join?"

"No," Sienna said slowly, like she was processing this information in real time. "I told Johnny I couldn't take the position for personal reasons. I didn't realize Elodie had anything to do with Cole."

So Elodie had joined Cole Corporation. Which meant she'd left Wilson Group.

Interesting.

Yale shifted his weight, still standing outside the building. "Then what were those personal reasons you mentioned?"

Sienna's voice went cold. "Just some old grudges. Family stuff. It's complicated."

"But—"

"What's wrong?"

Yale hesitated, then pressed forward. "What about Elodie's actual abilities? I heard she hasn't even been accepted into a PhD program yet. She—"

"She hasn't even gone to graduate school," Sienna cut him off, her tone sharp and dismissive. "She only has an undergraduate degree."

Yale's eyes widened. "Wait, seriously? Just a bachelor's?"

“Yes.”

There was ice in that single word.

Sienna stood in her apartment, staring out the window, her mind racing. She genuinely hadn't known Elodie had left Wilson Group. Hadn't expected her half-sister to make any moves at all, really.

And now Elodie had apparently used whatever connections she had to land a job at another company instead of going back to school to actually improve her credentials.

Sienna almost laughed at the absurdity of it.

No vision. No ambition. Just taking shortcuts wherever she could.

“So what are you planning to do next?” Yale asked, pulling her out of her thoughts.

“I have an official racing competition coming up,” Sienna said, her voice returning to its usual controlled calm. “I'll need to dedicate time to training. I'll think about work opportunities after that.”

“Oh, right. Of course.” Yale's admiration was clear even through the phone. “I don't know how you manage everything—racing, your research, all your projects. Most people would burn out.”

Sienna smiled slightly. “I'm not most people.”

“No. No, you're definitely not.”

They talked for a few more minutes before hanging up, and Sienna set her phone down on the counter.

Elodie at Cole Corporation.

It shouldn't have bothered her—they were in completely different leagues, after all. Elodie with her mediocre credentials and her desperate attempts to stay relevant, while Sienna had offers from top companies across multiple Pack territories.

But still.

It was... inconvenient.

Especially if Dante found out.

She made a mental note to mention it to him later—casually, of course. Just an observation. Just keeping him informed.

After all, they told each other everything now.

-----

Dante's POV

I flipped through another contract without really reading it, my mind elsewhere.

“Chad, get me coffee.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

I went back to the documents in front of me, initialing pages out of habit more than actual focus. The office was quiet except for the low hum of the air conditioning and the occasional shuffle of papers.

A few minutes later, Chad returned with the coffee and set it on my desk.

I didn't look up. Just reached for it automatically, stirring it the way I always did, three slow rotations, counterclockwise.

Then I lifted the cup to my lips.

And stopped.

Something was off.

I frowned, lowering the cup without drinking. The smell was wrong. Not bad, exactly. Just... different.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 66 - 67[ 1,411 words ]**

*Chapter 66: Chapter 67*

Dante's POV

The smell hit me before I even tasted it.

Wrong. Just... wrong.

I paused, the cup halfway to my lips, and frowned. Then I took a small sip anyway, just to be sure.

The second the coffee touched my tongue, I set it down.

“Have her make it again,” I said, not looking up from my documents.

Chad stood there for a second, probably surprised. “Of course, Alpha.”

I went back to my work, unbothered. It wasn’t a big deal.

Ten minutes later, Chad returned with another cup.

I didn’t even bother tasting it this time. Just lifted it, took one whiff, and set it right back down.

“What’s going on here?” I asked, my patience thinning.

Chad shifted his weight. “Secretary Sherry is probably just nervous, Alpha. It’s her first time making your coffee. She might not have gotten the temperature quite right, or—”

“Secretary Sherry?” I cut him off, finally looking up. “What about Elodie?”

Chad’s expression changed. Uncertain. Almost... careful.

“Luna Elodie left the company, Alpha. I thought you knew.”

I stared at him.

Left?

“When?” The word came out flat.

“Last Thursday.”

I leaned back in my chair slowly, processing that information.

Thursday. That was almost a week ago.

She’d left Wilson Group, and no one had bothered to tell me?

Well. That was annoying.

But also... typical Elodie behavior, really. Getting emotional about something, probably that whole situation with Sienna at the banquet and making some dramatic gesture to prove a point.

She’d probably expected me to notice immediately. To call her. To ask her to come back.

Which I hadn’t done, obviously, because I’d been busy and assumed she was still showing up to work like a responsible adult.

“I see,” I said finally.

Chad waited, clearly expecting me to say more.

I didn't.

Because honestly? This was fine. Elodie had worked here for years. She'd been competent, reliable, knew exactly how I liked things done. But she'd also been getting... difficult lately. Moody. Distant.

Maybe some time away would be good for her. Let her cool off, realize she was being irrational, and then she'd come back.

She always came back.

That's what Elodie did. She got upset, she pulled away for a bit, and then she came back because where else was she going to go?

"The coffee?" Chad prompted carefully.

"Take it away. Just bring me water."

"Yes, Alpha."

After he left, I sat there for a moment, staring at the spot where the coffee cup had been.

---

\*\*Elodie's POV\*\*

By noon, Johnny had left for a business lunch with some potential investors, which meant I was on my own.

I headed to the company cafeteria, grabbed a tray, and found a table in the corner by the windows.

A few people from my department were already there. When they saw me, they nodded politely.  
"Elodie."

"Hi."

That was it. They went right back to their conversation, and I went back to my lunch.

I didn't blame them. Why would they be warm to me? I was the woman who'd somehow gotten their respected colleague to quit on his first day meeting me.

I ate my salad mechanically, barely tasting it, and tried not to think about how lonely this felt.

After lunch, I went straight back to my desk and dove into the work Simon had handed over—Yale's unfinished projects.

The code was good. Really good. I could see why the team valued him.

But there were also inefficiencies. Small things that could be optimized. Algorithms that could run faster with a few adjustments.

I lost myself in it, my fingers flying over the keyboard, and for a few hours, I didn't think about Dante or Sienna or the humiliation of this morning.

Just code. Just logic. Just problems I could actually solve.

Around five o'clock, I saved my work and walked over to Simon's desk.

"Hey," I said quietly. "I'm almost done. Can you take a look?"

Simon glanced up, clearly distracted. "Done with what?"

"Yale's projects. The ones you assigned me this morning."

He blinked. "Wait, what?"

I sent him the files, and he opened them on his screen, his expression confused at first.

Then his eyes went wide.

"You... you finished all of this?"

I nodded. "Yeah. Is there something wrong with it?"

"Wrong? No, I—" He scrolled through the code, his mouth slightly open. "This is... Elodie, Yale spent \*ten days\* on this work. And you—you did it in \*one\*?"

"I had a fresh perspective," I said, trying to downplay it. "Sometimes that helps."

But Simon was already reading deeper, and I watched his expression shift from shock to something like awe.

"This isn't just finished," he said slowly. "You optimized everything. You found solutions to problems we've been stuck on for weeks."

A few other people had started drifting over, curious about what had Simon so worked up.

"What's going on?" someone asked.

"Elodie finished Yale's entire workload in one day," Simon said, still staring at his screen. "And she improved on it."

The gathered crowd went silent.

Then someone laughed nervously. "You're joking."

"I'm not joking. Look at this." Simon turned his monitor so they could see.

One by one, their skeptical expressions melted into disbelief.

Simon looked at me like he was seeing me for the first time. “You’re really just an undergrad? You didn’t go to grad school?”

The question made my chest tighten.

“No,” I said quietly. “I didn’t attend graduate school.”

“But—\*how\*?” someone else asked. “We’re all PhDs here. Top universities. And you—”

They didn’t finish the sentence, but I heard it anyway.

\*And you’re better than us.\*

“Why didn’t you pursue further education?” Simon pressed. “Financial reasons? Family obligations?”

I looked down at my hands.

The real answer was too complicated. Too painful.

“Just personal reasons,” I said instead, forcing a small smile. “Maybe someday I’ll go back to school. If the opportunity comes up.”

The lie tasted bitter.

Simon studied me for a long moment, and I wondered what he saw. If he could tell how much it cost me to stand here and pretend I was fine.

After spending another hour helping a few colleagues troubleshoot some code issues because apparently word had spread fast about what I could do, I finally packed up my things and left.

When I stepped out of the office, it was nearly seven. The sky had that dusky purple glow that came just before full dark.

And Johnny was waiting by the door.

I stopped, surprised. “What are you still doing here?”

He grinned. “Waiting for you. You cleared up everyone’s doubts on your first day and earned their respect. I’m impressed. As always.”

Something warm flickered in my chest, pride, maybe, or just gratitude that someone believed in me.

“Should I buy you dinner as a thank you?” I offered.

Johnny raised an eyebrow. “What else do you think I’ve been standing here for?”

I laughed, actually laughed and it felt strange. Like I’d forgotten how.

We walked to his car and drove to a restaurant nearby, one of those upscale places with soft lighting and cloth napkins that Johnny liked for business dinners.

“This okay?” he asked as we pulled up.

“Perfect.”

We got out and headed inside, and I was feeling lighter than I had in weeks. Maybe months.

Maybe things really could get better. Maybe I really could build something new here, something that was mine.

We climbed the stairs toward the second-floor dining area, and I was mid-step when a child came barreling down toward us, chasing after someone, laughing and completely oblivious.

I jerked backward to avoid the collision, my heel catching on the edge of the step.

I felt myself tipping, my arms flailing uselessly—

And then Johnny’s hand was on my waist, steadying me, pulling me upright before I could fall.

“Whoa, careful,” he said, his grip firm but gentle.

“God, thank you,” I breathed, my heart racing. “I almost—”

Then I saw them.

Dante and Levi.

Standing at the top of the stairs. Just... standing there. Staring.

My breath caught.

Dante’s expression was unreadable, blank in that way that meant he was feeling something but refusing to show it.

And Levi? Levi looked almost amused. Like he’d just stumbled onto something interesting.

Johnny’s hand was still on my waist.

I stepped away from him quickly, my face flushing hot. “Thanks,” I said again, quieter this time.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 67 - 68[ 1,531 words ]**

*Chapter 67: Chapter 68*

Elodie's POV

I bit down on my lip hard enough to taste copper and forced myself to look away.

Away from Dante's cold stare. Away from Levi's raised eyebrows and that knowing smirk.

I gently pushed against Johnny's arm, and he let go immediately, still oblivious to what was happening above us.

"Did you twist your ankle?" he asked, concern written all over his face.

"No," I managed to say, my voice barely above a whisper. "I'm fine."

"You sure?"

"Yeah. Let's just... let's go."

I didn't look back. Didn't glance up to see if Dante was still watching. I just kept moving, one foot in front of the other, climbing those stairs with Johnny beside me.

My heart was pounding so hard I thought it might break through my ribs.

We passed right by them, Dante and Levi, close enough that I could smell Dante's cologne, that familiar scent that used to make me feel safe and now just made me feel sick.

I kept my eyes forward. Kept walking.

Like they weren't there.

Like seeing my husband for the first time since I'd left his company didn't make me want to collapse right there on the stairs.

Johnny was saying something, asking about what I wanted to eat, maybe but I couldn't hear him over the rushing in my ears.

We made it to the second floor and the hostess led us to a private room.

The door closed behind us, and I finally let myself breathe.

"You okay?" Johnny asked, pulling out my chair. "You look pale."

“I’m fine,” I lied. Again. “Just tired. Long day.”

He didn’t look convinced, but he didn’t push. Just sat down across from me and started looking at the menu.

-----

Dante’s POV

“That was your wife, right?” Levi asked, staring after Elodie as she disappeared up the stairs with Johnny Gray.

I didn’t bother answering.

“She just walked past us like we weren’t even there,” Levi continued, sounding almost impressed. “And she was pretty cozy with Gray. Is this some new strategy? Trying to make you jealous?”

I started walking again. “Let’s go.”

Levi laughed as he fell into step beside me. “She’s got some tricks up her sleeve, I’ll give her that.”

I said nothing.

Because that’s all this was... all tricks. Games. Elodie being dramatic.

She’d done this before, just never quite this elaborately. Get upset about something, pull away for a few days, make a show of being “independent,” and then come back once she’d gotten whatever was bothering her out of her system.

This time she’d just added some extra steps. Quit Wilson Group. Got a job somewhere else. Pretended not to see me.

It was almost creative, really.

When we reached the private room, Sienna looked up from where she was helping Liora color on a menu.

“What’s so funny?” she asked, clearly picking up on Levi’s amusement.

Levi grinned. “Nothing. Just ran into someone interesting.”

Sienna’s eyes flicked to me, questioning, but I just sat down and picked up my menu.

Dinner was fine. Business talk with Levi, Sienna making everyone laugh, Liora chattering about her day. Normal.

I didn’t think about Elodie at all.

-----

Later that night, after dropping Sienna off, Liora and I got home.

The second the car stopped, Liora bolted for the door.

“Mommy! Mommy!” she called, her voice echoing through the foyer.

I followed more slowly, already knowing what she’d find.

Sabina emerged from the kitchen. “Luna Elodie hasn’t returned yet, little miss.”

Liora’s face fell. “What? But I wanted to see her...”

“I’m sure she’s just busy.”

“She’s always busy now,” Liora complained, trudging toward the stairs.

Sabina glanced at me, uncertain.

I shook my head. “It’s fine.”

Upstairs, my bedroom looked exactly as it had that morning. Empty.

Elodie’s things were still everywhere, her book on the nightstand, slippers by the bed, her robe on the bathroom door.

Like she’d just stepped out.

She hadn’t been here in days, but she’d be back soon enough. This was just taking longer than her usual cooling-off periods.

-----

The next morning, I came downstairs to find Liora staring sadly at her breakfast.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“This isn’t Mommy’s breakfast,” she said, poking at her eggs.

Sabina looked apologetic. “Luna Elodie isn’t home, miss.”

Liora frowned. “Where did she go? Did she go back to Grandma’s house again?”

“Probably,” Sabina said uncertainly.

Liora turned to me. “Daddy, where’s Mommy?”

I took a sip of my coffee which was still not right, still missing whatever Elodie did to make it taste how I liked and kept my tone casual. “If you want to know, call her yourself.”

Liora thought about it, then shook her head. “I’ll just ask her tonight when she comes home.”

Right.

When she came home.

Because she would. Obviously.

-----

\*\*Elodie’s POV

After forcing down breakfast, toast that tasted like cardboard and coffee that did nothing to wake me up, I headed to the office.

I was barely through the door when Johnny waved me into his office.

“Morning. I wanted to talk to you about the new product development timeline—”

His phone rang.

He glanced at the screen, frowned, and answered. “Hello?”

I started to stand, to give him privacy, but he held up a hand. Then he hit the speaker button.

“Johnny, did your company do something to piss off the Bellini Pack recently?”

My blood went cold.

Johnny looked at me, confused. “What? No. Why?”

“Because someone from the Bellini family just tried to cause some serious problems for Cole Corporation. We managed to block it, but barely. What the hell is going on?”

I felt like the floor had dropped out from under me.

My hands clenched into fists in my lap, my nails digging into my palms hard enough to hurt.

Dante.

Of course it was Dante.

He hadn’t said anything to me after seeing me with Johnny at the restaurant. Hadn’t called, hadn’t texted, hadn’t confronted me about supposedly “bullying” Sienna.

I’d thought maybe he didn’t care. Maybe he’d just let it go.

But no.

He just couldn't be bothered to argue with me directly. Instead, he'd gone straight for Johnny's company. Straight for the one good thing I was trying to build for myself.

Because I'd dared to refuse Sienna a job. Because I'd dared to move on.

Because he wanted to make sure I understood there would be consequences.

"Shit," Johnny muttered, running a hand through his hair. He looked at me. "This is about—"

"Me," I whispered. "It's about me."

He squeezed my hand. "Don't worry. Cole has strong government contracts and connections. The Bellini Pack can rattle our cage, but they can't actually touch us."

I nodded numbly, but inside I was screaming.

This was Dante protecting Sienna. Making it crystal clear that anyone who stood in her way, anyone who denied her anything, would pay for it.

Even me.

Especially me.

Johnny ended the call and immediately looked worried about something else. "Elodie, if they can't go after Cole... will they target the Miller Pack instead?"

My stomach twisted.

My family's Pack wasn't large. Wasn't powerful. If Dante decided to retaliate there instead—

"No," I said, though my voice shook. "He won't go after my family."

"How do you know?"

"Because of Nonna." I took a shaky breath. "She wouldn't allow it. And Dante still respects her enough not to cross that line."

At least, I hoped he did.

God, I hoped he did.

Johnny looked relieved but still concerned. "Okay. Okay, good."

We tried to get back to work, but I couldn't focus. Couldn't think about anything except what Dante had just tried to do.

He'd tried to destroy Johnny's company because of me.

Because I'd left him. Because I'd dared to have my own life.

The hours crawled by. Every time my phone buzzed, I jumped. Every time someone walked past my desk, I tensed.

By the time evening rolled around, I felt like I'd aged ten years.

I was packing up my things when my phone rang.

It was Liora.

My heart clenched as I answered. "Hey, baby."

"Mommy! When are you coming home? I'm starving!"

I closed my eyes. "Didn't Sabina make you dinner?"

"Yeah, but I don't want what she made." Liora's voice turned plaintive. "I want crab cakes. The ones you make. Please, Mommy? You promised you'd make them for me, remember?"

I did remember. Back when she'd been sick, I'd promised.

"Sweetheart, I—"

"Please? I've been waiting and waiting and you never came home last night and you're not here now and I just want to see you."

The guilt hit me like a tidal wave.

She was six years old. She didn't understand why Mommy wasn't coming home anymore. Didn't understand that the house she lived in didn't feel like home to me anymore.

All she knew was that I wasn't there.

"Liora..."

"Please, Mommy. I miss you."

Those three words broke something inside me.

I didn't want to go back to that house. Didn't want to see Dante. Didn't want to be in that space where I'd spent seven years feeling invisible.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 68 - 69 [ 1,325 words ]**

*Chapter 68: Chapter 69*

Elodie's POV

I was rubbing my temples, trying to figure out how to tell Liora I couldn't come, when she spoke again.

"Daddy's on a business trip, so it's just me and Sabina here. I'm so lonely, Mommy. Please come home soon?"

Dante was on a business trip?

I paused, my hand stilling against my forehead.

It shouldn't have mattered. I was going to divorce him anyway. His schedule, his whereabouts, none of it should've concerned me anymore.

But knowing he wouldn't be there... knowing I wouldn't have to see him, smell Sienna's perfume on his clothes, watch him look right through me...

It made the decision easier.

"Okay," I heard myself say. "I'll come back in a little while."

"Really? Yay! Thank you, Mommy!"

The joy in her voice made my chest ache.

-----

That night, I made Liora's favorite, sweet and sour ribs and a soup I knew she loved. She ate like she'd been starving, talking nonstop about school and her friends and some game she wanted to play.

I stayed. One night turned into two.

It was easier without Dante there. The house felt less suffocating. Less like a prison.

Almost like it could've been home, if things had been different.

On Friday morning, my grandmother called.

"Elodie, come for dinner tonight. I haven't seen you in weeks."

Guilt twisted in my stomach. "Of course, Grandma. I'll be there."

“Good. And bring Liora if you can. I miss that child.”

So that evening, I packed a bag for both of us and drove to Miller Pack territory.

The house looked the same as always. Modest, warm, nothing like the Bellini estate’s cold grandeur. My grandmother was waiting on the porch, and the second she saw Liora, her whole face lit up.

“Oh, my sweet girl! You’re back from your trip!”

Liora ran to her, and they hugged like they hadn’t seen each other in years. So it was just the three of us, me, Grandma, and Liora. No other person was home. It was... Peaceful.

We stayed the night, and the next morning I woke up early to make hand pies, the way Grandma had taught me when I was little.

She sat at the kitchen table, watching me work, and I could feel her gaze, nostalgic, a little sad.

“You never used to cook,” she said finally. “Before you got married, you couldn’t even boil water without burning it.”

I smiled, even though it hurt. “Cooking helps me relax. I like it.”

It was partially true. Cooking gave me something to do with my hands. Something to focus on besides the constant ache in my chest.

Grandma reached over and squeezed my hand. “You’ve gained a little weight. That’s good. You were too thin last time I saw you.”

I’d been too thin because I’d been barely eating. Too anxious, too miserable, too trapped to have an appetite.

But I didn’t say that.

We talked for a while, small talk, mostly. Safe topics. Nothing about Dante or the divorce or how my life was falling apart.

Eventually, I excused myself and went upstairs to check on Liora.

She was already awake, brushing her teeth in the bathroom.

I started tidying up the clothes she’d thrown on the floor last night, gathering them to take downstairs to the wash.

That’s when her tablet lit up on the nightstand.

A message notification.

I glanced at it without thinking and froze.

Sienna: Is little Liora awake? I'll be back this afternoon. Let's have dinner together tonight! And tomorrow, how about I take you somewhere fun?

The clothes slipped from my hands.

Sienna?

Messaging my daughter. Making plans with her.

She would be back this afternoon.

Back from where? From wherever Dante's business trip had taken him?

Had they been together?

My stomach twisted violently.

When I came back upstairs, Liora was already sitting on the bed with her tablet, but the second she saw me, she tilted the screen away.

Hiding it.

My chest tightened, but I kept my face neutral. "The pies are ready. Come down for breakfast."

Her whole face lit up. "Really? I haven't had your pies in forever!" She bounced off the bed. "Yay!"

At least that still made her happy. At least I could still do that much.

-----

Downstairs, Grandma was already at the table, smiling as Liora settled into her chair.

"What would you like for dinner tonight, sweetheart?" Grandma asked. "I'll have the cook make whatever you want."

Liora hesitated, and I saw it, that flicker of guilt in her eyes before she turned to Grandma with a practiced smile.

"Actually, Grandma, Daddy's coming home tonight. I should go back and have dinner with him."

The lie was so smooth. So easy.

My hands stilled on my coffee cup.

Grandma looked disappointed but nodded. "Oh, I see. Well, I suppose you do miss your father. It's been a while since you've seen him."

Liora nodded eagerly, playing the part perfectly.

And I just sat there, knowing the truth.

Dante wasn't coming home tonight. Liora wanted to leave so she could see Sienna.

She was lying to her great-grandmother. To me. To everyone.

Because she'd rather spend time with Sienna than stay here.

I should've called her out. Should've said something. But what was the point?

She'd just deny it. Or get defensive. Or worse, she'd admit it, and I'd have to sit there and accept that my daughter was choosing someone else over me.

"It's fine," I said, forcing my voice to stay steady. "I'll stay here and keep Grandma company."

Grandma turned to me, surprised. "You're not going back with her?"

"No. I have some things to take care of here."

It was a weak excuse, and we both knew it. What kind of wife stays at her grandmother's house when her husband comes back from a business trip?

But Grandma had never approved of my marriage to Dante. Had never understood why I'd tied myself to someone who treated me like an inconvenience.

So she just smiled and patted my hand. "Alright, dear. I'm glad you're staying. It's been too quiet here without you."

Across the table, Liora visibly relaxed.

She'd been worried I'd insist on going back with her. Worried I'd ruin her plans with Sienna.

The relief on her face felt like a knife twisting in my gut.

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When it was time for Liora to leave, Grandma packed a huge bag of her favorite foods, cookies, pastries, little treats she'd had the cook make specially.

"Here, take this home, sweetheart," Grandma said, pressing the bag into Liora's hands.

But I gently pushed it back. "Leave it for my uncle's kids, Grandma. They'll appreciate it more."

"But—"

"Really. It's fine."

I didn't want Liora bringing any of this back to the Bellini estate. Didn't want Sienna seeing it and knowing Grandma had made it. Didn't want to give her any more pieces of my life to claim as her own.

Liora looked confused but didn't argue.

I called the estate and asked them to send a driver to pick her up. I didn't offer to take her myself.

Couldn't.

Because if I got in that car, if I drove her back to that house, I'd see Sienna there. Waiting. Smiling. Ready to take my daughter out for their fun evening together.

And I couldn't watch that.

I couldn't stand there and watch my daughter run to someone else.

So I stayed in the kitchen, cleaning up breakfast dishes that didn't need cleaning, while Grandma walked Liora to the door.

I heard the car pull up. Heard Liora's excited goodbye. Heard the door close.

And then silence.

Grandma came back into the kitchen, watching me scrub the same plate for the third time.

"Elodie," she said gently. "What's going on?"

"Nothing." I set the plate down and reached for another. "Everything's fine."

"You didn't even say goodbye to her."

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 69 - 70 [ 1,395 words ]**

*Chapter 69: Chapter 70*

Elodie's POV~

"It's nothing, Grandma. Really. I just didn't want to go back right now and I miss you so much." I tried forcing a smile to my lips but failed woefully and saw as my grandmother kept searching my face and then pursed her lips as though she had found out the lie.

Nodding without saying further, she turned and walked away. And me? I simply released the deep, painful sigh I was holding back in.

Liora must have had the time of her life with Sienna over the weekend.

I knew because she didn't call. Didn't text. Nothing.

Not even a goodnight message.

By Monday, I'd stopped checking my phone every five minutes and just went to work like everything was normal.

It wasn't. But I was getting good at pretending.

The day passed in a blur of meetings and code reviews, and by the time evening rolled around, I was exhausted, not physically, just... emotionally drained.

Cara called just as I was packing up. "Dinner? My treat. You look like you need it."

She wasn't wrong.

We went to a nice place downtown, one of those restaurants with mood lighting and cloth napkins. Cara kept the conversation light, work gossip, some drama with her neighbor, anything to keep me distracted.

I appreciated it more than she knew.

Halfway through dinner, I excused myself to use the restroom.

The hallway was quiet, dimly lit. I was almost to the bathroom door when I saw him.

Harrison.

He was walking toward me from the opposite direction, and for a split second, our eyes met.

I kept walking. Didn't slow down. Didn't acknowledge him.

Just walked right past like he was a stranger.

But I felt him stop. Felt his eyes on my back.

I pushed through the bathroom door and let it swing shut behind me, my heart pounding for no reason I wanted to examine.

When I came out a few minutes later, I half-expected him to be gone.

He wasn't.

Harrison was standing exactly where we'd passed each other, like he'd been waiting.

When he saw me, he turned slightly. "You're eating here?"

His tone was odd. Not hostile, exactly. Just... curious. Like he genuinely wanted to know.

"Yes," I said flatly. "Do you think I'm stalking you, Mr. Crane?"

He blinked, caught off guard. "That's not what I meant."

I didn't care what he meant. Didn't want to stand here making small talk with one of Dante's friends—one of the people who'd made it clear I was never good enough.

"Excuse me," I said, moving to step around him.

This time, he didn't try to stop me.

I walked back to the table where Cara was waiting, my hands shaking slightly as I picked up my water glass.

"You okay?" she asked, frowning.

"Fine. Just ran into someone I know."

"Someone you don't like, from the look on your face."

"Something like that."

We finished dinner quickly after that, and Cara mentioned she wanted to stop by a jewelry store to pick up a birthday gift for her mother.

"Come with me?" she asked. "I need a second opinion."

I nodded, grateful for the distraction.

The jewelry store was upscale, all glass cases and soft lighting. Cara immediately gravitated toward a display of jade necklaces, her eyes lighting up.

"These are gorgeous," she breathed.

The store manager came over with a smile. "Those are part of our premium collection. Would you like to try one on?"

Cara was about to answer when the door chimed behind us.

"Hello, I'm here to pick up an order," a male voice said.

I froze.

That voice.

“Ah, Mr. Brown!” The manager’s smile widened. “Of course, let me get that for you right away.”

I turned slowly, already knowing what I’d see.

Logan Brown. Sienna’s father. The man who’d destroyed my mother. The man whose betrayal had ripped my family apart.

My father.

He was walking toward the counter, his attention on the manager until his eyes landed on me.

He stopped mid-step.

“Ely?” His voice was uncertain, like he couldn’t quite believe it. Then, more confident: “Ely, is that you?”

I stared at him, my throat tight.

He looked older. Grayer. But still polished, still refined, still the same man who’d walked out on us like we meant nothing.

“Are you here to order jewelry?” he asked, taking a step closer.

I didn’t answer. Couldn’t.

“Mag, please—”

I turned my face away sharply, focusing on Cara instead. “Are you sure about this one? Or do you want to look at the others?”

Cara was staring between us, clearly confused. She leaned closer and whispered, “Who is that?”

I didn’t respond.

Logan’s expression shifted, hurt, maybe. Or guilt. I didn’t care which.

But he didn’t leave.

Logan just stood there, staring at me with those eyes that used to read me bedtime stories, and asked softly, “Mag, how have you been lately?”

My hands clenched into fists at my sides.

I bit down on my lip hard enough to taste blood, then finally turned to face him fully. “What do you want to say?”

“I...” His voice got even softer, like that would somehow make this easier. “Ely, do you have to speak to your father like this?”

‘ Your father.’

Like he had any right to that title.

“And how exactly should I speak to you?” My voice came out cold. Dead.

“Your father knows he’s made mistakes in the past, but Elodie you have to understand, I’ve always had you in my heart. Always.”

I laughed. Actually laughed. It sounded harsh and broken even to my own ears.

“Oh, you’ve always had me in your heart? Is that why you let Sienna get close to my husband? Why you stood by while she wormed her way into his life? While she took everything from me? Tell me, Father, how exactly does that show you’ve always had me in your heart?”

“Elodie...” He frowned, and I saw frustration flash across his face. “I understand your feelings, but Sienna and Dante, they genuinely love each other. Love can’t be forced, so why are you—”

“Right. Love can’t be forced.” I cut him off, my voice shaking now. “So your affair back then was perfectly justified, wasn’t it? And now Sienna’s just following in her mother’s footsteps, proudly playing the mistress. Like mother, like daughter.”

Logan’s face darkened. “Elodie! When did you become so bitter? So extreme?”

“Extreme?” I stepped closer, and he actually backed up. “What would you prefer? Should I just divorce Dante immediately and make it easier for Sienna? Would that be less extreme for you?”

“That’s not what I—”

“Logan, what’s going on?”

A woman’s voice interrupted us.

I turned to see Tracy, Logan’s sister-in-law, walking into the store with a younger girl. Sophia, Sienna’s cousin.

Tracy’s eyes landed on me, and her smile was warm but pitying. “Oh my goodness, isn’t this Elodie? It’s been so long! You look even more beautiful than before.”

“Mom...” Sophia whined, clearly unhappy about the compliment directed at me.

I could see the jealousy flickering in Sophia’s eyes as she looked me over. But then her expression shifted, like she’d remembered something that made her feel superior again.

Probably thinking about how Dante preferred her sister over me.

Logan looked at Tracy, seeming caught off guard. “Sister-in-law, what are you doing here?”

“We hadn’t seen you in ages, so we came to visit,” Tracy said pleasantly.

Then Sophia’s eyes landed on the jewelry box the manager had set on the counter. Her face lit up with obvious delight.

“Oh! Is this the anniversary gift you had custom-made for Auntie?” she asked loudly, making absolutely sure I could hear every single word. “It’s absolutely stunning!”

Logan smiled, looking proud. “Yes, it is.”

“You’re so thoughtful,” Sophia gushed, her voice dripping with fake sweetness. “Every single year you prepare such expensive, beautiful gifts for Auntie. You always give her the most wonderful surprises. You’re so good to her.”

Each word was a deliberate knife aimed straight at my heart.

Anniversary gift. For Sienna’s mother. For the woman he’d left us for.

While my mother had died heartbroken and alone, Logan had been buying expensive anniversary presents for his mistress-turned-wife.

My throat felt like it was closing up.

Logan chuckled, clearly pleased with himself.

## **Alpha's Regret: Losing His True Mate - Chapter 70 - 71[ 1,128 words ]**

*Chapter 70: Chapter 71*

Elodie’s POV

Cara had been quiet this whole time, but I could feel her piecing it together, who these people were, what they’d done to me.

“Ah, so they’re just a bunch of scumbags,” she muttered under her breath, loud enough for them to hear.

Then she grabbed my arm. “Come on. We’re leaving.”

“Elodie, wait.”

Logan's voice stopped us at the door.

I closed my eyes for a second, gathering whatever strength I had left, then turned back.

He walked closer, his expression almost pleading. "Your aunt really does care about you, you know. She thinks about you often. And you and Sienna... you're sisters. Family. This whole situation with Cole... your father just hopes something like this never happens again."

I laughed.

It came out sharp and bitter, and I saw him flinch.

"Are you trying to disgust me on purpose?" I asked. "Is that what this is?"

"You—"

"Uncle, if she doesn't want to be civil, then she doesn't have to," Sophia cut in, her voice dripping with fake sweetness. "And honestly, even if she *did* want to be sisters with Sienna, my sister wouldn't want it. What's *her* status compared to my sister's?"

She looked me up and down like I was dirt on her shoe.

"You stopped my sister from getting into Cole," Sophia continued, clearly enjoying herself now. "But you don't realize, the more you target her, the more her husband falls in love with her."

Each word was a knife twisting deeper.

"In fact," Sophia said, her smile widening, "when Sienna's husband found out you and your boss at Cole were bullying her, he immediately went after your company. And even though nothing came of it in the end, as compensation for what my sister went through, he gave our family a multi-billion dollar project."

My blood ran cold.

"That project?" Sophia's eyes gleamed with malice. "It's the same one your brother-in-law has been desperately trying to get for months. Hahaha..."

I bit down on my lip so hard I tasted blood.

My fist clenched at my side.

Dante had given them a project. A massive project. One that the Bellini Pack had been negotiating for.

He'd handed it over to the Browns. To Sienna's family.

To compensate her.

While I got nothing. While I was nothing.

Cara looked ready to explode. “Has Sienna even married Dante yet? You’re calling him her husband like they’re already together? How absolutely shameless!”

“Excuse me—”

“Enough, Sophia.” Logan pulled his niece back, though he didn’t look particularly upset with her. He just sighed and turned to me. “Elodie, Sienna is a genius in the AI field. She has important work to do. You need to control yourself and stop targeting her.”

Something inside me snapped.

“Are you done?” My voice came out flat. Dead. “If you’re finished, you can leave.”

Tracy, who’d been standing there silently this whole time, finally spoke up. “Elodie, how can you speak to your father like this?”

“Exactly!” Sophia chimed in. “You have no manners at all!”

I looked at them, all three of them and felt nothing but contempt.

“I have no manners?” I repeated slowly. “At least I don’t go around being a mistress.”

Sophia’s face went bright red. “You—!”

Logan’s expression hardened. “That’s enough.”

“Yes,” I agreed coldly. “It is. You should go.”

He stared at me for a long moment, disappointment written all over his face. Like I was the one who’d let him down.

“Let’s go,” he said finally, turning away and then grabbed the custom bag of jewelry he had purchased and walked away.

They walked out, Sophia throwing one last venomous look over her shoulder.

The second they were gone, my legs gave out.

I grabbed onto the display case to steady myself, my whole body shaking.

After they finally and fully left, Cara turned to me, her eyes full of worry. “Elodie...”

I shook my head quickly, cutting her off. “I’m fine.” I lied. My lips trembling but I bit it hard, so it doesn’t wobble foolishly just like it does and would draw more of Cara’s pity.

I wasn't fine. But saying it out loud wouldn't change anything.

Logan Brown, stopped being my father the day he walked out on my mother and me. Of course. The day he chose his mistress over his family. In my heart, he'd been dead for years. Gone, perished and dead.

What hurt wasn't him. Not really. I didn't care about him anymore to hurt anymore about his existence and betrayal.

What hurt was knowing that because of me, Johnny's company had been targeted. That Dante had tried to destroy Cole Corporation just to punish me for standing up to Sienna.

What hurt was the realization that over and over again, that Dante would do anything for her. Attack my friends. Hand over billion-dollar projects to her family. Protect her at every turn.

While I got nothing but his anger and indifference. He would do anything for his mistress, and forsake the woman he had pledged under the moon as his Mate and Luna, under the oaths of the sacred goddess to love, cherish and protect, he had forgotten me. A cruel liar.

Every time I thought about it, it felt like someone was twisting a knife in my chest. Slowly. Deliberately.

The pain was unbearable.

"Elodie..." Cara pulled me into a hug, and I felt her sympathy wash over me.

I forced myself to smile. "Really. I'm okay."

I had to be okay.

I'd already made the decision to move on. To let go. To build a life that didn't revolve around Dante and his cruelty.

I just needed time.

That's all.

Time, and I could do this.

I could survive this. Yes, I could.

"Want to get a drink?" Cara asked gently. "I think you could use one."

"No, thanks." I stepped back, wiping at my face. "I'd rather just go home. Work on some data analysis. That helps me relax more than alcohol would."

At home, buried in code and logic, I could forget. I could calm down. I could breathe.

Cara studied my face for a moment, then nodded. "Okay. But if you change your mind, call me. Any time. I mean it."

"I will. Thank you." I tried to force that stupid, everything-was-alright type of smile but failed. Cara didn't comment on that but gently gave me a sadder one and gently squeezed my shoulders in reassurance that she got me and I'd be okay.

We walked to the parking lot together, and I was digging through my purse for my keys when my phone rang.

I glanced at the screen.

It was Liora.

My heart squeezed painfully that my steps froze on their tracks.