

Chapter 151 Lola

I look to Manuel who is just gazing at me, which I can't help but smile at. I seem to have been blessed with the sweetest guy for a mate I truly do. I should probably look to get up and look after him, I don't want to fail him as a mate on the first day together, or else I'd be heading straight back to my pack before I'd even moved away.

I want to make sure I am a good mate, I need to make sure I am doing all the things I need to do as a mate, running the home, making sure Manuel has everything he needs at home.... We had all this drummed into us growing up, I need to make sure I do not fail. I do not want to lose him. He is just the sweetest guy so I am not sure he would even tell me if I wasn't doing something right either, that's the difficult thing.

I should maybe address that with him, make him give me a rota of jobs he needs me to do, like my Mami has, that way I make sure everything is done, plus I need to make sure I do everything he wants in the bedroom too, or else I am failing as a mate in that way too. He seemed satisfied last night and this morning..... but what if I am wrong? What if I am a disappointment? I can't be a failure as a mate, though I can't imagine Manuel would beat me like they do back at Crimson Night Pack if you don't do the right thing.... Would he? No he really doesn't seem that sort of guy. He is too kind, too sweet.

"Hey, beautiful, what's wrong?" I hear his voice interrupting my thoughts.

Do I tell him? do I explain my worries? Would he understand?

I look to him, a look of concern is on his face. "Will you tell me if I disappoint you?" I ask quietly.

Now he looks puzzled. Ok, maybe I shouldn't have said anything.

"Carino, I am not sure you could disappoint me" he smiles, gently stroking my face with his fingers.

"I am being serious Guapo, I don't want to fail you as a mate. So please, if I do anything wrong please you need to let me know, so I can fix it ok?" I tell him.

Again, he just looks at me puzzled. "Lola, what is wrong?"

I sit up, at the edge of the bed. "Nothing. I just want you to be able to tell me when I am messing up ok? Now what jobs do you need me to do today?" I ask him.

"Jobs?" he sounds confused.

"Yeah, that's what I am here for right? To look after your house" I say, looking back to him with a smile.

"Not particularly. This is our house no? You are my mate, so it became your house too. And that then means jobs are done between us, not just by one of us" he says a frown on his face.

Ok I seem to have irritated him already.

"It is the woman's job to look after the house, make sure jobs are done, look after her man, please her mate" I tell him, almost reciting the things we are taught at Crimson Night Pack.

Manuel suddenly stands up off the bed, running his hands through his hair, looking frustrated.

“Carino, I am sorry, but I am not having that here. That is not how we are in our pack. Just because you have found your mate does not mean you are suddenly a lesser being, bowing down to me, doing what I expect of you. Running around after me. If that is the sort of relationship you are wanting then this is not likely to work beautiful. I want to be an equal to you. Treat you well, worship you, love you, care for you. I do not need you running around after me, I am capable of looking after myself believe it or not.” He says quietly. This makes no sense, this is not what we were told growing up. This is not what we were made to expect. I have been almost trained up in such a way that when I met my mate I would be his personal slave almost. His personal cook, cleaner, maid. At his beck and call. That is how it is in our pack. Yet here is my mate telling me that is not what he wants. I am confused.

“But that is not what we were told growing up” I tell him. “Lola, your pack is not normal, you have to know that. surely?” he looks to me, expectation on his face.

“But what am I going to do?” I ask “I am meant to take care of my mate, please him, satisfy him, make him happy, make sure everything is right for him” A deep frown is etched on Manuel’s face as he begins to speak “Lola that is not the basis for a happy relationship, surely you have to know that?” I stop to consider what he has just said. Most of the relationships in pack are like that, there are a few fated relationships, the rest are arranged, and chosen mates, but all are set up much like I had described to Manuel. And no, I don’t think there are many that are happy.

“So you don’t think we can be happy?” I ask him.

“I didn’t say that did I?” he smiles at me.

Did he not? I am confused. I shrug at him.

“You see Dan and Indie right? And Lilah and Knox?” he asks. “Do you think they seem happy?”

I think about them last night, they looked comfortable around one another, laughing and joking with each other, and with each others friends too. I nod.

“That is because they are happy, Carino. They are comfortable with each other. They are themselves with each other, they accept each other for being who they are. They do not have to try to please one another. They love each other’s weird little quirks. I always saw them and wanted what they have. I think we can have that Mi Amor, but you need to let go of the crap that your pack taught you and just be you.” He tells me.

I like the sound of that but is it that easy? When you have your brain programmed such a way for so long..... I guess I can only try..... I know he will be worth it.....

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I stand looking at Lola, worried by what she has just said to me. It sounds like their pack has truly

messed with her head. I thought my issues were over when she had let me mark her, but it seems I am going to have to help her reprogramme her way of thinking.

I do not want her thinking she has to answer to me, I do not like that idea at all. My Mami never answered to my Dad, haha I'd like to have seen him make her try! They were equals, and that is how a couple should be isn't it? I hope the way I explained the relationship between Dan and Indie and Lilah and Knox will have helped Lola see we can be different to what she was expecting. We can be happy, we can be equal and work well. She should never feel she has to run around after me, bow down to me and try to please me. The thought of that actually hurts me.

"What do you say, Carino? You think we can try?" I ask.

"I don't know if I am honest, Guapo, I need you to realise we were brought up as girls in pack to be trained to think we have to do certain things for our mates so my mind will automatically think I have to. But what you just described sounds perfect, and I am willing to try anything for you, Guapo, so we can be happy. And being myself shouldn't be a bad thing should it?" she looks to me nervously.

She looks so anxious bless her, I feel like my girl has been held back in her pack, I want to make sure here she is able to flourish. I want her to blossom, and to thrive and I will find ways for her to do that. But most importantly I want her to be happy.

"Look Lola, before you knew all about that crap growing up, what did you want to do? What would your dream job have been?" I ask her.

She looks confused. "I don't think a princess counts does it?" she smiles. "Or a mermaid?"

I can't help but smile, see my girl has a quirky sense of humour hiding there. I want her to feel comfortable to be herself and let that out with me.

"Hmmm maybe not able to do training for either of those things, and I am pretty certain I am not a secret prince, sorry to disappoint you" I grin at her.

"But I will re-word it then, if you could do any job what would you want to do? Because looking after me is not your job Lola" I tell her.

I see her smile at my joke and then I see her face go serious as she is thinking. "I worked at the pre-school in pack. I actually have qualifications for that I gained through the job." She tells me.

"That isn't what I said, Carino, I said if you could have any job, what would you do? Do you like working with the little ones? Because if you do I can speak to Knox and get him to arrange for you to work at the school or nursery here. We have the pack business I am shareholder in, which is based in the town, if you want to be involved in that. Or if you are into arts and crafts stuff, then I can ask Lilah, Indie, Livvy and Willow which are Knox's sisters to speak with you, as they have an art store in town which you could be involved in. or if there is something else you want to do let me know beautiful and I will find a way to sort it for you. You can do whatever you want, well within reason. The mermaid and the princess, is not so easy to arrange" I grin.

She looks confused now, maybe I gave her too much information in one go.

“Look beautiful, think about it, there is no rush to start working, you need to get used to being here first anyway. And I want to make the most of having my new mate too, so I will be taking some time off work and warrior training, so have a think about it all and when you decide we can get things sorted for you. But like I said, you do not need to be running the house for me, or looking after me, I am a big boy you know” I wink at her “I have been looking after myself for quite a while you know, and amazingly I am still alive. So we can look after the house between us. But it is our house now, not just mine so please don’t think of it as mine anymore ok?” I tell her, as that really bothered me. I had built the home in preparation for finding my mate, and I now finally had her here with me.

She smiles at me, “Ok Guapo, I will have a think. And yes you are a big boy” she winks back at me.

I feel myself blushing, see I need to get used to her making inappropriate comments. She is funny.....

“Are we going to arrange to go to your pack and get your Alpha told you have left?” I ask.

I see the colour visibly drain from her face. That tells me this is something she doesn’t want to do.

“The sooner we do this Carino, the sooner we can move on with our life, our future together” I tell her, reaching for her hand and squeezing it.

She smiles nervously “You know he is not going to make this easy Guapo”

“Jake is coming with us, and some warriors too. Your Mami and Papi said they were ok with all this too, it will be ok I promise. I am not going to give my mate up Lola. I have waited too long for you, and now you are here I cannot tell you how happy I am, you are a tiny vision of perfection” I tease.

She smirks at me “No, you are just a giant Guapo” she teases right back.

I laugh “Hmm to you I maybe am” I wink. “I was thinking Carino, do you want to meet my Mami and Papi before we head to your pack?” I suggest, considering I had already mindlinked them earlier.

She looks at me anxiously. “Ok?” I can sense her nerves through our mate bond, and hear it in her voice.

“They will love you beautiful, especially that you are Latina like we are.” I offer her my hand and lead her downstairs, knowing they could be here anytime.

I walk into the kitchen to make coffee for us, she follows and starts to take over. She isn’t going to let this go, seeing it as her job to take care of me.

“I will sort the drinks Chica” I smile. “Coffee?”

She nods. “What if your Mum and Dad don’t like me Manuel?”

“Why would they not? It will be fine” I do my best to reassure her, knowing my parents are the most laid back people you can meet and she has nothing to worry about in meeting them, but I can see from the look on her face bless her she is terrified. Though, I know tomorrow or whenever we travel down to her pack I am likely going to feel exactly the same when I meet her parents. It is a massive step.

There is a knock at the door.

“Oh no” I hear Lola mutter under her breath, as I walk to the door.

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I watch Manuel walk to the door, wanting nothing more than to escape out of the back door of the house before he lets his parents in through the front door. I can't believe he landed this on me!

Though considering Esme's actions, that probably wouldn't reflect well right now.....dammit....

who ever came up with meeting the parents? Surely I could just avoid them the whole time? Go

out each time they come over or stay home when he visits?..... anything to avoid the horrendous

nerves inside of me right now..... I think I feel sick.....

I haven't had chance to tidy his house, do the good mate thing and sort the house or anything.....

they will think I am a terrible mate.....

“Hola Manuel, you going to let us in son?” I hear a deep voice say. I assume his Dad. I really want to hide, though I am not going to get way with that now....

“Lola, come say hi, Carino” I hear Manuel's voice now from the hallway.

I walk through from the kitchen to meet him. He is stood with who I assume are his parents and a young woman, perhaps a sister?

His Dad is an older looking version of Manuel, just without the tattoos and has slightly greying hair. His Mum, is not as tall, slightly paler in skin tone, and has chocolatey brown wavy hair. She

too has the beautiful deep brown eyes that Manuel has. The woman I am assuming is his sister, is almost a carbon copy of their mother, which just backs up my theory that she has to be Manuel's sister.

Manuel hooks his arm around my shoulder. “Lola, this is my Mum and Dad, Ada and Javier

Gomez. And also my annoying little sister Isla.

Everyone, this is Lola” I can see a massive smile on Manuel's face. Something tells me he is happy to be introducing me to his family bless him.

Maybe I should try to be happy about this too..... bit difficult when I feel so sick though.....

“Hey Lola, bad luck being mated with my brother” Isla grins at me with a wink. I instantly find myself smiling, as it is something I can imagine my brother or my cousins saying about me.

“Manny says things are a bit complicated with your pack though, Carino, I may come down with you all if that is ok?” His Dad says.

Ok, it would appear Manuel has spoken to his family about things more than I know about. How

much he has told them I am unsure. I look to Manuel.

“I explained the basic stuff, that your Alpha may have issues with the fact we marked one another without his permission. Plus, the fact that Alpha Knox may be reporting the pack to the werewolf council is an issue in itself” Manuel explains.

“Are we going to stand in the hallway all day, or shall we go and sit down?” Manuel's Mum asks.

She makes a valid point, as we seem to have got stuck in the hallway where I went to greet them.

I smile at her to agree. We all head into the lounge. I sit myself nervously on the edge of the recliner chair, while Manuel goes to make coffees and teas for everyone.

I feel his family watching me curiously. No doubt, wondering about the new mate of their son and brother. Probably questioning if I am even good enough for him.

“I hope he has been making you feel welcome sweetheart” Ada says to me with a smile.

“Things have been a bit odd to be honest. With the situation with my pack how it is, and my cousin disappearing on Gabe, it has made the whole situation for me and Manuel different to how it should be, I think” I explain honestly.

“Hmmm we heard about Gabriel. He is tough. I am sure he will be fine. Do not let that affect you and Manny. Perhaps your cousin will change her mind if Alpha Knox sorts your Alpha out?”

Javier says.

Maybe she will, we can always hope. Though I don't even know if she will talk to any of us right now.

“Perhaps. I was surprised she did not just mark him anyway. She usually does what she wants.

She went to university when the women are not allowed to continue their education in our pack.

But Alpha is in control of her education at the university, so I think she may be scared of losing that” I try to explain so they don't think badly of Esme, as I know she will be scared to lose her hard work.

“Such a strange set up there. And so unfair. You have missed out on so much, Sweetheart. Make sure you do what it is you want to do here. Manuel will support you one hundred percent, I can guarantee it.” Ada reaches for my hand and squeezes it, reassuringly.

“I think I know of the pack, back from when I was a warrior. The Alphas there are known to be screwed up. You are definitely better to be out of there. Perhaps ask Alpha Knox about having your family moved here, Carino?” Javier smiles at me kindly.

I hadn't realised he had been a warrior too, though I shouldn't be surprised, it is not unusual for sons to follow their fathers' footsteps in their role within pack, so for Manuel to be a warrior, it was almost predictable that his father was a warrior too. I imagine his grandfathers before him also.

Manuel walks into the room carrying a tray of drinks, placing it on the coffee table, then he comes to the chair I am sitting on and lifts me up so I am sat on his knee, despite there being space on the sofa with his sister and Mum. I have to say, his touch makes me feel secure, so I am not going to complain about his move.

“I was just saying, Manny, I may come to Crimson Night with you when you travel there?

Additional support if you like. I want to see how this pack works. I don't want them causing any issues for you two. At the end of the day, you are fated mates. They should not be messing with that” Javier says

“Yeah, I heard when you mentioned it before. I am sure if you let Jake know he will be fine with that. He is coming too to represent pack so Knox can stay here. But they are also sending some warriors just in case. I think they are pre-empting trouble” Manuel explains.

“Do you think there will be trouble Lola?” Isla looks to me, puzzled.

“Our Alpha is a nutjob, so it isn’t out of the realms of possibility. He doesn’t like when his pack members do something without his permission either, so he won’t be best impressed with me. I am likely to get a beating for that” I say quietly.

I see their heads all swivel to me.

“A beating?!” Javier frowns “Please tell me he does not hurt you Carino”

I avoid eye contact with him and reach for my coffee. But I feel all of their eyes burning into me.

They don’t need to know half of the crap that goes on in that pack.

“Lola?” Ada says quietly. “You can talk to us, you know? We are family now, sweetheart.”

Mi Amor, please, speak with us. This is important.....Manuel suddenly mind linked me.

“There is a lot goes on in the pack you do not want to know about, and that I would really rather not talk about if that is ok? I want to forget about it all. Just know that I am scared of my Alpha, and most of the men in the pack other than my own family. As are most of the women in the pack, that is how the pack is run.” I explain.

I can sense Manuel’s emotions through the mate bond, and it is somewhere between upset and anger, distress and hurt. He is worried about what I went through. So no doubt this is going to be something he will want to know the details of. Great..... something to look forward to.....

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Hearing my new mate pretty much admit to the fact she has been mistreated in her previous pack has sent my emotions into overdrive, not to mention sending my wolf Rey crazy too. He is wanting to go to their pack now and rip them all apart for hurting his mate. I guess I am going to have to get used to this protective streak coming out more often now. It was already there for family and close friends, but it seemed even stronger for Lola.

I seriously feel like I want to go and kill these bullies from her old pack, I am just glad that she allowed me to mark her and that she will be with me here from now on so I can ensure she is safe.

Maybe we need to consider having her family move here too, I did faintly hear my Dad mention it to her when I was making the drinks, and that makes a lot of sense.

The more things she mentions about her pack, the more I think it is an unsafe place to be, so perhaps it would be better for her family to get away from there.

Though if Knox does report them to the Werewolf council, which I am hoping more and more that

he does now, hearing that they have potentially hurt my mate, then they could face being shut down, and if that happens, then all families will be relocated to other surrounding packs. Maybe then Lola could request for her family and maybe Esme's too, to move here. That way it could work for her and Gabe could it not?

Though I know a werewolf council investigation could take a while, and we don't exactly have a while, not with the way Gabe had been looking. Plus, by then they would have likely rejected one another. I am surprised that hadn't happened already. An official rejection would hurt, but it would cut the ties between them, and it would stop the pining between the wolves too eventually, so it would seem the logical step for Esme if she is certain she does not want to be with Gabe. If she is certain, she wants to stand by her pack for the reason of her university degree.

But part of me wonders if she is unsure and that is why she has not officially rejected him. I would rather she not officially reject him, as they made a great couple when they were together.

That is what is the irritating thing. It is whatever messed up shit is going down in their pack that is holding Esme back, that is stopping Esme from accepting the mate the moon goddess fated her with. Because everything she told Lola, she wants Gabe, she thinks he is great.

"Manuel, you ok, son?" My Dad smiles kindly at me, he must know how hard it will be hearing what we just have, having to hear your mate has been hurt by the people that are meant to keep her safe.

"Hmmm, just wanting to go and kill the dicks at Crimson Night" I admit.

"I would gladly join you, son. How they treat women there is disgusting. But we have the chance to get Lola away. You can keep her safe so, and hopefully with Alpha Knox's help, we can shut the pack down. Make sure the present Alpha and past Alphas get punished for their way of running the pack." My Dad reaches for my hand and squeezes it. I can see this is bothering him.

"I am ok, really, you boys don't need to be angry for me. I did as I was told so I didn't get in much trouble" Lola says with a small smile, obviously trying to relieve the tension.

"Sweetheart, you shouldn't have had to live life like that though. You will be happier here. We are a little crazy, but we will look out for you Lola" my Mum says.

I see my Dad watching Lola, he is chewing his lip anxiously, so something is bothering him. I know this sign with my Dad when something is on his mind.

Dad, what is it? I link.

He looks to me, a small nod. Just worried for her son. She shouldn't have had to go through that, she seems sweet, yet you shouldn't have a mate who is struggling either. He links me.

I frown at the things my Dad has said. Is he implying that because Lola has had a difficult past, that I should not want to be with her?

Are you saying, because of her past, I shouldn't want her? That seems harsh Dad. She is amazing.

And she is my mate. The one I am meant to be with. Surely I am fated to her for a reason. I can

help her. I respond.

I see my Dad look down. I didn't mean it like that Manny, sorry. I just meant you both should have it easier when you meet and are forming the bond. Sorry son. Things shouldn't be so complicated. I know you will be wonderful for her.

"Are you going to work at the property business Lola?" Mum asks.

Lola looks to me, confusion on her face. She maybe doesn't know the business I spoke of is a property one.

"I have told Lola to have a think what job she wants to do. At their pack the women don't have jobs, once they meet their mate, or mates, they run the house and pop out kids, then bring up the kids. Basically, be second rate to the men. So I said to have a think about what job she might like and we will look to sort out something. So potentially being involved in the property business, though she did work at the pre-school at her old pack which she enjoyed, or there is the art store too, which I am sure the girls would happily have her involved with" I explain.

I see my parents nodding their head in agreement.

"Sounds perfect. Manny will support you in whatever you decide you want to do Carino. You can be happy here. I know it" My Dad says to her with a smile.

Hey Manny, are we going to get things planned for going to Crimson Night dude? I get a link from Jake unexpectedly.

Yeah, that's fine, do you want me to come to you, or are you coming here? Oh, by the way, my Dad wants to come with us as additional support. Sorry. I link him straight back.

No worries, no surprise really. Gabe's Dad already spoken to me, so I figured yours would not be far behind. They may have retired but they are still warriors at heart and you know they will be wanting to protect their boys. We ok to meet at my office in the pack house? Got team of warriors heading there in half hour. Jake responds.

Wow, I was not expecting Gabe's Dad to be wanting to go. I am guessing they knew about the situation already. I wonder who had told them? I really can't imagine Gabe will have told them what had happened. So I wonder if Knox had gone to them? I will find out shortly, I guess, when I speak to Jake.

So what is going to happen when we get there that is going to be the big question? Is Knox going to have reported their Alpha by then? I need to know all this, I think, so I can at least prepare myself.

Yeah, I will see you in half an hour dude. I will bring Lola and my Dad too, if you like. I reply.

"Beta Jake just mindlinked me, asking for a meeting to get plans in place to go to Crimson Night to sort things out. Apparently, Uncle Mateo has already spoken to Alpha Knox asking to travel down with us. So I assume he is aware of the situation. We have to go to Betas office in half an hour" I explain.

My Dad nods "Doesn't surprise me that Matty wants to be involved, he will want to protect Gabe.

Try to help him so that he can fix things with his mate if it's possible. And if it's not, then kick the shit out of the dick that has caused the problems."

I see Lola look a little surprised by my Dad's words. Yeah, she would need to get used to his bluntness, him and Uncle Mateo were a little blunt like that, but that is likely down to being warriors. We all had a tendency of being a bit brash and blunt at times. Especially when speaking our minds. And when it comes to their families, both my Dad and my Uncle would cross hell and high water to help them and protect them. Lola would see that, and she would soon realise that she would be considered part of that now too. I can see that in how my Dad has responded to hearing about the things she has gone through in the pack.

I squeeze Lola round the waist "It will be ok, Mi Amor, just my Uncle and Dad are a bit blunt with their words when it comes to protecting their family" I smile.

"Yeah I gathered, mine are the same" she said.

"Warriors for you, right?" she grinned.

"Ah, so your family are warriors too, Carino?" My Dad was instantly interested.

"Yeah, my Papi was, and my Uncle. Esme's Papi. Plus, my brother, Luis, he is one of the head Warriors now" Lola smiles

I see my Dad looking impressed. "Definitely suggest moving them here, then Carino" he winks at her.

I can't help but laugh at my Dad, trying to charm my mate.

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We head to the packhouse. I love the buildings here. They are like ski chalets, with the pack being up in the forest and up toward the mountains, a lot of the buildings seem to have been built with a ski chalet-type style and they look gorgeous! The pack house looks like a large ski chalet type lodge hotel building at first glance. I can't believe how lucky I am to call this my new pack!

Our pack is run down and barely looked after. You can see how much this pack is cared for and looked after, and like I said, the buildings are just gorgeous. Plus, living up here means I would actually get to experience snow too! Being down near the southern border meant we didn't get snow, but up here I would imagine they get plenty of snow in the winter, and I bet the pack looks stunning glistening with snow and ice.....

"You ok beautiful? You look like you are off in a dream world" Manuel asks as we are walking.

"Just wondering what the pack must be like when it snows" I explain.

I see him look surprised, but then he smiles "It looks beautiful. Built for snow our pack when you look at the buildings, don't you think?"

See, I hadn't imagined it, they were ski chalet-type buildings. "I haven't even seen snow, so I can't wait" I tell him.

I see a big smile come onto his face. "Well, we will definitely make sure it is special for you then, Mi Amor. Use Knox and Lilah's hot tub in the snow, that is a weird sensation, being warm but in the snow, build snowmen, go skiing, snowball fights, hot chocolate on the balcony, lots of things

we can do”

He is definitely the sweetest.....

“Sounds perfect, Guapo. I seriously cant wait, just need to get this visit out of the way, and hope my Alpha doesn’t cause any problems.” I tell him.

“He isn’t your Alpha technically anymore. When we mated and marked each other, you became part of this pack. Knox has made it official too, so technically Knox is your Alpha” Manuel points out.

And the thing is, he is right. If you go off the actual technicalities followed by the majority of werewolf packs, that is how things would be considered here and I would be considered as part of the Midnight Forest Pack now, not the Crimson Night Pack. And besides, I know which pack I would rather be a part of!

“Is your Dad meeting us there?” I ask him.

“I assume so, he said he needed to go home before coming, so don’t know if he was going to meet my Uncle Mateo before the meeting” he says.

“That is Gabe’s Dad right? Is it your Dad’s brother?” I ask.

He shakes his head. “No, our Mama’s are sisters, mine and Gabe’s. That is how we are cousins.

Our Dads were both warriors here, so they were friends anyway. They were like family apparently before being family.” Manuel explains to me.

“Do you think Gabe will be ok?” I ask him.

I see him pause, then he sighs “In all truthfulness Lola, I don’t know, I haven’t seen him the way I saw him earlier, and that worries me. I know he was desperate to meet his mate, so having her reject him must be hurting him so badly. He seemed almost empty, that is the only way I can describe it. I hope they can fix things, because they seemed so good together when we were all out, didn’t they?” he looks to me.

I know what he means, because I saw the exact same thing in Esme. She looked so happy, complete almost when she was with him. It was a completely different version of her, and it suited her. For her to lose that possibility seems wrong.

“No, I agree with you, Guapo, they seemed perfect together. Like they completed each other.” I tell him.

I see him nod silently, like he is considering what I have said. The thing is, I also know Esme, and I know she will not put her family at risk, and she will think choosing to be with Gabe, is going against the Alpha, and going against the Alpha puts her family at risk, and she would never do that. Plus, they have no way to cover the cost of her degree, so she feels trapped, and I am certain the Alpha knows that and will use that to his advantage. He has done so far. In so many ways they probably don’t even realise yet....

We walk through the main doors of the pack house, inside is just as beautiful, it is so different to my old pack house, which is run down, though that is more because the Alpha is unwilling to spend money on maintaining it.

Manuel takes my hand, I love the sensation his touch brings to me, the tingle from the mate bind is heavenly. And my wolf, Nori almost purring in my mind each time our mate touches us, so needless to say she is adoringly in love with our mate already. I can’t wait to let her meet his wolf,

and let them go off and explore the gorgeous packlands here, Nori would be in her element.

“Hey you two” I hear Jake speak from an open office door, down the corridor which Manuel has just led me down, I assume this is his Beta office.

“Hey J” Manuel smiles at his friend. “We the first here?” Jake nods “Just want to make sure Lola is ok, anything you think I need to know in preparation, hunni?” he asks me.

Anything he needs to know? In preparation? Wow, well, the Alpha is a psycho, they know that.

He is a bully, they know that I think. I shake my head.

“I think you know most of it. If anything comes to mind, I will let one of you know. But be aware the Alpha will make this difficult. I am likely to be against a fight when he knows I have gone against pack rules and let Manuel mark me without Alpha’s permission.” I say.

Jake frowns, a deep frown. He is a handsome guy but he looks pretty scary when he frowns. “

That is weird, I don’t think I have ever heard of that before. Yeah, you might hear of needing Alpha’s permission to leave the pack, but that is usually a formality and doesn’t really mean much either, but for marking your mate seems really fucked up. Sure he ain’t got some weird perversion?” he raises his eyebrows at me.

I chuckle a little “I think it is just their way of keeping pack members within pack. If they need permission to be mates, they get to dictate who is mates with who, and that means they get to control who is mates, so more mates are from within the pack. Therefore, fewer people, well pretty much no people leave the pack” I explain.

“Again, I think that is weird, hunni. But I am sure you do not need me to tell you that, you have been living it for long enough.” Jake says with a smile. And he is not wrong, we all know in pack that the way our pack is run is not normal, but there is not a lot we can do about it. So we just do what we can to keep our lives as peaceful as possible. I truly could not wait to get away, because I could see I would be happy with Manuel.

Manuel’s Dad walks into the office, followed by another middle-aged man with dark hair, who I have to say is a spitting image of Gabe , so I can only assume this is his Dad.

“Hola Beta” he nods at Jake.

“Let yourself in, why don’t you, Mr Garcia” Jake grins at him. “Can see where Gabe gets it from”

“Hey Uncle” Manuel greets him. “Hey Dad”

“Alright Manny, we got a fight on our hands by the sounds of it? Wow, this one's a little lady, ain’t she?” Gabe’s Dad grins at me.

I just half smile at him.

Not like I haven’t heard that before. You get used to the jokes about your height when you are short.

“Mateo, leave her alone. Sorry Lola, this is Manuel’s Uncle Mateo. Bit of a dick, in case you didn’t gather.” Javier said, smiling kindly at me.

Manuel places his arm around me. “Sorry Carino, my Uncle thinks he is funny. Hopefully, we won’t have to stay long” he says.

“Ah you all brave, now you have found your mate big man” Mateo goes to put Manuel in a headlock. Manuel is obviously a better fighter or his Uncle didn’t try very hard as he is easily able

to reverse the manoeuvre on him.

Thankfully, I was able to safely move out of the way. Seems men never grow up, no matter their age. "Have you seen Gabe?" Manuel asks his Uncle. His Uncle suddenly looks serious. "Briefly, he did not want to talk. Which worries me. We need to sort this situation in this pack. How that pack is run is not normal. Allow his mate the freedom to chose to be up here if that is what she wants. So they can be together. But not just that, the others at that pack need to be allowed a normal life too."

"That is normal for us" I point out to him as Knox walks into the room, followed by a small group of men, who I assume may be the warriors they plan to take with them.

"Sorry Chica, I meant no offense. I meant that they deserve to be allowed some freedoms like a normal werewolf pack. How you have been made to live is unfair. Missing out on a lot. Manuel is a crazy fool, like my Gabe, but he will look after you. There is no fear of that Carino" Mateo smiles kindly at me.

He may be a little intimidating, and maybe even a little crazy himself, but he obviously loves his family. I smile back at him.

"I am sorry about my cousin with Gabe. She does want to be with him, it is just difficult, and she is scared" I explain quietly to Mateo as the warriors squash into the office. It suddenly feels very small in here.

"Carino, it is not your fault, and I doubt it is her fault either, in truth. Deep down, Gabe knows that too. That is why we need to try to fix things so they have a chance to fix it. He is a joker, usually Gabe, but he is hurting right now, so the sooner things are fixed the better. But we don't blame you or your cousin, sweetheart. This is the messed result of a twisted Alpha and his corrupted ways of running a pack" Mateo smiles at me. Knox goes to stand by the desk at the front of the room. "Right lets get this started" he says.

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