

The Alpha's Bride

#Chapter 901: Dinner full of surprises (1)

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"Dinner must be cold by now," George said to Dawn. He knew that she loved cooking for him, and because of Alpha Edward, it was ruined.

"Food is fine," Dawn assured George. "We kept it in the oven on warm, and the salad is in the fridge. I told Estelle and others to take the rest of the evening off. Zi and I will set up everything. You can head to the dining room. Do you want a drink while you wait? Or would you rather shower first?"

George shook his head. "I don't want you to serve me. Owen and I will help."

Dawn was surprised to hear George volunteer to work in the kitchen. It was one thing when it was just the two of them, and Zina was fine, but she considered Owen as an outsider.

The Red Moon pack was patriarchal with jobs strictly divided into male and female even for Omegas. Household chores like cleaning and cooking were assigned to females, while males would work outside on more "manly" tasks.

"What would warriors think if they see their Commander working in the kitchen?" Dawn asked George in a hushed tone.

George side-glanced at Owen. "I found one warrior in my kitchen working on a salad. I'm sure he won't mind setting up the table. If he dares to talk about this, I will tell people how an apron suits him." And that was George's apron! He will need to wash it, so it doesn't smell of Owen. George would throw it away, but it was a gift from Dawn. Why did Dawn allow another guy to wear it?

No matter how George looked at Owen, he disliked him more by the minute.

Owen never participated in the activity of setting up the dinner table, but he followed Zina and did what she told him to do.

To Owen, everything was novel and he moved about in a daze, hoping that he won't break something or make a mess and embarrass himself in front of Zina.

Owen's hands were full of spoons, forks, and knives, and he was arranging them on the dining table when he noticed an unexpected person at the door.

"Young Alpha James!" Owen exclaimed with panic.

Why was the young Alpha here? That can't be good! What if he sees Zina? Did James follow them to George's villa, or did he come on some other business? Did Alpha Edward send him?

James tilted his head while observing Owen who was standing frozen and staring at him.

James was not aware that Owen and George were this close. Actually, James was surprised when George appeared with Owen in Alpha Edward's study.

James recoiled when George nudged him from the back.

"You are blocking the way," George grumbled. "Why are you here?"

"Thanks to you, my dinner is late, so I came to eat here."

George shouted into the hallway, "Dawn! We have a freeloader for dinner!"

A second later, Dawn shouted back, "There are no such things as freeloaders in our house! If someone wants food they need to come and get it!"

George turned to James. "You heard her. Go into the kitchen and grab a plate and utensils for yourself. Don't expect to eat for free."

Owen observed this exchange with his eyes wide open. What did he just see? Did George boss James around? And James did as he was told without complaining!

Owen knew that George was James' tutor, but they were always politely distanced and why did this give such a homey feel?

George put a pot with the soup on the table and looked at Owen who didn't move.

"Why are you frozen?"

"Is young Alpha James going to eat with us?"

"Yes," George responded, and he cocked an eyebrow at Owen. "Really? You just found out that I'm hiding my mate and that I have an Alpha aura, and James coming to dinner is surprising?"

Owen had to admit that George's words made sense. What can be more shocking compared to George being a hidden Alpha? They practically grew up together, and Owen had no idea!

Owen was itchy to find out about George's background and how come he and James were so close, but he didn't dare ask about any of it.

'Why is that bozo here?' James' voice sounded in George's mind.

George chuckled. Somehow, James' irritation made George feel better. 'That bozo is Zina's mate.'

James appeared at the door of the dining room with two plates and utensils in his hands and his scrutinizing gaze settled on Owen.

"Zina is your mate?"

"Yes, young Alpha James," Owen responded stiffly. Talking to George came naturally because they knew each other from a young age, but James was up in the hierarchy, second only to the Alpha, and Owen was unsure how to talk to the youngster without offending him.

"Is he a liability?" James asked George and Owen's insides tightened.

"Unless he wants to be mateless, he is with us," George responded.

James cocked an eyebrow. "How far?"

"I'm not sure yet," George responded honestly.

James hummed ambiguously and resumed arranging plates and utensils with utmost care.

Owen's emotions stabilized when Zina showed up at the door with a big bowl of salad. He made that! Owen loved the way Zina smiled at him. He could look at that smile the whole day and not get bored of it.

Another figure appeared at the door and Owen gaped at the sight of James walking there, hugging the female, and kissing her like no one was watching.

"Can you keep your greetings short?" Dawn asked James and Cornelia while shimmying into the room past them. "We are all starving."

"You can start without us," James said with a smile in his voice and then he kissed Cornelia again.

Dawn waved at others to sit. "This can take a while."

Owen was not sure if he could handle more surprises in one day. What did he get himself into? Who was the female? Was that a mark on her neck?

Zina tugged Owen's shirt and he realized that he was staring. He quickly sat on a chair and then he sprung up to stand and hold a chair for Zina to sit on.

Zina giggled. Owen was so awkward and adorable, and she wanted to hug and kiss him until tomorrow. And longer, much longer.

Owen observed another strange thing, George didn't wait to be served. It was custom that Omegas will serve others, yet George was reaching for the bowls and trays, and... George was putting food on Dawn's plate!

Owen realized that he was overwhelmed by a desire to feed Zina. Will she allow it? Well, there was only one way to find out.

Owen put one chicken drumstick on Zina's plate and they both stared at it for a moment before looking at each other.

"Is this OK?" Owen asked apprehensively.

"Sure," Zina responded.

"Macaroni or Ceasar salad?"

"Both," Zina said and Owen took that as an OK to put more food on her plate.

Owen focused mightily on getting food for Zina while trying to ignore the couple that was engaged in kissing only a few steps away.

It was not the first time Owen to see people kissing, but his mate was right next to him! Zina smelled amazing and she looked even better and he wanted to kiss her, yet he couldn't! Damn it!

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Chapter 902: Dinner full of surprises (2) [Bonus chapter]

James broke the kiss, and he enjoyed the sight of Cornelia slowly opening her eyes to meet his. No matter how hard his day was, the thought of Cornelia in his arms made it all better.

Cornelia was absolutely dazed by James' attack on her senses. She hated that he kissed her deeply in front of others, but she couldn't complain because she was aware of how, unless they were in danger, James would focus only on her, and she loved that part of him. She loved every part of him.

While thinking about dangers, Cornelia had to ask, "Jay, who is the new face?"

"Zina's mate," James responded.

Normally, Cornelia would congratulate Zina, but this was not a normal situation, so she had to ask, "Is it OK for me to be here? Can we trust him?"

When Cornelia saw Owen, she froze at the door, and before she could ask who the newcomer was, James was already kissing her.

James smiled, happy that his chocolate-colored Goddess was in front of him, and he could feel her body pressing on his while her flavors of wild berries filled his system. The only thing that could make this better was if they were naked, but that will also happen, later. Would James allow anyone to jeopardize this? Not a chance.

"If that guy dares to say anything that shouldn't be said, I will kill him."

Owen stiffened at James' words. Were they talking about him? It sounded like it.

Owen was not surprised that Alpha Edward's son would talk about killing like it's a totally normal thing, but he couldn't believe that Cornelia was looking at James with hearts in her eyes like he said the most romantic thing in the world.

James and Cornelia joined them at the table and Owen didn't miss that James got busy feeding Cornelia which only confirmed Owen's suspicion: they were not just dating. They were mates! But, how was that possible? Wasn't James underage?

Nothing made sense anymore and Owen decided to give up on thinking.

He poked a bite-sized piece of roasted potato and offered it to Zina who obediently opened her mouth.

Every next moment brought another surprise, and Owen was now surprised by the sense of pride and accomplishment that swelled within him because Zina accepted the food he was giving her. It was his first time feeding someone, and it was such a simple thing. Why did it feel like it was important?

"How come you are here for dinner?" Zina asked Cornelia.

The witch would usually eat at the Dark Howlers pack and leave later in the evening when James was done with his duties.

Cornelia smiled at James while responding to Zina, "Jay texted me that he will be having dinner here, so..." She couldn't say more because James stuffed a spoonful of soup into her mouth which was quickly followed by a piece of dinner roll.

Owen remembered that James was setting up two additional plates. At that time Owen didn't think much of it, but now it made sense. Owen concluded that even young Alphas were not immune from the desire to serve their mates.

"Congrats on finding your mate," Cornelia said to Zina.

Zina glanced sheepishly at Owen. Was it too early to accept congratulations? But Owen was looking at her and she could feel his heart cracking with every second she remained silent, and her heart cracked as well when she realized that those were his insecurities.

"Thank you, Cora," Zina said. "It all happened so quickly that I'm still processing it."

"Take your time," Cornelia said. "You are mates and that won't change no matter how long you take to settle into it. Your heart knows best, but sometimes your mind needs to accept the adjustment. Only when they are in sync will you truly be at ease. Not everyone allows their impulses to take over thoughtlessly and gets marked the moment they see their mate."

Dawn felt that this was a jab directed at her. "And not everyone waits for a month!"

Cornelia's eyes flashed. "Why are you assuming that everyone is horny like you?"

James and George stiffened. Why were Dawn and Cornelia bickering about mating? If this resulted in no sex, they will be the ones suffering!

Zina burst into giggles when she noticed James' and George's panicked expressions. "Maybe you should take that back, Cora, as most of the people here are horny."

Dawn cocked an eyebrow at Zina. "Are you talking about yourself?"

Zina couldn't believe that Dawn called her out like that in front of Owen. "Mind your own business!"

"But you are my business, Zi. Until you figure out living arrangements, keep your hands to yourself."

"You shouldn't worry about their hands," George said.

"Living arrangements shouldn't be a problem," Cornelia said and turned to Zina. "Until you figure out things, you can always do how Jay and I are doing."

Zina's eyes lit up. Cornelia's suggestion made sense. Like that, she could work in the Dark Howlers pack, and Owen would do whatever he does during the day, and they could meet for the night. It was not perfect, but it would work until they find a permanent solution.

Dawn raised her hand to get everyone's attention. "You are assuming that we will dedicate a guest bedroom for Owen and Zi. And you are forgetting that after a few trips you will be tired of shuttling Zi around. How often will your schedules match?"

"Will a room for Owen and I be a problem?" Zina asked.

Dawn rolled her eyes. "It's not that simple. James was close to George before, so no one suspected a few additional trips. However, Owen and George are not exactly friendly. If their interaction changes suddenly, people will start asking questions and snooping around. You already know that if they look into this, they will find more than they bargained for. This is not the Dark Howlers pack, Zi. The slightest mistake will put all of us in danger."

Dawn saw that Zina's expression fell, so she added pleadingly, "Zi, you know that I'm thinking about what's best for you."

"Thank you," Zina said curtly. "I wonder how you would react if I was in the room when you saw George and realized he was your mate. What if I stood in front of you and told you to stay back because he is from the Red Moon pack?"

Dawn knew that Zina had a point, but there were many things Zina didn't know.

"Let's not talk about it now," James said, making both Dawn and Zina look his way. He gestured toward Owen and George. "Since you are discussing this small stuff, I assume that your mates didn't tell you what happened in my father's office."

Dawn was alarmed. "What happened?"

"We will talk about it after dinner," George said. He didn't want grim topics to spoil his appetite, even though it was already spoiled because Dawn was restless.

George knew that Dawn was worried about him, and it was killing him from the inside. He was an Alpha, why was his mate living in fear?

In moments like these, George was wondering if his revenge was worth it. Wouldn't it be better to disappear with Dawn to a place where Alpha Edward won't find them? It would be just the two of them, and it would be wonderful.

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Chapter 903: Plans without trust (1)

After dinner, George, Dawn, Zina, Owen, Cornelia, and James worked together to clean up the table and kitchen, and then they went to George's study.

No matter how much George trusted Omegas working in his villa, he didn't want anyone to know more than necessary.

George sat in his leather chair behind the executive desk and Dawn settled on his lap. His arms snaked around Dawn's waist, and he rested his chin on her shoulder.

James sat on the sofa chair and Cornelia squeezed next to him sideways so that her legs rested over James' thighs. James put his hands on Cornelia's knees, his thumbs moved to caress her gently and she leaned on him completely.

Owen and Zina were on the sofa and Owen realized that there was a distance between them. Should he get close to Zina, or pull her toward him? What if she hates it? He really didn't know what to do.

Zina felt the same awkwardness as Owen, and those two couples cuddling didn't make her situation more comfortable.

Owen jolted when he felt something warm on his hand. It was Zina's fingers, silently asking to be held. Owen slowly moved his hand, and Zina's palm slid over his until their fingers interlaced naturally.

Owen stared at their connected hands, the invisible sparks of their bond danced there, making him tingly all over. He slowly raised his gaze to meet Zina's blue eyes smiling at him. He really wanted to kiss her and somehow... he knew that she wanted the same.

George cleared his throat to get everyone's attention, bursting Owen's and Zina's lovey-dovey bubble and reminding them that they had important matters to discuss.

George narrated what happened in Alpha Edward's study.

As expected, Dawn and Zina were concerned about the potential consequences. Both females attended many parties, but now they had mates and they will be mismatched and potentially preyed upon. The worst thing was that the culture of the Red Moon pack dictated how Omegas don't retaliate. It was not something Zina and Dawn wanted to go through.

"What should we do?" Dawn asked while her eyes moved from George to James.

Zina and Owen were confused to see that George was looking at James also.

Zina was aware that the youngster was mated to Cornelia, and that he had a positive relationship with Alpha Damon, but nothing beyond that. As for Owen, he knew that James was the young Alpha of the Red Moon pack, and that was mostly it; the rest were Owen's assumptions based on Alpha Edward's reputation which was not good.

"You should go to the event," James said to Dawn and Zina.

"Can't we avoid it?" Dawn asked.

James shook his head. "Women are one of the top three things my father takes notice of. If you don't show up, he will seek Lieutenant Owen at what point he needs to have a very good explanation as to why you didn't come." James looked at Owen. "No matter what explanation you give him, the fact is that two Omegas didn't show up when explicitly asked for them. You will be punished."

Owen had to ask. "Punished? How?"

James shrugged. "It will depend on my father's mood. Demotion. Dungeon. He might make an example of you."

Zina sucked in a sharp breath. "That bad?"

"My father will see that as Lieutenant Owen rebelling against Alpha orders. What does Alpha Damon do with traitors?"

Zina's hold on Owen's hand tightened. Sure, traitors don't have a good ending, but Alpha Damon doesn't classify as treason when a woman misses a party.

"What if we leave the pack?" Owen asked.

James was surprised by this question. "You want to flee? Disown the pack? What do you think my father will do when he realizes you ghosted him? He might think that you were attacked, kidnapped, or that you ran away. In any of those cases, he will look for an explanation."

Owen couldn't believe this. "Are you saying that the only way out of this is if I attend the party with someone else's mate and pretend that she is mine? What about my mate? Should I stand on the side and watch other males breathe down her neck?"

James raised his hand, indicating to Owen to calm down. "It will be a big party with a lot of people. My father won't do anything despicable in front of guests." He turned to Cornelia. "Especially not guests from the Midnight Guardians pack."

Cornelia understood where James was going with this. "You want me to keep an eye on them?" She turned to Dawn and Zina. "We can take turns. Talia, Mindy, and Sandy will also be there. If we notify Kalina and Tatiana, I'm sure they will cooperate as well."

Since Maya and Caden were staying in the Dark Howlers pack to protect it in case rogues attack, Mindy was the next in line to go as Luna Talia's aide, and she would come with Gideon who was not happy to go, but he couldn't leave Mindy to go on her own either. As for Sandy, she will come with Tyler, as Alpha Natalia's Gammas. Normally, Meg and Kai would accompany Talia from the Midnight Guardians pack, but Meg was pregnant, and Talia didn't want to expose her to potential risks.

George liked James' plan. "With females staying in groups, no one will dare to act out of line."

Owen was still not pacified but he saw that Zina relaxed a bit, so he decided to keep his mouth shut. He didn't want to be a worrywart.

"Don't forget that Nora will come in the afternoon to help your mates get ready for the party," James said before asking, "Are we done here?" He was eager to go with Cornelia to their room.

George had a question, "Is there something we should know about tomorrow's event?"

James shrugged. "You are one of the guys in charge of security. You probably know more than I do."

James didn't care about his birthday celebration. Cornelia will attend as a special advisor to Alpha Natalia, and James will look for every opportunity to stick to his mate. Other than that, nothing else mattered.

Before leaving, James gestured toward Owen and spoke to George. "I suggest you don't leave him out of your sight." James reached into his pant pocket and threw a small bottle at George. "You should feed him this. One pill will prevent him from using the pack-link for twenty-four hours."

George nodded in understanding. If Owen can't use pack-link, he can't betray them sneakily. James really thought of everything.

Once James and Cornelia left the study, Zina shifted in her seat. "It seems it's time for sleep."

Zina was worried about the upcoming party, but that was far in the future because she had a full day until then and her mate was right next to her, holding her hand, handsome, edible, and smelling of honey. How could she focus on anything other than Owen?

"Where will you sleep?" Dawn asked.

Before Zina could respond, George spoke, "How about you girls talk outside? I want a word with Owen in private."

Dawn was happy to hear George suggest this. Dawn wanted to tell many things to Zina, but she didn't want to embarrass Zina in front of her mate who was visibly confused with everything that happened in the last few hours.

Owen didn't like that Zina left his visual range and George frowning at him didn't make things better.

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Chapter 904: Plans without trust (2)

George threw the bottle of pills at Owen which the latter caught with the flick of his wrist.

"Take one," George said with finality.

Owen didn't like the obvious show of distrust, but if the roles were reversed, Owen would do the same. He didn't want to fuss about it. If George or James wanted to harm him, they would do it already.

Owen took one white pill and placed it on his tongue for George to see, and then he swallowed it.

"Are you going to ask me to leave?" Owen asked George after returning the bottle with the remaining pills.

"That would be for the best," George said. "However, considering what you know, I can't afford leaving you out of my sight."

"You don't trust me."

"Do you trust me?" George responded with a question.

Owen puffed his cheeks. George was right. They had no reason to trust each other. Owen was acting like an ass for years and a simple sorry won't fix it. "Now what?"

George didn't have a long-term solution. If this was anyone else, he would just snap his neck and eliminate the threat. It wouldn't be the first time for people to have a deadly accident after finding out things they shouldn't know about. However, Owen was Zina's mate and George needed to be less murderous. "You will spend the night in this villa, in the room where you woke up."

"What about Zina?" Owen asked.

Owen was looking forward to some alone time with his fiery Goddess. At the same time, he was dreading that alone time. What if he messes it up?

George saw many guys ruining what could be a harmonious mate relationship. He didn't care about those before meeting Dawn, but she showed him that females have a voice and are capable and that he shouldn't force his will without considering what she wants.

Zina was Dawn's best friend and George remembered Damon's warnings when his bond with Dawn was fresh. At that time, George thought that Damon was unreasonable, but later George confirmed that Damon was right.

With that in mind, George thought of giving advice to Owen.

"Zina comes from the Dark Howlers pack. There, females are equal to males. When your mate stands in front of you, it doesn't matter if she is an Omega or Alpha's daughter. As your mate, she is your other half. Mistreating her is mistreating yourself. Do you understand?"

Nope. Owen didn't understand. "What are you getting at?"

"I want you to respect Zina's wishes. Respect her boundaries. I know that the pull of the bond is urging you to get closer, but don't force it. If she is not comfortable, give her time."

"Is that what you did with Dawn?"

George didn't want to talk about Marcy, but there were things he could say. "Dawn is my second chance mate, and she knew it. I needed to convince her and myself that I will be a good mate. Don't assume that Zina can read your mind. She can feel your emotions, but without context, it's just confusing. If you want something, tell her."

OK. This part made sense. Owen had to ask, "And you are telling me this because...?"

"Because Zina is Dawn's best friend. If you make Zina sad, Dawn won't get off my case. I push through each day because Dawn is at the end of it waiting for me. If she is not happy, my happy will be spoiled also. Don't mess up, or I will mess you up."

This time, Owen was confident that George was serious.

"I will do my best. But..."

"But?"

"How do I know I'm doing the right thing?"

George thought for a moment before responding, "Listen to Zina and listen to your wolf. In that order."

Dawn peeked to check if George and Owen were done talking.

George and Dawn lingered on the landing of the second floor, waiting for Zina and Owen to say their goodnight because Zina's and Owen's rooms were in opposite directions.

Zina glanced at George and Dawn and then she turned to Owen.

"I feel like a teen on my first date and my parents are watching."

Owen's eyebrows came together in a frown. "You had your first date as a teen?"

"Not really. But I saw that in movies," Zina said quickly. Was he disapproving because she mentioned early dating, or because werewolves don't date?

Owen's expression relaxed. "So... what happens next in movies?"

Zina's eyes darted to Owen's lips, and she realized that her mouth went dry. Will she chicken out now? She was a grown woman, for crying out loud! But why was Owen not making a move? Surely, he kissed girls before... or did he?

"Owen," Zina called. "Do you want me to initiate our first kiss?"

Yes! No, no! Owen was glad that Zina couldn't read his mind because she would see them naked right there in that hallway with her pinned against the wall and him ramming himself inside her.

Owen swallowed hard. Did Zina ask something? Yes, about a kiss... "How about we do it together?"

Zina puckered her lips and closed her eyes, and she got on her toes while Owen leaned lower... and Zina frowned when she felt some weird texture.

Zina's eyes snapped open, and she couldn't believe that she was kissing Dawn's hand.

"Dawn!" Zina shouted in protest.

"Sorry, Zi. If you start kissing, you won't be able to stop," Dawn said. "Say goodnight and let's go."

"I don't want to say goodnight!" Zina whined.

When Dawn and Zina talked outside the study, Dawn told Zina that it would be for the best for Zina and Owen to spend the night apart and use that time to think about their situation and potential solutions. It would also remove the possibility of Owen marking Zina before they were ready. A mark on Zina's neck would be a bad thing at tomorrow's party.

At that time, Zina thought how Dawn made sense and she agreed, and also, Zina didn't want to prolong the conversation and her time apart from Owen. Yes, Zina agreed to spend her night alone, but now that it came to executing it, Zina realized how she didn't want to do it.

Zina didn't want to part with Owen. Period!

Dawn grabbed Zina's arm. "See you in the morning, Owen. You know where your room is. Don't try anything funny, we have cameras around the villa and in the hallways!"

Owen watched helplessly as Dawn dragged Zina away and he could see Zina looking at him with longing.

Owen released a long breath and looked up. There it was. A camera. Dawn was not lying.

The most frustrating thing was that George was standing there with his hands behind his back, and he didn't object to Dawn dragging Zina away! Now what?

Owen turned around and dragged his legs to his room. It was the room where Zina tended to his wounds.

He sat on the bed and buried his face into the comforter where Zina was sitting previously. Her scent of chamomile still lingered there.

Why did he allow Dawn to drag Zina away!? If he stood up for himself and his mate, now he would be hugging his chamomile-infused fiery Goddess instead of fisting the comforter. Damn it!

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Chapter 905: Sneaking at night (1)

"Why are you treating me like a child?" Zina hissed at Dawn when Dawn closed the door behind them.

"Didn't we agree to this?"

"I changed my mind," Zina snapped. "You know how long I was waiting for my mate." Longer than Dawn because Zina was older!

Zina didn't think much about being unmated before, but in the last few months, Zina got to see all of her friends finding their mates, Dawn included. Zina was lonely and she wondered if the Moon Goddess was punishing her for something, and now that she finally found her other half, Dawn wanted her to stay away?

"I know what you are going through," Dawn said. "But I also know that the situation is messy. Can you trust me on this, Zi?"

"You are keeping me away from my mate and I should go with it because you asked me to? What kind of logic is that?"

"Don't do it for me. Do it for yourself," Dawn said. "Owen won't think about what's best for you because he doesn't know better than this. He probably considers keeping you here and hiding you under a blanket. Will you be OK stuck here waiting for Owen until he can give you a few hours of his day? How long will that last? Even if you go with Cornelia to the Dark Howlers pack, that's only a temporary solution. Let him work for it, Zi. Don't you want to see if Owen is committed to being with you?"

"How will I find out anything if we are separated?"

"If he can't figure out a way around a few obstacles, he won't stand up for you when it counts. The relationship doesn't work because of the bond. It works because mates are fighting for each other no matter who the enemy is. Let him fight for you."

Zina paused. "You are testing him?"

Dawn smiled a little. "You should be the one testing him, but I know that due to the mate bond, the only thing on your mind is sex with the guy who came out of nowhere in a crowded market to defend you while shouting how you are his woman."

Zina was not sure if she should bicker or agree with Dawn because Dawn was right, but it didn't sound right either. Why did she need to stay away from Owen? Why can't they figure out things together?

Dawn gave Zina a hug, wished her a good night, and left with, "Don't you dare go to his room, Zi. We have cameras everywhere. If you step out of this room, I will know about it."

Zina glared at the closed door for a long time before plopping on the bed and staring at the ceiling.

After hearing Dawn's full explanation, Zina feel a bit better, but she really wanted that goodnight kiss, damn it!

And what if Owen doesn't fight for her? What if he stays in his room and submits to George, and later to Alpha Edward? Would she want to be with a guy who would bow in

front of obstacles? Did she have the right to expect Owen to put himself in danger for her?

Zina hoped that Owen would appear at the door and then Zina would jump on him, just how Dawn jumped on George when he came home that evening.

...

Minutes trickled away and Owen realized that he won't be able to sleep. His wolf was restless, urging him to seek mate. But George told him to stay put and... Owen sat up abruptly.

George didn't tell him to stay away from Zina. He told him to listen to Zina and to his wolf, and how Owen saw this, Zina wanted to be with him, and his wolf wanted the same.

The only problems were the cameras and not alerting George and Dawn. How can he get to Zina without being noticed?

Owen's sight moved to the window, and he got an idea.

No matter how many security cameras George had, he wouldn't have them pointing at the building. Owen gave himself a mental pat on the back. It was brilliant!

One minute later...

Owen gripped the windowsill while inching stealthily along the façade of George's villa, moving from one window to another and listening to the smallest sounds. He sniffed the air to confirm if his chamomile-infused mate was there. With any luck, the light will be on, and he could see her clearly.

He didn't know on what side of the building Zina's room was, but he was determined to keep circling and peeking in until he finds her. As long as he didn't bump into George and Dawn, it will be fine.

Owen was a few windows in when he heard shuffling in the room. He put his ear close to the window, careful that his head is not creating a shadow when...

"Oh, James..."

Owen recoiled when he realized that was Cornelia and the low growl was definitely from James! How did he forget about those two? It was obvious James and Cornelia were going at it and that made Owen a super-peeper!

Forget about George! If James catches him dangling off that window, Owen was dead meat!

Owen's only concern was to get as far as possible from that window. How many windows per room? Two? Three? Owen jumped to the next one, and the next one, and his stomach tightened when someone grabbed his wrist and yanked him inside.

What the hell!?

As an experienced warrior, Owen immediately rolled into a crouch and was about to jump on his attacker when he realized that the room he found himself in was infused with chamomile.

Zina quickly closed the window and turned to face Owen. She was sitting in the dimly lit room, hoping that Owen will come to the door. She didn't expect him to come through the window, but the moment she heard some noise there, she knew it was him. She opened the window and hoisted him inside and here they were. Alone. Finally.

"You came," she said.

"I did," Owen responded while getting up.

"Why?"

"Don't you want me to be here?"

Of course, she did! "What will we do if George or Dawn catch you here?"

Owen's insides shook. She said WE, and that 'we' meant the world to him.

"I don't care," Owen responded while stalking toward Zina.

"You don't?" Zina asked in a high-pitched voice as her nerves were acting up. In this dimly lit room, shadows danced over Owen's features, making him mysterious and super handsome, and Zina was not sure what to expect.

Owen stopped when there was only a fraction between them. "The only thing I care about is right here and right now. With you." He was incapable of thinking about anything else.

Zina was confident that she never heard anything so romantic.

"What about tomorrow?"

"I don't know what tomorrow brings, but I know it will be with you."

Zina also wanted to be with him, but the Red Moon pack became prickly uncomfortable, and the incoming event made it worse. "What if we can't be here?"

"Did I mention a location?"

"You didn't." Did that mean he was considering leaving the Red Moon pack?

"I didn't," Owen confirmed. "Where is not important. Now that I've met you, a future without you is not possible, and I am willing to put my life on the line to ensure no one gets between us. I want to be with you, and I want to make you happy. I don't have much, but whatever I have, it's yours." He would do anything in order to ensure she continues smiling at him.

Owen licked his lips nervously before asking, "Zina of the Dark Howlers pack, do you accept me as your mate?"

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Chapter 906: Sneaking at night (2)

Owen licked his lips nervously before asking, "Zina of the Dark Howlers pack, do you accept me as your mate?"

Zina's heart was thundering in her ears, and she became lightheaded due to Owen's scent of maple honey. She found herself in a drunken daze that allowed her to focus only on the male in front of her.

Zina grabbed his t-shirt to stabilize herself, her nails scratching his pecks in the process, and he released a low growl.

She got on her toes, and he lowered his head and they both groaned when their lips connected in a slow kiss that shook their cores. Their mate bond urged them to get closer, much closer than they were.

'RIIIIP!'

Owen's eyebrows shot up when Zina ripped his t-shirt. He didn't expect it, but he didn't hate it either.

"So-Sorry..." Zina stuttered. "I didn't mean to." She really didn't, but it happened. Did he think of her as a violent woman?

Owen pulled the torn fabric over his head and smirked, obviously pleased by her action and the way she gawked at his exposed torso. Owen could feel that Zina wanted him, just as much as he wanted her. Who cared about one t-shirt?

"It's OK." He tried to sound cool.

Zina's palms landed on his pecs, and she didn't miss the way his muscles rippled under her touch.

The sparks that prickled his skin were out of this world and he was confident that his jeans will burst as his cock wanted to get out. Was he ever this hard?

Zina's hands moved higher until she reached his shoulders, and then her fingers connected behind his neck at the same moment his arms wrapped around her to pull her on him.

Owen dove to claim her lips with his, and he didn't delay in deepening the kiss.

Chamomile and honey was an addictive combination.

His hands glided down her back, and Owen gave her ass a squeeze before lifting her. He was unsure if he was rushing things, but then her legs wrapped around his waist and he moved toward the bed in small steps, giving her a chance to stop him... but she didn't.

Their kisses turned hungry and impatient, and Owen tripped when he was half a step away from the bed.

"Ugh..." Zina released a suppressed groan when she sunk into the mattress with Owen on top of her.

Owen was alarmed. What a way to kill the mood!

He quickly put his hands on Zina's sides to push himself up. "Are you hurt?"

Zina moved her arms around his back and clung to him tightly. "No, no!" Was he thinking of stopping now? Couldn't he pick up how aroused she was? "It was just unexpected," Zina explained.

Owen got down on his elbows and he pushed Zina's hair from her face.

"You are beautiful," Owen murmured.

He took a lock of her hair and put it under his nose, taking a deep breath.

"How do I smell to you?" Zina asked.

"Chamomile."

"Do you like it?"

"As far as my memories go, it was always my favorite."

Zina liked his answer. She liked it a lot.

"Angel," He called, and she loved the sound of his voice. It was low and sensual and filled with emotions she couldn't put into words.

"Are you sure about this?" He asked.

"Are you having doubts?"

He shook his head. "I just don't want you to have regrets. I never wanted anything in my life how much I want you. But it seems that a lot of things are stacked against us." He released a long breath. "I will be honest, I never faced anything this big."

Zina had to acknowledge that he was right. "Me neither. But the Moon Goddess set us to be mates, and she allowed us to meet. Maybe these are challenges we need to overcome together."

Owen's heart tightened and then it expanded. "I don't know how to do together. I was always alone."

Zina ran her hand over his head, enjoying the prickles of his short hair on her palm. "That was because you didn't meet me. Going forward, you won't be alone, Owen. Now you have your mate." She licked her lips. "I don't want to sound impatient, but is this the right time to talk?"

Owen cocked an eyebrow at her. He wanted to make it romantic and special because this was not just a senseless hookup to fulfill carnal needs. Did he embarrass himself?

"I want to make sure you are willing," Owen said, and his finger moved over her cheek and down her neck, gliding slowly and leaving a fiery trail of addictive sparks that set her body ablaze. He made small circles at the base of her neck, right where his mark should come, and Owen could feel his wolf going crazy in need to sink his fangs there.

"Angel, when I start, I'm not sure if I will be able to stop."

Zina felt butterflies going crazy in her stomach.

"There is no need to stop. I am yours."

"Mine," he said with a hum of approval, and lowered his head to kiss her neck, right where his finger teased her previously.

They undressed each other through fervent kisses and caresses, and Zina was surprised that he didn't tear her clothes. She could feel how hungry he was for her. It was maddening.

Zina's body felt like jelly, yet she was hyper-aware of every inch where they touched.

Owen's scent of maple honey enveloped her as his existence became part of her new normal, and Zina knew that there was no turning back from this. No man, ever, will be able to make her feel this. Desired. Needed. Worshiped. Accepted.

How could she think that he wouldn't want her or that he will mistreat her?

Owen breathed in greedily Zina's scent of chamomile. Touching, pinching, caressing, kissing, licking... no matter what he did, it felt heavenly, and she responded to him beautifully.

He stared into her eyes as he made his way inside of her, nearly blacking out from sheer pleasure when he got sheathed all the way inside of her.

"Fuck, angel!" Owen groaned. "This... this..."

"I know," Zina breathed, feeling dazed herself and she threw her head back when he started rocking into her.

Owen was not Zina's first, and she thought that sex was great before, but Owen rewired her brain and made her every nerve ending respond to his ministrations.

Owen started slowly and Zina's moans spurred him to move faster, and he loved the way her hips moved to meet his.

They entangled their bodies as their bond solidified with his every thrust and they were both marveling at this feeling of belonging, not caring about anything and anyone beyond the confinement of that bed.

It was just the two of them, merging into one; it was more than a physical connection.

Owen growled while trying to suppress his fangs from coming out. The woman below him was welcoming, and she smelled fantastic and felt even better, and she was his, but somehow... there was a small voice at the back of his head, reminding him that he shouldn't mark her.

Zina dug her fingers into Owen's back, lost in her madness and the desire to seal the bond completely. Her wolf agreed. He was already inside her and all around her, and there was only that small bit missing... Owen's mark on Zina's neck.

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Chapter 907: The best way to wake up

Owen and Zina were lost in the throes of passion. Harder, faster, more... but what was more than what they were doing?

The headboard was clattering against the wall, and the hinges of the bedframe threatened to give in.

Zina was fighting to catch the smallest of breaths while her wolf amplified her frenzy. Owen's growls and grunts vibrated against her left ear, and she heard him say how she was fantastic and that he loved every inch of her. The stretch and the friction were boosted by the sparks of their bond that made her claw at his back in a fervent need to increase their touching surface.

Owen prayed silently for the strength to not pass out from sheer pleasure that shook every muscle in his body. How could a woman be so enthralling? Her every moan spoke to his wolf, her lustful song urged the demon in him to come out and corrupt her pure soul... to claim her as his, forever.

"Owen," Zina panted as he lapped at the left side of her neck.

Her orgasm was building up and she was ready to blow. Will her heart burst from overstimulation? That was a possibility.

She tilted her head to give him better access and breathed into his ear, "I am yours."

Her words were barely a whisper, but he heard her clearly.

The last string of restraint snapped, and Owen dipped his head.

Zina muffled her cry in Owen's shoulder when the orgasm hit her full force at the same time as his fangs pierced her flesh.

Owen growled while pumping himself into her. Her insides tightened around his cock in rhythmical pulses, pushing him over the edge to fill her up with his hot seed.

Zina saw stars in front of her closed eyes. If previous orgasms were touching the sky, this one sent her outside of the Solar system. She was confident that her soul left her body to merge with Owen's because just their bodies becoming one was not enough to explain what was happening.

Zina's body twitched as Owen licked the spot where his mark was forming already.

"Damn, angel," he said while catching his breath and then he chuckled lowly. "I could spend the rest of my life doing this."

Zina stared at him with unfocused eyes. "Me too."

He wanted to pull out, but Zina's legs clamped him in place.

"Let me feel you," she pleaded, and he had no objections.

Owen loved the sight of his mark on her neck. The fiery Goddess was his and his only, but there was also a problem... "George and Dawn will jump to our throats in the morning." And what about the party in the evening?

"Are you regretting it?"

"No," Owen said right away. "If I could do it again, I would. And again. And again."

He wiggled his eyebrows and Zina giggled, her insides squeezed his cock, and he groaned in response.

"I am worried that they will give you a hard time," he said.

"Do you really care about Dawn and George?" Zina asked.

"No." Owen nuzzled her nose with his. "You still didn't answer my question."

"Which one?"

"Do you accept me as your mate?"

Zina blinked. Wasn't it too late for that question? But it seemed that Owen wanted a verbal confirmation.

"Yes. I accept you as my mate, Owen of the Red Moon pack." She didn't like the pack Owen was associated with, but she didn't want to be picky about it. He already said that location was not important, and she would be a hypocrite to say otherwise.

Owen's smile reflected in his eyes as he leaned to kiss her gently, tenderly, every move of his tongue stirred another wave of desire, and within a minute they were back at it again.

...

"Mmm," Zina moaned softly while drifting in and out of her sleep.

She had a fantastic dream. She came to visit Dawn, and they went to the market, and then a super-handsome guy appeared, and it turned out he was her mate, and he smelled of maple honey, and they ended up having hot sex and he marked her, and she nearly passed out how good it was, and then they did it again and... it was fantastic.

Zina didn't want to wake up. She wanted to keep dreaming because Owen's hold was solid, and no one ever managed to excite her wolf.

"Ahh..." A loud sigh escaped her lips because the dream was so good that she could still feel her handsome mate all over her. Well, not all over, but definitely at the cradle of her thighs.

Zina tried to squirm, and her eyes sprang open when she realized that she was unable to move her hips. What the hell?

Still half-asleep, Zina looked down to see a head between her legs.

"What...? Ahh... Oh!... Mmm..."

She was unable to form any words because Owen's lips latched around her clit, and he started sucking on it.

Eventually, Owen looked up at Zina and grinned. The lower half of his face was glistening from her juices, and it was all infused with chamomile and he loved it!

Owen didn't feel guilty for waking her up. He didn't get a wink of sleep and he let her sleep for a few hours (every minute felt like an eternity), and then his restraints snapped, and he decided to help himself. He was never a patient one.

"Good morning, angel," Owen said in a deep voice that shook her insides.

Zina's chest heaved. Good morning? Wait! With Owen between her legs, didn't that mean her dream was not a dream? This was a million times better than a dream!

"Is this how you will wake me up every morning?"

Owen licked his lips in slow motion. "If you like it."

IF she likes it!? "I like it very much," Zina said honestly. Who would say no to an orgasm first thing in the morning?

With a low chuckle, Owen dove back to tend to Zina's most intimate parts with his mouth and she plopped back into the pillows. Even if she wanted to resist his relentless attacks on her pleasure centers, she was unable to do so.

Zina's body twitched in the aftershocks of her orgasm when Owen crawled on top of her.

He observed Zina's blissful expression, and he was confident that she was the most beautiful woman in the world.

"Mine," he murmured.

Zina's smile widened. "Yours."

Owen kissed her deeply and she tasted herself on his lips. How come she didn't realize before that she tasted of chamomile? It was like Owen unraveled parts of her she didn't know before.

He swallowed Zina's cry when he jabbed himself inside her and he loved the sensation of her nails piercing his flesh. Owen hoped that she will leave scars so that her presence shows on his outside as well.

Zina couldn't believe the emotional tornado Owen stirred within her. Her senses were sharper, she was more aware of her surroundings, and everything was clearer. She could feel that they breathed at the same time and their hearts beat in the same rhythm. It was surreal.

The most fantastic above it all was that she knew, beyond any doubt, that Owen worshiped her.

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Chapter 908: You didn't!

Zina enjoyed being cradled in Owen's arms.

His hot breath seeped into her hair to caress her scalp gently, and the feeling of their naked bodies pressing on each other was out of this world.

She started the morning by coming on his tongue, and then they made love twice and Zina realized why newly mated couples don't leave the bedroom for days, but their situation was not normal.

"We should go down for breakfast."

Owen groaned in displeasure and tightened his hold on her. "Do we need to?"

"Unfortunately, we do. We can't spend the day here."

"Why not?" He whined.

Zina loved how clingy and childish he was. Was this the fierce warrior from the Red Moon pack?

"Don't you need to work?" She asked.

"I will tell them I'm sick."

Zina looked at him in disbelief. Unless it involves wolfsbane or silver, "We don't get sick."

"I saw it in movies. A guy calls in sick to work and..."

"That's for humans."

Owen pouted. "How about you come up with something believable?"

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Chapter 909: Commander George's adjutant

Dawn was about to argue how Owen marking Zina came at a super-wrong time and it could cause so many issues, but she was unable to disagree with George. Owen showing his intention of being with Zina was a good thing, but... "What if things go wrong during the event tonight?" And there were so many other things to think about.

Dawn was always carefree and playful, yet now she felt like an adult in the room.

George didn't think it was a big deal. "For better or for worse, mates stay together." George turned to Dawn and caressed her cheek with the tips of his fingers while saying, "Even if I knew that staying with you meant I will die tomorrow, I would pick one day with you compared to an eternity without. Aren't you the same?"

Dawn exhaled as her fighting spirit dwindled. She came to the Red Moon pack with George, knowing the risks and that it will be hard. And she didn't regret a single minute of it.

"I'm sorry Zi," Dawn said. "I hope you know that I am only worried about you. I love that you found your mate and that things are going well."

"Thanks," Zina responded while leaning on Owen. It meant the world to her to know that Dawn gave up and was officially onboard.

"Does their marking change our plans for tonight?" Dawn asked George.

"No. Just as Zina said, she will cover up her mark, and you will expose yours." George turned to Owen. "You will need to take care of your mate and mine. Control your wolf and don't get into a fight. I will keep an eye on you and step in if a need arises. Officially, I am single so I can't show up with a date, but I will find a way to join you as the event progresses. If the four of us leave together, we can keep our charade going without disturbing the hornet's nest. Until then, keep your eyes on them, and hands to yourself. I hope that your status is low enough, so you don't attract attention."

Owen made a face. What did that mean by, his status being low enough?

Owen opened his mouth with the intention to bicker, and his eyes bulged in surprise when Zina stuffed a piece of bread in his mouth.

"We will do our best," Zina responded to George.

Owen eyed Zina suspiciously and she spoke to him in a soft voice, "We need to follow their plan. Let's focus on surviving today and tomorrow we can discuss our options for the future."

Owen nodded in slow motion. The thought of a future with Zina calmed his wolf and Owen leaned closer to Zina, feeling needy for her proximity.

As the food on the plate was reducing, Owen's feeding of Zina was slowing down. He didn't want to go.

Zina could sense his emotions and she put her hand on his cheek.

"I will look forward to seeing you for lunch."

Owen pouted. "In the morning I run and do the obstacle course. I will be dirty and sweaty and..."

"It seems you didn't get the news," George interrupted Owen. "You are to report to your new position in fifteen minutes."

Owen was alerted. "New position?"

"Someone pulled strings and you are adjutant."

That would normally be a promotion, but Owen didn't like the timing. Also, it depended on whose adjutant he became. Did he apply for such a position?

"Who is the General I will be working for?" Owen asked reluctantly.

George shook his head. "You won't be working for a General. You are now adjutant to a Commander."

Owen's brows came together in confusion. What nonsense was that? Every Commander had a full staff, except for... "I will be working for you?"

Owen was a Lieutenant under a General who reported to a different Commander. How did George manage to make Owen into his adjutant overnight?

George smirked. "I am your direct superior now, Owen. I expect to see good results."

George had two secretaries, but no adjutants. Those were positions usually given to people of trust and Owen knew that George didn't trust him. "Am I trustworthy enough to be your right hand?"

George shrugged. "I am giving you a chance to prove yourself."

"How?"

"You will find out. Soon." Probably sooner than anyone thought.

Zina didn't think this was a bad thing. "Thank you, George!" She jumped to hug Owen.

Owen returned Zina's hug, but he was not sure if this sudden transfer was a good thing.

...

Owen and George left George's villa together and Owen was glancing at the building that was getting smaller with every step he took.

"Zina will be fine," George said.

Owen rubbed his chin nervously. "I know. I fear that I won't be fine without her. How do you go through the day, knowing that your mate is there, waiting for you?"

"With difficulty. And no, it doesn't get better in time."

Owen stuffed his hands into his pant pockets and walked with George absentmindedly. So many things happened. How was he supposed to go to those training grounds like everything was normal?

They passed by several figures and Owen realized that those were Omegas. Four females in their early thirties moved to stand on the side of the path and lowered their heads in front of George and Owen. They would do the same for any warrior or a ranked pack member.

Owen didn't pay attention to Omega's behavior before, but now he couldn't ignore it. The idea that his fiery Goddess would submit for no apparent reason was eating him alive.

If Zina left George's villa, she would need to act like that or be punished for disobedience. Will Zina be able to sit inside that villa and wait for him? They were dependent on George and Dawn and even they were in a tricky situation.

Owen looked around to assure no one was nearby to overhear them, and then he asked, "Why are you here, George?"

George was confused. "What do you mean?"

"Considering Dawn's background and your position, I'm sure that Alpha Damon would accept you into his pack. Why are you still here? Don't tell me that you enjoy keeping your mate locked up while you go about your day pretending she doesn't exist."

George's expression stiffened. He didn't like Owen insinuating that he was repressing Dawn, but he understood it would look like that to outsiders.

"I have my reasons," George responded.

Owen looked at him for a long second. "I hope those reasons are worth it."

George was hoping the same.

"What will you do next about your mate?" George asked.

Owen was not sure. "Zina wants me to talk to Alpha Damon. I will do that."

"Don't expect him to solve your problems. You need to stand up for yourself and for your mate."

With that, they reached the training grounds and Owen was following after George and doing small tasks that George assigned to him while counting seconds until lunchtime.

Owen remembered how on the previous day George left early and Owen gave him a hard time. Now that he knew about Dawn, and he had a mate himself, Owen felt like an ass. Will it matter if he apologizes? Probably not.

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Chapter 910: Honoring the deal

~ the Dark Howlers pack ~

Cassie was in a room that had a bed, a sofa with a low coffee table, and a television attached to the wall. The side door led to a bathroom.

This room was better than the dungeon where she spent the first three days after talking to Damon and Talia, but it didn't change the fact that she was a prisoner. How long was she in here? Cassie lost count of days, but it was definitely more than a week.

The door was locked from the outside, and they had metal bars on the windows. No matter how much she looked outside, the only thing she could see was the forest. She was stuck in the middle of nowhere and even though they didn't torture her, she was not fine with being confined. Cassie couldn't see any cameras, but she had a feeling of being watched.

So, what if she came with an agenda? That didn't change the fact that she gave them genuine information.

Cassie found that on her father's desk and while going through his drawers. She risked getting caught and punished seriously, yet they thanked her by locking her up.

The only good thing about this situation was that no one bullied her or rubbed in her face that her father was expecting another child and she will be replaced. Cassie scoffed at the thought of being replaced.

Not so long ago, she was the princess of the Steelbite pack. Her father pampered her, and she had exclusive access to Alpha Damon, the handsome Alpha of the largest pack in North America. Cassie thought she was at the top of the world, unaware of how fragile that world was. It all collapsed in an instant and she was left with nothing. Even her gorgeous hair was gone.

Cassie jolted when she heard the lock clicking.

"Talia?" Cassie called in surprise, and she looked behind Talia to see if someone else was with her.

Cassie thought it would be the guards bringing something, or maybe Damon came to see her, and she didn't expect Talia.

Cassie's mood deflated visibly when she confirmed that Talia was on her own.

How Cassie saw this, most of her troubles were due to Talia's existence. If Talia didn't show up, Cassie would still be able to stick to Damon, and she would have her hair! If Talia didn't give that stupid punishment that included a tribute from the Steelbite pack, Elders wouldn't be so quick to band against Cassie.

"What do you want?" Cassie asked Talia grumpily.

Talia put her hand behind her back, but not before Cassie saw that Talia was holding a folded magazine. Did she bring her reading material?

"I came to ask you where you want to go," Talia said.

"You are letting me go?" Cassie asked suspiciously.

Talia confirmed. "A deal is a deal. You gave us information and we will send you to the destination of your choice without your father knowing."

Cassie narrowed her eyes at Talia. "Why now? Where is Damon? I want to talk to him."

Cassie groaned when Talia's aura pressed on her.

"It's ALPHA DAMON for you, Cassie," Talia squeezed through her teeth. "You will talk to me, or there won't be a deal."

Talia retracted her aura and Cassie needed a moment to compose herself before asking, "What about the secrets I know? Aren't you afraid I will tell others?"

"After all the trouble you've caused, no one will believe you," Talia said. "If you need a reminder, I will be happy to entertain you. You are the reason why the Steelbite pack is paying tribute to the Dark Howlers pack. You have a reputation as someone who is shamelessly chasing after Damon. People also know you as a pampered princess, and since the latest edition of the WW Magazine..." Talia put the magazine on the coffee table for Cassie to see. "They also believe that you ran away from home since you can't stand the idea of a sibling."

Cassie's eyes widened. The front page had a bubble with her picture and a caption, 'A troubled princess on the run.' Cassie opened the magazine on the said page to see that they were guessing if she found herself a man, or if she stole valuables from the Steelbite pack. Another bubble said how Alpha Richard declines to comment on the situation, but he confirmed that he is expecting a child.

Cassie's stomach dropped. Now people think of her as a runaway and a thief. Can this get any worse?

Talia waited for Cassie to raise her gaze before saying, "We will honor our part of the deal. So... where do you want to go, Cassie?"

Cassie was not sure if she should trust Talia. If their roles were reversed, Cassie would definitely use this opportunity to get revenge.

"Can I talk to Alpha Damon?" Cassie asked. "It would put me at ease to know that he is aware of what's going on."

"It is not my responsibility to put you at ease," Talia responded with finality. "You either deal with me, or we will leave you outside the Dark Howlers pack territory and you can

fend for yourself. Or do you think I'm stupid to give you another chance to seduce my mate? Do you think he will be softhearted because you used to warm his bed?"

Talia's temper flared. She said those last words without thinking how they will impact her mood.

Talia was overcome with bloodlust and the desire to rip Cassie into pieces. The pregnancy hormones boosted her emotions to the extreme.

"Excuse my choice of words. You were never qualified to go to his room so you couldn't warm his bed." Talia felt better after saying this.

Cassie's expression tightened. "I don't trust you."

"The feeling is mutual," Talia said. "I knew you were stubborn, but I didn't know you were stupid. Look around, Cassie. You have one minute to tell me where you want to go, or I will leave, and then the warriors will come to drag your sorry ass out of here."

Cassie gritted her teeth. "I know things that are useful, that can harm you."

"Harm me?" Talia asked with amusement in her voice as her mood fluctuated again. "Do you have any idea with whom you are talking to? You played all your cards, Cassie. There is nothing useful you can give us."

Thanks to the leads Cassie gave them, they conducted a successful attack on a secret settlement of rogues. Damon and Maddox were confident that those were not all of them, but casualties caused a big dent in the forces that rogues had at their disposal. How will that change the rogues' plans to make a move during James' birthday? No one could predict that.

Talia wanted to address one more point. "After tonight, everyone will know my real identity. Do you think that people will dare to come after me when they confirm that Alpha Damon's fated mate is the Alpha of the Midnight Guardians pack?"

Cassie's eyes widened in shock, and her concern about her well-being swelled.

What did Talia say? She saw some notes on her father's desk about how Talia and Alpha Natalia were the same person, but no one knew for sure. What did this mean? Couldn't they just dispose of her? Talia could kill her with a thought, and no one would know. Would anyone search for her?

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