

Alphas Bride 271

Chapter 271 - Heaven Collapsed (3) [Bonus ]

'BANG!'

The door closed behind Tatiana, and two women who wore only towels on their bodies jolted in fright. Their nerves were tense as foreboding feelings consumed them.

The blonde and the brunette apprehensively looked at Maddox who stood paralyzed while staring at the carpet as possessed.

Two women exchanged concerned glances. What should they do?

Maddox told them to leave earlier that morning, but they were not fast enough.

Why did he come so quickly? Who goes on a group breakfast and returns in less than twenty minutes?

They ended up seeing him with another woman, and before anything really happened, Alpha Maddox got slapped! That was a great shame. Will he kill them to ensure they don't talk about it?

Two women wondered if that slap contained some magic because Alpha Maddox was unmoving like he was under a freezing spell.

"Alpha Maddox", the brunette called weakly.

Maddox's eyes snapped toward two women who shrunk on an instinct.

"Leave", he said in a low voice.

He felt an urge to tear them into pieces, but he knew that won't bring Tatiana back or erase image of those two bimbos standing there stupidly.

What did he even see in them?

Compared to Tatiana who shines in the colors of the rainbow, those two look like faded monochrome photocopies.

The brunette swiftly moved to collect her things, but the blonde still stared at him.

Maddox narrowed his eyes at the blonde. "Is your hearing damaged?"

She nervously gestured toward his crotch area. "You are leaking."

Maddox's brows furrowed in confusion. What did she say?

The blonde also scrambled to grab her garments and two women made a wide circle around Maddox before dashing out of the room.

Eventually, Maddox looked at his crotch area and stared at the stain that was slowly spreading. What the hell?

"Fuck!", he cursed loudly when he realized that the sausage he picked up from the ground earlier was in his pocket, leaking grease.

But Maddox couldn't care about his ruined shorts because he had other things to worry about.

Did Tatiana see that? Did she think that he peed himself? Or maybe that he suffers from premature ejaculation? Or...

Maddox rubbed his face forcibly. She probably didn't notice because she was too busy slapping him.

For a few brief minutes Maddox was flying, unable to wrap his head around the unexpected bliss that came with Tatiana's presence, and her every touch showed him a glimpse of Heaven.

It all came suddenly, and it collapsed in an instant and... Now what?

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"Tanya?", Kalina called when she saw Tatiana walking down the hallway.

After comparing their notes in the garden, the women concluded that they needed many things and only a mall will do. The mall is in the human town, so Maya will drive a van in order for all of them to go together and chat during the ride.

When Talia returned from the kitchen, guys headed for training, and the girls dispersed to get their necessities before heading for shopping. That's why Kalina was in here and she definitely didn't expect to see her newly-mated sister.

"You still didn't leave?", Tatiana asked.

"No. We are about to.", Kalina responded before glancing behind Tatiana and asking suspiciously, "Why are you here? What happened with Alpha Maddox?"

Tatiana didn't want to worry her baby sister. She would usually keep her problems to herself, but this situation caught her unprepared and Kalina already saw that something was off.

What should she say? That things got all hot and steamy but before they got to the main part, she saw two sluts in Maddox's room and her temper flared?

Before Tatiana could come up with a response to Kalina's questions, two women wrapped in towels dashed next to them, down the stairs, and out of the packhouse.

Kalina's face darkened as she realized, "Did those two come out of Alpha Maddox's room?"

Tatiana's silence was an answer to Kalina's question.

Rage rippled through Kalina as she was not used to controlling the aura that was waking up within her after Tony marked her.

"Lina", Tatiana called softly. "Don't. Let's go shopping."

Kalina looked at her sister with concern. "Are you sure?"

Tatiana nodded. "It's suffocating here. I need to get out. Shopping therapy might help me settle my emotions. Let's not alarm others..."

Kalina pressed her lips into a line. Easier said than done. Did Tatiana really think that Mindy won't figure out something was wrong when Tatiana shows up?

And it was not just Mindy. Maya, Talia, and Meg were also confused to see Tatiana join them for shopping.

Tatiana didn't say anything, but Kalina shared how they saw two naked women clutching towels around themselves and scampering out of Alpha Maddox's room.

In line with Kalina's expectations, Mindy was outraged.

Kalina and Maya stuffed Mindy in the van so that she doesn't make a scene.

Mindy wanted to go to Maddox and give him a beating. At least verbally.

Maya was driving, so Meg joined Kalina in holding Mindy down until they passed by Darkbourne. After that, they released Mindy since she calmed a bit.

Seeing that everyone was really concerned, Tatiana's heart warmed, and she told them briefly what happened in Maddox's room.

'Is Tanya with you?', Maddox's voice sounded in Mindy's head through the mind-link.

'You are an asshole!', Mindy hissed back.

Maddox snorted irritably. 'Is Tanya with you? Mindy! Talk to me! You...'

Mindy shut down the mind-link. He messed up and she was angry. Why should she help him?

Dumb brother! How can he forget that he has two women in his room?

He should be grateful that Tatiana didn't reject his sorry ass on the spot.

THIS is why Mindy didn't want to be mated to an Alpha. They are all bunch of lecherous snobs who always get what they want.

Since he entered his teens, Maddox was playing around, leaving a trail of heartbroken (and deflowered) girls wherever he passed but for him, that was part of the routine and the woman who is (un)fortunate

to be his mate should just ignore his repugnant past because he is THE Alpha who deserves all that while woman needs to suck it up.

Mindy walked in on Maddox with other women so many times that it became normal. No space was sacred.

Mindy often advised him to scale down on sleeping around, but nooooo, her brother is the mighty Alpha Maddox who can do whatever he feels like. Well, he can do whatever he wants now.

Mindy looked guiltily at Tatiana. "I am so sorry..."

"Don't.", Tatiana interrupted Mindy.

None of that was Mindy's fault, and Tatiana really didn't want to think about Maddox or about two women who emerged from his bathroom, or about his messy bed which had traces of a rowdy night Maddox spent with two women.

Sure, Tatiana didn't expect him to be a virgin. Even if he is not an Alpha, it would be normal that he had women in his life before they met. But she definitely didn't expect that his hookups were right there!

The delightful sparks of their bond messed with her reasoning and she allowed herself to be carried away.

Unfortunately, while Maddox was working on undressing Tatiana, two naked women were waiting on the side. What were they waiting for? To jump with them in the sack? Would Maddox welcome them? Bastard.

And even if those two were not there, Maddox wanted to claim her on the same bed that is drenched in his bodily fluids mixed with whatever those two hussies left behind.

Is that how one treats his mate?

Tatiana heard stories about mates, how their first time should be special, and her mate will cherish her forever, but Maddox made her feel worse than shit.

Will she be able to look at Maddox and not remember the horrible first impression?

What are her options?

Should she just reject this mate bond and move on with her life?

Chapter 272 - Relationship Advices

Tatiana's wolf was protesting the idea of rejecting Maddox, but Tatiana pushed the beast back. This was not the time to make decisions based on emotions that sprouted because she met a guy during one of her unplanned visits.

The unpleasant experience made Tatiana re-evaluate her opinion about the mate bond.

Tatiana was twenty-four years old independent woman with a solid head on her shoulders who saw a lot of the world, and not an inexperienced teenager from a small town who gets easily carried away by the flashy appearance of a local bad boy.

Sure, Maddox was outrageously handsome, his scent was addictive, and his flavor was even better, but did he have anything else going in his favor?

Money? Fame? Status? Tatiana didn't care if Maddox had those because she had her own, and him being an Alpha only complicated things.

Tatiana didn't plan to settle with a guy anytime soon and if not for the sparks of their bond, Tatiana would probably think of Maddox as a good hookup material and that's it. Being in a relationship with an

immature or insincere man will only bring her headaches no matter how good it feels when he embraces her.

They didn't even start, and she already got dirt thrown in her face. What can she expect going forward?

She needed to put things into a healthy perspective and remember what matters.

Tatiana made a name for herself. About five years ago 'Dama T' started shining in the fashion industry and since then, Tatiana travels and spends her days with beautiful, rich, and famous people who are eager to indulge her every need and want. Sure, she works hard, but that rewarded her with more money than she can spend in a few lifetimes, and she earned it all without a mate.

Those few moments with Maddox gave her an unexpected high, but... what is the price she needs to pay in order to feel it again?

Can she enjoy her time with Maddox after this?

What will happen when she leaves his side in order to attend her next fashion show? Will he have a few she-wolves to keep him company?

Mindy told her that her brother is a womanizer and Tatiana thought that Mindy was exaggerating. She should have known better.

Tatiana pushed those thoughts to the side. She really didn't want to think about Maddox because her headache was flaring again.

Her craving for coffee was cut short because it reminded her of Maddox. How ironic.

"It will be OK.", Kalina comforted Tatiana. "It's normal for Alphas to sleep around. They settle only after finding their mate."



"How did you accept Tony's lecherous past?", Tatiana asked bluntly, too distraught to worry about pleasantries.

"Uhm... he doesn't have one.", Kalina said guiltily. "Tony dated one woman and they broke up after he met me. If he slept with other women, he was discrete about it, so people didn't find out."

Tatiana smiled a little. "Lucky you."

"You should probably ask Lia about it.", Mindy said. "Max and Alpha Damon are made of the same mold."

Tatiana glanced at Talia. "Will you share your experience?"

Talia was not sure what to say. How did she accept Damon's lecherous past? She didn't. "They keep coming. It is up to me if I will allow them to bother me or not."

Tatiana frowned. "You are fine with other women coming onto Damon?"

"Of course, not. But Damon is consistent in assuring me that I am the only woman in his life.", Talia said and looked at Tatiana deeply. "Those women you saw are two out of many who touched Max's body, while you are the only one who can touch his heart. If you reject him, that door will close forever. I am not saying that you should turn a blind eye to what happened but ask yourself what you want. Did you feel the connection? Do you want to feel it again? If you do, give Max a chance to prove his sincerity."

Tatiana nodded faintly. Can she give him a chance? Maybe, later. Now she was too angry for any of that.

She wanted to drink, sleep, and forget about everything, but she will settle with shopping. For now.

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Damon returned to the packhouse when he heard that Axel, Kai, and Tyler entered the territory of the Dark Howlers pack.

He didn't need to welcome them personally, but he wanted to talk to Axel in private.

Damon was suspicious about Axel's motives for coming here and since everyone was busy, this seemed like a good opportunity to talk to these guests who self-invited themselves.

At that time, Damon would tell Axel that he was not welcome if Talia didn't look at him pleadingly. How can he say no to Talia?

With only a few Omegas busying themselves through the packhouse, Damon went to the study to keep busy until Axel arrives.

Damon passed next to the lounge and his legs stopped abruptly at the door. Did he see that right? Why was Maddox there? Shouldn't he be engaged in carnal pleasures with Tatiana?

"Max?", Damon asked while eyeing the Alpha who had a glass of amber liquor in his hand, and a dark cloud above his head.

"Did you come to lecture me also?", Maddox grumbled without turning to look at Damon.

"Lecture? About what? Where is Tatiana?" When Maddox didn't respond, Damon asked his next question. "Did you mess it up?"

Maddox nodded absentmindedly. "I did. It all happened so quickly that by the time I realized what's going on, my shorts smelled of sausage and I had a throbbing palmprint on my cheek."

Damon was confused. He guessed that the palmprint means Tatiana slapped Maddox, but what was the thing about the sausage, and how were those related?

Damon sat on the chair next to Maddox before asking, "How about you start from the beginning?"

Damon's face changed a few times as he listened to Maddox talking about amazing sparks, how good Tatiana tasted, a zipper that wouldn't budge, two women wearing only towels, and how Tatiana's slap collapsed his world.

Damon struggled not to laugh. Tatiana slapped Maddox! Damon would give anything to see that.

But Maddox was really distressed, so Damon focused on Maddox's words as he ended with, "I completely forgot about them, and now who knows what Tatiana is thinking. She said that I... humiliated her. I fucked up."

Damon could relate with forgetting about non-important females.

Maddox looked at Damon pleadingly. "What should I do now?"

"There is only one thing.", Damon said matter-of-factly.

"What?"

"Beg."

Maddox's face fell. "What? You want me to beg?" He never begged anyone for anything. He endured the harshest training without letting out a peep and now Damon told him to beg?

Seeing that Maddox was not willing, Damon thought of something else. "You have another option."

Maddox's face lit up with hope. "Which one?"

"Forget about her."

Maddox grimaced. "Can you be serious? Don't you know how important a fated mate is? If my pack finds out that I passed on my fated mate, it will cause displeasure."

"I am serious. Forget about what the pack will think. This is about you and her. Listen, and listen carefully because I will say this only once. I am telling you from experience. My start with Talia was..." Damon paused while trying to find the right word. "Unpleasant. Her wolf was hurt so she didn't know we were mates, and I was making one mistake after another until I realized that I can't do this halfheartedly. I wanted her completely, and I had to give my all in return."

"What mistakes did you make?", Maddox asked.

Damon cocked an eyebrow. "Marcy Redmayne. Do I need to say more?" Actually, Maddox didn't know about Marcy sucking Damon off when Damon and Talia saw each other the first time, but Damon didn't have any intention to share that detail. If Maddox knew about it, Damon wouldn't hear the end of it.

"This is not about me. It's about you.", Damon said. "Tatiana knew you were mates and when she saw those two she-wolves, she probably assumed that your heart is not into it. Show her your sincerity, show her that you want to be with her and only her. Beg, if needed. If you are not ready to do that much, forget about her. Those are your options. Pick one."

Seeing Maddox's troubled expression, Damon knew that Maddox had no intention of rejecting Tatiana.

"Look at the positives."

"Are there positives?"

"Of course!", Damon exclaimed. "First, she didn't reject you which means you have a chance. Second, she can feel the bond. Use it to win her back."

Maddox snorted. "This is all twisted. We are mates. She is mine. Why do I need to work for it?"

"That attitude will earn you a rejection.", Damon said dryly. "Don't think about Tatiana as yours. Think about her as your equal and imagine that roles were reversed. Imagine that instead of going to your room, the two of you ended up in hers, and just as the things got heated, some guys emerged from the bathroom. What would you do?"

Seeing that Maddox's expression contorted in rage, Damon patted his shoulder. "Good. Now we are getting somewhere. Next, internet."

"Internet?"

"It's full of useful tips on how to win over a woman. I'm sure we will find tips to help you." Damon got his phone and started typing while mumbling, "How to pacify a wife after she found out about two mistresses..."

Maddox's face darkened.

Chapter 273 - Relationship Advices (2)

Maddox was skeptical, thinking that Damon was messing with him. It wouldn't be the first time for Damon to pull a practical joke.

Damon wouldn't mess with this, right? This was about Maddox's fated mate, and it was important!

Maddox and Damon have such a bro-relationship where they tease and sometimes bully each other until it escalates into a fistfight, but when it counts, Maddox knew that Damon will have his back.

In any case, Maddox was out of ideas, so he decided to take the leap of faith.

Within seconds, Maddox was immersed in his phone while looking for solutions online.

At first, Maddox feared that he won't find anything useful, but only a few moments later he realized that the challenge will be to pick the right ones. There were so many!

Maddox understood that philandering and infidelity are common occurrences. Why else would there be numerous articles addressing those topics?

Damon silently enjoyed Maddox's predicament. Maddox was teasing him about Talia, and this must be some kind of a speed record for karma to do its magic.

At the thought of Talia, Damon got worried. Did Talia get a whiff of what happened here? And where was Tatiana?

Damon swiftly mind-linked Omegas in the packhouse and he found out that Tatiana was not in the packhouse. She actually joined other girls for shopping!

What if this incident with Maddox stirred some bad memories for Talia and she ends up with a grudge against Damon again?

How would he wiggle out of that predicament? Jumping in a waterfall was quite effective last time.

Damon rejected that idea. There must be a limit to how many times jumping in a waterfall will work, and he will save it for important things.

He didn't feel any resentment through their mate bond, so Talia must be fine or... far away. Right! They went to the human city! That was not really a big distance, so if Talia was in distress Damon should feel it, but he still wanted to make sure things were OK.

Damon tried mind-linking Maya, but he couldn't get through. One must know that the mind-link is not omnipotent.

The territory of the pack acts like a signal-booster, allowing pack members within their territory to communicate via mind-link without issues, but when outside of their pack territory, there are limitations in terms of range.

Since Maya was in the human town, she was out of the Dark Howlers pack territory, and Damon couldn't reach her with the mind-link, so he took his phone and send her a text.

[How are things on your end?]

Maya was in the swimwear store with Meg, Kalina, and Talia who were picking items under the supervision of Tatiana, and Maya was surprised to see a message from Damon.

Why didn't Damon contact Talia? If anyone would reach out to Maya, that would be Caden.

Something didn't feel right, but Maya still responded.

[Shopping]

[Is Tatiana with you?]

Maya cocked an eyebrow while staring at her phone. Why was Damon asking about Tatiana? Other than introducing themselves, Damon and Tatiana didn't interact.

Maya guessed that Damon might be asking for Alpha Maddox. Were they huddled next to Damon's phone? Maybe. Or actually... this might be Alpha Maddox using Damon's phone. Anything was possible. She decided to keep her responses short, just in case.

[Yes]

Damon was irritated with these one-word responses. It didn't tell him much, so he decided to be blunt.

[Do you know what happened between Tatiana and Max?]

[Yes]

[How did Talia take it?]

Maya smirked when she confirmed that this was Alpha Damon.

The scary Alpha was insecure! Should she call Talia and show her this?

Maya quickly dismissed that idea. The last time she meddled in the relationship between Damon and Talia, she ended up being separated from Caden.

Actually, Maya was happy that someone can stir Damon's previously stone heart. That's how it should be.

Maya swiftly typed a response.

[Lia acted like a true Luna and advised Tanya not to do anything rashly]

Damon puffed his chest when he read Maya's response. His kitten acted like a true Luna!

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Axel was trembling from excitement when he arrived in front of the packhouse of the Dark Howlers pack.



His instincts told him he was only a step away from finding the child from Cassandra's prophecy and he couldn't wait to see Talia again and confirm that voices in his head were true.

How would he confirm it? Axel was not sure, but if he was successful, that would be H-U-G-E!

In his mind, Axel could picture Cassandra confirming Talia's identity, and there would be no calamities and curses and he would prove to his parents and to everyone else how he was right.

Why did they fear that Talia would have awesome powers? Shouldn't that be a blessing?

A powerful member of the Midnight Guardians pack could raise their influence in the werewolf society and maybe, just maybe, open the door of possibilities where they won't need to hide their nature anymore.

In the scenario where Talia gave herself to a man who is not her mate, she wouldn't have any powers, which would make her an ordinary she-wolf. How can she pose any danger then?

Everyone in the Midnight Guardians pack knew about Cassandra's prophecy, but several decades passed with no news, and people started thinking about it as some legend, and not the real thing.

Some people would bring it up whenever a child was born on a full moon, but it didn't go beyond that.

However, Axel believed that the child was born already, and that was Talia.

What he couldn't figure out was who were the real parents of that child (aka Talia).

His parents either didn't know or they didn't want to tell him, and when he asked Cassandra about it, she responded in her enigmatic way, "When it's time for you to find out, you will."

That was another mystery, but the parents of that blessed child were not important. If Axel ever found out about their identities, he would ask them how could they allow for their child to be sent away.

Did they really think that she will be safer growing up with strangers who didn't know how special she was?

The Midnight Guardians pack is safeguarding so many secrets, what's one more? Or maybe her parents perished?

In Axel's opinion, the safest place for that child was in the Midnight Guardians pack. That's where she belonged, where her family was, and if that's really Talia, bringing her back home would be his way of apologizing for what was done two decades ago.

Other than Alpha Isaac and Alpha Sophia (aka Axel's parents), no one knew what Axel was trying to accomplish by coming here and they were not supportive, but Axel was not discouraged.

Kai and Tyler didn't know why Axel wanted to return to the Dark Howlers pack so soon. Normally, they would have months between their trips outside of the Midnight Guardians pack. But since Axel was set on going, as his future Beta and Gamma, the duo followed their future Alpha obediently.

Back to the present...

Dawn and Zina were at the main entrance, to welcome newcomers and show them into their rooms.

"Is Alpha Damon here?", Axel asked even though he really wanted to ask if Talia was there.

Dawn confirmed. "Alpha Damon is in the lounge with Alpha Maddox. The group from the Lightclaw pack is on the training grounds with Beta Caden. If you want to see Alpha Damon right away, we can take your things to your rooms."

"That will be appreciated.", Axel responded with a smile that put Dawn and Zina in a daze.

Every Alpha had qualities that would attract women, but Axel was special. Other than having chiseled features that were pleasing to the eyes, Axel was mysterious, usually stone-faced, and it was widely

known that members of the Midnight Guardians pack are saving themselves for their mates. This last clause only made Axel more desirable because every unmated girl dreamed of being THE ONE.

Axel's smile delivered a critical hit to Dawn's and Zina's tender hearts, and they needed a moment to collect themselves and scurry to help with suitcases that Kai and Tyler were hoisting out of the trunk of their car.

Chapter 274 - Relationship Advices (3) [Bonus ]

No matter how eager Axel was to meet Talia, based on the information Maddox provided, Axel knew that Damon and Talia were in a relationship, and he told himself to be patient. As long as he sticks to Damon, it's inevitable that he will see Talia.

Every member of the Midnight Guardians pack keeps secrets, and they are doing it for a reason. If Axel was right, and Talia is the missing child, that should be kept a secret from Damon, regardless of whether Talia awakened her powers or not, because Damon is an outsider.

Kai and Tyler went with Dawn and Zina straight to their rooms, and Axel headed to the lounge after dismissing Dawn and Zina with, "I know the way. Thank you."

Damon was aware that Axel and his party arrived at the packhouse, and he looked at the door of the lounge a few seconds before Axel appeared.

"Did you encounter issues during your trip?", Damon asked as Axel approached him with his hand outstretched for a handshake.

"No issues.", Axel responded, pleased that Damon shook his hand.

Axel glanced at Maddox who was scrolling on his phone and scribbling something on a piece of paper while his face changed rapidly from surprise to shock, outrage, delight... and then it was back to thoughtful.

"Did something happen?", Axel asked while gesturing with his chin toward Maddox.

In addition to the strange behavior, Maddox didn't even acknowledge his presence! But Axel was not angry because he spent quite some time with Maddox on the phone recently, and they could be considered close friends.

"Max met his mate this morning and..." Damon paused while picking words that wouldn't offend Maddox. "Things didn't go well."

Axel was speechless and he looked at Maddox with pity.

"Did he get rejected?", Axel asked Damon in a hushed voice.

"No. But he got close to it. As you can see, he is a mess."

Axel was unable to hide his curiosity. Finding a mate is a big deal, especially for an Alpha, and Maddox messed it up? What does that mean? He really wanted to know more.

"Let me know if I can help."

Damon shook his head. "You won't understand, and you can't help."

Axel frowned at Damon. It's one thing to say that he can't help, but what was that about not understanding? Did he imply that Axel was stupid?

"How about you tell me what happened and let me see if I can understand it?", Axel asked, unable to conceal his displeasure.

Damon shrugged and responded, "Max found his mate, took her to his room, and they were welcomed by two naked she-wolves who were there already."

Axel stared at Damon blankly while processing this information.

Damon smirked. "See? I told you. You won't understand because it's impossible to comprehend the infinite stupidity of a horny Alpha."

"Don't act like you are a saint.", Maddox growled. He glanced at Axel and nodded in a silent greeting.

Damon raised his hands defensively toward Maddox. "Don't put me in the same bucket with you. Besides, this is not about me. You need to fix it on your own if you want Tanya to see your sincerity. And aren't I helping? Without me, you would still be drinking and sulking."

Maddox wanted to object, but he stopped himself before he said anything. Damon was right. Without Damon, Maddox wouldn't think of going to the internet to search for the best ways to cajole a woman.

However, it was not straightforward because there were so many different tips and Maddox was confident some of them were decoys written by bitter women to make men crash and burn.

Complimenting Tatiana, gifting flowers, jewelry and perfumes sounded acceptable, but what was that about writing her poems, and singing? Do they really expect him to learn how to play guitar?

Be spontaneous? How can a man be spontaneous when under pressure to impress a woman?

Sure, watching the sunrise together sounds great, but how the hell is he supposed to reach that point?

There was a stream of articles about whisking her away on a romantic weekend. Did that mean kidnapping was allowed and women like it?

Surprise her. Respect her. Be honest. Be mysterious. Ask permission. Make her feel special. Don't shy from expressing your affection. Keep things private. Be available. Don't be intrusive. Call often. Don't suffocate her. Learn about her likes and dislikes. Don't pry into her private matters.

Maddox thought that his brain will explode. Don't authors of those tips realize they are contradicting each other?

The point of how women are emotionally driven was complete bullshit! If Tatiana followed her emotions, she would stick to Maddox no matter what because mate bond comes first, and he is a hot piece of ass!

Maddox and Tatiana were less than a minute away from going at it and Maddox was confident that Tatiana wanted it just as he did! But then... why did she leave?

Sure, she was angry because her pride was hurt, but why didn't she slap him a few more times to get it out of her system and then drag him to bed?

Nothing made sense.

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Maddox would occasionally sigh or groan, and Damon had enough of it. Besides, he had more important things to do, and that included talking to Axel.

Was Axel really interested in training? He can do that in his own pack.

With the reputation of the Midnight Guardians pack being an isolated pack and not mingling with outsiders, Axel coming here two times within one month was unusual and Damon believed that this might be related to Talia.

Damon saw Axel looking at Talia, and Damon didn't like it.

Being nice to Talia had nothing to do with how Damon treated others and he wanted to clarify important points with Axel: Talia was taken, and Axel needed to drop whatever ideas he had about her.

"I need to talk to you.", Damon told Axel. "Do you mind joining me in the study for..."

"You are leaving me?", Maddox's question interrupted Damon.

Damon frowned. Since when was Maddox clingy?

"You have things under control.", Damon responded.

"I don't.", Maddox admitted grumpily. Seeing that Damon was not willing, Maddox turned to Axel. "I need support."

Axel shifted on his feet. "I am not the right person to give relationship advice."

"That's fine. I need moral support. And you can give me your opinion on these..." Maddox waved the paper where he was jotting ideas. "At least tell me if I will make a complete ass of myself."

Axel glanced at Damon. "We can talk later, right? I plan to stay here for a few days."

Damon grumbled in displeasure before pointing out for Maddox, "You should really ask girls about this. I recommend Maya." Goddess knows Maya always has something to say.

Axel's ears perked up at the mentioning of girls and he suppressed his urge to ask if that includes Talia.

Maddox's brows came together in concern. "All girls are together, and Maya probably heard what happened. Do you think she will help?"

Damon had to agree that Maddox had a point.

Axel looked at Damon and Maddox and he couldn't believe his ears. "If both of you are aware that your lecherous ways are disrespecting women and will come to bite you when you find your mate, why do you keep doing it?"

Damon gritted his teeth in annoyance, but he couldn't rebuke Axel's words. If this was before Talia came into his life, Damon would argue, however, now it was different.

"There is no point in talking about the past.", Damon said diplomatically. "We need to assess the current situation and make plans for minimizing damage and turning this catastrophe into something beautiful."

Seeing that both Maddox and Axel stared at him, Damon asked, "What?"

"This flowery tongue...", Maddox said. "Is that Talia's influence?"

Damon didn't deny it. "She makes me a better man."

In the face of Maddox's pleading gaze, Damon caved in. "Alright. Let me see what you came up with. Axel, take a seat... we can talk later."

Axel eyed Damon cautiously. Damon just admitted that he is entangled with Talia and that sounded alarm bells in Axel's head. If they are serious, it would be a problem to take Talia with him.

Axel really wanted to ask Damon about the nature of his relationship with Talia, but he knew that this was not the right time.

If their relationship was something that should be publicized, Damon would do it a long time ago, probably during the Summer Solstice festival.



At that time, Axel assumed that Talia was a passing entertainment for Damon that will pass shortly, but then Damon took her to the event at the Lightclaw pack, and now she was here with other females, and Axel was not sure what to think.

Chapter 275 - Poor Performance

In the underground garage of the mall...

Talia, Maya, Mindy, Kalina, Tatiana, and Meg finished with their shopping and were putting things in the van with the help of the staff from the mall.

Neither of them thought she bought much, but there were six of them, and when all boxes and shopping bags came together, it was a lot.

Luckily, Maya suggested using the van to come to the mall so after folding unused seats, there was enough space for their purchases.

Tatiana and Mindy were in charge of making sure everything fits and nothing is squished or broken while Meg and Kalina helped. Maya started the van and was searching for the radio station that will play some cheery music and Talia used this opportunity to step to the side and check her phone.

Talia smiled dreamily at the messages she received from Damon in the last half an hour.

[I hope you are having fun]

[Buy whatever you like]

[Don't stray away from the group]

[I miss you]

[Stay safe]

[I can't wait to see what you bought]

[I hope there is something for me]

While shopping, Talia would occasionally respond to his messages, but he sent so many that she wondered if he was doing what he was supposed to do: training with Tony and others.

Talia looked at the group of ladies busying themselves around the van, and a novel sense of pride filled her chest.

She never shopped like that with girlfriends. Actually, she never shopped like that. Period.

The whole morning was exciting, and she didn't feel like an outsider.

Talia wondered how to thank Damon for it because all this wouldn't be possible without him.

When Talia told Damon that girls will go shopping, he gave her a credit card with words, "Don't look at the price tags, kitten. Nothing is too expensive for my Luna."

"I'm not sure I can accept this." She was not comfortable spending his money.

"Don't be silly.", he said with a knowing smile and gestured to her to look at the card.

Talia's eyes widened when she saw that the black card in her hand had a name: Talia Blake.

"When did you get this?", Talia asked Damon, unable to hide her surprise.

He cupped her face in his palms and gazed into her honeyed eyes while talking, "On the day you started working as my assistant, I changed my bank account to a joint one and added you. I was looking for a good chance to give you the card, and this seems to be the one. What's mine is yours, kitten."

His care warmed her heart.

She couldn't connect this feeling of happiness with the person she was a month ago. At that time, Talia was alone in the attic, mostly thinking about securing her next meal and concealing her presence from others, yet now she was daydreaming about a handsome Alpha who was hers only.

Since she met Damon, Talia's life changed drastically, and she got many things she never thought will happen, like friends and her wolf.

It was surreal.

Talia looked at Tatiana while wondering what's going on in the latter's mind. Whatever it was, it must have been related to Maddox, and it was probably painful and conflicting. But on the outside Tatiana was cool and composed, and she even smiled a little, and Talia admired that very much.

Talia knew how wonderful she felt in Damon's embrace, and she also knew how agonizing was the thought that other women enjoyed the similar treatment, and Tatiana actually saw two women in Maddox's room.

Talia wanted to comfort Tatiana, but other than their short exchange on their way to the mall, Tatiana didn't talk about Maddox, and Talia felt awkward bringing it up. And there was also the point that Talia was not sure what to say and not appear nosy. She didn't want to make it worse.

While thinking about the possibility of worsening the current situation, another thing popped on Talia's mind and she beckoned Maya to join her on the side, out of the earshot of others.

"What should we do about the party on the beach?", Talia asked Maya.

Maya immediately understood where Talia was going with that. The party was to celebrate Tatiana and Maddox as mates. However, the duo's current relationship status was not something that should be celebrated.

"Let's see what Kalina says." Maya decided to leave this decision to the person who knows Tatiana the best.

Kalina thought for a moment before responding. "Preparations are already ongoing, so let's keep it. My sister seems fine, but I know that she is hurting on the inside. A party might cheer her up. Just remove any mate-related message from the cake and say that the party is to celebrate all of us gathering."

And with that, girls entered the van and headed to the packhouse of the Dark Howlers pack.

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Damon, Axel, and Maddox lined up in front of the packhouse, waiting for the van with six young women to arrive.

Axel sent Tyler and Kai to train with others and he decided to stick around, eager to see Talia as soon as possible.

However, now that he was standing next to the Maddox who had a big bouquet of colorful flowers in his hands, Axel regretted not joining his Beta and Gamma. But the gray-metallic Mercedes van was approaching them, and it was too late to change his mind.

The moment the van appeared in sight, Maddox's body stiffened.

He was a nervous wreck.

First, he never gave flowers to any woman (his mother doesn't count).

Second, he was about to face the woman who slapped him. No one EVER slapped him and lived to talk about it, yet here was Maddox with flowers as a present for the one who violated his handsome face.

And third, he was about to apologize. Maddox NEVER apologized for anything in his life.

Maddox was only minutes away from embarking on the journey of many firsts and he was extremely uncomfortable, but the internet and Damon said that Maddox needs to go through this.

Axel agreed that this was the least Maddox needed to go through as penance for what he did.

Axel even hinted that this might be just a beginning, but Maddox dismissed it as exaggeration nonsense. Surely, Tatiana will see his sincerity and forgive him. Right? RIGHT!?

And it's not like he cheated! He was with those two women BEFORE he even knew that Tatiana exists.

The only faux pas he made was that he didn't consider the possibility that those two women were still in his room, but that was one small forgetfulness, and he shouldn't walk through fire because of that.

Needless to say, Damon was enjoying this. He couldn't wait for the van to stop and those doors to open because Talia was in there and because the show will begin.

Damon wondered if Maddox will crash and burn quickly, or if Tatiana will give him a slow and painful death.

Damon was 90% confident that Maddox's attempt to cajole Tatiana will fail.

With Talia's kind and forgiving personality, Damon had to jump into the freaking waterfall in order to get her to soften up, and considering Tatiana's prideful nature, just one bouquet of flowers won't be enough.

Damon wanted all this to be more theatrical, but Maddox firmly refused to kneel and serenade Tatiana.

Maddox accepted the idea of presenting to Tatiana the biggest flower bouquet they could find in Darkbourne on short notice, and Damon doubted if Tatiana will give Maddox more chances after this poor performance.

All three guys straightened up when the van stopped.

The side door opened, and girls started milling out.

Meg stepped out first and went to the back to fetch the bags. Of course, she saw Maddox with flowers, just like all other women in the van, and they all waited to see what Tatiana will do.

Maya hopped from the driver's side, and she joined Meg in the back, pretending to search for the right bags with her eyes on the Maddox.

Maddox took a step forward apprehensively while looking at Tatiana who was getting out of the van. No matter how he looked at her, she was perfect. A Goddess.

The addictive scent of strawberries reached him and a mental image of Tatiana riding him wildly flashed in his mind. Yup, that's where she belongs, on top of him.

Maddox hesitated. What if this bouquet of flowers was not big enough?

Tatiana's frosty gaze skimmed over Maddox who was peeking on the side of the colorful arrangement, and she addressed Damon. "Alpha Damon, how nice of you to welcome us back personally and you even brought help. They can carry our bags upstairs."

Axel frowned. How did he become part of 'they' who should carry things? He doesn't even know half of the women there!

Tatiana walked around Maddox-statue and went straight into the packhouse.

Maddox needed a moment to process this. Did Tatiana ignore him? No, worse than ignoring, she treated him as help, an Omega... And he was holding wretched flowers and was about to apologize for something he didn't do! Damn it!

Chapter 276 - Maddox's Apology (1)

The warm breeze carried away the intoxicating scent of strawberries Tatiana left behind, and rage bubbled inside Maddox as he slowly processed what just happened.

How can Tatiana disregard him? They are mates! She should worship the ground he is walking on and not dismiss him like some nobody!

And even without the mate bond, he is an Alpha! This was blatant disrespect.

Part of him was angry because he was the one allowing Tatiana this freedom, and she was abusing it!

No matter if it's in terms of physical strength or his Alpha aura, he could suppress Tatiana easily but he didn't want to play that way. He never forced a woman to obey him, and he had no intention to do so now.

But it hurt to be this humiliated by a woman who should be his other half.

Maddox wanted to snatch that enchantress, put her over his knee, and give her a good spanking.

Maddox was about to throw flowers on the ground when Damon grabbed his raised arm.

"You know she is testing you. Right?", Damon said. "Whatever attraction you feel toward Tatiana, she feels the same."

"What attraction?", Maddox squeezed through his teeth.

"Calm down.", Damon tried to reason with him. "By giving in to your rage, she won."

"What do you suggest, wise guy?", Maddox asked Damon sarcastically.

"Tatiana said that you can carry her bags. Use that to get access to her room. Do what's necessary for her to forgive you and don't lose your temper. Discuss things in private. Apologize."

Maddox sneered. "Apologize? For what?"

"Apologize for whatever she thinks you did. Right now, you are at disadvantage, and you need to be careful. The more time you spend with her, the more your bond will strengthen, and things will get easier. Trust me on this one. You won't regret it."

Maddox wanted to argue, but Damon was looking at him seriously and Maddox ended up nodding even though he didn't understand what Damon was saying.

Kalina was already in front of Maddox with several shopping bags in her hands. She wanted to argue for her sister and to tell Maddox to tone down that attitude, but now that she was standing close to Maddox, she realized how big he is. His hostile expression made him look like a ferocious ogre that could make her fly away with a flick of his finger.

She couldn't help but wonder, are all Alphas so scary?



Alpha Damon was not so big physically compared to Alpha Maddox, but Kalina clearly remembers how his Alpha aura immobilized her when he angrily carried Talia from Alpha Maddox's room at the Lighclaw pack.

Compared to Alpha Maddox and Alpha Damon, her Tony was like a tame puppy.

Kalina swallowed a mouthful of air before extending her arms toward Maddox. "These are Tanya's."

Maddox violently snatched bags from Kalina's hands before going into the packhouse. His feisty movements made some of the flowers fall out of the bouquet, leaving a flowery trail behind him.

Maddox didn't know which room was Tatiana's, but the scent of strawberries showed him the way.

"Hi, Axel! It's nice to have you here.", Talia said, and Axel responded with a reserved wave.

Axel was planning to greet her enthusiastically, but the fact that Talia walked straight to Damon while talking to Axel, made Axel pause to observe the situation.

"Will things be OK? Max won't do something unforgivable, right?", Talia asked while snuggling into Damon's embrace.

Talia's arms wrapped around Damon's firm torso naturally and she took in a deep breath of his intoxicating scent. Forest and the dark chocolate. Her favorites.

Damon pressed his lips on Talia's forehead briefly before responding, "It will be fine."

"How do you know?"

Damon looked at the little woman who was leaning on him completely. "Because the Moon Goddess doesn't make mistakes. She paired them up for a reason." Just how she paired the two of us.

He didn't say this last part aloud, but Talia knew what he wanted to say.

Kalina nodded at Damon's words. Tony was exactly what Kalina needed and maybe this ogre-like Alpha (aka Maddox) is what her prideful sister needs.

Seeing that Damon and Talia were serving copious amounts of dog food, Kalina went to get her bags.

"Did you miss me?", Damon asked Talia while gazing at her lovingly.

"Do you need to ask?", she responded with a question.

Damon pouted. "I want to hear you say it."

Talia smiled at the silly Alpha. "I missed you."

Damon hummed in approval and leaned to kiss her again, this time on the lips.

Axel stood on the side and watched Damon and Talia who were lovey-dovey, and even though there were other people present, he felt like a peeper.

Damon's and Talia's smiles matched as they exchanged a few soft kisses before Damon said, "I hope you didn't hold back on shopping. Let me carry your bags upstairs. Will you show me what you bought?"

"Don't you have work to do?"

"I always have time for you, kitten."

Talia wanted to reprimand him because he can't neglect his duties, but his words made her mushy on the inside and she ended up smiling foolishly.

As Damon moved to get shopping bags with Talia's things, Talia turned to Axel.

"How was your trip?"

"It was fine. Thank you for asking Miss Talia. Are you doing well since we met the last time?"

Talia always liked how polite Axel was. He was addressing her like she was someone important even before people started guessing that she was in a relationship with Damon.

"Yes. I am doing well. Are you hungry? If you are, we can get you some food because we will have lunch on the beach and that will be at least one hour from now, probably more."

Axel wanted to accept and to ask if Talia will join him for a snack, but he saw Damon glowering at him, so Axel was quick to reject. "No need to bother with me, Miss Talia." He will find his chance to approach Talia, later.

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"That doesn't sound good."

Maddox paused when he heard Tatiana's voice from her room.

He wanted to knock, but the door was open ajar, so he stood there silently with an intention to hear with whom Tatiana was talking.

Yes, he was eavesdropping, and he was not ashamed of it.

"I'm sure you can handle it, Mario."

Maddox's expression darkened. Mario sounded like a guy's name. Did Tatiana have a man inside?

His hands were full of shopping bags and there was also a ruffled bouquet of flowers, so he used his shoulder to push the door open, ready to punch the daylights out of Mario.

Maddox paused at the sight of Tatiana's back. She was standing in front of the window, facing outside, and the exquisite curves of her body made Maddox drool a little. He really wanted to fondle her all over.

"Come on, it can't be that bad...", Tatiana said, and Maddox realized that she was talking on the phone.

OK. There was no man but still... who the hell was Mario?

Tatiana exhaled and her voice became impatient. "I am visiting my sister and I told you that I expect you to deal with emergencies in my absence. Is it too much to ask for a few days?... Fine, fine. I know it's not your fault. Send me pictures of the fabric with details. I will see who dares to send me Charmeuse when I requested Crepe de Chine..."

Maddox stood at the door of Tatiana's room and stared at her as possessed.

Her delicious scent of strawberries was hard to resist, and he wondered if she could feel his scent.

Damon said that they feel the same. That means she also feels the attraction and the sparks and the only thing preventing her from ripping his clothes off and pushing him on the bed is that she saw those two women in his room.

Was Tatiana really controlling her urges to that extent?

Just thinking about her softness and the mind-spinning kisses made Maddox hard. He was never so easily aroused and to think that Tatiana was immune to his charms was impossible to accept.

Maybe if he gets closer and touches her and she feels the sparks, she will remember how good it feels when they embrace each other. Or she might slap him again.

Ah! If those two wenches left how Maddox told them, Maddox and Tatiana would be entangled with each other, and he wouldn't stand there like an idiot with shopping bags and flowers in his hands while Tatiana pretended that he doesn't exist.

Chapter 277 - Maddox's Apology (2) [Bonus ]

Maddox was confident that Tatiana is a smart woman. If he explains how those two she-wolves happened before he met Tatiana and that she saw them only because those two lingered against his orders, things will be fine.

Tatiana ended her phone call and sat at the small desk where her laptop was. The screen lit up a second later, and Tatiana started going through her emails.

Maddox looked at Tatiana's enchanting profile and he frowned while wondering if she was ignoring him or if she really didn't notice him there.

He dismissed the first option. After all, he is an Alpha and no one EVER ignored him.

But then... he is a rather big guy, standing at the door that's wide open. It would be impossible not to notice him.

Maddox didn't allow this small technicality to deflate his momentum, and he cleared his throat to get Tatiana's attention.

"Keep those down and you can leave.", Tatiana said without raising her gaze from the screen.

Rage bubbled within Maddox. How dares she dismiss him like he is some errand boy?

'BOM!'

The sound of shopping bags falling on the hardwood floor was unusually loud and Maddox wondered what she bought. That sounded too loud for shoes and garments. What if it was something hard and breakable? There was no sound breaking, but still...

"What do you think you are doing?", Tatiana asked irritably. How dares he throw things she purchased?

Maddox lifted his gaze from the bags at his feet and looked at her.

Part of him wanted to argue, and there was another part that wanted to pull her into his embrace and kiss her senselessly. He was never so conflicted!

He remembered that he was still holding onto one thing. "I brought you flowers."

Tatiana's perfectly groomed eyebrow arched. "So?"

Maddox's face fell. What does she mean by, so?

How was he supposed to answer this?

"Listen...", Maddox paused when he realized that his frustration was showing. He took a deep breath and continued. "I know we had a rough start and I want us to start over."

Maddox didn't move a muscle while Tatiana scrutinized his handsome form.

Impatience grew within Maddox, mixing with anxiousness and rage. Is it so difficult to say, 'Yes, Max. That's a wonderful idea...!', and then get naked and go at it?

"Come in, close the door.", Tatiana said eventually.

Maddox grinned. It's working! Ha! And he didn't need to beg or kneel or anything!

After closing the door, Maddox turned to Tatiana who looked at him with amusement on her face, but she didn't move. He wanted to go there and embrace her, but his instincts told him that wasn't a good idea, so he stood there awkwardly.

One second. Two. Three seconds.

"I am listening.", Tatiana said, and Maddox frowned in confusion.

"To?", he asked.

"To whatever you wanted to say." Tatiana tilted her head at his silence. "I hope you came here to explain yourself because just bringing flowers won't count for much."

She stood up and straightened non-existent creases on her dress. "I will appreciate it if you hurry up."

"Do you have something more important to do than to clear up the misunderstanding with your mate?", Maddox asked with a sneer. Maybe she has something to do with that Mario person.

Tatiana ignored his hostility. "Talia and Maya set aside this afternoon for spending time on a beach. It was a long time since I relaxed, and I would like to go there, but before that, I have some work-related things to settle."

Max couldn't believe it. She just brushed off the whole mate business!

Maddox swallowed curses that threatened to come out of his mouth and forced a smile that looked more like an ugly grimace.

"As I said, I want us to start over." He extended his hand that held a disheveled bouquet of flowers. "My name is Maddox River. I am Alpha of the Blue River pack and your mate."

Seeing that Tatiana didn't move, Maddox walked toward her and stopped when he was one step away from Tatiana.

"These are for you."

Instead of taking the flowers that nearly touched her chest, Tatiana asked, "Do you know why I left your room this morning?"

Maddox pressed his lips into a line. "Those she-wolves were there since last night. That was before I was aware of your existence. I told them to leave, but they didn't. If I knew they were in that bathroom, I wouldn't bring you to my room."

"So, if they left the room when you told them to, everything would be great. Right?"

Maddox was not sure where she was going with this, but the answer was obvious. "Yes."

Tatiana frowned and before she could say anything, Maddox spoke again, "You know we are mates. We are made for each other. Why are you making this difficult?"

Tatiana looked at him in disbelief. "I am making this difficult? Listen here, Maddox River, Alpha of the Blue-whatever pack. Mates should cherish each other, put the other one first. It's a sacred bond created by the Moon Goddess, and you dirtied it."



"How did I dirty it? When I saw you, I forgot about everything else, including that there might be other women in my room."

Tatiana's face stiffened. "I would assume that an Alpha in charge of a pack would have more things going for him. You disappoint me."

Maddox frowned. "What am I lacking?"

"Brain.", Tatiana deadpanned. "Your lack of sensibility is proving that you are just a hot piece of ass."

Subconsciously, Maddox twisted his body to see his behind and mumbled, "It's a good ass."

Really, no one ever complained about his physique, and he had no idea why Tatiana brought it up. Besides, if he ignored her derisive tone, it sounded like a compliment. How can a hot piece of ass be a bad thing?

Seeing that Tatiana's face darkened, Maddox added, "No one said how my hot ass is the only thing I have. I am sensible and that is why I'm here. With flowers."

Tatiana sneered. "Sensible? And how do you explain that my other half was eager to claim me as his on the bed where he spent a rowdy night with two other women? And it was not just the night. Based on the fresh scents lingering in the air, I was confident that you were busy until minutes before we met. Is that how one should treat his mate? You talk about starting over but that might be possible only if you can erase that disgusting mental image."

The truth was that under her composed facade, Tatiana was barely keeping it together. The mate bond works in such a way. Maddox was outrageously handsome, and his scent of coffee was irresistible, and she paid attention not to touch him because if the addictive sparks flare, she might snap and pounce on him.

But she couldn't give in to those primal urges because Maddox obviously needed an attitude adjustment.

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Maddox realized that the problem is wider than just two women emerging from the bathroom with towels around their bodies. This was also about the bed, but... "The only one I could think of was you, and everything else..."

"Wrong!", Tatiana snapped and her voice was rising as she lost control of her temper. "The only one you could think of was YOU. If you thought about me even a little bit, you would wonder if I would enjoy shagging a guy on the bed that was recently used by someone else. Damn it! At least you could change the bedsheets. And you would definitely double-check if the sluts you left in your room were still there."

Maddox was at a loss for words. Everything she said was correct, but this didn't sound right either. But he had a feeling that talking about it won't lead anywhere and it will only make things worse.

He wished that Mindy was there. Mindy was knowledgeable about this female stuff, and she would definitely tell him something useful. He thought about mind-linking Mindy, but then he remembered that she cut him off earlier, which means that Mindy abandoned him and he was on his own.

Chapter 278 - Maddox's Apology (3)

Facing Tatiana's determined expression, Maddox frantically searched his brain for the right move, a gesture, a speech, anything... to win over a woman. He read about so many on the internet, but now that he was in a sticky situation, everything was jumbled up and nothing made sense.

With no other choice, Maddox steeled his will, like he was about to face several dozen rogues on his own, and spoke solemnly.

"You are right. I was thinking about myself."

Maddox paused while observing Tatiana's expression that didn't crack, but her eyes told him that she was surprised by this blunt way of speaking and he hoped that was a good sign.

He braced himself and continued, "How do you expect me to care about you when I never cared about anyone in my life? From the moment I laid my eyes on you, the only thing on my mind was to get closer, to inhale your scent, to touch you, and I forgot about anything else, but even if I didn't, I wouldn't know from where to start."

Maddox spread his arms before gesturing toward himself. "This is me. I bedded more women than I can remember, and I never cared for any. Until now. I am willing to learn and change my ways, if you allow me. We both know we are mates. My stance is clear. I want to make this work. However, it seems that you still didn't decide if you will reject or accept me. Which one will it be?"

Seeing that Tatiana just looked at him, Maddox continued, "I know that your pride got hurt this morning and I came here to apologize. Since this is not enough for you to accept me, I need to know what else I need to do. State your conditions."

In the face of Maddox's determination, Tatiana's respect for him rose.

As a businesswoman, she appreciated the no-nonsense approach and if she could pick a man to spend her life with, it wouldn't be a heartless playboy, but it wouldn't be a softie either.

Unfortunately, as much as she liked Maddox's little speech, Tatiana didn't have a solution. If she tells him what steps to take and he follows through, it wouldn't be from his heart and she wanted to see what he will do for her, as his mate.

"I appreciate your honesty, and I will be frank in return.", she said. "Your first impression was bad and if you want me to drop my guard, I need to believe that it won't happen again. If you want to show your sincerity, just one bouquet of flowers won't suffice."

"How many will?", he asked without missing a beat.

Tatiana was not sure if she should laugh or cry. "It's not about the flowers, Max. It's about showing that you care for me."

"How do I do that?" He needed ideas and he needed something that will produce quick results.

Tatiana exhaled helplessly. Maddox's speech from a minute ago was promising, but now he confirmed that his EQ is negative.

"That is something you will need to figure out yourself. Now, if you will excuse me, I have things to do."

Maddox realized that Tatiana was chasing him away. And she still didn't accept the flowers!

"What things?", Maddox asked stiffly.

"There are some matters in the company I need to take care of."

"What company?"

Tatiana rolled her eyes. "If you paid attention to what I was saying during breakfast, you would know that I own a company."

Maddox pressed his lips into a line guiltily. She was right. He was not paying attention because he was mesmerized by her enchanting visual and distracted by his hard-on. He couldn't say that, but he didn't want to leave either.

Damon said that the more time they spend together, the bond will strengthen, and then Tatiana will give in.

OK. Maddox added this last part, but the rest was Damon's.

"Do you mind if I stick around?", Maddox asked.

"Suit yourself. But don't bother me. I have important matters to deal with.", Tatiana responded and sat back on the chair before focusing on her emails.

Maddox pulled a chair from the side and sat next to her happily.

He gazed at her elegant fingers that danced over the keyboard. Every part of Tatiana was seductive, fingers included. He licked his lips while imagining those fingers in his mouth. He would suck each of them thoroughly.

Maddox shifted a bit to adjust his hard-on and he wondered if Tatiana was impacted by his proximity how much he was impacted by hers.

He frowned a bit when he saw that she was totally focused on whatever was on the screen.

He was right next to her!

What could it be so important?

Maddox's frown deepened when he looked at the header of the email Tatiana was responding to. There was that name again. "Who is Mario?"

"My assistant.", Tatiana responded.

"A guy?"

"Yes."

"Is he... handsome?"

Tatiana's fingers paused above the keyboard and her lips lifted into a smile. "You wanted to ask if he is more handsome than you."

"That also.", Maddox said stiffly.

Tatiana stifled a giggle. "I wouldn't know. When I hire people, I look at their abilities, and not at their appearance."

Maddox was not happy with this response. "But now that I asked, you are thinking about how handsome he is. Right?"

Tatiana shook her head and refused to answer. If any of them should worry about Mario being interested romantically, that would be Maddox because Mario is openly gay, but Tatiana didn't want to reveal that to Maddox. Let him simmer in jealousy.

It took Tatiana only a few seconds to acknowledge that being with Maddox was natural, like it was supposed to be that way.

He was stubborn and irritating, and she was not sure if that clashed with her willful personality, or it complemented her, but she had a feeling that if they could smoothen things out and work together, they will be unstoppable.

Tatiana shot a side-glance at the messed up bouquet that Maddox kept on the table, next to her laptop, and she struggled not to smile.

As a successful good-looking young woman, Tatiana has her share of admirers who are regularly sending her gifts and that messed-up bouquet of flowers was probably the most horrific thing she received in a long time, yet it warmed her heart.

She reminded herself to focus on work because she was on the verge of giving in to the charms of the Alpha whose scent made her dizzy.

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Two minutes later...

"Do you need to be so close?", Tatiana asked stiffly. Maddox was inching toward her steadily while making sniffing sounds and she could feel his heat splashing on her skin.

With his scent muddling her mind and knowing that he was right next to her, it was impossible to focus on work.

"You are beautiful.", he responded in a deep voice that shook her insides.

"I am trying to work."

"So am I."

"What's your work? Distracting me?"

Maddox chuckled. "I am not trying to distract you."

Tatiana snapped to look at him irritably. "And what are you trying to do?"

"To get to know you."

Tatiana's heart skipped a beat at his words.

He reached to touch her cheek with the tips of his fingers, and he was happy that she didn't move to avoid him. The sparks shot up his arm and went straight to his heart and the way she leaned into his touch told him that she could feel the sparks also. And she liked them.

"Do you accept my apology?" Maddox was so close that his breath splashed on her lips.

"I didn't hear one."

"You are a smart woman, Tatiana Wilkov. I am confident that you know me being here is my way of saying that I am sorry for what happened."

"Will it hurt you to say it?"

There was no way he will say it. They were close, and the sparks were there, and he knew that she was on the verge of caving in. Just a bit more. "Do you forgive me?"

Tatiana inhaled a shaky breath that was filled with the delicious scent of coffee. She really wanted some, but she fought mightily against that urge.

"I am thinking about it.", she responded. "Don't you need to get ready for the beach?"

Maddox's eyes lit up. Tatiana already said that she was going to the beach, and this question definitely implied that he should come also. Score for Maddox!

"I can be ready in five minutes.", he said.

"How about you start now? There is no need to rush."

"I will be back once I'm ready and we can go there together."

Tatiana refused. "I will see you at the beach."



Maddox observed her for a few seconds in silence before saying, "Don't blame me if you see me sooner."

He took her hand into his and before she could react, he kissed the back of her palm.

"Mmm...", Maddox hummed lowly while his lips rested on her skin, and he relished the sensation of the sparks that made him feel alive.

"I will see you soon, Tanya.", Maddox said with a boyish grin and walked out with a spring in his step.

When the door closed behind Maddox, Tatiana reached to touch her hand where addictive sparks still danced.

Tatiana didn't want to admit it, but she missed his presence already.

Will she be able to smoothen out those rough edges around Maddox or will she cave in first? Tatiana was not sure, but she was determined to see what will happen.

Chapter 279 - Maddox's Rage [Bonus ]

Maddox walked away from Tatiana's room with difficulty.

Every cell in his body screamed for Tatiana's proximity, but he knew that forcing it will only make it worse.

Maddox had many skills in his repertoire which included negotiating deals, disarming bombs, calculating yearly expenses for the whole pack, and fighting in human and wolf form. However, courting a woman was not a part of that impressive lineup.

Maddox was never a gentleman because there was no need. His position allowed him to deal with others by being bluntly honest. As for women, they would come to him in all shapes and sizes to serve him willingly and the only thing he needed to do was to make his picks for the night.

That's the treatment all Alphas receive and their instincts to show their power and domination are not helping them in being polite.

But no matter how low his EQ was, Maddox was aware that his blunder from that morning offended Tatiana and if he tries to rush her into accepting him, it will only backfire.

Since he didn't know how to be sensible toward women, Maddox treated his current situation to negotiating a business deal with a party that was not eager to strike a deal. However, this time the stakes were his heart and his future as an Alpha.

If he fails, Maddox will lose the Luna that the Moon Goddess gave him, and the consequences will be unimaginable.

This was important and he couldn't allow for any loose ends that might trip him along the way.

He was itchy to get ready for the beach and reunite with Tatiana as soon as possible, however, in order to increase his chances of success, he needed to deal with liabilities, and one of them was right here.

Maddox stopped in front of one door and pushed it open without knocking.

"Mindy!", Maddox growled as soon as he closed the door behind him.

"Huh?", Mindy made a silly sound while peeking from the closet. She was sorting out her recent purchases.

Seeing Maddox glowering at her, Mindy shrank. She felt danger and cursed under her breath when she realized that the closet doesn't have windows. There were no escape routes and Maddox was standing at the door, his Alpha aura rippled in suffocating waves with Maddox at the center.

"What do you want?", Mindy asked while doing her best to control her voice from breaking. She never saw Maddox that angry.

"How dare you cut me off?"

Mindy knew that Maddox was pissed because she cut off the mind-link that morning when Maddox asked her about Tatiana. "Did you come here to punish me because I don't want to cover up your dirty deeds?"

"Mindy!", Maddox shouted. "This is not the time for your feminist crap! Tanya is not some random girl. She is my mate. Your future Luna! Do you know what the consequences are if she rejects me!?"

Mindy narrowed her eyes defiantly. "Shouldn't YOU worry about those consequences?"

Maddox balled his hands into fists. "If you are not my sister, you would end up in the dungeon for plotting against your Alpha and future Luna. Behave or I will send you home, and you can guess which side our parents will take after I tell them that I found my mate and you were not supportive."

Mindy was dejected. She was tired of always being reminded how Alphas have all rights while she needs to follow orders. "You messed up, why would I help you clean up?"

Maddox closed his eyes and exhaled sharply. Mindy was always a willful she-wolf, and he either supported her or didn't care because he saw her as his little sister, a cute pup that is all bark and no bite, but this time he had enough.

"Damn it, Mindy! Why are you always opposing me?"

"How did I oppose you?"

Maddox narrowed his eyes at Mindy dangerously. "Do you think I'm stupid? Do you think that all the shit you say behind my back doesn't reach my ears? I can only imagine you girls making a sistership circle around Tanya like I am some kind of a villain who should be castrated."

His nostrils flared in anger. "Do you think it's a good quality to say whatever comes to your mind? Look around, Mindy. How many long-term friends you have? Why are Claire and Rachel avoiding you? How long will this group of women tolerate your brash way of talking? Yes, you are only telling the truth, but you are not a child anymore and you should learn that some things should be left unsaid. Your words matter and they can cause harm. I allowed you to tag along with me because mom and dad pestered me, but if I knew it will explode in my face, I would leave you behind regardless of the consequences. Go and manage your charities and leave me alone."

Maddox's voice shook as he struggled to suppress his rising temper as he continued, "I fail to understand why would you side with a bunch of women you just met and disregard me? Do you even know what happened, or did you just assume that I hurt my mate because I am an asshole? I don't expect you to help me, but at least don't work against me. Why do you have so much hate when it comes to men in power? Aren't you benefiting from being part of the Alpha family? Why can't you see me as a brother? If my own sister won't speak up for me or show respect an Alpha should get, how can I expect others to think of me as anything more than a scoundrel?"

Mindy looked at Maddox whose rage was turning into sorrow as his fierce glare was replaced with disappointment and her eyes prickled from tears that were threatening to fall.

She wanted to tell him that he was wrong, but she couldn't.

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Mindy's gaze fell on the carpet between the two of them as his words echoed in her mind and she remembered the last few hours.

Mindy didn't say anything bad about Maddox in the van or during their shopping in the mall, but she said some quite nasty things before he came down for breakfast. Why did she say those things?

Maddox is a brother to her, but he is an Alpha to everyone else and she failed to give him the respect that his position as an Alpha demands or the love a sister should give. And she knew that Maddox was right... if she was not his sister, her careless way of talking would get her in trouble many times before.

If she didn't speak about Maddox as a womanizer, maybe Tanya wouldn't just leave without giving him a chance to explain things when those two she-wolves appeared.

And in the van, she didn't speak up for him either because... because... because she assumed that he is an asshole who hurt his mate.

This was the first time for Mindy to see Maddox so upset, but what stung fiercely was the grief that laced his every word. She really messed up.

Maddox was her older brother and she always saw him confidently moving forward, celebrating his victories, and brushing off failures like they were not important because he would stand up and try again and again until he overcomes that challenge.

She believed that there was nothing that can diminish his spirit, and now she confirmed that she was wrong.

Tatiana was important, probably the most important thing Maddox encountered so far, and instead of supporting him, Mindy made it worse.

Will saying sorry fix anything?

Mindy looked up only to see an empty doorframe.

Maddox left without punishing her and that created painful knots in her stomach.

If he shouted more or maybe if he hit her a few times she would have a reason to be resentful and to say that he was bullying her, but now she was left alone, feeling deflated with this feeling of guilt that was eating her alive.

Chapter 280 - Presents

In the master bedroom on the third floor of the packhouse...

Damon kept the shopping bags on the ground and started peeking into them like a child looking for candies.

"Where is the thing you bought for me?"

Talia giggled and pushed him to sit on the sofa. "Wait a minute. Let me find it."

She didn't want to tell him that girls went lingerie-shopping and if he sees it now, it will spoil the surprise.

Damon was super-excited. Talia bought something for him! Whatever it was, he will treat it as a treasure. "What did you get?"

Talia shook her head helplessly. She realized that Damon doesn't have a neutral state. Everything he does is extreme. Happiness, anger, dejection, playfulness, jealousy, whatever it is, it's maxed out. And right now, Damon was impatient.

She hoped that he will like the coffee mug she picked for him. Girls suggested that she buys Damon a necktie and other clothing items, but she was not sure if he will wear those, so she went with a mug. It came with a matching pen, so it was a set.

Did she really buy so many things? And they were wrapped in colorful tissue paper that made it difficult to find something specific.

The mug was white with a silver outline of a wolf, and when a hot beverage gets poured in, the ceramic will heat up and turn black, emphasizing the outline of a silver wolf howling at the moon that's not visible when the mug is cool and white.

Talia knew that Damon enjoys his morning coffee and she really-really hoped that he will use the mug she got him.

She was nervous.

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While waiting for Talia to find the right item, Damon saw on the sofa two plush toys. Blackie and Cinna.

He glared at Cinna. Will he ever be able to get rid of that wretched toy that came with the ghost of coach Keith?

At the sight of all the shopping bags and colorful tissue paper, Damon got an idea.

Cinna is on the smaller side. Would it be strange if she accidentally ends up lost in those bags and colorful paper, and gets trashed? That sounded like something that could really happen. And Omega in charge of the cleaning will take the trash out tomorrow and no one will find her. Ever!

But for that, he needed more bags and tissue paper, and then he will 'accidentally' push Cinna into one of the empty bags and stuff the colorful paper on top. Brilliant!

Damon groaned. "You are too slow! Let me help you get things out."

Talia couldn't believe him.

"Wait! Wait!", Talia exclaimed while slapping his hands away from the bags. "You should learn to be patient."

Damn it! Damon cursed internally. Talia is doing everything neatly and is not allowing him to make the mess that will sweep Cinna away.

"Let me open something.", Damon insisted.

Talia didn't understand what got into him. Why can't he sit tight for a minute?

She remembered that Mindy delivered a mini-mountain of presents and Talia kept them on (and around) the sofa chair. Damon didn't enter their bedroom until they returned from the Shifters nightclub, and the morning was busy so no one paid attention to those presents.

"Why don't you open your gift from Mindy while you wait?"

Damon was alerted. "A gift from Mindy? Why would she give me anything?"

"She got us matching wristwatches.", Talia explained while putting two boxes in front of him. "This one is for you."

Damon was interested. "Matching wristwatches?"

He opened both boxes and hummed in approval. He didn't wear a wristwatch, because it would break (or come off) during shifting into his wolf form, so it was not practical, and if he wanted to check the time, he had his cell phone. However, if it's matching with Talia's, he will find a chance to wear it.

"I told you that Mindy is a good person. We should keep her.", Damon said with glee while keeping two open boxes with wristwatches side-by-side on the coffee table so that he can admire them.



Talia smiled at the silly Alpha. He said that during the party at the Lightclaw pack, but a few seconds later he backtracked.

Damon's eyes moved over other boxes that were there. "What else did Mindy get?"

Talia shrugged. Other than wine, she didn't remember. "Feel free to check."

Damon took one flat box from the top and he hoped that it was sexy lingerie. He would ask Talia to put it on and then he will rip it and...

Nope. It was a golden necklace with matching earrings. Damon's brows came together while wondering if Talia likes these things... jewelry.

Should he buy her some? Definitely. But what should he get? Probably nothing without consulting Maya first. Or he could take Talia to the store and let her pick. Unfortunately, knowing Talia's personality, she probably wouldn't pick anything.

He kept the box on the side and opened the next one.

No luck with lingerie, but he was getting closer. It was a silky bathrobe with fluffy slippers.

Damon reached for the next box while wondering if it's normal for females to gift each other these kinds of things.

"Do you like what Mindy got you?", Damon asked.

"It's OK.", Talia responded absentmindedly. Actually, Talia thought that it was too much, but she didn't want to say that out of fear of sounding ungrateful.

"Will you use it?"

"It depends."

Talia remembered that among presents from Mindy other than wine there is an assortment of nuts and dried fruits. "I would love to try it with you. Maybe tonight when the things with guests settle and it's just the two of us?"

Damon didn't respond. Putting a wristwatch on in the evening didn't sound like his idea of having fun, and there was no way he could fit in that silky bathrobe.

Talia didn't think much about Damon's silence.

"Found it!", Talia exclaimed while fishing out a cube-shaped box and she paused at the sight of Damon who stared at the half-open box like his mortal enemy was inside.

Talia looked at the box in front of Damon and blinked once, twice... and then her eyes widened in horror when she remembered what was in that box.

It was a women's self-care kit with music, bathing salts, scented candles, skincare products, and there was also a lubricant and a dildo!

"You want us to try this together? Tonight?", Damon asked stiffly.

Talia swallowed a mouthful of air. "Not everything."

Damon's icy gaze locked her in place. "Not everything? Some things you want to use on your own?"

Talia could feel the danger and she cursed Mindy internally. Why the hell did she buy her a set that came with that abominable thing?

Damon stood up in slow motion and Talia took a step back on an instinct.

"Which one of us should use this?", Damon asked, and Talia couldn't stop looking at the purple dildo in his hand.

She bit her lower lip to prevent herself from laughing.

Yes, Damon was angry, and she was in trouble, but he was holding the dildo with the tips of his index finger and thumb, as far as possible from his body, like it was something dirty.

Talia knew that she should be wary of Damon who was royally pissed, but how can she take this situation seriously when Damon was in the same frame with a purple dildo?

Damon sneered. "What is funny?"

"Nothing.", she lied with a straight face.

"I can feel your emotions.", he said matter-of-factly.

Talia's chin shivered and then she burst into laughter.

"Ha-ha-ha... AH!", Talia's laughter turned into a shriek when Damon leaped over the coffee table, straight toward her.

Talia dodged him and ran around the sofa while struggling to catch her breath through giggles.

Of course, she didn't reach far.

After no more than five seconds of Talia's giggles and squeals, Damon's arms wrapped around Talia, and they fell on the floor with Talia on top.

She noticed that his hands were empty.

"Where is it?", Talia asked.

"What do you think?"

Talia raised her head how much she could and glanced around. Her eyes fell on the open window. "Did you throw it out?"

"What if I did?"

"You can't. What if someone sees it? It's a gift from Mindy."

"So, you want to keep it?", Damon squeezed through his teeth and rolled them over so that he ends on top.

"That's not what I said."

"What did you say?"

Talia exhaled helplessly. She had no intention of using it, but she couldn't throw it either. Talia thought about keeping it somewhere in the depths of the closet where it will be lost forever, but now Damon found it and he was acting like she was planning to leave him and live happily ever after with a piece of purple silicone.

Talia knew that there was no point in arguing with Damon when he was like this and he was nuzzling her neck, making her hairs stand on ends. It was difficult to think, and she was not sure if the heat between her legs was hers or from him, probably from both because he was grinding himself, and the sensation of his hard shaft pressing her sensitive spot stirred her into arousal within seconds.

"Damon", she called breathily. "We should get ready for the beach."

"We will." Eventually.

He swallowed her next argument in a fiery kiss that made her mind spin.

"I will prove to you that those gadgets are not necessary.", Damon mumbled between kisses. "Once I'm done with you, you will immediately reject such gifts going forward."

He said something about Talia not accepting any more presents from Mindy, but Talia didn't respond because her mind was clouded with arousal and her hands moved with urgency to unbutton his pants.