

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 14

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#Chapter 14 I Am Pushed Into The Pool

Selene's POV

I've never seen so many people in one place.

Nova hall is packed to the gills with glittering bodies. Wolves from across the pack have gathered to celebrate Gabriel, all decked out in their finest. I know most of the people here, having met them at some point or another over the last three years, but at least a quarter of the guests are outsiders.

Members of a dozen other packs have come to pay their respects, for tonight not only marks Gabriel's birthday, but also his 30th anniversary as Alpha. There is no question my father-in-law has been a highly influential leader, brokering unprecedented alliances with powerful packs across the continent.

I stand close to my mother-in-law's side, wishing I could go back to the pack house. I hate these events, which always leave me feeling scrutinized and judged by the prying eyes of pack socialites. Most pack members view me as either an oddity or a charity case, but there is one group in particular who took great offense when Bastien took me for a mate.

Everyone knows my story. My escape and Garrick's subsequent disappearance was headline news in Elysium, and if it weren't for Gabriel and Bastien, I probably would have become something of a pack side show.

With all our other concerns, I'm not sure any of us considered that I might need protection from negative attention within the pack, but time proved it was very necessary. Bastien had been the Nova's most eligible bachelor since he was a boy, and the pack's unmated women took our marriage especially hard.

It was one thing when people thought he would marry Arabella – she fit the role of an Alpha's wife, the de-facto leader of Novan females. I did not. I am not a leader, and standing next to Bastien I look more like his kidnapping victim than a partner. I am short, scrawny and timid; a halfling with strange eyes and nothing but wasted potential.

The fact that I am a Volana ceased to matter when I lost Luna. I am an incomplete person by definition, and that might be alright if I held no power, but the idea of having a woman without a wolf helping to lead the pack did not sit well with a great many people.

I have no doubt the pack will be relieved when our rejection ceremony is announced, but everyone agreed it should wait until after the gala. No one wanted to pull attention from Gabriel on his special night.

I can feel a hundred eyes crawling over my form.

I wish Bastien was here.

I adore Odette and find her a lovely, calming presence, but no one puts me at ease like my husband. He is the only person with whom I don't have to constantly worry about my safety, because I know he is looking out for me better than I ever could.

I wonder what's going on with Arabella. Has she taken a turn for the worse? Is that why he ran out the way he did? It's hard to fathom what could go wrong now that she's mostly healed, but it also wouldn't surprise me given the way she's been milking her injuries. It would be perfectly in character for Arabella to conjure some new crises when I need Bastien most.

I'm still struggling to sort through everything that happened between us. Her allegations against Gabriel still ring in my ears, posing far too many uncomfortable questions. There's no doubt she cannot be trusted when it comes to my well being, but that doesn't automatically negate her accusations.

The fact that she's a terrible person does not mean she's never been wronged, in fact one could argue that being terrible makes some past trauma more likely. I have a hard time believing it of my father-in-law, but I also remember the look in Bastien's eyes when he told me he doesn't do anything he doesn't want to – the same words Arabella used to ask me why he'd gone through with our marriage.

I still don't have a clear answer.

Nor do I know what to do about her attempted assault. I'm extremely concerned about what is going to happen when she gets released from the hospital. I know I don't have to worry about her sharing my news with anyone, but I'm afraid she won't give up after just one try

How did this become such a mess?

After a while Odette leaves me to check on Gabriel and I find myself very literally thrown to the wolves.

“Poor thing,” Someone titters behind me, sounding more disdainful rather than truly sympathetic, “If Bastien hadn’t married her she’d be in a gutter somewhere. He’s so noble. I can’t imagine how hard it is for him to be with her.”

The woman’s words are no surprise – it’s no secret that Bastien married me out of pity and obligation – but they still hurt.

“It’s no wonder he’s never claimed her.” Another woman adds, “Can you imagine your husband never marking you? It’s so tragic.” Like her companion, this she-wolf’s voice suggested she felt the opposite of her words,

“Well it’s not like you can blame him.” The first woman scoffs, “You don’t breed a thoroughbred with a mule.”

The women cackle cruelly, and I can’t take anymore. I walk away, slipping out the garden door to stroll alongside the saltwater pool bisecting the blossoming greenspace. I hold my head up high as I move through the people, but it seems as if there is no escape from gossiping shrews.

“I heard he’s rejecting her so she pushed Arabella down a flight of stairs.” I don’t recognize the speaker, but her words make my blood run cold.

Conflict is not in my nature. Indeed, Garrick spent years training my body to associate confrontations of any size with pain, and the after effects remain to this day. But this is too much. Even if the ensuing argument triggers a PTSD episode, I cannot let this rumor go uncontested.

Sa

nounce

I turn towards the woman who spoke such cruel words, and find her watching me. It’s clear she’d wanted me to hear her; her features are alight with malicious glee as I approach. “I didn’t push anyone down any stairs.” I announce coolly. Her painted lips twist into a cruel smirk. “But he is rejecting you, isn’t he?”

“What of it?” I counter. “People have rejection ceremonies all the time.” This is not entirely true. Rejection ceremonies are actually relatively rare, but they are still common enough in pack society to be considered normal.

The she-wolf flips a curtain of long red hair over her shoulder. “People may, Alphas don’t.”

I don’t know where the fire in my belly came from, but rather than shutting down, I fight back. “Actually it seems they do- since Bastien is an Alpha and he’s having one.”

“And rightly so, it’s far past time he got rid of you.” She bites back, sharing a cruel smile with her friends.

I scowl, ‘If you think you’ll have a chance with him once he’s single, you’re sorely mistaken.’ I tell them, “He’s already found his mate.”

The redhead shrugs, “Mates aren’t forever, maybe I’ll take a page out of your book and pay Arabella a little visit.”

“I already told you,” I snap. “I didn’t push her.”

She sidles forward with a sympathetic pout. “Oh honey, you don’t have to pretend. I don’t blame you.” If she was in her wolf form I’m sure she’d be baring her fangs at me. “Besides it’s not like anyone would be surprised, you’re not even a whole person after all, you can’t be expected to function in a civilized society.”

Jabs like this still hurt me, no matter how much time passes. There is too much truth in them for me to brush off, but she doesn’t need to know that, “If I’m such a weak little halfling, how do you think I managed to take down a fully grown she-wolf.”

“I don’t know,” she sniggers. “Maybe you snuck up on her from behind.”

I muster a glare. “Why are you like this, what have I ever done to you?”

The she-wolf closes in on me, and I reflexively retreat, backing towards the edge of the pool. “Growing up we all knew Bastien would be Alpha one day, we all fought for him.” She explains haughtily. “We would have accepted whichever one of us he chose – after all, we all put in the time. Then you appeared.” She spits the words at my feet,

“You who never so much as laid eyes on him before you escaped your little hovel. All the beautiful, brilliant she-wolves out there, and he picked a dirty little gutter rat.” The woman’s eyes flash with true hatred. “You didn’t earn him, you didn’t earn your position in the pack, and you certainly don’t lead us now.”

“Bastien deserves better.” She hisses, “ And for once Arabella isn’t here to distract him, so why don’t you do us all a favor, and get out of the way.” Using all her strength, the she-wolf shoves me backward, her palms connecting with my shoulders and launching my small body straight into the pool.

The water closes over my head as I sink, limbs thrashing. I never learned how to swim, and while my wolf might have been able to

flounder frantically, trying and failing to propel me to the surface.

I hadn't been prepared for the water, not realizing how close we had moved throughout the course of our argument. I didn't have the chance to take a deep breath; I splashed into the water with my mouth open, and now it swiftly fills my lungs.

Darkness consumes the edges of my vision. I don't have the time to be angry or afraid, there is only time for my panic-stricken brain to realize I'm about to die.