

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 151

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 151

Chapter 151 – Frederic Puts His Plan into Motion

Selene

I'm amazed at the difference one little pill can make.

I feel like a completely different person now that I've thrown out Dr. Kane's (if that's truly his name) placebos. Dr. Lee's medicines have reduced my morning sickness so much that the condition actually lives up to its name and only strikes in the morning. I've even put on a pound!

It's only been three days since leaving the hospital, and I couldn't be happier to be home, even though everything else in my life is a bloody disaster. I keep trying to call Bastien every morning, but he never picks up, the line never even rings. It goes straight to voicemail.

In addition to my mate's absence and my pup's continuous questions about where her Daddy is, the pack is all in an uproar. Apparently while I was stuck in the hospital Aiden and Donovan captured Odile, then immediately lost her. The worst part is that I think Frederic leaked the story himself, because almost no one knew she's been caught. Her escape included a black out and riot at the enforcement headquarters, and as much as I'd like to explain this away the same way I handled Bastien's absence, the truth is that we did fail.

Whether it's sabotage or not, we're failing to protect the pack and keep the peace. Frederic is winning, and I can't stand it. Still, today I'm going to try and forget all the drama and sadness. Sophie and I are going to take Lila to the zoo for a much needed day out. My poor pup has been such a trooper throughout all these crises and changes, and she desperately deserves a reward.

"Mommy I wanna walk!" She informs me as we walk towards the zoo entrance.

"But I want to carry you!" I reply, snuggling her close and kissing her cheek half a dozen times, "I haven't had any time with my Lila bean lately. I've missed you."

"But Mommy, it's the zoo." She replies, as if I'm completely missing the point. "I wanna run round!"

“Fine.” I sigh dramatically, “You can walk, but don’t run too far ahead, okay?” I instruct.

“Okay.” She agrees.

“Lila, I mean it, stay within sight.” I say, more stern now.

“I promise.” She vows, already squirming to escape the comforting safety of my arms. I set her little paws on the ground and she immediately races ahead.

Rolling my eyes, I link arms with Sophie. “This is how it begins.” I sigh. “First she doesn’t want to be carried, next she’s going to be too embarrassed to be seen with me in public.”

Sophie laughs, “I think that’s still a few years away. Besides, when that day does come, you’ll still have the new baby to comfort you.”

“Until it grows up too.” I complain, only half joking. Damned pregnancy hormones, I haven’t even given birth yet and I’m already in a snit that my baby will grow up too fast.

“So just keep having babies.” Sophie suggests. “That way there will always be a young pup to cuddle.”

“Spoken like a woman who’s never been pregnant.” I snort, instantly regretting my words when I see the look on the other woman’s face. “Oh Sophie, I’m sorry, I don’t know what I was thinking – that’s such an assumption, and such a cruel thing.”

“Relax Selene.” She interrupts me. “It’s alright. You’re exactly right. I’ve never been pregnant – until a few weeks ago I was a virgin.”

“Really?” I inquire, undeniably curious while simultaneously reluctant to think about Drake in that capacity. “And?”

Sophie giggles and flushes, “It’s been amazing.” She intones shyly, “But I think Drake is ready for a family and babies and all the rest, and I’m just trying to get my feet under me, you know?”

*Typical Alpha.” I sigh, “I swear, mean would never be so eager to become fathers if they had to do the hard part.”

“It’s not even that he’s pressuring me.” Sophie admits. “I can just sense that he’s holding back that side of himself.”

“That’s not necessarily a bad thing.” I tell her. “I know it probably doesn’t feel great, but you said yourself that you aren’t ready. It’s better he understands and gives you time than forces you into it.”

“I know, but he’s pretending he’s totally satisfied and I know he isn’t.” She shares. “I mean it’s his instinct to father pups now that he’s marked me, I hate that he’s hurting for my sake.”

“Have you talked to him about this?” | prod gently, knowing full well my shy friend hasn’t.

“No,” She confesses, “I’m not good with conflict.”

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“I’m not either,” i sympathize, “but being with Bastien helped me learn that not all disagreements are disasters. This is still all very new to you, and I understand exactly what you’re going through, but promise it gets better.”

“Thanks. Selene.” Sophie smiles, appearing truly relieved.

“Any time.” I promise, keeping my eyes locked on my pup as we pass through the entrance gates. It’s crowded today, and for a moment a young family moves into my line of sight, blocking Lila from view. I quicken my pace, trying and failing to see through their bodies to my little girl. They shift back out of the way after a few seconds, and Lila reappears, skipping along happily and heading straight for the giant anteater exhibit up ahead.

Exhaling. I turn to Sophie. “I’m sorry Soph, but I’m going to lose it if we don’t keep up with her.”

“No problem.” She allows, speeding up beside me.

I only looked away for one second, but this time when I return my attention to the spot where Lila was standing a moment ago – she’s gone. Pure, undiluted terror fills me so quickly it defies belief.

“Lila?” I call, glancing around in worry, “Sophie, do you see her?”

“I’m sure she’s here somewhere.” The she-wolf says calmly, scanning the area. Her brow crinkles in concern when she can’t lay eyes on the pup either. “She’s probably hiding. Lila!”

I dash through the crowd to the exhibit, my eyes darting over every surface, every shifter present. She’s nowhere to be found. The shifters around us are pointing and whispering to each other, clearly recognizing me, but I ignore them. I have my baby’s scent locked into my senses, and I follow it away from the melee.

“Lila!” I call again, tracking her determinedly and praying she’s misbehaving rather than in trouble. “Lila bean where are you?”

My heart sinks when I hear a muffled cry, but my protective instincts take over and I sprint in that direction, Sophie hot on my heels. We round the corner, finding what appears to be a supply shed, and storm inside without a second thought. The door shuts behind us, and I clock a hulking bear shifter in my periphery, but I can't give him a moment of my time. Directly in front of me, a strange man is holding my pup hostage and pure, maternal rage is pulsing through me like a wildfire.

"Take your hands off my pup, this instant." I snarl, my hackles raised.

"Calm down sweetheart." The shifter croons, "No one's going to hurt you or your pup, we're just going to take a little field trip."

"We're not going anywhere." I inform him harshly, speaking over Sophie's whimpers. "You have until the count of three to release my daughter, or you'll be sorry."

The men laugh, "Don't worry Selene, we're not going to separate you." He comes forward and hands Lila to me, "we're all going to go. Isn't that right, Jimmy?"

The man behind us pulls out a length of rope, brandishing it in our direction. "That's right." He agrees, offering us a stomach-curdling smile. Quickly checking over Lila, who looks scared and confused but otherwise unharmed, my worry fades, replaced by rage.

"Sophie, get down." I command, holding Lila close and willing the power I'm drawing up from my internal well not to harm anyone but the men seeking to abduct us.

"You hear that, Ed?" The man called Jimmy scoffs, "It almost sounds like the little wolf intends to fight."

"You might be surprised." I announce, sending out a wave of pure electricity the moment Sophie ducks out of the way. "I'm really sick of people trying to kidnap me."

As the would-be kidnappers hit the floor, Drake, Donovan and Aiden smash through the door behind us. I don't know how they knew we were in trouble, but I'm proud to have dealt with things myself. For once I'm not a damsel in distress, this time I defended myself and my baby all on my own, and now they know what I'm truly capable of.

"Not good with conflict my ass!" Sophie exclaims, even as Drake is practically strip searching her to ensure she's not injured. "That was amazing."

Shooting a smug look to the betas, I ask, "Still think it's too dangerous for me to learn to use my powers?"

"We're getting you a teacher." Aiden decides. "First thing tomorrow."

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Chapter 152 – Best to Trust a Witch

Selene

“You can’t be serious.” I drawl, crossing my arms over my chest and glaring at Drake.

“What?” He counters in exasperation, “She’s a powerful witch, why wouldn’t you seek her help?”

“Because she’ll never work with me without knowing the source of my power.” | exclaim.

After the almost kidnapping at the zoo, the Beta’s placed Lila and I on lockdown, while Drake holed Sophie up in his rooms and presumably showed her how grateful he is that she’s safe. Every time I’ve seen either of them since, they’ve been wearing dopey lovesick smiles and Sophie’s been wearing long sleeves and long pants that tell me she’s trying to hide more than a few hickeys and lovebites.

On the other hand the betas were true to their promise and immediately began searching for a teacher to help me with my powers. After everything calmed down, we learned they got a last minute tipoff from one of the original kidnappers who got fired a few hours before the job began and wanted revenge against his former colleagues. So in all likelihood, the guys would have arrived in time to rescue us, but thankfully they recognized the value of training me anyway.

Now Drake has located a revered witch in the oldest part of the city, but he brought me to meet her without first finding out whether she’s even willing to take on a student.

Simply tell her you’re a Volana, she doesn’t have to know you hold the key to eternal life in your veins.” He states matter-of-factly.

* Could we please not advertise that!” | exclaim, encouraging him to lower his voice.

“Oh come on, no one’s listening.” He assures me, “now stop being silly, and go introduce yourself.”

Grumbling under my breath, I cross the distance to the stately townhouse and prepare to knock on the door. I turn back to look at Drake one last time before raising my hand, receiving an encouraging nod in reply. However before I can actually knock the door swings open, revealing an elegant woman with coils of shiny silver hair piled atop her head and loose flowing clothes. She blinks when she sees me, “well I have to say

you've surprised me. I was expecting a new student, but I never imagined it would be the Alpha's mate."

I glance hesitantly at Drake again, "You knew I was coming?"

"I'm a witch darling, that is why you're here, isn't it?" She questions, stepping to the side and sweeping her arm wide to welcome me into her home.

"Well yes, but... * I don't know how to explain.

"You've never met a real witch have you, little mother?" She surmises, nodding at Drake so he'll join us in the house.

"No." I admit, "and I'm not one myself."

*Well that's obvious enough dear." She remarks with a rueful smile. "You're not my first student to come from another walk of life." She's circling me now, studying me closely and even poking at my arms, shoulders and hip experimentally. I don't have the first clue what she's doing, but she stops in front of my after three slow circuits, staring at me curiously. "Though I suspect you will be my last."

"Last student, or last one who isn't a witch?" Drake clarifies uneasily.

"Last student." She replies unemotionally, hopping ahead to the next subject as if she hasn't just made a thoroughly ominous remark about her own fate. "I've seen magic like yours before, but never this strong."

Wrapping my arms around myself protectively I ask, "Can you help me learn to wield it?"

"I would not have been home for your visit today if I did not intend on teaching you, silly girl." She chuckles, gazing at my two-tone eyes and making me feel as if she can see right through me. "My grandmother told me stories about Volana wolves when I was a girl, though even she did not know the secrets of your blood. I see now we've been underestimating your kind's true power."

"How do you see that?" I question, more curious than unsettled.

The woman laughs again. "I've said it before and I'll say it again, you shifters are never taught how to truly look at the world. There is so much you do not see, simply because you do not open your eyes."

I don't really understand what she's talking about, and I can see that Drake doesn't either. Shaking off some of my nerves, I extend my hand to her, "I'm Selene, by the way." I offer inanely, quickly amending myself. "I mean, I know you recognize me, but we haven't truly been introduced."

“Helene.” She introduces herself, but instead of shaking my hand she uses it to pull me forward. When she was young I imagine she must have been much taller than me. She still has a few inches on me, but her spine is bent and curved with age. She turns my chin right and left

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in her hand. “Pretty thing.” She says to herself, an observation rather than a compliment. Her brow furrows then and she tsks regretfully, “and to have survived so much darkness. I confess I’ve never met another like you.”

“The only other Volana I’ve met myself is my mother.” I share, assuming this is what she means.

“I wasn’t talking about your bloodline.” Helene corrects me calmly, “but that’s no surprise, given you and your daughter are the last ones.”

At first I think i’ve misunderstood her, “What?”

She blinks. “Did you not know?” Her gaze bounces between Drake and I, and she doesn’t wait for us to answer, “No I can see you didn’t. Well I’m sorry to tell you, there aren’t any other Volana wolves left – why else do you think you are being hunted?”

“You know about that?” Drake demands.

“I do now.” Helene explains, “before today I confess I never thought much on the matter, but you learn a great deal meeting new people.”

I want to run from this house and beg her to teach me everything she knows at the same time. Helene grins as if she can read my thoughts, then bursts out laughing when I narrow my eyes at her. “Oh come now, don’t be silly. No one can read minds.”

“But if you can’t, how did you know I was thinking that?” I object.

“I read feelings and secrets, I read the past.” She clarifies, her tone becoming matter-of-fact as she continues, “And I’ve been at it long enough to know what it means when someone looks at me that way.”

“I’m impressed by your knowledge and skill.” Drake informs her, looking like he’s not sure whether to be pleased or concerned, and I’m glad to know you’ll teach Selene. My question is whether that’s all you’ll do. Can we trust you with what you’ve discovered today? Can we trust that you will only help and do no harm?”

Helene gives Drake a long, assessing look that makes him shift nervously from foot to foot. After a moment she returns her gaze to me and arches a brow. "You have too many guard dogs."

Trying to hide my snort of laughter while Drake growls in offense over being called a dog, I cough and clear my throat. "You have no idea."

"Do not worry, Alpha." Helene informs Drake coolly. "Your friend is safe with me. I have no need for money, I have no ambition for power, and I've already lived too long as it is."

*And how long is that?" Drake demands.

*Drake!" I exclaim, outraged on my new teacher's behalf, "stop being rude!"

"It's alright little mother." Helene tells me, patting my cheek. "Age is only a matter of vanity for the young. I'm a hundred and seventy years old young man. I've lived more than five of your lifetimes, and you cannot intimidate me by baring your fangs. You can either trust me or kill me, but do not expect me to bow and scrape like the rest of your subjects." I cannot hide my surprise. Shifters have long lives as a rule, but

I've never heard of anyone living past a hundred and fifty before.

Drake considers her for a moment, before nodding and turning to me. "I like her."

I do too, far more than I imagined I would a few minutes ago. It's such a relief to have everything out in the open and have someone not only willing, but capable of helping me. Besides, I get the feeling Helene will not coddle me the way the men do.

Drawing her attention back to me, I ask the only other question that might cease our association before it can truly begin. "Is it safe to use my powers in my condition?"

Her eyes light up. "that reminds me! I have something for you."

Without another word she turns and disappears deeper into the house, the sound of her footsteps receding down a flight of stairs. * – but, you didn't answer my question." I complain, trailing after her.

I descend the steps into what can only be her work room: the walls are lined with glass jars and herbs, the central table is scattered with heavy books and parchment, and there's even a bubbling cauldron in the corner. I feel as though I've walked into a fairy story, even though it's all still too surreal.

Helene is scanning the jars on her shelves, her gnarled finger skimming the labels until she clucks with pleasure and plucks one from the mantle. "Aha!" She uncorked the

glass vessel and raises it to her nose, nodding in approval. “Not only is it safe, but using your powers will make you and the baby stronger, Selene.” She tells me. “So will this.”

Accepting the jar from her, I study the dried flowers inside, completely confused. “What is it?”

“The cure for your illness.” She says, as if it should be obvious. “Forget the doctors deary, when it comes to creating life, it’s best to trust a witch.”

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Chapter 153 – Frederic Issues a Challenge

When Drake and I return from meeting Helene, Lila seems like the only one who’s happy to see us. She runs over and leaps into my arms, kissing me on the cheek and immediately rattling off stories from her day. Unfortunately everyone else is gathered on the couch in front of the television, looking very somber indeed.

“What’s wrong?” Drake asks, striding over to his mate and lifting her off the couch, before sitting in her spot and settling her in his lap. Sophie simply nods towards the television in answer.

Oh no, I think, this must be about the kidnapping.

The attempt on Lila, Sophie and I has been headline news ever since it happened, particularly because Bastien has still not reappeared. It turns out it didn’t really matter whether Frederic’s latest attempt – and we’re all certain he is the one who was behind the plot – succeeded or not. The almost disaster was plenty damning in the eyes of the pack, at least when it comes to condemning my mate. After all, what kind of Alpha lets his pack fall to chaos for his own ends? And what kind of mate fails to care when his wife and child’s lives are in danger?

Carrying Lila further into the room until I can see the screen myself, I’m both relieved not to see Bastien’s name scrolling across the bottom of a news desk, and very dismayed to see Dr. Kane instead. Thomas or Frederic, or whatever other name he might go by, is standing in front of the same podium I spoke behind last week, looking very grim indeed.

*This pack has been without a leader for too long." He announces, his features hard and unforgiving. "I have immense respect for the Durand family's legacy in Elysium, and I consider Selene a close friend, I would never wish to impune her honor."

"Here we go." Aiden mutters grumpily, reflecting my own feelings.

Close friends my ass. I think, friends do not make each other sick or spy on them under the guise of providing help.

They also don't try to destroy their relationship or kill their mates. Luna adds.

Fair point.

"However, over the last few weeks I have been deeply disturbed by Basiten's absence, and the crimes which have transpired as a result of the pack being seen as weak and lawless. I have seen the suffering of good Novans firsthand, from those who lost their homes in the fires, to the families who lost fathers and mothers to the rogues. I have watched while Selene fights for her life and her child's while her husband is away doing Goddess knows what, and all while maintaining the strength and dignity of a true leader."

Every time he compliments me, I know the hammer is about to fall against Bastien. It's a truly clever ruse, alternately riling up people's discontent and giving them someone to blame for their misfortunes, and avoiding being seen as a detractor through praising me. He's trying to turn Basiten into a villain and himself a hero, all the while dangling me between them like the damsel I used to be. Even with Helene's healing herbs, I feel sick to my stomach.

"We have to stop this!" I protest, my voice thick with emotion. "He can't do this, he can't be allowed to just stand up there and lie to the pack."

"If we cut him off, we'll look like the monsters he's accusing us of being. It will play right into his hands." Donovan advises.

"This most recent news disturbed me more than everything which came before. I was certain that no matter what neglect he may have inflicted against the pack in the past few years, a wolf as honorable as Bastien would never neglect his mate the same way, especially not with everything he risked to get her back. Yet here we are days later, and there is still no sight of him. I know from caring for Selene in the hospital that she herself has not heard from Bastien in weeks, despite her hospitalization being so widely publicized he must certainly know."

"I have come to the terrible and unfortunate conclusion that our Alpha is not the man we believed him to be. He is without integrity and without honor, and he does not care about us the way our leader should. He does not care for his family the way a man must, and he does not deserve our reverence or our respect."

“That bastard!” Odette curses, offering me an apologetic glance when she remembers that Lila is in the room.

“Mommy, why’s the mean doctor saying dose tings ’bout Daddy?” My pup asks, understanding far more of the unfolding events than I’d like. In hindsight I realize I should have paid more attention to my daughter’s dislike for the man. When it comes to sensing untrustworthy people, children and pets really do have the market cornered. Lila hadn’t liked Thomas from the beginning, and I should have listened to her instincts rather than my own bias.

“Because he’s not just mean, angel.” I explain with a sigh, “He’s a very bad man.”

* You can say that again.” Donovan gripes.

“Selene, do you want me to take Lila to play?” Sophie suggests, pointedly glancing at the TV.

Drake growls and holds her a bit tighter, though I realize it’s merely his protective instincts, rather than disregard for my pup. The almost kidnapping was very triggering for the Alpha, and watching the likely perpetrator denigrate us all is clearly making him lose his cool.

“That’s okay, Soph.” I decline gently. “But thank you.”

“It is not in my nature to create trouble or question authority,” Dr Kane is saying now, sending a communal scoff throughout the room. “I do

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not believe in challenging the natural order of things or forgetting one’s place in the grand scheme of the pack. But I also believe we all have a responsibility to speak out against injustice, no matter the consequences, and we are undoubtedly living through a great injustice at Bastien Durand’s hands. I cannot stand by and remain silent while the pack I love and the people I care about suffer this way, and I encourage all Elysian’s to reject any status quo that keeps unfit rulers in power.”

“Goddess, he’s going to incite a rebellion.” Odette moans.

“He’s certainly trying.” Aiden agrees, looking at me with deep concern, “You’re going to have to give a statement about all this before the morning news cycle.”

“A statement saying what?” I fret, “I’ve already explained about Bastien, and I can’t deny he isn’t here or explain why he can’t return yet. I can’t even refute that we haven’t spoken.”

*Frederic is using you to prop himself up.” Donovan reminds me, “If you renounce him, at a minimum people will think twice about accepting what he says about you blindly.”

*If I renounce him, he’ll argue that Bastien has me brainwashed and reduce me to being a pawn in their games.” I argue, “I know we can’t just let him say all this without making any kind of effort to refute him, but I think we need to think about it very carefully before deciding how to respond.” I insist.

“She’s right.” Drake agrees, “If we dig in our heels and just say he’s full of it, it will look petty. We have to find a way to beat him at his own

game.”

“That might be difficult.” Sophie murmurs, gesturing towards the screen.

Clearly ramping up for some dramatic ultimatum, Dr Kane is now staring straight into the camera, speaking directly to the audience at home rather than the reporters assembled in the room. “People of Elysium, whether you are a Nova shifter, or have joined us from afar, I encourage you to ask yourself what you want in a leader. I encourage you to stand up with me and reject this mistreatment. To everyone in the Pack House, I hope you know how much we all value how hard you’ve been working to keep things running in the Alpha’s absence. I hope you know that this criticism is not intended to hold you at fault for Bastien’s failings. To the Durand family, I want to thank you for everything you’ve done for this pack over the centuries, and pray you understand I am doing this out of love for the pack, not hatred for you.”

His green eyes flash through the camera lens, and my heart stops in my chest. “And to Bastien Durand, know you have been found guilty by popular opinion of neglecting your duty, your pack, and your family. Know you cannot walk all over us because you are stronger and more powerful, know your actions have consequences.” His deep voice is getting louder with every word, and a dull muttering has risen up among his audience.

“To you I issue the following challenge: if you truly care about your people, return and answer for your crimes. Return and face challengers for your position. If you do not return by the end of this month, we will take it as proof you do not wish to defend your title – but you will have to defend it even if you do come home. I will be formally challenging you to become Alpha if and when you return, just as I will fight any wolf who wishes to take your place.” Dr Kane proclaims forcefully, baring his fangs, “You have two weeks.”

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Chapter 154- Arabella Has an Audience with Blaise

Arabella

As much as I wanted to slap my supplier right in the face when he advised me to try being lovable, I can't deny he had a point. I need Bastien to fall head over heels in love with me, and I haven't been trying very hard thus far. After all, I have to convince him we're meant to be together so completely that he won't believe the truth even when his betas say it to his face. He has to be so blinded by affection that he won't recognize his own mate if they meet again.

I've got my work cut out for me.

At least I have one advantage, which is that I know what he likes. I just have to act as pathetic and helpless as Selene, and the big idiot will fall at my feet. No one is easier to manipulate than an alpha with a hero complex, except maybe one who's being drugged. That's the other tool in my limited arsenal. I've decided to up the dosage of the memory potion a bit, so that he's even more confused than he is already.

I'm going to set my plan in motion tonight. I've done everything I can think of to arrange the perfect date. While he's taking a little drug induced nap a professional cleaning crew and chef will make me look like susie homemaker, and the dress purchased this afternoon will make me look even more appetizing than dinner. I'll act as sweet and ditsy as possibly can, lord knows his mate doesn't have a spine, let alone a brain.

However before I begin the distasteful task of making that oaf love me, I have to deal with the other Alpha in my life. Blaise hasn't seemed to mind my absence too much in recent days, and I might have been offended if it weren't for the fact that I very much needed the time away from him to sort out things with Bastien. Still he did call an audience with me this afternoon, so I expect he'll be bending over backwards to apologize for his neglect. I'll have to act aloof and unconvinced so that I can explain my continued absence in coming weeks.

Blaise is the only Alpha I've ever known who actually sits on a throne, and he's waiting for me in the throne room when I arrive, looking imperiously down at his subjects from the dais. The room is half full of nobles and aristocrats required to fawn over him every afternoon by his own decree, and I'm only too pleased to have an audience for his apology.

"Is there something you'd like to tell me, Arabella?" Blaise inquires ominously, tapping his fingers impatiently on the arm of the throne.

For a moment I think he might know about Bastien, and fear courses through my body. "Whatever do you mean?" I ask him with a wide smile, playing dumb.

"Think very carefully, Novan." He growls, "you do not want to lie to me."

I want to be caught hiding Bastien from you even less. I think. Furrowing my brow, I say, "I'm sorry, sir. I'm confused. I really don't know what you're talking about."

Blaise nods at his beta, and the big wolf steps forward and places a stack of glossy photos in my hand. Looking down at them in surprise and disbelief, I realize they're all of me. Thankfully none of them include Bastien, but they do show me going around the city on my day to day business, including visiting my potion supplier at the underground market.

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"I stammer, "You've been having me followed?"

"As is my right." Blaise snarls, clenching his fists at my audacity, would you care to explain what you were doing buying memory potions from a common trader?"

I have to think fast. Glancing around the assembled crowd and praying for someone to come to my aid, my mind races a mile a minute. When no one speaks up I look back to the terrifying alpha and nervously gnaw on my lower lip. "I-I was stocking up." I lie, sudden inspiration

striking me. "I thought it might come in handy when we take over the Nova pack. There might be a few people who don't fall in line immediately, but if we can make them forget it will be easier."

is that so?" Blaise asks rhetorically, rising from his throne.

*Yes!" I insist, "I was going to tell you the plan the next time we met."

The Alpha smiles, and I breathe a little easier. I return his grin as he draws nearer, relieved beyond belief that he bought my story. He comes so close that our bodies are almost touching, and before my eyes his smile melts to a horrible grimace. He lashes out and fists his hand in my hair, yanking my head back. "Listen to me, you impudent bitch."

I flinch as his harsh words and even harsher touch, not understanding where I went wrong. "First of all, we are not taking over the Nova pack I am taking over the Nova pack and if you're lucky I'll let you live long enough to lick my boots once we succeed." He hisses, spittle flying from his lips as he shakes me roughly, drawing an unwilling whimper from my lips.

*Second, you do not make plans and inform me about them later, you do not make plans at all. You do not even think without my permission You are useful to me because of your connection to the Durands and your inside knowledge, that is why I'm keeping you around, not so that you can fuck up my best laid plans by getting ideas of your own." He thunders,

Chapter 154- Arabella Has an Audience with Blaise

To my shame tears burn in my eyes and I begin to tremble. The only reason I'm able to keep it that much together is that he's clearly not planning on killing me, but I'm only too aware that he might still hurt me. "And third, I don't associate with the drudges of the underground. No one aboveground is permitted to contaminate themselves with those mongrels' poverty and depravity. If you expect to receive another audience with me, I expect you to thoroughly disinfect yourself and never set foot down there again. I do not need another dirty whore serving me, I want only the purest of she-wolves in my presence. Is that clear?"

"Yes sir, I'm so sorry," I mewl pitifully. "I'll make it up to you, I promise."

"You won't do a single thing without my express orders!" Blaise roars. He raises his hand a second before his knuckles slam across my face, sending pain exploding through my head. He's still holding me by the hair, so I can't even fall to the ground, I hang there by my hair, struggling to breathe through the agony.

"I'm sorry!" I moan again, half sobbing.

"Good." He drops me like a sack of bricks, "Now get out of my sight."

I can't meet the gazes of any of the courtiers filling the room as I slink out with my tail between my legs. What on earth just happened? I can't believe I miscalculated so badly. I can't believe I didn't notice I was being followed. I'm going to have to be much, much more careful in the future.

I stop in the opulent restroom before leaving, wiping away my running mascara and trying to get my tears under control. There's already a huge purple bruise blooming across my cheek, and my nose and eyes are red and splotchy. This is so not how I wanted to look before my big date with Bastien. After all, Selene always looks perfect, she's even a pretty crier and I absolutely am not.

However as I'm washing my face I realize that this might actually work in my favor after all. Bastien has always been a sucker for a woman in need, and I don't actually have to tell him about Blaise. I could easily pretend I was attacked by some strange wolf and fall into his arms like that helpless bitch he calls a mate.

The more I consider the idea the more I like it, and the more grateful I am to Blaise- this really couldn't have gone better if I planned it.

When I get home a little while later I turn off the oven and kick out the cleaners, undoing all their preparations for our date and hiding the evidence. Once the apartment is back to normal, I walk out into the hallway and work myself up into another fit of tears. When I'm suitably pathetic I crash into the house so loudly I'm sure it will wake Bastien. I slam the door hard and throw myself against it, sliding by back down the wood until my butt

hits the floor and sobbing melodramatically. Right on cue Bastien surges out of his room on high alert.

He takes one look at me and pales, his hands instinctively clenching into fists. "Bella!" He asks frantically. "What happened!"

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 155

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate
Chapter 155

Chapter 155- Bastien Takes Care of Arabella

Bastien

All I ever seem to do these days is pace.

Pace, scour the news from Elysium and try to figure out what hell I'm going to do. I cannot stomach the idea of standing by and doing nothing, but Arabella gets so frantic every time I mention going back or taking action that I've learned to cool my temper around her.

It's strange, I've witnessed a thousand of Bella's tantrums over the years, but she's never been a cowardly wolf. No, her fits have almost always been about not getting her way, this is the first time I've ever seen her so beside herself out of fear. She must have been terribly traumatized to be this afraid, and things must be even worse in Elysium then I realized if she feels she has no allies there. I still find it hard to believe my mother, Aiden and Donovan would all be so easily fooled by Selene, but everything I read in the papers or see on TV backs up what Arabella says.

The pack is about ready to throw me out as Alpha, and my so-called mate is nowhere to be found. If anything, she stirs up the discontent by making herself a victim at the expense of my absence. Unfortunately the cable was out last week during the press conference she gave, but

Arabella showed me the papers the next day, which detailed how my wife bemoaned my negligence and blamed me for everything going wrong at home.

I don't want to upset Arabella, but I cannot allow this to go on, I have to return home and expose my cousin and traitorous wife. I'm supposed to be here planning my next move, but every time I think of a new idea, Arabella shoots it down. I admit she knows the current situation better than I do, but I think I've been letting her fear guide us both, and that cannot continue.

My wolf goes on high alert when I smell Bella drawing near the apartment and hear her crying. I'm automatically bracing myself for danger when she stumbles into the room, bruised and sobbing. "Bella!" Rushing to her side, I lock the door behind her and gather her up, trying to

get a look at her even as she collapses into my arms. "What happened?"

"It was Blaise." She wails, sniffing loudly, "He called an audience with me and I thought it was just to talk about the state dinner next week, but it wasn't."

"Blaise did this?!" I demand fiercely, finally pushing her off of me long enough to get a look at the dark bruise blooming across her cheek. What kind of a man hits and innocent woman? I think in horror, what kind of Alpha treats his subjects that way?

The same kind that would lock all the poor and disabled people in an underground prison and ban them from mixing with their "betters". Axel supplies with a snarl.

"Yes!" Arabella cries, "oh Bastien, he was terrifying. He's been having me followed, he said he knew I'd been exploring the city, going to the underground. He said he didn't give me permission to roam Tartarus at will and threatened to kill me if I crossed him again."

"What?" Tutter in disbelief, that's insane."

"He's insane!" Arabella agreed. "it's only a blessing he didn't see us together. We can't risk you leaving the house again, or he might kill us both."

As guilty as I feel for thinking it, I can't help but feel Arabella is being hysterical. First because breaking a law and going to the underground is a far cry from merely stepping outside one's own front door – especially when Blaise has no idea who I am. Second because regardless of the threat it may pose, I have zero intention of lying down and letting a tyrant walk all over me. And third, because none of this makes any sense. I mean, I know Blaise is a ruthless tyrant, but I have to be missing some detail here. Why would he care so much about a random she-wolf who doesn't even belong to his pack defying him? Why would it matter if he saw another visitor staying with her.

She's not telling us everything. Axel reasons, far more calmly than I would have expected him to feel under the circumstances. That's the only explanation

"Come here," I encourage Arabella gently, guiding her to the kitchen, "Let me take a look at your cheek."

As we move across the room I realize Arabella is limping, so I sweep her up into my arms and set her on the counter. "Just breath Bella." | encourage. "Can you do that for me?"

The sobbing blonde heaves in a few gulps of breath, and when her shaking has lessened, I prompt her to start from the beginning.

“It’s like I told you,” She chokes, “He called me for an audience and attacked me.”

Though bruised, her cheek looks as if it will heal relatively quickly. Based on my own battle experience, I’d say he walloped her pretty hard, but only struck once. At least the bastard is capable of that much restraint. “Okay, where else are you hurt?” I ask, looking her over.

“Just my cheek and my ankle.” She sniffs, her lips trembling dangerously

Moving to examine her ankle, I can’t find anything visibly wrong with it, but presume it must be a sprain.

14:44

Chapter 155. Rastien Takes Care of Arabella

“Bella, why was Blaise having you followed?” I don’t really know a delicate way of asking this question, so I simply blurt out the tactless thought in my mind, “Why does he care about you, or what you’re doing in the city?”

Arabella flushes, looking surprised by my blunt words and unsure how to answer, I can see the gears spinning in her head, and I know Axel was right. She is hiding something. It’s also clear she doesn’t want to tell me her secret. Her lips are pursed and her brown eyes are darting around as if searching for an answer. “What is it, Bella?” I encourage, “You can tell me.”

She peeked up at me from beneath her lashes, looking more vulnerable than I can remember seeing her in a very long time. “You have to promise you won’t get mad.”

* Just tell me, honey. I promise you’ll feel better with everything out in the open.”

Staring at her lap and nervously twiddling her fingers, she admits, “Blaise he’s been pursuing me.” Her voice is barely louder than a whisper, “He came onto me when I first arrived but I told him I wasn’t that kind of girl. I don’t think he knows how to take no for an answer.”

Damn, I think, overcome with fury and frustration. This explains a lot, including why a strange man’s mere presence could cause problems for Arabella. It’s also a very unfortunate complication, for both of us. “Well he has a funny way of showing his affection.” I growl, pulling a bag of frozen peas from the freezer and tenderly applying it to her cheek. She winces and tries to push me away, but I hush her and hold firm, “I know it hurts, darling. Just give it a moment. It will help.”

*Thank you for taking care of me, Bastien.” She whimpers, “I don’t know what i’d do without you.”

“You don’t ever have to worry about that again.” I vow. “From here on out, it’s you and me, Bella. We’re going to get through this together.”

She blinks up at me tearfully, her hands clutching my shirt in an iron grip. But how?”

In this moment I can almost see her as a child again, when she inevitably got herself in over her head trying to prove herself and Flynn and I would have to come to the rescue. I recognize the hallmarks well, and I have a feeling this is more of the same. I don’t doubt she’s hurting, but Arabella has never been the type to pull out the puppy dog eyes unless she’s trying to garner sympathy.

Nothing excuses what Blaise has done, but I wouldn’t be surprised if she hadn’t come here intending to charm him and subsequently bit off more than she can chew. Sweet and vulnerable is not her style unless she’s trying to get out of trouble, then she’ll pull out all the stops to avoid accountability,

“We’ve got to get out of this city.” I insist, hoping this incident will finally make her see how dangerous it is to stay here. “I need to return to Elysium, and we need to get you away from Blaise.”

“No!” Arabella yelps, surprising me, “We can’t leave. This is the only place we’re safe from Selene.”

Furrowing my brow in confusion, I study Flynn’s sister closely, thinking perhaps Blaise hit her harder than I realized. “But Bella, we aren’t safe here either” I remind her. “Blaise is never going to be an ally to me, and he’s a threat to us both.”

“Actually, I’ve been thinking.” Arabella says, though it truly seems like she’s making this up as she goes along. “Maybe I should just give in to Blaise.”

“What are you talking about?” I demand.

“He might help us if I did.” She shrugs.

“Bella, you’ve spent weeks telling me what a monster he is and that he’d kill me for the Nova Pack and the first chance.” I exclaim.

“I just, I don’t know what else to do!” She cries, jumping down off the counter. “it’s different for you, you can go back and fight Selene and Frederic, but I’m exiled – from our pack and from all of our allies’ too. I don’t have a choice but to stay in Tartarus, and this might be the only way I can do so safely.”

“No,” I command forcefully. “That isn’t happening. When I go home, you’ll come with me. I’m going to make things right.”

She shakes her head, tears streaming down her cheeks. “You still don’t get it, do you?” She asks. “The moment you go back there, they’ll turn you against me. They’ll convince you I’m evil. They’ve already done it once, they can do it again.”

Understanding finally sinks in, and I realize this is what she’s been afraid of all along. “Then we won’t give them a choice.” I decide. “We’ll make it so nothing can come between us.”

“What do you mean?” Arabella questions, sounding defeated,

“We’ll get married.”