

## Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 5

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#Chapter 5 Three-year Marriage Contract

Selene's POV

"What are you talking about," I'm out of the bed, edging toward the door. "You want me to marry Bastien?"

Gabriel, not the least bit fooled by my furtive movements, blocks my path. "You need protection, Selene Not only from Blaise but from any wolf who might seek to take advantage. Without your own wolf you are vulnerable and defenseless." His soothing tone has a core of steel. "I will not fail your mother again. Bastien is the only man I trust to keep you safe, who I know without doubt will honor my wishes long after I'm gone."

"But-

"And it's not only safety." He presses on. You've been in captivity through the most important formative years in your life. You've had no education, no socialization. Your knowledge of the world is that of a child."

He gestures toward my skittish movements, "And forgive me, but you are clearly not prepared to rejoin the pack as you are if I let you walk out that door right now, what would you do, where would you go?"

My throat begins to itch as I consider the Alpha's question What would I do? Go back to Garrick's house? Try to find a job despite

the fact that I have no skills whatsoever? Would I be able to survive in the city when the very sight of strangers sends me into a full on panic?

Gabriel's authoritative bearing softens when he sees my lower lip begin to tremble. "You need help, Selene. You may not need it forever, but you cannot do this alone. You went to Bastien for protection from Donavon and me today. Despite everything that's happened – you trust him. I believe he is the one to help you find your way"

I think about Bastien, who rescued me so many years ago and stole my young heart. "Does he know?" I exhale shakily, "That you're planning this?"

“Yes,” The Alpha responds simply. “He knows.”

If someone had told me as a child that Bastien Durand would one day be my husband, I would have burst with happiness. Now I don't know what to think. The future terrifies me, but of all the possibilities, Bastien frightens me least.

I lower my eyes from Gabriel's in submission, “Okay.”

Bastien's POV

“You killed Garrick?!” My father is shooting me death glares, pacing his office like a tiger in a cage.

“On neutral territory.” I counter, “it was well within my rights, and we'll both sleep better knowing he's out of the picture for good.”

“That is beside the point.” He hisses. “The rule of law exists for a reason. Trials serve as examples for the pack, evidence that we take violations seriously, that we care about justice.”

“His body will serve as a better example of what happens to abusers than any trial.” I bite back

“When you're Alpha you can change my laws,” Father snarls, bearing his teeth. But until that time I expect my heir to embody the values I espouse and uphold the status quo, not flout it with loopholes.”

I cross my arms over my chest, “He deserved everything he got.”

“You think I don't agree with you?” He snaps, “You think I wouldn't have liked to join you out there?”

“So why didn't you?”

“Because being a leader doesn't mean you get to do whatever you want with impunity.” Father barks, “It means standing by your principles even when it feels impossible, doing what is best for the pack no matter how much you might personally hate it.”

“And if it had been mom?” I know it's a low blow, but I won't apologize for protecting my mate. “If someone had done to her what Garrick did to Selene?”

“That's different.” He waves away the question, “Your mother and I are fated mates.”

“Exactly.” I say, staring him down.

Understanding flickers in his eyes, and he slowly deflates, then tension seeping out of his muscles little by little. "But she—"

"She lost her wolf, remember?" At first I hadn't understood why Selene could not feel the mating bond. It only became clear when I learned about her wolf. Of course she can't feel it, she's lost the very essence of her being.

"Oh son," He squeezes my shoulder, genuine pain in his voice. "I'm sorry." I nod in acknowledgement, but cannot bring myself to meet his gaze. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to offer her an out." I sigh, "We'll get her through the transition, and when she's ready to stand on her own two feet, she can decide if she wants to stay." I drag a hand through my hair, "I haven't spoken with her yet, but I'm thinking three years should be about right."

"Are you sure?" Father inquires softly.

I nod firmly. I might not like it, but there's no doubt in my mind it's what's right. "She's been a captive long enough, I don't want to trap her in a marriage she does not want. And if there's a chance she can have love I want her to have it, even if it's with someone else."

His face pulls into a grimace. "If that's the case, I would keep a very tight leash on your wolf. Don't claim her completely until you know whether or not there's going to be a rejection ceremony." He advises. "If he marks her, you won't ever be able to let her go."

Axel growls in my head, clearly displeased with this suggestion. She's mine. It's my right to claim her.

I clear my throat, "That's not going to be easy."

"No," Father argues. But it will be less painful than spending your life chasing someone who can never love you."

Selene's POV

A stranger stares at me in the mirror. She has my eyes, my full lips and long, silky hair; but I cannot find myself in her.

A month has passed since my escape, and though I'm still much too thin, the hollows in my bones have begun to fill slightly. My skin is no longer a garish shade of gray and mottled with bruises – though it's still very pale -, and though I am still heartsick for Luna, freedom has returned some light to my eyes.

Bastien stands behind me, dwarfing my small body as he too studies my reflection. I still haven't been able to let anyone else near me, so he is the one who helped me into my wedding dress for the final fitting. The long gown is perfect, but I feel more like a child playing dress up than a bride.

I don't think Bastien is happy to be marrying me. He's never said so and, though he's been there for me through every breakdown and panic attack without question or complaint, he's undeniably distant when we're alone together.

Unfortunately I've come to rely on him so completely that his reserve is becoming truly distressing. The inconvenient truth is that the torch I carried for the future Alpha when I was a girl has been relit. When I was five he was my knight in shining armor, now he is my lifeline.

I don't like feeling this way. Getting attached to him – to anyone – is dangerous. I went from being completely helpless to being completely dependent on Bastien, and while I realize it can't be helped given my situation, I also know it's a recipe for disaster.

I'm slowly learning about the pack and everything I missed over the last eight years through a combination of formal lessons and eavesdropping. I spend a lot of time with my ear pressed up to walls and doors, though my stealth skills are lacking. Bastien has caught me at it a number of times but thankfully he seems to find it more amusing than annoying.

It was through one of these eavesdropping sessions that I learned about Arabella. Apparently before I came along, Bastien had been planning on taking a she-wolf named Arabella Winters as his mate. It seems Gabriel's edict forced them to end their engagement, and I can't deny it makes sense. Being in love with someone else would certainly explain Bastien's distance.

Warm hands circle my waist, dragging me back to the present. "What are you thinking about?"

I meet his silver gaze in the mirror, leaning back against his chest. "Nothing important."

"Hmm," His rumbling hum vibrates against my spine, "Then why not tell me?"

If there is one thing I find annoying about this man, it is his ability to put me at ease when I want to raise my guard. I'm always less anxious when he is near, always comforted by his voice. His dominance is so absolute that my natural instinct is to submit, regardless of whatever else is going on in my head.

"I was thinking about marriage." I admit. "Our marriage."

Bastien frowns, dropping his head – in thought, I suppose. When he raises it again, he nods tersely, "I've been meaning to talk to you about this for a while now."

My stomach plummets. "About what?"

"Our marriage contract." He explains, pulling away from me. "Do you know what a rejection ceremony is?"

I shake my head uncertainly.

"It is a ritual undergone by mates who wish to end their marriage." Bastien pulls a sheaf of paper from the breast pocket of his discarded jacket. "Given our unique circumstances, I thought a rejection provision might be appropriate."

He hands me the document; our marriage contract. I scan the contents, stumbling over the unfamiliar words. "So," I summarize slowly, "we'll marry for three years, then decide whether or not to reject one another?"

"In essence." Bastien confirms. "Three years should give you enough time to adjust to freedom, and your status as an Alpha's spouse will guarantee you lifelong protection even if we don't stay together. You would be free to choose another mate."

And so would you.

In that moment a flip switches inside me, and the riot of emotions threatening to surge forward shuts off, leaving me feeling blissfully numb. "If that's what you want." I hear myself say.

"I think it's for the best." Bastien sounds very far away, and I turn back to the mirror, staring at the stranger again. The light is gone from her eyes now, and I wonder how it ever appeared in the first place.

My future is clear now. The ray of hope I've slowly cultivated over the last few weeks is beginning to flicker; if I can't win over Bastien before our contract ends, I will lose my new lifeline.

Three years, that's all I have: One way or another, I will make my husband fall in love with me.