

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 71

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Chapter 71

#Chapter 71 Drake's Reckoning

Bastien's POV

The early morning sun filters through the windows and bathes the room in dappled light. I trace the patterns its rays form on Selene's skin, trailing my fingers down her spine, circling the shadows and delicate illuminations across her ribcage before tugging the sheet pooled around her waist down to reveal a broader swath of canvas.

Selene sighs in her sleep as my hands travel the length of her body with a featherlight touch. Unable to resist the temptation, I soon replace my hands with my mouth. Selene shivers as my lips find the small of her back, finally stirring her from slumber.

She turns onto her side to look up at me sulkily. "How do you expect me to sleep with you doing that?"

I chuckle deeply, claiming her mouth possessively before answering, "I think you might be missing the point."

Selene's breath catches as I trail my mouth down her throat, blazing a scorching path to the swell of her breasts, "We only just went to bed." She complains, closing her eyes again and attempting to return to sleep. "Aren't you tired?"

"Mmm," I purr, nipping the tender flesh of her stomach, "Poor, naive mate, I'm nowhere near being done with you."

It's true. In the hours since I marked her, we've scarcely rested, making love over and over again to the point of delirium. Still, I haven't had enough. Her heat is still in full force, and she might be exhausted from the sheer avalanche of climaxes I've inflicted on her, but I still have plenty of energy yet.

Selene's grin is overtaken by a whimper as my mouth moves further south and settles between her legs. Her hand leaps reflexively to the top of my head, burying her fingers in my thick hair. "Bastien," She gasps. "I'm sore."

After a few moments delay, during which I manage to elicit a series of barely smothered moans from Selene, I worked my way back up her flushed body until I'm hovering above

her. "You should have thought about that before you decided to look so damn ravishing." | scold, "you've done nothing but taunt me all morning."

Selene squirms beneath me, looking adorable disgruntled. "I wasn't even awake!"

A predatory gleam appears in my eye as a growl rumbles in my chest. "As if that's any excuse."

Selene shrieks with laughter as my hands sweep down to the sensitive nerves of her belly, tickling her weak spots without mercy. She tries to wrestle out of my hold as she giggles, but my strength wins out. We quickly make a mess of the bedding, writhing around like a pair of fish out of water, squirming and tussling until we're both short of breath. Then, just as Selene is closing her teeth around the arm I'm using to hold her captive, a loud rapping at the door cut through the noise of our battle.

We freeze, looking around for something to cover ourselves with and finding we've pushed all the bed ding to the floor. "All right you two." Aiden calls through the door, having enough sense not to enter, "Lila's awake and she's asking for *you*. Odette's going to bring her up in a few minutes."

I look down at Selene, who is still mid-chomp and looking entirely unrepentant. I grin from ear to ear, dropping a kiss to her throat and pausing to nibble my mark, fresh and bright red against her pale skin. "Come on, *gorgeous*. *We* better get up."

"But we aren't finished." Seler

'And whose fault is that?' I rep

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'You can't leave me like this.' Selene catches my hand and guides it between her legs. 'Look what you've done.'

Clever little wolf. She's dripping wet and searing hot. "Poor baby" | coo, sinking my fingers into the swollen, soaked flesh. I love watching her writhe on the thick digits, immediately succumbing to the raging hormones consuming her worn out body.

When I pull back, triumph wells in my chest. I gaze down at Selene's furrowed brow and glazed eyes with a devilish grin, "Maybe this will teach you not to question me."

Selene's POV

A draft of cold air washes over my body as Bastien rises, taking his warmth and talented hands with him. My lust-addled brain is slow to the uptake, and it's a moment before I rise onto my elbows. "Bastien!"

He's pulling on a pair of sweat pants, pretending like he's not rock hard and obscenely straining the soft cotton fabric. "Yes, angel?"

"You can't be serious!" | exclaim, gesturing to my prone body expectantly. Only a monster would get me all worked up and then walk away. Lila's not here yet, I'm sure we have time to sneak in another round.

He strides over to the bed, towering over me menacingly. 'Wanna bet?:'

Outrage washes away my stubborn hope. 'Fine.' I hiss, dropping down onto my back. 'I don't need you to finish.'

Before my fingers can connect with my aching flesh, one of Bastien's massive hands clamps down on my wrist. 'Oh yes you do.' There's no mistaking the threat in his voice.

Seething, I dig my fist into his pillow and smash it into his side with a vicious swing. Clearly my heat and Luna's influence has bolstered my confidence – I never would have tried such a thing when we were married. Undeterred, Bastien scoops me up and sets me on my feet, 'We are going to get up and have breakfast with Lila.' He decrees, pressing my silky pajamas into my hands. "And later – if you're good – I'll make it up to you."

| glare up at him, unable to stand still I'm so overcome with lust. "And if I'm bad?" | question defiantly

Bastien just grins, cupping my upturned face in his hands. It will be the better for waiting, Selene. He presses a soft kiss to my lips, pulling back only slightly to deliver his next promise. "But your pleasure is my responsibility. If you try to take it from me again," he slides one of his hands into my thick tresses, tilting my head back a little further. 'And I will know if you do – I will make what you are feeling right now seem like nothing.'

'Two can play at that game.' I hiss, completely full of it.

"They can," Bastien agrees, his silver eyes glittering dangerously, "But we both know I'll win."

I want to argue. I want to deny his words, tell him he's wrong and storm off in a righteous huff. Instead I pull the pajamas from his grip, stalking toward the bathroom and muttering mutinously under my breath before shutting *myself* inside.

If this heat has taught me anything, it's that my mate has even more power over my body than he did *before*, I'm helpless to resist him – especially now that he's marked me. All Luna wants is to be tied to him in the most intimate manner, and I want it too.

We don't stand a chance.

Drake is staring at the mark on my neck as if it's a particularly gruesome wound, appearing both horrified and slightly ill.

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I left Lila with Bastien after our breakfast together, needing to talk to my friend and hoping the distance from my mate would help cool down my raging desires. Unfortunately it's done no such thing so far, and I'm feeling increasingly certain nothing can save me from this onslaught of feelings.

"What the hell were you thinking?" I ask Drake, pulling the collar of my shirt over Bastien's mark. "Why did you attack him?"

"I was trying to protect you." Drake insists. "You seem to forget who you are when you're around Bastien, it's like he has you under a spell."

"He does – in a way." I remind him gently. "He's my mate."

"He mistreated you for years, Selene!" Drake thunders, "Have you forgotten what that was like?"

"It's not that simple." I try to explain, "There's a lot that happened back then I'm only just beginning to understand. I'd be lying if I said our marriage was perfect," Drake scoffs in disbelief, but I ignore him, "but it also wasn't what I thought. I love him, Drake."

The Eros Alpha is shaking his head, pacing back and forth and looking as if steam is pouring from his ears. "No." He snarls. "No. It was alright when you were here on your own with Lila, I was alright keeping you at a distance, but I can't watch you go back to him." He declares, "It's not right, Selene. You know it isn't."

My stomach is starting to feel very queasy. I don't like hearing Drake speak this way. It's too personal, too intimate. "Drake, you're my best friend –" I begin.

"Don't do that!" He interrupts. "I don't want to be your friend, Selene. I've never wanted that."

"What are you saying?" I choke weakly.

“I’m saying that I’m in love with you!” Drake explodes. “I’ve been in love with you from the day we met. You and Lila don’t belong with Bastien.” He hisses, ‘You belong with me!’”

Before I can stop him, before I even realize what’ he’s doing, Drake yanks me into his arms and slams his mouth into mine.

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Sophie’s POV

I’ve been in love with Drake Cavanaugh for as long as I can remember.

We grew up together. My dad was his step-father’s Beta, and we spent our entire childhoods tied at the hip. All my fondest memories are with Drake. We spent our days running through the docks of Asphodel like wild things, completely free and completely happy.

I always imagined Drake would wake up one day and realize he loved me. The older we got, the harder I fell, and even though it was slow, it really seemed like he felt the same. I know men have to go out and sew their wild oats or whatever you want to call it – they have to explore and get all those primal urges out of their systems. So I didn’t worry when he didn’t immediately fall at my feet during my first heat.

I didn’t worry when we reached our twenties and he still seemed more interested in other she-wolves. We were still just kids, and I’ve always been patient. I could certainly be patient for Drake – I’ve never met a man more worth waiting for.

And then he met Selene.

The first time he return Asphodel after meeting her, I knew something had changed. He was more mature, more serious and motivated. He started taking his position in the pack more earnestly, and I love him for it all the more.

I didn’t know what was behind the change until much later, when he finally brought Selene home with him. He said it was nothing, that she was just a she-wolf in need of protection, but I saw the way he looked at her.

I wanted to hate her so badly. My jealousy drove me out of my mind with the most horrible thoughts about the pretty she-wolf, but the more time I spent with her, the more

I liked her. Selene assured me there was nothing between her and Drake, and even though I knew those were her feelings and not his, I accepted it.

1. I've watched them closely over the years, and I've never doubted that Selene's only feelings for Drake were platonic. When the news spread that she was breeding, everyone assumed the baby was his, but I trusted my friend when he told me otherwise. I believed Drake and Selene when they insisted Lila's father belonged to another pack.

I've done nothing but wait. I've been nothing but patient, and in my delusional mind, I thought it would eventually pay off. I truly believed my day would come with Drake.

Then Bastien Durand came to town, and I learned that my so-called friends have been lying to me for years. Selene isn't just any she-wolf, and her pup doesn't belong to another man.

The news about Lila's paternity broke days ago, and I've spent the better part of a week trying to build up the courage to confront Drake. It's not even about my feelings, it's the betrayal. He didn't have to lie to me. We've never lied to each other about anything – or we hadn't, until Selene,

After wallowing in self pity for a few days, I finally forced myself out of bed and set off for the pack house, prepared to both bare my soul and have it torn to shreds. I made it to the packhouse around mid day, as prepared as one can ever be for a life changing conversation.

I climb the stairs to Drake's office like I have a thousand times before, my stomach in my throat. I have it all planned out. I know every word I'm going to say.

That's when I see them: Drake locked Selene in his arms and was about to kiss her.

I feel like the ground is crumbling beneath my feet. This isn't how it was supposed to go. I knew that Drake was Lila's father, but I never imagined he and Selene were still together.

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I can't bear it.

I turn on my heel and run back down the hallway, taking the stairs two at a time as I rush out of the pack house.

I've been such a fool.

Selene's POV

It takes almost all of my strength, but I'm finally able to push Drake off of me.

If I ever had any questions about whether my heat could be satisfied by anyone other than Bastien, they were just answered. I'm so glad I successfully ducked before Drake could kiss me.

"What are you doing?" I demand. "Have you lost your mind. Do you have any idea what Bastien would do to you if he knew you wanted to kiss me?"

Abject disbelief paints Drake's handsome features, "That's your response?" He hisses. "That's what you're thinking about right now? What Bastien will do?"

"He's my mate." I snap, "And in case you didn't notice, you can't take him down without a full army at your back. If I were you, I wouldn't risk pissing him off."

"I don't give a damn what Bastien thinks or wants or feels." Drake exclaims, "I just professed my love for you and you're acting like it was nothing..." He watches me with horrible fascination, "It is nothing to you, isn't it?" He croaks, "You didn't feel... anything?"

"Drake." I breathe, praying for patience, "Please don't do this. You know you're my important friend... I just can't love you the way you need me to."

"But Bastien Durand is worthy?" He bites, "you want to build a life with that animal?"

"I already have a life with him." I state coolly. "We have a pup, he's claimed me. We're still married for Goddess's sake."

"I thought..." His eyes are shining oddly, "I thought maybe you just didn't know what you were missing."

I shake my head sadly, "You're right that I've been missing out for years now, just not in the way you think." I admit, "Bastien is what I need. He's the one I'm meant to be with, and I've been hurting ever since I came here."

"I brought you here to protect you." Drake reminds me.

"And I will forever be in your debt." I agree, "but I don't need your protection anymore – I need my mate."

Sophie's POV

My pillow is soaked with tears. I've been sobbing ever since I saw Selene and Drake together in his office, and I've long since stopped caring who sees me. I cried openly on the walk home, drawing concerned look from passers-by and even a few well-

intentioned inquiries. I waved them all off, wallowing in my pain and wishing I could go back to this morning and save myself from uncovering this secret.

They've been lying to me all these years, not only about Lila's paternity, but about their relationship.

How could Drake do it? I've been nothing but a friend to him. I don't understand why he would hurt me this way

"What are you snivelling about?" My brother, Martin is hovering in my bedroom doorway, watching me without an ounce of sympathy.

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"Nothing." I snuffle stubbornly. Martin doesn't have a kind bone in his body, if he's asking me why I'm crying, it's not out of concern.

"Don't tell me this is about that pathetic crush of yours." He drawls, "Didn't I tell you no man would ever be satisfied just being friends with that piece of ass?"

He did tell me that, but I never believed him. I thought he was just being gross, I didn't realize the truth could be so terrible.

"My Goddess, Sophie." He sighs, "Grow a backbone. Why bother crying over that bastard? You don't get sad. You get even."

I don't want to hear this. Martin can be such a jerk. I just want to wallow in my wretched feelings and eat a few dozen tubs of ice cream, "Go away, Martin." I hiccup.

"If that's what you want." He smirks, "Of course, if I leave, I can't help you."

"Help me with what?" I roll my eyes.

"Help you get even." He scoffs, "Haven't you been listening?"

"And how on earth am I suppose to get even?" I ask, more out of habit than true curiosity.

"You take something your competition cares about more than the Alpha." He explains slyly. "You make her see the error of her ways."

"You aren't making any sense." I gripe.

"I'm saying." Martin grumbles through clenched teeth, "that you need leverage. If you have something to hold against Cavanaugh's whore, you can force her to give up her claim on him. You can make her walk away."

Deep down I know what he's suggesting is twisted and wrong, yet at the same time, I can't help but feel intrigued. Is it really possible to make Selene back off? Can I convince her to let me have Drake?

"What kind of leverage?" I ask, still unconvinced.

"What does she care about more than anything in the world?" Martin questions, seeming as if he already knows the answer.

"What?" I inquire nervously.

"Her pup." He growls, "take her pup, and she'll give you anything you want – even Cavanaugh."

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#Chapter 73 Lila Disappears Odette's POV

Watching Lila dart gleefully around the playground – positively squealing with happiness – transports me far into the past. I'm no longer a lonely widow far past her prime, I'm a young mother with my whole life ahead of me. My loving, powerful mate stands by my side, and together we look on in amazement as our pup finds his way in the world.

My heart aches to return to those halcyon days, but the nostalgia and grief aren't what concern me most. At first I thought I was seeing flashes of Bastien in Selene's pup out of wishful thinking. Now I know better.,

She might be her mother's miniature in looks, but Lila is my son's clone in spirit. There is so much of Bastien in Lila I can't believe he doesn't see the resemblance. I suppose it's difficult to recognize one's own mannerisms and expressions in another person, but I would recognize them anywhere. A mother never forgets, and it's not Selene's baby I'm seeing in front of me – it's mine.

No matter what the DNA tests say, it's become painfully obvious that Lila is Bastien's child. The clues go far beyond the pup's looks or personality, as soon as I acknowledged the possibility, the puzzle pieces started falling in place. Selene was sick as a dog in the weeks before her supposed death, not to mention the mood swings and exhaustion. I should have recognized it at the time – but I was admittedly distracted.

I don't know Selene's motivations for lying, or how those results came back negative, but I intend to find out. I won't repeat Bastien's mistake and go behind her back. I plan on confronting Selene directly. I'll find some time for us to be alone together and ask her what's going on.

I understand the pressures, fears, and stresses of motherhood in a way my son and his Betas never will. I know how strong the instincts are to protect our young – how primal. I'm not going to jump to any conclusions.

If it turns out that Selene is keeping this secret for compelling reasons, I may even be convinced to stay quiet. Knowing my daughter in law, I suspect there must be a good reason for hiding the pup's identity. However, if I'm wrong, if it turns out she's lying for the sake of silly insecurities or spite – I won't hesitate to tell Bastien.

The fact remains that Lila is both a Volana wolf and an Alpha's pup. I won't stand for my grandchild being denied the privileges and protections her birthrights demand unless I can be convinced deception is the safer option.

Sighing and shaking my head, I continue to follow the movements of Lila's tiny body with my eyes. She's wearing a bright red sundress, though the garment is little more than a blur the way she's zooming around the park.

Movement flashes in my periphery, and a familiar scent fills my nose. I turn to greet Drake's mother, Diana. She and I are old friends, bonded through the shared experience of being mated to Alphas and raising their heirs.

I immediately fold her into a hug, "Diana! It's been too long."

"I know," She commiserates. "You'd think Joseph retiring would give us more time to travel but nooo." She quips, referring to her husband. "All he wants to do is lock himself in his study and read!"

"You could travel without him." I suggest, knowing it's a fruitless idea. Joseph may be Diana's second husband and merely a chosen mate, but he's still an Alpha: they don't like to let their wives out of their sight.

"I wish." She mutters, "I'd love to come stay with you in Elysium for a while."

"Well you're welcome any time." I assure her, reaching out to squeeze her palm.

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Diana grins and returns the squeeze. "Thank you." She glances around at the playground, catching sight of Lila. "I take it you're on babysitting duty?"

I follow her gaze, curiosity welling inside my chest. Lila does not seem to be aware that Diana has arrived, or if she is, she doesn't care. Similarly, Diana does not seem overly interested in the pup – odd behavior, considering she is supposed to be her Grandmother. 'Tell me,' I ask, "Do you see Drake in her?"

Diana blinks, understanding flashing across her sharp features quickly. "No," She answers honestly. "And you?"

"She reminds me so much of Bastien ... It's uncanny." I share.

Diana nods pensively, "We've been friends for a very long time, Odette." She broaches gently, "longer than our pups understand. And our friendship means more to me than whatever games they're playing." She continues.

"Drake has claimed Lila as his – publically. I can't pretend I know what's going on with him and Selene, I can't pretend I understand all the stakes... but I know this," Diana confides, "Selene gave birth six months after arriving in Asphodel."

"And the baby?" I press.

"Full term." Diana confirms, "She was small – but not premature."

I nod, this new information providing yet another clue to the larger picture. "Thank you for telling me."

"Of course." She sighs, "Though I admit, I wouldn't mind if she were Drakes. She's such a pretty little thing – and it's long past time that boy is mated."

I chuckle, "You know how it is with Alphas. Everything in their own time."

"Just so." She grins.

I search the playground for the little red ball of energy, awash with fresh certainty that she is my blood. I scan the slides and swings, the sand boxes and climbing contraptions, but I do not find her. My brow furrows, where did she go?

I step forward, an eerie sense of unease raising my hackles. I scan the playground again and again, searching every corner and crevice for signs of Lila. When I come up empty I scent the air, alarm jolting through my system when I find only slight traces of the toddler.

I reach out for Diana, steadying myself on her arm. "Diana."

"What's wrong?" She questions sharply, reading my panic.

"Do you see Lila? Do you smell her?" I ask hoarsely.

My friend's expression slowly transforms: from placation, to puzzlement, to concern. "No." She breathes anxiously. "Odette... I think..."

I don't need her to finish the sentence. "She's gone."

Bastien's POV

Selene is tempting me to no end.

Ever since I denied her this morning, she's been torturing me, trying to provoke me into mating her while simultaneously punishing me.

She started by donning the most scandalous lingerie she could find and parading around her rooms pretending to deliberate what to wear for the day. After sorting through her wardrobe and dropping a suspicious number of items on the floor throughout the process, all of which she very slowly and deliberately

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bent over to retrieve, wagging her round bottom in the air all the while – she finally settled on a dress that necessitated going braless.

After stripping off the silky garment and sliding the dress over her head, she made sure to strut past me at a pace that set her pert breasts to bouncing, before donning heels that made her slender legs look a mile long.

None of it was necessary, the scent of her arousal and irresistible pull of her wolf was enticement enough. If I had my way we never would have left the bedroom, but we are not young wolves without responsibilities. Selene is a mother, and I am an Alpha – we cannot let our lust control us.

I suppose it's easier for me, I've experienced many ruts in my life, but this is Selene's first heat. For all intents and purposes, she's like an untried virgin, overwhelmed by the powerful sensations taking over her body.

It doesn't bother me to be responsible for both of us, to take control when she cannot – but she doesn't have to make it so damn difficult.

After our breakfast with Lila, Selene went to talk with Drake while I met with my Betas and called home to the council. I've already been away from Elysium too long and my work is piling up – but I won't leave without Selene.

We got through lunch and a few strategy sessions about the bounty without further incident, trusting my mother to babysit Lila.

Now we're finally back in Selene's rooms, and we have about a half hour before Mom and Lila return from the park. I don't plan on wasting a single moment. I've been planning out my revenge for Selene's antics all morning, and while half an hour isn't nearly enough time to accomplish everything I hope, it's certainly a start.

Selene is currently eyeing me like the naughty little mate she is, with hunger, anticipation and guilt. She knows she's been bad, and she's so sweet I could gobble her up in one bite.

I start walking towards her across the suite, Axel rising close to the surface as the scent of her arousal fills my senses. I've been waiting for this all day, and I can't wait to claim Selene again.

Just then, my mother, Diana Cavanaugh and Donavon burst into the room unannounced. Mom looks white as a sheet, tears shining in her eyes. It takes me all of one second to realize Lila isn't with them, and the pit falls out of my stomach.

I know what she's going to say before the words leave her mouth, but I pray I'm wrong.

I'm not

"Lila's been taken."

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#Chapter 74 The Letter

Selene's POV

This isn't happening

It can't be real.

I'm frozen in place, staring at Odette as if she's a ghost. I must have misheard her. But if that's the case, why does she look so distraught? Why are there tears in her eyes? And where is my pup?

I swing my gaze from her to Bastien, whose hands are locked in white-knuckled fists at his sides. He's breathing heavily, his eyes glowing and fangs extended. My first reaction was disbelief. His – apparently – was fury.

Bastien's gaze descends on me, and I feel my lower lip begin to tremble uncontrollably. It's not real. I think desperately.

Luna is frantic, lashing out our heightened senses to every corner of the room in search of Lila and coming up empty. "What do you mean she was taken?" I choke, "How could that happen, weren't you watching her?"

: "I'm so sorry, Selene." Odette professes sincerely. "I turned my back for one moment and she was gone!"

What?!.can't help blaming Odette a little when I realize Bastien is crossing the room towards me, a determined look in his molten eyes. I back away from him, shaking my head in denial and trying to stay out of his reach even as his muscular arms extend towards me.

"No!" I insist, swatting at his hands. I don't want to be cuddled. I don't want to be comforted. I want my pup. "Don't Bastien!"

He doesn't listen, growling dominantly and dragging me into his embrace no matter how hard I fight.

Eventually my flailing limbs and defiant snarls give way to sobs. It isn't real. I think again. She isn't gone. My hands go from pushing my mate away to trying to climb completely into his arms. He lets me, lifting me off the ground and rocking me gently back and forth.

Gentle, soothing purrs vibrate against my cheek and soft lips press to my hair. "Shhh little wolf." Bastien croons. "We'll find her." He promises, an edge of steel in his deep voice, "You have my word – if it's the last thing I do, I will bring her home."

Sophie's POV

I think I've made a terrible mistake.

It all made sense when Martin was spelling out the plan. He was so convincing. All I needed was a little leverage to hold against Selene in order to convince her to leave Drake, and her pup would certainly provide the motivation. It's not even really a kidnapping – Lila knows me, and I have no intention of hurting her at all. I just want to talk with Selene, to make sure she isn't a threat to me.

However the more time that passes, the more I start to imagine how Selene and Drake must be feeling now that the pup has disappeared, and Martin's plan doesn't seem so

great after all. They must be out of their minds with worry, and I highly doubt they'll be forgiving when the truth comes out.

What was I thinking? How could I be so foolish? Has my love for Drake really blinded me so much that I would steal an innocent child from her mother? That I would hold her hostage in exchange for staying away from the Alpha?

#Chapter 74 The Letter

I've always liked Selene. I've always liked Lila. I don't want to cause them pain.

I'm not a mother and I cannot pretend to understand the bond between parent and pup, but I know enough to understand this is cruel and unreasonable.

Lila is playing happily in my living room, and again I feel a rush of abject guilt. Even if I believed in what I was doing – how stupid can I possibly have been to bring her to my home? Maybe if I reach out and pretend it was an accident. I can say I found Lila wandering near the park and rescued her... but if that were the case I don't know how I would explain bringing her home with me. It's been hours, I think it's safe to say the excuse ship has sailed.

Martin is hovering in the doorway watching me, a gruesome sneer on his face, "Having second thoughts sister?"

"This was a mistake." I whisper, afraid of speaking any louder lest I set off his temper. "They're going to hate me when they find out."

Martin shakes his head, striding forward with a cold leer and taking my chin in his hand. "Are you questioning me, Sophie?" He growls.

"No!" I insist, shaking my head. I know what comes of questioning Martin – it's never good.

"You better not be." He hisses. "I want what's best for you. I want you to have Drake. Don't you?"

"Yes, but-

"There are no buts!" Martin roars. "For once in your life just do what you're told. I swear, I don't know why you have to make things so difficult. You want the Alpha, I'm getting you the Alpha. Now stop sniveling and write the note!"

He shoves a pen and paper into my hand, and I can feel Lila watching us. I glance in her direction, finding her tiny brow furrowed at Martin.

"You mean." The pup accuses.

Oh Goddess. This isn't good.

Martin approaches Lila, his ruthless temper flushing his ruddy face. "What did you say?"

I jump to my feet, running to put myself between the two of them. "She's just a pup," I insist. "She doesn't know what she's saying."

Glancing over my shoulder, I see Lila still glaring. Shame writhes in my belly, apparently even toddlers are braver than I am.

"Then you can take her punishment." Martin answers gruffly, lashing out with the back of his hand and smashing it across my cheek.

I yelp and hit the floor, stars swirling in my vision. I don't have any time to get my bearings before he's grasping me by my shirt collar and dragging me back to the desk where the unwritten ransom note waits. "Get on with it you worthless bitch."

Licking my lips and tasting the coppery taste of blood, I try to force down the sick rising in my esophagus. Trying to steady my shaking hand, I lift the pen, and begin to write.

Selene's POV

I'm alone when I find the note.

It appears out of nowhere, as if conjured from thin air.

After a horrific afternoon of scouring the city, listening to Odette and Diana replay the events on the

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ground over and over again without ever gaining any more clarity, Bastien finally convinced me to re 1 home in case the kidnappers reached out with a ransom.

Personally I thought this was very optimistic thinking. We all know that the most likely motive for tak Lila has nothing to do with money or power, and everything to do with her Volana blood. Still, I couldn't kleving a single stone unturned, and that meant considering a ransom.

I don't think Bastien believed the kidnappers would take this route either, I think he just wanted to calm down.

In the end we were both wrong.

I spent a good hour pacing the suite waiting for the phone to ring and pathologically guarding the windows to search the grounds. It wasn't until my bladder was full to bursting and screaming for release that I finally took a break.

And when I returned to the living room, the note was waiting for me on the coffee table. It was simple parchment, scrawled in a hand I do not recognize.

Lila is safe.

Meet me at 2:00 O'clock on the Lethe Bridge if you want her to stay that way.

Tell no one where you're going. If you involve the Alpha or the enforcers, I will have no choice but to cut my losses.

Don't try anything clever or think you can get around these conditions. If you flout them, your pup will pay the price.

Don't be late.

I swing around, glancing at the mantle clock and quickly absorbing the time signature flashing across the digital surface. 1:30. I have half an hour to get to the edge of the city, or my pup will suffer. Goddess knows what depravities.

I don't even consider calling Bastien or Drake. I don't contemplate seeking backup or dialing the enforcers. Lila needs me, and there is not a single thing I would do to risk her life.

I depart the house on my own, and set off to meet my daughter's kidnapper without pause.

I may be alone, but any woman can tell you that hell hath a mother scorned.

Whatever is to come, I'm ready to meet it.

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 75

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 75

Selene's POV

The Lethe bridge is suspended over the turquoise waters of the lagoon, its silver cables and solid deck reflected in the crystalline surface. A few meandering shifters and

workers on late lunch breaks are scattered along the length of the bridge, none of whom look anything like the rogues I imagined.

Unease seethes in my belly. This feels wrong. Granted, I've experienced nothing but pure anguish since Lila was taken, but this is different. Something about this meeting seems off, though I can't put my finger on any one thing in particular. It's partly the lack of visible suspects, but I also can't believe the kidnapper asked for a meeting in such a public place, and in broad daylight too.

And why wasn't there a ransom? Why did they only ask for a meeting?

I'm still standing at the mouth of the bridge, scanning the long structure for likely suspects, but finding none. Suddenly a soft voice sounds behind me, and a familiar scent ripples through the air. "Selene?"

I whip around, my heart skipping a beat as I lay eyes on the speaker. My brow furrows, this isn't what expected. I'd recognize the lovely hazel eyes and strawberry blonde hair anywhere, but they are terribly out of place in this moment. "Sophie?"

Her eyes are red-rimmed and a dark bruise is blooming over her high cheekbone. My first instinct is worry, but then I smell Lila. Sophie smells like my pup – and that can only mean one thing. My disquiet flourishes into fresh anger, and my eyes narrow to slits, "You?"

She immediately begins shaking her head. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry." Tears well in her eyes, "I don't know what happened. I don't know what I was thinking."

"Where is my daughter?" I hiss.

"She's safe." Sophie promises with a hiccup. "I only wanted to talk to you... to convince you to leave Drake."

Fire explodes from deep within, and Luna begins clawing to get out. The instinct to shift – to attack – is almost undeniable. "You kidnapped my daughter because of a silly crush!?" I thunder.

"I didn't... I don't..." She sobs helplessly, unable to conjure an explanation for her insane plan. I've known how Sophie feels about Drake for a long time, and until now she's had my sympathy. If anyone understands unrequited love, it's me. However this is too far, much too far,

“Splitting us up won’t make him love you, Sophie.” I snap harshly. “We’re not even together.”

“I saw you kissing!” She bursts out, looking as if she wants the ground to open up and swallow her whole.

I breathe in a heavy sigh, trying to find patience. I’m no longer terrified for my pup’s life, but I won’t relax until I have her back. “No. I ducked his kiss, and it will never happen.” I share, brushing my hair back to expose Bastien’s mark. “I already have a mate, I don’t need another.”

Sophie’s eyes widen in horror, “But... Lila... it’s all over the pack that she’s his.”

Suddenly I realize my blunder. I can’t keep up the lie about Lila’s paternity and also maintain that Drake and I have never been together, but my daughter’s safety comes first. “She isn’t.” I announce coolly.

The other woman’s lip is trembling fiercely, and she’s slowly folding in on herself, “I’ve been so stupid.” She shudders as if invoking the name of a demon, “Martin... He said...”

The fine hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. “Sophie, how did you get that bruise on your cheek?” I interrupt, a sickening feeling in my stomach. I’ve only met Martin twice, but I’ve never liked him.

*Chapter 75 The Meeting

As I look at Sophie now, the clues begin to fall into place. A suspicious number of injuries over the years, her skittishness, and discomfort around any men but Drake.

Sophie averts her eyes and shakes her head, looking so utterly defeated that my heart opens for her – just a crack. I’ve been a man’s prisoner, I know exactly how horrifically they can twist your thoughts and feelings. My fury ebbs slightly, followed instantly by a great resurgence of terror, I take Sophie by the shoulders, giving her a little jerk and pulling her eyes up to mine. “I need you to tell me where my daughter is.” I insist. “Right now.”

My heart stops beating as the other woman begins to reply, the very last words I wanted to hear already on her lips, “Martin-”

“I should have known you’d bungle this.” A snide voice interrupts her. We both turn to find her brother leaning against the railing, malice glittering in his eyes.

“Martin, what are you doing here?” Sophie squeaks.

He rolls his eyes, "You stupid girl," Martin jeers, "haven't you figured it out by now?"

Sophie hasn't, but I have. "You didn't bring me here for any promise," I assert hoarsely, "You left that note to get me away from the Alphas."

A cruel laugh leaves his lips as he strides forward. "Very good." He taunts, the humor vanishing from his features so quickly I have whiplash. "And now, you're coming with me, both of you."

Bastien's POV

I know something is wrong the moment we return to the packhouse. Now that I've marked Selene, I can feel when she's close by – and she isn't. I cannot smell her or sense her presence, and Axel immediately goes into protector mode.

They've taken her too. He growls in my head, We shouldn't ever have let her out of my sight!

We don't know that for sure. I try to reason, but my heart is pounding frantically in my chest. I run up to Selene's suite, blood rushing in my ears. I can hear Aiden and Donovan calling out after me, their footsteps pounding up the stairs at my back, but I ignore them. I don't have time to explain.

Crashing in so violently that the door comes off its hinges, I scour the set of familiar rooms, scenting the air for traces of shifters who do not belong. I catch only the tiniest hint of an unfamiliar wolf. The aroma is completely separate from my mate's, and I don't think they were actually near each other.

There are no signs of a struggle, no knocked over furniture or broken vases. Everything is as it should be, appearing exactly as we left it. Everything except for a single piece of parchment on the coffee table.

I lunge for the page, trying to block out Axel's bloodthirsty tirade against the people responsible for stealing our females. I'll rip out their throats one by one. I'll skin them alive and use their bones as tooth picks. I'll...

My eyes fly across the page: once, twice, three times, just to be sure I understand. Surely Selene didn't go to meet the kidnappers alone. She wouldn't ever do anything so foolish, would she? Goddess it's probably a trap, otherwise they would have demanded money or some other sort of ransom., .

Immediately pulling out my phone to check the time, I let off a volley of curses. It's 2 o'clock already.

I turn on my heel and storm out of the room as swiftly as I came, shoving the note into Drake's chest when we nearly collide on the landing. Behind me I can hear the crinkling

of paper as he unfurls it, then the shouted commands and charging feet of at least a dozen guards.

Drake falls into sync with Aiden, Donovan and I, catching up more quickly than I expected. "Why would she go alone?" He asks, voice thick with worry.

#Chapter 75 The Meeting

"Her pup's life is on the line." Donavon grumbles on my left, "Do you really believe she wouldn't risk her own neck to save her?"

"But now they're going to get both of them!" Aiden exclaims.

"Not if we get there first." I growl, finally exiting the oversized mansion and shifting midstep. With Axel in control, I race to the lagoon as fast as I can, only deferring to Drake for navigation assistance.

The inhabitants of Asphodel scatter as we come barreling along the docks, jumping out of the way when we pass and hiding in their doorways. It's a rare thing to see so many powerful shifters in wolf form within city limits, especially two Alphas side by side.

By the time we reach the lagoon, news has spread through town that a hunting party is out for blood. I don't know how word beat us there, but the bridge is empty and the surrounding area positively deserted.

No Selene. And no Lila.

The remnants of her presence remain, and I follow her scent to the edge of the water, where a boat was recently tied. She's not alone. Two other wolves were with her, a male and a female. I snarl and dig my claws into the ground, they left on the water, which means they can't be tracked.

I'm seconds away from throwing my head back and howling into the air, when Drake appears at my side, a very odd expression on his furry face.

What? I demand sharply.

His glowing green eyes bore into my own, I know who has her.