

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 81

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 81

#Chapter 81 Daddy

Bastien's POV

By the time the lab has mixed the antidote for Lila, Selene is so exhausted she's barely able to keep her eyes open. She's trying so hard to stay awake, but the last few days have been exhausting in more ways than one.

As pleasurable as heat cycles are, non-stop sex for hours on end takes a lot out of you – as does resisting the hormones in order to function normally when you inevitably must. Running on almost no sleep, my poor little wolf had to cope with heat, her pup being kidnapped, then being taken herself, and now this. If it hadn't been for her time under the Starlight, I think the stress would have toppled her over hours ago.

I'm not in great shape myself, but I've been trained to endure war, to survive under the harshest conditions imaginable and somehow persevere. Besides, just as Selene keeps herself going for Lila, I keep myself going for them both. I've stationed myself between their beds, holding my mate's hand and gazing at my pup in wonder.

I'm a father. Not a surrogate standing in for another man, not a guardian or adoptive parent, but a real father. It still doesn't seem real. I already thought I was the luckiest bastard on the planet just for getting to call Selene my own and help raise Lila. Now! think I must be dreaming.

"You should really try to rest a little." I encourage Selene for the dozenth time, stroking her palm with my thumb. "I promise I'll wake you the second something changes."

Selene shakes her head weakly. "No." She replies hoarsely, "not until I know she's okay."

Luckily we don't have to wait much longer. Selene has been watching Lila's vital signs like a hawk, and when the doctors finally enter with a syringe full of eerie purple liquid, she practically tries to jump out of her bed. I catch her before she gets very far, not that it's difficult. Her movements are sluggish and unsteady, like a drunk under water.

“Okay Mr and Mrs Durand, the antidote is ready.” The doctor announces, showing us the drug. “I’m going to inject it straight into her IV so it will get into her system nice and fast.”

“You’re sure it’s going to work?” Selene frets.

“Nothing’s ever one hundred percent.” The doctor hedges, “but I’ve never known this treatment to fail.” She presses the needle into one of the little ports along the clear tubes feeding into Lila’s arms, and depresses the plunger. The purple liquid slowly seeps out of the syringe and into the tubes, then disappears into the toddler’s veins. “It will take a little while to fully revive her.”

“How long?” I press, my agitation spiking now that the moment of truth is imminent.

“Half an hour?” She theorizes. “Give or take.”

“Half an hour.” I repeat to Selene, kissing her hand. “That’s not so bad.”

The waiting is terrible, but after five minutes Lila’s vital signs begin to improve. Her heart beat grows more steady and her blood pressure rises, even her coloring starts to look a little better.

“Bastien.” Selene shakes my hands as vigorously as she’s able – which isn’t very much. “look!”

“I know, baby.” I assure her, “It’s working.”

For a moment I think she’s going to start crying again, only she doesn’t look relieved or happy as I might expect. “What’s wrong?”

“She’s too far away.” Selene complains in a small voice.

My lips compress into a hard line as I study the pup, observing all the wires and machines hooked up to her tiny body. It’s impossible to put them in the same bed, but Selene isn’t nearly as tangled up in equipment. Careful to pull her IV pole with us, I scoop my mate up and settle her in my lap, moving the chair as close to Lila’s bed as possible.

She’s completely limp, her wet cheek pressed against the curve of my neck. Still, she peeps, “Closer.” She needs to sleep. Axel gripes, his concern for our mate overriding his happiness about Lila. She’s delirious.

I’m not going to make her sleep before the pup wakes. I counter, She can make it a little while longer.

0.00%

14-01

#Chapter 81 Daddy

“Hush sweetheart,” I soothe, rubbing her back. “It won’t be long now.”

“Why is this happening ? She whispers, so quietly I almost don’t hear her. “Why is someone always trying to hurt us?” My heart cracks wide open at these words, at the pain in her sweet voice. The worst part is that I don’t have an answer. Selene’s life has been one trauma after another, and it never seems to stop. “I don’t want Lila to live this way.”

“She’s not going to.” I vow, not having the faintest idea how to fix any of this, but certain that I will find a way. I will not let this be my daughter’s story – or my mate’s, not anymore. “I promise Selene, if it’s the last thing I do, I’m going to make her safe.”

Unfortunately Axel is right, and Selene has fallen beyond logic or understanding. She’s spiraling deeper, delving into dark thoughts and buried fears. “What did we do to deserve this?” She continues wearily, “Is life always this hard?”

“You didn’t deserve anything that’s happened to you, Selene. Do you hear me?” I demand, squeezing her more tightly.

“Hmph.” She grunts sleepily, not truly answering me. “Life isn’t always going to be this way.” I soberly claim, “We’re going to make it better, we’re going to be happy – all three of us.”

Selene nuzzles her face into my neck, “I’m so tired, Bastien.”

Before I can respond, a tiny voice sounds on my right, “Mommy?”

We both jolt, our attention snapping to the bed. Lila’s two-toned eyes are blinking blearily, and she’s squirming with discomfort, no doubt riddled with confusing aches from the machinery.

As disoriented as she was a moment ago, the sound of her pup’s voice rouses Selene like a blaring alarm. “I’m here, angel.” She immediately answers, reaching for the child. Standing, I balance Selene on the edge of the bed, keeping her weight braced against me so she doesn’t topple over. Her gentle hands flutter over the pup. “It’s okay, my darling. You’re safe.”

Lila’s little face twists up, and she begins pulling at the various tubes connected to her body. “Mommy, owie.”

“No Lila, you have to leave those alone.” Selene tells her. “I know they hurt but they’re helping you.”

Her cheeks flush bright red, and I can't help but admire the color given how pale she was a little while ago, even though I recognize what's coming. Lila begins to cry, overwhelmed by the aches, strange surroundings, and Goddess knows whatever else the Starlight did to her system.

Selene tries to soothe her, but unable to hold the pup or fix her hurts, she soon becomes distressed. Within minutes I have two crying she-wolves on my hands, one whom I can't calm, and another who won't allow me to try.

The nurses come to give Lila a sleeping draught, and Selene shakily croons to her until she goes under. The moment Lila's eyes fall shut once more, Selene collapses, passing out in my arms.

Selene's Pov

It feels as though I've been asleep for days. My body is so heavy and leadened I can't lift a finger. I think I must be drugged. I feel so calm and restful, like I'm floating on a warm breeze.

I can hear Lila's precious voice somewhere to my left, and I can feel Bastien nearby. "Mommy's really sleepy." She's saying.

"She is." Bastien agrees, "She had a very rough few days. You both did."

"What happened to bad man?" Lila asks in return, undoubtedly thinking of Martin.

"He's gone away." Bastien informs her, "And he's never coming back."

"That's good." Lila chirps, prompting a chuckle from her father. She giggles right back, pausing to linger in their shared amusement before speaking again. "Bashun, I's hungry."

"Well we can certainly get you some food." He quips, an odd note in his low voice. When he speaks again, I understand why. "But instead of Bastien, how would you like to call me Daddy?"

"Daddy?" Lila mimics thoughtfully. My heart flutters in my chest, he's offering my daughter the one thing I've never been able to give her, the thing I never thought she'd have.

"That's right." He remarks solemnly, "Because that's who I am. I'm your daddy."

#Chapter 81 Daddy

"I've never had Daddy before." Lila muses.

“Well you do now.” He replies adoringly.

My heart has been broken in so many ways over the years that I’ve lost track of all the fissures and cracks; all the fractures. Often I don’t realize a piece was broken until it’s mended, and this is no different. I never realized how badly I needed to hear Lila call Bastien Daddy, to see my pup and my mate together. It’s such a small word, a simple gesture, and yet it carries all the weight in the world. Now that the truth is out, we can finally be a family.

We are a family – at last.

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 82

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 82

#Chapter 82 Sophie is Rescued

Sophie’s Pov

I shifted after Martin left with Selene and Lila. It’s so cold in this basement that my teeth were actually chattering – I’ve never been so grateful for my fur. I don’t know where he’s taken them or when he’s coming back, but I’m not sure it matters.

By now Drake must know what I’ve done.

If I ever get out of this place I’m going to be in a world of pain, either from Martin’s fists or Drake’s hatred. Hell it will probably be both. I’ve survived Martin’s temper my entire life, I’m not sure I can survive Drake hating me.

My stomach is growling so fiercely and I can’t remember the last time I ate. I’ve been trying to distract myself from the wretched pangs and my parched throat, but my thoughts can only drift so far before finding their way back.

I hope Selene and Lila are okay. I still don’t understand what Martin is up to. I was a fool for believing him, but I don’t have the faintest idea why he wanted the she-wolves. I have a very bad feeling about all this. Did he leave me here so I couldn’t run for help? Or is he simply not finished with me yet?

I’m still pondering the idea when I hear the front door open, then a wolf moving through the house on all fours. A shadow appears beneath the door at the top of the stairs, and Hugo’s familiar scent wafts down to me.

Oh Goddess, has he come to arrest me?

The door jerks off its hinges, releasing a stream of yellow light filtering through the iron bars. Hugo is back in human form, squinting through the darkness, "Sophie?" He calls, "Are you alright?"

I can't answer, I can't bring myself to shift back. I can barely breathe. I'm spinning into a panic attack, the walls closing in around me. Hugo curses under his breath, and I can see him fighting with the padlock on the bars. "Just hold on Soph, I'm going to get you out."

I whimper as the room begins to spin, listening to the clinking and clanking of metal far above me. The last thing I remember is hearing a metallic crash as the lock breaks, then everything is black.

The world is blurry when my lashes part, and I can smell the strident clean of a hospital. It's a terrible unnatural scent, and so powerfull almost don't notice the familiar aroma beneath.

Drake. I think miserably, clamping my eyes shut again. Any other time I would be comforted and thrilled to find him at my bedside, now I wish he was just about anyone else.

He won't hurt us. My wolf, Rose, is always more optimistic than I am. She says it's because her instincts are stronger, I think it's because she often gets to stay safe inside me while I bear the brunt of Martin's anger.

Hey, I heard that. She grumbles.

"Are you going to pretend to sleep all day little lamb?" Drake's deep voice skitters over my skin, and suddenly I can feel him next to me, warmth radiating off his big body. Soft fingers graze my uninjured cheek, and I flinch as if I've been struck.

He tsks, settling his hand more firmly against my skin rather than pulling it away, "Goddess I could kill him all over again."

This gets my attention. I hesitantly open my eyes, finding Drake's handsome face much closer than I expected. His emerald green eyes are clouded with anger and worry, his angular jaw covered in a dark swath of stubble. "Kill who?" I squeak.

He sighs heavily, looking almost regretful. "Martin."

"He's dead?" I ask, unable to process this new information.

"Yes." Drake replies soberly, "He can't ever hurt you – or anyone else – again, Sophie.*"

Don't ask me why, because I haven't the faintest clue, but a sob rises in my chest. I don't know what's happening to me. I hate Martin

#Chapter 82 Sophie is Rescued

Hated. Rose corrects me gently.

Hated. I hated my brother, he's done nothing but hurt me for years and his latest transgressions have probably cost me my future. I know they've cost me the man I love. I shouldn't be sad that he's gone. Only someone truly sick would mourn their abuser. right?

He was still our brother. Rose reminds me, he wasn't always evil. We grew up together, those memories count... and he's the only family we had left.

I flinch again when Drake climbs into my bed, shifting me over so he can stretch out on the cot and pull me into his arms. I collapse against him without shame, crying my heart out over everything that's happened over the last week – over the last few years.

Drake strokes my hair, making soft shushing noises and murmuring encouragements my ear, "That's it sweetheart. Let it all out, I've got you."

Somehow his words make it worse, he shouldn't be nice to me, not after what I did. I don't deserve his kindness. If I'm capable of kidnapping an innocent pup, maybe I deserved Martin's punishments after all. But not this.

I know he's angry with me. I can feel rage writhing in his chest like a feral beast, lurking just beneath the surface and waiting to burst out-probably when I'm not a blubbering mess. I'm not sure how I can sense it so keenly, I've always been able to tap into Drake's feelings like this and I stopped questioning it a long time ago.

"Stop." I moan, clenching my small fists so tightly my fingernails break the skin, digging into my palm in perfect rows of bloody crescents.

"Stop what, Soph?" Drake purrs, his nose twitching as the scent of my blood fills the air. He instantly catches my wrists, prying my fingers out of their tightly locked position, "baby, what are you doing?"

"S-stop b-being ni-ice to me." I weep shakily, despising his sweet words and pet names. He's always done this, always called me by terms of endearment and showered me with physical affection. It's why it's been so impossible to get over him, to even look at anyone else as a possible mate.

"Look at me, Sophie." He growls, Alpha authority heavy in his voice. I can only cower and cringe away from him until a second growl shatters the quiet, and my gaze jumps to his without my permission.

Drake's nose is almost touching mine, and his dark brow is furrowed in disapproval. His large hands are still steadily petting me despite his pulled focus, and I can only think about how horrible I must look. "You are not responsible for what Martin did." He claims falsely, "I won't stand for you feeling guilty about his crimes."

I drop my forehead against his chest, hiding my face and all but wailing, "But I am. Selene will tell you. I kidnapped Lila."

"Selene already told me." He states firmly, nudging me with his shoulder, "I know exactly what happened."

I pause, trying to catch my breath. "What?"

"What did you think was going to happen, Sophie?" Drake questions ominously, "Did you think I would blame you when I'm the one who failed to protect you, to even notice what was happening right under my nose?"

Crinkling my nose in confusion, I tilt my chin up so I can see his face. A moment ago I thought his seething anger was for me, now I understand he's turned it towards himself. I open my mouth to argue, but a long, masculine finger presses to my lips. "You were locked in a cell when Hugo found you. You still bear his bruises." He rumbles furiously, eyeing my cheek. "If Lila hadn't been in such bad shape I would have stayed back to help Aiden exterminate the bastard"

"What happened to Lila?" I ask fretfully, swiping at my eyes and smearing blood over my face.

Drake tuts and presses the nurse's call button before answering my question, using his thumbs to try and wipe the crimson stain from my skin, "Just an allergic reaction to the Starlight." He shares, "She's fine now."

"I still don't understand why he wanted them." I admit tearfully, "I mean he convinced me to help him by..." Suddenly realizing explaining my side of the story would mean admitting to Drake that I have feelings for him, I trail off.

"Yes?" Drake prods, arching his brow.

Just then the nurse appears, taking one look at Drake and I and immediately launching into a lecture. She chases Drake out of the bed and sets about wrapping the fresh injuries on my hands and cleaning the blood and tears from my skin. We remain silent as she works, but the tension in the air is unbearable. Before she leaves she turns on the Alpha, "Sophie needs to rest. She doesn't

#Chapter 82 Sophie is Rescued

need you getting her all worked up."

“Yes, ma’am.” Drake salutes her, and she rolls her eyes before stalking off.

When she’s gone, he returns to my bedside, though he doesn’t climb back in. Instead he leans over me, an unreadable expression on his face. “Now, where were we?”

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 83

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 83

#Chapter 83 Guilt

Drake’s Pov

The last twenty-four hours have turned my life completely upside down. I’ve always been so self-assured, so confident in who I am. After all, I’m an Alpha – how could I not be? I may not be the strongest Alpha on the continent or even the best leader, but I’ve never needed to be those things.

I’ve only ever needed to be a good leader for my pack, and I grew up knowing my place in the greater order. I may seem weak next to wolves like Bastien and Blaise Denizen, but they are not normal Alphas. Denizen’s reputation is nearly Godlike, and Bastien is well on his way to earning the same status.

I will never be able to compete at their level, but the fact remains I’m stronger than every last member of my pack, which numbers in the thousands. I’d wager I’m even stronger than the shifters in the Nova pack. I’ve seen Bastien’s Betas in battle often enough to estimate their skill – it would be a close fight, but I’m relatively certain I would come out on top.

Certain, the same way I was certain I was in love with Selene. It’s not in my nature to doubt myself, and even though my wolf was never convinced about the beautiful Volana, I knew in my heart that she was meant for me.

Seeing Bastien’s mating mark on Selene made me furious, and when she and Lila were taken I was devastated – but neither hit me as hard as learning Sophie was in danger. Just like that, everything I thought I knew disappeared. I’m only just beginning to acknowledge that I didn’t actually know myself before today, and concerningly, I’m starting to wonder if I truly know my pack.

I’ve never experienced fear like I did when Martin said Sophie would die. It was a savage and primal, a ruthless terror deep in my bones. My wolf went berserk at the

words, and all at once I realized I was never truly in love with Selene. Infatuated perhaps, besotted even, but now that I know what true love feels like, I see what a fool I was.

I always thought I would know my mate when I saw her, but I've heard stories about shifters who knew each other for years before the bond kicked in. Most of them were cases just like me and Sophie, wolves who grew up together and had their instincts muddled by childhood friendships.

Looking down at the beautiful little wolf now, I don't know how I could have ever missed it. I haven't felt the instinctive pull to claim her yet, but there's no doubt in my mind that the connection will come in time. Even my wolf agrees. He incessantly begged me all night long to come see Sophie, but I couldn't leave Selene and Lila until I knew they were alright.

I'm trying very hard not to look too smug and happy – this has been a traumatic day and Sophie is absolutely beside herself with grief, guilt and anxiety – but finding one's mate is a big deal, especially when you already know they love you in return.

Sophie is looking anywhere but at me, her cheeks flushed bright red.

Has there ever been anyone so adorable?

Has anyone ever smelled so good? My wolf replies. It's true, Sophie's scent is a combination of everything I love: dark berries and vanilla bean, marsh flowers and fresh sea air.

It seems like Sophie is going to ignore my question. But then she looks up at me from beneath her long, dark lashes, her hazel eyes looking very green in their red rims. "You were going to tell me why Martin took Selene and Lila."

Sneaky little wolf. That is absolutely not where we left off, and she knows it.

"Was I?" I arch my brow and Sophie's flush spreads to her chest. "Well," I begin, deciding to play along. "There was a bounty on Volana wolves – a very large bounty. Martin wanted it."

Her lovely face twists up in confusion. "Who placed the bounty?"

It's a very long story and even I don't know all the details." I sigh. "The real bounty is being offered by Blaise Denizen, luckily Bastien set up a shadow system to intercept anyone trying to collect the reward."

"So when Martin tried to turn them in..." She says, slowly piecing things together.

"He called us." I confirm, "And delivered them at our feet."

“Thank the Goddess.” She breathes mournfully, clearly still beating herself up for her role in the ordeal “Why does the Calypso Alpha want them?”

14:02 !

0.00%

#Chapter 83 Guilt

“They won’t tell me.” No matter that I can hardly protect my pack members from threats when I don’t have all the information, but then again, I doubt Selene will be part of my pack much longer. It’s truly astonishing, a week ago that thought would have sent me reeling, now I just want her to be happy. I still don’t trust Bastien, but Selene clearly loves him.

“I do know that if they’re turned in, Denizen will kill them.” Sophie’s sweet flush disappears, the blood draining from her face. Damn, maybe I shouldn’t have been quite so honest. Apparently he’s been looking a very long time.”

“That’s horrible.” Sophie exclaims weakly. Visible gears are turning in her head, undoubtedly churning with unpleasant thoughts and memories. She clamps her eyes shut, as if she’s trying to hide from the feelings.

I don’t like this. I much preferred it when she was tying herself into knots over her feelings for me. “So, how did Martin convince you to help him.”

Her eyes snap open, and she begins taking on that same squirrely energy she had earlier. “That’s not important.”

“I disagree.” I press, “I think it must have been very important if you were willing to kidnap a pup.” I knew the words were a mistake as soon as they left my mouth. Wincing, I amend, I’m not judging you, little lamb. I just want to understand.”

Sophie wraps her arms protectively around her small body, unintentionally pressing her breasts together. I can see the plump mounds even through her hospital gown, and my mind takes a decidedly salacious turn. I’ve never thought about Sophie’s breasts before, let alone lusted for them – I must have been blind.

Goddess, I’m drooling over a woman in a hospital bed. Is this going to be what it’s like? I ask my wolf. I’m going to be able to help wanting her even in the most inappropriate times?

Pretty much. He replies.

Groaning internally, I turn my attention back to Sophie’s face, where it belongs. She’s staring at her lap, “I can’t tell you.”

I can't resist reaching out to her, running my hands through her luscious hair. "Why not?"

"I don't want to ruin our friendship," Sophie whispers, leaning into my touch even as she backs away from me emotionally. "I never deserved it in the first place, but if I tell you it will be over...and I don't want that."

"Sophie, you've got to stop saying you don't deserve nice things," I command firmly, "you deserve to have everything you want in life, and if anything, I'm the one who's undeserving." I remind her, "How many years of pain did you suffer at Martin's hands because I wasn't paying attention?"

She purses her lips tightly, determined not to answer.

"Tell me." I order, my voice rough and gravelly.

"That isn't a fair question." She says meekly. "It's not like..." Again she teeters on the edge of revealing too much, catching herself just in time and redirecting. "I mean, we're only friends – protecting me isn't your job."

"I'm not just your friend, I'm your Alpha." I rumble, "It absolutely is my job." As much as I hate to see Sophie's lip trembling, once again on the verge of tears, I don't regret my harsh tone. She needs to accept this, she needs to know it wasn't her fault. "And there is nothing you could ever say to me, that would make me forsake you." I add for good measure. "Nothing."

Sophie sniffles, her little red nose just begging to be kissed, but I restrain the impulse. A few tears escape her lashes, sliding down her temples and into her hair. They pool against my palm, and I fight the urge to brush them away. There will be plenty of time for kisses and cuddles later, now it is most important that she submit. "Do you understand me, Sophie?"

She nods shakily, but I'm not buying it. Sophie would agree to just about anything to put an end to this conversation. "Say it."

"What?" She chirps in surprise.

"Say that none of this was your fault. Say you deserve the world. And say that you know I won't ever turn my back on you, no matter what happens." I instruct.

Sophie looks somewhat shell-shocked, and I want to kick myself over and over again. All this time my problem wasn't only that! didn't know myself, it's that I didn't know Sophie either. I knew only what she wanted me to see, I believed the masque she wore to cover up wounds still being inflicted.

"I'm getting impatient, little lamb."

“N-none of this was my fault.” She repeats obediently. “I deserve...”

14:02 1

45 270

#Chapter 83 Guilt

“The world.” i prompt.

“The world,” Sophie mimics, “And I know you won’t turn your back on me, no matter what.”

“Good girl,” I praise, kissing her forehead.

As much as I want to hear her tell me she’s in love with me; as much as I want to tell her the same and begin our lives together, I can see this isn’t the time.

This conversation has been evidence enough. Despite Sophie’s feelings, she’s clearly not ready to bring them into the open. Given everything I’ve learned today I don’t blame her.

She has to come to me in her own time, which means that I’m going to have to figure out how to be patient. I’m going to have to wait.

I just pray I won’t have to wait too long,

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 84

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 84

Chapter 84 Changing Plans

It’s over.

Bastien marked Selene. He knows the pup is his.

All my best plans, all the money and resources I wasted, all the trouble I’ve gone to in order to keep them apart: it has all been for nothing. Bastien is going to bring this mate and pup back to Elysium, and he’ll be stronger than ever. He’ll have no distractions, no

depression or grief to weaken his spirit. If anything he'll have more of a reason to fight. He has something to protect now.

To top it all off Arabella has fled to the Calypso pack, leaving me completely high and dry. My only remaining ally is my mother, and she's more of a figurehead than anything else. When Uncle Gabriel killed my father she instigated the plot, determined for our family to have revenge and to see me take my rightful position as Alpha.

She sent me to the best schools, found shifters to train me in one on one combat and battle strategy; she gave me all the tools needed to succeed. She even set me on track to get a job that would permanently put me in Durand's orbit.

As far as she was concerned, her part concluded when my education was complete. She made it my responsibility to design the plot and find allies, then set me loose. Of course, the further downhill things roll, the more vocal she becomes. She hasn't set foot back in Nova territory since the day of the revolt, but she's got a powerful influence even at a distance.

Sometimes I think my mother is the one who should have planned Dad's insurrection. She's cunning and ruthless in a way I can never be. She wants me to put things right and kill Selene and Lila. "Like I should have from the beginning." She says.

She insists it's the only way, but I can't do it. I might have been able to once, but I already lost that fight when I saved Selene from the fire. I don't care much about Bastien's brat, but I can't even bring myself to do away with her, because of the pain it would cause Selene.

I've always seen a kindred spirit in Selene, only she's a thousand times stronger than I am. I lost my father and my birthright, she lost her freedom and her wolf. She suffered for so many years, and I felt for her even before I met her – and what a mistake that was.

As soon as I saw her, and saw how miserable she was with Bastien, I was a goner. Despite my promises to Arabella, I even started thinking about taking Selene as my wife when I finally got rid of Bastien. The blonde would have thrown a tantrum beyond all reason, but by then I'd be Alpha it wouldn't matter what she wanted.

As inconvenient as it is currently, having Arabella out of the picture actually makes my future plans for Selene easier. I just have to figure out how to get her away from Bastien first.

I have to separate them, one way or another. I don't want Selene in the line of fire, and the worse their relationship suffers, the weaker Bastien becomes. Mother is threatening to come take matters into her own hands if I don't get things under control within the month, and I can't afford to let that happen.

The clock is ticking

Selene's Pov

Lila runs up the stairs in front of Bastien and I, her tiny legs propelling her forward at a snail's pace – not that we mind. We're finally home. Not at the Pack House or a Safe House, but back in the apartment where I raised Lila.

My pup is all giggles and sunshine, thrilled to be back in the familiar space and away from all the stress of the last weeks. The hospital released us early this morning, and we spent the rest of the day packing up our belongings and shopping for essentials like groceries

Bastien has his arm slung across my shoulder, and he's whispering in my ear as I unlock the door, "I hope you're feeling rejuvenated little wolf, because it's been almost two days since I last had you and my wolf is getting very impatient."

"Is that so?" I ask archly, every bit as eager as he is. Though Lila's kidnapping and poisoning completely distracted me, my body was still awash with the tortuous hormones and impulses of my heat. Now that the danger has passed and I'm no longer exhausted to the point of insanity, they've risen again to take control.

Not to mention I will take any excuse to delay our inevitable fight about Lila's paternity. Right now we're still reveling in the joy of

0.00%

14:021

#Chapter 84 Changing Plans

health and security, I want to keep that going as long as possible.

"And how do you propose we get a moment alone?" I murmur back, nodding toward our pup, who is currently zooming around the apartment in an irrepressible burst of energy.

Bastien shoots me a wolfish grin, nibbling on my earlobe as he points out, "in case you hadn't noticed, it's almost nine o'clock. That means bedtime for pups and playtime for mommy and daddy."

It hasn't escaped me how frequently he's been using these monikers, I remember how strange and surreal it was to become a mother – to actually think of myself as a mommy. It fills me with joy to see Bastien experiencing the same wonder now, despite our rocky start as a family.

I snort, “First lesson in parenting big bad wolf, pups are notorious for sneaking into Mommy and Daddy’s bed, especially after a lot of stress and excitement.”

Bastien doesn’t look concerned – amateur.

After a bath and a lot of cajoling Lila finally goes down, but Bastien doesn’t even have all my clothes off before the door creaks open and Lila’s little head pokes into the bedroom. “Mommy, can’t sleep.”

Down to my underwear and hitched up against my mate while he kisses and licks his mark, all the while making delightful growly sounds, I try to respond naturally. “I’m sorry baby, I’ll be right there.” I promise, pushing at Bastien’s shoulders in hopes of prying his big body off of me.

It doesn’t do any good, he pauses his affections but he doesn’t allow me to put even an inch of space between us. His head raises to study the tiny creature in the doorway, and his features immediately shift from predatory to tender.

Lila’s lower lip sticks out in a full on pout, and her eyes go big and wide, “I want sleep with you.”

I know I predicted it, but I’m so worked up right now that the thought of going to sleep before Bastien ruts me makes me want to cry. I’m struggling to come up with an answer, torn between my pup and my mate. If it weren’t for the heat it would be no contest: my daughter comes first.

“Of course, little one.” Bastien answers before I can get myself under control. He didn’t think about it for one moment, he immediately caved. Lila already has her Daddy wrapped around her little finger. I’m thrilled and frustrated all at once.

I drop my face to his chest, whining softly. “Hush little wolf, I’ll take care of you too.” He rumbles, pressing gentle kisses to my

hair.

Lila is running toward us now, and Bastien scoops her up to snuggle between us. “What were you doing?” She asks sleepily, melting into my arms.

“Cuddling.” Bastien says, a note of humor in his voice, “But now we should all get to bed.”

My gaze jumps questioningly to his, and he gives me a look urging me to be patient. I sigh and climb into bed with Lila, turning onto my side and wrapping my arm around her. Stripping to his boxers, Bastien climbs into the other side, slipping his arm beneath us both so we’re curled against him.

Lila is nestled between our bodies in a perfect fit, and she falls asleep so quickly I almost don't believe it. I can't help but stare at her with utter adoration: she looks so serene, so perfect i'm mesmerized. She's safe and whole, and in my arms. I couldn't ask for a better gift.

After a moment I realize Lila isn't the only one being watched. I look over at Bastien and find him watching us both in much the same way I was watching our pup. "It's incredible, isn't it?" I ask, "how one little being can give so much joy just sleeping?"

"It is," he agrees, a well of unspoken emotion rising between us. "But I felt that way long before I met Lila."

My heart swells in my chest, and I can feel his love pulsing through the bond. My desire spikes, and I feel myself squirming, trying to relieve the ache without disturbing Lila. "Bastien, I need.."

"I know, baby." He leans forward to capture my lips, dark promise in his eye. *Just hold on a little while longer. Once she's completely out – you're not going to know what hit you."

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 85

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 85

#Chapter 85 I Don't Think I Can Be Gentle

Bastien's Pov

Selene's eyes are glowing with barely contained emotion when I finally sneak her out of bed, unraveling Lila's plump limbs from our bodies and slipping out from beneath the covers. Tossing my mate over my shoulder, I cart her into the living room and pull the bedroom door shut.

Depositing Selene onto the sprawling sectional, I pounce, covering her body with my own and reveling in the feel of her bare skin on mine. I know the Goddess created us for each other, but it never ceases to amaze me how perfectly our bodies fit together.

giant, her little form fits so snugly in my arms I could happily carry her forever. And that's not to mention the glove-like embrace of the sleek channel i'm about to bury myself in.

“What if she wakes up?” Selene whispers in between kisses, her hands trailing over every inch of my body. She’s exploring me as if she’s afraid some part of me has changed in the last 24 hours, as if she’s no longer certain I’m real.

“You’re just going to have to be very quiet,” I tease, licking and nipping my way down her throat.

“Bastien, I’m ser-” Her words are cut off with a strangled gasp when I suck her nipple into my mouth, all protests forgotten. She arches her back, offering up her charms to my questing lips, biting down on her fingers to keep quiet.

In truth, I’m not worried about waking the pup because I know this is going to be over fast. We’ve both been waiting too long to be reunited this way and are positively frenzied with need after denying our instincts for so many hours.

“I don’t think I can be gentle this time, baby.” I warn her. The truth is I need to be inside her so badly it hurts. My frustrated anatomy aches with unrequited lust, and my sanity teeters on the edge. I might have seemed in control to Selene when we put Lila to bed, but I simply have more experience being in rut.

“Good.” She growls passionately, sinking her little teeth into the bulging muscles of my shoulder.

Swearing under my breath, I rip the thin undergarments from her body, groaning when I see the wetness pooled at her center. The scent of her arousal has been torturing me all evening, but I didn’t realize how drenched she was until this moment.

Selene is so ready I don’t even need to touch her, so I bury myself inside her with a single thrust. I sink into her soaked sheath all the way to the hilt, swallowing my mate’s cry as she throws her head back with rejoice.

I claim her savagely, giving her everything and taking the same in return. When we were married I would have been afraid to take her so roughly, but now that her wolf has returned she’s egging me on, encouraging me and begging for more.

I don’t hold back, pinning her to the sofa as I pound into her tight heat, my pelvis slamming into hers almost savagely. I know the exact moment Selene loses control completely, when her efforts to silence her euphoric moans cease and she begins crying out and whimpering without restraint.

I pause, eliciting a snarl from Selene. Flipping her onto her hands and knees, I deliver a spank to her luscious behind, changing her snarl to a whine. I give her another, liking her plaintive sounds just a bit too much.

Driving into her from behind, I drag her torso up, pulling her body against mine and covering her sweet mouth with my hand. Selene’s back bows as her hips undulate into

my thrusts and her shoulder-blades shake against my chest, the muffled sounds of her pleasure growing louder.

My mark is red and swollen, mere inches away from my mouth, and I can't resist. I sink my teeth into the imprint, not hard enough to break the skin, but forcefully enough to prevent her from moving as I chase my climax.

When I feel it begin to tingle in the base of my spine I slide my free hand to her slippery clit, spurring her to a sudden and explosive peak. Her body goes rigid as it takes her, and her spasming muscles squeeze my cock so fiercely that I cannot last another second. I spill into her with a ragged growl, riding her through the throws of ecstasy and only stopping when her body goes limp in my arms.

Selene's head lolls back against my shoulder, wearing a delirious smile that fills me with smug pride. I steal one final kiss from her lips, delving my tongue into her mouth and savoring the taste of my mate.

and

#Chapter 85 I Don't Think I Can Be Gentle

I never forgot Selene's taste or smell in the years I believed she was dead, but I never imagined I would experience them again. Now that I am, I never want to stop... but my little wolf is already half-asleep in my arms, and I know we need to rest.

The bedroom door is still tightly closed, and Lila remains dead to the world when we make it back to bed, showered and freshly clothed. Selene is out the second her head hits the pillow, and the last thing I see before I go to sleep is Lila unconsciously snuggling into her mother's warmth.

Selene

Some very silly part of me thought Bastien might actually forget about the DNA test and my lie. He's been nothing but adoring ever since rescuing us, and after a morning of family time and frantic quickies whenever Lila takes a nap, I've almost forgotten myself.

After lunch Bastien pulls me aside, glancing at Lila out of the corner of his eyes and speaking softly. "How are you feeling about

Lila?"

His words may be vague, but I know what he means. The immediate danger may be passed now that Martin is dead, but having my baby kidnapped in broad daylight has made me fairly determined to never let her out of my sight again. "I'm afraid to turn my back." I admit in a whisper, "everytime I do I'm filled with panic, even though I know she's still here."

Bastien tsks and pulls me into a hug, “I know exactly how you feel.” He rumbles, lips moving against my hair. “I’ve been that way every since I realized you were alive.”

Guilt ties my stomach into knots. I hate the idea of causing Bastien to feel what I am now. I tilt my face up to tell him how sorry!

am, but the words die in my throat when I see his expression.

Luna immediately tucks her tail between her legs. Where there was only love and desire moments ago, there is now an Alpha’s stern disapproval. Cupping my cheek, he proclaims, “We need to find some alone time to talk.”

“Talk?” I squeak, not liking the sounds of that at all.

“Among other things.” He replies ominously, but I don’t want to separate you from Lila if it’s going to cause either one of you stress.”

“It wouldn’t cause you stress?” I ask with mild disbelief. I’ve seen the way he keeps scanning the room for invisible threats every fifteen minutes.

“I’m not talking about taking her out of the apartment. I thought we could go down the street to the cafe and leave her here with Aiden and Mom.” He thinks about it, then adds, and a full security team.”

I know Bastien’s giving me an out. Being separated from Lila and facing the consequences of my lies are the very last things I want to do. However, I also know that my mate will see right through me if I refuse him just to get out of being held accountable.

I try to imagine having Lila a few doors down, knowing Aiden’s mental link with Bastien will alert us the very second something goes wrong. I don’t love the idea, but if the situation were different and we were using the alone time to mate, I think I might be okay with it – in theory at least.

My lower lips quivers, I hate confrontations. I hate people being angry with me, and Bastien knows it. It seems like no matter how much time passes, I can’t shake Garrick’s ghost – not when it comes to this.

My mate is frowning now, as if a new thought is just occurring to him. “How have you deal with the episodes all these years?”

I know he’s really asking if Drake helped me through them, but when my PTSD strikes, any man who isn’t my mate becomes Garrick reincarnated – even my friend. “On my own.” I answer honestly.

He nods grimly, then compresses his lips into a hard line. “We can’t put it off forever, little wolf.” Bastien remarks gently, stroking my hair back from my face. “And the sooner it happens the sooner we can put it behind us.”

“I know.” I whisper, dread leeching into my veins. “Tonight?”

Bastien considers me for one long moment, then agrees. “Tonight.”

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 86

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 86

#Chapter 86 You Knew You Were Pregnant?

Selene’s Pov

The cafe is closed on Mondays, but when Bastien and I arrive the lights are already on and the scent of roasting meat is emanating from the kitchen. My stomach rumbles in reply, and I look up at my mate in confusion, “you gave someone my keys?”

His lip quirks, “Just Donavon.”

I should have guessed. Donavon has always been a wonderful chef, and he takes every opportunity he can get to invent new dishes and recipes.

“Oh,” I relax, calling out a hello to the Beta.

A disembodied voice returns my greeting, and then Donavon’s head pops around the corner, his shoulder-length salt and pepper hair-pulled into a ponytail. “Dinner is just about ready – ten more minutes and I’ll be out of your hair.”

I frown, feeling uncomfortable that the older man should be waiting on us. Bastien reads my expression and chuckles, “don’t worry, he volunteered.” He assures me, “And it’s not just for us, he’s packing up boxes to take to the apartment.”

“Oh good,” I relax a little, looking around the familiar space. All of the tables are bare save one. A cozy booth in the corner is set with a pristine white table cloth and gleaming silver flatware. Tealights glow at its center, and a bottle of red wine awaits with two empty glasses.

Bastien tugs me over to the booth, waiting for me to slide in before taking a seat on the opposite bench. My eyes widen with surprise when I realize he means to sit across from me. Bastien never lets me out of arm's reach if he can help it. Even before all this happened, he preferred to keep me close – touching me more often than not. I used to think it was a show of possession or protection, now I understand that he simply does it because he wants to.

Anxiety skitters in my veins, my heart beating a little louder.

I don't like this. Luna says.

I don't either. I admit shakily.

Don't look so alarmed, baby. Bastien purrs, pouring the wine and offering me a glass. "This is simply to make sure we don't get distracted."

well, let's just

That's fair I suppose. My heat can strike at the most inconvenient times, and if he's touching me when it happens say we won't be getting any talking done.

Just then the kitchen door swings open, and Donavon appears carrying two steaming plates. The food looks incredible when he sets it down in front of us and even though I'm starving, I'm so nervous I'm not sure I'll be able to keep anything down.

Bastien is frowning deeply, I think the scent of my fear is agitating him. I know he's furious with me, but I doubt he wants me frightened. I imagine it feels something like when I have to discipline Lila for being naughty. I know it's the right thing to do, but seeing her suffer the consequences fills me with terrible guilt. I would be horrified if I thought she was afraid of me.

When Donovan retreats, Bastien raises his silverware, asking me something innocuous about my day and throwing me off completely. Later I realized he did it to help me relax and put some food in my stomach, because for the next hour or so we had a perfectly pleasant dinner.

It wasn't until afterwards, when a second bottle of wine came out and we were both pleasantly sated, that he struck.

"So," Bastien begins, leaning back in his seat and eyeing me with lethal intent. "Where do you want to begin?"

I freeze with my wine glass halfway to my lips, "What do you mean?"

He's all predator now, all Alpha. "Well, you have quite a few options to choose from, Selene." He rumbles, "There's the fact that you failed to tell me Drake kissed you."

There's the fact that you willingly walked into Martin's trap without telling anyone where you were going or what was happening." He sets his own glass down before his tight grip can smash it. "And then there's the fact that you told me I wasn't Lila's father."

Oh Goddess, I thought this was just about Lila's paternity, I completely forgot about Drake's attempted kiss and the ransom note. In hindsight it makes perfect sense that Bastien would disapprove of those things, but I never considered his reaction in the

0 000

13:15 L

#Chapter 86 You Knew You Were Pregnant?

moment.

Gulping, I broach, "Drake didn't actually kiss me." I wait for him to contradict or question me, but he simply sits there watching me with that same intense stare. "He tried, but I deflected him."

Bastien's chin dips, his silver eyes hard. "Alright. I'll amend that. You failed to tell me another Alpha came onto you."

"Because nothing happened." I insist, "You're my mate, I picked you. And telling you would only have made things between you and Drake worse."

Bastien sighs, and I can see him fighting for patience. "Selene, I know you were never taught about these things, but did you consider what my mark signifies?"

I shrug, confused about why we're suddenly discussing marks. "That we're mates."

"A claiming mark is an announcement to every wolf you meet, that you are already spoken for. It protects you from unwanted advances from males and decides your status among the pack females." He explains evenly, "To proposition any marked she wolf is a serious offense. It disrespects her choice and challenges her mate's claim, but you're not just any she-wolf." An edge of

steel enters his deep voice. "You were marked by an Alpha."

Understanding clicks in my head, "So if he challenges your claim on me..."

Bastien nods, challenging an Alpha is challenging an Alpha – it doesn't matter the motive. If he and I were to truly fight – no Beta's or back up, no interfering little mates trying to be noble" he teases, reminding me of their last fight, in which I nearly got myself killed. "- the winner would claim the loser's pack."

"Then," I think aloud, "It's a good thing I didn't tell you, because you would have been forced to meet his challenge and then you'd have been stuck with the Eros pack."

I swear the corner of his mouth twitches like he wants to smile, "Maybe, but that's not why you kept it a secret."

"I knew you would fight and I didn't want any more violence." I reason, "Is that so wrong?"

"Of course not, but I need you to understand that it isn't nothing if someone comes onto you." Bastien lectures. It's a very big deal, and it's very important that you tell me if and when it happens. Not only because it's an offense against me, but because it may very well mean you're in danger. Anyone willing to challenge an Alpha for their mate isn't going to be very concerned with your consent."

"Okay." I agree sheepishly.

"And speaking of danger," he transitions cryptically, "why don't you tell me about Martin's note."

"I won't apologize for that." I counter, straightening my spine. "It might have been a trap, but I would rather someone hurt me than Lila, and I would rather be in trouble with her, than leave her in trouble alone."

Bastien's molten gaze bores into me, and I can see the thoughts flickering through his mind. "This isn't about a mother's instincts to protect her pup." He finally asserts. "If it were just a matter of protecting Lila, there's no doubt you did the right thing. The problem is how you did it."

"The note said not to tell anyone." I remind him. "I couldn't risk it."

Again he pins me with a long, assessing stare, clearly trying to find the right words. "Sweetheart, have you considered what would have happened if Martin hadn't been the tipster?"

Actually I've been trying very hard not to think about that. I would still rather it be me than her."

"But it wouldn't have been you instead, it would have been both of you!" Bastien exclaims, his temper slipping. Pausing to take it a deep breath, he clenches and unclenches his fist, finally setting it on the table. "Do you realize that until Martin's phone call came in, we didn't have the first clue where you were? We didn't have a trail to follow and we were nowhere near finding you?"

Iblanch, "No."

“If he’d called a real seller instead of us, Lila would be dead from the Starlight.” Bastien states grimly, “If he’d handed you over to the Calypso pack, Blaise wouldn’t have agreed to kill just one of you. Not telling us what was going on didn’t just endanger you, it endangered Lila.”

His words slice into me like a knife, and now I really do think I might be sick. “I’m not saying any of this to make you feel badly.” Bastien grimaces sympathetically, “but Blaise is still out there and if – Goddess forbid – something like this happens again, the

42.15%

13:15 1

#Chapter 86 You Knew You Were Pregnant?

most important thing you can do is maximize our odds of us finding her. We have to have as much information as humanly possible.”

But the note”

“A dead hostage isn’t worth anything to a kidnapper, ” Bastien softens his tone when he realizes how harsh he sounded, “And while they might be able to hurt her and still collect, at least then she’d be alive – which she wouldn’t be Blaise got his hands on her.”

I nod. “I’m sorry,” I croak, despite my earlier words. “You’re right.”

My mate looks ready to end this horrible conversation, and for a moment I think the guilt might just win out. However after a moment Bastien seems to push through it, a resolute expression coming over his face.

“Listen, I know Arabella terrified you so much you were too afraid to come back to Elysium when you found out you were pregnant,” Bastien begins. “Actually I already knew.” I correct him before I can consider the wisdom of doing so.

His eyes flash dangerously. “Excuse me?”

“I knew.” I repeat meekly, already regretting my honesty. “I knew I was pregnant before I left Elysium.”

For a moment Bastien just stares at me, breathing heavily and looking furious. Then, without another word, he stands from the table, and storms out of the cafe.

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 87

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 87

#Chapter 87 I've Loved You Since I Was Five

Bastien's Pov

I only make it a few paces out of the cafe before I change my mind and turn back. All night I've been tip-toeing around, trying to get through this fight without upsetting Selene, but I can't hold back any longer.

I don't want my mate to be afraid of me. I don't want to trigger her and send her into a PTSD episode, but I have a right to be angry. Besides, fights are upsetting. There's no way to honestly have one if you can't express your feelings for fear of offending someone else's.

Selene jumps when the door slams back open, the bell hanging above it jingly wildly. I stalk back to our booth, towering over my beautiful mate with steam billowing from my ears. "How long?"

"What?" Selene squeaks, eyeing me warily.

"How long before you left did you know you were pregnant?" I demand. My mate immediately drops her head, unable to meet my gaze. The moment she does I know I'm not going to like the answer to this question. "Answer me, Selene."

"I found out the day before our anniversary." Her eyes are turning red when she glances back up at me, "the day you told me you were rejecting me."

I feel like I've been punched in the stomach. "You knew all that time?" I hiss, trying to process this information. In hindsight the puzzle pieces begin to click into place: her illness, her refusal to go to the hospital, the way she stopped drinking alcohol and caffeine. "Why couldn't I smell it on you?"

If she was in her wolf form I have no doubt my mate would currently be on her back exposing her belly to me. She's curled in on herself, invisible tail tucked between her legs. "I covered it up." She confesses hoarsely, "the doctor gave me something to hide the scent."

Axel is positively snarling in my chest, but I'm still struggling to wrap my head around this development, "Why?"

I scent her tears a moment before I see them. Selene steps out of the booth, looking up at me plaintively. “Everything I told you about the fire is true, but part of why Arabella tried to kill me is because she knew about the baby. When she tried to push me down the stairs at the hospital it was because she overheard the doctor and I talking. She wanted me to miscarry.”

“That’s not what I asked you.” I rumble.

“I thought you loved her! I thought you didn’t want me!” Selene cries, “And she wanted me dead, she wanted Lila dead!”

I almost snap at her again for ignoring the question, then I realize what she’s trying to do. She’s trying to explain herself before

but you were always planning on leaving.”

Selene is practically sobbing and part of me wants to comfort her but, for the first time, my anger is more powerful than my concern. “Weren’t you?” I snarl again when she doesn’t answer.

“Yes!” Selene yelps, jumping half a foot in the air. “Yes. Drake and I had a plan but then Gabriel died and it seemed like you actually needed me for a while. But then you still wanted the rejection... I was going to go right after.”

“The rejection was for you!” I thunder, all the memories coming back to me. “You never had a choice in marrying me and you were mooning over some wolf you’d known for 15 years. I wanted you to be happy!”

“What are you talking about?” Selene hiccups.

“I heard you on the phone with your friend, talking about how upset you were that you couldn’t be with the man you’d been in love with since you were 5.” It’s been a long time since I’ve thought about that time in my life. When I thought Selene died I only wanted to remember the good parts of our marriage. I blocked out those last few months so completely I actually forgot about the phone call I overheard.

Selene is gaping at me, her tears slowing amidst her surprise. When she finally responds, it’s with such exasperation and disbelief I almost miss her words. “You idiot.”

“Excuse me?” I reply dangerously.

0.00%

13:15 L

#Chapter 87 I’ve Loved You Since I Was Five

“I was talking about you, Bastien!” Selene practically shouts.

“What are you talking about? I interrogate. “We didn’t meet until you escaped Garrick.”

“Yes we did.” Selene corrects me, holding her head in her hands. “When I was a pup I got lost in the mountain tunnels and you found me. You rescued me and I had a horrible crush on you afterwards. I’ve loved you since I was five years old,” her eyes narrow as the irony hits her, and when you found out you rejected me!”

I rack my memory for the event she’s talking about, diving through the annals of my life until I finally resurrect a hazy image of a pup not much older than Lila, crying in a dark cave. Horror and relief wash over me in equal measure.

“Why didn’t you ask me about what you overheard?” Selene questions me, “why didn’t you just talk to me instead of jumping to conclusions?”

“Oh, the way you talked to me when you thought I was leaving you for Arabella?” I snap. “When you thought I was having an affair, or when you found out you were carrying my baby?!”

Selene stubbornly crosses her arms over her chest, and I’m amazed at how well she’s holding herself together. Part of me is proud of my sweet mate for coping so well under stress and even wants to praise her, but I pummel that thought back – this is not the time.

“That was different.” She insists, “I was still just a kid. I was still a wreck just trying to put one foot in front of another and scared of my own shadow. You were a fully grown Alpha without a fear in the world.”

“And now?” I grouse, “Are you still just a scared little girl that had to fake a DNA test rather than confront reality?”

“I didn’t have anything to do with that DNA test!” Selene denies hotly, “I don’t know how it happened, but it wasn’t me.”

“Oh come on, Selene. Give it up!” I bark, “You’ve spent years hiding Lila from me. You’ve been hiding her from the first moment you found out she existed. Do you really expect me to believe you weren’t behind those fake results?”

“I didn’t even know about the test until the results were back!” She reminds me fiercely.

“That doesn’t change the fact that you kept up the lie.” I combat, “I might be able to understand it when I first arrived, but you learned the truth and still let me believe she was Drake’s.”

My mate wrings her hands, her stunning eyes wide and shining as she implores me to understand. "I didn't want you to settle for me simply because I mothered your pup." She whimpers. "I needed you to want me for me."

"And after I claimed you?" My hand closes around her nape, needing her to look me in the eye, needing to impose my dominance on her. Some of her anxious movements cease as she submits to my hold, and continue, "We promised each other no more lies. You gave me your word and still you said nothing!"

She tried to shrink back but doesn't get very far, looking so lost it takes all my strength to hold onto my anger, "I know." She concedes mournfully, not offering any more excuses.

"Why?" I inquire desperately.

"I don't know." She laments, using her palms to try and wipe away her tears.

"Yes you do." I press, "Why didn't you come clean? Why did we have to wait for our pup's life to be in danger before I found out | had a daughter?!"

"I was scared." Selene cries pitifully.

"Of what?" I growl. "Of Me?"

"I knew how angry you'd be." She sniffles, "I didn't want you to hate me. I just got you back, I didn't want to lose you again."

Her words slap me across the face, and I stare down at her in disbelief. "Did you think I would hurt you? Or take Lila and reject you?"

Selene shrugs helplessly.

My anger spikes, even though I know it isn't fair. "How could you think I would do something like that?" I ask in outrage. "How could you possibly think I'm capable of hating you?"

"I- It's not. I don't," she stammers hopelessly, trying to duck her head and avoid my gaze. I slide my hand into her hair, tangling my fist in the loss tresses and pulling her head back.

*Have I not made it clear how I feel about you?" I snarl, "Have I not shown you how important you are to me? Have I not claimed you thoroughly enough, mate?"

Despite her sadness and fear, the words spark the familiar scent of Selene's arousal, and her pupil's dilate as she weathers my fury. We both know it's just an excuse when

she shakes her head in denial. “No,” she whispers, her voice music to my ears, “I guess you haven’t.”

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 88

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 88

#Chapter 88 Consequences

Selene’s pov

Oh Goddess, why did I just say that?

It seemed like a good idea in the moment. Bastien was watching me with that predatory gleam in his eye and my heat sparked with a vengeance. One look and I combusted, flames of passion engulfing my body and driving all sense from my head.

Luna got the better of me, convinced me I needed him more than I needed oxygen, told me to say whatever it took to make him claim me. But I just challenged him, told him he hadn’t done his job as my mate – as if he wasn’t already angry enough.

He was going to rut me either way, I tell Luna ruefully, I didn’t have to provoke him.

Yes you did, his wolf needs this – and so do I. She insists. She’s right, I realize, and she’s not alone in her desires. I need to feel Bastien’s dominance, I need to feel his possession so deeply that it permanently brands my soul.

Bastien’s eyes flash and the next thing I know I’m spinning, turning to face the table. Bastien clears the surface with one powerful sweep of his arm, sending glass and china clattering onto the bench. Pressure between my shoulder blades bends me over the table, and the next thing I know my cheek is flush against the cool wood.

Bastien keeps one large hand splayed across the small of my back to pin me in place – not that he needs to. My palms rest on either side of my head, but I don’t try to rise. My heart races as Bastien flips up my dress and rips away my panties, my breath diminishing to a ragged pant.

I can barely keep up with what’s happening, but I don’t need to, I know my mate will take care of me. I know

Smack! Bastien's hand comes down hard on my exposed backside, drawing a startled yelp from my lips. Now I do try to push myself up, pressing my hands into the wood with all my strength, but I'm powerless beneath him.

"What are you doing?!" I cry in shock, even as another swat lands. Forgetting about standing, I throw my hands back to try and cover my bottom, but Bastien simply gathers my wrists and holds them behind my back.

**What does it look like I'm doing?" He growls, his voice like gravel.

Suddenly I remember where we are, and I strain to see over the top of the booth. "Bastien, someone could see!" I exclaim, thinking of the floor to ceiling windows lining the front of the cafe.

"Then they'll see an Alpha punishing his naughty mate." He replies nonchalantly, as if spanking fully grown women is something that happens every day. A series of five sharp smacks pepper my behind, Bastien punctuating each one with his scolding words. "I. Could. Never. Hate. You." He says the phrase so viciously I wince. I know he's only using a tiny fraction of his strength, but my skin burns beneath his touch. I writhe, trying to escape his punishing hands and whining like a pup.

"You are my everything, Selene." Bastien declares fiercely, rubbing my aching bottom and then delivering another whack to the spot he just soothed. "Don't you dare forget it."

Bastien

My poor little mate doesn't know what hit her – literally.

I've given Selene a few playful swats over the years, even a few real ones in the bedroom, but I've never disciplined her this way. I was always afraid of triggering her post traumatic stress, of reminding her of Garrick and making her afraid of me.

To be fair, I didn't actually intend to do this. Axel responded to our mate's challenge so abruptly I didn't even think about what was doing. One moment Selene was whispering that I hadn't claimed her thoroughly enough, and the next I had her sprawled over the table with her luscious bottom on display.

Bright red handprints mark her pale cheeks, and I can hear her sniffing softly. "I'm sorry." Selene pleads, still trying to wriggle out

0.00%

13:16

#Chapter 88 Consequences

of my hold. Apparently my concerns about frightening her were unnecessary. Not only is she not afraid, but the scent of her arousal has grown stronger, spiking every time I land a spank.

“You’ve been a very bad girl.” I purr, giving her two strong smacks. Selene squeals in protest, more affronted than pained. “Doubting your mate.” *Smack!* “Lying to him.” *Smack!* “Keeping secrets.” *Smack!* *Putting your precious life in danger.” This smack is the hardest of all, and my mate finally stops struggling.

Her body relaxes, the fight draining out of her limbs. Little by little, she submits, accepting her punishment and yielding to my control. This time when she apologizes, she means it. “I’m sorry, Bastien.” She murmurs, her voice thick with tears. “For everything.”

“I know you are, sweetheart.” I flip her over onto her back, smirking when she hisses as her rear end meets the hard table. “But I’m not done with you yet.”

Her eyes widen as I reach for my fly, and she pushes up onto her elbows, frantically checking the windows. “Not here.” She begs, “we’re practically in public.”

The only reason I agree is because I don’t want any wolves passing by to get an eyeful of what’s rightfully mine. I scoop up Selene and cart her into the kitchen, kicking the door shut behind me and laying her out on the metal island.

She sighs, and I realize the cold surface probably feels good against her stinging backside. Chuckling darkly, I withdraw my cock from my trousers, pulling the neckline of Selene’s dress down to expose her breasts.

Axel groans in my head as I sweep my gaze over her naked skin, the sight making my already rock hard arousal stiffen further. For a moment I consider taking a picture of her. I would love to be able to see her like this whenever I want: spread out like a feast for me to devour, disheveled and needy, ripe for the taking.

In the end I’m too impatient. I may have reasserted my dominance in the dining room, but I’ve yet to reassert my claim, and I can’t wait a second longer. “Hold on tight little wolf.” I instruct, teasing her swollen clit with the head of my cock. “You’re in for a rough ride.”

Selene’s pov

Rough was putting it mildly.

In the delirious aftermath of our lovemaking, Bastien lies with his head pillowed on my breasts, bent over the island counter in exhaustion as I run my hands through his soft hair. I feel completely boneless: drowsy and satisfied beyond belief.

The strange thing is how peaceful I feel; not just calm but light as a feather. I didn't realize how heavily the burden of my secrets was weighing on me until it lifted. Even my guilt has faded. It was still eating me up inside before Bastien bent me over the table, but somehow his spanking freed me of it.

I still can't believe he did that. I still can't believe how much I liked it. It hurt like hell, but every time his hand fell my sex throbbed and clenched, needing to be filled. Deep down I secretly loved Bastien taking me in hand that way, dominating me with so much raw power and control. Somehow it made me feel safe and cared for, like some sort of catharsis which set everything right with my mate.

I hazard shifting my hips and hiss with discomfort. My backside is even more sore than it was before, which isn't surprising given how ruthlessly Bastien rutted me. The big wolf lying on top of me rumbles contentedly, and lingering kisses shower my breasts, "You took that so well baby." He croons, petting my sides. "I'm very proud of you."

While his praise fills me with warmth, there is one thing I have to make clear. "If you ever," I begin sleepily, "spank Lila I will-

Bastien's head suddenly jerks up, his expression so horrified that I stop speaking. From the look on his face you would think I accused him of murder. "I would never." He proclaims, straightening up and taking his comforting weight with him. "Spankings are for naughty mates, not innocent pups."

I snort, adjusting my dress to cover my nudity and gingerly sitting up. I'm sore in all the right places, and I really could use a nap. I stretch, emitting a little moan before I catch Bastien watching me hungrily. "Oh no you don't." I tell him, wagging a finger. "I can't take any more of your love today, mister."

Bastien laughs, swooping his head down to steal a kiss before righting his own clothes "That's probably for the best." He agrees reluctantly, "We still have to talk about the move."

That stops me in my tracks. "What are you talking about?" I ask, furrowing my brow.

44.71%

13:15 1

#Chapter 88 Consequences

What move? I think, surely he doesn't mean...

Bastien looks down at me with steely-eyed resolve. "We're going back to Elysium."

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 89

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 89

#Chapter 89 Breeding

Selene's pov

"What?" I ask, unable to conjure any other words.

"I've been away too long," Bastien sighs, "And so have you." He adds pointedly. Suddenly I realize he must have dropped everything to come here. He has so many responsibilities in Elysium, I don't know how he managed it. Who's been running the pack while he's been busy chasing me around Asphodel? The council?

Next I wonder how none of this occurred to me before. We can hardly be together while living in separate cities. In Bastien's mind, I probably agreed to come back to Elysium the moment I let him claim me. The last card in my hand had been needing to keep Lila near her father, and that excuse went out the window when I told him the truth about the DNA test.

"Bastien, I have a life here." I reply hesitantly,

"You had a life there too:" Bastien reminds me, brushing a few strands of hair out of my eyes.

"No." I correct him. "I had you and nothing else. Here I have a business, friends, a purpose beyond standing beside you and looking pretty."

"That's not what I want for you, Selene. You can have all those things in Elysium. You could have had those things before if..." He trails off, uncertain why I hadn't shown an interest in opening a cafe or having a life of my own when we were married. Puzzled and clearly concerned he asks, Did you think I wouldn't let you?"

"No." I exhale heavily, "It wasn't anything you did, well, not in the way you mean." I amend, reaching up to stroke my mate's clenched jaw. "You have to understand. When you first rescued me I was completely helpless. I did need you to do everything for me, and you were so willing to take on that role that you never pushed me to step out of my comfort zone or do anything for myself. At the time I thought it was because you didn't think I was capable of standing on my own two feet." I share, reaching into my memories.

“If I coddled you, it’s because I love you.” Bastien informs me, looking perturbed. “I didn’t push you because taking care of you was never a burden to me, I wanted to do everything for you. I never wanted you to have to struggle again.”

“I know that now.” I assure him gently, but I never learned how to fend for myself. I never got far enough out into the world to find myself, to figure out who I was and what I wanted out of life.”

“It had only been three years,” Bastien argues protectively. “You made incredible progress in that time, considering where you started. Goddess, Selene, you were trapped in a basement through your entire adolescence.” He reminds me – as if I could forget. “You had to learn everything from scratch, all while trying to figure out how to be a wife and an Alpha’s mate.”

“And I did it in a bubble.” I proclaim firmly, “When I came here I didn’t have a choice. Drake helped me get the apartment and provided for me financially, but I had to figure out how to survive on my own. I had to figure out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.”

“So do those things in Elysium.” Bastien beseeches, “It won’t be like before.”

“Bastien, you said it yourself, being an Alpha’s mate is a lot more than just being a wife.” I’m trying to choose my words carefully, but I’m not sure how successful my efforts are. My mate is looking grumpier by the minute. “It’s a full time job with a lot of responsibilities, if I go back I won’t have a choice anymore.”

Dragging one large hand through his hair, Bastien huffs in frustration. “What did you think was going to happen when I claimed you Selene? That you and Lila would stay here when I went back home?” He eyes my flat tummy. “For Goddess’s sake, you’re probably breeding already.”

“Excuse me?” I squeak, not sure I heard him correctly.

Bastien rolls his eyes. “You’re in heat, Selene.”

The man seems determined to tell me things I already know this evening. “So?” I exclaim, throwing my hands up.

My mate appears to be praying for patience, bringing his palms together and speaking very deliberately, “You’re the most fertile you’ll ever be, and we’ve had unprotected sex a dozen times since it began.”

I blindly reach behind me, seeking the edge of the island to brace myself. Suddenly my knees feel like jelly. How could I have failed to connect those dots? Without contraception heat cycles almost always result in babies – it’s kind of the entire point.

Blood is rushing in my ears, blocking out all other sounds with a loud whirring. I've never considered having another pup. I wouldn't have ever wanted one with anyone but Bastien and I never thought I'd see him again.

I try to picture what it would be like to go through a pregnancy now, how different it might be from the first time with Bastien by my side. I try to imagine having another pup, a sibling for Lila, maybe a little boy – a miniature Bastien.

Luna is swooning at the thought, and I have to admit I am too. Now that I know it's possible, I desperately want to have another child with Bastien, but I'm not sure I'm ready to do it right this minute. We still have a lot to figure out. Lila and I are still in danger – what if I have another girl, another Volana in need of protection?

There's something else, a niggling thought in the back of my mind. Bastien knew. He knew he might get me pregnant again. He seems to expect it, treating it like it's a foregone conclusion. What's more, we always used protection in the first year of our marriage, when having a baby would have been more traumatic for me than joyful.

Narrowing my eyes at my mate, I push away from the counter, stalking towards him. "Were you planning this?" I hiss, "Have you been trying to get me pregnant? Did you see I had a child with Drake and need to plant one of your own to spite him and lock me down?"

Bastien rubs the back of his neck, looking decidedly guilty. "The thought did occur to me," He admits, "But in my defense, I thought you understood the situation."

"You are unbelievable." I declare hotly, "I know you didn't believe I would thoughtlessly jump into such a big commitment when things were so uncertain between us – when we live in different cities! When my first pup is already endangered because of the blood I passed down to her!"

Bastien reaches for me and I try to back out of his reach, but he's too fast. Before I know it the full length of my body is pressed against his, and his silver eyes are glaring down at me. "It's instinct, Selene." He states sternly, "It's my instinct to breed my mate, to mark what's mine and wipe away any remnants left behind by other wolves." Goddess help me, but his words are starting to excite me again. "I assumed your instincts were driving you to do the same."

Were they? I think. Was I subconsciously trying to seal our bond with another baby? Is all this lust really driven by that base instinct to continue my line?

Of course it is. Luna tells me, I want another pup, I want to raise them with our mate.

I'm rarely angry with my wolf, but I am now. She might have known what was happening, but I didn't. I never even considered another child, I was too overwhelmed just coping with Bastien's reappearance in my life.

“Well they weren’t!” Pushing against Bastien’s chest and not moving an inch, I continue, “I’m terrified every single day about Lila and this bounty! I was already carrying her when I found out about it in Elysium. I would never intentionally try to breed with that kind of threat hanging over my head!”

“All the more reason for you to come home.” Bastien asserts, entirely unyielding. “You belong in Elysium. You and Lila belong with me.” His massive hands squeeze my hips, and if you are carrying another pup, they’ll belong with me too.”

“I know that!” I burst out, finally speaking my truth. “I don’t want to be apart from you! I don’t want Lila to go another day without her father!”

“Then why are you fighting me, little wolf?” Bastien demands, emanating pure ferocity.

“Because I don’t want to go back to being that person!” My throat scratches uncomfortably, and I can already hear the tears in my voice. “I don’t want to go back to being weak and afraid and useless!”

“You were never weak.” Bastien growls, fire burning in his eyes. “You survived things no other wolf could. You managed to hold onto your heart through years of torture and abuse.” He professes, “And you were never useless. Not to me.”

“You know what I mean.” I hiccup, unable to meet his gaze. “I don’t want it to be like before. I don’t want to be bullied by jealous she-wolves and sit idly by while you govern the pack.”

Kissing my brow and gathering me to his chest, Bastien promises, “That’s not who we are anymore, baby.”

“Promise me it will be different.” I request in a small voice, “Promise me it will be better.”

“I promise.” His deep voice wraps around me like an embrace, and even though my fear urges me not to believe him – I can’t help

but trust my mate.

Burying my head in his chest for one long moment to try and get hold of my tears, I make my decision. “When do we leave?”

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate Chapter 90

Pregnant and Rejected by My Alpha Mate

Chapter 90

#Chapter 90 Leaving Asphodel

Bastien's pov

My small family is gathered in Drake Cavanaugh's office. Selene and I sit across from the Eros Alpha with Lila balanced between our laps, preparing to announce our departure to Elysium. I was anticipating a scene, given the way things went when the other man found out I'd claimed Selene, however now I'm not so sure.

Everything was so chaotic after the kidnapping that I didn't pay attention to the way Drake was looking at Selene, but now the difference is striking. Whereas he used to eye my mate with unrequited longing, now he studies her with nothing but friendly

warmth.

I have a feeling I know the reason behind this sudden shift, and while I still harbor some resentment for the little she-wolf who helped kidnap my mate and pup, solving my Drake problem might just be worth my forgiveness. I know she was a victim in all this, but the fact remains that my pup almost died, and the father in me just can't get past that. I know Selene feels the same.

"I presume you've come to tell me you're leaving." Drake prompts us, a sad smile on his handsome face.

"Yes." Selene confirms, squeezing my hand. Before the week is out."

"Well I can't say I didn't expect this." Drake admits ruefully. "But I'm going to miss having you here." He tells Selene, before looking down at Lila. "And what am I going to do without my Lila bean?"

Lila giggles and clambers down to dart across the room. Drake scoops her up and sits her on his knee, bouncing her enthusiastically while her peels of laughter ring out. This time last week the sight would have sent me into a green-eyed rage, but I'm not bothered now that I know Lila is mine.

Besides, when the girls were kidnapped Drake and I had to put aside our differences, recognizing that their safety was far more important than our pride or egos. I don't think we'll ever be friends, but I do consider him an ally. Our affection for the she-wolves unites us in a way politics never could.

"Listen Drake," Selene broaches, sounding emotional, "I will never be able to repay you for everything you did for me. You saved my life so many times I've lost count, and in helping me you saved Lila too."

She's right. If nothing else, I have to be grateful to Drake for taking care of my mate all these years, no matter how badly the idea makes me want to throw something.

"You've been an incredible friend to me from the day we met." Selene continues. "I know things are a little... difficult right now, but you have to know how grateful I am. And how much I care about you."

Drake's expression goes very serious, and he looks straight at me now, "I'm sorry for the way I reacted to your claim. It wasn't right, and not only because of the disrespect it showed you." His emerald eyes turn to Selene. "I was wrong. I thought I was in love with you, because you're so wonderful my wolf couldn't see anyone else." He smiles, and I'd recognize that look anywhere. This is a wolf who's found his mate.

"Sophie?" I suggest, causing Selene to stare up at me in surprise, before swinging her expectant gaze back and forth between us.

"Sophie." Drake confirms, beaming. "She's still recovering, but when the time is right..*" Heat infuses his tone, and I can practically read his thoughts. They're the very last thing any man should be contemplating when holding a pup. Clearing my throat loudly, I drag his attention back to the present.

Selene frowns with concern, "Drake, are you sure?"

Protectively cuddling Lila closer, he answers, "You know it was never her will to hurt anyone, don't you?" His brow furrows with pain and anger, "Martin was hurting her for a long time."

"I know that." Selene says stiffly, "And I wouldn't blame her if she'd only come after me." A growl bubbles up in my chest before I can stop it, and my sweet mate leans into my side, bombarding me with her scent. "But I hope you understand why I can't forgive her completely."

"I do." Drake concedes, "Just as I hope you can understand why I can't hold her at fault."

"I understand." I announce before Selene can answer. My mate could burn down a convent and I wouldn't be able to hold it against her. That's the way of fated mates. The bond is wonderful and impossible all at once.

"Thank you." Drake bows his head.

Selene opens her mouth to argue, and I drop my lips to her ear. "How would you feel if it were me?"

My mate throws me a sulky look, but settles without further protestation. "There's one more thing I have to ask you before we can

put all this behind us.” I broach carefully

“Go ahead,” Drake encourages. “I don’t want us to part on uneven footing any more than you do.”

It’s amazing how much I can respect the other Alpha when he’s not drooling over my mate. “We’re still not sure what happened with the DNA test.” I explain, “Did you have anything to do with it?”

Cavanaugh looks every bit as concerned as I feel. “No, I didn’t know anything about it until the results came back.” He starts bouncing Lila again, distracting her as our conversation grows tense, “You had them run in Elysium, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” I confirm, “And I know it wasn’t the courier.” Given that the courier was my mother, who just yesterday told me she’d figured out Lila was mine even before the kidnapping.

“Maybe the sample was simply contaminated in the lab.” Selene suggests, not sounding like she believes it.

Shaking my head, I caress her velvety arm. “I don’t think so, little wolf.” I wish I could shield her from this, but she needs to know what we’re up against. “Someone in Elysium has been undermining me for years. I think this is more of the same.”

“Arābella.” Selene immediately reminds me, “Arabella was undermining you for years.”

“She was already gone by the time the sample made it to the city.” I remind her.

“I know,” Selene agrees, “But maybe she wasn’t working alone.”

“What do you mean?” I ask in befuddlement, “She wanted you out of the way so I would be free to marry her, what good would it do to sabotage me?”

Selene’s brow knits up in thought, and I have to resist the urge to smooth out the wrinkles. She looks so cute, but I don’t want her to think I’m not taking her seriously.

“Maybe we’ve been assuming the wrong motive.” She suggests. “Arabella always seemed like she was more interested in power than in you..like you were simply a means to an end. If she wanted to control the Nova pack and you made it clear it wasn’t going to happen through marriage, maybe she would just try to get you out of the way completely – align herself with whoever has been working against you all this time.”

It’s an interesting thought, and though it goes against my preconceived notions, I have to admit it makes sense. Arabella stopped coming onto me a long time ago, after I rejected her one too many times. Did I misconstrue her advances? Did I really know so little about Flynn’s baby sister?

“Either way I think you’ve got a very serious situation on your hands,” Drake assesses, looking reluctant, “Are you sure going back to Elysium is the safest option?”

Selene instinctively snuggles close to me, her unease absolutely palpable. She’s watching Lila like she wants to grab the pup out of Drake’s arms, so I press a few reassuring kisses to her temple. “We’re a family.” I reply, we need to be together.”

Drake nods in understanding. “Well, you know you always have allies in Asphodel.” He grins at Lila, who is now playing with his wolf-shaped paperweight. And a second home, should you ever need one.”

“Thank you.” Selene says again, leaving the couch to go hug Drake and retrieve our pup, “You’re welcome in Elysium anytime.”

“I’ll miss you.” He squeezes her tightly and hands over Lila, “both of you.”

For the first time, Lila seems to realize she won’t be able to see her beloved uncle every day. “Uncle Rake’s not coming to Lysium?”

A pang of regret slams into me. We’ve told Lila that she’ll be moving, but I don’t think she truly understands. After all, what toddler could? How much is she going to miss Asphodel – the only home she’s ever known? What if she doesn’t like Elysium? We don’t have water and exciting animals, only caves and endless forests.

“No my darling,” Selene tells her gently, “but he’s going to visit. Isn’t he?” She questions pointedly.

“Absolutely.” He agrees, kissing Lila’s soft cheek. “And we can talk whenever you want.”

This seems to satisfy my pup, though I fear she still doesn’t realize what all this means. I’m the last to depart, hanging back with Drake while Selene takes Lila downstairs. “You’ll keep an eye out for the bounty?” I prompt.

“Every day.” He vows, shaking my hand. “But you can’t keep this up forever, Bastien. Sooner or later you’re going to have to deal with Blaise.” His gaze shifts to the doorway through which my mate just exited, “They’ll never be safe until you do.”

“I know.” I sigh with resignation. “That’s what I’m afraid of.”