



Billionaire Wolf Needs an Assistant

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Description: DO NOT fall for your billionaire boss, especially when he's a grumpy werewolf known for making his employees cry.

Katie is down on her luck and unable to land a job in her field of study after graduating from college. When the Discreet Talent Connections Agency calls her with a job as a personal assistant, it's an offer she can't refuse. She's sure it won't be so bad. After all, her friend Lacey ended up with a cushy job vacationing with her billionaire boss in a ski resort and jet-setting around on his private plane. If only she wasn't assigned to work for the most notoriously cruel werewolf CEO in Huntington Harbor.

Reeve is a monster with a temper in the boardroom and with his staff. At least, that's what the whispers on the streets say. With high-stakes negotiations on the line, and his personal life in ruins, the last thing Reeve needs is a distraction in the form of a sassy new assistant. When she's around, all he can think about is biting and claiming her. Unless he wants another scandal on his hands, she's completely off-limits. But the wolf in him recognizes his mate, and he will hunt her until she belongs to him. Forever.

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Chapter 1

KATIE

I stared at the half-finished crochet hat in dismay. After an hour of stress crocheting, I realized that I had made a wrong stitch at the beginning. The entire thing had to be pulled and redone.

Ugh, there was no salvaging it. Giving up on any more attempts to put my employment offer from Discreet Talent Connections Agency out of my mind, I shoved the hat and my crochet hook into my craft basket.

My mind replayed the conversation I had with Gladys at the employment agency, "Ms. Clark, before you sign the contract, I need to be transparent with you about your new employer. Mr. Song can be... difficult to work with. His last assistant quit suddenly, crying as she ran in the middle of her shift. She didn't even bother to come back for her things." The agency specialized in job placements for rich and powerful men who were also supernatural creatures. I heard rumors that some of the men they served were werewolves and even vampires. To say that some of the clients they serviced were difficult was like saying Mount Everest was a hill.

Unfortunately, my need to keep a roof over my head and food in my belly overrode any hesitations I had about accepting the job. My gaze landed on the old television standing on top of two milk crates at the other side of the living room. Despite having graduated from one of the top universities in the country, I was still unemployed and living like a broke college student.

Think of the money, Katie, I repeated to myself. Besides, Lacey was currently flying around in private jets and living up the good life in a ski resort with her billionaire boss. If a bit of my roommate's good luck rubbed off on me, then maybe working for Mr. Reeve Song wouldn't be so bad. With that thought to bolster my confidence, I got ready for bed.

The gleaming glass windows of Alpha Fang Technologies towered before me. A woman dressed in a tailored gray skirt and flowing silk blouse strode out of the automatic double doors. Her stiletto heels clicked a steady rhythm and as she walked past me, she scanned my figure in disdain. My stomach flip-flopped. This was my first 'real' job after school, and dressed in my thrifted blazer and polyester dress pants, I felt like a little girl playing dress-up in my mother's clothes.

Just thinking of my mother filled my head with her voice.

"Why can't you be like your cousin Janice? She's going to get a PhD and an M.D."

I shook my head to clear away her negative words. My mother's constant disappointment in me was the last thing I needed today.

With a deep breath, I squared my shoulders and marched through the front doors. It was still technically thirty minutes until I was supposed to start my first shift. I wanted to give myself plenty of time to find my way around my new workplace. The security guard at the door glanced at me and shook his head as I passed by.

My sensible shoes clicked against the polished marble floor on the way to the front desk. I absorbed the sleek modern lobby with its soaring ceilings and abstract art. Everything screamed money and power, from the custom water feature that drew the eye upward fifty stories to the metallic Alpha Fang logo that seemed to float in midair behind the desk.

"Mr. Reeve Song, please," I said to the receptionist. "I'm his new assistant, Katie Clark."

She typed something in her computer system and clicked through the results before she picked up her phone. After a few muffled words that I couldn't hear, she ended the call.

"Floor 50, Ms. Clark," she said with a smile. "Mr. Song's office is waiting for you." She pulled a plastic card from a drawer and ran it through a machine. "This is your pass to operate the elevator. Good luck," she said as she shot me a sympathetic smile.

"Thank you." My hands shook as I grabbed the card. Everything in the building was made out of cold glass and metal. The grand lobby made me feel like I tiny ant as I scurried toward the elevators. The doors opened as a car arrived. I entered and scanned my pass before I pushed the button for the top floor.

After accepting the position from the agency, I had spent a sleepless night looking up my new boss on the internet. Every article described him as a ruthless genius with zero qualms about cutting inefficiencies from his business. He started his Alpha Fang in his early twenties after college and by the time he was twenty-five, he had built it into a company worth billions. His company was known for collaborating with some of the biggest corporations in the country including Wulfthorn Baked Goods. The photos of him in press releases showed a distinguished, handsome man with jet-black hair, strong cheekbones, and cold gray eyes that seemed to burn through my phone screen. My stomach flip-flopped, but I couldn't let Reeve Song's intimidating reputation dampen my excitement. This was finally my chance to prove to my family that I could make it on my own in the big city.

The elevator came to a stop and the doors opened directly into a clinically stark white reception area. A svelte blonde in a figure-hugging black designer dress that probably cost more than everything I owned in my apartment looked up from her computer.

Her perfectly styled eyebrows rose when I stepped into the room.

"Katie Clark?" She stood up and walked around her desk with a fluid grace that should have been impossible in her heels. "I'm Sophia Roberts, Mr. Song's secretary. He is waiting for you in his office."

I followed Sophia down a hallway of glass windows past a couple meeting rooms to an imposing metal door. Sophia shot me a knowing look that made me stand a little straighter. Everybody in this building thought I didn't belong. I was going to prove them wrong.

Sophia knocked sharply before she opened the door. "Your new assistant is here," she announced.

I stepped past her into the massive office.

"Try not to cry when you run out of here," she muttered. "His last assistant caused quite a scene."

I gritted my teeth, unwilling to give her the satisfaction of scaring me.

The door closed behind me with a click. Giant floor-to-ceiling windows provided a wide view of the ocean shores of Huntington Harbor. In the distance, ships bobbed in the gleaming water like they were toys floating in a bathtub. A tall man in a perfectly tailored slate-colored suit stood at the window with his back to the door. Even without seeing his face, his entire being projected power.

When he finally turned around, I gulped. He was even more overwhelming in person than in his photos. Reeve Song possessed a primal magnetism that pulled me to him even from across the massive room.

He was taller and more handsome than I had expected. As he moved toward his desk, his movements were graceful and decisive like a predator stalking his prey. In an almost imperceptible movement, he inhaled deeply as if he was catching my scent.

His gaze swept over me dismissively. "You're early." His voice was deep, with a growling undertone that raised goosebumps on my arms.

I shot him a bright smile as I marched to his desk. "Yes sir! I wanted to get a good start. I'm Katie Clark, and I'm thrilled to join your team." I extended my hand.

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He ignored my outstretched hand, moving to settle into the leather chair behind his desk. "Your resume shows no relevant experience. The agency must be getting desperate. Give me one good reason why I should hire you." His fingers, strong yet elegant, drummed on the desk as he waited for my answer.

Even as my cheeks ached from the effort, my smile didn't waver. "What I lack in experience, I make up for in dedication and quick learning, Mr. Song. I'm ready for any challenge." I meant it too, if I lost this job, then I couldn't make rent this month. Lacey and I would be on the streets.

The edges of his lips curved, but it was a snarl more than a smile. "We'll see about that." He gestured to a mountain of boxes in the corner. "Those contain files and letters from my late father. They need to be organized and digitized. Get it done by the end of the day if you want to keep this job." Something darkened his expression at the mention of his father, but it was gone in a flash and quickly covered by his stoic mask.

I turned toward the towering pile of haphazardly packed boxes. The stack came up to the top of my head. There had to be more than twenty boxes. Random bits of paper and folders stuck out of the tops, and from the yellowed color of some of the papers, there was a good chance the documents were older than me. It was an intimidating mess, but I had experience digitizing my hometown's records during my last summer at home before I moved away for college. This was just a larger version of a similar problem.

"I'll get right on it, sir."

He nodded. "Sophia will show you to your desk," he said before he turned his chair toward the computer and began typing. I was clearly dismissed.

When I walked out of the office, Sophia was already waiting for me at a desk on the opposite side of the reception area as hers. Her smile was smug. "Don't get too comfortable. No assistant has lasted more than a week here."

While I settled at my new desk, Sophia went into Mr. Song's office with a push cart to retrieve the box of files. I examined the barren workspace and the generic computer screen. There was a yellow sticky note on the monitor with the login credentials and a box of tissues on the desk. Pulling open the desk drawer, I found a row of pens with Alpha Fang's logo on them and a half-empty bottle of ibuprofen.

Sophia came out with the files and dumped them next to my desk. I rolled up my sleeves. None of them thought I could handle the work, but I was going to show them what this small-town woman could do.

Eight hours later, my back ached from hunching over the documents and feeding them through the scanner. It was almost the end of the work day, but I finished scanning every last piece of paper. I'd skipped lunch, using the time to enter each file into a database. Satisfaction swelled in my chest as I knocked on his office door.

"Enter."

"The files have been digitized, sir. I've emailed you access to the database. Everything is categorized by date for easy searching."

He looked up sharply, disbelief flooding his face briefly before his expression returned to its usual stony façade. "Show me." He pushed back his chair and signaled for me to come closer.

I leaned over his desk and used his computer to navigate to the shared folder where I stored the system I had created. Standing so close next to him, I was acutely aware of the heat of his body. Our shoulders brushed as I maneuvered the mouse. A tingle crept across my skin, keeping me on edge. My voice shook as I described how I had organized the files.

Finally, he leaned back into his chair. Folding his arms behind his head, he studied me for an uncomfortable moment.

"That will do," he finally said. "You can go home."

I had barely reached the door to his office before his voice stopped me.

"Make sure your schedule is cleared for Christmas. I have an important project that will require your assistance."

If I wanted to keep this job, I would have to give up the one day of the year when I had the opportunity to see my family. Nothing could keep my voice from wavering when I answered him. "Yes, sir."

By the time I gathered my things from my desk, I noticed the office was empty. Sophia had already left. I rode the elevator down to the main lobby and walked out into the crisp late afternoon air.

My feet ached in my stiff shoes, but I couldn't help but smile as I texted Lacey. She was the only person who would understand what a victory it was for me to survive my first day at work.

I finished typing my text and hit send. As I put my phone away, I turned around and stared up at the tall glass building. It was too far away for me to make out any details, but I swore Mr. Song was watching me from the windows of his office.

Chapter 2

KATIE

"I'm so sorry, Mom," I whispered, fighting back tears. My family crowded around the laptop screen, their faces glowing in the warm, golden light of the Christmas decorations they'd hung behind them. The cheerful twinkle of the lights only made my bare, dimly lit apartment feel colder, emptier. The silence here was deafening, broken only by the faint hum of the radiator struggling to keep up with the winter chill. To make it worse, Lacey was miles away in Paradise Peaks with her boss, leaving me utterly alone on what was supposed to be the most magical night of the year.

"I know this job came up suddenly," I continued, my fingers nervously twisting the strand of yarn in my hands, "but I promise I'll make it up to you at Easter. I'll be there. I swear."

Mom's brave smile wobbled, and my chest ached at the sight of unshed tears in her eyes. She blinked quickly, trying to hide them, but I knew her too well. "We understand, sweetheart. Your career has to come first. I only wish you had chosen a less demanding job." Behind her, my younger sisters made funny faces at me, already wearing the matching Christmas pajamas I was supposed to have gotten at our annual holiday exchange. The empty spot on the worn plaid couch behind my mom where I should have been sitting felt like a physical wound, reminding me of everything I was missing this year.

"I've been crocheting your presents," I said quickly, desperate to fill the silence. I held up the half-finished scarf in Mom's favorite shade of blue. The cheap acrylic yarn was a far cry from the soft merino wool I'd dreamed of giving her, but I'd put extra love into every stitch, hoping that it would somehow make up for my absence. "I'll overnight them tomorrow. They should arrive before New Year's."

"Just take care of yourself," Dad chimed in, his forehead creased with worry lines I didn't remember being there last summer. His voice was gruff, but the concern in his eyes was unmistakable. "That fancy harbor city is expensive. Are you eating enough?"

I angled the camera away from my dinner of instant ramen and the stack of unpaid bills on my tiny kitchen counter. "I'm fine, Dad," I lied. Forcing a bright smile on my face, I shrugged. "The job pays well, and I'm already learning so much." There was no need to mention the impossible demands from Mr. Song or the way most of my coworkers looked at me like I was dirt on their designer shoes. "My boss is challenging, but in a good way. He pushes me to be better."

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"Like that time you said the neighbor's mean dog was just particular about people?" my sister Amy teased. Her tone was light, but I caught the concern in her eyes.

"Hey, I won him over eventually!" I protested. Privately, I wondered if Reeve Song would prove harder to charm than old Rex had been. At least the dog had accepted treats. Something told me my new boss wouldn't be swayed by sugar cookies and burger scraps, but that wouldn't stop me from trying.

After saying goodbye to my family, I curled up on my threadbare couch. My hands moved automatically through the familiar motions of crocheting, the rhythmic stab and twist motions providing a small comfort as I blinked back tears. The loneliness pressed in like the winter darkness outside my window, but I refused to let it win. I'd make this work. I had to.

The last several days had been an unexpected, but welcome reprieve. Mr. Song had been completely absent from the office. According to Sophia, he was off on some important business trip to Paradise Peaks. She mentioned something about working with Wulfborn Baked Goods to secure a deal, but said nothing more to me. His return to the office tomorrow meant that my easy week at work was going to come to an end. My stomach churned at the thought of what fresh hell he was going to have waiting for me. Crocheting was not doing much to ease my anxiety. I needed to do something else to take my mind off of work tonight, something physically stimulating. Baking always helped.

The next morning, I arrived early at the office with a tin of homemade cookies and some subtle decorations for my desk. Nothing overboard, just a small poinsettia plant and a tasteful strand of white lights. Pete, the security guard, accepted a cookie with a

grateful smile, the first genuine one I'd seen in this glass fortress.

"You're too nice for this place," he warned, though there was fondness in his gruff voice. "They'll eat you alive up there."

"Then I'll make them choke on me," I replied with a wink.

I was arranging the lights around the poinsettia when Sophia walked past my desk in her designer heels. She was wearing a figure-hugging black and white dress cinched at the waist with a thick leather belt. Today's outfit probably cost more than three months of my rent.

She paused, perfectly manicured finger hovering over the tablet in her hand. "How quaint," she said, her words as cold as her smile. "Though perhaps a bit unprofessional for an executive floor?" She inhaled slightly, nostrils flaring in a way that reminded me of a predator scenting prey. "Mr. Song prefers a more polished aesthetic. We wouldn't want him thinking you're unsuitable for this position."

Ignoring her barbed words, I held out my tin of homemade cookies. Just to piss her off, I pulled my lips into an extra wide beaming smile. "Would you like one? They're still warm," I replied cheerfully.

She wrinkled her nose as if I had just shoved roadkill into her face. "Ugh, carbs are so last decade."

I had just settled at my desk and opened my email when Mr. Song's voice crackled through the intercom, sharp and demanding. "Ms. Clark. My office. Now."

As I got up, I caught the smirk spreading on Sophia's face. Bitch.

When I entered his office, he was standing at his window, looking down at the city

below. There was tension in his shoulders. He was coiled tight as a spring. Slowly, he turned around, his stormy gray eyes locking onto mine. His nostrils flared when he laid his eyes on me. For a second, I thought he actually snarled.

"What is that smell?" he demanded.

Despite the tremor in my legs, I forced myself to walk across the room. "Uh, freshly baked sugar cookies, sir. Would you like one? It's my grandma's recipe." I lifted the lid off the tin and held it out toward him.

He clenched his jaw, but something flickered in his expression, temporarily softening the harsh lines of his face. "I don't celebrate Christmas."

"Everyone celebrates cookies," I said before I could stop myself. Was that a tiny twitch at the corner of his mouth? For a moment, the air between us felt charged with something I couldn't name. Something that set my heart racing.

He broke the moment by dropping a massive file on his desk. "The Singapore Cruises account needs a complete presentation by tomorrow morning," he said. "The board meets at 8 AM sharp. Our entire Asia Pacific strategy depends on this proposal. Handle it."

I set the cookies down on the corner of his desk and flipped through the papers. My heart sank as I scanned the requirements. The time difference meant working through Christmas Eve, and the data alone would take hours to compile. But I lifted my chin, meeting his challenging stare. Something sparked in those gray eyes when I didn't back down.

"Of course, sir. I'll have it ready."

The hours blurred together as I worked, fueled by determination and coffee courtesy

of the Bean Brewing and Sipping coffee shop downstairs. Everybody had already gone home, leaving the office empty except for Mr. Song and me. Christmas lights twinkled through the windows of the buildings next to us, a cruel reminder of the holiday I was missing. Only the hum of my computer and occasional sounds from Mr. Song's office pierced the thick silence.

My phone buzzed with a text from Lacey, accompanied by a photo of a luxurious suite decked out in Christmas decor.

Lacey: "You would not BELIEVE this place! The suite is bigger than our entire apartment, and I have a view of the mountains."

Me: "Rub it in, why don't you? How are you feeling?"

Despite her job being more glamorous than mine, Lacey had been in a bad car accident a couple of days ago.

Lacey: "Blake's been amazing. He and Emilia have barely left my side. They're decorating gingerbread cookies right now. How's your billionaire tyrant?"

I glanced in the direction of Mr. Song's office.

Me: "Still grumpy. Still difficult. Drowning in spreadsheets. You will have to celebrate Christmas for both of us."

Lacey: "Don't tell me he's making you work on Christmas Eve! I'm going to have Blake talk to him."

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My heart jumped. I knew Lacey meant well, but her interference would only prove to Mr. Song that I couldn't handle the workload.

Me: "No! I can't abandon ship now. Besides, someone has to show him that Christmas miracles exist. I will get this project done even if I have to work my fingers to stubs."

Lacey: "Girl, take care of yourself! He's an idiot if he can't see how amazing you are."

I worked straight through until dawn. By the time I knocked on his door, my eyes burned and my hands shook from exhaustion and caffeine overload.

He looked up from his computer monitor. The first light of Christmas morning crept over the city skyline behind him. It wasn't fair that after an all-nighter, he looked fresh and rested as if he had just arrived at work.

"The Singapore presentation, sir," I said, trying not to sway on my feet. "I've included market projections, demographic analysis, and a strategic implementation timeline. The slide deck is formatted for both Western and Asian business styles, with cultural considerations integrated throughout."

I wrung my hands as he flipped through the materials I had prepared. A frown appeared on his face as his fingers traced the charts I spent hours compiling. Was that a sign of disapproval of my work? Or was he surprised that I managed to pull it off in such a short time?

"This is acceptable," he said finally, his voice rougher than usual. For a moment, he

seemed to lean slightly toward me, that strange tension filling the air between us again. "Take tomorrow off."

"Thank you, sir. Merry Christmas," I said. My heart swelled at his reluctant praise. For Mr. Song, acceptable was the equivalent of receiving a gold medal and confetti raining on me. It was a Christmas miracle. As I turned to leave the office, I noticed the tin of cookies was still on his desk. There was an entire layer of cookies missing inside.

Biting my lip, I suppressed the smile that threatened to spread across my face. With a renewed spring in my step, I walked out of the office. Reeve Song had a tough exterior, but I was going to crack through it.

Chapter 3

REEVE

I was going mad.

The holidays were always the worst time of the year for me. Employees expected to use their vacation days, ruining our project deadlines. Happy families all around reminded me of the backstabbing den of wolves I descended from. This year, I couldn't even hide away from it all with my best friend, Blake, since he was too busy making googly eyes with his new nanny.

On top of all this, I had to deal with her.

Her scent was riling up the wolf inside of me, driving me crazy. I paced my office like a caged animal, fighting the urge to rip through the door separating us. Katie's sweet vanilla-honey aroma tempted me through the cracks of the door.

My wolf raged at me for not taking her like it demanded. She was everything tempting and comforting that my beast craved. It roared in my chest for me to go out there and claim what was mine, consequences be damned. My wolf's intense desire to possess her set my nerves on edge. The human part of me knew too well how dangerous it was to give into uncontrolled passion.

It took me three years to build the walls around my heart after Celeste ripped it to shreds with her betrayal on Valentine's Day. Three years of suffocating the weak part of myself until I operated with ruthless, cold efficiency and detachment. Now, this sweetly fragranced human from some rinky-dink town in the middle of nowhere threatened to destroy my defenses with nothing more than a smile and a couple cookies.

The phone on my desk flashed. I pressed the button to take the call.

"This is the fourth call you've ignored today, Reeve Alexander Song."

I swore under my breath. Sophia was going to hear from me later. She knew better than to put my mother's calls through unless I was expecting her.

A growl rumbled in my chest. "I'm running a billion-dollar company, Mother. What do you want?"

"Don't take that tone with me, young man." My mother, Victoria Song, had perfected the art of maternal disapproval over five decades as matriarch of the Song pack. "The New Year's gala is in a couple of days."

"I told you I'm not coming." My fangs lengthened at the thought of what awaited me there. The suffocating pheromone-laden perfumes of the eligible she-wolves, the calculating stares from allied and rival wolf packs. Even after Celeste had humiliated me in front of wolf-shifter society by choosing to mate with a more powerful alpha,

my mother still insisted on playing matchmaker.

"You are heir to the Song pack, Reeve." Her voice cracked as she spoke. "When you were younger, we indulged in your fantasy of staying a bachelor wolf like your friend, but times have changed. Your father's barely cold in his grave, and you're neglecting your duties. The pack needs to see you taking your role seriously. Especially now that you've hired a human assistant."

I snarled. My mother had spies in every corner of Huntington Harbor, even in my office. Someone was leaking information to her.

"My assistant is exceptional at her job." More than exceptional. Brilliant, innovative, infuriatingly optimistic. Every task I set to drive her away, she conquered with a cheerful smile and enthusiasm. "The board will be pleased with her work."

"The board agrees with me that bringing a human into a wolf-run business is a reckless decision. Sophia Roberts comes from excellent breeding. Her father's pack would make powerful allies."

"Enough!"

"Fine. But you're coming to the gala." Mother's voice held steel beneath the silk. "Bring your human assistant if you must. The pack should see what they're dealing with. Don't embarrass us, Reeve."

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The line went dead. I inhaled deeply, trying to center myself. Red molten hot anger churned in my chest, but Katie's scent filled my lungs. Sweet. Pure. Mate. The word whispered through my consciousness before I could stop it.

"No. No, fucking way," I muttered under my breath. There was no way I could allow myself to be vulnerable again. No way I could let another woman close enough to destroy me. Especially not a fragile human.

I stabbed the intercom. "Ms. Clark. My office. Now."

She entered with a soft smile. That infuriatingly sweet scent filled my office, covering me and lulling me into a false comfort.

"Yes, Mr. Song?"

"The company is hosting a New Year's gala. You'll attend as my assistant. Formal attire required." I kept my voice cold, professional, ignoring how my wolf tried to reach for her. "All of the board members will be there as well as our most important clients. Don't embarrass me."

She looked at me with surprise. "Of course! I'd be honored. Should I prepare anything specific?"

You should run far away from me and my complicated life, I thought. Instead, I said, "Just be professional. Ask Sophia for where to shop. You can charge the expenses to the company's account. And try to contain your excessive cheerfulness." My tone held more growl than I intended.

She actually laughed at my words. "I'll do my best to be appropriately stern, sir." Her eyes sparkled with mischief that made my beast want to play. "Though I can't promise not to smile. It's a party, after all."

"It's a business function," I corrected sharply, fighting the urge to bare my teeth. "With traditional guests who expect certain behavior. This isn't one of your small-town festivals."

"I understand." But her smile didn't dim. "Will there be dancing?"

An image flashed in my mind, of myself ripping off her fancy dress as I tossed her onto my bed before I mounted her. I shook my head. Insanity. A low growl escaped before I could stop it. "Not if I can help it."

She seemed unaffected by the sound that made most humans instinctively back away. Instead, she tilted her head curiously, like she found my reaction fascinating.

"Just be ready at eight on New Year's Eve. A car will collect you."

She nodded and turned to leave, her scent swirling around me like a caress.

I dropped my head into my hands and groaned. This was going to be a disaster.

The gala was every bit as painful as I'd expected. Crystal chandeliers dripped light across the ballroom of my family's estate, while pack members and business associates circled like sharks in evening wear. I could smell the politics in the air, thick as the blood that threatened to spill out if a rival pack offended another.

"Your human is late," Mother hissed. Her long dark hair was twisted in an elegant hairstyle. A heavy diamond and sapphire necklace encircled her neck. As always, she was immaculate in midnight blue silk that matched her calculating eyes. They flashed

amber in warning. "Sophia looks lovely tonight."

She did. My secretary wore a designer gown that probably cost more than Katie's entire annual salary. Her movements were precisely calculated to display grace and breeding. But while Sophia was the perfect wolf mate for any eligible alpha, her scent held none of the warmth I craved.

"If you say so," I replied dismissively.

Then Katie walked in, and my world tilted sideways.

She wore a simple emerald dress that hugged modest curves, her hair falling in soft waves around shoulders bared by the neckline of her dress. She wasn't wearing an obvious designer piece, nor did she have any expensive jewelry, but she glowed with an inner light that drew every eye. My wolf surged forward, desperate to claim her in front of all the other wolves.

"Mr. Song!" She hurried over, stumbling slightly in heels that she was not used to wearing. I caught her elbow automatically and then had to fight the urge to pull her closer as her scent enveloped me. "I'm so sorry I'm late. The taxi got lost."

"Reeve." Sophia appeared at my side. Like a snake, she slinked close to me and placed her hand possessively on my arm. The touch made my wolf bristle. "You promised me the first dance."

I hadn't, but pack politics required certain courtesies. As much as I wanted to shake her off, I could not do so without offending her pack and bringing shame to the Song pack.

Reluctantly, I led Sophia to the dance floor. Trapped with a woman I wanted nothing to do with, I turned my head and saw Katie watching us with an odd expression. Then

Denver, Sophia's older brother, came up to Katie and swept her onto the dance floor.

My wolf did not like that. Not at all. A possessive growl built in my chest as I watched them move across the floor. My jaw clenched as I watched Denver lean down to whisper in Katie's ear. She broke out into a tinkling laugh that drifted across the room. I was not the only one keeping an eye on her. Katie moved with natural grace, already drawing admirers. Even some of the older wolves seemed charmed by her genuine warmth.

"Your mother tells me the board has been concerned with your recent performance," Sophia purred, pressing closer than strictly necessary. Her carefully crafted scent, a mixture of expensive perfume layered over wolf, made my nose itch. "My father's pack has extensive Asian contacts. A merger of our interests would be advantageous."

I spun my dance partner through the dance steps on autopilot. My attention was on Katie, who was once again on the sidelines. After her dance with Denver, she was now working her magic on the other party guests. Despite the cold nature of the shifter in the room, they couldn't help but be drawn in to her warmth. She was an innocent lamb surrounded by a den of wolves.

"Reeve? Are you listening?"

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"No," I said honestly. Sophia's perfectly painted lips thinned with displeasure.

Unable to put up with the charade any longer, I guided her off of the dance floor. "Thank you for the dance, Ms. Roberts." She started to say something, but I was already across the room and on my way to Katie.

All I could see was her. She was impossible to ignore. Her laugh, her scent, the way she handled the judgmental bastards in this room with ease. She was a ray of sunshine in this world of sinister shadows.

My mother intercepted me before I could get to Katie. She grabbed my arm and pulled me toward the bar. "This is unacceptable. That human is making a scene. As have you." Her voice dripped with disgust. "You've been drooling over her like a lovesick pup."

I shook off her arm and signaled for the bartender to get me a gin and tonic. "She's my assistant. I'm ensuring she doesn't embarrass the company." The lie tasted bitter on my tongue.

"She's inappropriate. I've already announced your dance with Sophia for midnight."

The bartender handed me my drink and I downed it in one go. I slammed my glass down. "Then you can expect to be disappointed. I will choose my own partner." My voice held a growl that would have sent lesser wolves running. Mother's eyes widened at my defiance.

"You're the Song heir," she hissed. "The pack must come first. After Celeste, I expect

you to put aside your foolish whims."

"Do not mention her name." Through the crowd, I saw Katie slip onto a moonlit balcony. Alone. My wolf urged me to follow.

"You will dance with Sophia," Mother insisted. "The pack needs this alliance. Your father--"

"Father is dead." I cut her off coldly, letting my eyes flash amber. "And I am not him."

Tired of the conversation, I followed Katie out onto the balcony. I found her leaning against the stone railing, shivering slightly in the winter air. Without thinking, I shrugged off my jacket and draped it over her shoulders. She jumped, then relaxed as she recognized me. The sight of her wrapped in my scent made my wolf purr in satisfaction.

"Oh! Thank you, Mr. Song. It's a beautiful party." She inhaled deeply, and something primal in me preened at her unconscious acceptance of my scent. "Your mother has exquisite taste."

"She has expectations," I corrected, moving closer than I should. "For everything and everyone."

Katie turned, studying me with those clear eyes that saw so much despite her innocence. "Is that why you look so sad? The expectations?"

"I'm not sad."

"You're lonely," she finished softly. Her hand touched my arm, her warmth soaking through my silk shirt. I leaned into the contact. "Surrounded by all these people who

care about status and alliances, but not a bit about you."

She understood too well, this interloper, who despite her background, was far too good for my world. "You don't belong here," I said roughly.

"Maybe not." Her smile held a hint of mischief that made my heart stutter. "But I'm having fun anyway. Life's too short for arbitrary barriers, don't you think?"

Inside, the countdown to midnight began. If I was a good son, I would have gone inside for the traditional midnight dance with Sophia.

Katie shivered again, and I found myself stepping closer, drawn by the honey-sweet scent of her. She tipped her face up, moonlight catching in her eyes. "Mr. Song--"

"Reeve," I corrected hoarsely. My wolf pushed forward, wanting her to know me, all of me. "My name is Reeve."

Ten... nine... eight...

Her eyes widened, but then her heavy gaze drifted to my lips. Her little hands came up to rest on my chest. She swayed slightly.

"Reeve," she breathed. The tip of her tongue came out to wet her lips.

Seven... six... five...

My hand landed on the small of her back, drawn to it like it was the most natural place in the world. With my other hand, I stroked her cheek, running the back of my hand down her throat. Her pulse jumped under my touch, a siren call to my beast.

Four... three... two...

My lips drifted closer to hers.

"Reeve!" Mother's voice shattered the moment. "Sophia is waiting!"

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Katie stepped back quickly, face flushing. "You should go. Everyone is expecting you to dance with Ms. Roberts."

Before I could protest, she twisted out of my arms and retreated into the ballroom and the safety of the crowd.

One...

I growled in frustration as she slipped away, taking her warmth and that maddening scent with her. My wolf howled in protest, but I forced myself to return to the ballroom. To duty. To expectations.

All eyes were on me, their gazes burning with hunger for me to create a scene that they could gossip about for the rest of the year. But I wasn't going to give them that satisfaction. Even as I took Sophia's hand for the traditional dance, my eyes found Katie across the room. She was watching us with an expression I couldn't read, still wearing my jacket like a claim.

My wolf knew what it wanted. The question was, how long could I keep denying the truth?

I had finally found my fated mate, but it was in the very last person I should want.

Chapter 4

KATIE

I stared at the email from Reeve, reading it for the third time to make sure I hadn't misunderstood. My heart fluttered with a mix of excitement and anxiety. After our almost kiss on New Year's Eve, which I was now sure was a figment of my imagination, he had barely spoken ten words to me. But this request meant that he wasn't mad at me. Hope blossomed in my chest. He wanted me to join him on a trip to Paradise Peaks for a crucial meeting with Alpine Tech. Tomorrow.

"I need you to prepare all documentation for the Alpine Tech project," his email read. "We leave at 7 AM sharp. Pack appropriately for mountain weather."

My fingers flew across the keyboard as I arranged everything from meeting schedules to accommodation details. Winter storms were forecasted, but the meeting was too important to postpone. I'd barely finished booking the last details when Sophia came up to my desk. As usual, her designer heels clicked on the floor with each step.

"I hear you're heading to Paradise Peaks," she said, her perfectly manicured nails drumming on my desk. Something predatory flickered in her eyes. "I should really be there to ensure you don't miss any important details."

"Mr. Song specifically requested just us two for this trip," I replied. I kept my tone professional despite her obvious disdain. The way she looked at me reminded me of a wolf sizing up its prey. It was an odd thought that sent a shiver down my spine.

"How convenient for you." Her smile didn't reach her eyes. "Well, don't get too comfortable. I know your type isn't used to traveling to places as upscale as Paradise Peaks. Try not to embarrass the company."

Before I could respond, Reeve's office door opened. "Katie, my office. Now."

I gathered my tablet and hurried in, eager to get away from Sophia. Closing the door behind me, I caught the scent of his cologne, woody and wild, like a pine trees after

a heavy rain. My stomach did that strange flutter again, the one that had been happening more frequently lately whenever he was near.

"Is everything prepared?" he asked, not looking up from his computer.

"Yes, sir. Hotel reservations are confirmed at the Hughes Hotel. I have all documents related to Alpine Tech organized and backed up both digitally and in hard copy. The weather reports show that a storm is on the way over the mountains."

"Fine." He cut me off, finally looking up. For a moment, I could have sworn his eyes gleamed gold. "7 AM. A driver will come to pick you up. Don't be late."

The next morning, I waited outside my apartment at 6:45 AM, travel mug of coffee in hand and overnight bag packed. Following his directions, I wore a thick down jacket and thermals under my thick wool pants. When I got into the backseat of the car, I was surprised that Reeve was behind the wheel. He looked devastating in a charcoal suit that fit him perfectly. The fabric seemed to ripple with his movements, like shadows flowing over muscle. He barely acknowledged me as he began to drive.

The first hour of the drive was silent, except for my occasional updates about the meeting schedule. As we climbed higher into the mountains, snow began to fall. What started as gentle flurries quickly turned into thick, heavy snowfall. He handled the conditions well, but tension rolled off of Reeve in waves.

"The weather's getting worse," I murmured. The windshield wipers struggled to keep up with the falling snow. Not that it mattered much, as the world outside had become a swirling white void.

"I'm aware," he growled. He squeezed the steering wheel with a white-knuckled grip. Something about his posture reminded me of a coiled spring ready to snap.

"Maybe we should pull over." My words cut off in a gasp as the car suddenly fishtailed. Reeve fought for control, but the vehicle spun, sliding toward the edge of the road. I caught a glimpse of his face, his eyes definitely glowing with a strange golden light, before the car hit the guardrail with a sickening impact.

Everything happened in slow motion. The crunch of metal, the world turning upside down as we rolled down the embankment. When we finally stopped, the SUV was on its side, and icy wind howled through the shattered windows like a hungry beast.

"Katie!" Reeve's voice shook with panic, which was more emotion than I'd ever heard from him. "Are you hurt?"

"I'm okay," I managed, though my whole body shook. "Just scratched and dinged."

"We need to get out. Now." His urgency frightened me more than the crash. There was something primal in his voice.

The temperature was dropping rapidly, and the storm was getting worse. We managed to climb out through the broken windshield, but the wind nearly knocked me over. Snow was falling so thick I could barely see three feet ahead.

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"There's a ranger station two miles ahead," Reeve shouted over the wind. "We have to move!"

I tried my best to follow him, but after fifteen minutes of trudging through knee-deep snow, my legs were numb, and my teeth chattered uncontrollably. The cold felt like needles in my lungs. Reeve kept looking back at me, his expression growing more worried with each passing minute.

"I can't." My frozen legs refused to work. I stumbled, falling to my knees. Dark spots danced at the edges of my vision. I glanced up at him. He seemed so tall, and with the snow swirling around him, he towered over me like a mythical creature.

Something changed in Reeve's face. His features seemed to shift, becoming somehow wilder. "Katie, don't be afraid."

Before I could ask what he meant, he started changing. His body shifted and transformed before my eyes, clothes tearing away until a massive black wolf stood where my boss had been moments before. He was magnificent, with intelligent golden eyes and fur as dark as night. He stood taller than any normal wolf, his presence both terrifying and mesmerizing.

I should have been terrified. Instead, I felt safe. As if some part of me had always known this about him, had been waiting for this revelation.

The wolf nudged me with his massive head, urging me to climb onto his back. His fur was thick and warm against my frozen hands. Understanding dawned. He was going to carry me to safety. It took all of my remaining strength to crawl onto him. I buried

my frozen fingers in his thick coat and held on as he bounded through the snow with supernatural grace and speed.

By the time we reached the ranger station, I was barely conscious. Reeve shifted back to his human form as soon as we were safe inside. He set me on a lumpy couch and went to rummage around the cabin for supplies. I was too delirious from almost dying of hypothermia to appreciate his rippling muscles and smooth golden skin before he pulled on an old pair of sweatpants and a sweater he found in a cabinet.

I closed my eyes and shivered. We were out of the wind, but the old cabin was just as cold inside as it was outside. Soon, Reeve had a roaring fire going in the wood stove. He wrapped a scratchy wool blanket over me and warmed my hands in his.

"You're a wolf," I whispered as feeling returned to my extremities. "An actual wolf."

He crouched beside me, closer than he'd ever been before, except for that night at the New Year's Eve party. The firelight cast dancing shadows across his face, making him look both more human and more otherworldly than ever. "Yes. Are you afraid?"

I looked at him. For the first time since I started working for him, I saw who he really was. His usual cold, indifferent mask was gone, replaced with a vulnerability I had never seen before. "No," I answered truthfully. "I'm not afraid. You saved my life."

Something shifted between us in that moment. The air seemed to crackle with unspoken possibilities.

"You should be afraid," he said softly, but he leaned closer. His scent enveloped me. Pine. Leather. Danger. It was arousing, intoxicating, absolutely addicting.

"Why?" I breathed, caught in his golden gaze. My heart pounded so hard I was sure he could hear it.

"Because you make me feel things I shouldn't. Things I've been fighting since the day you walked into my office." His voice was rough, almost a growl. "You make me want to lose control."

My heart thundered in my chest. The cold that ran through my veins earlier was completely gone. Molten hot desire flooded my blood. "Maybe you should stop fighting."

For a moment, I thought he might kiss me. Instead, he pulled back, though his eyes lingered on my face with an intensity that made me shiver.

"Get some rest, Katie. We're not out of this storm yet."

The cabin groaned with each gust of howling wind outside. Quiet pops and crackles from the fire in the wood stove pierced the silence of the room.

Reeve's presence loomed large in the small space, his every movement deliberate, his every breath measured. He was a man of contradictions, controlled yet wild, distant yet vulnerable. And now, after what I had just witnessed, he was no longer just my enigmatic boss. He was something far more dangerous. Something that defied reason.

I sat on the lumpy couch, the scratchy blanket wrapped tightly around me, but it did little to ease the chill that had settled deep in my bones. My mind raced, replaying the events of the afternoon. The car spinning out of control, almost dying, and then Reeve's transformation.

It was like a wild dream, the way his body shifted, bones snapping and cracking, muscles rippling and tearing through his clothes, the black fur bursting from his skin. He was a massive wolf. Even now, the memory sent a shiver down my spine, but it wasn't from fear.

Reeve moved around the cabin with an ease that suggested he was familiar with roughing it in the wilderness. He rummaged through the drawers and cabinets and found a can of beans, a box of dried pasta, and an old kettle. After a quick trip outside, he filled the kettle with snow, and settled it on top of the stove to boil. Even under the poor fitting borrowed clothes, it was obvious that his body was filled with power. His broad shoulders stretched the fabric, and with each movement, his muscles bunched and rippled under the clothing.

“You’re staring,” he said without turning around.

I blinked, startled. “Sorry. I just can’t believe this is real.”

He turned then, his golden eyes meeting mine. There was something raw and unfiltered in them that made my breath catch. “Believe it,” he said simply. “Because there's no telling how long we will be here.”

The kettle began to whistle, breaking the tension that had settled between us. Reeve poured the hot water into two chipped mugs and handed one to me. The warmth seeped into my frozen fingers, but it did little to calm the storm raging inside me.

“Why didn’t you tell me earlier?” I asked, my voice barely above a whisper. “All this time, I thought I was imagining things at the office. That night on New Year’s Eve, when we almost--”

Reeve’s jaw tightened, and he looked away, his expression unreadable. “You didn't imagine it,” he admitted after a long pause. “But it couldn’t happen. It still can’t.”

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“Why not?” The question slipped out before I could stop it, and I immediately regretted it. His eyes snapped back to mine, making my heart skip a beat.

“Because I’m not human, Katie,” he said, his voice low and dangerous. “And you don’t know what you’re asking for.”

“Then tell me,” I pleaded, my voice trembling. “Help me understand.”

He hesitated, his gaze searching mine as though weighing the risks of letting me in. Finally, he sighed and sat down on the couch beside me. His body was tense, as though he was ready to bolt at any moment. “It’s not just about what I am,” he began, his voice barely audible over the storm. “It’s about what my kind has done. The dangers that come with being with a wolf. There’s blood on our hands. You think you know me, but you don’t. You can’t.”

His words hung heavy in the air.

“I don’t care,” I said finally, my voice steady despite the turmoil inside me. “Whatever you are, it doesn’t change how I feel.”

Reeve’s eyes darkened, and he leaned closer, his breath warm against my skin. “You don’t know what you’re saying,” he growled, his voice thick with emotion. “You don’t know what I’m capable of.”

“Then show me,” I challenged, my heart pounding in my chest. “Stop hiding from me.”

For a moment, I thought he might retreat back behind the walls he'd built so carefully. But then something shifted in his expression, and before I could react, he closed the distance between us, his lips crashing against mine in a kiss that was equal parts desperation and desire. It was nothing like the hesitant almost-kiss on New Year's Eve. This was raw, unfiltered, and utterly consuming. His hands tangled in my hair, pulling me closer, as though he couldn't get enough of me.

I surrendered myself to the heat of his touch, the taste of his lips, the way he made me feel alive in a way I never had before.

But just as quickly as it began, it ended. Reeve pulled away, his chest heaving, his eyes blazing with a mixture of longing and regret. "This is a mistake," he said hoarsely, running a hand through his hair. "I won't let you get hurt because of me."

"You don't get to decide that," I shot back, my voice trembling with emotion. "I'm not afraid of you, Reeve. And I'm not going anywhere."

He stared at me for a long moment, his expression unreadable. Then, without a word, he stood and walked to the window, his back to me. The storm raged outside, the wind howling like a living thing, but the silence inside the cabin was deafening.

"Get some rest," he said finally, his voice barely audible. "We'll talk more in the morning."

I wanted to argue, to demand that he stop pushing me away, but the exhaustion was too much. My body ached, my mind was spinning, and the warmth of the fire was finally starting to lull me into a sense of calm. I curled up on the couch, pulling the blanket tighter around me, and closed my eyes.

Chapter 5

REEVE

It did not take long for a rescue team to find us. Once the snowfall let up, a passing police cruiser stumbled across the scene of our car crash. The plume of black smoke rising from the cabin's wood stove had guided them to our location.

When they arrived, I felt a strange mix of relief and regret. Relief, because Katie was safe, and the ordeal was over. Regret, because our time alone in that little cabin had felt like a stolen moment, a fragile bubble where the outside world didn't exist. In that little cabin, it was just the two of us. There were no wolf pack politics or worries about business, nor were there any overwhelming family expectations. With the crackling of the fire, the soft sound of her breathing as she slept, a part of my heart was healed as I saw a vision of a life I never dreamed was possible.

The meeting with Alpine Tech had to be rescheduled, but I couldn't bring myself to care. Business deals and alliances all felt trivial compared to her. The only thing that was on my mind was the look of pure acceptance on Katie's face as I told her about my family and the blessing and curse of being a wolf shifter.

She had listened with an openness that left me breathless, her questions curious but never judgmental. My wolf melted into a panting puddle at the way she had run her soft fingers down my cheek. When she stroked my hair and scratched behind my ears, my wolf had reacted to her in ways I couldn't control. Her touch was electric, sending sparks flying down my spine and filling me with longing for more. I wanted to lay my head in her lap and beg her for more. Beg her to never stop. It took all of my strength to avoid voicing my desires, afraid of overwhelming her with the intensity of my need.

After our rescue, Katie was whisked away immediately to the hospital for a thorough examination. The doctors assured me she was fine, only suffering a few scratches and bruises. Still, I insisted that she take the week off to recover at home, though every

day without her in the office was torture.

Even after so many days without her presence in the office, her scent still lingered. Both the man and wolf in me yearned for her. Something about this human called to my most primitive instincts to protect and possess her. There was no doubt of it in my mind. She was my mate. The way she embraced my wolf without fear or disgust only reinforced my belief.

But the human side of me was filled with guilt. Katie deserved a safe and normal life. A life free of pack politics and the constant threat from other wolves who dared to challenge me. She deserved an accepting family who welcomed her with open arms instead of the judgmental expectations of my backstabbing family.

"Mr. Song?" Katie's voice pulled me from my brooding. I nearly fell out of my chair as I twisted around to face her. She stood in the doorway with the light behind her giving her an angelic glow. Her chestnut hair was tied in a loose bun. A few tendrils escaped at her temples and framed her face. My fingers clutched the edge of my desk. How I itched to run my fingers through those silky locks and tuck those stray strands behind her ears.

It was her first day back to work. The office, which had felt so drab and lifeless without her, now pulsed with energy. Her presence was like a beam of warm sunlight breaking through a thick cover of gray clouds.

"Yes, Kat--Ms. Clark?" My voice cracked, revealing the storm of emotions brewing inside of me. I cleared my throat and tugged at the collar of my shirt as I struggled to maintain my professionalism.

"Alpine Tech just called. They want to reschedule the meeting for next Monday, here." Her tone was polite and formal, but there was a flicker of something in her eyes, as if she was uncertain what my response would be after all that we had shared.

I forced myself to focus on her words, not the way her scent wrapped around me like an intoxicating caress. "Good. Confirm the meeting."

Before she could respond, my mother's voice cut through the air like a blade. "Reeve, darling!" She ignored Katie as she brushed past her and swept into my office like she owned the place. Sophia trailed behind her like a loyal lapdog.

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"I brought lunch from that divine new French place," she announced. With a flourish, she placed the takeaway bag on my desk. "And Sophia has some fascinating ideas about expanding our reach into the European luxury market."

"We were in the middle of a meeting, Mother," I said through gritted teeth. It was impossible to hold back the warning growl in my voice.

"Nonsense. Your little assistant can handle things by herself." She waved a dismissive hand in Katie's direction, as if she was nothing more than an annoying fly. "Sophia's brother, Denver, just joined the board of XMGH Brands. We simply must discuss collaboration opportunities."

I clenched my jaw so hard I thought my teeth would crack. The wood of the desk groaned under my grip. A sharp crack echoed through the room as a chunk broke off. My gaze flew to Katie, who had gone very still. The usual warmth in her eyes had vanished, replaced by a hollow emptiness that made my chest ache. Her smile, once so bright and genuine, was nowhere to be seen.

The message was clear. Sophia represented everything my family wanted for me. The perfect alliance of pack and business interests. She was the kind of woman a male wolf in my position was expected to mate with. Sophia would strengthen the position of the Song pack in wolf society and bring lucrative connections to Alpha Fang Technologies. There was only one problem. She wasn't Katie.

"I have some emails to send out, Mr. Song. I will leave you to your meeting," Katie said, her voice was quiet, but I detected the slight tremor as she spoke. She refused to meet my eyes as she turned and walked out of the office, her shoulders stiff and her

head held high.

I wanted to call out to her, to beg her to stay, but the words caught in my throat. My wolf howled in protest, a sound of pure anguish that only I could hear. The door clicked shut behind her, and it felt like a part of me had been severed.

"At least the little urchin knows when she's not wanted," my mother muttered, oblivious to the pain twisting my insides. "Now, Reeve, Sophia and I think you should arrange a lunch meeting with Denver. How about next Saturday?"

As my mother blathered on, Sophia began unpacking the takeaway containers on my desk. The rich aromas of overpriced French food filled the room. Despite the appetizing smells, the food might as well have been chalk for all I cared. My stomach churned, a heavy weight settling in my gut. The only thing I wanted was on the other side of my office door, and I could sense her slipping further and further out of my grasp.

Lunch was an exercise in restraint. Mother dominated conversation, her words a carefully crafted blend of praise for Sophia and not-so-subtle hints about the benefits of aligning with the Roberts family. Sophia played her part perfectly. She was all calculated smiles and flattery. Each time she deliberately touched my arm, I wanted to swipe at her with my claws. My wolf snarled, disgusted by her brazenness.

I barely tasted any of the food, each bite going down my throat like a chunk of cardboard. All of my senses strained to track Katie. I monitored her scent, the faint sound of her heartbeat, the noises she made as she worked at her desk. The distance between us grew with each passing minute. I hated myself for lacking the courage to bridge it.

My uninvited guests stayed until the end of the workday. My mother invited Sophia over to our family estate for dinner, but I had had enough. My patience was already

hanging by a thread. I used the excuse of catching up on the Alpine Tech deal to brush them off.

When I finally emerged from my office, Katie was still sitting at her desk. I had survived the surprise attack sprung by my mother, but it looked like Katie had become collateral damage. She looked so sad and vulnerable. Her fingers flew across the keyboard as she stared steadily at the screen and avoided meeting my eyes. The sight of her like that, so withdrawn and distant, made my chest ache.

"Don't mind my mother," I said gruffly. "She has an annoying habit of meddling in my life and setting me up with women I have no interest in."

The steady click-clack of her typing did not stop, but I saw the way her eyes flinched and the way her shoulders tensed. "Your personal life is none of my concern, Mr. Song. I am just finishing a report before I leave."

Mr. Song. The formality in her voice was like a dagger to my heart. Not even a battle with another alpha wolf could hurt me as much the words out of this human woman's mouth. All of the connections we had made over the past weeks crumbled to dust in just one afternoon.

My wolf roared in protest. The memory of her acceptance and her wonder when we were in that cabin flooded my mind. I would give anything to get that back.

"I wanted to talk about what happened on the Paradise Peaks trip," I said, my voice low and cautious.

She stopped typing. Her fingers hovering over the keys. For a moment, she didn't move, didn't breathe. Then, she turned to face me, her eyes cold and sharp. "There's nothing to discuss. What happened between us was--"

"Amazing," I finished. The words rushed out from my mouth before I could stop myself. "Katie Clark, you are everything I have ever wanted in a partner. The way you showed no hesitation and accepted my wolf is a memory I will cherish forever."

Our eyes met, and for a moment, it was as if we were back in that tiny cabin. Her eyes were fearless and glistened with unshed tears. "I will remember that moment too, Reeve. Thank you for trusting me with your secret."

She was so close, so achingly close. My wolf raged. Take her. Taste her. Mark her. But I held back, afraid of pushing her too far, too fast. "I know I have not proven myself worthy of your trust," I said, my voice trembling with the weight of my emotions. "But now that I have found you, I will show you that we are meant to be together."

Her lips fell open in surprise, her breath coming out in a hitch. Over the hum of the computer, I could hear her heartbeat quicken. Her sweet scent deepened, and the aroma of desire and nervousness filled the air.

The cleaning staff's cart rattled in the hallway, breaking the spell. The enormity of what I had just admitted hit me all at once. She was still frozen in place, her eyes wide as she processed my words.

"It's late, Ms. Clark. My driver will be waiting downstairs to take you back to your apartment. Goodnight," I said stiffly before I retreated to my office with my tail between my legs.

Closing the door behind me like a shield, I pressed my overheated forehead against its cool surface. I didn't want to wait for her reaction. No, I couldn't handle the possibility of her rejection. There was no use denying it any longer. Katie was my mate. The one woman I was fated to give my life and heart to.

Only one question remained. Did she even want what I had to offer her?

Chapter 6

KATIE

"Have dinner with me."

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I nearly dropped my tablet. Reeve stood in front of my desk, his usual intimidating presence softened by something almost hesitant in the way he held himself. His eyes flickered with vulnerability. After three days of distance and avoiding each other, his sudden invitation sent my heart racing.

"What?" The word tumbled out of my mouth before I could stop it. Not my most intelligent response, but I was still in shock. What had changed all of a sudden? And why?

"Dinner. Tonight." He ran a hand through his dark hair, disheveling its perfect style. The gesture made him seem like a normal man instead of the untouchable billionaire CEO he was. "Unless you have plans?"

"No plans," I managed, trying to ignore how my pulse jumped when his gaze met mine. Heat crept up my neck under his examination. "Just surprised."

His lips twitched. "I do occasionally eat, Katie."

"In restaurants? I assumed you survived on coffee and the souls of terrified employees."

The corners of his lips lifted into an actual smile. My breath caught in my throat, taken aback by the boyish grin. Reeve was usually handsome in an intense and brooding way, but when he smiled, he was utterly devastating.

Satisfied that he had accomplished his goal, Reeve rapped his knuckles on my desk. "I'll pick you up at your place at seven o'clock," he said. "Wear something warm."

I gaped at him as he retreated to his office. My mind spun with possibilities. Warm? What did that even mean? Frantically, I pulled my phone out of my desk drawer and fired off a text to Lacey.

Me: "He asked me to dinner. Told me to wear something warm."

Lacey's response came immediately.

Lacey: "He's taking you to Elysium. It's this over the top fancy schmancy place at the top of National Tower. Blake took me there for dinner once. The view of the harbor is insane."

My eyes widened. Elysium was one of those places that I had only read about in glossy magazines. It was the kind of place I never imagined I would set foot in.

Me: "How do you know that's where he's taking me?"

Lacey: "Because that's where all the big-shot businessmen here take their dates to impress them. Plus, you'll be so high up that you're among the clouds. There's a walk-out sky deck, which is why he asked you to wear something warm."

Me: "What should I wear?"

Lacey: "Go home and find that emerald green dress you helped me pick out last month. Make sure you put your hair up so it doesn't get tangled from the wind. Wear that thick shawl you have in the back of your closet. And bring makeup for touch-ups. You'll need it after the helicopter ride."

Me: "The WHAT? You can't be serious."

But at seven exactly, I found myself sliding into the backseat of Reeve's car. This

time, there was a driver, so Reeve was sitting in the backseat next to me. I looked at him in confusion as the driver took us back to Alpha Fang. My unvoiced question was answered when we stopped in front of the building's private elevator. Moments later, we emerged on the building's helipad. I said a silent thanks to Lacey for her warning and clutched the shawl around my shoulders. The winter wind whipped around us, and Reeve wrapped his arms around me to shield me from the cold arctic air. My hands trembled slightly as he helped me into the passenger seat, his touch lingering on my waist. A shiver ran down my spine, but it had nothing to do with the cold weather.

"Is this yours?" I asked, my voice barely audible over the roar of the helicopter's blades.

"The company's. I am but a cog in the corporate machine." His voice rumbled pleasantly in the enclosed space. He flashed me a wide grin, once again giving me a glimpse of the mischievous side of him. The man who hid underneath the CEO's crisp suits and the wolf's fanged snarls. "But I fly it whenever I can. There's nothing like seeing the city from above."

The flight was magical. City lights sparkled below us like a sea of stars as far as the eye could see. Reeve proved surprisingly talkative, his voice animated as he explained the intricacies of aviation to me. His genuine enthusiasm was infectious, and it made him seem younger and more approachable. By the time we landed on National Tower's rooftop pad, I was completely charmed.

Elysium lived up to its name. Glass walls offered panoramic views of the harbor, while subtle lighting created an intimate atmosphere. The maître d' led us to a corner table that somehow felt both private and prestigious. Several diners nodded to Reeve as we passed by. Whether it was because they were fellow wolf shifters, or simply in awe of his reputation, I wasn't sure.

After we placed our orders, I took the time to appreciate the view. "This is incredible," I breathed, taking in the glittering cityscape. "Thank you for bringing me here."

His expression softened. "You've earned it. The way you've handled crisis after crisis was amazing." He paused, something dark flickering across his face. "I should have told my mother off for the way she treated you."

I shook my head. "It's fine. She's your mother, Reeve. And I get that Sophia can cause a lot of trouble for you."

"She's not who I want." His voice was low, but the intensity of his words sent a jolt through me. Our eyes met across the candlelit table, and the tension of what was unsaid crackled between us.

"Reeve? Darling, is that you? It's been so long since we've seen each other."

The silky voice shattered the moment like glass. A stunning woman in a red dress approached our table with another equally glamorous woman beside her. Both of them moved with the grace of a predator, which I now recognized as the stealth of a she-wolf. Not even the most expensive silks could mask the nature of their beasts.

Reeve went rigid, his face draining of color. His distress hit me like a punch. He was both in pain and infuriated. The relaxed vulnerable bit of Reeve I saw in the helicopter was replaced by the stone cold mask he wore so well.

"Celeste," he said flatly. "What an unwelcome surprise."

My eyes darted between the two of them, trying to piece together the history that hung heavy in the air. While Reeve stared ahead at the table like he had seen a ghost, Celeste looked like the cat who swallowed the canary. What was the connection between them?

"Aren't you going to introduce us to your little friend?" she purred. Celeste's smile was pure venom. Her companion giggled mockingly. Both women loomed over our table with practiced intimidation. "How sweet to see you branching out socially."

"This is Ms. Clark, my assistant." Reeve's voice had gone cold and formal, all earlier warmth evaporating. "Ms. Clark, Celeste Blackwolf and Rachel Lightblood."

Whoever this woman was, it was clear that her presence caused Reeve pain. And for that, I hated her guts. I forced out a polite smile even though all I wanted to do was slap that smug grin off of her face. "Lovely to meet you both."

"How quaint." Celeste's perfect nose wrinkled as she deliberately scented the air. "Though I suppose someone has to handle the grunt work. Still, darling, dining with the help? What would Victoria say?"

Reeve tensed, the muscle in his jaw jumping like he had been shocked. Before he could respond, I smiled sweetly up at Celeste. "I'm sure she'd say it's none of your business. After all, it appears you are no longer a close part of the Song family."

Rachel gasped. Celeste's eyes flashed with fury, and a low growl escaped her throat.

For a moment, I thought she was going to lunge across the table and take a swipe at me with her crimson tipped claws.

Silence descended across the dining room as the patrons waited to see what kind of drama was about to unfold.

"You let your human speak to me that way?" Celeste demanded, her perfect composure cracking to reveal the predator beneath.

"Ms. Clark speaks for herself. If you'll excuse us, we're trying to have dinner."

Reeve ignored her, turning his attention back to me. He topped off both our glasses with wine as if Celeste and Rachel were nothing more than pests.

The two women left after they failed to provoke a response out of Reeve, but the damage was already done. Reeve retreated behind his cold mask and responded to my attempts at conversation with one-word answers through the meal. Tight lines emerged around his mouth and forehead. The candlelight that had seemed warm and romantic earlier now cast harsh shadows across his face.

Later, back in the helicopter, I finally broke the heavy silence. The city lights below seemed dimmer now, the magic of our earlier flight lost to old wounds. "She hurt you badly."

He didn't respond for so long that I thought he wasn't going to answer me. When he finally spoke, his voice was quiet, almost broken. "Valentine's Day. Three years ago. She told me she'd found her true mate in Alexander Blackwolf. I was not wolf enough nor man enough for her." He shot me a sad look. "She was right. I don't know how to be what anyone needs."

"Hey." I reached out, touching his arm gently. His muscles were tense beneath my

fingers. "She was wrong. You're everything I want, and more." I finally admitted the truth to myself, that I was falling in love with my grumpy wolf shifter boss.

He looked at me then. For a moment, I thought I had broken through those carefully constructed walls around his heart. He seemed to lean toward me for comfort, but then he turned away as we landed. The walls slammed back into place, higher and thicker than ever.

When we landed, he helped me out of the helicopter, but there was a stiffness to his touch. "Goodnight, Katie," he said once we were back on solid ground. "Thank you for your company."

His shoulders were rigid and bunched as he turned and walked away. I watched him go, my own heart aching with the need to heal his. Celeste might have broken him on Valentine's Day, but I was determined to help him trust again.

Even if it meant risking my own heart in the process.

Chapter 7

REEVE

My wolf was a feral beast, clawing at the edges of my sanity, tearing me apart from the inside.

It had been three days since the disaster with Celeste. Three days of Katie's scent driving me to the brink of madness. Every time she walked past my door, I had to stop myself from lunging at her and claiming her. There was nothing I wanted more than to spread her across my desk and pleasure her until she was the one howling out her desire.

She was mine. My mate. My home. My heart.

But if I gave into my craving for her, then everything would change. My pack's expectations of me, the responsibility to preserve our pure bloodline, all of it hung over my head like a knife.

The rest of the Song pack was never going to accept her. They would see her as a weakness, a stain on our legacy. And yet, every fiber of my being screamed for her.

The entire office became a minefield of tension. Employees scattered like frightened mice whenever I passed by. Not even Sophia dared to pull her usual shenanigans. Only Katie seemed like she wasn't afraid of me, maintaining her perfect professional courtesy. She didn't cower. Didn't run away.

And that only made it harder.

It was a lie, of course. Her racing pulse gave her away every time.

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"The Morrison contract needs your signature," she said from my office doorway, her voice calm and steady despite the flutter of her heartbeat.

"Leave it," I growled. Her scent flooded my senses, honey sweetness now tinged with hurt. Because of me. Because I was hiding behind my desk, trapped in a cage of my own making, instead of claiming what was mine.

She placed the contract down on my desk and retreated. I tracked every step, zeroing in on the catch in her breath and the tremor in her hands. Why was I such a coward? Why was I letting family duty and fear dictate my life?

Hours passed in a haze of paperwork and longing. The office emptied for lunch, leaving me alone with my thoughts and Katie's presence. Through the door, I heard her at her desk. There was some shuffling, and then the ringing of a phone call. My enhanced hearing picked up every word, even though I should have given her privacy.

"Gladys? It's Katie Clark. I need to discuss my position at Alpha Fang."

My blood ran cold. Everything seemed to stand still in that moment.

"I know you placed me here for a reason." Her voice trembled as she spoke. "But I can't do it anymore. I think I need to resign."

No.

This couldn't be happening. The wolf roared. Primal rage turned my vision red,

desperation making my blood pound. I was going to lose her forever. Every instinct screamed at me to get up and stop her before it was too late.

I jumped to my feet, my chair crashing to the floor behind me. In an instant, I was at the door, almost ripping it off its hinges. My hand slammed against the door frame hard enough to make the walls shake.

Katie looked up at me, her eyes wide in shock and shimmering with unshed tears.

"End the call, Katie," I commanded.

She stood slowly, clinging her phone to her chest like it was a piece of armor. "Reeve--"

"Don't leave me," I pleaded.

"Why should I stay?" Her voice cracked and a tear slipped down her cheek. "I can't take it any more. Every time I think I've gotten through to you, you keep pushing me away. I can't keep doing this."

"Because you're my mate." Finally saying it aloud shattered something in my chest. "Because I knew the moment I met you. Because I've been a stupid fool for fighting it ever since. Because I'm terrified of wanting you as much as I do."

She set her phone down on her desk. "I don't understand. Why is being with me so terrifying for you?"

I crossed the space between us in three strides. Cupping her face in my hands, my thumbs brushed away her tears. "You're human, Katie. Too fragile and defenseless for my world, for my family. They will disown me and try to destroy you. Celeste was right. I wasn't enough for her because I wasn't willing to give myself completely.

But with you, I'm ready to risk everything because I can't lose you."

Her hand came up to rest just above my heart. The heat of her touch was like a brand searing my skin through the fabric.

"You don't have to. Stop fighting your heart, Reeve. Stop letting your family control your life."

Something inside me snapped. All of my careful control, all of my fears and doubts, shattered in an instant.

I kissed her like a man possessed. She melted into me, a soft mewl of delight escaping her as her fingers tangled in my hair. Placing my hands around her waist, I pulled her to me. Her body pressed against mine, her heat igniting a fire that threatened to consume us both. I gave her lip a light nip before soothing the love-bite with my lips and tongue.

Mine, my wolf howled. Forever.

The thick and heady scent of her arousal filled the air, wrapping its heady grip around my head. I was drunk on her.

My control snapped. In a single motion, I tightened my grip and lifted her onto her desk. Instinctively, she wrapped her legs around my waist, like we had already done this hundreds of times. The heat of her core was molten as she started to grind up and down on my throbbing bulge, taunting me and driving me wild.

My mate was a fucking tease.

A growl rumbled deep in my chest which made her giggle in delight. The tinkling sound of joy sent a jolt of pleasure straight to my cock. Wrapping my arms around

my precious cargo, I lifted her effortlessly and carried her back to my office. The door slammed behind us, the lock clicking into place.

I was going to take my time savoring every inch of my mate.

Striding across the room with a frantic urgency, I held onto her with one arm and swept my desk clean. Pens and papers clattered to the floor. My computer monitor landed with a crash.

"Reeve!" Katie gasped.

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"I have billions, remember? I can replace it a million times over."

I set her on top of my desk and stepped back. Her chest heaved as she leaned back on her elbows, the fabric of her button-up blouse straining to keep her breasts concealed. My teasing nips had made her lips crimson and swollen. A pink flush crept up her neck to her cheeks. At that moment, I didn't know if I wanted her spread-eagle across my desk, or if I wanted to bend her over the edge and smack her ass until she begged me to fuck her.

My hands tugged at the collar of my shirt and undid the top two buttons. "Last chance, Katie. There's no going back once I claim all of you as mine. I'm going to warn you, I'm not a gentle lover."

She gulped. Her eyes wide. There was shock and fear in them, but also a hint of curiosity. "I can take it. Do it, Reeve. Make me yours."

Thankfully, she wore a knee length skirt today, which made things a lot easier for me. With one hand, I pushed her back against my desk and ripped off her flimsy top. She gasped as the fabric tore with a loud rip and buttons flew across the room. Her ample breasts were barely contained in a black lace bra, which my claws rendered into scraps too. My hands slipped up her thighs, pushing her skirt up to her hips, and yanked off her panties.

"Reeve!" Katie shouted. She clung to the tattered remains of her clothes to her chest, but before she could protest any further, I dropped to my knees and yanked her bottom to the edge of my desk. I may be an ass in the office, but I was not a selfish lover.

I slid my tongue along her folds, licking her from top to bottom. My wolf purred when I discovered that she tasted just as sweet as she smelled. Taking her clit in my lips, I sucked her until her little nub stood hard and swollen. While I worked her with my mouth, I reached up to fondle her soft breasts, teasing her nipples into diamond peaks.

Her fingers wrapped around my head, pulling me closer to her core as she rocked her hips against my face. She twisted and writhed on my desk, letting out increasingly loud sobs as she sought her pleasure. I pierced her channel with my tongue, diving in as deep as possible as I savored her juices.

Soon. I was going to claim her there. For now, I returned my attention to her clit, using my lips and tongue to work her at a savage rhythm. I traced my fingers through her labia before plunging two fingers into her channel.

Katie cried out as I started pumping my fingers in and out of her in time with each stroke of my tongue. Faster and faster, I pushed her higher. With a final sob, her muscles clenched around my hand, fluttering as she orgasmed. I kept up the pressure, rubbing the sensitive spot inside of her as I continued to lick at her clit. Her back arched, and her thighs squeezed around my ears until I thought she was going to pop my head like a grape.

When she finally came back down, her legs fell limply to the side. I crawled upright and admired the mess I had created. Her hair was wild and unruly spread out across the desk, her mouth fell open as she panted for air, and her breasts jiggled with each heaving breath.

While she recovered, I trailed my wet fingers down her folds, gathering her dew before I circled around her back hole.

Katie lifted her head and began to crawl back on her elbows. A warning growl

rumbled in my chest before I gave her a quick nip on her inner thigh.

"Be still or I'm going to have to punish you." Her breath hitched in a way that revealed she wasn't opposed to a bit of pain. I filed that information away for the future. "I told you I was going to have all of you." My fingertips pushed against her little pucker.

She clenched her muscles, blocking my entrance, but she laid her head back down and let out a moan. Slowly, I massaged her tight hole, until I finally felt it soften and give way. Bit by bit, I worked my fingers inside of her ass. Soon her muscles were clenching and fluttering around my invading digits.

She was so fucking tight and hot. All I wanted to do was stretch her ass with my cock and fill her with my cum until it dripped out of her. Reaching down, I squeezed my shaft in my fist. No, I couldn't fuck her like that. Not yet, anyway.

From her shocked reaction at my first touch, Katie was still untried when it came to having anything in her butt. I had to ease her into this. Withdrawing my fingers, I walked around to the other side of my desk and pulled out the emerald studded silver plug and a bottle of lube.

She tried to sit up, but I was back on her in a flash.

"No," I warned. "Keep that pretty pussy open for me." With one hand, I pushed her back onto the desk and lifted her hips until her legs were pressed against her chest. After the plug was generously coated, I squirted the lube onto her pucker and worked it in with the tip of the plug. It was smooth and tapered at the tip, but the hilt was flared and round before ending in a flat flared base.

I applied pressure, pushing the plug into her. "You aren't ready to take me in your ass yet, but this will get you used to having your ass filled."

"Oh, Reeve." Her eyes were clenched shut and she bit her bottom lip as she let out a hiss. It was a tight fit, but I continued to apply pressure and work the plug into her. I kept an eye on her expressions as I stretched her, and then finally, the flared bulge popped past her sphincter and the plug slid in to the base.

"How does that feel?"

Katie moaned sucked in a deep breath. Her hips wiggled as she tried to find a comfortable position and ease the pressure in her ass. "It feels so big, but I need--"

The jewels in the base glittered at me as she moved. A wicked image filled my mind. I brought my open palm down and smacked the shimmering plug.

Her eyes popped open in surprise as she let out a yelp.

She was ready. I made quick work of shucking off my clothes. My hands clenched her thighs, pulling her to the edge of my desk. I was so hard, my balls were going to burst if I didn't come inside of her soon. A drop of precum already welled at the crown cock and I traced the outline of her sex with it, marking her.

"Reeve, please. Stop teasing," she keened.

"As my mate commands," I grunted. With a hard buck, I shoved my throbbing cock into her pussy. She slid across the desk from the impact, and I reached up to grab her by the nape to pin her in place. Her heat rippled around my shaft like a burning embrace. It was the first time that both my wolf and human halves felt this connected to another soul.

Her cries of pleasure bounced off the walls of the office as I thrust into her over and over again. Each time I plunged into her tight channel, I could feel the bumps of the plug rubbing against my shaft. The pleasure built inside of my balls until I felt the

familiar swelling in the base of my shaft.

Katie stared at me wide eyed. "Reeve, what's happening?" she moaned.

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"That's it. Take it. You're going to take every last drop I give you." I was going to fill her with my seed and keep her stopped up until it overflowed out of her pussy past my shaft. She was going to be mine forever.

She gasped. "I'm not on the pill. You have to pull out."

"Too late, babe."

The pressure of the plug combined with my swollen shaft stretched her to the limit. Her tight sex clamped down as I rutted her hard and fast. This was primal and savage. Mating was the most primitive urge of all.

My name fell from her lips like a mantra as I drove her toward her climax.

I zeroed in on her pulse and lunged, clamping my teeth around her neck.

"Mine," I growled as my sack grew tight. I released into her, plunging balls deep into her and staying there. As she came, her muscles spasmed and milked my seed from my shaft as I flooded her with my cum. Her back arched off of the desk, her entire body seizing like a creature possessed.

It went on forever, her sex draining me of cum until finally, she went limp and the caress of her pussy became weak tremors. Nestling my face against her neck, I placed a soft kiss on my mark. Realization dawned on me that this was what it was going to be like for the rest of our lives. She was mine at last. Happiness swelled in my chest.

Finally, my shaft deflated and we were able to detach. I grabbed the base of the plug

and removed it slowly and gently. She let out a wince as the bulge popped out.

Wrapping my arms around her, I carried her over to the leather couch and went to the mini-bar to dampen a hand towel. After we were cleaned up, I joined her on the couch and gathered her on top of my chest. Our mating had sapped all of her energy, and she made happy noises as she placed her head over my heart and closed her eyes.

Claiming my mate was more than I had ever dreamed of. A part of me still wasn't convinced it was real, or that it could last.

Chapter 8

KATIE

The Song family mansion loomed against the twilight sky like something from a Gothic novel. Its dark weathered stone made an intimidating impression and the ornate towers and spires reached toward the clouds like claws. It was a relic from another time, an era of robber barons and gilded age wealth. Bare trees lined the circular drive, their gnarled branches creating strange shadows in the gathering darkness. Everything about this place was screaming at me to stay away. I did not belong here.

Reeve's hand was warm and steady as he helped me out of the car, his touch lingering protectively at my waist. The mate bond hummed between us, still new and fragile, yet as natural as the beat of my own heart. It was only a week after we mated and already I couldn't imagine life without this connection. His presence was a balm to my frayed nerves, but even his nearness couldn't fully quell the unease coiling in my stomach.

"We don't have to do this," Reeve murmured. "Mother's emergency family dinner can wait." Even though I could feel his anxiety through the bond, he still prioritized my

comfort and safety.

I smoothed my hands over the navy silk of my dress. It was a straight-line dress that had cost a month's rent, but Reeve bought it for me without blinking an eye, as if a four-figure sum was spare change in the bottom of his pocket. The dress was beautiful, elegant, and utterly out of place on someone like me. I felt like an imposter, a girl playing dress-up in a world where I didn't belong. But I straightened my shoulders. Reeve had chosen me, and I had to be the best version of myself. The version who was deserving of being mated to a Song.

I managed a smile that felt braver than I was. "Running won't help. Besides, how bad can it be?"

The answer came as soon as Grayson, the elderly butler, opened the massive front doors. Power rolled out like a wave, suffocating me under its weight, sending shivers up my spine. My breath hitched, and the hairs on my arms stood on end. This wasn't just a home. It was a den of predators, and I was the prey who stumbled into their lair. I was in the presence of old money, older magic, and the wild energy of a house full of wolves.

Grayson led us to a formal parlor where twenty members of the Song family waited. The room was opulent, with high ceilings, crystal chandeliers, and walls lined with portraits of stern-faced ancestors. As soon as Reeve and I stepped past the doorway, all twenty pairs of eyes shifted to me with predatory focus.

Bits of information flowed into my mind through our bond. Not words, but impressions, emotions, and fragments of his memories that gave me a sense of Reeve's relationship to each person in the room, and where everybody stood in his family's complex hierarchy. The younger and lower-ranking members of the pack lingered around the edges of the room, their voices hushed and their heads low. But at the center of the room, seated in ornate throne-like chairs, were the dominant wolves.

And among them was Reeve's mother.

Victoria Song rose from her seat with a calm, deadly grace that was as beautiful as it was terrifying. She wore a simple black dress and a strand of pearls. Her movements were deliberate, each step a reminder of her authority. She was the embodiment of centuries of breeding and tradition, the queen of her domain.

"Reeve. Ms. Clark," she greeted us. Her smile didn't reach her eyes and it resembled a predator baring its teeth in a snarl. "How unexpected to see you accompanying my son."

"Mother." Reeve's hand tightened on my waist, his body growing tense. "You invited us both."

"Did I?" She gestured to the assembled pack members, all beautiful, all powerful, all watching me with varying degrees of horror and fascination. "I merely suggested you bring a guest to tonight's family dinner to discuss some concerning developments regarding the company. I didn't realize you'd bring your assistant."

The way she said "assistant" dripped with judgment. Hushed whispers rippled through the room, punctuated by the occasional warning growl. The words human, disgrace, and bloodline drifted across the room. I lifted my chin higher. The mate bond flooded with Reeve's pride at my defiance. It was a warm, steady presence in my mind.

"Katie is my mate." His voice carried the strength of an alpha wolf making a declaration that made even the strongest wolves step back. Power rolled off him in waves. "She has every right to be here."

"Does she?" A man who could only be Reeve's brother stepped forward. He was younger than Reeve, but unlike the hidden vulnerability that my mate possessed, this

man was all sharp angles and barely contained aggression. Daniel Song had the same dark good looks as Reeve, but where my mate radiated controlled power, his brother's energy felt volatile, a ticking bomb waiting to explode. "Why does she have the right to destroy everything our family built?" His eyes gleamed with malice.

My eyes darted between the three of them in confusion. "What are you talking about?"

Victoria pinned me with her razor-sharp gaze. "Perhaps we should move this discussion to your father's study. You too, Ms. Clark, since you're apparently involved."

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The study felt like stepping back in time. Three walls in the room were lined floor to ceiling with mahogany shelves holding leather-bound books. Centuries of wealth and influence oozed from every antique surface. A massive portrait dominated one wall. A regal looking man with the same dark hair and high cheekbones as Reeve and Daniel. It was Reeve's father, Augustus Song, painted in oils that caught the stern set of his mouth.

Victoria settled behind the massive desk like a queen holding court. "Let me be clear," she said, steepling fingers tipped with perfectly manicured nails. "This attachment cannot continue. The board of directors already has concerns about your leadership, Reeve. If word spreads that you've taken a human mate, then your position in the company will be at risk."

"My personal life is none of their business," he shot back, but I felt his anger simmering through our bond as he sensed the trap closing around us.

"It becomes their business when you control a company built on pack alliances." Daniel straightened his Italian suit, every movement screaming old money and older prejudices. "Or did you forget that your original investors were all wolf shifters?"

A lump formed in my stomach as Victoria pulled out a stack of documents, her movements calculated. "The formation documents are quite clear. If any pack partner objects to company leadership, they can force a vote of no confidence. And I'm afraid several members have already expressed concerns."

"You're blackmailing me?" Reeve's growl rattled the windows, his wolf pushing close to the surface. Pain and rage flooded through our bond. The betrayal cutting deeper

because it came from family. "Using my company as leverage?"

"I'm protecting our legacy." Victoria's eyes flickered with specks of gold, her own wolf rising to meet her son's challenge. "Break the mate bond now, before it fully forms. Marry Sophia Roberts as planned. Or watch everything you've built crumble."

The mere suggestion of breaking the bond sent a searing pain through my chest. My hand flew up to clutch my chest and I let out a gasp. Reeve flinched beside me, his pain mirroring my own.

"This is insane." I found my voice, anger burning hotter than fear. "You'd destroy your own son's happiness for what? Pure bloodlines? Pack politics?"

"You know nothing of our world, human." Daniel's sneer revealed lengthening fangs, his control slipping. "Nothing of our traditions."

"Your traditions are destroying the person you claim to love." I met Victoria's gaze, refusing to back down even as her power pressed against me like a physical weight. "Reeve is brilliant at running this company. He's respected, successful, and honorable. And you'd throw that away because you can't accept that his mate is human?"

"His mate?" Victoria's voice rose to a screech, her composure shattering as she stood. The air itself seemed to bow before her authority. Power crackled around her like lightning bouncing around the room. "You're nothing but a temporary distraction. A passing fancy that threatens generations of careful breeding. You think you can walk into our world and change everything? You're not worthy to be part of this family."

"Mother!" Reeve's booming voice cracked like a whip. "Enough."

But the damage was done. Tears burned behind my eyes as Victoria's words cut deep,

every insecurity I'd ever had about not being good enough for Reeve crashing over me. My pain and fear of losing Reeve reverberated through our bond, mixing with his own pain at his mother's cruelty.

Then Reeve's arm wrapped around my shoulders, his warmth and scent enveloping me. I leaned into him, drawing from the strength and comfort he provided. "You're wrong, Mother. Katie is exactly what our family needs. She brings light to my darkness, joy to my solitude. She makes me better." His chest rumbled against my back. "And if you force me to choose between her and the company? I choose her. Every time."

I held my breath, not really believing what I was hearing, but the mate bond resonated with the truth of his words.

"You'd throw away everything your family has given you? Your birthright?" Daniel demanded. "For her?"

"For love." Reeve's voice softened to something almost gentle. "The way Father should have done, before you forced him to marry for bloodlines instead of the woman his heart wanted."

Victoria went white. "How dare you."

"I found his letters." Reeve's words fell like bombs in the silence. "The ones you hid after his death. I got them out of the house before you could destroy them. There were boxes of letters spanning decades. I know about Caroline, his human mate. The one he gave up to marry you instead. The regret he felt haunted him until the day he died." He straightened, every inch the alpha wolf. "I won't make his mistake. I won't let fear and tradition steal my happiness."

In the portrait above us, Augustus Song's eyes seemed to glow in approval of his

eldest son.

"Then you leave me no choice." Victoria's hands trembled slightly as she pulled out a folder from the stack of documents. She opened it. "After your father's death, Daniel and I control fifty-one percent of the Alpha Fang's shares. As of tomorrow, you're suspended from all duties pending a formal review. Perhaps some time away from the situation will help you reconsider your choices."

My heart shattered, but Reeve just laughed. It was a wild, animalistic sound I'd never heard from him before. "Keep the company. Keep the pack. Keep your precious traditions." He laced his fingers through mine, our pulses pounding in sync. "I choose Katie. I choose love."

We walked out of that mansion together, the weight of generations of expectations falling from Reeve's shoulders. With each step we took, his gait seemed lighter and more carefree, as if he were shedding chains he hadn't realized he wore. His joy and relief flowed through the mate bond, a balm to my bruised heart.

"I'm so sorry," I whispered once we were in the car.

He silenced me with a kiss, long and deep, his love pouring into me through the bond. "You're worth more than any company," he murmured against my lips. "We'll build something new together, something fresh and untainted."

I leaned my forehead against his. "What about your family?"

"You're my family now," he said, his voice firm and unwavering. "You and whatever future we create together. The rest is just details."

Chapter 9

REEVE

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After losing everything, what surprised me the most was how little any of it mattered. The weight of the empire I had walked away from felt like a faint echo now, fading into a distant memory. What remained was something far more profound, something I had never truly allowed myself to believe in until Katie came into my life.

I had transformed one of the spare guest rooms in my house into my new home office. It was a space that bore the unmistakable imprint of my mate's touch. Katie had insisted on filling it with life and soft touches, making it feel warm and inviting. Lush green plants spilled over their pots, and soft throw pillows in various shades of blue and yellow reminded me of her when she wasn't around. It was quite a change from the cold glass and metal of my old office.

Looking back, I realized Alpha Fang was more of a prison than a workplace. My current office was a harmonious mix of modern lines and natural warmth. Katie's signature style was everywhere, from the crocheted throw draped over the back of the couch to the pictures we took of ourselves on our ski trip at Paradise Peaks. This was a sanctuary where the comforting and delicious aromas of coffee and Katie's honey scent made both sides of me feel at home.

Three weeks had passed since I walked away from the Song empire. Three weeks of ignored calls, deflected threats, and the beginnings of a new future built one careful piece at a time. Through our mate bond, I felt Katie before I saw her, her presence lighting up my senses.

She padded into the office barefoot, another plant in a huge pot cradled in her arms. The sight of her in my old Harvard t-shirt, sleep-mussed and perfect, made my wolf surge with possessive joy. Mine, it howled. Forever.

"Blake called again," she said, setting the Monstera on the floor beside my desk with careful hands. The neck of her t-shirt slipped down her shoulder, revealing the silver scar where my wolf had claimed her. A purr rumbled from my chest. "He's pretty insistent about that meeting."

My oldest friend had been relentless in his support of my new venture, even after Victoria tried to pressure him to cut ties. "The Bean Brewing account?" I asked.

"Mmhmm." She adjusted the plant's leaves, her smile turning me into a begging pup. "He says, and I quote, 'Tell that stubborn bastard to stop wallowing and let me give him my business. The fastest-growing coffee chain in the country needs the best consultant to develop a robust online commerce platform'."

My friend's offer was generous, almost too generous. But that was Blake, the angry wolf turned marshmallow-soft since finding his own human mate. His happiness with Lacey had given me hope when my wolf first recognized Katie as mine.

I caught her wrist gently, pulling her into my lap. She came willingly, fitting against me like she'd been designed for it. "I'm not wallowing," I protested, though the words sounded hollow even to me.

"No?" She traced my jaw, sending sparks of pleasure down my spine. "Then why haven't you taken any clients yet? Your reputation is solid. Companies are practically begging to work with you."

Because accepting clients meant this was real. It meant truly stepping away from generations of Song family legacy. It meant admitting that I was no longer the heir to an empire but a man building something entirely his own.

"Stop thinking so loud." She kissed me softly, breaking my spiral. I felt her unwavering faith, her absolute certainty in us. "You're allowed to be happy, Reeve."

You're allowed to build something that's just yours."

But beneath her faith, I caught something else, a fizzy nervousness she tried to hide. She'd been blocking part of the bond all week, the way she did when planning surprises. My wolf stirred, curiosity piqued.

"What are you up to?"

"Nothing!" Her reply was too quick. The rapid thudding of her heart gave her away. "Just thinking about the Bean Brewing proposal. And, you know, future stuff."

I narrowed my eyes, scenting the air. No fear or worry, just that bubbling excitement she couldn't quite suppress. "Katie, what do you have up your sleeves?"

"Don't you have work to do?" She squirmed away, straightening my shirt and tugging the hem down her thighs. "Client calls to return? A business empire to rebuild?"

"You're deflecting."

"And you're paranoid." But her mischievous smile held secrets. She kissed my nose, her lips warm and soft. "I have errands to run. Try to actually answer some emails today?"

She darted away before I could press for answers, leaving me with the ghost of her kiss and the echo of her laughter.

The morning passed in a blur of potential client calls. Katie popped in and out, carrying mysterious packages. Her phone was glued to her ear, and I heard bits of her whispered conversations with Lacey that stopped whenever I got too close. By afternoon, my curiosity was driving both man and wolf crazy.

On her next trip into my office, I pulled her onto my lap. She smiled against my neck. Her fingers played with the hairs at the nape of my neck. "Valentine's Day is next week."

Ah. There it was, the reason for her secret plans and nervous energy. The holiday that had become entwined with betrayal and loss. Until now.

"Katie, you know how I feel about holidays."

"I know you hate it." She pulled back to meet my eyes, determination shining through. "And I know why. But I want, no, I need to show you it can be different. That love doesn't have to hurt."

My heart ached at the pure hope in her voice. Through our bond, I felt her desperate need to heal this wound, to replace pain with joy. "You've already shown me that. Every day since we met."

"Still, let me try?" She traced my lips with gentle fingers. "One chance to give you new memories? Better ones?"

How could I deny her anything when she looked at me like that? "One chance," I agreed, already knowing I'd give her a thousand if she asked. "But no big gestures. No public declarations. Just us."

Her smile could have lit up the whole city. "Just us," she promised, sealing it with a kiss that tasted of forever. "That's all we need."

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She stood up, and as I watched her walk out of the office, for the first time in three years, I looked forward to Valentine's Day.

Because this time, I had real love to celebrate.

Chapter 10

KATIE

It was still early, and I made sure to walk on tiptoes as I made my way down the hall to his office. My bare feet barely made a sound on the polished wooden floor and each step brought me closer to what Lacey had dubbed "Operation Heal Reeve's Heart." The name was so dramatic, it made me roll my eyes every time I thought about it. Today wasn't about grand gestures. It was about understanding, healing, and trust. The kind of trust that had been shattered by others and was now slowly being pieced back together by me, stitch by careful stitch.

Reeve was still sleeping peacefully in our bed, fully unaware of what I had planned for today. My fingers trembled slightly as I reached into my bag and pulled out the crocheted wolf. Weeks of late-night work had gone into this piece, hidden while Reeve focused on rebuilding his consulting business. My fingers turned into gnarled claws from the hours it took to get the details right, the shimmering black yarn that matched his wolf's fur, the proud tilt of his head, the hint of vulnerability in the hand-painted glass eyes that matched what I sometimes glimpsed in my mate when he thought nobody was looking.

I placed the wolf carefully on his desk, arranging it so that it faced the door. There

were no hearts, no red balloons, no flowers. None of the traditional Valentine's Day trappings that would trigger memories of Celeste's betrayal. Instead, there was only a piece of my heart crafted into something he could hold. Something that would remind him of me and my faith in him as he rebuilt his business empire on his own terms.

The note had taken me longer to write than the gift itself. I had gone through dozens of drafts, trying to find words that conveyed my feelings without being overwhelming or saccharine. Finally, I settled on something simple. "Some things are worth trusting again. Happy Valentine's Day, my love."

I placed it beside the wolf, along with a cup of his favorite coffee from Bean Brewing. A tiny detail to remind him that I understood the delicate balance between personal and professional lives. That I could love him fiercely while still respecting his boundaries.

Through our bond, I felt him beginning to stir. Confusion rippled between us as he reached for my side of the bed and found it empty. His consciousness brushed against mine, a silent question. I sent back waves of reassurance and love, hurrying to my own desk on the other side of the room before he could fully wake.

Through the walls, the sounds of him getting ready for the day soon filled the house. The soft padding of his feet on the floor, the rustle of clothes, the rush of water from the tap, the faint hum of his electric razor. His scent preceded his arrival. I kept my eyes fixed on my computer screen, pretending to be absorbed in early morning emails.

He paused at his desk and I heard the catch in his breath when he picked up the crocheted wolf. "Katie." His voice held shades of meaning.

I looked up, aiming for professional composure despite the emotions churning inside of me. "Good morning, Mr. Song. You have a nine o'clock video meeting with Blake

about the Bean Brewing partnership. Would you like me to get the office ready?"

The rest of my carefully planned script vanished as he crossed the room in three long strides. His kiss was firm and tender, tasting of minty toothpaste, gratitude, and healing. When he finally pulled back, his eyes shone with unshed tears. He cradled the crocheted wolf like it was the most precious thing he had ever held.

"How did you know exactly what I needed?"

I reached up to touch his cheek, feeling the faint stubble beneath my fingers and the warmth of his love through our bond. "Because I love you," I said softly. "The real you, not the billionaire CEO or the wolf shifter or the Song heir. Just you." I smiled. "And real love means understanding what hurts, what heals, and how to bridge the gap between them."

"I've spent three years dreading this day," he admitted. He set the wolf carefully on my desk, right next to the framed photo of us at Paradise Peaks. "I can't believe I let one moment of betrayal poison everything about love and trust. I almost lost you because I was too stubborn to open my heart." He caught my hand, pressing a kiss to my palm. "But you make me want to believe again."

"Then believe," I said, my voice steady despite the tears threatening to spill over. "Believe in us."

The computer on his desk chimed, announcing that Blake had connected to the virtual meeting room. Reeve growled softly at the interruption, but I just laughed and straightened his collar.

"Later," I said, sealing it with a quick kiss. "We have all the time in the world."

His smile, which made his eyes crinkle at the corners, warmed me better than any

Valentine's chocolate. "Later," he agreed, his voice dripping with dark promise.

My thighs clenched together in anticipation as a rush of heat flooded my core.

"And Katie? Thank you. For understanding."

The day passed in a blur of meetings and emails. Every time Reeve opened his drawer, happiness pulsed through our bond. Whenever our eyes met across the room, we shared a secret joy.

As night fell, Reeve made a show of stretching his shoulders before he got up from his desk.

I eyed him warily. "What are you planning?"

"Nothing." But his happiness leaked through our connection, matching the barely contained smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "Can't a man just want to spend time with his mate? Oh, Katie? Wear something warm. We're going out tonight."

I raised an eyebrow, recognizing my own earlier deflections. "Now who's being mysterious?"

He just grinned, looking younger and freer than I'd ever seen him. The transformation from this morning's tentative healing to tonight's quiet joy made my heart swell.

"Reeve?" I asked as he steered the car toward the mountains instead of heading into the city.

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"Trust me?" He caught my hand, pressing a kiss to my knuckles without taking his eyes off the winding road.

I smiled softly. "Always."

Paradise Peaks emerged from the gathering darkness like a fairy tale, tall snowcapped mountains and lush pine forests welcoming us. But Reeve drove past the downtown area and past the Hughes Hotel. Instead, he followed a private road that curved higher and higher up toward the summit. When we finally stopped, the town of Paradise Peaks and further away, the city lights of Huntington Harbor spread out below us like shimmering diamonds on black velvet.

He helped me from the car, then put his hands over my eyes. "Close your eyes," he murmured. I felt him move around behind me, his warmth seeping through my coat. Without sight, all I could rely on was my sense of smell and hearing as he guided me. The air was crisp and cool, with a trace of pine, and the snow crunched beneath our boots.

"Okay. Open them."

The scene stole my breath. In front of me, was a small cabin perched on the mountainside, windows glowing with warm light. Through the glass, I glimpsed a cozy interior with a crackling fire and what looked like a nest of blankets and pillows. It was a less dangerous and cozier version of the cabin we stayed in after our car accident.

"I remember you saying you missed seeing the stars, like from your hometown,"

Reeve said softly. He slid his arms around my waist and rested his chin in the crook of my neck. "Light pollution in the city makes it impossible. But up here, we can see everything." He gestured to the crystal-clear sky above us, where stars crowded the sky and cast a glow onto the snow-covered ground.

We were both giddy as he led me inside. The cabin was small but perfect, all warm woods and plush textures. A low table held covered dishes that smelled amazing, and music played softly from hidden speakers.

"When did you do all this?"

"I had help." He smiled, shrugging off his coat. "Turns out Lacey is quite the romantic conspirator. She helped set everything up while we were busy at the office."

"That little scamp. I'm going to grill her for details later." It seemed like Lacey was a double agent when it came to Operation Heal Reeve's Heart. I turned in his arms, overwhelmed by the thoughtfulness of it all. "And here I thought I was the only one planning surprises today."

"You taught me it's okay to celebrate love again." He touched the mate mark on my neck, sending shivers down my spine. "That Valentine's Day doesn't have to mean grand gestures or public declarations. Just us, being real with each other."

"Happy Valentine's Day," I whispered against his lips.

"Happy Valentine's Day, my love."

Epilogue

KATIE

ONE YEAR LATER

Carefully, I arranged this year's Valentine's gift. The three crocheted wolves, two large and one tiny, felt weighted with promise as I positioned them on his desk. Reeve was still at home, unaware of the surprise waiting for him. I'd sent him back on a pretext, claiming I'd forgotten the tablet in our home office. My poor, unsuspecting mate had no idea how our lives were about to change.

The past year had transformed us both in ways I never expected. Love had softened Reeve's sharp edges while strengthening his core. His consulting firm had flourished, built on genuine relationships rather than pack politics. We'd outgrown our home office, hiring more staff and moving to a proper space downtown.

My hand drifted to my stomach, still flat, still hiding the secret I'd carried for weeks. Beneath my palm, a tiny spark of life pulsed, a quiet miracle growing inside me. I'd suspected for a while, but I'd kept it close, shielding the truth from Reeve until today. This was the ultimate Valentine's gift, much more precious than any crocheted creation. It was the beginning of the next chapter of our lives.

The elevator's familiardingechoed through the office, pulling me from my thoughts. My heart leapt into my throat, pounding in time with the footsteps that grew louder as he approached. Through our bond, I felt his curiosity, his anticipation. He knew me too well, knew I had something planned today.

"Katie?" His voice was warm, laced with a hint of amusement as he stepped into the room. His eyes fell on the three wolves, and for a moment, he just stared, his brow furrowing in confusion. "What's all this?"

The moment he understood was etched into my memory. Sharp and vivid, like a photograph I'd carry forever. His hands shook as he picked up the tiny wolf, his eyes widening as they met mine.

"Are you really?" he whispered, his voice cracking under the weight of emotion.

I nodded, happy tears spilling over as a smile broke across my face. "Eight weeks. I wanted to wait until today to tell you."

The sound that escaped him was something between a laugh and a sob. He swept me into his arms, lifting me off the ground and spinning me gently, as though I were something fragile. When he set me back down, his hands cradled my face, his thumbs brushing away my tears.

"A baby." His voice cracked. "Our baby."

"Our family," I corrected, placing his hand over my stomach. "The three of us."

I didn't need the bond to feel the pure love and protectiveness that radiated off him in waves.

"Thank you." He pressed his forehead to mine, his breath warm against my skin. "For giving me everything I never knew I needed. A mate. A family. A reason to love again."

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I smiled, remembering how far we'd come. "Some things are worth trusting again," I quoted from last year's note. "And you've proven that every day since."

SIX YEARS LATER

"Daddy! Wake up! It's Valentine's Day!"

The sound of tiny feet pounding against the hardwood floor was followed by the sudden weight of our four-year-old daughter, Luna, launching herself onto the bed. Her tawny hair was a wild mess, a bird's nest of curls that bounced with every movement. The wolf pup in her gave her a supernatural energy and speed compared to normal children. She almost shot up to the ceiling as she jumped on the bed. Behind her, two-year-old Emery toddled determinedly forward, clutching a slightly crushed cut out of a paper heart in his chubby hands. His face was a picture of concentration, his little brow furrowed as he focused on not falling over.

Reeve caught them both, growling playfully as he pulled them close. I sat up and rested against the headboard. A laughed bubbled out of my throat as he rough-housed with the children. His heart overflowed with love for our little pack. His wolf basked in the contentment of family, so different from the lonely alpha I first met years ago.

"What's this?" He examined Emery's crumpled creation with exaggerated seriousness. "Did you make this yourself, son?"

"Mommy helped!" Emery beamed. "Happy Vala-times!" His words were still soft and sweet, not quite fully formed.

"Valentine's," Luna corrected primly, ever the big sister. Like her father, she strived for perfection in everything. She produced her own gift, a carefully crocheted heart that showed hours of patient practice. "I made this all by myself!"

Reeve's face beamed with pride as he took the heart. His fingers traced each neat stitch. I'd taught her the basics of crochet last month, and she'd thrown herself into learning with the same determination she inherited from her father. She wouldn't rest until she'd mastered it, just like him.

"Mommy has the best surprise," Luna stage-whispered. "Right, Mommy?" Her eyes sparkled with mischief as she waited for me to reveal the big secret I held for weeks.

I touched my slightly rounded stomach, feeling our third child's steady presence. "That's right, baby. Should we tell Daddy now?"

Reeve's head snapped up. His eyes darting to the hand on my stomach. "Katie?"

Luna and Emery bounced with barely contained excitement as I retrieved this year's crocheted family from my nightstand, four wolves now. I placed them gently in his hands, watching as amazement filled his eyes.

"Happy Valentine's Day," I whispered.

His kiss was gentle but fierce, pouring all his love through our bond. The children giggled and made exaggerated kissy sounds, but their joy in the news was clear.

"I'm going to have a sister!" Luna cheered.

"Nu-uh, a bwother," Emery retorted.

Later, I watched my family demolish heart-shaped pancakes around our kitchen island. I marveled at how perfectly everything had fallen into place. Our home

hummed with life and laughter. It was so different from the cold formality of the Song pack house. Through the windows, I could see the garden where Luna practiced her jumping and dashing skills under Reeve's patient guidance. She wouldn't shift until she reached her teenage years, but her father was already preparing her for the change.

Our lives were going to keep changing, but whatever came next, we'd face it together, not just as mates, but as a family.