



His Mate's Curves

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Description: Andreas Barret is a devoted leader. A pack member, who has just earned his rank as leader, he's eager to protect his territory and excel in everything he does. Just as eager, Andreas hopes to find a mate to rule at his side with equal passion and devotion. But, an evening's mistake risks the one woman who is worth it all leaving Andreas uncertain if he's truly screwed himself at gaining the one thing he yearns for most. Darya, being a countess, she has finally found herself seated in a position of importance upon the counsel of her mother's pack. Now, an alpha female in her own right, Darya is exquisitely beautiful but has a tongue with a sharpness that surprises all whom come across her. With her heart set on Andreas Barret, leader of the Jade Pack, Darya's anger erupts once she spots him lip-locking Hanalei Kelnor, a mongrel half-breed who is known for acquiring fleas.

Total Pages (Source): 11

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

Chapter One

Andreas circled the small rabbit, watching Lukas's every move opposite him. They gave each other a slight nod, and Andreas quickly pounced on the frightened creature. Together, they tore it apart, sharing in the delicious snack.

"Andreas, don't you think you'll become an alpha someday?"

He thought about that as he picked a bone out of his tooth. "I don't think so... there are so many who are stronger and faster than me."

"You might not be the fastest or the strongest," Lukas shook his head, "But you're the wisest and a natural leader. The mightiest, smartest hunter I know, the best in the pack."

Andreas looked at him with disbelief, "You've got to be kidding. There's no way I could be that good."

"You'll see someday. You'll see," he said as he nudged his best friend.

The two were inseparable, best of friends, always hunting together. They stayed together for years, in the same pack, the Jade Pack. One of the largest and mightiest packs there is. They used to be one of the first known packs in America. Now, Houston was home to several packs, too many to keep track of.

It took years of hard work, but eventually, Andreas's day to become an Alpha arrived. "I told you years ago that you would make it."

Humbly, Andreas looked into his friend's eyes, "I know you did. I should've listened to you then. Maybe I would've been more prepared."

"You're plenty prepared."

A smaller wolf, with dark grey fur around her eyes, stepped into their conversation, "The day has finally come. I'm so proud of you!"

"Thank you, Hanalei."

A tear began to form in the corner of her eye, "I know your mother would've loved to see you become who you are today."

Andreas nodded in solidarity, "She would have."

Rolling his eyes, Lukas backed away from the unspoken emotions floating in the air.

Lukas was large, his chest wide and mighty, he had grown into a sharp looking wolf. His human form was stereotypically handsome, with dark hair and dreamy eyes. Though he didn't have a muscular chest, instead his biceps were rather large and his legs lean and strong. He was an overall catch, but he never caught the eye of the one he truly thought was the most beautiful in the pack.

She was low-level but had her sights set on the main prize. Hanalei was sweet and subtle but held a fiery passion within her that no one could tame. Her eyes glowed a bright blue no matter what form she was in. She didn't get to come with the boys as often as she wanted to, as she was bitten, not born of a bloodline. The only time she could turn was a full moon cycle; rarely did she get to go with the pack on hunts or meetings.

At one time, she had saved Andreas's mother when she needed it the most. Though

his mother passed, he gave her the gift she would cherish forever. That bite was what kept Hanalei going some days. Her love for Andreas grew, naturally, as one would when given a new and exciting life. Lukas would watch her from afar, understanding her desire for an Alpha that gave her the life she dreamed of. Though, he was disappointed that Andreas was never quite sure what he wanted. He didn't have time to think of picking his mate when he was training to take over the pack.

Lukas couldn't blame her; he was handsome. Smoky brown eyes, thick black fur, and a rugged jawline. His human form wasn't as rugged but was kinder. His brown eyes were still deep, but his long dark hair curled around his thick lips and plump cheeks. Muscular in each form, he tried his best to keep in shape, and his work always paid off. He was strong, independent, and commanding. His gaze alone could silence a pack in a single second.

"Are you excited for today?"

He smiled sweetly, "It's a day I've waited for my entire life. Of course, I'm excited."

His alpha ceremony was one he'd only dreamed of. The leaders of the pack asking him to take a place among them. To help them lead the people he'd loved for centuries. He was excited, to say the least.

"Well, I should let you prepare," she dropped her head shyly, showing her respect and giving him space to settle before his big day.

He smiled at her as she left, trying to not get distracted by her small figure. He took in the scenery. The woods, the smell of rain from the previous night, the tracks of their prey, everything seemed sweeter on a day like this. His senses heightened at the sound of the howl of the entire pack, asking him to join them.

He began to sprint towards the noise, running into the various leaders and wolves

seated in a circle howling for him to enter. His blood pumped faster than it ever had before. He could hear it in his head. Panting, he walked into the circle to give his own howl. In the center, seated next to the highest alpha, he bowed down like the rest of the pack. Until the alpha allowed them all to rise.

“We’re here at this meeting today to allow Andreas Barret to sit upon the throne of the alphas. To lead us, the Jade Pack, through any and all troubles we might face. Through the good and bad, any evil that may come and any prosperity that may find us. Is there anyone who objects to this motion to make Andreas an alpha?”

The silence gave him hope. It filled his heart with joy and excitement. Not that he thought anyone would object, but the vast number of wolves seated here were putting their trust in him. His fearlessness, dedication, and leadership had gotten him here, and now he would use his skills to devote himself to this pack that he loved.

“The alphas may now vote. Each alpha must accept this dedication.”

One by one, the four wolves seated high on rocks next to the pack confirmed the decision. Trying to contain his excitement, Andreas nodded at each one in respect.

“Andreas. You may now lead your first hunt.”

Four wolves who were well regarded, one being Lukas, came forward in support to hunt with him. They all ran off to begin searching for the pack’s dinner. Upon finding a horde of elk, they surrounded. Dragging back two they managed to trap and kill, the pack had their feast.

As she ripped off a piece of meat, Hanalei looked up and smiled at Andreas. She stared at him as he ate while he nervously talked with Lukas about their hunt. After their share of the meal, Lukas watched them walk off into a secluded part of the forest together. In disappointment, he shook his head and walked back to the pack.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

Chapter Two

Darya had just come back from the cubs' entry into the pack, a monthly meeting she had with the other council members. As she walked back into her mother's cave, they discussed her time and future.

"Mother, when do you think I will be able to mate with him?"

"His alpha ceremony was today. Don't you think you should give him some time?"

Confidently, she reminded her mother, "I am his only choice. What does he need time for? I am on our pack's counsel; he is an alpha of his pack. There are no female alphas around Dallas, and there are only a few counsel women. One of them being you."

"Yes, my dear. I'm sure he will choose you. But you have to give him the time to come to that decision on his own. Love feels better when it's by choice, not by coincidence."

"I know you're right, but I'm just too impatient. I want him now. He's perfect, mom. Absolutely perfect. His eyes are so... deep, and his hair is so luscious. When he almost died for his pack during that dry summer, I cried. He's so passionate and warm, like a deer on a summer day."

Rolling her eyes, her mother said, "Yes, yes. I've heard it all before. He's the most handsome; you love him to death. Now, give me room to relax. It's been a long day."

Nodding her head, Darya obeyed her mother's wishes. She walked out of the small cave and stood on top of the rocks, overlooking the Jade Pack's ceremony. Gazing at her soon-to-be husband, she pictured the two of them together. He was by far the most handsome in town, not to mention his strength and loyalty to his pack. It was inevitable that they would get together. Everyone had talked about it. They were meant to be.

Though they only had a few conversations, she believed they both would agree that their connection was stronger than any other. She knew she was beautiful; her smoky coat was smooth, and her legs more muscular than other females. She was strong, powerful, a great leader, and most of all, beautiful. Eyes greener than the blades of grass and black ears that perked up when she felt prey was near.

She watched as they all bowed to their new alpha, allowing him to lead and provide for them. He went off on his first hunt, and she imagined their time together for the years to come. Leading beside one another, it was all a were woman could dream of.

As she saw them return, she giggled with joy. Knowing that her love was home safely, she waltzed around the pack camp. She got her dinner from the latest pack hunt, and as she ate, she remembered the first time she ever met Andreas.

"Did you want some?" he asked her in the middle of the woods with his latest catch.

She sighed, "No, it's alright. We'll search the south side."

"There's nothing there. It's really slim this year. The human hunters are driving everything to the outskirts. This is the first catch I've had in a week."

"It's tough out there this year. Shouldn't you bring it back to your pack?"

He hung his head low, "I haven't been taking any of my shares. You can have some,

and I'll tell them it was mine. You need your energy to keep hunting. I can tell by your legs, you haven't had much this year either. We all need a share."

"Thank you."

She took just a few bites of meat to keep her going for the day. The hard years were terrible on the hunters. Andreas was so kind that they talked for a few minutes, getting to know each other. It wasn't that they didn't know who the other was. It was that they then realized how much they had in common. How strong of a bond they could share one day. It was almost love at first sight, as corny as it sounded, for Darya. She was strong, but she melted when she looked into his eyes.

Back into her reality, Darya realized that she was on the edge of her pack's base, close to Jade Pack.

Maybe I should pay him a visit, she thought.

As she ran through the woods, she saw him. She began to run through the bushes to surprise him when she noticed he wasn't alone. He was with another female, a low-level female. One that wasn't fit to mate with him. Darya's full stomach turned to knots, anger rose within her. Why would he be alone with another female, especially a half-breed with no admirable qualities?

She peeked through the branches in the nearest tree, trying her best to keep her coat invisible behind the surrounding bushes. Her reflexes wanted her to go in there, to protect her man, the love of her life. It took everything inside of her to watch them silently. The pressure built in her chest as she tried to keep the tears in.

Between the leaves, she saw Hanalei lean in, embracing Andreas tightly. As the moon went down, Hanalei changed quickly into her human form. As she turned, so did Andreas, continuing their loving embrace. As they arose to their feet, Hanalei brought

her head in close to his. Slowly, their lips touched as they held each other. In her grief, Darya ran carelessly away from the awful sight.

Hearing the footsteps, Andreas pushed Hanalei away gently as he searched the surrounding woods. He looked left and found the tail of a familiar wolf, one he'd never forgotten. One he wished wasn't here at that exact moment. He looked at Hanalei, in human form, confused and flustered. Without a single word between them, he turned back and ran to the pack.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

Chapter Three

“It’s time!” Lydia shouted from the cave.

Distraught, Darya sauntered over to her mother, “I can’t do it. I’m too angry with him. I don’t think I should go.”

“You have to go. You’re required to by the council. We are to support the packs with their new alphas, one of them being Andreas. It’s a part of your job. The job that you’ve loved for years don’t let it be ruined by one man who can’t seem to decide who he wants to mate.”

Darya didn’t want to believe it. The man she loved had forsaken her and their relationship. She didn’t want to look at him, and now she had to go to the ball created to celebrate him. It didn’t sit right with her. It had been almost an entire day since she saw him kissing someone else. It was still fresh in her mind, that halfbreed coming after the man she once knew. He felt like a stranger now.

“Fine. You’re right. Let’s go see the man who broke my heart.”

Her mother nudged her neck and kissed her forehead. Darya couldn’t help but smile at the attempt to cheer her up. She always knew how to make her feel better. Plus, she would be at the party, able to be a buffer between the two females. Hanalei was lucky that the lunar cycle was in her wolf phase during his ceremony, though it was unlucky for Darya.

“Tell me again what happened,” Lukas asked him.

“Hanalei told me to go into the woods with her because she had something to tell me. So I went with her, and she basically told me she wants to be with me. She told me she wants me to pick her, and then she kissed me. I saw... Darya runs away.”

“Darya? Like the best eligible mate, Darya? The girl on the counsel for the pack next door?”

“Yep.”

Lukas shook his head, laughing, “You’re screwed.”

“I know. I just don’t know what to do.”

“Who do you love? Who do you want to mate with for the rest of your life?”

“That’s the problem, I don’t know. I don’t know who I want to mate. I want Darya. She’s the best in the state. She’s smart, she’s beautiful and strong. She knows who she is and what she wants. But every time I see Hanalei, it’s like I don’t know what to do. She’s in love with me, I obviously care about her, and I saved her, made her one of us. I have connections to them both.”

Lukas tried his best to support his best friend, “Look, you can pick who you want. But everyone, including you, expected you to wed a highly admired woman from another pack. Will you be disappointed if you end up with a half blood?”

“You’re right. I should really talk to Darya. I want her. She’s what’s best for me, for the pack, for our lives. Her passion and devotion is unmatched. I can’t imagine not being with her. I’ve dreamed of her since we met.”

“That’s what I thought. Let’s get you out to your celebration. People are here to celebrate you.”

The crowd cheered as he strutted out into the celebration. He could see Hanalei smiling at him on the side, pawing at him, asking him to come to her. With a sad look, he ignored her demands. He knew that he couldn't be with her. Deep down, it was telling her that was the hardest part. She wouldn't take it well.

Hanalei turned around to find Darya and her mother entering the party. Strutting over to them, she slowly bumped into Darya, hard and clearly on purpose.

"Oh my. I didn't see you there," she giggled with a sarcastic look.

"Very funny. Now, if you'd gladly move out of our way, we have a few packs to celebrate."

"Oh, I'm sure you do. But let me tell you, there's one person who probably doesn't want your congratulations."

"I'm here to do my job, so whenever you're done making a fool of yourself, please get out of our way."

With a smirk on her face, she asked, "Tell me, Darya, when you kissed him, was it as good as it was for me? I just feel like you trained him so well, and now I get to have him."

Lydia intervened, "Listen here, you small child. I have had enough of your foul mouth talking to my daughter that way. You don't have to be rude to Darya just because you got a minute with an eligible bachelor in town. You are a half-breed, with nothing, no rank, no mate, and no future here if you keep talking to other packs like that. You will speak to the other council members with respect. Do you understand?"

Reluctantly, she answered, "Yes, I understand. I hope you know that I'm not going

anywhere.”

“How unfortunate for us all,” Darya snapped as they walked past her at last.

The two of them walked into the party, unphased by the obnoxious Darya, who walked over to stand by Lukas. He was trying not to laugh at the remarks they made. He may have liked Hanalei, but they really had some good punches in there.

“Don’t let it get to you,” he said to her.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

“Please, they couldn’t get to me if they tried.”

He shook his head, and they walked off into the party. The large grassy area was full of werewolves in wolf and human form alike. Scattered across the area was brightly colored confetti and tons of meat, cooked and raw. It was quite the sight as it was every year. Signs with each new alpha’s name were posted around the area where they stood to speak to eligible mates and other officials that could help them in their time of leadership.

Darya walked up to each one, bowing to them in congratulations. Until she got to Andreas’ in human form, she quickly transformed and leaned in for a quick hug. The discomfort was clear to any and all who saw. She tried not to make eye contact with him at all while he moved his head to try and meet her eye line. She was too ashamed to look at him, too angry and hurt.

“Darya? Can we talk?” he asked her.

She shook her head as she turned to walk away, “I don’t think that would be a smart idea.”

He grabbed her arm gently, which made her tense up. He didn’t like that he touched her, as he touched Hanalei before. She didn’t know the nature of their relationship, but it seemed more intimate than theirs. She had never been kissed like that by him. She had never been kissed by him. Darya was done trying the second his lips touched Hanalei.

“Darya, please.”

She did enjoy the way he begged for her attention, she felt in control, and that's what she enjoyed most of all. With that thrill, still, without making eye contact, she followed him into the forest behind them. They were uncomfortably quiet with each other.

He faced her, "I know you saw Hanalei and me. It wasn't what it looked like..." "It's always what it looks like," she interrupted.

"It really wasn't, though. I didn't know she was going to do that. I wasn't even sure that I liked her."

"You saved her life. You obviously liked her."

He sighed in resignation. "I didn't know what I liked or what I wanted. I didn't even think about a mate until I was told I would become alpha. I was so focused on becoming a leader that I didn't have time to think about women at all. But, I think back to that day we met, the first time. I think about how much fun we had, just talking. How amazing you are, strong and independent and beautiful. You love your pack as much as I love mine, and you care for it so well. I can't imagine being with anyone else. I want you to be mine."

"What about her? What about Hanalei? Because she thinks you're hers. She thinks you're going to choose her. What will you do about that? How will you be her friend as you try to be my husband?"

"I don't know. I care about her as a friend, but she's depending on becoming my mate. Maybe we could get rid of her somehow?"

She winced at the phrasing he used, "Get rid of her? What are you gonna do, kill her?"

“No, no, no. That’s not at all what I meant. I just mean... Look, I’ve been seeing Lukas eye her for years. I think he might be into her. Maybe we could set them up on a date or something? Maybe she’d get off of our backs if she had someone else.”

“That’s an interesting idea. I think I’d like that better than trying to avoid her. She already tormented me once today, and I don’t think I want to have that conversation again.”

He drew closer to her, visibly remorseful, “What did she say?”

“Just that you two kissed, she was happy and gloating. It’s alright, I was a bit bothered, but it was more disrespectful than anything. Rude to speak to a councilwoman like that at a celebration. Rude to speak to anyone like that. She sounded like a schoolgirl on the playground bullying. I wondered what you saw in her...”

Her face told him that she was hurt by the conversation, “I’m sorry. I didn’t know she would do that to someone. She’s not typically like that with me.”

“Well, that’s because she likes you. Who would be mean to someone they like?”

“You’re right. I’m sorry she treated you that way. No one should treat anyone poorly, especially in this community. I’ll make it clear to her that there’s no future between us. Would that make it up to you?”

She leaned in close to him, now standing in between his outreached arms, “I don’t know if that’ll cut it.”

“I’ll do anything to make it up to you. I can’t hurt you again. I won’t. I want you, only you.”

He stared at her luscious lips, pushing out to meet his. It was a passionate kiss. They sat for several minutes, pecking and kissing until she was satisfied with his apologies. She knew he would want her, but she wasn't expecting this. To have him, to hear that he wanted to be hers. It was magical, something she never expected out of this day. Though, she was too cautious about letting him in that easily. She would watch him closely, making sure he was honest with her. He was a nice boy but smart and tactical when it came to his life choices. She wanted to make sure he was hers because he loved her.

"We should probably get back," she whispered to him.

He sighed, "Says who?"

"Says the huge group of people who came to celebrate you and your accomplishment," she winked at him.

"Fine, I guess we can go back to my party, but I'll only go if you agree to go on a date with me."

She smirked at him, "Of course, I will go on a date with you. But it better be nice. I'm a lovely lady who deserves a lovely time."

"Of course you are," he smiled.

Chapter Four

“I need you to do something for me,” Andreas told his friend on their way to their hunting grounds.

Concerned, Lukas asked, “What do you need?”

“I need you to shoot your shot with Hanalei.”

Immediately in defense mode, he explained, “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I don’t like her that way.”

“Lukas, I’m sorry, but I’ve known you for years. You can’t fool me. I know you’re interested in her. I need a chance with Darya, and the only way she’s going to leave us alone is if she has someone else to focus on. She’s only been looking at me since she got into this pack. Give her a chance to look at you, and I know she’ll like you. You’re amazing. I just want you to go for it. It’s best for all of us.”

He put his head down, not making eye contact with him. Lukas was embarrassed that Andreas had figured out his little crush. He wasn’t sure if he should really make a move on her. It seemed insensitive to make a move on someone who was in love with his best friend. She’s loved Andreas for so long, while Lukas watched on the sidelines, it seemed far-fetched to think she’d be interested in him. But maybe if she knew how he felt, she would fall for him.

“I can talk to her, I guess.”

Andreas raised his eyebrows at him, “You need to tell her how you feel. If not for me, for you. She needs to know, and you need to get it out. If she doesn’t like you, then you’ll know. It’s good for everyone if you just tell her the truth.”

“You’re right. I’ll tell her how I feel.”

Andreas rammed into his side, pushing him over. Lukas’s eyes darted over to him. He was angry until he saw the smile on his face. Then, he pushed him back, both of them giggling. They playfully raced to their hunting grounds, preparing for their hunt.

“Mom! Tonight’s the night. What do I wear? You think maybe a dress? I feel like a dress would be appropriate.”

“Yes, Darya,” Lydia called out to her, “Wear one of your nice dresses. Did he tell you where he’s taking you?”

“No, he hasn’t told me yet, but I’m sure it’ll be fun. It’s with Andreas, so who cares where we go. I know I’ll have fun.”

“I’m glad to see you in high spirits. He better treat you well, but I’m not worried about you. You’ll tell him if he’s not,” Lydia explained as she came into the room.

Darya was looking through her many dresses, trying to find the perfect one for her date that evening. She and her mother eventually decided on a gorgeous light pink dress, short and patterned with small gray dots. It looked amazing on her, accentuating her waist with its tight midsection. The sweetheart neckline did wonders for her collarbones; her breasts clung tightly to the fabric. She was proud of her body and the way it looked in her dress. It gave her an abundance of confidence, not that she needed it.

A knock at the door of their small home came crashing through her room. Her heart fluttered at the idea of him finally being here, finally having their first date. It was all so magical. She was ecstatic, to say the least.

“Darya!” her mother called from downstairs.

“Coming!” she cried back.

She looked at herself in the mirror one last time before leaving to spend the night with the love of her life. She admired her large eyes, as they were one of her favorite features. Staring at them in the mirror, she turned her head sideways, giving herself a small smile before heading downstairs.

“There she is!” he called up to her, “There’s the girl I’ve been looking for! You look absolutely radiant. You’re glowing!”

Darya played into it, acting extremely dramatic as she pranced down the stairs, “Well, here I am. Were you waiting for me this whole time?!”

Without a moment to think, he answered, “I would wait a thousand years for you to walk down those stairs in that.”

“Mom’s still here! I’ll let you two go out and have fun,” she smiled at her daughter, “Can’t say bring her home before midnight because she’s an adult, but if you care, you’ll have her home before then, please.”

He nodded at her as he opened the door for Darya to step out with him. He drove a decent car, a small blue sedan that he helped her get into. Andreas was a perfect gentleman.

“Where are we off to tonight?” she asked.

“Our first stop is an ice cream parlor. I know it’s your favorite human treat.” She squinted at him, smiling, “How did you know that? I never told you that.” “Your mother can be quite helpful if she likes you.”

She shook her head in disbelief. Her mother was so kind to give him clues. If he had asked Darya, she certainly wouldn’t have helped him at all. But he already knew that. That’s why he asked her mother. The ride to the parlor was lovely, the sun was slowly going down behind the horizon, so the sky became colorful and bright. Before they walked into the parlor, they stared at it.

As they exited the car, Darya looked up to see her favorite shop. Built like a vintage shop, it had all of the flavors she enjoyed while she got to sit in a 50s diner-style room and enjoy it. They each got huge scoops of ice cream in plastic cups with white plastic spoons and sat across from each other in a booth.

Page 6

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

“This is fantastic,” she said, “I don’t enjoy a lot of human parts of my life, but this is something they got right. It’s delicious and sweet. It gives me so much energy. I love it.”

“I’m glad you’re enjoying yourself.”

“So, I’ve been meaning to ask...” her tone got quiet, more serious, “How did that conversation with Hanalei go? Did you tell her about us, about wanting me?”

“Well, not exactly. I...”

Darya cut him off, making her tone harsh, “I’m sorry, you didn’t tell the woman you kissed that you were taking me on a date tonight? What if she sees us? What if she thinks you two will mate?”

“Hold on, let me explain. I told Lukas to talk to her tonight. He’s going to tell her how he feels. He likes her, and I want her to be let down gently. I think it’s the best way to get her to understand. Let her know that there are other options for her, and then I’ll let her know that I’m no longer one of those options.”

“I really can’t believe you would do that to me. I’m not just some side woman. I’m either yours or I’m not. How can I be yours if some other girl thinks she has you?”

He didn’t know what to say to that. He fumbled with his words, trying to start a sentence but getting tongue-tied. She sat there, watching him try hard to spit out what he was trying to say. She really didn’t have anything else to say to him.

He finally got his mouth to say the words in his heart, “I never thought of it that way. I know we talked about it, but we should have come up with a plan. I will tell her after tonight, tomorrow. I’ll let her know exactly how I feel about you.”

“You have to let me know how you feel about me, first,” she smiled as she wiped away a tear.

He looked at her with such empathy, she almost forgot her name, “Darya. I am in love with you. I have been since the moment I met you, and I was too dumb and too blind to admit that to you or myself. We’re both grown and ready to become one with each other. Let’s do it. I’m ready if you are.”

“Really? We’ll have to go through the mating ceremony, but I’m ready, too.”

He pulled her face into his, gently coddling her head as he kissed her. She melted in his hands, losing control of her head as he led her in passion. The kissing had only lasted a few moments, but to Darya, it felt like a lifetime. He was good at it, and she was too. They both knew their chemistry was strong, and it made their passion grow. Leaving the ice cream shop was sad for Darya. She wasn’t sure what was next. He hadn’t told her the other plans for the evening.

“This was so fun,” she told him as he got into the car.

“Oh, we’re not done,” he giggled at her.

She looked at him, delightfully confused, “What do you mean we’re not done?”

“It’s only 9 pm. Do you really want to go home?”

“Well, of course not,” she answered playfully.

“Next stop, movie theater.”

“The movies!” she exclaimed as they drove off into the city.

Page 7

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

Chapter Five

He'd been pacing the room all night, waiting to hear a knock at the door. Lukas had invited Hanalei over to his place to discuss his feelings for her, though she didn't know that yet. He told her that he was hanging out with Andreas and asked if she'd like to come over. He was nervous that she would be upset when she got there due to Andreas's absence, but he was trying to be confident in himself and his abilities. The knock finally came.

"Hey, Hanalei. Come on in."

"Nice place you've got here," she said as she stepped into his apartment, "Thanks, some of the other guys live here too, but they're out for the week. They're hunting for the pack. We got a little low after the celebrations this week."

"Ah," she said as she looked about the room, confused, "Where's Andreas?"

"He's actually not here," he nervously patted the couch for her to sit, "He's out."

"Oh. So why did you call me here?"

He took a deep breath, "I wanted to ask you something."

She nodded slowly, waiting for him to go on. A small patch of silence stayed between them as he thought of how to phrase his next words.

"Have you ever thought about being with someone other than Andreas?"

She looked at him, puzzled by the question. It was clear that she hadn't. For years, the only person she looked at was him. It was clear they were meant to be together. At least, to her, it was.

"Whatever, either way," he shrugged his shoulders, "I just wanted to tell you that I have feelings for you. Romantically. I really would like it if we gave us a try. I know you've been into Andreas for so long. I just wanted to know if you had thought about being with someone else. Someone like me," he put his head down, almost ashamed of his uncomfortable proposal.

Compassionately, she put her finger below his chin and pulled his head upward to look at her, "I had never thought about that, but I'd love to try and see how it goes."

"You would?" he asked innocently.

"Yes, I would. I'd never thought about it before. I would love to give things a try with you."

He was so excited, he almost forgot where they were and what was going on. He leaned in and kissed her, despite it being their first real time alone together. He was shocked by his own confidence and pulled himself away from her. He couldn't look at her without wanting to lock lips again. She was a force he wasn't strong enough to pull away from.

She smiled and bit her bottom lip as she leaned in to kiss him again. They pushed and pulled passionately, tantalizing each other. It was better than Lukas had ever imagined it. She continued to push herself on him, doing more than he expected to happen on the first night. Lukas was pleased with himself, he wasn't sure what he said to make her this excited for him, but he was happy that he said it.

"Can you show me to the bedroom?" she asked playfully.

He nodded and carried her up the stairs to his room. He dropped her on the bed. It didn't take long before she found her way on top of him, and they were making love. The experience was so unexpected, Lukas could barely contain himself. He had never had a woman like this before. One so eager and kind in the bedroom.

She sat on his bed, looking into his eyes while he kissed up her arm slowly. When he finally got to her lips, they kissed and stared at each other. Admiring the work of art they each were. Hanalei wasn't sure how she felt about him, but she was glad they had done that. She always thought he was attractive. She admired a good-looking man. It was nice to be appreciated for once, too. It felt like all of that build-up from Andreas never giving in to her was released when she got her hands on someone who wanted her. It felt good to be wanted.

Darya felt like she had to make sure she was wanted. Not just wanted but desired by the man she loved. She wanted to make sure he wasn't just choosing her out of guilt or status but that he loved her for her. She was frustrated by his moments with Hanalei, and even though he reassured her many times that he wanted to be with her, she couldn't get Hanalei out of her mind. Because, what if he actually wanted Hanalei? What if he was marrying her for his status and because it was the right thing to do?

While they were in line to get snacks and drinks at the movie theater, she asked him, "What's your favorite thing about me?"

It seemed out of the blue, but Andreas was willing to answer, and he took no time in dwelling on it, "I love your determination. You are loyal and strong, so when you make a decision, that's the decision you've made, and you'll find a way to make sure it happens. Sometimes, it can come off as stubborn, but I know it's just you being strong and independent."

She smiled at his answer. She hadn't noticed that in herself before, nor had she noticed that other people thought of her as stubborn. They went into the movie theater, and even though they were both quiet most of the time, she enjoyed herself—Especially when an exciting part would come on, and Andreas would watch her for her reactions. She could see him out of the corner of her eye, but it didn't stop her from genuinely jumping during the intense moments of the screen. But, her favorite part about their trip to the movies was when he grabbed her hand so tight, she thought he'd never let go. As if to remind her that he was there, with her the entire time. It was a sweet gesture.

After the movie, she thought their night was for sure coming to a close, but she didn't want to go home yet. She looked at him as they stepped into the car.

“So, where are we going next?” she asked excitedly.

“Next?!” he panicked.

“Why, it's only 11 pm. We can't go home yet,” she winked at him.

He smirked, “I think I have something up my sleeve.”

Page 8

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

He drove down a street she wasn't familiar with, through winding roads and strange forests. It wasn't far away from the city, but it was a few miles down an unpaved road. He came to an abrupt stop in a small parking lot on the side street.

"Let's go," he said as he opened her door for her.

She stepped out, and as he shut the door behind him, he changed into his wolf form. Puzzled, she turned around to see Andreas and was almost startled by the quick change. She transformed quickly, and he took off into the woods, up the hilly paths, and through the unpathed brush. She followed him, laughing as they chased each other through the woods. They climbed and climbed until they reached the very top. Before Darya got there, she heard Andreas reach a peak and howl. It sent a shiver down her spine as she rushed up the peak and looked over the edge.

Words couldn't describe how gorgeous the view was. It was almost untouched by humans, as they couldn't reach this hill and make it up those steep inclines. It was all to themselves. The woods were vast, greens and blues everywhere. Not only was it a beautiful forest view, but to their right was the entire city. Darya could see her house, her childhood school, their pack base, and their friends sleeping outdoors. They could see everything. In human form, Andreas grabbed her hips and pulled her in close. He rested his head on her shoulders, hugging her from behind.

"Isn't it pretty up here?" he asked.

"How did you find this place?"

He kissed her on the cheek from behind, "I saw the peak one day when I was just a

teen, and I thought it would be pretty from up there. So I ran into the woods, as far as I could until I reached it. I've been coming here ever since to think and spend time away. Imagine what being an alpha would be like. How I would lead. It all started up here, and now I have you. And I get to bring you up here, too. So you can see how beautiful everything is. And I can watch you stare in wonder at the place we call home."

She turned around in his arms with her back to the city. His face turned confused, but before he could say anything, Darya's arms were around his neck. She pulled him in for a passionate kiss. Pushing him back, they landed on the ground.

"Do you love me, for me?" she asked.

"Of course I do."

"Not just because you need to, or because I'm on council?"

"No. You're my match. You're my mate. For life."

"That's exactly what I wanted to hear."

She began to make passionate love to him, with the city in the background. It felt like they were on top of the world like they owned everything. They were invincible, ready to take on anything. Including Hanalei. Especially Hanalei. Darya would make sure she knew Andreas was hers.

Chapter Six

Andreas and Darya were ready to officially become mates, to become husband and wife in the eyes of their packs. It was their day to unite as one. Only a few days after their first date, as typically for werewolves choosing a mate, they were to be a union. Darya had put in her headpiece, as they would both be walking into the pack in wolf form. It was the most exciting day of her life, though she was nervous about Hanalei. She didn't know what Andreas had told her or if she took the news well at all. She wasn't able to present herself in wolf form, so she wasn't allowed at the celebration to begin with—a lucky coincidence for Darya.

“I'm so proud of you,” Lydia told her as she fixed her white ribbons laced in her fur.

The flowery and lace veil draped around her back was perfectly aligned, thanks to Lydia. She had made sure everything was perfect, and they would have an amazing day together. It was going to be a beautiful event.

“I love you, mom.”

“I love you too.”

They nudged their noses together and walked toward the celebration. An alpha from each pack would say a few words, and they would then be congratulated as husband and wife, as a mated pair. It was a quick ritual to notice their lifelong relationship. They would be together from beginning to end. The day was to be perfect.

As they entered the pack, Andreas stared at Darya. He couldn't take his eyes off of

her. She was beautiful, and everyone knew it, but Andreas got to have her. They would lead together, their packs would become allies and great fighters. They would be well known for how amazing they led. The pack would talk about them in generations to come. All around, it was the most important day of their lives. Though, they were both just happy to be with one another. They would finally be able to live with one another. They craved each other, and they could finally give in.

“Hello, beautiful,” he whispered to her as she finally got to him.

His fur held similar flowers and ribbons. They hung around each of their necks in celebratory fashion. Waiting for the alphas to speak over them. As the large gray male began to speak of his excitement for them, a sound burst through the room.

“STOP!”

Darya turned in shock. She couldn't believe something or someone could ruin a moment like this. It was terrifying to turn and face what had interrupted their wonderful ceremony. Her heart raced, and she began to sweat in the humid air. She was afraid but brave enough to face the woman who ruined her relationship.

“You can't do this,” Hanalei whimpered as she walked into the center of the open green space.

She was in human form, as she couldn't be in wolf form. Everyone stood silent in shock. The half-breed had no authority to stop a ceremony. She knew that too. No one knew how to react. She had burst into the marriage ceremony of a pack alpha. They all looked to Andreas for guidance in the situation.

“What do you mean I can't do this?” he asked as he looked over at Lukas, who was standing frozen in fear and disappointment.

Hanalei stared at Lukas, unsure of how she felt, “Don’t do this to me. Don’t marry her.”

Lukas immediately turned into the woods with a dagger in his heart, unable to face his best friend, who knew about his time with the woman who loved Andreas. He was hurt, broken down by this woman that lied to him. That mated with him and still wanted his friend.

Darya took off into the forest, too ashamed and angry with Andreas. If he had talked to her, told Hanalei that he didn’t care for her, she wouldn’t have done this. There’s no way she would burst into a wedding ceremony knowing that the groom didn’t love her. Darya sobbed, running as far as she could, never stopping for a moment.

“Darya,” Andreas cried after her. He turned back towards Hanalei with anger, “Hanalei, you will leave this pack. You will leave here and never return, do you hear me? You are not allowed anywhere near here, and I will let every pack in the state know what you’ve done. I love Darya, and you know that. Not only did you ruin our wedding ceremony, but you’ve also ruined my best friend who’s loved you for years and your own life.

She stood, encapsulated by his harsh words. She couldn’t move, couldn’t speak. It was traumatic to even try.

“I was just...”

“Just leave,” he interrupted.

With her head hung low, she walked out of the pack. Crying the entire way home. She was banished from returning to this pack or any in the state. Exiled because of her harsh, rash decisions.

Meanwhile, Andreas had a bride to catch. She was fast, but he was faster. They chased each other, Darya running out of tears, stopped to catch her breath. She threw herself on the ground, unable to regulate her breathing. The tears were falling, but she was mostly hyperventilating. She gasped for air, curling up on the ground. She took a minute to regain herself, to come back to reality, to think clearly.

“Darya?”

Hearing his voice was like a bullet to the heart. He was the last person she wanted to talk to.

“Leave me alone. I can’t believe I was going to marry you. You lied to me twice.”

He went to her side, laying beside her, “I’m so sorry. I didn’t know she would do that. She’ll never bother us again.”

“How do you know that? How do you know she’ll never bother us again. She’s terrible, she’ll always hate me, she’ll never accept us as leaders and as paired mates. You haven’t done a single thing about it! You haven’t told her anything about us, have you?!”

He gulped. He didn’t want to answer her, “I didn’t tell her about it. But she was supposed to be getting together with Lukas. I thought she was taken care of.”

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:27 pm

“Taken care of?! You talk about her like she’s a burden, so why don’t you treat her like one. Why don’t you tell her that you don’t want her.”

“I don’t know. I didn’t want to hurt her feelings, but she’s gone now. Actually gone, she’s banished. I told her to leave and never come back.”

She looked up at him for the first time, “You banished her?”

“Yes. She’s gone. For good. She won’t be back ever. She interrupted our day. She’s a low-level and not allowed to do that. It was way out of line,” he pleaded with her to believe him.

“Why didn’t you tell her before? It would’ve been so much easier for us. How am I supposed to trust you when you won’t do what you say?”

A tear began to fall from his left eye, “You’re right. I should’ve done what I said. Lukas told me that they were getting together. That they were happy.”

“Well, he was wrong about that,” she assumed from her behavior.

“I guess so. I didn’t realize how much she liked me. I thought it was just a crush.”

“You kissed her. I told you that she was bragging about it. You had to have felt something for her or told her something to make her think you were interested.”

He sighed in confusion, “She pulled me in for a kiss. I didn’t know she was going to do that. I didn’t tell her anything. We were just friends. I thought about her for a mate

but knew it wouldn't work out."

"You considered her?!"

The anger rose inside of Darya, she was a fiery woman, and today was no exception. If she had known that Hanalei was an option for Andreas, she might not have said yes to marrying him. If he had told Darya that she was one of a few choices for him, she wouldn't have gone on that first date.

His words seemed to fail him as she ran off while he tried to explain himself. Andreas kicked himself for speaking such strange words. He didn't mean that she was an option for his mate. She was really an afterthought, nothing to him. Hanalei was considered for a minute maybe, no more. She wasn't Darya. She wasn't who he wanted. He ran after her, yet again, but he couldn't find her in the woods. It was getting foggy, and the clearance wasn't great. He decided to go back towards the camp and hope she returned soon so he could explain. Maybe she just wanted some time away.

And away she went, far into the forest. Sprinting, unsure of if Andreas was following her. She really hoped he wasn't. She was praying he wasn't on her tail to speak with her again. It seemed like every time he spoke, he messed up his words and hurt her feelings. It was a big mess. She was embarrassed, ashamed, too uncomfortable to return. She found a spot surrounded by large bushes with soft soil that she kicked around as she thought. She stopped there in hopes of talking herself through the relationship she thought she had.

"You know when he first met you," Lukas appeared from the brush around her. She jumped as she thought she was alone, "he told me everything about you. He rushed home to let me know that he found someone beautiful."

"Lukas, I'm not in the mood to talk about Andreas with you. You're biased. You're

his best friend. You can't convince me of anything. Plus, what do you know about love? Didn't your love just interrupt my wedding?"

That one hurt him; he was upset, but only for a moment, "Yes. I just thought you should know how he talks about you when you're not around."

"How does he talk about me?"

He grinned as he sat beside her, "He told me that he found someone beautiful, that no one could match it. Before you went on your first date, he spent the day preparing everything. It took hours. He spoke to your mom. He went to the ice cream parlor to make sure they had your favorites in. When he got home that night, he told me about your trip up to his spot. He's never even taken me there before. He's never shown it to anyone. He speaks very highly of you, even if he has trouble saying it to your face."

"He told me he considered mating with Hanalei. I mean, how can he recover from that? How can I trust him after all that he's done for her and with her?"

Lukas rolled his eyes at his friend's ignorance with women, "He talks too much, too honestly. He did consider Hanalei, but only for a moment. She loved him, she really did, and he didn't want to hurt her feelings. He considered marrying her so she could be happy. Now, he's ruined that happiness for her so that you can feel safe."

She nodded along, "I guess so. But why can't he talk sweetly to me like he did on our date?"

"When he's trapped, pressured, backed into a corner, he can't talk his way out of it. He gets nervous, he tries to say things that will help the situation, but they usually backfire. He wants to tell you, but I don't think he could when Hanalei was here. It's good that he banished her. It was the right thing to do. She was out of control. He was

too nice to tell her how he really felt about her. If she was here, he wouldn't be able to talk to you. He'd be too busy trying to explain himself. Give him a chance."

She looked down at herself, thinking about everything Andreas had done for her. She started to feel a little ungrateful for his compassion after noticing how much effort he had put in to make their relationship work. She was trying, but she hadn't noticed that he was too. She needed to go back and explain to him how much she loved him. He deserved to get the same thing that she wanted. They needed to explain to each other.

Chapter Seven

Andreas sat there, just insight of the group waiting for his return. He was waiting to see if his bride would join him for their wedding day. It was looking bleak, he noticed the longer he sat there. He wished he would be better at expressing himself, at telling her how much he loved her. He regretted not turning Hanalei away sooner. She should've been gone the minute he knew he wanted Darya.

He heard a rustle behind him, building himself up, ready to explain himself, until Lydia came through the forest.

“Andreas, I went looking for you,” she spoke.

His head went back down, ashamed of himself, “Yeah, I tried to talk to Darya, but it’s no use. She’s made up her mind. She doesn’t want me anymore. She’s right. I shouldn’t have waited to talk to Hanalei; I shouldn’t have assumed that she would fall in love with Lukas. She won’t even speak to me. How am I going to get her back?”

“Are we talking about the same Darya,” she joked, “The first day you guys met, she came home to tell me everything. She was so excited that she met you, she told me that she finally found the one.”

“She did?” he looked at Lydia with hope filling his eyes.

“She did. She was so happy, and when you asked her out on that date, she spent hours getting ready. When she came home, she was elated, walking on air. She knew she would marry you, and I did too. You’re a sweet boy. You two are perfect together.

She talked very highly of you. Should you have maybe told Hanalei to leave a while ago? Yes. But that's over now. She's gone. You have the rest of your lives together. Start it off right."

He nodded in agreement. He just hoped that Darya felt the same way. He was nervous about her return. They heard footsteps approaching. Lydia patted him on the shoulder and went back to the group. Lukas walked past his friend, giving him a playful nod and a smile. Finally, Darya walked into sight, through the fog, ready to speak with her groom again. She looked like a goddess appearing out of thin air.

"I'm sorry," he spat out to her as she walked up.

She giggled, "I'm sorry, too."

He was taken aback by her response, as he had an entire speech prepared to win her back, "Why are you sorry?"

"I was so focused on Hanalei and what she was doing that I didn't take time to notice what you were doing for me. You curated the most wonderful date I've ever been on. You took me to your favorite spot that you've never shown to anyone. I should've appreciated what you were doing for me instead of worrying about a girl that you just banished."

He smiled in appreciation of her, "Thank you. I'm sorry that my words come out jumbled and that I never told Hanalei to leave me alone. I should've told her sooner how I felt about you."

"Well, I want you to know that I care about you deeply. I love how kind you are to people that you don't even know or like. I love how well you lead, how strong you become when there's a problem. How selfless you are, and your looks aren't too bad either," she winked at him and nuzzled his nose.

“I love how strong you are and determined. You lead with pride and valor. Your hunting skills are on par with mine, which is hard to accomplish. You’re amazing. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

“Well, shall we get married then?” he asked with a smirk.

She smiled lightly, “I would really like to. I am a bit nervous about how we left things... Running out of our own wedding and all. I’m embarrassed.”

“There’s no need to be embarrassed. After today, we have the rest of our lives together. What do you say to that?”

“I say, let’s have a wedding,” she laughed.

They walked back into their ceremony, listening to their family and friends speak highly of them and their relationship. It became the first day of the rest of their lives. They spent the night in celebration, dancing, hunting, and eating with the pack. The pack welcomed them with open arms. Their two packs got along nicely, becoming one as they did. It was a magical evening, but even more magical was the love they shared.