

In Bed with the Alpha Boss Chapter 11 - 20

Chapter 11- Red

Sebastian.

I stare at the window of my corner office, trying to get a grip of my emotions.

“Sebby!” a high-pitched voice say behind me. “I’m bored!”

Hearing Soraya call me “Sebby” in that tone makes all the hairs on my body stand.

‘F*ck it! Kick her out!’ Kylo says in my head. ‘I don’t care about your ‘No Hitting Girls policy’, but that nickname and that tone are going to be the death of us!’

‘Shut up, Kylo!’

‘Seriously! What did you f**king do? You took this bi*ch’s side over Gabrielle?’

‘I didn’t take her side! I didn’t pick her over Gabrielle!’

‘Well, excuse me! That’s exactly how it looked like from where I’m standing!’ Kylo roars at me. ‘You embarrassed her in front of everyone! You asked her to swallow her pride by apologizing to that Parks brat. And you let her colleagues gossip about her!’

‘And what do you want me to do?’ I ask angrily. ‘I can’t show that I favor her! She’s human!’

‘So, what if she’s human? We like her!’

‘She’ll be a weakness. And I can’t let anyone see that! We have plenty of enemies, and they’re hiding in plain sight.’

It is true. Being an Alpha is not a walk in the park. I have been betrayed too many times before. A werewolf becomes an Alpha by bloodline, not just by accomplishments, or a show of ability. I can’t show any weakness. I have to prove that I am the best werewolf for the job, not just because my father was the previous Alpha, or that my wife was the only daughter of another powerful Alpha.

“We. Not just you. Your enemies are my enemies, too.”

‘Then you should understand why I needed to do that.’

“Did you hear what I said, Sebby?” Soraya asks behind me.

S*it! I forgot she was there in the first place.

I turn to face her, trying my best to stay polite.

‘Yeah! Because we’re a few seconds from kicking that bi*ch to Kingdom come, I swear!’

Kylo continues to growl.

I get that he hates Soraya, but I need to tolerate her, even though we do not love her, or like her.

Soraya’s father is still the Alpha of our most useful ally in the east. Whether I like her or not is not really the question here.

Since I don’t have a wife, and a son, people may still consider me a weak leader. Where I come from, it’s a weakness not to have a mate or an heir.

My mother wants me to marry Soraya because she wants a grandchild to dote on. I'm not sure how far I can tolerate her, but for the sake of power, for the sake of my pack, I have to live with it.

I clear my throat, forcing a smile on my face. "I'm sorry, I was thinking about something."

"I hope it's not that bi*ch, Miss Jones," she mutters.

"You already won that round, it seems. You've effectively humiliated her. What more do you want?" Remembering how Gabrielle must have felt when Soraya treated her so harshly, I feel a knot twist inside my chest. But I keep a steady, stoic face.

"I don't like her!" she says with a pout. "I don't just want to humiliate her, I want to end her. I haven't met any human who makes my blood boil before."

I smirk. "She didn't do anything to you. She's only a weak human. Quit being a spoiled brat and leave her alone."

"See? That's why I hate her! I know that you're banging that girl! And now, you're defending her!" she hisses, claws and fangs bared. Her hatred for Gabrielle is evident. And at that moment, I know that she sees her as a threat.

"You are out of line, Soraya! You do not have the right to talk to me like that!" I say angrily. My voice, though low, carries a lot of venom.

"I know I cannot talk to you this way, Alpha," she growls. "I can't do anything to you. But there are no rules that say I can't do anything to her!"

My pulse quickens. I forgot that Soraya, though belonging to a different pack, also holds a lot of power and influence. Enough to hurt anyone who is unlucky enough to irritate her.

"What did you do?" I ask, swallowing hard, barely able to keep a straight face.

Soraya gives me a proud smirk. "Now, I have your attention, it seems."

I take a step towards her. "What did you do?" I repeat.

She shrugs and looks at her nails with a bored expression on her face. "She's going to be our problem in the future. Maybe it's best I deal with her now."

I close the gap between us, towering over her with a sinister expression on my face.

She backs down, stuttering. "You... you made me do it!"

"Do what?" I roar. "I am asking you again! What the f*ck did you do?"

"I am teaching her a lesson!" She glares at me. Tears brim her eyes.

"What lesson?"

"She... she's going to be our problem. I want to make sure she stays the hell away from us!"

I want to punch her in the face. I want to strangle her. But I get a grip of myself. I run a hand through my hair as I take deep breaths. I need to cool down.

“You do not have the right to do that to my people!”

Her eyes widen in surprise and then she starts laughing maniacally. “Your people? She’s your assistant! Your plaything! But she’s not one of us! She’s not even a wolf! Do know you even how insulting that must be for me to compete for your attention with a vermin like her?”

“I’m not going to ask again! What did you do?”

My voice reverberates across the room, threatening to shatter the glass.

Soraya retreats, finally feeling my wrath. “I... uhm... I sent the boys to have their way... with her...”

I feel my chest tighten and my heart hammering. The frustration and anger burst from me in a savage growl that sends Soraya recoiling back. In a frantic blur, I dart out of the office, barely taking time to slam the door shut behind me.

‘She just left, ‘Kylo says. ‘She couldn’t have gone far.

I run on the streets, following my instincts. I take a deep breath, trying to trace her scent in the air.

A faint familiar scent leads me into a small alley. I see her backed up against a wall, and a man with a muscular built has cornered her.

“...I will kill you!” the guy tells her.

And as he lunges toward her, anger and panic surge through me at once.

I saw red!

Chapter 12- Willow

Sebastian.

Without a second thought, I charge myself toward the guy, crashing into him with full force. We both fall to the ground, with him groaning in pain. I immediately get up, ready to fight him off, but before I can do any damage, he pulled out a knife and lunged towards me.

I dodge his attack, and in a split second, I have him pinned to the ground with his own knife pressed against his throat. I can see the fear in his eyes, and for a moment, I consider ending him right then and there.

“What do you think you’re doing?” I ask in a low growl.

“I’m here to... protect Miss Parks,” he replies.

“By killing this helpless woman?”

The guy stares at me defiantly. He's a ga*ma, it seems. Perhaps one of the more capable soldiers of Soraya's pack. I forget that he doesn't answer to me.

"So? What is it to you if I kill one helpless human being?" he asks in a challenging tone.

"Soraya is your fiancée. Who is this woman to you?"

I stare back at him, deciding what to answer him.

'He's our woman! Our mistress! The love of our life!' Kylo says. Tell him to stay away from her or we will split him in half!

I sigh in frustration. "Nothing." I answer in a weak voice. "She means nothing to me."

'F*ck you!' Kylo curses at me and then he walks out, and I know he will not be speaking to me for a while.

But it is true. Gabrielle should be nothing to me. She is just my secretary. Apart from the fun we've had in bed for two years, she and I have no real future together. Even if I am not marrying Soraya, I still cannot marry a human.

The guy pushes me off him.

"Then this is none of your business!"

I glare at him. "Mind your tone! You may not be from my pack, but I still outrank you! I don't think your Alpha will be too happy if you start an unnecessary rift with me!"

"I am a loyal soldier of the Lunar Shadow pack!" he argues. "I do what I am told to do by my masters. And Miss Parks gave me direct orders to make sure this woman does not cause problems for her!"

"Leave her alone! Or you're going to regret it!" I threaten him.

He gives me a smirk. "Why don't you leave her alone, and give Miss Parks one less thing to worry about?"

I glare at him, but I feel my temper slowly subsiding. I will not let him get to me. The more I react, the more they will think that they can use Gabrielle to get what they want from me. Sometimes, you can save what's important, simply by not doing anything.

"She's my employee," I say in a calmer tone. "She's an important part of my business. She's part of what makes my company thrive."

"Sure," he said, giving me a knowing look. I can detect sarcasm in his voice, which tells me he is not entirely convinced that this woman doesn't mean anything to me.

"Leave now! I will take care of her. I assure you, she will not be a problem for Soraya and me."

The guy backs away, and then he starts to leave. "I will be happy to reassure Miss Parks of that." He slowly walks away. But just before he turns the corner, he turns around again. "I have been with the Lunar Shadow pack a long time. And I'm pretty sure I've seen that woman before."

I have an idea what he's talking about.

Cassie.

I shake my head dismissively. “You’re wrong. She’s not who you think she is.”

After the guy left, I turn to Gabrielle, who’s lying on the ground,

I gather her in my arms, listening to her breathing. It’s calm and steady. Relief washes over me.

‘She’s just passed out,’ Kylo says.

‘Oh, you’re back. I thought you were not going to speak to me for a long time.’

‘Believe me, I was planning to do that. But then again, you make the worst decisions when I’m around. Imagine what mess you’ll enter into when I’m not with you?’

Suddenly, I hear footsteps behind me. I wrap my arms around Gabrielle protectively.

Sh*t! Did that wolf come back?

But when I turn around, I see Benjamin approaching.

“Alpha!” he exclaims as he runs toward me. “What’s wrong with Gabrielle?”

“She’ll be fine,” I reply. “She’s just passed out.”

“What happened? Why are you out of the office?”

“Soraya had a man follow her to warn her off,” I grumble. “She must have fainted due to fear.”

“Soraya Parks sure knows how to stake her claim. And you’re not even married yet.”

What is she going to do to Gabrielle once I decide to push through the wedding?

‘She’s going to eliminate her from the chessboard, for sure.’ Kylo grunts. And she will be justified. She will be your new Luna, after all. She has every right to eliminate threats to your marriage, which will ultimately be viewed as threats to the pack.’

I look down at Gabrielle’s sleeping face. She looks so serene, so peaceful.

As long as Soraya thinks of her as a competition, her life will be in danger.

If I’m wise, I should stay away from her... for my own sanity and for her own safety.

I start to lift her up in my arms.

“Alpha, allow me...” Benjamin says, but I ignore him.

“I will stay away from her,” I tell him as I carry Gabrielle in my arms. “Soon.”

“Of course, Alpha,” my beta says quietly.

Benjamin leads me to the car, opening the passenger door for me.

“Where to?” he asks.

“To her place.”

A few minutes later, I lay Gabrielle’s sleeping form on her bed. She stirs but doesn’t wake up. I sigh as I watch her quietly.

‘It’s not fair to her, Kylo. We are putting her in unnecessary danger. Soraya will never leave her alone. She’s only human. She doesn’t stand a chance against her. ‘I am not sure who I’m trying to convince more. Kylo or myself. ‘And you know that the only reason we wanted to get close to her was because we’re still holding on to the past. She was the closest replacement we had for Cassie. And that makes it even more unfair.’

Because I know that no one can replace Cassie in my heart. She will always be my mate. The one and only love of my life.

I stand up and head for the door. I have had my fun with Gabrielle. I have to distance myself from her from now on. If only to keep her out of danger.

“Wake up, Willow...” Suddenly, I hear her say.

I quickly spun around, holding my breath as I watch her.

‘What did she say again?’ Kylo is on full alert. He heard it too.

Willow... I haven’t heard that name since Cassie died.

Willow was the name of Cassie’s wolf.

Chapter 13- The Wolf

Gabrielle.

I’m feeling groggy and confused. My brain is clouded with chants and monsters, and for a moment, I find it hard to tell dream from reality.

It’s just a dream, for sure. Because how can monsters with blazing eyes and fangs be real?

I close my eyes for a moment. That monster gave a warning. He said...

What did he say?

D*mn it! Why can’t we remember a huge chunk of our dreams? I can still feel the fear and panic, but I can’t remember a lot of it.

Then I remember something else in my dream. A creature. Beautiful. Magnificent. Its fur is white as snow. Its eyes, bright green, a shade similar to mine.

It’s the first time this creature appears in my dreams, and yet somehow, I feel like I’ve known it all my life.

Willow.

Even the thought of its name brings my heart to a stuttering halt.

The creature’s name is Willow. And suddenly, the confusion and fear I earlier felt start to melt away and are replaced by a fierce longing to see the creature again.

She looks like a formidable wolf. But I know in my heart that she’s a protector, a guardian.

Suddenly, there’s a knock on the door. I sit up in my bed,

realizing that I am back in my room, and in my bed. I distinctly remember going to work this morning. I even remember Soraya Parks's power slap. That wasn't a dream for sure. How did I get here?

I hear a knock again, this time it's louder and more persistent.

"Wait a minute!" I say, staring to my feet.

When I open the door, my best friend, Maya Monroe, walks into my apartment, without waiting for me to invite her in.

"Why aren't you answering my calls?" she demands. She takes a look at my pristine white clothes and her expression turns from irritation to panic. "Ohmigod! What happened to you?"

I look down on myself, seeing my dusty clothing, the same clothing I wore when I went to the office this morning.

"I... stumbled and fell, I guess," I lie. "I... was just about to change my clothes when you knocked on the door. Anyway, what are you doing here at this hour?"

"I called your office, and they told me you left early," she says almost frantically. "You shouldn't even be at work, you should be in the hospital. Getting treatments!"

Maya was with me when I first found out that I have cancer. She had been pestering me to quit my job and get aggressive treatments ever since.

"Well, if I don't have a job, I will not be able to afford treatments."

"I thought Golden Crescent, a.k.a. the biggest group of companies in the country, has a great health insurance package!" she says sternly. Then she narrows her eyes, looking at me suspiciously. "Or are you trying to hide your sickness because of that b***ard?"

It's no secret that Maya hates Sebastian. Why wouldn't she? For two years, she had witnessed me work my a*s off for a man who had no plans of ever loving me back. And she is right. After Sebastian took Soraya's side this morning, in spite of the fact that she was obviously lying, I knew that he is a hopeless case. I had to let him go.

"Are you going back to the office?" she asks.

You can take the day off.

I remember Sebastian's ruthless words and his stoic face as he said them. I guess that was my wake-up call.

Except in bed, Sebastian will never feel anything for me.

I force a smile on my face as I face Maya. "Why don't I just go to your clinic with you?"

She blinks back at me. "When did you ever have any interest in my practice?"

Maya is a vet, and she's one of the best in the city. Her clientele ranges from cats and dogs to even exotic animals like snakes and birds. I had always admired her for her passion for animals.

“Well, today seems like a good day to start taking an interest,” I say. “Besides, fate tells me that I have to be there.”

A few minutes later, we walk into Maya’s clinic located in an upscale neighborhood in the city.

“Anything I can do to help?” I ask as I settle my bag in a luxurious couch in her reception.

“I only have one pick-up today. My top client brought in his... er... hybrid... dog.” She suddenly sounds uneasy.

“Is something wrong?” I ask.

She pastes a smile on her face. “Nothing, really. It’s just that... my job can be as fascinating as it is challenging. But really, it’s nothing I can’t handle.”

“Don’t tell me you accepted a python again!” Maya’s clients can be cu**oos sometimes.

“No, no. Not a python,” she laughs nervously.

“Something dangerous then?”

“No, it’s just a... dog. Just a bit aggressive, though. But nothing a tranquilizer can’t handle.”

Suddenly, we hear an alarm.

“Da*n it!” Maya curses under her breath. “Stay here.”

Something does not feel right. As she hurriedly runs towards the restricted area where she keeps the animals she is treating, I have a feeling that I shouldn’t leave her alone. So, I run and follow her.

I hear a growl and a loud bark that reverberates across the room. Maya hurriedly puts on a jumpsuit and anti-dog bite gloves.

“You shouldn’t be here!” She glares at me as soon as she sees me.

“Neither should you!” I argue back.

I hear another loud growl.

“What the f*ck is in that room?” I ask her in a panic.

“I told you, it’s just a dog.”

“That dog sure has a scary bark!”

She slowly opens the room. I can tell that she’s being cautious. I’ve never seen Maya this scared of an animal before.

When she opens the door, I see a big cage. Inside it is a huge, fury animal with bright golden eyes trying to gnaw itself free from its chains.

I gasp, finally understanding why she is suddenly uneasy.

“Da*n it, Maya! That is not a dog!” I exclaimed. “That’s a wolf!”

“No, no,” Maya insists. “It’s a hybrid wolf dog. I checked the papers my client gave me before I accepted it here.”

The animal looks at us as if it understands what we are saying. Then it continues to bite at its chains. It is only now that I notice it has a bandage wrapped around its torso.

“What’s wrong with it?”

“I operated on it. Hunting accident. It got hit. I successfully removed the bullet two days ago. It’s been unconscious ever since. But now, I think the tranquilizers’ effects wore off.”

“You think?” I ask sarcastically.

The closer we get the more aggressive the animal gets.

I glance at Maya, who is getting ready to administer another tranquilizer. But as she approaches the cage, the wolf suddenly

lunges forward, snapping its powerful jaws at her. Maya jumps back, barely avoiding being bitten.

“What are we going to do?” I ask, feeling helpless.

Maya frowns. “I don’t know. I’ve never seen anything like this before. It’s like it’s not just a normal animal.”

“It isn’t normal!” I scold her. “What was going through your mind when you accepted it here?”

“It was shot, it was dying!” I can tell that Maya is getting desperate now.

Suddenly, the wolf breaks free of its chains, snarling and baring its teeth. Maya and I back away, fear gripping us both.

I look at the wolf again, and this time, it meets my

gaze. Our eyes lock, and I feel a strange connection that I can’t explain.

Without thinking, I take a step forward, my hand outstretched towards the wolf. It doesn’t move, just stares at me with those bright golden eyes.

And then, to my amazement, the wolf walks towards me, its head lowered in submission.

Chapter 14- Wolf Dog

Gabrielle.

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I reach out and gently stroke the wolf’s fur, feeling the softness beneath my fingertips.

It’s a strange feeling, to be so close to a wild animal and yet feel no fear. In fact, I feel a sense of calm wash over me as I continue to pet the wolf.

As I stroke its fur, I notice a strange marking on its side. It looks almost like a tattoo, but I can’t quite make out what it is. Intrigued, I lean in closer for a better look.

That's when the wolf suddenly snaps at me, its jaws inches from my face. I recoil in shock and stumble backward, my heart racing with fear.

But as quickly as it happened, the wolf retreats, its body language changing from aggression to submission once again. Maya takes advantage of the situation. Quickly, she plunges the needle deep into the wolf's side and slams down the plunger. The wolf howls its torment before finally succumbing to the powerful sedative, its eyes rolling back in its head as it falls into an unconscious slumber.

"Whew! That was close! I thought it was going to be the end of us," Maya says, relief washing over both of us. Then she stares at me with a confused expression. "What was going through your mind? Didn't your parents ever teach you that it's not okay to stick your hands into the cages of wild animals?"

Chapter 14- Wolf Dog

give her a bored expression. "I thought you said this was a dog?"

"Hybrid. A wolfdog to be exact."

"Who would have this for a pet? Wolves can never be domesticated."

"Who can understand the eccentric minds of the rich, right?" Maya opens the door of the cage. "You better wait for me at the reception. I need to change the bandage of this one."

"Are you sure it isn't going to wake up?"

"The amount of tranquilizer I gave it is enough to make a mammoth sleep for a whole day, don't worry."

"Alright, let me get some air," I say.

I nod and make my way out of the facility, still feeling the adrenaline coursing through my veins. As I step outside into the cool night air, I take a deep breath and try to calm my racing heart.

I can't help but think about the strange tattoo-like marking on its side. It looks like some strange letters of an alphabet unknown to men. So, I am certain that it was marked there. I wonder what it means, and why someone would subject a wild animal to such a thing.

And Maya says that the animal is a hybrid? A domesticated wolfdog? Then why was it shot in a hunting accident?

A part of me suddenly feels enraged for the animal. And even though she had put herself in so much danger, I am thankful for Maya for taking it in.

I look at the sky, the clouds look dark and heavy when it had been so bright and sunny this morning.

This is a strange, strange day. This morning, it felt like Sebastian and I were making some progress. It was the first time he ever waited up for me and suggested we go to the office together. And then everything went downhill when Soraya Parks entered the

scene.

The next time you cross Miss Parks, I will kill you!

I gasp. Remembering my dream. It feels so real. That man—that monster! His eyes look a lot like the eyes of the hybrid wolfdog in Maya's clinic!

I bring my hands to my temples. A headache suddenly hits me. I feel a drizzle over my face, but I barely notice it. My mind is going a mile a minute, trying to make sense of everything that's happened today.

As I walk towards the reception, I start to feel like there's something more going on here. Something bigger than just a hybrid wolfdog and a strange marking on its side.

What if my encounter with this man earlier was not really a dream? What if it had been real? And Soraya Parks has

My headache gets worse as I sit on the couch. I rub my hands over my arms realizing I'm a little drenched from the rain. I lean back against the soft cushions of the couch and close my eyes, trying to clear my head.

I just cannot shake off the feeling that there's something sinister going on. And I am right at the center of it.

Alexander.

I enter Doctor Monroe's clinic. I usually have someone else handle my affairs, but this one is different. This one needs my personal attention.

Last week, I went on one of my hunting escapades with Arthur. Unfortunately, there was a group of hunters there. They had mistaken Arthur for a wild animal, and they shot him. Then no one can fault me for what I did to those men afterward.

They deserved what came to them.

As I enter the reception, I find it completely empty. Doctor Monroe had been true to her promises. I paid her handsomely to keep Arthur a secret, so I guess she let her entire staff take the day off.

No veterinarian will take in a wolf. I manage to convince Doctor Monroe that Arthur is a hybrid wolfdog. She is either a little

dumb or she cannot resist the opportunity to treat yet another exotic animal.

A figure on the couch catches my attention. She is curled up, hugging herself, as if she is freezing. I look at her face and I gasp.

This is...

'Casandra!' Neman, my wolf, exclaims inside my head.

'No. Cassie's dead. 'I say. "I know this woman. She's human.' This is Sebastian's assistant. What was her name again? Gabrielle Jones?

'But she looks a lot like Cassie, doesn't she?'

‘Yes. But also different. See? She doesn’t have Cassie’s mole, the one just below her right eye.

Neman is silent for a few moments. Then he says, ‘You are right. This is not Cassie. I cannot sense Willow in her, or any wolf for that matter. She’s human.’

“There you are!” Doctor Monroe interrupts my thoughts. “You’re a little early.”

“I finished early,” I say.

“Follow me. He’s still out. But I can give you instructions. You can take him home now.”

Before I follow Doctor Monroe, I take another glance at Gabrielle. She shivers and rubs a hand on her arm, but she doesn’t seem to be awake, Just feeling cold, I guess.

Without thinking. I shrug out of my coat. And very gently, careful not to wake her up, I put the coat over her.

Chapter 15- All About the Money

Gabrielle.

I wake up from my nap, feeling warm and comfortable.

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Fresh, masculine scent fills my senses. That’s when I notice the brown luxurious coat that is draped over me.

“Great! You are awake. I’m just about done here,” Maya’s chirpy voice greets me.

“You sound happier,” I tell her. “That wild animal gone now?”

Maya giggles nervously. “Yeah,” she replies. “And I didn’t know I’d be so relieved.

Guess I can cross that off my bucket list now.”

“Huh!” I smirk. “I wonder what else is on that list!”

“Anyway, let me treat you to dinner,” she says.

I beam at her as I stand up. “Now, you’re talking.” I gather the coat in my arms. “Is this yours?”

“Sure, because I wear men’s coats all the time.” She rolls her eyes.

“Then whose is this?”

“Probably Mr. Alexander’s. He was the only one who came by to

Chapter 15- All About the Money

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collect his hybrid dog,” she says. “He probably noticed that your top was thin, and you seem to be shivering.”

“I will leave it here. Can you return it for me?” I ask.

“It’s raining outside, and I don’t have an umbrella,” Maya argues. “Why don’t you just borrow it?”

“Are you sure that’s okay?”

Maya shrugs. “The fact that he draped it over you means he’s already giving you permission to use it.”

Then something in her eyes lights up.

“What?” I ask.

“Ohmigod! Alexander must have been attracted to you! Though you were sleeping, he cannot help but be drawn to your beauty! Isn’t that romantic?”

I frown at her. “You should have been a romance novelist, instead of a vet, you know.”

“Hey, I am not kidding!” she says, sounding excited about playing matchmaker. “I will totally introduce you to him. He is so hot! Plus, he’s a billionaire!”

I frown at her. “Wow, as if I haven’t had enough of his kind already. Remember? The last man I fell in love with was also a hot billionaire.”

Chapter 15- All About the Money

Maya rolls her eyes at the mention of Sebastian. It’s no secret that she hates him. “Alec is different. Sebastian is a cold, self-centered pr*ck. Alec is down-to-earth and charming. He suits your personality more.

“Come on, give me a break, Maya,” I say. “You know I can’t be in a relationship anymore.”

Between Sebastian and cancer, I think I’m worn out. I don’t want to spend the rest of my days feeling like a complete failure.

“Who knows? Maybe Alec is meant to give you a reason to fight for your life,” Maya looks away. I can detect the tears in her voice.

I sigh, feeling sorry for her. “Come on. Let’s just take one day at a time. For now, dinner.” As we head out of her clinic, I slip on the coat. Maya is right. The material feels warm and nice on my skin.

“Miss Jones...” Suddenly, I hear a familiar voice calling me.

I look up and see Benjamin standing outside the door, looking like he’s been waiting for me.

“What are you doing here?”

“Mr. King wants you in his office now,” he replies.

“It’s already past six!” Maya says. I can tell that she’s starting to feel aggravated.

Chapter 15- All About the Money

“I know,” Benjamin says. “But Miss Jones is at our boss’s disposal, regardless of the hour.”

“Look, it’s late now. Can’t it wait till tomorrow?” I ask.

“No. I’m afraid not.” Benjamin shakes his head.

“Look, mister! My friend is not going anywhere! Why don’t you tell your boss to just go and f*ck himself.”

Benjamin’s head snaps up in Maya’s direction. “What did you just say?”

“I said that Sebastian King can just go and f*...”

“Okay!” I say, interrupting Maya. I know where this is headed. It can easily get out of hand. “Why don’t we all just calm down?” I turn to Maya. “Let me go and see what he wants. Perhaps, we’ll have that dinner some other night.”

Maya turns to me, her eyes wide with disbelief. “Are you kidding me?”

I shake my head. “I’m sorry, Maya. If I don’t go to him now, he’ll just show up in my apartment later.”

Maya heaves a frustrated sigh, but then she nods. “Call me if he does anything funny, okay?”

I nod and give her a hug.

A few minutes later, I am walking in the familiar corridor, towards the corner office of Sebastian King.

His head snaps up in my direction as soon as I open the door, as if he had been waiting for me all afternoon.

“Miss Jones...”

“Mister King, I thought you had already dismissed me for the day?” I ask in a firm voice.

“That was this morning,” he says, getting up from his seat. “I need you with me now.”

“I have already resigned as your secretary.”

“Yes, but until you find a suitable replacement, you still work for me, remember?”

My pulse quickens, as he strides towards me purposefully. In a split second, I find myself backed up against the wall.

“I know you want to end this. But don’t forget that I already paid you for the rest of the month.”

Right! He always paid me in advance. But right now, I can’t return that money anymore because I have already used it to pay for Liam’s surgery.

His hand crawls under the coat that I’m wearing, and his fingers start tracing my body.

My breathing grows shallower as his fingers dig into my skin.

I forget to breathe the moment his lips touch mine. Slowly, I’m becoming putty in his arms. Resisting him is a skill I might never learn.

His hands skillfully strip the coat off me, and then he throws it to the ground.

“I paid you for the month, Gabrielle!” he says. His voice sounds stern. “That means you are mine and mine alone. At least, until this arrangement ends.”

He leans down and nuzzles my neck, sucking hard at my skin, as if he's marking me. I feel a gush of liquid heat between my legs.

"I don't want other men touching what's mine!" He presses himself against me. I can feel his rock-hard arousal against my abdomen. "Do you understand, Gabrielle?"

"No," I say in a weak voice.

He stops kissing me, looking at me in surprise. "What did you say?"

At this point, I gather both my wits and my strength to push him off me.

"No," I say again. "You don't own me. If you can have another woman, why can't I have fun with other men? I should have. Because other men would have been more considerate of my body."

I see the moment anger flares in his eyes. "What the f*ck is that supposed to mean?"

"For two years you have used my body as you pleased. You made me take different pills and all sorts of contraceptives to make sure I do not bear you a child."

He stares back at me, suddenly speechless.

I take a deep breath. This is the first time I had the strength to talk to him like this.

I have cancer... probably because of you!

But I don't have the courage to say that.

"Be... because of our arrangement, my body got broken. Now, I'm barren!

Congratulations. Now, you can rest assured that I will not get pregnant with you... or with any man for that matter!"

Sebastian stares at me for a long moment. His face remains cold and stoic. I cannot tell if he understands what I am saying, or if he feels remorse for what happened to me.

Finally, he takes a step back and takes a deep breath. "How much?"

Excuse me?

"Wha-what do you mean?"

He shrugs. "If you feel that I damaged you in any way, let me make amends." I still cannot read the expression on his face. "How much do you want?"

F*ck! It's still about the money, isn't it? He really does think that I'm like a wh*re who spread my legs for him because of money.

I try to compose myself, try to hold back the rage that I feel. And when I raise my eyes to him, my voice is calm, and even.

"One million dollars!" I say without batting an eyelash.

Chapter 16- The Bluff

Sebastian stares back at me for a long moment. If he is shocked, he doesn't show it. But Sebastian has always been good at hiding his thoughts and emotions from other people, even from me.

Well, if he thinks I'm only after his money, then so be it!

I'm dying anyway. I would never live to see the day that he feels something other than lust for me. So, why bother changing his opinion of me?

Then without a word, or any hint of emotion on his face, he walks towards his desk, draw out his checkbook and write something in it.

No way! Is he calling my bluff?

When he hands me the check amounting to one million dollars, I can hardly believe my eyes.

Is this really what Sebastian turned me into? A gold-digging wh*re?

I don't remember much about my childhood, but before I worked for Sebastian King, I was all about academic accomplishments and having pride in what I do. But during my time with him, I did things I never imagined I would be doing.

Love does make you do foolish things.

And this check is a firm reminder of things I never thought I would be.

Putting on a brave face, I raise my chin at Sebastian and give him a proud smirk.

"This is not about the money, Mr. King. I deserve this money, not because I was good in bed. But because you... destroyed me!" I grip the check tightly in my hands as I blink back the tears. "You destroyed my life! You shattered my dreams of ever becoming a mother! Because of you, I am going to die alone and miserable!" I raise the check in my hands. "So, I am accepting this check, not because I'm a wh*re, but because it's the least you can do for destroying my life!"

"No, Gabrielle... listen..." he stammers. For the first time since I have known Sebastian, he genuinely looks like he has no idea what to say.

"No, Sebastian. You listen," I say in a firm voice. Then I threw the check on his face.

"Here. I am returning the fifty thousand dollars you paid me for this month. The nine hundred fifty thousand dollars is yours. I am paying you to leave me the f*ck alone!"

He walks towards me with definite precision, that it almost made me lose my confidence.

"What the f*ck did you just say? Are you really out of your

"No! For the first time in two years, I'm thinking straight." I turn on my heel and pick up the coat from the floor. "You already told me to take the day off. So, if you don't mind, I'm going to enjoy what's left of my evening."

I head for the door.

"Don't turn your back on me!" he growls as he grabs my wrist. I don't fight him; it might make him angrier. "Why are you doing this?"

“Doing what? Taking your money? Or using it to pay you to stay away from me?”

“I don’t need the money! I’m not accepting your money!”

“Too bad. Because I’m giving it to you anyway. And if you don’t let me go now, I will have to call the police and file for harassment.” I narrow my eyes at him. “It would mean a lot of money for me. And a lot of damage to your spotless reputation. You don’t want it to get that ugly, do you?”

The fury radiating off of him was so strong that I could see the lines of his veins pulsing on his forehead.

He takes a step towards me, and I take a step back. He moves closer, and I retreat until my back hits the wall, blocking any further escape.

Sebastian smirks, realizing that I am trapped between the wall and his body.

“Get out of m-my way...” I stammer.

I’m not scared of Sebastian. I know he won’t hurt me. It’s my body I’m afraid of. Because I know that if he so much as kisses me, I will melt in his arms, and I will take back everything I just said to him just now.

“Hmmm... you’re so confident now, huh?” He looks down on the coat on my arm, running a finger over its fabric. “This is expensive,” he says. “Let me guess. You found another rich man to f*ck you, huh?”

His tone is angry and condescending.

Is this really what he thought of me after all these years?

Don’t dwell too much on it! A part of me says. ‘He’s angry. He doesn’t know what he’s saying.

“Tell me! Is he the owner of this coat? Is he waiting for you in front of the building?”

“Get off me, Sebastian!”

I make an attempt to push him. But he is quick to catch both my hands and trap them both over my head. Now, I am really hopeless to escape.

“What’s he like? Is he good in bed?” he asks.

His hand slowly descends and comes to rest on my breast. His thumb starts to move in a slow circle, eliciting a soft moan from my lips. He carefully begins to massage my nipple. I can feel my p**sy start to weep.

Sebastian closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. “Hmmm... I can smell your arousal,” he whispers. I am not sure if he can really smell my wetness, but he’s always right. “Can he make you this wet?”

His hands continue to travel down my body. He slides his hand underneath my skirt, teasing my inner thigh. I bite my lower lip to suppress a moan.

“See? Just one touch, Gabrielle...” he whispers in my ear. His finger trails up to the very top of my p**sy, near the crease of my thigh. “Just one touch, and you forget about any other man. You are mine! And I’m not good at sharing.”

This brings me back to my senses. I am able to free my hands and give him a push.

“I am not yours. Not anymore!” I growl in anger. “You can’t keep doing this to me, Sebastian! And maybe there is another man. And he’s not only rich, he’s a pretty stand-up guy! He is not keeping me a secret! And he has the balls to stand up for our relationship. Something you will never be man enough to do!”

Anger flares up in his eyes as soon as he hears my words. I can see his face turning red with anger, and suddenly, his eyes seem like blazing fire in their sockets.

For a moment, he doesn’t look human. He looks magnificent, divine, and if possible, even more beautiful.

Then as if he’s trying to get ahold of his emotions, he turns away from me. He punches the coffee table behind him, and it instantly broke in half.

“Get out!” he says in a low guttural voice. “Leave now!”

“Sebastian...” I whisper, scared that I have gone too far.

“I said, LEAVE NOW!”

Chapter 17- Wish she was you

Sebastian.

“I said LEAVE NOW!” I roar at Gabrielle.

Good thing I have my back on her, or she would have witnessed me slowly turning into a beast.

I hear her sta**ering to her feet, and then she slams the door behind her.

“F*ck it, Kylo!” I cry out angrily. “Get ahold of yourself!”

I underestimated myself, and I underestimated the effect that Gabrielle really has on me.

When I touched her, my senses were electrified. It’s always like this when I touch Gabrielle. I go insane with lust.

And when she mentions that she’s seeing another man, I cannot help it, too. I go crazy with rage. The thought of her being touched by another man just drives me mad.

Kylo is the same. And now, he is enraged, and I can hardly control him.

‘She’s lying!’ Kylo roars. ‘There’s no way that what she’s saying is true!’

us

here!’ I order him.

It takes a few moments and then finally he calms down. I can feel my pulse start to stabilize.

‘You will not do that again!’ I scold him. ‘We will not turn here in the office just to satisfy those horror stories they write about in books.’

I march over to the bar and pour myself a glass of whiskey.

‘It’s not true, you know,’ Kylo says. ‘There is no way she would melt like that with our touch and let another man touch her that way!’

‘So what if she’s lying? Didn’t you hear? She doesn’t want us to come near her anymore?’

‘She doesn’t mean that. She’s just mad right now.’

I am not sure. I know Gabrielle well. This is the first time she talked to me like that. And something tells me that she means it. She wants me to stay the f*ck away from her.

It’s over.

Gabrielle and I are over...

Gabrielle.

I run out of Sebastian’s office as quickly as I can. All the years that I have known Sebastian, he’s always been cold and emotionless. But today, I see him lose control.

For a second, he looks like he’s going to turn into some sort of animal. He reminds me of something I only see in my dreams!

On the way out, I bump into Benjamin.

“Miss Jones, are you okay?” he asks me.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” I reply, then I walk past him.

“Do you want a ride?” he calls out.

“No, thanks!” And then I blend into the crowd, ignoring him.

I just want to leave. I want to get away from Sebastian. I just know that the more I stay with him, the more I will fall for him all over again.

The city lights, the noise of the traffic, everything feels like a blur to me. Then suddenly, I start to feel dizzy. Sweat run down my forehead and I feel a sharp pain in my abdomen.

“F*ck!” I curse as I stop walking, holding my tummy. The pain intensifies every second.

“H-help!” I can barely utter the word. Then everything turns dark around me.

I don’t know how much time have passed. But when I opened my eyes again, I see bright lights on white walls.

“Good, you’re awake,” a soft female voice say beside me. I turn to my left and see a friendly-looking nurse smiling down at me. “Feeling better?”

I try to sit up. “Where am I?”

“In the hospital. You fainted on the street. An ambulance brought you in. The doctor would like to run more tests.”

I shake my head. "That's not necessary. I know exactly what's wrong with me."

She looks at me hesitantly for a moment, then she nods. "Okay. I will have the discharge papers ready."

As the nurse leaves, my phone rings. I see Maya's name on the screen. I quickly compose myself.

"Hey, Maya," I greet her, keeping my voice steady, so she won't suspect that I ended up in the hospital after Sebastian had called me to come in after office hours. As if, I needed to give Maya another reason to hate Sebastian.

"Where are you? I called you like a bazillion times!"

I check my phone and see that I have a dozen missed calls from Maya alone.

"Sorry, I accidentally muted my phone. What's up?"

"Where are you? I'm going to pick you up."

"Oh no, no!" I say, almost in a panic. "Don't pick me up! I'm... I'm actually on my way home. You don't need to worry."

"Are you sure?" Maya doesn't sound convinced.

"Ummm-hmmm."

"What did Sebastian King want from you at this hour anyway?"

"Nothing." I reply. "He just needed some office files."

"Alright," she says. "Just take care of yourself and rest well. You really need it."

"Thank you, Maya. Bye."

As I hung up, I accidentally swipe my finger to the gallery and a photo of me and Sebastian displays on the screen.

This is the only photo of me and Sebastian together in one frame. I remember this night vividly.

We just came from a company dinner, and he had been drinking. He took me back to my apartment. I thought he was going to f*ck me, because why else would he go to my apartment? But to my greatest surprise, he just held me in bed.

I took a picture of us then. And just before he succumbs to sleep, he smiled at me and said, "I wish she was you."

Then he dozed off, leaving me wondering what he meant by what he said.

Who was she?

Was she the reason why he couldn't bring himself to like me?

As I listen to his quiet snores that night, tears roll down my cheeks. That was the first time I realized that I was in love with him.

The nurse returns with my discharge papers, snapping me out of my thoughts.

“I checked your records. You really need the treatment, sweetie,” she says, smiling at me accidentally. “It’s not yet too late.”

I nod. “Thank you.”

Before I go home, I pass by the dry cleaners to drop off the coat of Maya’s client.

I have to remember to ask Maya for his contact details. It was so nice of him to let me borrow it.

Just as I start to walk home, a black limousine pulls up just in front of my apartment.

I get nervous because usually, anything luxurious that pulls up in front of my place has something to do with Sebastian King.

And I’m right. Because as I walk past it, the window rolls down,

“Get in the car, Miss Jones. There’s something important that we need to talk about.”

S*it! What is it this time?

Chapter 18- Queen Mother

Gabrielle.

Please give me a break!

What do these eccentric people want with me? I am practically a nobody, but why do I always get dragged into their business?

Of course, I get into the car and smile politely at her.

As the car starts moving, Samantha clicks on the privacy window, and then she turns to me to say, “I like you, Miss Jones. You are smart and quite efficient at your job. And Addison needs an assistant like you.”

I nod, smiling at her compliment. “Thank you, Ma’am.”

“But recently, you are becoming a problem. And you know what we do with problems? We eliminated them.”

I swallow hard. Does she mean what I think she means?

“E-eliminate?” I repeat.

She heaves a sigh. “Yes. I can’t fire you. I have no grounds to do so. It won’t be a good look on me. Plus, I doubt my son will like that I’m meddling in his affairs.”

Aren’t you already? I thought. After all, Sebastian’s engagement with Soraya was all his mother’s doing.

“So, I suggest you leave on your own.”

“You mean, I should just resign?”

“Yes,” she replies. “In exchange for your cooperation, I am going to compensate you handsomely, and I will make sure you will find a better employment elsewhere.”

She is bribing me to stay away from my son.

“I am not naive, though sometimes, I pretend to be. Don’t think for a second that I do not know what’s going on between you and Sebastian. He fancies you, I will give you that. But don’t get your hopes up. He will never marry you.”

She smiles at me apologetically. I am not sure if it’s only my imagination or I actually see a hint of sincerity in her expression.

“I am not delusional. I am neither rich nor influential. I have no value to a man like Sebastian King,” I say to her.

She gently shakes her head. “Trust me. It’s actually more complicated than that. Sebastian will just not marry outside of his... er... class.”

Yep. It all boils down to wealth and status in life. It’s not my fault I was born poor. But I also have no ambitions of rubbing elbows with the la crème de la crème. I just happened to fall in love with one of them.”

I raise my chin and give Samantha a reassuring smile. “Well, you didn’t have to bribe me, Mrs. King. I have already submitted my resignation letter.”

Her eyes widen in surprise. “You have?”

I nod. “I want to go back to my life,” I say. “You probably think I want all of these? That I want Sebastian’s money. But the truth is, I really want no part of it.”

She leans back on her seat looking embarrassed.

“That is not really what I mean, Miss Jones.”

“You don’t have to deny it, Mrs. King,” I tell her frankly. “And don’t feel bad as well. I’ll take brutal truth over sweet lies any day.”

The older woman raises a brow at me. “Maybe now that you’re almost no longer an employee of my son, perhaps we can be truthful to each other.”

I nod. “I am not sure how long I will stay. Mr. King wants to find a replacement for me first.”

Her eyes light up and she flashes me an excited smile. “Recommend Soraya! She has a finance degree from an Ivy League university. She is more than qualified to do your job!”

I am not particularly fond of Miss Parks, but I keep my expression stoic. When she looks at me expectantly, all I can do is nod. “I’ll make sure to mention it.”

“Soraya will be good for Sebastian,” she continues. “More than her qualifications, an affiliation with her family will be very good for our clan and everybody else we look after.”

I nod, then I look away from her.

How many times does she need to remind me how great Soraya is for Sebastian?

The limousine stops, indicating that we are in front of my apartment once again.

“Well, Mrs. King, if we have nothing else to talk about, I bid you a good evening.”

Just as I start to come out of her limo, she gently grabs my arm.

“Just a moment, dear,” she says.

Then she reaches inside her purse and hands me a green velvety box.

“Wh-what is it?”

“For you,” she replies.

I open the box and find a diamond tennis bracelet staring back at me.

“I know about your relationship with my son,” Samantha continues. “Take this. As a token of my appreciation. Though he doesn’t show it much, but I know you have made my son happy when he needed it the most.”

“When he needed it the most?” I echo.

She nods at me. “He may look formidable, but my son is... aching inside. He needed warmth and comfort, and you gave it to him without trapping him, or pressuring him for something he may never give you. You didn’t blackmail him or extort him for money. He needed someone like you at that time.”

She really does know everything about me and Sebastian.

I feel embarrassed. We tried to keep our relationship a secret. But if his mother knew, then everybody knew.

I put the jewelry on the seat beside her.

“I’m sorry but I can’t accept this. You don’t have to thank me, madam. I was having fun with him as well. I also have physical needs. And Sebastian was there and available.” I want to keep a portion of my pride intact. The last thing I want is for everyone to think that I’ve been dumped by Sebastian King. “So, if you have nothing else to say to me, I need to go.”

She doesn’t say anything. When I look up, I see that she is looking at me intensely, studying my face. I suddenly feel self-conscious.

“Is there dirt on my face?” I ask.

She blinks back at me, as if realizing that she had been staring.

“Oh, forgive me, my dear. This is the first time that I’ve seen you up close. I didn’t realize how beautiful you are before.”

I smile shyly at her. “Ummm... thank you, madam.”

She stares at me again. Then she shakes her head and smiles apologetically. “You just remind me of someone I knew a long time ago.”

“Who?”

She shakes her head. “Doesn’t matter. She’s gone.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. Anyway, if there is nothing else, I have to go.”

She nods. "I'm glad we had the chance to talk, dear. You are actually more decent than I thought."

go

down the limo and start walking towards my apartment.

"Quite the ride you have there," a male voice says behind me. "Is that your latest sugar daddy?"

Chapter 19- Daddy Dearest

Gabrielle.

I spin around and make out the silhouette of Henry, my adoptive father, sitting in the shadows of the porch. He throws his cigarette away and walks slowly toward me.

"Wha-what are you doing here?"

"Look at you. Being driven home in a limousine." There is malice in his smirk. "Is that the man who's been keeping you afloat these days?"

"What? No!" I exclaim. "How could you accuse me of that?"

He shrugs. "Hey, you're a grown woman, my dear. So, I don't have a say in your life choices. I won't even judge. As long as you are happy, I'm happy."

I raise a suspicious brow at him. For as long as I can remember, my father is a hopeless drunkard and a gambling addict. Whenever he comes to visit, it's always because he needed something from me.

"Do you mean, as long as I keep you happy," I say with an accusing tone.

"I've always known you were a smart girl," he laughs. "And you are right. I need some money."

gave you barely a week ago?"

meres the 20 thousand dollars I

"That was a week ago, kiddo. You see I have some people who won't get off my back unless I pay them."

I have completely lost hope in my father. Before, I had always been giving him the benefit of the doubt. But for the past years, it had always been like this. He gambles and he drinks, he causes trouble. I have lost count of the times I have bailed him out of jail for petty things like bar fights, or illegal gambling. My money would have been better off being donated to the orphanage. At least I would be saving meaningful lives, instead of helping my father throw his life away.

"I'm sorry, I have no money this time," I say.

"Hey, I know that there's something going on between you and your boss. Sebastian King, was it? He's pretty big shot. Yeah, I know you're having an affair with him."

My eyes widen in shock. "No, that's not..."

“Don’t even try to deny it, kiddo. Twice I’ve seen him coming out of your apartment at questionable hours of the morning. And I can tell he’s pretty h**ked on you. I’m sure he won’t hesitate to give you some money if you asked.”

“No, that’s no longer the case. I’m no longer his secretary! I quit. I am jobless and I don’t even have money saved up.”

It’s true. I am almost broke. All the money that Sebastian gave me was either donated to charity or given to my father during his occasional visits.

“Why the hell would you quit such a great job?”

“I am miserable there, Dad!” I explained. In a way it is true. My colleagues respect me because they know I’m good at what I do, but now, I know that they have all been suspecting that I’m banging the boss. I’ve been in love with my boss, who didn’t and would never return my feelings. And now, my boss’s mother practically told me that if I hadn’t resigned by myself, I would need to be eliminated.

But instead of feeling sorry, my father threw his hands impatiently in the air. “That’s s**pid! A high-paying job could never make you miserable. You just have to endure! Do you know how many girls would kill to be in your position right now?”

“Then they can have my job! I’m done with that company!”

“What about me? How will you support me?”

My head snaps up at him in surprise. “Huh? Since when did we agree that I’d be your life support?”

Anger flares in his eyes. “You heartless ingrate! Have you forgotten? I raised you, I fed you and gave you a home when you’re not even my flesh and blood! Without me, you would have been dead a long time ago!”

Some parts of what he said is true. He did raise me even though we’re not related. But it had all been my mother who took care of me. But when her kidneys failed and she got really sick, my father treated me like a sl*ve, like it is my responsibility to take care of him instead.

Memories of my mother flood my mind again. She was as beautiful as she was kind. She was the one who worked hard for the family, while my father kept on drinking and gambling.

I tried to help save my mother because my father wouldn’t do anything. She needed a kidney, so I attempted to give her one of mine. But to my uttermost shock, the test results showed that my kidney wasn’t compatible with hers. That’s when I found out that we weren’t biologically related.

I was so shocked that I refused to admit it at first. But the tests didn’t lie. And later on, I had come to terms with it. I figured it didn’t matter if they weren’t my real parents. They took care of me even though I wasn’t their own. And that was more than enough.

“I know that I owe you and Mom my life,” I mutter. “I will always be thankful for that.”

“See? Then why aren’t you giving me money now?”

“Because I don’t have it!” I cry. “You finished it all last time!”

“That was only 20 thousand!” he argues. “With your high-paying job and the trinkets you should receive from your boss for giving him a good time, you expect me to believe that you’ve only saved 20 thousand dollars? Come on!”

“20 thousand is a lot of money” I argue. “And my boss does not give me trinkets! Even if he does, I will never accept it.”

“I don’t care!” he growls. “I am deep s*it, and as the daughter I raised, it’s your responsibility to save me.”

I sigh, feeling his desperation weighing heavy on me. “How much do you need this time?”

“Two hundred thousand dollars in three days! Or I’ll expose you to the media.”

“Really? You’re resulting to blackmail?” I can hardly believe what I’m hearing.

“I’m desperate. It’s either your reputation or my life!” he boomed.

“You’ll expose me for what? You have nothing on me! And why would the media even pay attention to me? I’m practically a nobody!”

“You probably are no one. But I bet everybody would pay attention to the juicy details of your boss’s affair with his secretary.”

I froze in my place. He’s got to be kidding, right?

Seeing my reaction, Henry gives me a malicious smile. “Atta, kiddo. I knew you would listen.”

Then he leaves.

I stare into space, still iced from his words. I can’t let him do that. That would destroy Sebastian and his company. And I would have no chance of ever finding another job again.

My thoughts are interrupted by the sound of my phone ringing. Still in a daze, I press the answer button.

“Elle!” I hear Maya’s frantic voice on the other line. “You have to turn on the news. Now!”

Chapter 20- The Voice

Gabrielle.

“Why? What’s on the news?”

“That b***ard Sebastian King is on the da*n news!” Maya wails on the other line.

“Seriously? After using you and ruining you, he’s just going to get engaged to some brat?”

“Maya, Sebastian King has to get married sometime. He’s the most eligible bachelor in the country. And guys like him marry their own kind. It was never going anywhere with me.”

“You’re okay with all these? You got the wrong end of the bargain here! You got sick and he’s going to get his happy ever after. Life is so unfair!”

“Don’t worry about it too much, Maya. I just want to move on with my life, without Sebastian. I’m positive that I will be alright.”

I don’t want to waste the last days of my life whining over my broken heart.

I am sure is some hope left for me.

“Do you want to stay at my apartment for a while? I don’t think you should be alone.” I can hear the sadness in Maya’s voice.

“No, I’m fine.” I insist. “I need to settle my affairs at Golden Crescent Corp. first.”

“So, he found a replacement for you?”

“Most likely.”

Although, I doubt that Soraya can be called a suitable replacement for me.

The next day, I go to the office, putting on a brave face. I first go to HR and when they give me my settlement, I was surprised.

“I think there has been a mistake,” I say.

The HR Manager shakes her head.

“Mr. King was happy with your performance and said you should be well-compensated for it. He gave you an extra three months’ salary on top of your other benefits.”

“Oh.”

This is quite generous of him.

“After you sign everything, we will transfer the money to your bank account.”

I nod and sign all the papers I need to sign. Then I go back to my office and start packing my personal things.

I’m going to miss working here.

I feel sad and scared at the same time. Questions like ‘What am I going to do?’ and ‘Where am I gonna go?’ race inside my brain.

‘Don’t worry. You’re going to be okay.’ someone says.

I snap my head up, looking around for the owner of the voice that just spoke to me. But weirdly, I find that I am alone in my office. I look at the doorway and call, “Hello! Is somebody there?”

No answer.

I walk towards the door to see if someone is outside, but I no one is standing close. I walk out of my office to the employee desks.

“Excuse me,” I call the attention of the employees on the floor. “Was someone standing outside my office?”

I stare at the blank faces of my former officemates. No one answers. I really did hear someone talk to me back there. Or did I just imagine it in my head?

“Okay, thank you.”

As I turn on my heel, I hear someone call out to me. “Oh, poor little Miss Jones.” I turn around and see Hazel Gibson, the administrative manager, sneering at me.

“Excuse me?”

She slowly walks up to me. “Did you get fired after that incident with Miss Parks? Or did you resign out of humiliation when you found out about your engagement with Mr. King?”

I raise my chin to her. “For your information, I resigned days before that unfortunate incident with Miss Parks. I have already made other plans.”

“Pfff! Liar! If you really resigned, then where are you going? Have you already found another job?”

“Do I need to have another job before I can quit this job? Some of us just need to take a break.”

“Oh don’t kid yourself, my dear. We all know what really happened. You thought that sleeping with the boss can get you ahead in your career? Hmmm... maybe it did. But it didn’t last, did it?” She laughs, raising her voice for everybody to hear. “Because now, the boss met his perfect match, and he threw you away like an overused sex doll, that has lost its appeal!”

“Be mindful of your words, Miss Gibson. I can very well sue you for damaging my reputation.”

“Oh, please, Miss Jones! You don’t have any reputation to damage anymore. Everyone knows of the kind of woman that you are. The moment you started sleeping with Mr. Campbell, your ‘career’ just went down the drain. I don’t even need to mention the incident with Miss Parks.”

“Okay, I’m done here!” I say, refusing to stoop down her level. I turn on my heel and start to walk away.

“Do you think you can hold a candle to Miss Parks? You are nothing compared to her! Nothing!”

I ignore her, trying to get ahold of my emotions. As I walk on the empty corridor leading back to my office, I ball my hands into fists, my nails digging through my skin.

‘Calm down. She’s just a lowly human being! She’s not worth

our time!’

“What?” I turn around. It’s the same voice. And then again, I find that I am alone in the empty corridor. “Who’s there?”

No answer.

S*it! I must be going out of my mind!

Sebastian.

“Ladies and gentlemen, let’s all welcome, our newly engaged couple, Sebastian King and Soraya Parks!” I hear the host announce through the speakers.

F*ck!

F*ck!

F*ck!

“Come on, darling! They’re waiting for us!” Soraya winds his

Chapter 20- The Voice

arm around mine and pulls me towards the ballroom.

I have no choice but to follow.

‘When did we agree to this again?’ Kylo ask in an aggravated tone.

‘I don’t remember we did.’

Yet, why are we in this predicament? Oh! I know! Because when your mother announced her intentions to engage you to that Parks brat, you didn’t say anything! Silence means yes,

genius!’

‘Shut up! I thought if I simply ignore it, she will see that I wasn’t interested.’

‘And look at where we are now!’

Yeah, I never expected that my mother would really take matters into her hands and push this engagement down my throat. I thought she understood my pain, my sorrow. She was probably tired of waiting for me to move on. Maybe this was her way of forcing me to forget my mate.

But that’s the problem. I will never forget my mate.

‘Second chance mate’ is bu***hit, dude! There’s only one mate for us!’ Kylo says.

Everybody congratulates us as we walk past them. I feel like I am walking in my own body, but I am not really here. It feels

like I’m a robot. Or a ghost.

I don’t know why I’m here. Why I am getting engaged to this girl. Sure, she’s pretty. And she does have advantages. Marrying her will certainly give me leverage to her pack. They

will have to swear allegiance to me and come to our rescue if we would ever need it.

After exchange pleasantries with the elders of both our packs, I finally find an excuse to get away from Soraya. I head towards the bar to get myself a drink—most likely the strongest one they have.

“Ain’t fate a bi*ch?” I hear someone say behind me as I take a sip of my whiskey. I don’t have to turn around to know who it is.

I take another swig of my liquor. I have a feeling I’m going to need a lot of alcohol in my system if I want to endure this party.

“Fate is clueless,” I tell Alexander.

“Ha! I agree!” he tells me. “I know very well what happens if you marry someone who isn’t your mate.”

I sigh heavily. I’ve seen it all before. In our kind, marrying someone who isn’t your mate is like a curse in itself. You’ll both be insatiable, you’ll have no connection, no satisfaction. You’ll end up going astray, trying to always find that one connection that only your mate can provide. In my case, only Cassie could provide.

“I don’t believe for a moment that you really want to marry my sister. And I suspect that even after you’re married, you’re going to cheat on her.”

“I ain’t like you,” I growled.

“That’s right, you’re not. That’s why I know that if you’re going to cheat on her, you will cheat with only one woman.” He smirks as he takes another drink from his glass. “And I think I already know who that woman is.” Alexander leans closer to whisper in my ear. “I intend to court Miss Jones while you’re trying to get an erection from my sister.”

I squeeze my glass so hard that it threatens to break in my hand.