

Chapter 7 Obey Or Leave

Axel

It takes all my energy and strength to remain calm and indifferent towards the woman in front of me. Her blue eyes are cautious as she quickly glances at me before she takes a seat in the chair furthest from me.

"Do you have a twin?" I ask, even though I know the answer. But I have to make sure because nothing makes sense right now.

"N... no," she stutters and avoids eye contact.

The silence grows awkwardly between us as I stare at her while she keeps her gaze on the floor as I align my thoughts.

"Are you hurt?" I ask brusquely and cross my arms in front of my chest to keep myself from wrapping her into my embrace. I recognized her the second I saw her, but I was not prepared for the punch in my gut when I realized who she is.

She only shakes her head and diverts her eyes.

"Then why's your face swollen?" I demand. Wyatt will pay for this, I swear.

"It's... it's nothing," she stutters. "I'm not hurt."

I grind my teeth as I look at her and try to figure out what the fuck is going on. Is she covering for Wyatt or is she telling the truth? I did not see him slap her, but I did see him punch her in the gut. This makes me believe that his hand is imprinted on her cheek.

"What's your connection with Wyatt?" I ask, and she looks at me with those big, beautiful, innocent blue eyes. "And don't you dare tell me nothing. I know Wyatt, he doesn't beat women up for fun."

"He was my mate," her words are so soft it is barely audible. "But I rejected him a week ago."

"Were you his ancé?" I ask as the puzzle pieces start to fall into place. "The one that got into an accident an hour before the wedding?"

She bites her bottom lip as she nods and looks down at her feet. Emotions bombard me from all sides, and I walk to the window. I turn my back on her as I stare at the garden in front of me.

"Where's your mark?" I ask as I turn back to face her.

"My mark?" She frowns and looks at me perplexed. "I don't understand."

"You're telling me you were engaged but he didn't mark you?" I ask in disbelief. She was engaged to her mate, but still, she did not sleep with him, nor did he mark her. And by her confession, I know Wyatt never informed her about the marking ritual. Why?

"I really don't understand the question," she murmurs.

"What's your name?" I ask after a moment of silence.

"Liana," her reply is soft and melodious, and I clear my mind to savour the sound for a moment.

"Tell me exactly what happened," I order.

"You saw what..."

"No," I interrupt and turn to face her. "Start by the night a week ago when I took you to the hotel room."

Her face pales and I know I caught her by surprise. Either she did not recognise me, or she hoped I would not remember. I pray to the goddess it is the latter. It will break my heart if she did not remember our night together.

I listen patiently as she tells me her story and I am impressed and surprised that she even confessed to the staged accident to get out of the marriage.

"That's all," she finishes her story.

"Did you know who I was in the bar?" I smirk sarcastically as I go stand in front of her.

"Yeah," she shrugs. "Does it matter?"

"Rather coincidental, don't you think?" I raise an eyebrow. "Seducing the future alpha when you realized your mate doesn't love you."

"I didn't seek you out," her eyes blaze at me and I feel relieved that she is no longer so timid. "So, what that I recognised you? You were the first man I bumped into. You were convenient, that's all."

"Convenient?" I growl as her words stab my soul. No man wants to feel convenient. "Do you take me for a fool? I know what's going on here. You realized your mate is going to kick you out, so you planned to seduce the future alpha and secure your place in this pack."

"Have you lost your mind?" Liana looks at me in disgust. "That's the most absurd theory I heard in my entire life."

"Is it?" I raise my eyebrows at her. "You were in a relationship for seven years and never shared a bed with him. And now you expect me to believe that you're willing to give it up in a second to a stranger for no reason?"

"Respectfully, Axel," her voice is soft and steady as she stands up and comes to stand in front of me. "Go fuck yourself. I didn't want anything from you then and I don't want anything from you now. I will repeat what I said to you a week ago, once this door closes behind me, you and I have never met."

She does not wait for my reply as she pushes past me and walks out.

I sigh heavily and take a seat in the nearest chair. I do not know what I should make of Liana's story. I believe her, but more than one woman has tried a similar stunt to become Luna. If she truly does not want anything from me, why is she still within our borders? Why has she not moved on with her life?

No, I shake my head as I stand up. I must be careful. No one can be trusted. And until I am certain, I will not tell a soul that she is my mate.

Liana

I am furious as I pace up and down in front of Nina's examination room. I am dying to get home and to never, ever see Axel again - or Wyatt for that matter.

The audacity of that man suggesting that I seek him out. It is preposterous. I am not sure if it is a wolf thing or if there is something in the water, but it seems to me everyone in this pack is batshit crazy. I need to get a job and get out of this pack before I catch this craziness.

"There you are," I sigh in relief when the door opens and Nina steps out. "What did the doctor say?"

"I'm going to be ugly for the next couple of weeks and after that, I'll be ne," she rolls her eyes and I smile gently at her.

"You can never be ugly," I take her arm and lead her to the exit. "Even with a broken nose."

"You're my best friend," she replies. "You're obligated to say that."

"No, I'm not," I laugh heartedly.

"Excuse me, ladies," the security guard at the exit interrupts us. "Axel instructed me to give you this."

He holds out Nina's car keys and I take it from him.

"Thank you," I smile politely. "Is he still around?"

"No," he shakes his head. "He has already left with Beta Nick."

"Have a nice day," I greet as we continue walking to the car.

"Nina," I turn to her. "Thank you for helping me today."

"It's nothing," Nina waves it off.

"No," I shake my head adamantly. "You got punched in the face for me. It's not nothing. I owe you everything. I don't even want to think what would've happened to me this past week if it weren't for you."

"Hey," Nina bumps her shoulder against mine. "You would've done the same for me. Don't fuss over it."

"I won't," I smile as I unlock the car and open the passenger door for her. "But I want you to know that I'm not taking you for granted."

"I know," she smiles as she gets in.

I close the door behind her and walk around to get into the driver's seat.

"On the bright side," Nina smiles wickedly as she looks at me. "We were in the presence of Axel. Damn, he's hot. Looking at him makes me hungry in places where I don't have taste buds."

"You're terrible," I laugh as I steer the car through traffic. "But I guess he's okay."

"Okay?" Nina shrieks in shock. "He's so much more than okay."

"True," I pout. "He's also arrogant and egotistical."

"Spill it," Nina demands as she gives me a knowingly look. "What happened between the two of you?"

"Noth..."

"Don't bullshit me, Liana," Nina cuts me off. "I want to know."

"Fine," I sigh heavily as I consider my words. As much as I want to keep my night of shame a secret, it would also be great to get it off my chest. And the least I can do is tell Nina the truth after she sacrificed her nose for me. "Axel is the one I spend the night with after I caught Wyatt cheating on me."

"You got to be shitting me," Nina gapes at me. "That... no... it's... are you serious?"

"Yep," I admit as I park the car in front of Nina's house. "And he was a complete jerk the next morning."

Nina slurps up every word as I tell her everything that transpired between me and Axel as we get out of the car and walk into the house.

"Can you believe that he thought I was a prostitute?" I shriek as I throw my hands up in the air.

"Well... yeah," Nina replies as she sits down on the couch. "He's the future alpha and in demand."

"That doesn't make sense," I frown as I sit next to her.

"Liana, this pack is very traditional," Nina explains patiently. "They're anal about the old laws. A rank must be mated to his true mate."

"I know that," I roll my eyes. "That's why Wyatt is so pissed off at me."

"But it's even worse for the alpha," Nina continues as if I have not said a word. "Not only must he be mated to his true mate, but she must also be a virgin. If he doesn't find his mate by the age of twenty-

five, he's allowed to marry any virgin of his choosing. Axel has not found his mate, and he'll be thirty next year. Which means he's allowed to marry any girl, as long as she's a virgin. Even very eligible virgin tries to bed him in the hope that he would pick her. Hell, sometimes even the parents get involved and help their daughters to catch the alpha's eye."

"Oh," I feel like a deflated balloon. As offended as I was that morning, I understand, and I cannot even fault him for that. If I were in his shoes, I would have reacted the same. "I guess I should've paid more attention when Wyatt explained these things to me."

"That's if he even told you," Nina rolls her eyes. "He most likely only told you the stuff that applies to you."

"Okay, that excuses Axel's reaction for that morning," I cross my arms stubbornly in front of my chest. "But it's no excuse for his accusations this morning. I mean, I didn't even tell him my name or asked him for anything since then. There's no justification for being a jerk today."

"Wyatt really didn't tell you anything," Nina shakes her head melancholy. "Liana, when you're living within these borders, you don't have the rights like you would've when you were home. The alpha's word is the law. He doesn't know you as I do. All he has to go on are the cold, hard facts. And what he sees is a human desperate to become part of the pack. You should count your blessings that you're still alive or not thrown out of the pack after you told him off earlier. Disrespecting any members of the alpha house is punishable by death."

I want to burst out laughing but my blood stills when I look at her and realize she is dead serious.

"That's murder," I protest weakly.

"Nope," she shakes her head. "It's a death sentence. Enormous difference."

"But..."

"But nothing," she cuts me off. "That's their laws and you're in their territory. Either you obey or you leave."

"Then I shall leave," I say adamantly. "As soon as I get a job, I'm out of here."