

## Chapter 16: The Truth About Gabriel

Amaya said nothing further. She only glanced at her father, who shot her a look of embarrassment, and then abruptly sat down. The atmosphere in the conference room was different now – everyone clearly accepted Amelia and her new position; Magnus was not a man to be questioned. They didn't have the slightest clue as to where she came from nor how she got this job, but no one was about to stand against Magnus.

The meeting ran smoothly. The department heads were sure to include Amelia in the conversation, showing that they accepted her (or at least pretending to in front of Magnus). They asked Amelia her opinions on a number of different aspects of the company. Amelia was hesitant to respond, though. She didn't feel fully equipped yet to answer questions about important company matters.

"Jonathan will be helping Amelia while she transitions into her new role," Magnus stated, his air of authority strong in his voice. Everyone nodded collectively.

"May I have the floor?" Amelia asked her dad before he could convene the meeting. "There's something I'd like to say to everyone." Magnus nodded and motioned for her to speak.

Amelia cleared her throat. "I know what you're all thinking,"

she stated, addressing the elephant in the room. "You're wondering how I received this position. I'm sure you all have questions about my capabilities and skills." Amelia looked directly at Amaya. "I am new to this company, and I have a lot to learn, yes. I will need help from all of you as I learn the ropes. But I want to make something very clear. I'm not just a 'pretty face' around here. I am more than competent and I CAN run this company, and I will prove my worth to you. I am asking for one month. Give me one month to prove my value. If I haven't proven myself in one month, then I will step down and leave this company."

The people around the table looked a little shocked by Amelia's statement, but they respected her boldness. The meeting was adjourned, and Amelia let out a sigh of relief. Magnus patted her on her arm before he left the room; it was a gesture of pride. Then she followed Jonathan to her new office.

"So this is where you keep your confidential files," he said, pointing at a filing cabinet with a lock. "This is your desk. This is your sitting area." Amelia took in her new office. It was spacious and ornately decorated. Just then the door burst open and Olivia flew through.

"Mila," she exclaimed, embracing her friend. "I just heard about the meeting. They tried to give you crap and you just gave it right back! You're my idol!"

"Stop it," Amelia said, rolling her eyes. "I'm just trying to earn their respect."

"Well, you sure gave yourself a short time frame to do it," Asher said, waltzing into the room. "What were you thinking? One month? Do you realize how much you have to learn?"

"Speaking of things to learn," Jonathan interrupted. "Miss Olivia, I suggest you learn how to knock on the door." Jonathan was clearly upset that she'd just barged in. "Amelia is the Vice President now. You need to show her respect."

Olivia sheepishly apologized, but Amelia waved her off. "Livs is my best friend. She's welcome in my office whenever she wants."

"Noted," Jonathan replied, but his tone said he disagreed.

"Guess what?" Olivia said. "My office is just next door. We're neighbors," she giggled.

"Love it!" Amelia replied, happy to have her friend and confidante right next door.

"We can have lunches together." Then she leaned in and whispered, careful not to let anyone else hear. "And gossip about...work," she said, but she was looking directly at Jonathan. Amelia understood her implication and agreed – it would be fun to have a friend to dish about office politics to.

"Oh wait, I almost forgot," Olivia said, reaching for her phone. "You won't believe what I found." She opened a video on her phone and thrust it towards Amelia.

It was Gabriel. He was in a human pub, one that she didn't recognize. There was a woman standing behind him, a stripper Amelia guessed by skimpy clothing. Three men stood in front of Gabriel. They were shouting something at him but the loud music drowned out what they were saying. The three men lunged towards the stripper then but Gabriel wouldn't let them pass. Then one man swung and hit Gabriel square in the jaw. Before Gabriel could react, another one kicked him in the stomach. The men laughed as Gabriel coupled over in pain. Then all hell broke loose and they jumped on him, kicking and punching.

Amelia passed the phone back before the video ended. She'd seen enough.

"Told you he was an asshole," Olivia laughed. "Look at him! He's drunk out of his mind! Humans are beating him up. HUMANS Mila. How weak is his wolf? I can't believe you ever had feelings for this piece of trash."

Amelia knew what it looked like. It looked like Gabriel was drunk and they were fighting over a stripper. But that wasn't the truth.

For starters, Gabriel was allergic to alcohol.

And secondly, she knew what those men were doing. She'd been in the same situation.

Because that's how she'd met Gabriel.

The stripper in the video was wearing a silver halter dress,

too short and too sparkly. And way too similar to the one she'd been wearing.

-Flashback-

Two years ago.

She'd just been dumped by her loser boyfriend. He'd been sleeping around and she'd found out. She was hurt and embarrassed. So, in a move very out of character for her, she'd decided to head out for the night to blow off some steam.

She chose the Stormfang territory. It was far enough away so that no one would recognize her. Everyone knew her where she was from; the daughter of Magnus, heir to the family business.

Just one night, she'd told herself while she put on a halter dress. I can be whoever I want to be for just one night.

And she had. She'd drunk champagne and danced with abandon. She felt free.

Things took a bad turn, though, when some harmless flirting became a bit too aggressive for her liking.

At the bar, three young men had circled her.

"Looking for a good time?" one of them said. She didn't like the way he looked at her body.

"We can show you a good time, baby," another one said.

Amelia had declined, firmly. But that had only made them more aggressive. One of them grabbed her arm. "We aren't asking," he'd said roughly.

"Let's take her out back." She was being dragged away.

"Dumb bitch."

"The lady said no." He was tall. And handsome. And strong. The three wolves harassing her let her go immediately. They nodded and took a step back.

Gabriel.

Alpha.

Savior.

Her heart stopped. Her knees became weak. Time stood still. He asked her to dance. She couldn't resist. He asked where she was from. She couldn't admit the truth. Look at what she was wearing! At how she was behaving! Her family would be embarrassed. She was ashamed.

"I have no pack," she'd lied, looking up at him from under her thick eyelashes. She can only hear her wolf growling crazily.

MATE.

"You're a rogue?" he'd asked, shocked. Then he'd pull in for a hug. "Not anymore. You're coming home with me."