

Celeste José: Doubt started to creep into my mind, causing me to question everything and everyone in my life. My relationship with Calix was no longer a priority; ever since I uncovered his infidelity and learned of his vile plan to tarnish my reputation, I had lost all love and respect for him. Cheating on someone was one thing, but descending to such depths of malevolence was something I never anticipated from my mate. Now, I found myself in the clutches of a so-called friend who possessed knowledge of all my secrets and was now using them to blackmail me into an unthinkable situation. Feeling trapped, I had no one to turn to for assistance. I realized that my only option was to contact the alpha king. It struck me that if Walsh managed to obtain the incriminating footage, it would link my name directly to the alpha king. With trembling hands, I dialed his number, and after a tense few minutes of no response, he finally answered my call. "Alpha King Klaus," I whispered, nervously biting my lower lip as I uttered his name. There was always an inexplicable aura around him. Every time I was near him or engaged in conversation, it felt like we were transported to a different world, one where only the two of us existed. I couldn't discern whether it was a comforting or disconcerting sensation. "I didn't expect your call so soon. I've got some matters to attend to, and you can visit later tonight," he replied shamelessly, causing me to clench my jaw. "I'm not calling you—for that," I mumbled guiltily. "The night before the event, when we were in my car, I'm concerned that the security cameras may have captured the entire scene," It was difficult to discuss that night. Despite having been intimate with him twice now, talking about it still brought a flush to my cheeks. I couldn't quite fathom the hold he seemed to have over my body. It shivered at the mere thought of him. However, my contemplation was abruptly shattered by his icy response, making me regret my decision to call him. "So? Why should this be of concern to me?" he inquired in a chilly tone. I tried to speak but found myself at a loss for words. He had consistently made it clear that he was only interested in fleeting pleasures and had little regard for my personal concerns. "I was hoping that maybe you could—well, forget it," I trailed off, my battered self-esteem and broken trust in others silencing me. I doubted he would ever devote a day of his life to assist me. Before he could respond or I could bid him goodbye, the guestroom door burst open, and my husband, with an angry expression, stormed in. I slid my phone away from my ear but didn't disconnect the call, uncertain about my mate's next move. He swung his arm and struck me forcefully, causing my phone to tumble under the table. "Who was it?" he bellowed, striking me once more when he saw me attempting to rise. "What's wrong with you?" Summoning all the courage I had, I pushed him away, allowing me to stand up and confront him. My cheeks throbbed with pain, and the split lip filled my mouth with the taste of my own blood. "You wretch! You brought someone into our home to retrieve the security footage, didn't you?" He screamed again, yanking my hair and shoving me onto the bed. The ground beneath my feet seemed to tremble, and I couldn't help but wonder if Walsh had disclosed anything to him. "We watched the footage. You witnessed us together and overheard all the discussions about our plans to have you expelled from the pack. Is that why you spent the night away from home before the event?" With the truth slowly unraveling, Casey seemed unburdened by any fear of my judgment. She entered the guestroom, standing in the doorway with her arms crossed and a wicked smirk on her lips. "That's why I felt that pain that night because you were upset with me," Calix chuckled, shaking his head at the notion that I could have betrayed him. "Did you ever truly love me?" I inquired, my hand pressed against my cheek. My question momentarily froze him, and he glanced at Casey, who seemed highly invested in his response. Her eyes conveyed a warning that a single wrong word would not bode well for him. Deep down, I already knew the answer; if he had ever genuinely loved me, he wouldn't be treating me in this cruel manner. "Never!" he retorted, delivering another harsh blow to my face. "We know you brought that man in a hoodie here. What did he want? What have you got against us?" Casey was no longer content to stand in the background. She seized control, and Calix willingly stepped aside to let her interrogate me. "Go ahead, hit me all you want. I'm not telling you a damn thing," I asserted, rising from the bed and shouting defiantly in her face. Confronting her face-to-face, I realized that she had truly taken advantage of my kindness. "Oh, you!" she hissed, raising her hand as if to strike me. In response, I head-butted her, causing a stream of blood to flow from her nose. The expression on her face confirmed that she was in pain. "Babe! Everything's spin—ning," she grumbled, her arms outstretched as she stumbled backward. Calix swiftly caught her beneath the arms, providing her

with support. "How could you hurt her?" He carefully seated her on the bed, still obstructing my path, then firmly gripped the hair at the back of my head. "I didn't intend to do it this soon, but you've left me with no other choice. You won't leave this mansion until you comply with my demands," he hissed, his alpha status making it challenging for me to resist. "I'll damn well destroy her!" Casey, who had regained her senses, shouted. "Let me go!" I resisted, but Calix managed to drag me to the side of the room and produced a bottle containing the clear liquid. There was no need for me to ask what it was; it was wolfbane.

"St—," I gurgled as he compelled me to ingest it. His hand clamped over my mouth and nose, leaving me with no alternative but to swallow the liquid. "Argh!" I let out an agonizing scream and collapsed to the ground, overwhelmed by extreme weakness. "I'm going to offer you a chance to depart from this mansion in one piece. Sign the documents I've drawn up, provide a complete confession admitting your disloyalty, transfer your studio to Casey's name, and depart from this pack. You're fortunate I'm not asking for more," Calix hissed his final words while I lay on the floor, bleeding from the brutal beatings. "Let's tend to you first, my love," his tone was gentle as he attended to Casey, while I remained on the ground, battered and bloodied. He was going to compel me to relinquish my studio, the dream I had worked so hard to achieve, striving to become the pack's premier designer on my own merits. He intended to gift everything I owned to his mistress. I lay there, helpless and immobilized by the wolfbane coursing through my body, when I heard footsteps approaching again. This time, it was Calix alone, bearing a set of papers in his hands. As he crouched down, he slipped a pen between my fingers. "Sign them," he commanded. It was unfathomable that my fated mate was subjecting me to this ordeal. He displayed no signs of pain or remorse, completely indifferent to my wretched state. "f*****g sign it; you've got your whole life to cry," he shouted, his rage intensifying as he observed my quiet sobbing. He exerted pressure on my hand against the paper, issuing a chilling ultimatum, "Either you sign, or I'll tear you apart in the most horrific manner. This night will be a living nightmare for you." It was a choice between life and surrendering everything. Suddenly, another set of footsteps entered the room, distinct from Casey's. The enigma and power they exuded momentarily froze Calix. "Using your strength on your Luna? Shameless much, Calix?" The voice that echoed carried a potent authority, and its presence was undeniably influential. The owner of the voice, none other than Alpha King Klaus, appeared profoundly displeased. My heart skipped a beat as I witnessed him take immediate action, seizing Calix by his collar and compelling him to stand. "You enjoy the taste of blood?" Klaus inquired, delivering a powerful punch that caused Calix's blood to spray across the room. I didn't have the opportunity to witness the rest of the spectacle; the overwhelming exhaustion and the effects of the wolfbane took their toll, and I drifted into unconsciousness. My last memory was of being cradled in a pair of strong arms, feeling weightless and safe.