

Chapter 5: The Final Blow

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(Olivia's POV)

"GET OUT!" Theodore's furious roar exploded behind me like thunder. "Who the hell gave you permission to sit in my Luna's seat?"

I spun around to see him roughly dragging Clara from the passenger seat, his face twisted with what looked like genuine rage. She stumbled and fell into the muddy gravel, her white dress immediately staining brown.

"Theodore, I was just—" she began, but he cut her off with a snarl.

"That seat belongs to Olivia! Only Olivia!"

For a split second, something warm ickered in my chest. Maybe—

Then Clara dropped to her knees in the mud before me, her hands clasped in perfect supplication, crocodile tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Luna Olivia," she sobbed, "I beg you, please don't let Elder Eleonora send me away! I'll do anything—I'll leave the pack house, I'll work in the kitchens, anything! Just please don't banish me!"

My blood ran cold. Eleonora—Theodore's mother—wanted Clara gone? When had that happened? How did Clara even know?

"Mom!" Leo's voice piped up from inside the car, his small face appearing at the window with an accusatory scowl. "Why did you say bad things about Clara to Grandma? That's mean!"

Understanding hit me like a slap. Clara had orchestrated this entire scene. She'd brought Leo here specically to create discord between us, to make me look like the villain who'd complained about her to Eleonora.

The woman was a master manipulator.

"Olivia would never speak ill of anyone," Theodore said rmly, stepping forward to place a protective hand on my shoulder. "My mate has too much integrity for petty gossip."

Once, those words would have warmed me. Now they sounded like mockery coming from the mouth of a man who'd been buried inside his mistress less than two hours ago.

"But Clara got red!" Leo insisted, climbing out of the car and rushing to Clara's side. "Someone had to tell Grandma something bad, and you're the only one who doesn't like her!"

"Leo," I said quietly, my voice steady despite the chaos in my heart, "you shouldn't make accusations without knowing the facts."

My ve-year-old son looked at me with Theodore's stubborn chin raised deantly. "Then prove you didn't! Go tell Grandma not to re Clara right now, or I won't believe you!"

I watched in horried fascination as Leo helped Clara to her feet, fussing over her muddy dress while completely ignoring the fact that I was drenched and shivering in the cold rain. His small hands smoothed her wet hair back from her face with tender care—care he'd never shown me.

"Oh, Leo," Clara said with perfect, practiced sweetness, "you shouldn't speak to the Luna that way. She's your mother."

But when Theodore and Leo weren't looking, she caught my eye and gave me a small, triumphant smile that made my blood boil.

"I'll kneel here for as long as Luna Olivia wants," Clara announced loudly, making sure Leo could hear every word. "I don't care if I catch pneumonia, as long as she doesn't have me banished from the pack."

"See?" Leo turned to me with tears in his eyes. "Clara's willing to die for us! You have to help her, Mom. You have to convince Grandma!"

"Everything will be ne once Clara is properly dismissed," Theodore said, though his words carried a strange undertone I couldn't quite place. "You could even go speak to my mother directly, Leo. I'm sure she'd listen to you."

I stared at him in shock. Was he actually giving our son the idea to plead Clara's case to Eleonora?

"That's it!" Leo's face lit up like Christmas morning. "I'll go beg Grandma myself! Clara, you have to come with me—she needs to see how good you are!"

Before I could protest, Leo was pulling Clara toward the car, both of them climbing into the back seat together. I watched my precious boy—my only child—treat this woman like she was his real mother, arranging her wet shawl around her shoulders and promising her everything would be okay.

"Once Clara is out of our lives, everything will return to normal," Theodore said softly, moving to stand beside me. "I promise you, Livvy. Our family will heal."

I looked at him—really looked at him—this man I'd loved for ten years. Did he truly believe what he was saying? Did he really think we could just erase Clara and pretend none of this had happened?

"There's no going back, Theodore," I said quietly. "Some things can't be undone."

"I'll drive myself," I said when Theodore gestured toward his car.

"Livvy, there's no need—"

"I said I'll drive myself."

I was afraid if I shared a car with them, I might lose control and kill them all.

We drove to the Redgrave Estate in separate vehicles, the rain continuing to pound against my windshield. Each drop felt like a tear I could no longer shed.

The moment I parked, Eleonora rushed out with pack servants holding umbrellas. She wrapped her arms around my soaked form without hesitation.

"My dear child, you're freezing," she said, her voice lled with genuine concern. "Come inside immediately."

She guided me into the warm sitting room, ordering servants to bring hot moonlight herb tea and thick blankets. Her care felt like a mother's love—something I'd been starving for.

Eleonora had been my mother Lyra's best friend. After Lyra's death, she'd cared for me like her own daughter.

In the warmth of the room, she took my cold hands in hers.

"I know everything, Olivia," she said softly. "Whatever decision you make, I will always support you. I stand rmly on your side."

Her words broke something loose in my chest. Finally, someone who truly cared about me.

I opened my mouth to tell her about my decision to sever the mate bond, to explain everything I'd discovered.

That's when Leo burst through the door.

He threw himself at Eleonora's legs and began to cry, his small body shaking with sobs.

"Grandma, please don't send Clara away!" he begged. "I promise I'll never call her 'mommy' again! Please, please don't make her leave!"