

Chapter 2

When they returned, their fingers were interlocked as they strolled to the center of the festival grounds.

Willow's mouth was swollen and red, while Ryan bore several conspicuous kiss marks on his neck.

The crowd's gazes were laced with amusement, waiting to see my reaction. In the past, whenever I saw another woman acting intimately with Ryan, I'd inevitably throw a fit, clinging to him and demanding his attention.

But this time, I merely stood in the corner, quietly watching them while savoring a delicious raspberry tart.

Ryan positioned Willow protectively behind him, his gaze briefly flicking to me. A trace of confusion flashed in his eyes, but it was soon replaced by a mocking smirk.

"Looks like you've grown up this time," he sneered. "At least you're not throwing a tantrum like before."

I didn't bother to respond. Instead, I casually finished the last bite of my tart and turned to leave.

Every year during the Full Moon Festival, I'd make it a point to ride the Ferris wheel. It had always been my favorite attraction since I was little. In the past, I'd drag Ryan along with me, but this year, I didn't.

To my surprise, after the celebration ended, Ryan intercepted me. "Don't you ride the Ferris wheel every year? Let's go. I'll go with you."

I glanced at him but said nothing, turning on my heel to leave.

At that moment, Willow clung to Ryan's arm with a bright smile, her voice syrupy and coy. "Ryan, I want to ride the Ferris wheel too! The moon is so full tonight—it'll be so romantic."

Ryan hesitated, his eyes lingering on me as though waiting for my reaction.

Ignoring them both, I walked toward the Ferris wheel alone. Just as I was about to board, Ryan and Willow caught up, insisting on sharing the same gondola.

Inside the small cabin, an awkward silence settled over us. Willow, however, soon broke it with a laugh.

She deliberately sat close to Ryan, leaning against him as she spoke in a sugary tone, "Ryan, this Ferris wheel is so high up—it's making me nervous."

Without a word, I remained seated across from them, my gaze fixed on the star-studded night sky beyond the window.

"Don't be scared. I'm here," Ryan reassured her, his voice so tender it grated on my nerves.

Emboldened, Willow giggled and grabbed his wrist, pressing herself even closer. "Ryan, your hands are so warm. Could you help me apply my lipstick? I want to look good for pictures later."

Ryan took the lipstick she handed him. The two leaned in so close that their breaths mingled. Willow tilted her head, slightly opening her mouth, her tongue darting out to wet them in a way that was undeniably provocative.

"Ryan, you're so bad—don't mess it up..." she teased, her voice cloyingly sweet.

Their eyes locked, the space between them shrinking until their breaths grew uneven.

Then, suddenly, Ryan's gaze snapped to me, as if he'd just remembered I was sitting across from them.

When he saw me calmly gazing out the window, his expression faltered, darkening inexplicably. He rapped his knuckles sharply against the glass, as though trying to draw my attention.

As the Ferris wheel neared the end of its rotation, I prepared to disembark, but Ryan unexpectedly grabbed my arm again.

He shoved a bracelet into my hand, his tone dismissive.

"Alright, stop pretending you don't care. It's not a good look. Consider this bracelet my engagement gift to you. As long as you behave, I'll give you the wedding you want. At least officially, the wolf pack will acknowledge you as my wife."

I laughed coldly, meeting his gaze head-on. "And who are you planning to establish the mate bond with? Willow?"

Ryan's expression darkened instantly. Then he smiled smugly.

"I knew you were just pretending," he sneered, stepping closer. In a low, warning tone, he added, "Let me make this clear—you'd better not breathe a word of this to either of our families. You can't even imagine what Willow and I share! She's pure and kind, nothing like you with your underhanded little schemes. If you so much as hurt her, I'll call off the wedding entirely."

I stayed silent for a moment, then smiled. The irony wasn't lost on me—it was his own cowardice that kept him from telling my family the truth. He couldn't bear to part with my bloodline, yet he had the audacity to twist it as though I were the one creating trouble.

Without another word, I turned and left.

As soon as I stepped through the door, a message from Willow popped up on my phone. It was a video.

In the footage, Ryan was carefully clasping a necklace around her neck.

I recognized the brand of the necklace immediately, and with it came the realization that the bracelet Ryan had given me earlier was nothing more than a promotional gift included with the necklace.

Toward the end of the video, Ryan pinned Willow against the Ferris wheel window, kissing her fanatically. Willow's expression was one of pure ecstasy, her soft moans filling the tiny cabin and amplifying in the enclosed space.

Attached to the video was a text message. [Alice, Ryan and I did it so close to the moon tonight—it was thrilling and romantic beyond words. Has he told you yet? The wedding is just for show. When it comes to the real ceremony under the Moon Goddess's witness, it'll be me he establishes the mate bond with. This time, it's my turn to be the leader's wife.]