

Chapter 15 - Encounter In The Kitchen

It was past two o'clock in the morning, and Damon was unable to sleep.

His room was facing the garden and there was a forest in the distance. Damon decided to go for a run. That should help him clear his mind.

Ideally, Damon would shift into his wolf form. Feeling the soil and grass under his paws as the wind runs through his fur always feels good. However, he is in the territory of the Red Moon pack and if his wolf is seen, it will be perceived as a challenge, a threat.

He came here to see what Alpha Edward is plotting, and not to start a war.

Damon descended the stairs and reached the main floor. He took a turn toward the door that leads to the garden when the sweet citrusy scent of freesia got his attention.

Without thinking, Damon's legs moved, and he found himself in the part of the packhouse he didn't visit before. The kitchen.

The main light was off, but he could see the surroundings among heavy shadows because the fridge was open.

And there he saw a small figure sticking out of the refrigerator.

Looking from behind, based on her size he estimated that she can't be more than fifteen, maybe sixteen years old.

Damon stalked toward her, and he stopped when he was only half a step behind her.

He took a deep breath and her sweet scent made him dizzy, urging him to get closer and maybe lick or bite her. He wondered if her taste will be so addictive as well.

"Mhm...", Damon cleared his throat, and she jumped in fright.

"Aw!", Talia stifled a cry when her head bumped into the shelf of the refrigerator.

She turned swiftly toward the source of the noise and her eyes widened in horror when her eyes met Damon's.

She recognized him. It's the important guest. The same one whose private time with Marcy she interrupted.

Talia cursed her luck.

After Marcy visited her in the attic, Talia didn't dare to move until all the sounds in the packhouse died down. She thought that she should just stay there until Marcy and

others forget about her, but she was hungry, and she searched for something cold to relieve her pain.

If Talia knew that she will bump into this scary guy, she would stay upstairs hungry and endure the pain. It wouldn't be the first time; the only difference is that the previous injuries were from other Omegas, and this time princess Marcy acted.

Before this afternoon, Talia thought that Marcy was a kind person, but she is not.

Between Marcy and Anna, Talia prefers Anna who doesn't pretend to be nice only to bully Talia when she doesn't expect it. At least she knew to be wary of Anna, while Marcy smiled and said sweet words only to get close.

Talia looked at Damon fearfully.

Will he punish her also? Why is he narrowing his eyes at her? She felt the urgency to leave.

Talia didn't know that Damon was squinting in an effort to identify her features clearly. The light was behind her, and heavy shadows veiled her face.

"I'm sorry...", Talia said in a shaky voice and lowered her head before stepping to the side, trying to find her exit.

Damon extended his arm, blocking her path. "What are you sorry for?"

He was irked. Is she avoiding him?

Every girl would do community service for some one-on-one time with Damon, and this girl wants to flee.

Talia bit her lower lip. How is she supposed to answer his question? She reminded herself not to mention what she saw this afternoon in the guest bedroom. With any luck, he won't know that was her.

"I'm sorry for getting in your way", Talia responded. "If you excuse me..."

"Wait!" Damon called, preventing her from leaving. Wasn't she looking for something in the fridge?

A side of Talia's face was illuminated, and Damon frowned.

He grabbed her chin roughly and delightful sparks prickled his fingers and spread up his arm, confirming what his wolf said. Mate.

He never felt anything like it.

Damon could sense his wolf wagging its tail in delight, and Damon would enjoy this sensation if not for Talia's ragged appearance.

Damon forced Talia to lift her head so that he can see her face against the light the open refrigerator provided.

Talia's beautiful doe-like eyes blinked at him, but Damon's daze lasted only for a moment before his sight moved over her injuries.

Her upper lip was busted, and she had a bruise under her left eye and even her right cheek had dark purple marks.

"What happened to your face?"

Talia's breath hitched. "I fell."

Damon didn't buy it. He saw consequences of many falls, and this was nothing like it. "That must be some nasty fall."

He took another look at her and noticed bruises on her neck that were in the shape of fingers. Did someone choke her?

Rage rippled through Damon. The thought that someone hurt Talia infuriated him beyond belief.

His urge was to protect her, to see her smiling and happy and this... just what is this?

"Who did this!?", Damon squeezed through his teeth angrily and Talia's whole body shook in fear.

There was no way that she would say anything. It will only bring more trouble.

How can she say that it was princess Marcy? Aren't this scary Alpha and Marcy on good terms? If she speaks up, at best he won't believe her and there is a high chance she gets another beating. He was already angry, and she didn't want to be in the vicinity when he blows up.

"No one. Please. Can I leave?"

Damon released Talia's chin and held her shoulder. Even through the coarse fabric of her sweatshirt, Damon felt faint prickles on his palm that made him crave for more. Mate.

Damon focused mightily on inspecting her face, especially the purple mark on her right cheek. It was oval with small dots around it and somehow it reminded Damon of the ring he saw earlier that evening... a ring on Marcy's hand.

'Stop scaring the girl...', the wolf spoke in Damon's head.

Damon looked at Talia and he pressed his lips into a line when he saw the horror in her eyes.

Damon's attention moved to her shoulder under his palm, and he realized how small and fragile she was. He guessed that if he exerts a bit of pressure, he can probably crush her.

Reluctantly, Damon released her shoulder, trying not to make any sudden movements in order not to scare her more.

"I will not hurt you.", he said as calmly as he could, but her unchanged expression told him that she didn't believe him.

Why would she believe him? So far, people either ignored her or bullied her. And those are people who live in this pack. Why would a stranger treat her better? And the stranger in front of her was intimidating.

'She is probably abused.', his wolf said, and Damon's closed his eyes in an attempt to contain another rush of rage that swelled inside him.

Abused. Someone abused his mate!

Damon took a deep breath, the sweet citrusy scent of freesia made him lightheaded, like a drug that helped him relax. It was addictive. He greedily inhaled again and again, and it took him a few breaths to detect that the scent was getting fainter.

Damon opened his eyes and realized that he was alone in the kitchen. She left, and he didn't notice. Was she even real or did he imagine her?

'Imagine my foot!', his wolf grumbled. 'Use that nose of yours and track her down!'

Damon snapped to his senses and followed his nose outside, toward the garden.
