

## Chapter 8 - Talia

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~ The Red Moon pack ~

"Out of the way!", Anna spat angrily while carrying a stack of plates into the kitchen.

Talia quickly stepped to the side, not wanting to attract attention. She never understood why Anna or other Omegas are treating her like trash, she is an Omega, just like they are.

The only difference between them and Talia is that they all have families, while Talia is an orphan. No one will stand up for her and in the world of werewolves, one wins by strength or numbers. Unfortunately, Talia doesn't have any of those, so she needs to submit or risk another beating.

Talia read in a book that a good Luna should advocate for kindness and helping the less fortunate ones, but Luna Layla is not one of those. Other than worrying about herself, Luna Layla cares about the flashy image of the Red Moon pack, and that's where her concerns stop.

Talia huddled in the corner, behind a big ficus, and observed the commotion.

The whole packhouse was buzzing with activity and she overheard Omegas talking how someone important is coming for lunch. Probably an Alpha.

The packhouse is a big mansion that is used as a home for the Alpha, the Beta, and their families. Also, guests stay there.

Other pack members have their own dwellings in the area whose size and proximity to the packhouse reflect the owner's standing within the pack.

Talia is the only exception as she is a nobody and she lives in the packhouse, but only because she stays in the attic. No one knows Talia exists as long as she completes her chores, and she doesn't get in anyone's way.

On a normal day, Talia thinks of herself as a house mouse that lives within the walls without anyone noticing.

Talia likes when they have important guests because that means there will be plenty of food to go around, just like during the party, two days ago.

That party was amazing. Talia listened to the music from the window she cracked open while munching on a full plate of various snacks she sneaked from the kitchen.

The only bad thing was that the guest of honor, princess Marcy (how other Omegas call her), bumped into Talia after Talia returned the empty plate. Luckily, Marcy didn't raise a fuss and she even apologized.

Talia is confident that Marcy is a good person.

When Talia cleaned Marcy's bathroom while Marcy was on one of her spa outings, Talia observed an array of beauty products she wouldn't even know how to use, and Marcy's closet was full of fancy outfits which confirmed to Talia that Marcy is the real princess. Princess Marcy.

Talia used the less used passages to reach her room in the attic. The things inside are old and dingy, but she keeps it clean and most of the time no one bothers her.

She smiled at the sight of two apples and a dinner roll that were on the napkin, next to the futon where Talia sleeps.

Normally, Talia stays in her room during the day. At night, she would complete her chores, and she uses that opportunity to shower in a bathroom that is attached to one of the unused guest bedrooms. When everyone is sleeping, Talia sneaks into the kitchen to find food.

How Talia sees it, today is a good day. With an important Alpha coming, there will definitely be a feast, which means more leftovers.

Talia laid on the futon that is riled with holes, and she stared at the ceiling while munching on an apple.

Talia likes to think of herself as a captured princess, waiting for her prince to rescue her, but Talia is aware that she is no princess and there is no prince. Not for her at least.

Talia was brought to the Red Moon pack, when she was a toddler, by the previous Alpha. She heard rumors that the Alpha was kind and powerful, but unfortunately, soon after Talia's arrival to the Red Moon pack, he died, and his son, Edward inherited his position.

Alpha Edward was eager to prove himself and in the world of werewolves, that is done by strength and strategizing. His strategy was to focus on warriors and military power, and he neglected everything else.

Of course, Alpha Edward's perfect image was important, so Luna Layla was in charge of making the packhouse looking glamorous and organizing parties, while their daughter Marcy was sent to Europe to attend prestigious boarding schools when she was in her early teens, and their son James was busy with tutors even before he could walk properly.

Between all that activity, Talia is convinced that Alpha Edward and Luna Layla forgot about her existence.

Talia was seven or maybe eight years old when Alpha Edward repurposed common rooms for additional training areas, and at that point, Talia lost her bedroom.

"Where should I go?", Talia asked while looking at people who were taking the furniture out of her room.

The woman paused. "The attic is not used."

And here she is. In the attic.

That was more than a decade ago.

Since then, Talia is living low-key with Alpha and Luna not acknowledging her existence. It's not that they are ignoring her on purpose. Talia is a quiet, inconspicuous girl, with a talent for diminishing her presence.

Talia was a child when she came to the Red Moon pack, and she never went through the ceremony of joining the pack, so she doesn't have the mind link. That's one of the reasons why Alpha Edward doesn't know about her.

But Omegas know. They tend to bully Talia for the smallest mistakes and over the years, Talia learned to keep to herself and to avoid them effectively.

She cleans the bathrooms and empties the trash in the packhouse, without anyone noticing.

Talia shifted and groaned when a hard corner hit her lower back. She reached for the book that's the culprit for her pain. That will leave a bruise.

Talia lives with the werewolves, but she is no more than a human.

If not for her wolf speaking to her, Talia would believe that she IS a human.

Unfortunately, Talia heard her wolf the last time about four years ago.

'You are too weak to shift...', Talia's wolf spoke into her head. 'If you force it, it might kill you...'

Talia didn't feel her wolf since then, and Talia is not sure if her wolf is sleeping or if she is lost forever.

Without her wolf, Talia doesn't have the speed or the strength, or the enhanced senses, and her healing ability is super-slow. On top of that, Talia is malnourished and much smaller than an average werewolf, making her look like a fifteen-sixteen years old (skinny) girl, instead of nineteen years old.

Talia looked at the book in her hand and observed the illustration of a princess who is smiling and running with her prince. There is a castle in the background, they are holding hands and look happy, and Talia's eyes always wander to the princess' shiny shoes.

The book is about Cinderella, a poor girl who is abused by her stepmother and stepsisters, and then she meets a fairy godmother who magics a fancy dress and shiny shoes so that Cinderella can go to the ball, meet her prince, and live happily ever after.

'What nonsense.', Talia thought. 'The story is rubbish. One's fortune can't depend on a pair of shoes', but Talia still cracked a smile.

This book reminds Talia of Olivia, the only member of the Red Moon pack who treated her as a person.

Olivia left the pack about one year ago and Talia misses her dearly. Every night Talia hugs that book to sleep, and she remembers Olivia.

Olivia is two years older than Talia and her father is Dr. Scott, the pack doctor.

Olivia would sneakily come to the attic and help Talia tend to her cuts and bruises. Olivia didn't dare to help Talia openly when others bullied her, but Talia never blamed her for it.

Olivia taught Talia a lot about plants; which one is good for swelling, which one for reducing pain, etc.

When Olivia noticed that Talia is reading slowly, she gave Talia the book about Cinderella. "Practice reading daily. This is a great book to remind you how there is such thing as magic, and dreams can come true..."

Talia thought how that was silly, but she was touched by the gesture and accepted the book.

Last year, Olivia was away for a few weeks, and when she returned she came to say her goodbyes.

"Where are you going?", Talia asked her curiously.

Talia never thought about leaving the pack. Not because she didn't have the courage, but more because she had no idea where she would go. Her knowledge about the world outside of the Red Moon pack was extremely limited making her feel like a frog in a well that was sealed and she can't even see the sky above.

Olivia smiled dreamily. "I met my mate. I'm going to live with him. Larry is waiting for me at my house. I used the chance of Larry talking to my dad to come here and say goodbye..."

Talia hugged Olivia and wished her all the best. Talia was happy for her friend, even though she knew that she will be lonely.

Olivia found her prince and she was going to have her happily ever after, and Talia held her tears for after Olivia left.

Talia placed her hand on the book about Cinderella and dozed off.

Her duties start in the evening when everyone is sleeping, so she can rest. By then, the guests will arrive and all the buzz will be over, and Talia smiled at the thought of all the leftovers she will find in the kitchen.

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