

Alphas Bride 431

Chapter 431 Visiting the Shaman (5) [Bonus chapter]

There wasn't enough seating for eight people in Gideon's sitting area as he never hosted gatherings. If more than three-four people stopped by, Gideon would meet with them outside, and this was definitely crowded.

However, Talia sat on Damon's lap, and Kalina on Tony's, so they managed.

Seeing that Gideon was standing at the side, Mindy moved close to him.

"Should we offer them some refreshments?", Mindy asked Gideon in a whisper.

His instinct was to say no, but Mindy's scent of sweet pumpkin reached him, and her eager expression made him unable to say anything other than, "OK. We can make tea." But no snacks!

Mindy's eyes flashed in delight. He said, WE!

"Give us a few minutes to prepare tea!", Mindy exclaimed toward their guests, grabbed Gideon's hand, and tugged him toward the kitchen. "Come. Show me where things are, and we can do it together." She was embarrassed that the only areas of the cabin she knew were the bedroom and bathroom upstairs.

The cabin was deep in the woods and didn't have commodities like running water and electricity, but Mindy didn't mind. She remembered him fetching water from a pail to pour on her when they washed last night, and she thought how all that was romantic. Mindy took a mental note to ask him later about how he gets water and does laundry and such.

Gideon started the fire on a two-burner stove that was attached to a propane tank tucked under the work surface, and Mindy put a pot of water to boil.

Seeing Mindy eyeing the little stove, Gideon thought that maybe it was time for an upgrade. It was fine while he was alone, but a young woman like Mindy is probably used to commodities a town can provide. He left those thoughts for later.

Gideon moved on the side where containers with various herbs were, and Mindy followed.

She observed him with curiosity, and he started explaining, "This is chamomile, good for calming the mind and easing into sleep... Sage will keep you alert and your mind sharp... Lemon leaves rejuvenate the body, skin, in particular, to give a clean youthful look... Mint will aid in digestion and relieve congestion... Ginger will boost immunity, help fight inflammations and nausea..." He paused when he noticed that she eyed the containers suspiciously. "What?"

"Dried herbs look more-less the same. Why didn't you label the containers? How do I know which is which?" What if he asks her for tea to stay alert and she ends up accidentally putting herb that eases people to sleep? She forgot which herb that was because he said many things.

Gideon glanced at the unlabeled containers and realized she was right, but... "They smell differently."

Mindy shook her head in disagreement. "Everything smells like lavender." She looked up to see him smiling at her and she smiled as well when she realized that everything smelled like Gideon.

They stared into each other's eyes, and the invisible pull worked its magic, and they ended up locked in a kiss that quickly turned hungry.

Mindy's fingers moved to explore his broad back, and she loved how his muscles tensed under her touch that was charged with the electric sparks of their bond.

Gideon gave Mindy's waist a squeeze while pulling her closer to feel his erection pressing on her lower abdomen, and her whimper made him pay attention to other sounds which reminded him that they were not alone.

He broke the kiss and released a frustrated breath. The scent of her arousal was driving him crazy.

"How long are they staying here?"

Mindy blinked herself into reality and glanced over Gideon's shoulder to see a group of six. They obviously knew that Mindy and Gideon were almost going at it right there in the kitchen, but they all pretended not to notice. Mindy was grateful for it, especially for Max not blowing a fuse.

"Talia wants to talk to you.", Mindy said. She didn't know the details, but Talia told her that they came to bring Mindy's stuff and for Talia to talk to Gideon. Seeing that Gideon's brows came together, Mindy put her arms around his neck. "They came to bring my stuff and for Talia to seek your guidance. Can you talk to her?"

"Are you telling me what to do?", he grumbled.

"No. I am asking you to listen to what she wants. Talia won't ask for help easily, and the fact that she is here even though she knows that we crave privacy means it's important. Just hear her out, and anything beyond that is up to you. Can you do that?"

He glanced at the pot of water that started releasing steam. "Can you prepare tea while I talk to Talia?"

Mindy's smile was blinding. "Just show me where are mugs and what herbs I should put inside once the water boils..."

Gideon left Mindy in the kitchen and made his way toward Talia who was sitting on Damon's lap.

"I hear that you want to talk to me in private. We can take a walk through the garden while Mindy finishes the tea."

"I will help her!", Kalina volunteered and went to the kitchen. Kalina was burning from inside with curiosity to find out how Mindy's night went. And she still didn't see the mark on Mindy's neck!

Talia stood up in response to Gideon's words, and Damon was quick to stand as well.

Gideon frowned at Damon. "I thought this will be a private talk between me and Talia."

Damon's frown was deeper than Gideon's. "It will be after you cover up."

Gideon glanced at himself and realized that he was wearing only pants. Why the hell would he cover up his top half? He was NOT a female! But he knew that the Alpha in front of him was possessive and unreasonable, and the sooner they finish, the sooner these people will leave, so Gideon went on the side and reached for the shirt that was there since Mindy undressed him on the previous day.

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Talia walked side-by-side with Gideon through his garden. It still reminded her of a meadow full of wildflowers, but now that she knew it was a garden, she could see hints of some organization among the colorful blooms. She was careful not to step on anything more than just plain grass.

At some point, Gideon stopped walking and turned to Talia.

"As my future Luna, you don't need to hold back.", Gideon said. "Speak with confidence."

Talia was surprised that he called her Luna. She should probably get used to it.

"I am not a Luna, yet."

"But you hope to be."

"I am Damon's mate. It would be unfair to ask him to give up his pack for me, so I will be his Luna. But in order to reach there, I need your help."

Gideon observed Talia while thinking how she was younger than Damon, yet so mature. She selflessly put Damon's need in front of hers, like a true Luna. His opinion of Talia rose by a notch.

Gideon gestured to Talia to keep on talking.

"On the next full Moon, there will be a pack run, and I am supposed to lead it with Damon. I don't want to disappoint him or the pack, but the thing is that I never shifted in my wolf..."

"Never?"

Gideon's question interrupted her next words and Talia shook her head.

"How is that possible?", Gideon asked.

"No one told me how."

Gideon cocked an eyebrow at her. "Shifting into the wolf form is not taught. It comes naturally. Youngsters will do it when their temper flares and their wolf takes over. That is stronger under the influence of the full Moon, but in time you learn to control it."

Talia was stuck on the words, 'wolf takes over'. She pressed her lips into a line while wondering how much she should reveal. She can't tell him everything, but if she doesn't say something, he won't be able to help her. Assuming that he will want to help.

"Before coming here, I was weak. Doctor Travis told me that my wolf took the burn off my weak body so I can survive. I don't feel my wolf and I fear that she is not there."

Gideon inched closer and sniffed the air around Talia and then he looked into her eyes with such intensity that she felt a headache coming, but she held his gaze without flinching.

After an unknown measure of time, Gideon straightened his posture and spoke with certainty, "There is nothing wrong with your wolf, Talia."

Chapter 432 Visiting the Shaman (6)

Talia stared at Gideon like he was growing a second head. Did he say that there was nothing wrong with her wolf? And why did he sound so certain about it?

"If my wolf is fine, why can't I sense her?"

Gideon looked at Talia with a complicated gaze. It seemed that she didn't know much about her wolf side. "There are cases where the wolf part will sacrifice itself in order for the human body to survive, and I don't know what happened to you, but I can tell you that your wolf right now is fine. Wolves are spirits that live inside us and bless us with longevity and what humans would call supernatural powers. Think of them like a flame; assuming that your wolf gave her strength so that you get better, it doesn't mean her flame was completely extinguished. That happens every time we heal or perform beyond limits of what our bodies normally could if we were humans." He paused because Talia's confusion was obvious.

Gideon decided to simplify it. "Wolves are more than just part of us; they have their own will. If your wolf doesn't want to be disturbed, she will retract at the back of her mind. There is also a possibility of someone with a stronger presence influencing your wolf, but it's just the two of us here, so that's not the case. Didn't Damon tell you that?"

"He did, but..." Talia paused.

"But?" Gideon urged her to continue.

"Damon said that he can't sense my wolf." And Talia couldn't sense her either.

"The strong ones can avoid detection by the weak ones.", Gideon said mysteriously.

Talia blinked while processing Gideon's words. Did that mean her wolf was stronger than Damon's? And also... "Are you saying that your wolf is stronger than Damon's?"

"No.", Gideon said right away. "But I have my ways that don't rely on strength."

Talia was still not convinced. "If my wolf is fine, why am I weak?"

"How would you define weak?"

"I am not as strong or fast as others."

"Let me guess, you are comparing yourself with Damon." Gideon waved his hand, indicating that she shouldn't answer that. He knew what she was about to say. Why would a she-wolf whose body seems fragile compare herself with one of the strongest Alphas? He really didn't know how youngsters think these days.

"Every wolf is different, Talia. Sure, there are standard ranges that accommodate most of the werewolves, but there are always exceptions. Your strength is not only in how quickly you move or how high you can jump."

Who cared about speed and jumping? Talia really wanted to ask him about abilities like glowing, healing people, stopping water currents, and swatting people away without touching them. But she feared that such questions will reveal more than they should.

Can she trust the Shaman? Damon told her not to trust anyone, and she trusted Damon. Wasn't that contradictory?

She shook her head while thinking that her being Damon's mate didn't make sense, yet here she was, trying to get answers so that she can be by his side.

Gideon saw that Talia was thinking about something intently, and he offered her another piece of his wisdom. "We live in a society where power rules. However, one's worth is not limited to strength and speed. Regardless of what you can do, keep in your mind that it was given to you by the Moon Goddess. Treat it as a gift. It's up to you how you will use it."

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When Talia and Gideon returned, the tea was served and Kalina, Tatiana, and Mindy were discussing events from last night.

Mindy was eyeing Damon cautiously while wondering if his fierce reputation matched someone who would give so much freedom to Elders or anyone else. How much she understood, they definitely undermined his authority. Isn't that rebellion? But she didn't want to ask about it. He had his reasons. Maybe.

The talk moved to the pack run.

"I never participated in a pack run. Sounds exciting.", Kalina said and glanced at Tony. "Will we stay long enough to join? Lia could use our support."

Before Tony could respond, Mindy said, "You can't."

Kalina was confused. "What? Why?"

"It's a pack run, only for pack members to establish new or reinforce existing hierarchy.", Mindy explained. She knew this because they have pack runs in the Blue River pack.

Seeing Kalina's confused expression, Mindy continued, "Alpha and Luna lead the pack run with Betas flanking them and others move behind them based on hierarchy. If someone moves ahead of their place, it represents a challenge, and they can fight it out if the other one doesn't yield. There will be hunting also, so members can gain acknowledgment by competing to see who caught more. Outsiders can be there for the ceremony, but they can't participate in the run."

"Oh...", a sound escaped Kalina's lips. She didn't grow up in a pack, so she didn't know this.

Kalina glanced at Talia. "Who will support Lia then?"

Mindy puffed her chest. "I will be there." With Gideon being her mate, it was just a formality for Mindy to join the Dark Howlers pack officially.



Kalina looked at Mindy with concern. "You are not a warrior. Lia will need all the support she can get. You saw those people last night. They were eager to see Talia mess up. I'm sure they will plot against her..."

Talia was sitting on Damon's lap, and she sank into his embrace while trying to tune out the noise.

Her biggest problem was how to shift into her wolf form. If she can't accomplish that, Elders and others with bad intentions will definitely use it against her and Damon. She won't be able to take part in the pack run without shifting, so her priorities were set to getting in touch with her wolf.

Gideon said many things that made sense, yet she needed to figure out how they apply to her. Or do they apply to her?

Was it possible that her wolf was simply not interested in whatever was going on and was snoozing while Talia scrambled to deal with Elders and Marcy and who-knows-who? Or was her wolf concealing her presence with some other purpose?

Talia remembered that her aura came to her aid more than once in the time of need, and that was something that originated from her wolf. At that time, Talia was confident how it was a sign of her wolf getting stronger and allowing Talia to tap into those abilities, but now Talia suspected that her wolf was actually there, listening, watching, and it was her wolf doing things when needed, without exposing she was awake.

When did her wolf wake up? Or what if she was always awake?

Talia was uncomfortable at the thought that her wolf knew Damon was Talia's mate and kept quiet about it. And all the bullying in the Red Moon pack. Was her wolf watching that also?

Talia was not sure what to think about that.

The only thing preventing her from crumbling was Damon's solid hold on her, which told her he was there for her.

Chapter 433 A bright future (1)

The group of six didn't linger, and they moved to leave after they finished their tea.

Kalina, Talia, and Tatiana repeated many times that Mindy should stay in touch, and wished the newly-mated couple all well, and Maddox moved slowly to stay last.

Their visit was too short for Maddox to observe Gideon carefully, but he could see that Mindy was happy, so he kept his thoughts to himself.

"Give me a heads up before you visit home, so I'm there.", Maddox said while wrapping Mindy in a goodbye hug. "I'm sure that mother and father would like to meet your mate."

Mindy smiled. At first, she was not sure where Maddox was going with mentioning their home, but then she understood that it applied to both her and Gideon.

That reminded her, "Do mom and dad know?"

Maddox shook his head. "I didn't tell them." He glanced at Tatiana. "I didn't tell them that I found my mate either. After last night, they definitely know, and will be upset when I call."

"Don't call.", Mindy said. "Go in person with Tanya. They won't dare scold you in front of her."

"You think so?", Maddox asked and shook his head.

"When you tell them about me...", Mindy paused. "Tell them that Gideon is a good man."

Maddox responded with a stiff smile. Can he say that and sound sincere? He just met the guy! "I'm sure mom and dad will be in shock to find out that both of us found mates only days apart."

"I heard the theory that putting mates together is Talia's power.", Mindy said.

Maddox stifled a chuckle. He wanted to say how Kalina is full of nonsense and Maya is encouraging those crazy ideas, but he realized that it was time to go. "Don't forget that you have a family, Min."

Mindy was speechless. Why did Maddox look so emotional? But his concern was genuine, and she comforted him, "Max, you know where I am. Feel free to come anytime. In addition to that, you can text and call. I have my cell phone and it has a signal."

Maddox looked around. "Do you have a place to charge it?"

Mindy was not sure how to respond to it. It should be a no, but then Gideon spoke, "We have a generator and there is a power bank she can use. I don't live in Middle Ages."

Maddox nodded in approval and after another hug with Mindy and a handshake with Gideon, he walked out to join the other five.

Maddox was happy for his sister, but his heart was heavy. Tatiana's arm around his waist and her leaning on him made it a bit better.

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Mindy and Gideon stood in front of the cabin, and they didn't move until their six guests were out of sight.

"My brother means well.", Mindy said to Gideon, hoping to explain Maddox's overprotective behavior.

She wanted Gideon to get along with her family because they were an Alpha family who was close and if Gideon and Maddox start on a bad note, it can lead to Mindy needing to pick between the two. The mate bond was urging her to stick to Gideon, but her memory and experiences were drawing her toward her family and Mindy hoped that she won't need to abandon one for the other.

"In the Blue River pack, we have a shelter for the ones who need it. There are children, elderly, but most of the people who come seeking our protection are women who suffered years of abuse because they thought that no one will help them. Both me and Max are involved in helping those people get back on their feet and start a new life. No matter how much we see, it's always heartbreaking when another woman finds her way into our shelter while believing that she is not worthy of people being nice to her."

Gideon cocked an eyebrow at her as it dawned on him. "Is he worried that I will abuse you?"

Mindy's brows came together. Yes, Maddox was worried, but even Mindy didn't know what the future holds. Things went well so far, and she was happy, but... "I guess we all need to see how this will unfold."

Gideon's expression turned solemn.

"Mindy.", he called. "That is not how the mate bond works. Fated mates can't hurt each other, it goes against our nature. I waited for you to walk through that door from before you were born. I have no intention of mistreating you, but I am used to living on my own. If something is bothering you, I need you to tell me. I don't guarantee I will agree to your requests, but I promise to listen and do my best to accommodate your needs."

While on the topic of accommodating her needs, Mindy thought of asking, "Will you be OK with me continuing to work on the shelter and charities involved with it?"

"I want to hear more about the work you did."

Mindy looked at him apprehensively. Why did he talk about it in the past tense?

Gideon's brows furrowed as he continued, "Going there to work will require a lot of travel, but I'm sure we can make it work."

Mindy's lips stretched into a smile, and she relaxed at the thought that he was supportive.

"I don't need to be there in person.", Mindy said. "We can visit occasionally, just to see how things are going, but even that can be done with a video call. My work was mostly focusing on securing donations so that shelter can run, and also for various charities that are focusing on specific areas, such as sponsoring education, healthcare, or attending mental therapy for the ones who need it."

"Sounds like a lot of work. How much time do you spend on visiting the donors?"

"Alpha Damon is our biggest donor and by being here I'm already doing most of the work.", Mindy responded brightly. She had other people who could do that work, but her identity of Mindy River came with connections to the Alpha family, and that was the biggest incentive for people to give donations. "I can do almost everything with phone calls, emails, and we can attend a few parties a year."

"Parties.", he said sourly. "With me?"

"Will you let me go on my own?"

Gideon exhaled helplessly. He hated parties, but he hated the idea of Mindy being surrounded by some random men more. Didn't she know how beautiful she was?

"As long as you don't expect me to dance, it will be fine."

Mindy giggled and nodded, her eyes flashing in approval.

Now that she thought about it, her work with charities didn't require her to be in other places a lot. There was also the point of Mindy finishing her education, but she can do most of it online, so being mated to Gideon didn't seem to hinder anything she did so far.

Why did she think that finding a mate will be a problem? She didn't need to give up on anything, yet she got a handsome mate who was a beast in bed. Beast, in a good way.

Mindy leaned into Gideon's embrace, happy that the future looked brighter the more she thought about it.

#### Chapter 434 A bright future (2)

The guests left a while ago, yet Mindy and Gideon stood in front of their cottage, embracing each other in silence, each lost in their thoughts and the comfort of just being together.

A long time ago, Gideon closed off his heart that was reserved for his mate. He was not inexperienced in pleasures of the flesh, but every woman who passed through his hands left him empty. He thought that the Moon Goddess denied him fated mate, for reasons unknown, and he gave up on finding his other half, yet with Mindy's appearance all the walls he built over decades collapsed, and here she was... bright and welcoming, and for the first time in his life Gideon felt like he can breathe with full lungs, each breath filling him with the addictive scent of pumpkin. His pumpkin. Mindy.

Mindy enjoyed Gideon's warmth and his solid embrace that came with the irresistible scent of lavender, but her thoughts were focused on the things that are coming.

She lifted her head to look at him. "Do I need to prepare an outfit?"

He didn't get it. What outfit? "For?"

"For the ceremony before the pack run." Mindy smiled proudly. "As Shaman's mate, I will be by your side, right? I attended ceremonies in the Blue River pack ever since I was a little girl. Shaman's mate would pass him things, so I have a general idea what I should do, but every pack has a different outfit, so..." Her voice trailed and she looked at him expectantly.

Gideon's eyebrow twitched. "I didn't agree to perform the ceremony."

Mindy couldn't believe this. "You are kidding, right? The pack run will happen with or without the ceremony. I can see the friction between you and Alpha Damon, and I won't tell you to pretend that things are fine. However, you are a Shaman. The pack needs you. If the ceremony doesn't happen, people will believe that you abandoned them."

Gideon was speechless. He knew Mindy was right, but she was still talking, and for some reason, she was also stroking his chest with the tips of her fingers in ways that muddled with his reasoning.

"I want us to participate in the pack run. It will be my first one since finding my mate and..."

"I will prepare clothes for you.", Gideon grumbled.

"Our wolves didn't greet each other.", Mindy said. "Do you think we can save that for the pack run? It's only a few days away and it will make it more special."

Gideon swallowed hard. The idea of his wolf chasing Mindy's until he catches her and they mate, was leaving him breathless. Werewolves are promiscuous, but mating in wolf form is reserved for mates because their wolves won't touch another.

Gideon saw wolves mating many times, but... he never... until now.

"Alright.", he rasped.

Mindy beamed. She was really looking forward to this. After all, Mindy has Alpha blood in her veins, and being Shaman's mate was not putting her at the top of the hierarchy, but she was not low either. Actually, it was perfect to give her some authority without putting her into the spotlight that came with duties.

Gideon was now thinking about going into town with Mindy to visit the tailor. She will need a traditional leather outfit, and they should probably hurry because the last pack run was a decade ago, and once the news spread, youngsters who came of age in the last ten years will hurry to get their clothes ready. For the ceremony, it was not important, but for the ones participating in the pack run, the leather outfit that is not constricting and can easily be removed was a must-have. And with Mindy standing by his side, as his mate, a lot of eyes will be on her. He wanted to get her the best outfit so she can shine.

Ah, but the town was far away and if they go now, it will cut into their alone time as a newly-mated couple.

While thinking about the distance to the town, Gideon asked, "Do you want us to move to the town? Or somewhere else? There are single-family homes available for mated couples."

"What about your garden?", Mindy asked.

Gideon shrugged. "I can always plant a new one."

Mindy was genuinely moved. She was sure that Gideon spent years arranging this place to fit his needs, yet he was willing to leave it all and start anew with her.

Well, she was leaving her life behind also, but it was common for werewolves that female makes adjustments for her mate.

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Mindy wrapped her arms around Gideon's neck. "Hold onto the thought about planting a new garden for later. Right now, this place is fine. If we find that it's not working, we can discuss a move. It's not something we should rush into."

"It seems you have things figured out."

"Mhm...", Mindy hummed in confirmation. "Both of us will come up with a list of things we expect from our new place and find one that's perfect. If that kind of a place doesn't exist, I will take care of that." She winked playfully. "I am close to the Luna and can pull some strings. We will get our dream home in a perfect location, and neither of us will have regrets."



Gideon chuckled and tightened his hold on her. Mindy's cheerfulness and easygoing way of talking were refreshing. But the best part was that he could feel her emotions and he knew that she really felt that way. She wanted them to be happy... both of them. And he wanted that as well.

Mindy took a deep lavender-infused breath while imagining their future house.

A big house won't do because she didn't like to clean, and she didn't want to get Omegas to serve them either. Privacy was the top priority, and they can't have that with others snooping around.

Two bedrooms, one for them and one that can be used when they have guests. A library for his books, a spacious backyard that can accommodate all his herbs, and a shed that would serve as his workshop for drying herbs and whatever else Shamans do. A small patio where two of them could sit and have a snack with his aromatic teas while enjoying the view of the garden.

As for the location... Closer to the town than this, but not too close to the noise and crowd.

Just the two of them would be perfect. The two of them, and... kids... maybe? The thought of the baby-making process made her heart race.

Gideon's nostrils flared when he picked up the scent of her arousal.

"What are you thinking about, princess?", he asked huskily.

She looked at him and waggled her eyebrows playfully. "I'm thinking about us continuing to get to know each other. On a deeper level."

A hearty chuckle escaped Gideon's chest and he scooped Mindy in his arms and carried her into the cabin.

He closed the door with his leg and continued walking upstairs, loving the way her soft body clung to him.

His adorable mate wanted them to get intimate, and he had no intention of denying her that.

Chapter 435 Restless thoughts

When they returned to the packhouse, Damon went with Caden to handle some pack-related business as Maya was swamped.

Maddox was restless after leaving Mindy with Gideon, and there was also the point of telling his parents that he and Mindy both found their mate. But the matter that weighed on him the most was the upcoming talk to Tatiana. Will she accompany him to the Blue River pack?

Maddox and Tatiana touched on the topic of their future, but Tatiana was talking about her company and upcoming fashion shows, and there was no mention of the Blue River pack and her being a Luna and Maddox's mate.

Maddox was nervous. Will she leave him?

In order to release some of his tension, Maddox decided to join Tony when he headed to the training grounds.

That left Tatiana, Kalina, and Talia in the living room.

Talia decided to give attention to her two friends.

Until then, she was thinking about Gideon's words, and about the incident in the study when her wolf took over for a few endless minutes, and about every time her aura came forth and... nothing. Other than her getting a hint of a headache, there was nothing.

Talia needed a mental break, and there were many other things to think about. Like the possibility of an upcoming war.

"Did you guys decide how long you will stay here?", Talia asked Tatiana and Kalina. "I'm not chasing you away, just asking."

Kalina nodded in understanding. "I guess you don't want us to be implicated if Alpha Edward makes his move."

Talia gave Kalina a grateful smile. She was glad that her friend understood. "I know that Tony and Max believe how your presence will deter him from acting, but I think that the man is power-hungry to the point of not caring of who is watching. I don't want you to get hurt just because you are here."

Kalina reached to hold Talia's hand and gave her a reassuring squeeze. "We can help."

"I know.", Talia responded. "But I believe you will be of more help if you are out there. Talk to people who are willing to listen until they understand that Alpha Edward is unreasonable. They don't need to provide reinforcements to the Dark Howlers pack, but if they can decline assistance to Alpha Edward, that will already be a lot of help."

Tatiana slumped back in her chair and let out a long breath. "To be honest, I like it here."

Kalina cocked an eyebrow. "You are just shagging your mate. What is there not to like?"

Tatiana stifled a laugh. "That's not what I meant. I was talking about being myself."

"You sound like you were holding back so far. I don't remember that you lived a life of solitude.", Kalina said teasingly.

"No. I mean..." Tatiana paused while thinking about how to explain. "I spent a lot of time among humans, always watching that I don't move too fast or squeeze too hard during a handshake. Humans look like us, but they are not. I felt caged while suppressing things that come to me naturally, and here I don't need to do that."

Kalina pursed her lips. She grew up around humans also, but she didn't see it as caged. "I always thought about that like practice in control."

Tatiana leaned forward, resting her elbows on her knees. "That's exactly it. Control. With humans, we need that. Here, I can do what I want, how I want it, and people won't look at me like I'm a freak. I

remember attending one of my first parties and when I took the champagne flute, the delicate thing shattered in my hand. My date looked at me strangely, and after the third one I broke, the waiter said how the glasses must be flawed because there was no way a refined lady like myself would end up breaking them on purpose. Ah, I still remember going home thirsty because I didn't dare touch those anymore, and everything was fragile crystal..."

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Talia's chest tightened when Tatiana's story reminded her of herself. Damon was warning her to be careful but why did she need to control her powers? Will people think of her as a freak if they find out what she did? What about her friends?

Will Tatiana be grateful that Talia stopped water currents so that Maddox can save her, or will Tatiana fear her?

Gideon said that whatever she can do is a gift from the Moon Goddess, but what's the point of a gift if she can't use it because people might look at her like she is a monster?

Was there a place for Talia where she can be herself and break stuff without people looking at her strangely?

Somehow, Talia remembered Axel. He said that she was welcome in the Midnight Guardians pack. Based on the scene of Meg glowing in the car and Kai's silvery eyes, it appeared that people in the Midnight Guardians pack have such powers. Was that the place where Talia could be herself? But they won't accept Damon because he was not one of them. Was she one of them? How can she know if she belongs to a place she never visited?

Talia nearly jumped out of her skin when a pair of strong arms circled her from behind.

"What's weighing on your mind, kitten?", Damon murmured close to her ear, and she took a deep breath of the forest and the dark chocolate that had the power to ease her nerves.

That's right. Damon was her home. With him, she could be herself and he won't judge her or think of her badly no matter what she did.

"Just... stuff.", she said. Was she actually thinking of going with Axel? No, that's not happening. No matter what, she won't leave Damon.

She looked up at Damon to meet his icy-blue eyes full of concern.

"I am fine. Really.", Talia did her best to assure him. They already had so many things to juggle and adding more to it won't help.

Acting like things were normal was one of the things that helped her from running away. Where would she run? She didn't know. Maybe into the mountains, or out of the country; wherever she ran, it would be fine as long as Damon was with her, but... would he want to leave all this behind? She shook useless thoughts away.

This place, this pack... it was important to Damon, and he was her most important person and she didn't want to put him in a position to choose. She will be with him in this, for better or for worse. Together. Isn't that what mates do?

Before any of them said anything else, James entered the living room.

Talia felt anxiety bubbling inside her. Wasn't James supposed to spend the day having fun with Petra, Erik, and Zack? And why was James' expression not good?

Talia swallowed hard. If James was back early, it could mean only one thing.

"Is it time?", Talia asked Damon, her voice barely above a whisper.

Damon gave her a small nod and said words that made her chest tighten.

"Marcy is awake."

Chapter 436 A three days-long deceit (1) [Bonus chapter]

In the house where Marcy was...

Talia, James, Dawn, and George were in the kitchen, all seated on chairs and staring at the screen of a laptop that showed the live feed from Marcy's room.

Marcy was on the bed, and Doctor Travis was checking her vitals and taking notes on his tablet.

Dawn was nervously squeezing George's hand and he gently caressed her knuckles, silently assuring her that Marcy had no effect on him. And she didn't. The truth was that George didn't want to be there, but as Commander George, he needed to be present.

James observed with a boorish expression, and Talia was tense because she knew that Damon will enter the scene.

Upstairs, Damon stared at the door like it was his mortal enemy while silently chanting James' last instruction, "it needs to be convincing".

Damon hoped that just words will be enough and Talia won't blow a fuse. He could feel her anxiousness spilling into him and he took a deep breath to stabilize his emotions. If Marcy sees through him, all this will become a fantastic shitshow.

They needed Marcy to cooperate and only Damon could do this.

James said it will work, and Damon hoped that youngster's confidence was not just for show.

After a short knock, Damon pushed the door open.

Travis was sitting on a chair next to Marcy's bed and he bolted to his feet. "Alpha!", he greeted with his head lowered.

"Continue...", Damon said and leaned on the doorframe with his arms crossed over his chest.

Marcy opened her mouth for Travis to put a thermometer, and her eyes drifted toward Damon. His intense gaze was trained on her and she held her breath, unable to look away. He was super-handsome without trying and his appeal was enhanced by the sharp aura coming from him. Dangerous. Powerful. Dominating. A true Alpha.

She bit her lower lip. How much did Damon know?

She woke up some time ago, and this doctor entered her room a few seconds later, introducing himself as Travis, the doctor assigned by Alpha Damon to take care of her.

Travis told her that he was watching her since yesterday, her condition was serious, but improving, and that Alpha Damon was on his way.

Travis didn't mention breaking of the mate bond and she wondered if he didn't know about it or if he was not allowed to talk about it. In either case, Marcy decided to keep quiet and see how things went.

Marcy used this time to assess Damon's attitude. Surely, if Damon knew that George was Marcy's mate and that they broke off the bond, his Alpha pride would kick in and he would send her packing. Or maybe to the dungeon. Or worse.

The fact that Damon provided her medical aid in a house, outside prying eyes, told her that Damon either didn't know about what happened or was trying to conceal it. Was it possible that Damon was fearing her father and was willing to overlook her error of coming here to be his Luna while having a mate?

But George accepted the rejection, so there was no evidence, and no obstacles for Damon to mark her.

If George didn't spill the beans, they might think that she only passed out from unknown causes. And if George said the truth, he would be in danger also, and George was not stupid or suicidal, so... there was a chance that Marcy can come out of this scot-free.

Travis removed the stethoscope from around his neck and turned to Damon. "Done."

"How is she?", Damon asked.

"Her vitals are steady but somewhat weak. I expect that in two-to-three days we will see a full recovery."

"Thank you, Travis.", Damon said and moved while gesturing toward the open door. "I would like privacy with Miss Marcy. Please wait downstairs. I will have some instructions for you."

Travis bowed his head and took his medical bag before making his way out of the room and closing the door behind him.

Marcy's heart thundered against her chest. This is it, the moment when she will find out what will happen.

Damon knew that this was not fair but facing a choice between the safety of Talia and his pack vs Marcy's, the choice was obvious. He also reminded himself that Marcy came here with her mate while hoping to become his Luna, so deceiving her won't be a big offense. She was doing the same.

'It needs to be convincing!', James' voice echoed in Damon's head, reminding him that this was not the time for doubting priorities and weighing who is right.

"How are you feeling?", Damon asked while taking a seat on the chair that Travis vacated, next to Marcy's bed.



Marcy's eyes widened. Was that question full of concern directed at her?

"F-fine.", she stuttered before adding, "A bit weak, but fine." She repeated what Doctor Travis said. If she says that she is completely fine, Damon might kick her out.

Damon ran his hand through his hair. "You got me worried."

Marcy was not sure what to think about this. Did he say he was worried? "Thank you for your concern, Alpha Damon."

She blinked a few times before deciding to ask, "It seems I missed the event."

"Yes, you did."

"How did it go?"

"It was nearly a disaster. Everyone expected you to show up and I announce that you will be my Luna, and when you didn't come, I had to improvise." Well, that was almost-truth.

Now the acting came. Damon's role was to convince Marcy that he was clueless about the rejection.

"I'm sorry, Marcy."

Marcy's stomach dropped. Was this the part where he tells her to pack and leave? Or will he send her into a dungeon? "About?"

"My doctor believes that you were poisoned. Considering the condition of your wolf, he thinks it was wolfsbane.", Damon said with a pitiful expression.

Marcy wondered if her ears malfunctioned. She was poisoned? "What?"

"I hope you can forgive me the negligence. I have no idea how an enemy sneaked into my packhouse, but my people are working on it. By the time I found out that someone is targeting my future Luna, it was too late and when I arrived, you were already on the floor. I brought you here and got my best doctor to take care of you. I couldn't risk taking you to the pack hospital because I didn't know who was behind the attempt on your life."

Marcy blinked while staring at him stupidly. Poisoned? He was sorry? She couldn't decide if he was serious or maybe baiting her into something, but there was no way she will admit to anything.

"You think that someone poisoned me?" She had to make sure about this.

Damon nodded solemnly. "Your bloodwork was clean, so it must have been a mixture that is difficult to detect. But only wolfsbane will weaken your wolf in such a way. The good news is that given enough time, you should make full recovery."

Marcy couldn't believe her luck. Her wolf was weakened from her rejection, and she took another blow when George accepted the rejection, but Damon thought it was wolfsbane. This was fantastic!

Chapter 437 A three days-long deceit (2)

Marcy reminded herself not to smile about her stroke of luck. Instead of being scolded for coming to the Dark Howlers pack to be Damon's Luna despite having a mate, Damon thought that she was poisoned and he felt guilty about it! She can definitely use that to her advantage. But first, she needed to understand the whole situation.

Marcy made a troubled expression. "You said you improvised at the event. How did you explain my absence?"

"I told everyone at the event that Talia will be my Luna."

Marcy's head was spinning. Did they think she will die and that wretched mistress took her place? Marcy still remembered how Talia pinned her down while showing her the racy video, and then George lost his temper and accepted Marcy's rejection, snapping the bond completely and causing her unimaginable pain.

It was Talia's fault that Marcy ended up in this sorry state, and now Talia took her spot! Marcy wanted to give Talia a good beating.

Marcy thought that Damon came to comfort her, yet it seemed that he replaced her already. It didn't make sense. "You... what?"

"I had to announce Talia as my mate.", Damon said. "You see, like this, my enemies don't know if they were successful in poisoning you, and whoever is targeting my Luna, will shift their focus on Talia. Only like that, I can assure your safety. My men already have a solid trail and once we find the culprits, I will call the press and remove any doubts about who will be my Luna.", Damon said this in one breath and hoped that Marcy will fall for it.

James said it will work as Marcy mostly thinks about her survival. Damon admired this scenario that covers the truth with a veil of deceit perfectly. Marcy will buy it.

The way Marcy's eyes moved told Damon that she was processing this information, and this was the right time for the next step: making Marcy feel important. It will boost her confidence to the point of neglecting the warning signs. At least that's what James said.

Before Marcy could react, Damon moved swiftly to sit on the edge of her bed and hold her hand.

"Marcy...", Damon called huskily. "I need your help."

Marcy stared at their connected hands. His hand was big and warm and... she liked it.

Damon's free hand moved to touch her chin and lift her head so that he can meet her eyes. "You said that you want to be my Luna. I expect my Luna to watch my back. Will you help me?"

Marcy blinked. He was close. Too close. "Help you? How?"

"I need you to handle your father. He doesn't know what happened and thinks that I discarded you."

Her eyes darted to his lips. "How can I help?"

"Tell him the truth.", Damon said without missing a beat. "Actually, if you can skip the poisoning part that would be for the best." Damon waited until Marcy nodded, and then continued, "Tell him that someone is targeting you and what happened at the last night's event is only to flush out my enemies. We need him to be patient for three days, and then everything will be clarified."

"What will happen in three days?", Marcy asked breathily because her heart was racing. Damon was awfully close, but she wanted him to get closer.

"Doctor Travis said that by then you will be fully recovered. Also, I'm confident that within three days the culprits will be caught, and then we can make your position official. I don't want my Luna to be in danger before she can take on her role."

Damon had no problems saying that because most of it was mostly the truth. Mostly. He will announce that Talia is his Luna, and everyone will know that Marcy is not. Three days. By then, Talia will wear his mark. This thought made him smile a little.

Marcy nodded robotically. "OK."

Damon stared at her intently, and Marcy thought he will kiss her, but he stood up and stepped away.

He took a phone from his back pocket and gave it to Marcy. Marcy flipped the phone to see that it was hers, powered off, and her attention went back to Damon who was giving her additional instructions.

"Call your father. He is probably going crazy thinking that I mistreated you. Tell him that things between us are going well, and ask him to be patient for three days until we clarify everything..."

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Marcy called Alpha Edward to tell him what Damon instructed her to say.

The short version was that someone was targeting Marcy, and the announcement how Talia is Damon's Luna was a decoy to keep Marcy safe. Marcy was in a safe location, near the packhouse, until Damon finds the culprits. Marcy said that Damon was visiting her when the circumstances allow and that things between them are great.

Alpha Edward was at first confused and then pacified. The call ended with Alpha Edward's, "I look forward to hearing good news in three days!"

Damon knew that Alpha Edward will continue sending his spies to confirm what was really going on, but after his talk to Marcy, he will dismiss stories that place Damon and Talia together either as Talia being Damon's assistant, or Talia being a decoy to protect Marcy.

After ending her call, Marcy powered off her phone and returned it to Damon. He said that his enemies might use GPS to track her phone, and she believed him.

"Is there anything I can do to make your stay here more comfortable?", Damon asked.

"Here?", Marcy asked while eyeing the room. "I won't stay in the packhouse?"

"No. There are too many people there, and we need to stick to the scenario. It's temporary.", Damon assured her. "Don't leave this house until I come and say that it's safe. I have my trustworthy warriors guarding you. Even if you don't see them, they are there. Rest as much as you can in order to recover your strength. Handpicked people will come here to bring you food and anything you ask for. You might hear from them that I'm with Talia. Don't overthink it. She is just a decoy until I find the culprits. Only a few of us know how important you are...", he picked his words carefully, but he still felt sick to his stomach when he saw Marcy smiling brightly at him.

Marcy's smile faded as she thought about the next few days. "Are you expecting me just to sit here and do nothing?"

"It's for the best that you stay off the grid. You can watch the television, but no internet and no cellphones. Be patient until the coast is clear."

Marcy let out a long breath and nodded in agreement. A few days. Three, at most. She can do that.

"I won't visit you before I'm sure the culprits are caught.", Damon said. "I am probably being watched and I don't want to risk leading my enemies to you. At this point, you are precious and vulnerable."

Marcy's smile was back. He said that she was precious.

Marcy asked about James, George, and Nora, and Damon told her that James and George are attending training as scheduled, to which Marcy frowned. How can George train like nothing happened while she was unconscious for a full day? But then, George was a Commander with a trained body and spirit, so maybe that was the difference between their endurance.

She decided not to think about George because Alpha Damon was right there, and he was telling her updates related to Nora. Marcy was not surprised that Nora made her move on Damon, and she was visibly pleased with the news that Nora was in the dungeon.

Marcy asked for books and magazines to keep busy in the next three days because she was not interested in watching television, and Damon said that he will take care of it with a reminder that the internet and cell phone are prohibited, for her protection. And she believed him.

Everything went just as James predicted.

Chapter 438 A three days-long deceit (3)

Damon left Marcy's room feeling victorious, but also apprehensive about meeting Talia's eyes.

While he was in that room with Marcy, Damon felt Talia's unsteady emotions bouncing on him, and he was on the verge of dropping everything and just going to hold her. She needed comforting, and he needed assurance that she won't leave. He was never so insecure. Maybe because he never truly cared about someone before.

Damon hoped that Talia knew he held Marcy's hand only for the show, and all the nice things he said were only to get Marcy to cooperate.

He tried to focus on the positives.

With this, level of alertness in the territory of the Dark Howlers pack can be lowered. No matter what Alpha Edward hears after his conversation with Marcy, he will think that it's information from people who don't know what's really going on.

In the meantime, Marcy will send to her father a few updates that James prepared already. Damon couldn't believe that everything played out how the teen predicted.

Damon really admired James' mind. The boy is a genius!

Damon was thinking about how to recruit the teen, but James was right... his father won't let him go because Alpha Edward doesn't see James as a smart kid, he sees James as his successor.

However, in two years, James will have his eighteenth birthday and his cover will crumble when his aura doesn't awaken. Damon took a mental note to poach the boy at that time. If he can have James as a strategist, Damon was ready to make him his Gamma.

This three days-long delay will be enough for Damon to mark Talia and they enjoy being lovey-dovey in the cabin, away from it all. Even if the sky was falling, Damon would prioritize solidifying his bond with Talia. No more waiting. With dangers pressing on them from all sides, he needed to know that she was his, or he would lose his mind. And once she wears his mark, and they step out as Alpha and Luna of the Dark Howlers pack, everything else will be settled... somehow.

This three days-long break will give James more time to play, and George and Dawn will indulge in the activities as newly found mates.

Everyone wins!

Well, not everyone. Someone needs to work.

Caden and Maya have tasks to monitor the situation and catch any people who attempt to get in touch with Alpha Edward.

Damon didn't get a chance to talk to Maddox and Tony about their plans, but they can either continue what they were doing, or go home. At this point, they can't contribute, and they were not in the way either.

Once three days are up, Talia and Damon will return, and they will move on to the next stage of James' plan.

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When Damon reached the kitchen, he found Dawn, George, James, Travis, and Talia. They were looking at the screen that showed Marcy on the bed rolling and giggling. She was obviously pleased with this outcome, and totally oblivious to the camera in her room or that her happiness will collapse in three days.

Damon pressed his lips into a line while wondering how Marcy will behave when the truth slaps her on the face. Telling her a pretty lie in order to manipulate her was wrong, but Damon knew that he couldn't tell her the truth in advance.

James said that Marcy is a bad liar, and even if she wanted to collaborate with them, Alpha Edward would see through the deception. Marcy might be willing to lie, but she won't be brave enough to go through it.

Based on James' assessment. It was crucial for Marcy to believe the lie because only like that she could make Alpha Edward believe it.



Well, she will enjoy her bliss for three more days before they tell her what's really going on.

Damon didn't like this. He was a warrior, and not a schemer. This lying made him feel icky all over. But he reminded himself that Marcy wanted to be his Luna with a mate by her side, and she beat Talia, twice. Marcy did a lot of selfish things without considering who gets trampled. With that in mind, Damon felt less guilty.

"Travis...", Damon called. "The fact that Marcy is here is no longer a secret, but we don't want to publicize it. Marcy is not allowed to leave the house. Pick a few trustworthy nurses to come and check on Marcy once or twice a day, just to make sure her condition doesn't worsen. Tell Caden and Maya who are nurses you picked, so they notify the guards. Zina can coordinate with them to bring Marcy her meals."

George stood up and pulled Dawn with him. "We are leaving.", George said.

Damon nodded in acknowledgment. "You have three days. After that we move onto the next stage."

George's eyes darted toward James. "Will Marcy cooperate after finding out the truth?"

James smiled smugly. "By then she will be too deep to back off. Don't worry. I got it all figured out." He glanced at Damon. "Anything else, or can I go?"

Damon knew that James was irritated because he had to stop his fun to attend this. "If you want to join your friends, I will arrange for a warrior to take you there. And if you don't, there is the latest PlayStation console in your room with a few games that should keep you busy for a while."

James' eyes lit up. "I will check out the game console." James walked out of the kitchen in hurried steps. PlayStation!

With that, Damon looked at Talia who had a small frown on her beautiful face. He could feel that she was troubled. It's not that he was holding a woman's hand, but this was Marcy. She wanted to be his Luna. She already experienced his touch and Talia ended up watching the video recording.

Damon knew, if roles were reversed, he would blow a fuse just by seeing Talia in the same room with a guy who put his hands on her.

"Give me a moment, kitten.", Damon said and moved toward the sink.

He used the dishwashing liquid to soap his hands and he washed them thoroughly before patting them dry with a towel and turning to Talia who was now smiling a little.

She knew that he washed hands because of her, and she appreciated the gesture. She didn't want to think about Marcy or anyone other than Damon.

"Can we go now to the cabin?", she asked.

Damon's heart flipped in his chest, and he licked his lips nervously. It was happening! But first, a few more things.

"I will ask Steph to pack us some food for the road and in the meantime, we can pick a few changes of clothes to take."

Damon extended his hand toward Talia, palm up, and her delicate hand slid into his big one, their fingers interlaced, and Damon was glad that Talia was not upset.

They were getting ready to leave for the cabin, and he will mark her, and she will be his completely. Finally.

Chapter 439 On their way to the cabin [Bonus chapter]

About ten minutes after they passed Darkbourne, the black armored Lexus SUV took a right turn, and Damon skillfully navigated a gravel road that snaked between massive sequoias and pine trees that were blocking the afternoon, allowing only occasional thin bright rays to spear through the air and speckle the ground with white dots.

As the drive progressed, gravel became sparser, revealing the hard soil beneath it. Bushes and ferns stretched toward the road, indicating that this road was not frequently used.

Other than the moving car, everything appeared to be still.

Talia opened the window and warm sticky air caressed her cheeks. The humidity was so high that there were puddles on the side of the road even though it didn't rain in days. But she loved it. Wherever she looked, she could see the green untouched nature.

And the best part was her left hand was in Damon's right, their fingers interlaced.

Talia knew that they were heading for his cabin, and she didn't ask where exactly that was. As long as she was with Damon, she would go willingly even if it's inside a volcano.

Over the steady hum of the car engine, Talia listened to the sounds of the forest. She could hear birds chirping and there was faint clamor of water that sounded like a stream hidden in the dense foliage, but not a single animal was in sight no matter how much she looked.

"Are you searching for something in particular?", Damon asked her.

"I was wondering if I could see a bear or a fox." Or anything. They were away from the town, and she was sure that this dense forest will be a home to many creatures.

Damon chuckled. "Animals have strong instincts to avoid danger. They won't get close to us."

Talia paused and it took her a few long moments to realize that the danger he spoke of was him.

She smiled while thinking how Damon is so sweet with her that she forgot he is an efficient killing machine. An Alpha. Predator.

There was a time when she was afraid of him, but in time he showed her that he can be caring, gentle, passionate. Hers.

Maya told her that Damon's behavior changed since he returned from the Red Moon pack with Talia. He was less aggressive, not so impulsive, thinking more (and sometimes overthinking), but overall, happier.

Maya also said that Damon would spend a lot of time training with warriors or engaged in a fight. That was not the behavior Talia observed and she hoped the change in Damon was for good and that people won't think less of him.

Talia unbuckled her seatbelt and scooted closer to lean her head on Damon's shoulder. It didn't matter how other people (and animals) looked at him, to her, he was Damon. Just Damon. Her mate.

The drive was steady, and the exhaustion caused by stress of the last few days caught up to her, and Talia drifted off to sleep.

Damon glanced at the sleeping woman by his side, and he made sure to avoid bumps on the road, so she can rest.

Both of them needed a break, from everything.

Damon really wished that they can take a whole week, or a month, or forever, just for the two of them. But he knew that was impossible. He couldn't leave the pack. It was his duty to keep everyone safe and provide for them, and now that he found his Luna, he needed to introduce her to his people. Their people.

Last few days were a constant reminder that he screwed up. Maddox and Tatiana, Kai and Meg, Gideon and Mindy. Even George and Dawn were clinging onto each other from the moment they realized they were mates, and Damon... didn't.

Damon was supposed to announce Talia as his mate on the same day she arrived at the Dark Howlers pack. Actually, even at the Red Moon pack, instead of sneaking Talia in the trunk of a car, Damon should have claimed her as his mate in front of everyone and walk her out through the main door with a warning that Alpha Edward will suffer for mistreating her. Surely, a fallout after that couldn't be messier than what they were facing at this point.

Damon squeezed the steering wheel while releasing a frustrated breath. He was unable to change the past, and he decided to treat this as a new beginning. This time, he will do things right.

His plan was solid. The two of them will enjoy the next three days; he will mark Talia and assure her that he will keep her safe and support her to the best of his abilities, swearing loyalty and commitment while they make sweet love and savor each other until exhaustion. And when these three days pass, Damon will bring Talia back to the Dark Howlers pack as his Luna, ready for the pack run and to deal with Alpha Edward and anyone else who dares to endanger what they have.

The source of this content is Freewebnovel.com.

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Talia opened her eyes when the movement of the car changed.

"Sleep, kitten...", Damon murmured as she blinked herself awake.

"No, it's fine.", she said and rubbed her eyes. "I didn't mean to sleep."

Talia felt guilty. Damon was working more compared to her, yet she ended up dozing off while he was driving.

She observed that the road became bumpier, and it was actually just two faint strips in the grass. If not for those, the only indication that it's a path would be that there were no bushes that way.

The amount of light diminished, indicating that the sun was setting. How long was she sleeping?

"We will be there in a few minutes.", Damon said, and she hummed in response while looking out the window that was closed now.

With every passing second, Talia was becoming more aware that she was alone with Damon. They were going to spend some time in a cabin and... have sex. Her cheeks heated. They did it many times before, but now they were going with an intention to do it, and she was getting flustered.

Damon threw her a side-glance. "What are you thinking, kitten?"

There was no way she will admit her thoughts. "I was wondering how the cabin looks like. You said that there is a lake nearby. I would like to see it."

"Mhm...", Damon hummed in response. "Do you think it's a sexy lake?"

Talia blinked. "What?"

He chuckled. "I can smell your arousal. So, either you were hoping that the lake is sexy, or it was something else. Were you thinking what are we going to do in the lake? Now that is something I want to hear about, so I can make it come true."

Talia cleared her throat awkwardly and swiftly pushed the button to open the window. She forgot about the scent!

Damon's hand was squeezing and caressing her knee now, but she decided to ignore him and think about something else because if she acknowledges her naughty thoughts, it will only spur him to tease her more, or maybe stop the car so they can go at it right there, and it's not that she didn't want it but she wanted to reach the cabin before nightfall.

She couldn't believe that they were about to spend three days off the grid considering what was happening at home.

But she knew that these three days were calm before the storm and even though everyone seemed to be happy to get this break, they were anxious about what's coming.

Other than Maya and Caden, no one else knew that they left. They agreed that Maya will say how she will tell everyone that Damon and Talia went to handle some pack business and it might take a few days.

Talia didn't want to conceal this from her friends, but she knew that the fewer people were aware that Alpha Damon was set on marking her, the bigger were chances that no one disturbs them. After all, when Damon marks her, their bond as mates will be sealed, and even if someone doesn't approve, only by killing one of them that can be broken. Talia tried not to think about it. She hoped that people will approve, or at least not meddle. One can wish.

#### Chapter 440 In the Cabin (1)

Talia tried not to think about Marcy's situation because the mental image of that woman made her insides tighten in a bad way. However, no matter how much Talia disliked Marcy, giving her hope only to let her crash later was cruel.

Talia cringed when she realized how one tiny part of her agrees that Marcy deserved everything that was happening.

Marcy rejected her mate while coveting another man, and Talia's body tensed at the memory of Marcy's beatings and words full of spite, talking to Talia like she was dirty and unworthy to be in princess Marcy's presence.

"Ah!", Talia let out a surprised cry when Damon squeezed her knee with some force.

"Why did you do that?", she asked.

"Didn't we agree that this is our chance to disconnect and recharge? For the next three days, you can either relax or think about me."

She realized he was right. Somehow, she ended up thinking about Marcy and her mood dropped, and he could feel her. "Sorry. My thoughts drifted that way on their own."

Damon clicked his tongue, and he was about to say something, but then his lips stretched into a smile. "We are here..."

It was a simple cabin made out of dark wood that appeared black where shadows blanketed it. Tall bushes started on each side and massive trees towered above. The grass in front of the cabin was

cleared of other foliage, but there was no path to the front door. It seemed like the structure was completely part of the forest.

Damon went to the back of the car to get the bag with their things, and then he opened the door for Talia and offered her his hand.

"Welcome to the first three days of our forever as mates.", Damon said with a smile that reflected in his eyes, and Talia's heart skip a beat.

Forever as mates. She liked that. She liked it a lot.

Damon was quick to give Talia a tour, eager to be done with formalities and move onto the important parts.

The kitchen extended into the dining area that had a small square table with four chairs.

The sitting area had a three-seater sofa and a rocking chair. Talia could imagine snuggling with Damon on the fur-rug with a cup of hot cocoa in front of the fireplace where a fire will dance later that evening.

One small room on the left doubled as pantry and miscellaneous storage, and the door next to it was for the bathroom.

The back half of the cabin was a bedroom with a king-size bed and the armoire that had a few dark gray t-shirts and sweatpants, to add to the clothes they brought with them.

Everything was clean and smelled fresh.

Talia approached the window and smiled when she realized that the small flashes of light were reflections of the sunset in the lake that could be seen between thick trunks of trees. Damon said that there is a lake close to the cabin, but this was closer than she thought it will be. Will they go swimming? Maybe tomorrow.



"What do you think?", Damon asked. "Is this fine?"

"This is perfect.", Talia said honestly.

Damon released a nervous breath. "I'm glad you like it."

He was torn between something grand and romantic (based on the information he found on the internet), and this solitude that is more werewolf-style.

Damon knew that Talia grew without the influence of her werewolf heritage, and what she saw in the Red Moon pack was just wrong. He grew up hearing stories about battles for territory, people living in caves and gathering under the Full Moon to worship the Moon Goddess, Alphas taking care of their people, and that forever-bond with a fated mate that was the most sacred of them all.

Damon didn't care about the bond before, he didn't want it. But as Talia entered his life, he realized that he can't escape it, and the more he found out about the delicate girl he took away from the attic, the less he wanted to resist the pull. He was absolutely under her spell.

After all they've been through, Damon was determined to show her how things should be.

The source of this content is [Freewebnovel.com](http://Freewebnovel.com).

Talia looked at Damon who was staring at her intently, yet he also seemed to be a bit distracted.

"Damon?", she called.

He blinked and then his lips lifted into a smile that stirred butterflies in her stomach.

She leaned into his warmth as he cupped her cheeks with his palms and the softness of his lips against hers made her crave for more.

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"I will be back in a bit...", he murmured before giving her another light kiss.

Talia wondered if she heard him right. "What?"

"I need to do something."

Talia's eyes widened as she processed his previous statement. He was leaving her! And if he was just going to the kitchen, he wouldn't announce it. "Where are you going?"

"Out. I will be back before you know it.", he assured her and he gave her another kiss because he could feel her uneasiness swelling. "Trust me."

Did she trust him? Yes!

Did she like him leaving? Absolutely not!

But she didn't want to whine, not now when they were away from troubles.

"Uhm... fine? I guess I will unpack.", Talia said, unsure where this was going. "When can I expect you back?"

Damon smiled a little, enjoying her need for him that he could clearly feel through their mate bond. "How about you freshen up? By the time you shower, I will be back."

"I can take a quick shower. Under five minutes.", she warned him. The thought of him leaving her there made the cozy cabin not so cozy anymore. "Will you be back so quickly?"

Damon chuckled. "Come here."

He took her hand in his and led the way into the bathroom.

When Damon gave her a tour, the bathroom door was cracked open and she didn't care much about what was inside, but now she noticed that there was no bathtub, only a shower, a toilet, and a sink. The sink had on it two toothbrushes, still in their original packaging, and a toothpaste. A basket on the ground held neatly rolled towels that smelled fresh.

She moved to peer into the shower area that was half-blocked by the shower curtain and observed that the boards below the shower had gaps and she could see pebbles that were a few inches below it. The thing drained into the ground.

The shelf on the wall had a shampoo and a soap, so Talia had everything she needed to freshen up, but soon she realized one problem. There were no knobs, buttons, or anything on the wall she could press or twist to start the shower.

"How does the shower work?", Talia asked while standing under the showerhead which looked like a straight wide pipe that ended abruptly with a closure that had tiny holes in it.

Damon pointed at the simple chains that hung from the ceiling. "There is a water reservoir on the roof that's collecting rainwater. The reservoir is full and considering the weather we had recently, the water will be warm. The right chain will start the water, and the left one will stop it."

Chapter 441 In the Cabin (2)

Talia observed the strange mechanism of the shower and noticed that there was one more chain. "What about the one in the back?"

"That one will drain the reservoir. We will drain it before we leave so that it stays dry until the next rain."

Damon hugged Talia from behind. "Shower and wear something comfortable. I will be back in no time and then we will work on the dinner."

Talia wanted him to stay, or at least to take her with him, but his choice of words made it obvious that he wanted her to wait for him. Well, the day was long, and the humidity made her sweat. She would need to shower anyway.

"Be back soon.", she said softly. "Go, before I change my mind."

Damon chuckled and kissed the back of her head.

Talia closed her eyes when his arms loosened around her and she released a slow breath, missing him from the moment his warmth started disappearing.

Maya told her that after marking their connection will intensify, and the absence will hit them harder. Talia didn't want to think about anything harder than what she was experiencing right now.

...

Talia entered the bathroom with a towel around herself while clutching her change of clothes.

Damon's absence was unsettling, and she decided to shower quickly. He said that he will be back by the time she was done, so if he breaks his word, she will give him a hard time. But she really hoped that he will be back sooner, and maybe join her in the shower.

Talia observed the showerhead that was actually a wide pipe coming straight from the ceiling, and Talia guessed that the other side was attached to the water reservoir on the roof.

After keeping her things on the side, Talia stood under the showerhead, tugged on one chain, and... nothing. She tried the other one, gradually increasing the pull, and after a small screech that sounded like a groan, the water started dripping. It was warm. She gave the chain a stronger tug and the water flowed.

"Ahh...", a long sigh escaped Talia's lips when warm water hit her head and glided down her body, soaking in the tension she built up during the last few days, and washing it away until it disappeared in the pebbles that could be seen through the planks on the floor.

Talia reminded herself that there was a limited water supply, so she tugged the chain to stop the water in order to soap herself. After a strained creak, the water stopped, and Talia reached for the shampoo.

She was distracted.

What was Damon up to? Why did he leave like there was an important mission?

She was nervous.

Talia told him that he can mark her, and she knew that's why they came here, and that was already nerve-wracking, but then he left. She needed his proximity and assurance that things will be alright.

What if her wolf comes out and objects or... worse?

And how could Gideon say that her wolf was fine? How can it be fine if she is not responding when Talia calls for her? Or is her wolf ignoring her on purpose? Aren't wolves and humans supposed to work together?

"Crap!", Talia cursed under her breath when shampoo entered her eyes, fierce sting blinded her.

Now what!?

Talia frantically waved to reached for the chains. She tugged one, nothing happened. She reached for the other one and nothing.

How can both of those be nothing? She pulled with a lot of force this time.

Is the system broken?

She grabbed the other chain and put her weight behind it. The pipe above her head creaked and then...

'SPLAAAAAASH!'

Talia lost footing under the force of water that hit her suddenly, and she fell on her butt, blinking rapidly as the water slammed into the floor planks and splattered everywhere.

Talia pushed her hair back to see that the pipe above her head was completely open, water pouring out, and she had no idea how to stop it. After a moment of hesitation, Talia she quickly stuck her head under the stream to wash away the remaining shampoo because she had a feeling that water will run out within seconds.

The water stopped and Talia dejectedly looked up, wondering if she broke it. But then she understood that she probably pulled the third chain, the one that drained the reservoir.

Will Damon be mad at her?

Well, at least the lake was close. They can go swimming and laugh about this shower incident. Maybe.

She heard about rain-summoning rituals. Should she try to perform it? If it rains heavily, Damon won't notice that she used the whole reservoir for one shower. Will he believe it was an accident?

Talia exhaled helplessly. What was done was done.

She walked out of the shower to grab a towel and she looked in the mirror dejectedly.

This three days-long vacation didn't start well. Actually, the last few days were kind of horrible, and it felt like a dam was about to break, yet they were patching it up with bandages.

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Talia exited the bathroom while rubbing her hair with a towel and she froze when she heard noise from the kitchen.

Slowly, very slowly, she turned toward the source of the noise and released the breath she was holding when she realized it was Damon.

Relief replaced her anxiety with every inhale that brought her his addictive scent.

He was rummaging through the kitchen and Talia paused at the sight of his muscular back as he stretched his arm to reach something from the top shelf. Damon was wearing only a pair of black shorts and his form was mesmerizing.

"Done with shower?", he asked before turning to meet her gaze. "I told you I won't take long."

Talia was about to respond, but she ended up frowning when she saw that his cheek was red.

She swiftly moved toward him and reached for his face. "You are hurt."

Damon shook his head. "I'm fine."

"That's blood."

"Not mine."

Talia followed his eyes that moved to the side and her brows furrowed at the sight of two dead rabbits that were in a metallic bowl on the kitchen counter.

She blinked while wondering if he bit them to death. Or did he shift in his wolf form? That would explain where his pants and shirt went.

Damon picked up a few spices and a knife, put them in the bowl next to the rabbits, and tilted his head toward the main door.

"Come with me."

Talia had no idea what to expect, but she followed him gingerly.

She paused at the sight of the campfire that was burning not far from the cabin. It was in a small clearing that was obviously made for such activities because there was no grass growing there, and three logs that formed a triangle were perfect for sitting around the campfire.

Chapter 442 Offerings to a mate (1)

Talia sat on a log and observed Damon squatting a few steps away from the campfire as he expertly removed the fur and intestines from two critters.

There was something hypnotic in the way he focused on his task as he wielded the knife, always finding the right place to slide the blade.

His features were enhanced by the light of the campfire that danced over the exquisite landscape of his body, accentuating it with lights and shadows. With part of his body completely veiled in darkness, Damon looked mysterious, dangerous, definitely irresistible.

Talia had no idea how long it lasted, but she wished that it was longer because she wanted to be lost in the sight of Damon forever.

Once the two critters were cleaned, Damon sprinkled some spices on the meat and then speared them with long finger-thick sticks he prepared earlier.



When he stuck the end of sticks in the ground angled so that the rabbits end up over the campfire, Talia had to ask, "What are you doing?"

"Making dinner.", he responded like she asked something that was obvious.

And it was obvious, but she had a point.

"Why are you going through this trouble? I mean... Don't we have a full fridge and plenty of food in the pantry?"

Damon wiped his hands on his shorts and stalked toward Talia.

He squatted by her side and looked at her intently while resting his palms on her knees.

"Kitten...", he paused and licked his lips before continuing, "We met in unusual circumstances, and it all started wrongly. I found my mate, and instead of making it glorious, I screwed up. For the first time since taking my position as the Alpha of the Dark Howlers pack, I was confused, I feared that I will fail, and I lost my way."

Talia glanced at two critters that were roasting over the fire. "How is that related to you catching dinner when we have plenty of food ready?"

"Not catching. Hunting.", he corrected her with all the seriousness in the world. "If I had more time, I would go for something bigger, but you told me to come back soon, so I went with this." He exhaled sharply and shook his head. Why was he getting distracted like this?

The truth was that Damon was a bundle of nerves, unsure if Talia will approve of what he was doing. Will she understand that this was his way of showing sincerity? He messed up so many times that he didn't trust himself anymore. He was blindsided and hesitated, and that created openings for lies and schemes, and it put her in danger, and he was determined that it won't happen again.

Talia reached to touch Damon's face, but he grabbed her wrists to kiss the inside of each palm before pulling her hands down.

"Please, give me a moment.", he said. "You've seen me as an Alpha. You saw the packhouse, the pack, and you have an idea about the resources I have available. And this..." He pointed with his chin toward the rabbits. "Those are my offerings to you from me, as your mate. I want you to know that I will take care of you, Talia. I might lose my position, my pack, and everything I have, but I will never give up on you. As long as there is breath in me, I will seek you and take care of you. I will hunt for you and provide you with shelter and safety. You won't go hungry or cold..." His voice trailed when he saw that her face fell. Why was she sad? "Did I say something wrong?"

"No...", she said in a shaky voice, realizing that he was doing this in order to reassure her before he marks her. She was not sad, but she was emotional.

"You said everything right, Damon. It's romantic." And it was.

It was her dream to be with Damon, just the two of them; a simple life, away from dangers and responsibilities that kept them apart, and even though it will be only for a few days, it was happening, and she couldn't be happier.

"I feel blessed to have you as my mate. It means a lot that you are showing your sincerity in taking care of me." Especially the food part because no matter how much she ate, Talia always had a lingering fear that she will go hungry again. And she wanted to take care of him in return.

Damon was about to say something, but then Talia kissed him, and he was quick to move closer, wrap his arms around her, and deepen the kiss.

He had more to say, but that can wait for after the food was ready.

Actually, Damon was never a guy who spoke much. He let his actions speak for him, and he wanted to show Talia that she was his number one priority, and he would do anything to make her happy. No more hiding, no more schemes, and lies. They will finish this business with Marcy and Alpha Edward per James' plan, and after that, the two of them will stand proudly and face together whatever was coming.

He was determined to return with Talia by his side as his Luna, and if people disapprove then... to hell with them. The only disapproval that would hit him hard would be from the members of the Dark Howlers pack. Damon was born to lead them, and his whole life was focused on the pack, but if those

same pack members won't accept his fated mate as their Luna, they can leave. He won't stop them, but he won't allow anyone to stir trouble for Talia either.

Damon wanted to kiss her forever and to do much more than kissing, but rabbits were above open fire, and he needed to ensure that his offerings to Talia don't turn into charcoal.

As werewolves, they could eat them raw, but he wanted to do this properly in steps: catch food, prepare food, eat food, eat mate, and mark mate. Yup, it sounded about right.

Damon went back to rabbits and was checking the progress while rotating them so that the other side gets kissed by the flames, when Talia asked, "When will I meet your wolf?"

For a brief moment, his movements paused, and he was confused that his wolf didn't stir at this. Wasn't his wolf super-excited about meeting mate?

Damon shook the uneasiness away, and responded, "After food."

He didn't want to risk giving control to his wolf who might snap under the intensity of his instincts and pounce either on their dinner or on Talia. Probably on both.

Talia didn't think much of it.

On every few minutes, Damon would give his attention to their dinner so that it roasts evenly, and in-between those he would get close to Talia and shower her with kisses that were soft and playful. He didn't want to heat up the situation, not yet.

At some point, after carefully inspecting their dinner, Damon announced, "Dinner is ready, kitten."

She licked her lips because the roasted rabbits looked good, and they smelled even better.

She was eyeing the meat and she wondered why he delayed in bringing it to her.

Talia's eyes went wide when Damon removed his shorts, leaving his impressive body completely bare. Damon looked super-sexy with that dancing campfire between them, and Talia was suddenly hungry for more than just meat.

Chapter 443 Offerings to a mate (2)

Talia was not sure what to think about this sudden treat for her eyes.

Damon's naked form made her throat go dry. She saw every part of him more than once, but this was in the open, just the two of them, privacy.

Weren't they going to have food now? But... why did he remove his shorts? Their dinner will go cold and it won't be so good.

Talia peeled her eyes from his mid-section where his precious parts were hanging, and her gaze traveled over his firm abs and pecs... she saw his Adam's apple bobbing when he swallowed, and instead of his cocky expression, she met his eyes that looked at her with depth that made her realize this was important.

Damon took two sticks with roasted meat on them and approached her slowly, circling the campfire, and dropping on his knees when he was one step away from her.

"Talia", he called in a solemn tone. "Will you accept my offering?"

Her heart thundered in her ears. "Why are you so official?"

"I want to know if you will accept me as your mate.", Damon responded. When he saw her frowning in confusion, he explained, "You see, the Moon Goddess decides who will be fated to each other, but we have an option to reject it."

Talia nodded at his words. Rejection comes at a cost, but it's still possible. She saw that happening between Marcy and George.

Damon licked his lips before saying, "I am offering you this food as a gesture that I will provide for you. And I am offering you myself because I am completely yours, and yours only. My mission in life will be to

provide for you and make you happy. If you accept me, we will face challenges together and I will be your weapon and your shield. No other woman will ever have my heart or my body. Nothing and no one will be more important than you are. Tell me, Talia... Do you accept me as your mate willingly?"

Talia sucked in a breath when she realized that this was more than just a romantic gesture. He was kneeling in front of her, baring himself completely, and giving her a choice to step back. He spoke of challenges because being his mate won't be easy, and he said that he will always put her first. Wasn't he the sweetest man alive?

Talia didn't want him to be the only one who will show his sincerity.

Talia stood up and took a moment to shake off her nerves which made her insides tremble.

Damon's anxiety was building up. Why was she not answering? Was she remembering all the trouble he caused and fears it will happen again? Is that why she stood up and stepped away? Was she about to reject him?

Damon held his breath while waiting for Talia to say something, or at least to smile a little, but he could feel that she was nervous and that only made him more nervous in return.

And then he watched her as she started removing her clothes and he was not sure if the whole world slowed down, or just his brain.

Talia kicked her shorts on the side and felt the breeze caress her most intimate parts. She was never this exposed, but it was exactly what she wanted. She wanted to be vulnerable and exposed in front of him.

She got down on her knees to face him on the same level.

"Damon...", she called softly but with determination. "I don't have much to offer, except for my support. I am overjoyed that you want to be my mate and that you are giving me a choice... a choice I don't need because even before you claimed my body as yours, you had my mind and my heart. It's yours. All yours. I am yours, and I accept you. Willingly."

Talia could feel his emotions swelling together with his arousal, an obvious approval of her words. She thought that he will reach out to her, and they will go at it right there on the dirt next to the bonfire, all thoughts about eating roasted rabbits were now forgotten. But Damon just smiled with a genuine smile that reached his eyes and then he extended his left hand toward her.

"Let's eat."

Talia gingerly took the stick with the roasted rabbit that he offered, and she scooted to sit on the log.

The source of this content is Freewebnovel.com.

The rough surface of the tree was not noticeable over her shorts, but with her bare skin on it, she could feel the grooves and it took her some time to get used to it.

Damon sat next to Talia, close enough for their thighs to touch. He needed that contact as assurance that she was there, and this was happening.

He watched her as she eyed the meat in front of her, silently deciding from where to start eating.

Damon enjoyed the fact that both of them were completely naked and other than slight anxiousness, he didn't pick up anything negative from Talia.

Since he was a teen who could shift into his wolf form, and even before that, Damon spent time nude among other werewolves and it was not a big deal, it was normal for werewolves to move about naked. However, he knew that Talia grew up differently and she was now like this only because she trusted him. In a way, he liked it because her naked perfection was only for his eyes.

"Talia...", he called, and she turned to see him holding a piece of meat that he broke with his hand, silently urging her with his eyes to take it.

She let out a guilty breath. He was giving her his first bite, conveying that he will put her first, yet she almost sank her teeth into the meat she was holding.

Talia opened her mouth and he put the meat in there.

His breath hitched when her tongue grazed his finger, reminding him of all the ways that tongue can play with his body and mind. Seductress!

"Mmm...", Talia hummed in pleasure with her eyes closed as the tender flesh stimulated her taste buds.

"Do you like it?"

"It's delicious.", she said with glee, her lips glistening from the juices that the meat released. "It's soft and sweet and..." Talia paused and gave him a big smile. "Thank you, Damon."

His smile reflected in his eyes. "You are welcome."

Feeling that she should do the same, Talia took a bite-sized chunk of meat and offered it to Damon.

"Please...", she said when his brows came together in disapproval. "We share everything, food included."

Damon's expression relaxed and he opened his mouth.

His lips closed around her fingers that held meat for him to take. Of course, he remembered the tease Talia gave him. Damon's tongue twirled around her index finger, and he sucked on it slightly, enjoying hearing her heart rate picking up.

He loved how her body responded to him. He loved everything about Talia. He loved Talia.

Damon and Talia fed each other in silence, every bite silently conveying their thoughts and emotions about their future together.

Their hearts thrummed in the same beat, and this ritual seemed like the most intimate thing they did so far.

Both of them could feel the air around them changing, something between them strengthening, becoming more solid, almost tangible. It was surreal.

Chapter 444 Meet the wolf (1)

Talia didn't notice at what point she and Damon finished the delicious meal he prepared for them, but she knew that small bones were scattered on the ground, and they were sitting completely naked on a log, facing each other, with a dimming campfire warming their sides as they exchanged light kisses that Damon controlled from turning hungry.

"Mmm... I could do this for the rest of my life.", he said in a husky voice between kisses.

Talia loved the idea of kissing him forever, but she wanted to feel him everywhere and not only on her lips.

Damon cupped her cheeks, and his fingertips ran over her arms creating delicious goosebumps as the sparks of their bond flared, but he didn't pull her closer, and when she tried inching to close the gaps between them, he asked her to be patient.

She glanced down at his erection and cocked an eyebrow at him. "Don't you want to do more than this?"

"Oh, I do.", he said earnestly. "I want to worship every inch of your body, kitten. But first, I want to freshen up. After chasing rabbits through bushes, I need a shower. Do you want to join me?"

Talia's smile matched his. Did she want to join him in the shower? Absolutely!

She showered already, but she could go again, with Damon.

Her smile fell when she remembered... "I forgot to tell you something. When I took a shower, soap got in my eyes, and it was stinging, and... I ended up pulling the wrong chain." Seeing that he was just looking



at her blankly, Talia cleared her throat while embarrassment swelled within her. "I'm sorry, Damon. I think I accidentally drained the reservoir."

Damon's expression changed a few times and he wanted to ask her how could she accidentally pull a chain that was so much further than the others, but he didn't want to make her feel uncomfortable because the lack of water in the cabin was no more than a slight inconvenience. The only thing that rubbed him the wrong way was that he was not there to see the scene of Talia soaped up and yanking the wrong chain.

"It's OK. The lake is right here."

"You are not angry?", Talia asked apprehensively.

"Angry?" His lips lifted into a wicked smile. "Would you like me to punish you?"

"No, but maybe to get me to fix it somehow."

A mental image of Talia bringing water from the lake in a bucket popped in his mind, but that would take forever. Surely, she was not thinking about it, right? He had to ask... "And how would you fix it?"

"I heard about rain summoning dance.", Talia responded seriously.

"Hmm...", Damon hummed while making a thoughtful expression. "I would love to dance with you in the rain, and before the rain, and after it. I want to do many things with you, kitten, and right now I want you to stop thinking about the reservoir because it's not important. I will go for a swim in the lake. Will you join me?"

Talia smiled dreamily while imagining them slowly dancing in the rain. "I will follow you everywhere..."

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After a hot summer day, the water in the lake was pleasantly warm.

Talia tried to cling to Damon, but he was careful that they don't get too close, keeping their contact points on hands and lips, because his control was close to snapping, and he didn't want to take her in the lake. Not now when she gave him permission to mark her, and not now when she accepted him as her mate... it needed to be perfect, something that will make her heart rate speed up whenever she remembers it, something that will make her blush and smile fifty years in the future.

After a short swim in the lake, Damon and Talia laid on the grass and stared at the dark sky that was speckled with numerous stars and framed by the rich tree canopies that appeared black.

They held hands with their fingers interlaced and didn't speak. Both of them were brimming with anticipation of what was coming.

Damon was remembering his every interaction with Talia, acknowledging that he was stupid at the beginning, but he was learning and improving, and... here they were... completely naked under the night sky with the forest surrounding them, holding hands, and enjoying each other's presence. It was peaceful and it was perfect.

Talia's chest was full of warm and fuzzy feelings, and there was also slight anxiety while wondering if anything will go wrong to prevent this marking from happening. She didn't want to jinx it and invite trouble, but nothing with Damon was easy, even though they made it eventually.

Talia turned to look at him, only to meet his deep blue eyes directed at her.

The darkness didn't prevent her from seeing every curve of his chiseled face and the way her stomach flipped at his smile left her in awe. Was it truly possible that she had something special with such an exquisite specimen? Damon was beyond handsome with hard muscles all over his tall body, and his face was absolutely beautiful. And Damon was much more than just an enchanting visual. He was strong and fast and smart and caring, and he looked at her like she was the only woman in the world. And he smelled of the forest and the dark chocolate. Talia's favorites.

"Damon?", she called breathily.

"Yes, kitten?" His voice was a rumble that started from his chest.

"Your wolf... when can I meet him?" That was the last thing on her list before he can mark her.

"I guess there is no better time than now."

He pushed himself into a seated position and turned to face her.

Talia sat as well, and he said, "Remember that my wolf is eager to meet you and mark you, but he won't harm you. And he won't do anything without your consent." Hopefully.

"Do you think he will do something... unexpected?"

Damon shrugged. "I really don't know what he will do. My wolf mostly just talks to me in my head. He comes in front when I'm in my wolf form, but he prefers to stay in the back of my mind. You are the first woman he wants to interact with."

Talia's eyes lit up. "Really? I mean... He didn't want to talk to anyone else?"

Damon reached to push a lock of hair behind Talia's ear. "There is no other, kitten. Just you. For me and for him."

"OK.", she said and bit her lower lip nervously. "I am ready."

"Don't be tense. I will still be here, but he will do the talking."

Talia relaxed at Damon's words, remembering that when her wolf took over to scold Damon, Talia was there listening.

She didn't know what to expect, but Damon's wolf was part of him, and he can talk, and she thought of him as Damon's roommate that can't be evicted. It wouldn't be proper if they seal the mate bond that will last a lifetime without her talking with the guy.

Damon's face changed as he called to his wolf, and it didn't take more than a few seconds for Talia to realize that something was wrong.

"Damon?", she called carefully.

"Uhm... he is not responding."

Chapter 445 Meet the wolf (2)

Talia was not sure what to think about Damon's wolf not coming out.

She wanted to ask Damon if he was joking, but she kept that to herself because this was not the time for jokes and Damon wouldn't do that. "Is he hurt?"

Damon shook his head. "He was fine when we were hunting dinner. I did that in my wolf form."

Well, if he was not hurt, then... "Did he change his mind about meeting me?"

Damon rejected that possibility immediately. "That shouldn't be the case. He was excited to meet you and now... nothing."

"Does this happen often?"

"It happens after I get hurt and he heals me, or if he wants to be left alone.", Damon said helplessly. "But I am not hurt and..." Damon was getting worried. Will this impact the mating?

Talia put her hand on Damon's and gave him a squeeze. "It's OK. Just relax." She could feel that he was tense. Was it a bad idea to ask to meet his wolf?

But then... Damon said that his wolf was eager to meet with her, and she believed him.

It was obvious that Damon was troubled by this, and Talia wanted to help him somehow.

Talia scrambled her brain for a solution. If Damon's wolf choose not to meet with her, it would be fine, but it seemed that was not the case.

Why would his wolf not respond?

Talia remembered what Gideon said, how wolves can be unreachable when they choose, when they deplete their energy and need to rest, and... he also mentioned that the strong ones can impact the weaker ones.

Damon told her that he can use his Alpha aura to make others submit and tell the truth without touching them, but she didn't think much about it, until now.

Talia's mind was working a million thoughts a second as fragments of conversations with Gideon and Damon and many others came together, and questions started sprouting.

What if...?

Was it possible...?

Talia could see only one explanation.

"I know you are listening.", Talia said, and Damon looked at her in confusion.

He whipped his head around, searching for an intruder, but his senses didn't pick up anything in the wide area other than forest critters.

Damon opened his mouth to ask what was going on, but she continued talking.

"Come on, I know you are there. Why are you not responding? Are you suppressing Damon's wolf? Why would you do that? Are you afraid that he will tell me something you don't want me to know?"

Talia gasped when intense fury bubbled in the pit of her stomach.

'WHO IS AFRAID!?', a voice boomed in her head.

Part of Talia was delighted to hear her wolf, and part of her was scared because she hit a nerve by provoking her (not on purpose). Talia was also confused, why would her wolf conceal her presence?

"It is you, isn't it?", Talia asked.

'You don't need to use words. I can hear your thoughts.', her wolf snorted.

"Kitten?", Damon called anxiously. He guessed that it was her wolf, and he was not sure if that was a good thing or a catastrophe emerging. Did her wolf come up with another crazy condition before he can mark Talia? Actually, even the first one (chasing away Marcy without revealing that Talia was his mate) was not completed successfully. Damn it!

He held Talia's hand and gave her a squeeze, but he didn't want to interrupt whatever conversation was going on in Talia's head, knowing that his kitten was getting answers and that she will fight for them no matter what her grumpy wolf comes up with.

Talia was not sure what to ask first.

'Since when are you sitting there and watching? Why would you hide your presence from me?'

Talia spent many lonely days in the Red Moon pack yearning to hear her wolf again. Since Talia got hope that her wolf might come back, she was eager for that to happen, eating, training, carefully listening, and she never imagined that her wolf would come back and pretend that it was not there. Was her wolf gone at all? How much did she see?

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The more Talia thought about this, the more she felt betrayed, spied on, and uneasiness swelled within her.

'Don't go there', her wolf grumbled. 'Whenever you were getting close to that lecherous boy, I stopped watching. I'm not a pervert.'

'But you are awake for a while. Right?'

'It was on and off.', her wolf admitted.

'You saved us when the rogues attacked.'

Her wolf snorted. 'If not for me, both you and that boy wouldn't be breathing.'

Talia's mood improved. 'You healed Damon in the hospital.' If her wolf healed Damon, that means she didn't really dislike him.

'Oh, I didn't. That was you.'

A gentle squeeze on Talia's hand reminded her that Damon was right there, and she decided to focus on the pressing topic.

'Why are you suppressing his wolf?'

'What makes you think...?'

'Stop pretending.', Talia interrupted another question that wouldn't give her an answer. 'No games. Just tell me.'

'Why would I tell you anything? So that you can find a way around it? Does he deserve to have his wolf?'

Talia cursed silently. Why were her thoughts exposed while her wolf kept everything to herself?

'You need to learn to conceal your thoughts, Talia.', her wolf said patronizingly. 'If I'm not shutting down your mind-link forcibly, many people would get unobstructed access to your thoughts, and you wouldn't want that, right?'

Talia was shocked. She had a mind-link? Damon said that when her wolf awakens he can help her identify her mind-link if she had one, but now it seemed that her wolf prevented many things from happening.

And why would her wolf meddle with Damon's wolf? Unless...

'This is not about Damon. This is about his wolf.' When her wolf didn't answer, Talia continued pressing, 'Why don't you tell me what's the problem? I'm sure we can clarify it and you will see that it's a misunderstanding.'

Talia's wolf snorted. 'Misunderstanding?'

'Yes. Damon's wolf is supportive, and he saved me many times. You know he can talk, right? He wants to meet me. Why are you preventing that from happening? Don't you want to talk to him?'



'There is nothing to be said between us.'

A wave of emotions washed over Talia. Grief. Yearning. Anger.

Talia's mouth fell slack open. 'You know him!' And not just know him but know-know him. 'How do you know him?'

'It's none of your business!'

'But it is my business.', Talia argued back. 'You are my wolf. We share a body. Damon is my mate. If you have a problem with his wolf, I need to know about it. Or are you going to prevent me from completing mating with Damon because you have a grudge with his wolf?'

Chapter 446 Liseli and Sapa [Bonus chapter]

'Stay out of this, Talia...', her wolf growled. 'This doesn't concern you.'

Talia couldn't believe this. 'How can you say that this doesn't concern me?'

Talia came here with Damon so they can relax, enjoy time together, and seal their bond with marking, yet her wolf came in the middle, suppressed Damon's wolf, and is threatening not only to kill the lovey-dovey mood but also to stand in the way of Damon marking her.

Talia had a feeling that something might go wrong. She feared that Damon might see Talia as unworthy and change his mind, or rogues might attack them, or another delusional Damon's ex pops out of a bush and jumps on Talia to scratch her face, a swarm of locusts or a forest fire, anything was possible! But Talia never imagined that this evening will be ruined by her own wolf. Shouldn't wolves support the mate bond?

'What did I do to deserve this?', Talia asked dejectedly. 'I don't care when you woke up and I don't care why you didn't help me when I needed you, but... didn't I suffer enough? You are my wolf so you should know that Damon is my mate. I love him with all my heart, and he loves me back. Maybe he didn't complete your stupid condition to chase away Marcy without announcing that I'm his mate, but I don't care because he proved that he was willing to learn and make me happy, and I believe him. Why are you doing this?'

'You don't understand...'

'THEN HELP ME UNDERSTAND!', Talia shouted in her head.

Talia didn't want to yell at her wolf, but she felt betrayed on so many levels. Everyone either bullied her or ignored her, and then there was Damon, a handsome Alpha who looked at her like she was the only woman in the world. Sure, Damon made mistakes, but Talia took a few wrong turns also and Damon always came after her and soothed her into staying with him until she recognized who he was, her other half.

Over the years, Talia really wished for her wolf to come back. She was weak and insecure among werewolves, believing that her wolf was the part she needed so that she can be complete, yet now Talia suspected that her wolf was one of the people who left her to fend for herself, and it's not that her wolf was not helping, but it was standing in the way of Talia being with the only man who treated her as important.

Talia was sick of fighting against people who believed she was not worthy, and women who wanted to put their hands on Damon, and now even her wolf was an obstacle.

After a painfully long pause, Talia's wolf spoke in her head. 'Can I come in front? I can talk to Sapa, and you... listen.'

Talia was not sure why her wolf asked her that. And who the heck was Sapa? Was that how her wolf addressed Damon or was that the name of Damon's wolf? But most importantly... 'Do you need my permission to come in front?'

'Not really, but...'

'It takes a lot of energy to fight me. Doesn't it?', Talia asked as she remembered when she was trying to yank her wolf back the last time. And Damon told her that he tires easily when he takes control in wolf form and that the same is for his wolf when in human form.

'We are spirits, and the most taxing is when we fight against our hosts who are strong.'

Talia snorted. 'Me? Strong?'

'Your spirit is strong, Talia, one of the strongest. There is a reason why you survived all those years in the Red Moon pack. Now, do you want to know what this is about or not?'

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'Yes, but... If you reject him, I will never forgive you.'

'I won't reject your mate, Talia.', her wolf said, and Talia had a feeling there was a second part that her wolf kept to herself. 'I wouldn't be here if you didn't insist.'

'But you suppressed Damon's wolf.'

'And if you let me in front, you will find out why. I know you have many questions, and there will be plenty of time for us to talk, but for now, can you just listen?'

Damon looked at Talia and anxiety swelled inside him when Talia's eyes started glowing silvery and her expression turned solemn.

Damon wanted to greet Talia's wolf, but he felt his own wolf stirring and fighting to come in front.

'Let me talk to her!'

Damon had no idea what his wolf wanted, but considering his previous interaction with Talia's wolf, Damon was happy to let his wolf handle this but, 'Don't mess up this for me, old guy. Talia is important.'

His wolf snorted before he took over control of Damon's body.

"Liseli, is that you? Does this mean that Selena saw my sincerity, and we can..."

Talia's wolf jerked her hands out of Damon's grasp.

"You remember me?"

"How could I forget? You are the only one on my mind since... we parted."

"Lies!", Talia's wolf hissed.

"Why would you say that?"

"You didn't know it was me, yet you wanted to mate this girl."

Damon's head shook. "No. I had a feeling it was you, but I wouldn't mate her. Not without confirming..."

"LIES!"

"Liseli...", he called with a voice full of grief. "You have no idea what I went through..."

"Why don't you enlighten me?"

"I lived a thousand of lives in the hope to find you. Selena took you away, but she left me here, and just when I thought that my death will save me from loneliness, I realized that I was unable to die, but without a body, my soul ended up attracted to the strong ones. I ended up transmigrating every time my host would perish. Some lasted a few months, and some a few decades, but no matter who my host was, I didn't mate any other."

"Then, what's this?"

"I can't leave them mateless, Liseli. I help them find their mate, and then I step back. None of my hosts mated in their wolf form, and I'm sure Selena will confirm that if you ask her. Don't you see? This was my punishment... to see others mated and happy. Every time my host found his mate, a part of me died because I didn't know if I will ever see you again. I was lonely but I persevered. That's probably why she let you come here, in that body, as Damon's mate. Can I show you?"

Talia could sense that her wolf's attitude softened, and she gave a stiff nod.

Chapter 447 Images from the past (1)

Talia observed Damon, and she could see him clearly, but the whole view appeared like she was sitting in the back seat of a car and looking in front.

She could see things, smell Damon's addictive scent, hear the noise that was made by the critters in the bushes around them, and feel the light breeze caressing her skin. It was a strange feeling of knowing she was right there and that was her body, yet she didn't have control over it. The last time her wolf took over, it happened too quickly for her to process it, but now Talia realized she was the spectator and the whole experience left her unsettled.

'You get used to it', Talia's wolf spoke.

Talia was not sure she wanted to get used to this.

Damon's hands reached for Talia's and both of their wolves jolted at the contact that was charged with the sparks of their bond.

Talia's wolf was overwhelmed at the sensation of touching her mate after many centuries. But this touch was different than before, after all, when they saw each other last time, they were wolves, and these human forms were... different.

'My senses are dulled...!', Talia's wolf said and Talia felt the opposite like everything got an upgrade.

"Relax, Liseli. Open your mind and let me show you.", Damon's wolf said.

Talia gasped when unknown images started flashing in front of her eyes, and she remembered Maya's explanation on how mates communicate, as their minds and souls were connected. At that time, Talia didn't get it, but now she understood.

Numerous faces, smiles, tears, hugs, and goodbyes.... wars and challenges from times that were far in the past. There were flashes of familiarity, but never belonging.

Those were mental images from Damon's wolf, memories of thousand lives he lived without his mate. But it was more than just images. It included scents and emotions, and Talia was overwhelmed by immense loneliness and despair that threatened to break her heart into pieces. And her wolf felt that also.

Damon observed all this from the back seat of his mind, and to say that he was shocked was an understatement. Before Damon's parents died, his wolf was a spirit that communicated through instincts, urges, and shared emotions. When the ancient creature spoke into his mind for the first time, Damon thought of him as an upgrade, and now he understood that he was wrong. His wolf told him that he used to be Alpha Jacob's wolf, and many others before that, but Damon never suspected that it would go this deep.

Damon was wrapping his head around the information the two wolves spoke about. Selena, the Moon Goddess? Selena took away Talia's wolf and left his wolf to roam the earth and move from one body to another while hoping to find his lover? They were punished? Did they break some ancient tradition?

'No, not tradition.', Damon's wolf spoke. And then the mental images changed, showing a lush meadow in the forest, and Damon's breath caught in his throat at the sight of a beautiful light gray wolf that shimmered in silver under the moonlight.

'This was the first time I saw Liseli. I knew right away that she was my mate. My only one. Beautiful, isn't she?'

'Yes.', Damon responded, feeling slightly drunk under the influence of his wolf's emotions. He really loved her. Damon wondered how his feelings for Talia compare to that.

'Don't overthink it. You will see the changes after you seal the bond.', Damon's wolf said.

The images changed, showing two wolves rubbing their heads on each other, running through the forest, sunsets, sunrises, a tall rock that showed magnificent views of valleys... Images changed, but what was constant was that Liseli and Sapa always moved. They never stayed in one place for too long, and even though they were happy, there was a sense of uneasiness, like someone was always watching.

Damon's wolf spoke to Damon, 'Liseli was Selena's favorite student. She was supposed to remain pure, yet we fell in love. Selena warned us to stay apart, deeming me not worthy, but how does one stay away from his mate? I would sneak in there whenever I could, and Liseli would join me gladly and we would run as far as we could, but Liseli knew that she had to return or face Selena's wrath. Eventually, we were caught. Selena punished us by taking her away and leaving me behind. For centuries, I didn't know what happened to her. The bond was still there, so I knew she was alive, but I feared that Selena punished her harshly or... that she forgot about me.'

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Damon could feel his wolf's emotions and he believed him. But what he couldn't believe was that this wolf was with him for a full decade, yet this was the first time Damon heard about it.

'Did you know from the start that Talia's wolf is your mate?', Damon asked.

'No, not from the start. But I knew that Talia was your mate and that if I didn't help you be with the one that's meant for you, it would be a mistake. I would do the same I did for your father, help you get to your mate, and then shut down whenever you were together, but the more Talia's spirit recuperated, the more I found her familiar. When Liseli came out on that day in the study, I wanted to talk to her and confirm it was really her, but I was suppressed. At that time, I was almost certain it was Liseli, but maybe it was one of her sisters who holds a grudge, so I didn't dare say anything until I confirmed.'

'She can suppress you?' Damon was not sure if he should be amused or terrified by this. No one ever suppressed his wolf before.

'Liseli is the only one who can.', his wolf responded dreamily.

Damon was uneasy about this. It's not that Damon didn't approve of Talia's strength, but her wolf was a different thing. The old creature was moody and threatening to deny him marking his mate. How can Damon be OK with that?

'Now what?', Damon asked.

'I don't know what Selena or her sisters told her, but she is here, and she saw how I lived without her. I'm sure Liseli will come around.'

Damon snorted. 'She better.' They were having a moment, and Talia's wolf spoiled it! Damn it!

'You probably shouldn't say that aloud', Damon's wolf warned him.

"Liseli?", Damon's wolf called carefully while observing silvery eyes that were full of tears.

"Is that real?"

"Why would you doubt me?"

'Answer him', Talia urged Liseli. She didn't understand why her wolf was reluctant to respond, but she could feel that Liseli was considering to shut down again, and Talia knew that staying quiet won't solve anything. 'I can feel your yearning for him. You want to believe him, but you need to have an open conversation.'

Chapter 448 Images from the past (2)

Talia's wolf hesitated.

Images that Sapa showed her felt real, almost like they were her own memories, yet they were so different from what she believed in many centuries they were apart.



She looked in those endlessly blue eyes directed at her, and even though that was not the face she recognized, she knew that the pleading gaze came from Sapa. Maybe the images he showed her were not true, but his desire for her to believe him was.

Liseli needed to share her side of the story. She owed him that much. She owed that to herself.

"Can I show you?", Liseli asked.

"Please.", Sapa responded right away.

And then another set of images started flashing in their minds.

It showed Liseli covering her ears with her paws in order to ignore words how Sapa moved on, found another, many others... The next scene was a small pool that acted like a television of some sort, and there Liseli saw a big black wolf running and her heart cracked when one chocolate-brown she-wolf rubbed on him, and he didn't snap at her.

There was a scene after scene of Sapa close to other wolves, hunting, running, and showing affection, and Liseli spoke with her voice cracking, "I mourned your death, believing that the passage of time got you while I stayed in the realm where the time was frozen. But then I heard that Selena gave you immortality and some of my sisters advised me to stay strong because as long as I live, we can reunite. But then I saw these. Tell me, Sapa, what's the point of me living if you forgot about me? You are my other half, and only with you I can be happy, but how can I be happy when you moved on?"

"I didn't forget about you, Liseli. I didn't move on. You should know that what you showed me was not true."

"Are you saying that I'm making things up?"

"No. But I believe that Selena would test you. Test your resolve. Just how she tested mine."

"I want to believe you, Sapa, I really do...", her voice trailed. For centuries, she heard all kinds of stories and even saw images. Were all those really lies?

Yes, Selena separated her from Sapa, but she was a teacher, a mother, not someone who would lie. At least that's what Liseli thought. If Selena thought that Sapa was bad for Liseli, Selena might keep them apart but to break Liseli's heart with deception only to get her way was too cruel. Would a mother do that to her daughter?

Liseli flinched when Sapa touched her cheek with the tips of his fingers.

"Take as much time as you need, Liseli. I waited for so long, and some more won't make a difference. Now that I know you are here, my heart sings with joy." He glanced up to see the moon emerging from behind tree canopies. "While you are sorting out your thoughts, keep in mind that Selena always cherished you and she wouldn't allow you to meet me like this if she didn't think I'm worthy. I hope you know my feelings for you didn't diminish and... I missed you."

Those words were loaded with heavy emotions that made Talia's stomach sink. She really wanted to comfort him, yet she knew that only Liseli could do that.

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Talia felt her consciousness shift, and she was back in the driver's seat, blinking at Damon who smiled at her.

"Hi, kitten", he murmured. After the bomb how his wolf and Talia's have history, Damon was shaken. But he was also relieved to see that her eyes stopped glowing. His kitten was back.

"Hi", she responded absentmindedly, still processing what happened in the last few minutes. Or was it the last few hours? She was not sure.

"Are you alright?", Damon asked with concern obvious in his voice.

She wanted to say that she was fine, but she couldn't lie. Even without the overload of information, there was a whole new set of emotions running through her. It made her feel like her senses got an upgrade to the next level, and she was more aware of everything. Was that the effect of her wolf being present?

"I'm not sure. How are you doing?", she asked in return.

"It's a lot to take in." For all of them. "How is Liseli?"

"She is confused, relieved, angry, hopeful. I think she will be alright.", Talia responded. "How about Sapa?"

"This is the first time my wolf gave me anything other than patronizing or angry. He is happy."

Talia pressed her lips into a line. Happy? Of course, he would be happy. Damon's wolf lived forever without his mate, without knowing how she was doing or if they will ever meet again, and now that wait was over.

She tried to imagine how she would react if that were her and Damon; if someone separated them right now and kept them apart; if she heard stories about how he moved on and found someone else. Talia was confident that her love for Damon wouldn't waver, but what about her trust in him? She was not sure, and it was eating her alive.

Talia wanted to believe Damon's words that she was his only one, she wanted to believe that nothing would ever change that because she was confident that Damon was the only man for her, and ever will be. However, she already doubted him more than once, and if she needs to withstand the trial of time...

"Hey, hey...", Damon said while scooping Talia into his arms and lifting her to sit on his lap.

"What are you thinking about?", he asked while tightening his hold on her. Her body was not cold, yet she was shivering and pressing herself into him, seeking his warmth and protection.

Talia gripped his back while taking deep breaths of his addictive scent, enjoying the safety of his firm embrace, and hoping that they will never be apart. She didn't want to tell him that her insecurities were resurfacing. "I'm just sad. The story of Liseli and Sapa is so..."

"I know.", Damon murmured against her temple and then he kissed her there. "But they are together now, and that's what counts."

Talia nodded and buried her face into his neck, seeking comfort because her nerves were still strung tightly.

She let out a shaky breath. "Damon?"

"Hmm?"

"What would you do if we can't be together?"

"I would flip the heaven and earth to find you, and I wouldn't stop until I do."

Talia knew he meant it. She was confident that she was the luckiest girl in the world as their mate bond allowed her to feel how much he adored her. She blinked her tears away. This was not the time for crying, even though those would be tears of joy.

Chapter 449 Lovers from the beginning of time (1)

After Sapa and Liseli retracted at the back of their minds, it was just Damon and Talia on that clearing next to the lake with their thoughts.

Talia was sitting on Damon's lap and leaning into his embrace. Both were completely naked, and both distracted enough to not pay attention to it.

The information that their wolves have a history together was shocking, and the effect of experiencing centuries of memories squeezed into a few minutes left them with a myriad of emotions that could fill an eternity.

Everything was so vivid, and Damon and Talia knew that it came from their wolves, yet it still felt like they were right there... loving, yearning, aching for each other... for centuries.

The feeling of being separated was like a fresh wound that can be mended only if they cling onto each other, and they did.

Damon was first to snap into reality. His eyes moved over the calm surface of the lake that shimmered under the moonlight, and then he scanned the trees and bushes that surrounded the small clearing where he and Talia were. It was quiet and peaceful, and he reminded himself that this was real and that images which shook his heart were in the past, and not even his. Or were they? It was difficult to discern as Damon and his wolf reached another level of connection like their consciousness was merging into one.

Damon's attention moved to the little woman whose bare form rested on him like it was a totally normal thing and he loved it.

Damon pushed a lock of hair behind Talia's ear, and she blinked while lifting her gaze to meet his.

"I feel like I loved you from the beginning of time.", Talia said, catching Damon by surprise.

"I feel the same.", he said while staring into her honeyed eyes that glistened with unshed tears under the moonlight. She was beautiful, strong and fragile at the same time. His.

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The mate bond allowed Damon to feel Talia's love and devotion, and he knew that was real. She wanted to be with him, and she would never leave his side willingly, but the fear of losing him was also real, just how Sapa lost Liseli.

Damon wanted to comfort her, to give her assurance that nothing and no one will stand between them. And he needed that assurance as well.

"Is your wolf OK with...", Damon's voice trailed, and his fingers brushed the base of Talia's neck, hoping that she will understand.

"Marking? She is fine." Well, Liseli didn't say that explicitly, but she didn't object to it either, which Talia took as an agreement.

A huge burden fell off Damon's chest, but in the next moment, he got nervous. It's happening! Well, almost.

She observed his expression changing, and then it hit her. They came to the cabin to have three days just for themselves so that they can relax and... Damon to mark her. She was distracted by the revelation of their wolves, but now she was back into the present.

Talia's heart rate picked up and she swallowed hard.

They were in the open, completely naked. The intimacy of the moment stretched beyond the flesh. The night, the lake, the forest, Damon, it was all perfect and she loved it.

Talia could feel his anxiousness, and her chest swelled with warm and fuzzy emotions. Alpha Damon... the outrageously handsome, powerful, dangerous, cheeky, caring, and sometimes overbearing Alpha was holding her in his arms like she was the most important thing in the world, and he was nervous. Because of her.

"Damon?", Talia called to get his full attention. "I want you to know that there is no other man I would do this with."

Damon blinked. How was it possible that she ended up comforting him? He lifted her hand to his lips and kissed the inside of her palm. "I know." He kissed the inside of her wrist. "And there is no other woman I would want as mine. It's only you, kitten."

He arranged kisses on her arm all the way to her shoulder, going down to collarbones as his nose grazed her neck, and Talia's insides melted at the sensation of Damon's lips traveling over her skin, delivering a delicious dose of addictive sparks every time.

Her breathing picked up as she became aware that he is going to mark her. Tonight.

Talia gripped his shoulders and pressed into him, trying to maximize the surface of their bodies touching.

"How about we go inside the cabin?" Damon's hot breath slipped into her ear, making her hairs stand on the ends.

"What's wrong with here?"

His head snapped so that he can see her and then his eyes moved to scan their surroundings. Was she really OK with them going at it here in the open? But he remembered that Talia spent many years hiding in the attic and that she loved the forest. There was soft grass below them and the night sky above, and he realized that this place was actually perfect.

"There is nothing wrong with this, kitten."

Damon pecked and nibbled Talia's neck gently with just a bit of teeth, and his damp hair tickled her cheek as he moved. With every passing moment they were holding each other tighter, pulling closer, their movements turning impatient.

Damon sucked in a breath when she stood up from his lap. Did she change her mind? But he loosened his hold on her. He didn't want to force her if she was not willing.

He smiled when she spread her legs to straddle him. Oh, yeah. They will go at it. Right there.

Damon took advantage of this position to kiss her thoroughly, and he groaned when her soft flesh pressed against his erection. Why did it feel like he didn't delve into her depths for months?

He grabbed a fistful of her hair and pulled her head backward. The way her body arched pushed her breasts up for him to feast on. And he did.

Talia gasped when he sucked on her nipple, his tongue doing magic circles that turned her body into clay for him to mold.

"Damon, Damon...", she chanted his name like a prayer while getting lost in arousal that was building at an alarming rate and she had no intention to resist it.

She gripped his shoulders and rocked against him. The movement of her hips spoke of urgency, and her breathing was getting ragged, but Damon didn't want to rush. Not now. This was important.

His palms were flat on her back as he got up on his knees, and he put her to lay on the soft grass.

Talia blinked while looking at Damon who was looming above her, close enough for her to feel the heat of his body yet denying her that skin-to-skin contact.

The moon behind Damon veiled his handsome features in deep shadows while outlining his silhouette with an otherworldly glow.

Chapter 450 Lovers from the beginning of time (2)

Damon lifted himself on his arms to increase the gap between him and Talia and the moonlight hit her naked body, making her skin appear milky-white, nearly glowing.

His breath hitched. She looked like a Goddess with her hair spread on the grass like a crown, and her gaze full of lust and love directed at him.

"You are beautiful, Talia...", he spoke in a husky voice. "I can't believe you are mine."

Talia smiled dreamily. Silly man. He was the beautiful one.

She reached to touch his cheek, and her hand slid over his ear to caress his hair.



"I am yours. You are lucky.", she said cheekily, and he chuckled.

"That's one way to put it." He leaned lower and touched her nose with his before murmuring, "Do you really think that the two of us together was luck or a coincidence? After revealing the history of our wolves, I believe that we were always meant to find each other. Maybe not in the attic, and maybe not in the Red Moon pack, but I would definitely find you, kitten."

"Not if I found you first."

Damon hummed in agreement with her words, and he enjoyed the way her eyelids became heavy when his hands started exploring her body.

His fingers traced the edge of her breast and slid down to her waist, squeezing and applying pressure just enough to get her stirring. And then he went back up to tease her without touching any sensitive spots, leaving a fiery trail and making her ache for him.

Damon enjoyed the way her body coiled under his ministrations. She responded to him perfectly. Everything about Talia was perfect. For him.

Talia gripped the back of Damon's neck and tried to pull him down. She really wanted to feel his weight on her and to devour his lips.

It took her a few seconds to confirm he was not budging. She groaned. "Damon, please..."

"What's the rush?"

He wanted to take this slow. Sure, he could pick up her arousal, but he wanted her to writhe in need, and when she reached the point of nearly losing her mind, he would take her. Well, that was the plan, but then he saw that her eyes were glistening with unshed tears, and he panicked. Did he do something wrong?

"Hey, hey", he asked quickly. "What's going on? Are you having second thoughts? If you are, we don't need to go through marking now. We can just relax and enjoy and..."

"No. No!", she said with panic in her voice. What did he mean by, they don't need to do it now?

"Then, what is it?"

Talia released a long breath. "I just want to be done with this."

Damon was not sure if he heard her right. "What?"

"I'm tired of people and wolves interrupting or trying to stop us from being together. Mark me, Damon. Only like that, we will tell the world that we are one and no one will be able to stand between us. I don't want to be apart from you, ever. The possibility of someone separating us was scary, but now that I felt the anguish of our wolves, I really don't want to risk it. Mark me. Please." She inhaled a shaky breath and added in a small voice, "Like that, even if we are not together, part of you will always be with me."

Damon released a slow breath, relieved to hear that she didn't get cold feet.

"I feel the same, kitten. You know that I'm always eager to plunder your sweet pussy and make you scream my name in ecstasy."

The source of this content is [Freewebnovel.com](http://Freewebnovel.com).

He paused to enjoy her shocked expression. He adored the way her cheeks blush when she was flustered, and he hoped that part of her will never change.

"However, this is not the time to rush, kitten. Don't allow others to impact you to the point of spoiling the good moments. And this is a good moment." He lowered himself until his firm chest pressed on her soft breasts, and he gave her a long kiss that took her breath away.

"I waited for you to recognize me as your mate.", he spoke against her lips. "I wanted to hear your confirmation that you accept me. Me marking you depended on you, kitten. Only you. Now that I know you are willing, nothing and no one will prevent me from claiming you as mine."

His emotions washed over Talia, and she knew he meant it. But what really struck her was that her acceptance was important to him. This willful Alpha who would boss around people and take what he wanted without apologizing, needed her acceptance. It was surreal.

"I love you, Damon...", Talia breathed.

His lips lifted into a wicked grin. "I know."

She slapped his shoulder playfully. "It was a romantic moment, and you ruined it."

"Ruined? Let me fix that quickly.", he chuckled and then he kissed the base of her neck once, twice, and his lips latched on the spot where his mark will come, and Talia gripped his shoulders to steady herself because the whole world was spinning.

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In less than ten heartbeats, Talia was breathing heavily, clawing at his back in an attempt to pull him closer.

"I love you, kitten...", Damon spoke close to her ear. "Don't ever doubt that."

Her lips lifted into a smile that lasted only a second before her jaw fell slack as she moaned when he twisted her nipple with his index finger and thumb, sending electric shocks straight to her core. Before she could recover, Damon started grinding himself at the cradle of her thighs, every rock of his hips making her gasp and tremble.

Damon said that they shouldn't rush it, but the truth was that he was also impatient. He wanted to feel her, and he was eager to mark her. At the same time, he wanted it to be good for her, something she will remember gladly, and not just a procedure they need to go through because of external pressure.

He rocked against her, her slick juices coated his cock that was hard and ready, her hips moved to meet his, and she arched toward him while pulling him lower.

"Ahh...", a shaky breath escaped her lips when she felt the pressure at her entrance and her body came alive, her hips twisted to take him deeper and faster because his movements were torturously slow.

"This might hurt...", Damon said while kissing the spot on her neck where his mark will come. "My wolf said that it will be fine as long as we allow our instincts to guide us."

Talia nodded choppily.

His slow thrusts created friction that made their minds hazy in need of more.

"Harder, Damon.", she breathed. "Give me all you've got."

"Fuck!", he cursed under his breath. He was trying to take this slow so that it lasts longer, but she was not making it easier.