

Alphas Bride 591

Chapter 591 Letting go

Talia and Damon didn't talk on their way to the pack hospital.

Damon didn't like Talia showing care for the wretched Coach, but he also felt that it wouldn't be right to tell her not to. After all, the guy got hurt because he was defending Talia.

Damon wanted Talia to have guards, someone to watch her back, and he told her to pick them and she did, but now Damon wondered if that was a good idea.

Last night, five of them went against Damon, their Alpha. Was that acceptable? No one EVER went against him without suffering consequences. These were his pack members; he expected loyalty and not mutiny. At the same time, Damon disapproved that Lulu hid behind a tree when Damon was proving that he was at the top of the hierarchy for a reason. Was Lulu hiding because defending Talia meant going against Damon, or because she wouldn't treat Talia's safety as a priority?

Can he just send them back to survival training? But if he does that, who will be Talia's guards? Damon could easily pick a handful of loyal warriors, but they wouldn't be loyal to Talia, and she wouldn't trust them and... nothing seemed right.

Damon tried peering into Talia's emotions, but she closed them off and her expression told him that she was thinking about something intently. Was she blaming him? Probably.

...

Keith was lying in the hospital bed and staring at the ceiling while Katya was telling him about the ceremony and the pack run he missed.

Everyone who was able went for the pack run. It was the event of the decade. Many brought drinks and snacks in advance and kept them at certain points in the forest, and they gathered there after the run was over to celebrate first run in their generation with Damon as their Alpha. Mates were eager to find solitude, and some found their mates. The mated pack members didn't mingle with single souls, but those who were single didn't spend the night being lonely either.

The Shifters nightclub was closed which meant that Katya lost one night of earnings, but she didn't care. She was obviously excited.

Keith normally loves listening to his sister, but this time he was distracted. Images of Damon pinning Talia to the ground and mistreating her were etched in Keith's mind and he was angry that it happened and he couldn't help Talia.

Talia didn't deserve such treatment.

If he was stronger, if he had the Alpha aura, Keith would be able to protect the only woman who stirred his heart instead of being stuck to the ground and watching it helplessly. He hated himself.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

Keith blinked when he realized that Katya asked him something. "What?"

"You were not listening. Do you want to talk about whatever is on your mind?", Katya asked. And she had a good idea that Talia was on Keith's mind.

Keith didn't want to talk about it. "I'm just wondering if I need to waste a day here. I have so many things to do."

"Like guarding our Luna?", Katya asked in a teasing voice.

Keith's brows came together to form a frown. "Yes. That's my job."

Katya made a 'I-don't-believe-you' face. "It's more than a job. You can't lie to your sister."

Keith released a long breath. "What do you want me to say?"

"I hope you know what you are doing.", Katya said. "I am aware that you changed since meeting Talia, but she is not Talia anymore. She is our Luna, Alpha's fated mate."

"You think I don't know that?"

"I don't know, Keith. Do you know that?"

Keith gritted his teeth. "You were not there, Katya. You didn't see how he treated her. Talia is not happy."

"If she is not happy, why is she not leaving him?", Katya asked.

"Do you think it's easy to leave Alpha?"

"It has nothing to do with Alpha Damon's status, Keith. They are fated mates."

"I know."

"You don't.", Katya snapped. "You will know only when you find your fated mate. She will not leave him no matter how he treats her because they are mates and if she leaves him, it will harm them both. I can see you don't believe me. I wouldn't believe it either before I met Oscar..."

"So if Oscar disrespects you in front of everyone, you will be fine with it?", Keith asked dryly.

Katya gaped at Keith. "Of course not. But, Oscar wouldn't disrespect me BECAUSE he is my mate. Mates come first and..." Katya's voice trailed when she saw that Keith made a face. "Are you telling me that our Alpha is mistreating his mate? Is that why you ended up in the hospital?"

Keith shook his head. He didn't want to talk about it, but he knew that Katya won't let it go. "Maya said that Alpha was not himself, but I've seen Alphas with women, and I know that they treat them like trash. Shit! Even I treated women like trash." OK. Not how Damon treated Talia on the previous night, but Keith had his share of not caring about women.

"Are you saying that you changed?"

"I would never do such a thing to Talia.", Keith said seriously.

"You wouldn't because she is your Luna, and you need to keep your hands and your pecker to yourself."

Keith made a face. "Can we go back to you talking about the pack run and me not listening?"

"As soon as you promise that you won't do anything stupid."

"You don't understand, Katya. The world gets colors in her presence. Her smile makes the birds sing..."

"And you will get our whole family kicked out of the pack if you allow those feelings to grow.", Katya said dryly.

"Don't worry, sis. I know where the line is."

"I surely hope so."

...

Talia held onto the basket she prepared for Keith. She didn't want Damon to carry it and Damon didn't insist.

The nurse showed them to the room where Keith was, and Talia recognized the woman by Keith's side. It was his sister, Katya.

Keith's face lit up when he saw the figure at the door. "Talia", he called, and he wanted to get out of the bed.

"No, no", Talia said while rushing to his side. "Please, don't get up for me."

Keith's eyes moved behind Talia and his expression stiffened. "Alpha."

Talia brushed off the awkwardness between Keith and Damon. She didn't expect that they will kiss and make up anyway.

Talia greeted Keith and Katya and then she kept the basket on the side. "I brought you these. I was not sure what you like, so I got a bit of everything. How are you feeling?"

"I am fine.", Keith assured her. "Doctor wants to run more tests just in case, but I am completely healed, and I can resume working as your guard as soon as I'm out of here."

"I am glad you are well.", Talia said and looked at him sadly. "Keith, I am grateful for what you did last night. Unfortunately, I need to inform you that you can't be my guard anymore."

Chapter 592 Talia's head guard (1)

Keith, Katya, and Damon stared at Talia, all three wondering if they heard her right.

"What?", Keith asked. "Did I do something wrong?"

"No, not really.", Talia responded. "I am touched that you jeopardized yourself for me, but I don't want you to do it again."

"That's what a guard should do.", Keith said with desperation in his voice. Was he getting fired because he did his job? Guarding Talia was so much more than a job.

Talia pressed her lips into a line. "I know, but... I don't see you as my guard, Keith. You are my friend, and I can't bear the sight of you getting hurt. Not for my sake."

"But I am fine."

"You are, because you were lucky. What if you are not fine? What if last night we faced rogues? What if there were many of them with wolfsbane-laced weapons? What if you ended up with a permanent disability? What if you died? Did you think how I would feel if that happened? How would Katya feel if that happened?" Talia was on the verge of crying now. "There are so many people who care about you, and I can't bear such responsibility. I want you to be safe and healthy."

Keith knew that Talia's words made sense and she said that she cares about him, but... "Who will keep you safe?"

"I have a good Coach who taught me to take care of myself.", Talia responded, and she turned to Damon who was standing at the door and observing all this without a word. She took Damon's hand into hers and spoke to Keith, "And I have Damon."

Damon was touched by Talia's trust in him, but he couldn't believe that Talia was letting go of Keith.

He knew that Talia and Keith were close because he was her personal trainer before Damon stepped in. She trusted Keith and they were getting along well. Keith was there for Talia when Damon wasn't, and the Coach had the skill set and attitude to be a good guard. There was no reason to dismiss him, yet Talia did it.

Damon was aware that Talia hated seeing Keith being hurt while protecting her, but Damon also knew that it was because of him. Damon never hid his displeasure with the Coach, and Talia definitely considered Damon's feelings about this.

As an Alpha, Damon delivered many punishments, some were excessive, but he never felt guilty about it. Actually, even now he wouldn't feel guilty about crushing Keith if not for his concern about offending Talia.

Damon wanted Talia to be happy and safe, but can he really allow an enamored guy like Keith to linger close to Talia? On the other hand, Talia is amazing and beautiful inside and out, and whoever spends time with her will start developing emotions. Can Damon keep her guards on some rotation? But then there will be no sense of camaraderie and trust, and personal guards will feel more like people who keep her imprisoned.

Once again, Talia proved that she will put others ahead of her. She was a true Luna, willing to make sacrifices so that others will be happy.

--- ---

Keith was dejected. He remembered Damon pinning down Talia while mocking Keith for being helpless. How can he just let it go? Talia was humiliated and degraded, and even if she forgave Damon, Keith refused to believe that she forgot about it.

"You think that Alpha Damon will keep you safe? That's not what I saw last night.", Keith squeezed through his teeth.

"Keith!", Katya exclaimed.

"It's OK.", Talia quickly said. "Last night was unfortunate. Do you remember how you got better quickly?" Keith nodded and Talia continued, "You can think of it as white magic. Damon was under the effect of dark magic which blocked the mate bond and it made him look at me as an enemy. We needed the full moon for the ritual to dispel the dark magic, and now Damon is back to himself. He won't harm me."

"I regret my actions from last night.", Damon said, making the other three look at him in surprise, but he was talking to Talia. "I harmed you physically and emotionally and there are no words strong enough to say how sorry I am. I am glad to hear that you will rely on me, but I can't be with you all the time. You will need guards. Now that everyone knows you are my mate, people will target you."

"I know.", Talia responded to Damon. "But I don't want Keith, Sandy, Lulu, Pierce, Liam, or Caleb to put themselves in danger only because they are my friends. I will leave it up to you to pick my guards."

Damon was surprised by this. "You will?"

Talia confirmed. "You are the strongest Alpha and the fiercest warrior. Assign me people you think are the best."

"Are you sure?"

"I am.", Talia responded.

Damon didn't need to think much about this.

"Keith", Damon called in his official tone. "I want you to be Talia's head guard."

"What!?", Talia, Katya, and Keith asked in unison.

Damon was looking at Keith seriously. "Last night, you proved that you will treat Talia's safety as your top priority. That's what I expect from her guard." Damon didn't like it, but this was the truth. If Keith went against Damon, he would go against anyone only to keep Talia safe, and in a weird way, it will put Damon's mind at ease.

"Can we talk about it?", Talia asked Damon.

"I thought we did. You said that you are leaving it to me to pick your guards.", Damon responded matter-of-factly, reminding Talia that her Alpha was not only moody and domineering but that he can twist the words to fit his agenda. How could she forget that side of Damon?

"Yes, I said that you should pick them, but didn't you hear that I don't want my friends to guard me?"

Damon cocked an eyebrow at Talia. "I'm not asking your friend to guard you, but the person who is the best fit for that job. Besides, if they are your friends, it's less likely you will give them a slip. Once, I can forgive the mistake, but next time it will count as incompetence and they will be punished. Think about it before you put yourself in danger again."

Talia lowered her gaze guiltily. She knew that Damon was talking about Talia sneaking out of the packhouse in order to go to the Lightclaw pack and then to the Council of the Alphas. Sure, it all ended well, but it could go wrong in many ways. She was lucky.

Damon touched Talia's chin, making her look at him. "I know that you trust Keith, and he proved last night that he is taking his job seriously. Unless he is unwilling, or has a reason that will prevent him from putting your safety first, he is the best to guard you when I'm not around."

"I am willing!", Keith exclaimed with haste, hoping that they won't change their minds again.

Damon turned to look at Keith. "I expect you to do whatever you can to keep her safe, regardless of how many people want to harm her, or who they are, and even if the person in question is me."

Keith gaped at Damon, and it took him a few long seconds to respond. "Thank you, Alpha. I won't disappoint your trust."

"I know you won't.", Damon said. "I am not proud of what happened last night. It was one of my lowest moments and I am lucky that Talia understands how I wouldn't do it if my mind was clear. Talia is my fated mate and she is my most important person. I will do whatever needs to be done so that she stays safe. As for the rest of the guards, we can discuss later if you will keep your current team, or if you want to replace someone. I expect you tomorrow morning to report to the packhouse and we will discuss current dangers we are aware of..."

Chapter 593 Wasted snacks

Talia and Damon left Keith's hospital room and headed back to the packhouse.

"I thought you were not happy with Keith being my guard.", Talia said.

She got that part right. Damon was not happy because Keith's feelings for Talia were obvious. However, in the moment of crisis, Keith prioritized Talia's safety and that was the thing that mattered the most: keeping Talia safe.

"I can't blame him for the way he worships you.", Damon said. "You are beautiful and kind and sexy, and every guy will fall for you. But no matter how Keith feels, I know that he won't do anything against your

will, and I also know that you have eyes only for me, kitten. If I deny you the best guard because of my jealousy, it will show my insecurities and I am anything other than insecure about the two of us."

Talia's eyes widened in disbelief. Was this her possessive Alpha who blows a fuse if a guy looks at her?

"You should have asked me.", Talia said. "If they get hurt..."

"Then, don't put them in danger.", Damon cut her off. "Your guards should stick around when I'm not available, and I can assure you that I will never leave you in the middle of the enemy's territory. As long as you don't do anything reckless, your guards will be safe and so will you."

Talia had to admit that he was right. Every time she was in danger, it was because she left on her own.

Talia wondered if she could be so magnanimous. If a woman who was openly admiring Damon wanted to be close to him, would Talia allow it? Talia was not sure. But then... almost every woman was openly admiring Damon, and Talia was definitely NOT OK with that. However, that was probably because he already slept with all of them.

"Kitten? Did my words upset you?"

Talia blinked. What words? How did she end up thinking about women Damon had sex with? Damn it, her mood was ruined just like that!

"Let's not talk about it.", Talia said. They were close to the packhouse now, and Talia wanted some time to clear her head. "I will check on lunch preparations."

Damon had a feeling that this was Talia's way of avoiding him. "Are you sure? Why don't you tell me what's going on?" He didn't want to allow a small doubt to grow into something bigger. Considering that Talia was prone to overthinking things, that was highly likely. And also, Damon heard Liseli speak about how there was lingering dark magic amplifying Talia's negativity and now he was nervous.

"It's not important.", Talia responded. It really wasn't, because she was psyching herself out. "Last night you announced to the pack that I'm your Luna. As your Luna, I need to take care of the guests and that

includes checking they have food to eat. How about I see what's going on in the kitchen, and then I will find you with a snack?" She knew that Damon got work piled up, so he will definitely go to the study to work.

"Only if the snack is you.", Damon responded, making Talia burst into giggles.

...

Damon's happy mood dropped when he saw the pile of paperwork waiting for him on his desk.

What he wanted to do was snuggle with Talia, but someone had to do this, and he wondered if Talia's approach was better. Should he open up to more people helping him with work?

But who was trustworthy, capable, and knowledgeable to help him deal with matters related to managing the pack?

If he could have a guy like James to be his Gamma, Damon was confident that James would handle most of the work without needing Damon's input.

The boy was scary smart, and Damon would love to poach him, but James was like a hot potato and if Alpha Edward suspects that Damon has his eyes on James, it would attract another heap of troubles.

Besides, James was still a boy and Damon knew very well how hectic things become when one steps too soon into adulthood. Damon wouldn't do that to James or to any other kid.

'Damon?', Caden's voice sounded in Damon's head through their pack mind-link.

'Yes?'

'I tried contacting you earlier, but you were not available.'

Damon closed off the mind-link while he was in the hospital because he didn't want to be disturbed.

'What is it?'

'It's Jade.', Caden said, and Damon didn't need more explanations.

Jade is a successful model, the daughter of Beta from the Silverfur pack. Alpha Adam was trying to set up Damon with Jade and to establish a connection with the Dark Howlers pack through marriage because Alpha Adam didn't have daughters. There was also a point of Jade and Damon going on a date once that ended with a steamy night, but Jade was cool about it and didn't try to latch onto him, so Damon didn't think about her as a potential danger.

'What about her?', Damon asked.

'She is here.'

Damon looked around his study like he expected the woman to pop out from a corner or from behind a sofa, but she was nowhere to be found. 'Here? Where?'

'On her way to the packhouse.', Caden clarified. 'She entered our territory about half an hour ago, saying that she wants to talk to you.'

Damon groaned. Didn't they have a rule that outsiders can't enter without permission? But then they relaxed that rule since they merged borders with the Spring Leaf and the Blue River packs.

Damon wondered what Jade wanted. They were clear with Alpha Adam and his Beta that Jade was NOT a candidate to be Damon's Luna, and the woman herself said more than once how she was not interested in that position because she wanted to pursue her modeling career.

Among all women that were buzzing around Damon, he had a feeling that Jade was the most levelheaded. Probably because she had her goals that didn't include being someone's wife.

'Don't worry about her.', Damon said. 'She can find me in the study.'

With that, Damon was back to looking at the documents in front of him. He needed to deal with as many as possible before his kitten comes with a snack.

...

Damon lost track of time when his focus was broken by a knock on the door.

"Come in!", he called, and the door opened to show a tall blonde. It was Jade.

"Good morning, Alpha Damon!", she greeted him cheerfully as she made her way toward his desk in long steady steps with a small sway in her hips that was catwalk-worthy.

"Jade. To what do I owe this pleasure?", Damon asked.

"I called and I left you voicemails, but you didn't respond.", she said.

Damon was not aware of that, but it wouldn't be strange if he dismissed them as not important. "I am busy."

Jade reached his desk and her eyes glanced over the documents. "I can see that. You are a busy man."

Jade put her hands on his desk and leaned over it, her shirt falling to give him a good eyeful of her cleavage and the white lace of her bra. She saw him glancing there, shorter than she thought he will, but he still did it, so she smiled.

"I wonder if you thought about my proposition. We can scratch each other's back."

Damon was not sure what proposition she was talking about. He opened his mouth to respond but his throat was painfully constricted, and he glanced at the open door behind Jade to see Talia there with a tray in her hands.

Why did this scene look so familiar?

'CLANG!'

The tray, plates, and utensils fell on the floor loudly, and the food scattered as Talia dropped the tray out of her hands with force. It was obvious she did it on purpose.

Talia's glare spoke volumes and Damon tried to reach her through the mind-link, but she closed it off.

"Alpha Damon", Jade called while eyeing Talia. "It seems that your Omegas need to be educated on how to behave in front of high-ranking members. As your partner, I can help you with that." She pointed at the mess at Talia's feet. "You need to clean that up and you will pay for wasted food and anything that was broken."

Chapter 594 Jade

Talia barely heard anything of Jade's haughty words as her icy gaze was directed at Damon who was staring at her with shock and fear evident on his face.

Why did he look like a child who was caught stealing candy? Was he surprised that Talia saw him like that? How far would he allow Jade to go if Talia didn't show up? WHEN WILL HE LEARN!?

The rage within Talia was rising exponentially. Bloodlust. Urge to break and smash and tear until nothing was left. Talia never felt anything like it and it scared her as she felt like a vicious beast was about to devour her.

Should she fight against the violence, or should she allow herself to be consumed by it?

Everything seemed like it moved in slow motion; Damon got on his feet, and she saw him opening his mouth, but the only thing Talia heard was buzzing.

Talia didn't care about Damon's words or Jade's confused expression. She didn't want to be there. She didn't want to see Damon or Jade and she definitely didn't want her rage to explode and to hurt her most precious person.

With that, Talia turned on her heel and dashed into the hallway.

"Shit!", Damon cursed, and he rushed after Talia.

He didn't expect that Jade will get so close and act provocatively, and he definitely didn't think that she will treat Talia like an Omega. What's up with these high-ranking bitches looking down on everyone!? He would give Jade a beating, but his first priority was to pacify Talia who was definitely furious, and something seemed off with her.

"Kitten!", Damon shouted after Talia who was already halfway down the staircase. "Wait!"

Talia's steps froze. "Why? So that I see another woman seducing you?"

Talia recoiled when Damon's hand touched her shoulder. "DON'T TOUCH ME!", Talia shouted. "DON'T YOU FUCKING TOUCH ME!"

Damon raised his arms, palms toward Talia, silently telling her to calm down.

"Jade just arrived in the study, less than a minute before you. She only said, hi." And there was a whole desk between them! Wasn't Talia's reaction exaggerated?

Talia sneered. "Sure, she just arrived and immediately offered to scratch your back. Is that protocol common for all Alphas or only you get frisky first and talk later? Why do I have a feeling that your itch is somewhere else?"

"Kitten, no..." Damon abruptly stopped talking when Talia's eyes started glowing in silver. She was definitely angry. "Can we talk about this?"

Talia's nostrils flared, and she didn't need to look behind Damon to know that Jade was standing at the door of the study and watching them. The way how Jade didn't cover in fear spoke volumes and Talia could see that Jade behaved as if she belonged there, in that study, with Damon, and Jade acted like Talia was an outsider. All that pointed to only one possibility...

"Did you fuck her?", Talia asked through her teeth.

Damon's expression froze for a moment and Talia closed her eyes.

"I can't believe this.", Talia said under her breath, and her fury turned into dejection as her heart broke into a million pieces. Will she ever get over this? Will she always be surrounded by women Damon slept with? Was there a woman he DIDN'T sleep with?

Talia gasped for air. There was not enough of it.

Damon panicked when he saw streaks of black in Talia's silvery eyes.

"Kitten... Kitten..."

Talia could hear Damon calling for her, and somehow she knew that his arms were around her, even though she couldn't feel them.

"Don't give in to the darkness", he said, and the rest was choppy as Talia was losing consciousness. "I'm right here... You are my only one... Please... You need to fight this..."

...

Talia's eyes fluttered open to see blurry faces. She blinked to get them in focus and inhaled a scent of lavender, basil, mint, and chamomile that was wafting from the nearby burner. It was a calming mix of herbs and Talia guessed that Shaman was nearby.

First, Talia recognized Mindy, and then Dawn and Zina.

Talia was lying on the sofa in the living room.

Talia looked around to see Gideon, George, and Damon standing a bit further, and in the furthest chair was a head of blonde hair; it was the woman from the study that Damon called Jade.

"Are you back with us?", Mindy asked with concern obvious in her voice when she noticed Talia moving. "Stay down. Doctor Travis and Cornelia are on their way."

"Kitten?" This was Damon and he was already kneeling by the sofa where Talia was and holding her hand.

Talia's eyes didn't settle on him as she looked at Jade. "Why is she here?"

Everyone turned to look at Jade.

Talia lost consciousness on the staircase, and Damon carried her to the living room while mind-linking Mindy, Dawn, and Zina who came quickly with Gideon and George, and they called Travis and also James to come back with Cornelia as soon as possible... and Jade just sat there in the chair, with no one paying attention to her.

"Don't worry about her, kitten.", Damon said with haste. "She is nobody. How are you feeling?" Talia looked normal, but Damon was worried about the dark specks in Talia's eyes from before.

Talia was not willing to let it go. "If she is a nobody, why is she here?"

Jade shuffled in her seat. By now, she realized that Talia was someone important. Why else would all these people make a fuss around her? But, how important could Talia be?

"I came to visit Alpha Damon.", Jade responded. "Nothing more."

Talia pushed herself into a seated position while eyeing Jade suspiciously. "Really? Alpha Damon just said that you are a nobody. Are you close enough for social visits or are you a nobody? Which one is it?"

"She is..."

"Did I ask you?", Talia snapped at Damon whose mouth closed so quickly that his teeth clattered.

Jade confirmed that her deduction was right. Talia was important. Why else would Damon allow Talia to cut him off like that?

Alphas cared about their position and pride, and unless Talia was equal to Damon or above him, he wouldn't submit so easily. But how could Talia be above Damon? Damon was the most powerful Alpha of their generation!

Jade's heart tightened. Was the rumor true? Did Damon find his mate? Was this the girl?

Jade had difficulty accepting the current situation, however, Jade knew that she needed to figure out who this mysterious woman was.

Jade stood up from the chair and introduced herself, "I am Jade from the Silverfur pack. My father is Beta Milo."

Talia eyed the woman in front of her. Jade was nearly as tall as Damon with a slender body and super-long legs whose elegant shape was shown through the skinny jeans she was wearing. Jade's blonde hair was shining as it came out of a shampoo commercial, she had almond-shaped hazel eyes, a straight nose, perfect lips... really a model-worthy appearance.

"Beta's daughter?", Talia asked. "Are you here on a pack-related errand?"

"No. As I said, I came to visit Alpha Damon."

"Why?", Talia kept on pressing.

Jade's eyes moved nervously over people in the room and then she looked at Damon whose expression was unreadable.

"It's OK.", Talia said. She stood up and crossed her arms over her chest. "Damon doesn't have secrets in front of us. You can tell us."

Jade licked her lips nervously. "I came to visit..."

"WHY?", Talia shouted making Jade and everyone else twitch.

"Tell her.", Damon urged Jade. He feared that Talia's condition will worsen and she will pass out again. He looked at the door impatiently. Where are that doctor and the witch?

Jade swallowed a mouthful of air. "Alpha Damon and I had a deal to pretend to date. My father is forcing me to marry, and Alpha Damon is facing similar pressure, so we can help each other..."

"LIES!", Talia roared, and her voice boomed to shake the windows. "TELL ME! WHY ARE YOU HERE!?"

Chapter 595 Fierce girlfriends (1) [Bonus chapter]

Jade felt that the air was heavy, and her mouth opened to respond against her will, "I heard that Alpha Damon organized dinner with Elders where he announced his Luna. After my modeling gig was over, I rushed to see if it's true and if I can become his Luna before he marks her."

Talia couldn't believe this. Jade rushed here to take the spot of Damon's mate? "Why didn't you call?"

"I did, but he didn't pick up and I thought he was avoiding me, so I came in person because I couldn't miss this opportunity now that Marcy was out of the running to be his Luna."

Cold sweat beaded Jade's forehead.

Why the heck was she talking nonsense? But it was not nonsense. Sure, she wanted to get closer to Damon by fake-dating, and then slowly she would incorporate herself into his life. She would show herself as non-intrusive and useful. Everyone thought that Damon will make Marcy his Luna, but Marcy was out of the way, and Jade was confident that things would move in the right direction given enough time.

If he would dote on her, that would be great, and if he didn't, she would continue modeling and traveling. In either case, it was a win-win for her, and now it was ruined.

Who the hell was this woman? Was this an Alpha command? Even Alpha Adam doesn't have this power.

Talia was angry again. Jade came here to be Damon's Luna before he marks the woman he choose? Well, too bad because Damon already marked Talia, and they were fated mates, but it seemed that none of these bed climbers cared about what they will destroy in order to get what they want.

Talia turned to Damon. "What do you say, Damon? Do you need a fake girlfriend? Should I leave so that you can mark this woman?"

Damon pinched the roof of his nose as he remembered Caden telling him that Jade was bad news and that her talks about independence and keeping their fake relationship fake were just to reel him in. At that time, Damon suspected that Caden was dramatic because Jade always spoke about her career, but what was this nonsense about her being his Luna?

"Let me clarify a few things.", Damon said. "First, I never agreed to the fake-dating scheme. It was Jade's idea. Second..." He walked to Talia and took her hand into his. Damon's heart tightened when he felt how stiff Talia was, but the good thing was that she didn't yank her hand out of his grasp.

He clasped her hand between his and gave her a squeeze.

"Nothing else matters, kitten.", he said. "You know that none of these women are important. You are and you always will be my only one. I admit, it's my mistake that Jade is here." He turned to look at Jade. "I believed that Jade's only interest in me was to get her father to stop forcing her into marriage. I believed that she puts her career first. I believed that she was strong and independent and that she won't allow them to use her for a political marriage."

Talia could feel his sincerity and she knew that he meant it, but the anger in the pit of her stomach was still swelling.

"You are telling me that she lied to you.", Talia said. "You are saying that she came here to seduce you and to use you for her own benefit."

Talia spoke to Jade. "You are a pitiful woman, Miss Jade. Did you really think you can use Alpha Damon for your agenda? I don't care what happened between you in the past, but you definitely got the message that he found his Luna, yet you came here to snatch that position. Are you worthy? Do you think that being Beta's daughter is enough qualification to be Damon's Luna? Or were you relying on your looks? Will Damon's Luna just stand there and allow others to question her in a degrading manner?"

This got Jade's attention. "Why are you talking to me like I did something despicable? I admit that I came here with the hope to get Alpha Damon's attention, but I didn't do anything wrong and Alpha Damon didn't refuse me."

"And you assumed that his silence is agreement.", Mindy interjected. She was angry for Talia, and she was also angry because this reminded her of Nina. If Gideon pushed Nina away decisively, Nina would get the message that she was in the past and that she should scram, but he didn't, and Nina continued advancing and disturbing Mindy's peace.

"Who are you?", Jade asked Mindy.

"I am a woman who knows how it feels when an insignificant ex comes to disturb MY mate!", Mindy responded.

Jade's eyes darted from Mindy to Talia, and she was confused now. Was Mindy Damon's mate?

"I knew you were impressive, but I didn't realize you have more than one mate.", Jade said to Damon while trying to lighten up the mood.

"One or ten, that shouldn't be your concern.", Dawn said. She saw Jade as an ex who can't get the message that she needs to back off, and that reminded her of Marcy. "What you should remember is that Alpha Damon is taken and you are not IT."

Jade was still looking at Damon. "Alpha Damon, I think we have some misunderstanding here... ahh!" She cried when another wave of pressure made her collapse down to her knees. She thought that it was Talia or maybe Damon, but Mindy was glaring at her.

Jade gaped at Mindy. From where did that Alpha aura come?

"The only one who doesn't understand her position is you, Miss Jade.", Mindy said with a malicious smile on her face. Her father was an Alpha, and even though Mindy's aura was weaker when compared to Maddox's, she could still handle Beta's daughter with ease.

Gideon looked at Mindy with sparkles in his eyes. His pumpkin-infused princess was fantastic!

Mindy turned to Talia. "She obviously came to seduce your man. What will you do with her?"

"You should make an example from her. Beat her, strip her, humiliate her, so that no other woman dares to come like this.", Zina said from the side. Everyone knew about women clinging onto Damon and trying to get close to him, but Zina remembered Cassie who was coming to their packhouse and bossing around everyone like she owned the place, and Zina hated it.

With Mindy being distracted, Jade scrambled up to her feet. Kneeling on the floor was embarrassing.

"You must be joking.", Jade said breathily. "Ahh!" She cried and fell back down to the floor.

After a long second, Jade looked up to see who pressured her with Alpha's aura now. Damon, Talia, Mindy? But it was none of them because the one who was staring her down was Dawn. What the hell?

Chapter 596 Fierce girlfriends (2)"Do you think it's a joke to seduce someone's mate?", Dawn asked Jade through her teeth. "Even if you don't understand how important a fated mate is, you should know that they are together because the Moon Goddess arranged it, and getting between mates is going against the will of the Moon Goddess. Prepare to face the consequences!"

Jade groaned as Dawn's pressure increased to hold her down on the floor, and she struggled for her face not to get squished on the carpet.

Jade couldn't believe this! When she saw Talia bringing food into the study, Jade assumed that Talia was an Omega, but now she wondered if all females in the room were Alphas. What the hell was this place?

George's chest puffed with pride when he realized that Dawn was the one pinning Jade down. That's his mate! He taught Dawn how to control her aura, and she managed to direct it only at Jade, and she did wonderfully.

Talia looked at her girlfriends who were angry with her, and Talia's anger sizzled away. At that moment, Talia got an idea.

"Damon", Talia called.

"Yes!", Damon responded right away.

"What do you do with enemy spies?"

"Spies!?", Jade shrieked, realizing that this was taking a very bad turn.

"You came from the Silverfur pack with an intention to trick and seduce Alpha Damon so that you can manipulate him and use his resources. If you succeeded to become Damon's Luna, you would get access to what he has. Were you planning to use those for the benefit of the Silverfur pack? Isn't that what spies do? Or is it better to say, thieves? Which one are you, Miss Jade?", Talia asked.

"No, no...", Jade stuttered, happy that she could get up, but she didn't dare get all the way up to stand, so she stayed on her knees. "I had no malicious intent. I mean, I wouldn't try anything underhanded. If Damon was not interested, I would..."

"It's ALPHA Damon!", Talia snapped. "You have no right to address him in a familiar way. Get it?" Talia waited for Jade to nod, and then she said, "Continue."

Jade hated this treatment but there was nothing she could do other than cooperate. She swallowed her grievances with the thought that she will get her revenge, later.

"I came for a visit. If I verified that Alpha Damon found his mate and that he was not interested in me, I would leave.", Jade said.

"I see.", Talia responded thoughtfully. "But I'm not sure if I should believe you. How can we confirm that?"

"I can use Alpha command on her.", Damon said. "Don't strain yourself. Let me do it."

Talia refused. "Her mind seems fragile, and she barely held it together the first time. If Jade returns to the Silverfur pack as an imbecile, Alpha Adam and Beta Milo might give us hard time."

"Will you send her to the dungeon?", Mindy asked.

Talia shook her head. "That's for people who did wrong and Miss Jade claims that she didn't come here with malicious intentions."

"You don't plan to let her leave like that?", Dawn asked.

"How can we let her leave? She just got here.", Talia responded. "Didn't Miss Jade say how she came here for a visit? We should allow her to stay and prove her sincerity. After all, she is Beta Milo's daughter, and that counts for something."

Zina was frowning while wondering what was wrong with Talia. "You want to let her stay here?" It didn't make sense.

Jade was also looking at Talia with confusion obvious on her face. Was Talia going to let her stay in the packhouse? Something didn't seem right.

"It's the polite thing to do.", Talia said to Zina. "Ask Rose to prepare a room for Miss Jade in one of the buildings where Omegas are staying."

"Omegas?", Jade asked in disbelief. She never stayed with Omegas. It was either in the packhouse or in luxurious hotels. Other than being a world-renowned model, she is Beta's daughter!

"You didn't think you will stay in the packhouse, did you?", Talia asked Jade. "That's for high-ranking guests and being Beta's daughter doesn't qualify you for such a privilege because you don't have any ranking. Don't worry, our quarters for Omegas are satisfactory, and we won't bully you. Just as when any non-ranked member visits, we will ensure you have a place to stay, and food will be provided. You can eat in the community cafeteria or cook for yourself. As a non-ranking member, you will get duties assigned during your stay. However, since you need to dispel our doubts about being a spy, we will have warriors watching over you. If you skim on your duties or do anything suspicious, it will be a reason for your residence to move to the dungeon."

Jade's mind was spinning. What the hell was this? Wasn't she just being held here to work as an Omega? She had fashion shows and other things to do!

And why did Talia say 'non-ranking' a hundred times? It was on purpose!

"I came here to visit Alpha Damon!", Jade exclaimed.

"Did you invite her?", Talia asked Damon.

"No.", he responded before she could finish her question.

"Are you friendly with her?", Talia asked her next question.

"No."

Talia turned to Jade. "Then, Miss Jade, your visit is one-sided, and you are intruding. Do you think that anyone can invite themselves as Alpha Damon's guest? You can submit to my conditions, or we can send you to the dungeon right away. It's your choice, Miss Jade."

Talia pursed her lips and spoke to Damon. "We should call Calvin to do a scoop on Miss Jade. If WW Magazine publishes an article about how women coveting you are setting themselves up to work as Omegas in the Dark Howlers pack, it might deter some of these pampered misses so I don't need to deal with trash."

Jade's face was arranged into a dejected grimace and if looks could kill, Talia would be sliced into a million pieces. Jade was never insulted like this in her life!

"Who are you?", Jade asked Talia.

"That is something you should have found out before coming here, before assuming I'm an Omega, and before you tried to take my mate. Because you see, Damon carries my mark on his neck, and he is MINE."

Talia was distracted by the pride and love that poured into her from Damon and he was definitely turned on by Talia claiming him as hers. Silly Alpha.

Talia needed a moment to compose herself before continuing to talk to Jade, "Instead of hating me for making you work for repentance, you should be happy that I didn't break your legs. How will you model when you can't walk? If you act suspiciously or refuse to do work, warriors who are watching you will break your legs without the need to check with us..."

Jade stared at Damon who was nodding obediently at Talia's words, and Jade couldn't believe that she didn't notice it before. It was there. He was marked. It meant that he submitted to his mate. Alpha Damon submitted? It was unbelievable! And that only made Jade even more wonder who Talia was.

Chapter 597 Fierce girlfriends (3) Jade cursed under her breath. After her last fashion show, she heard that Alpha Damon announced his mate to the Elders of the Dark Howlers pack, and she decided to investigate the situation. On her way here, she called her father to confirm if Alpha Damon really found his mate, and he told her that those were unconfirmed rumors.

Jade didn't suspect that anything was off. Over the years, there were many women associating themselves with Alpha Damon, so Jade assumed that it was one more fake news, but now she realized that she got herself into a heap of trouble. Will she be able to get out of this with her life intact? What if they really break her legs?

Maya and Caden entered the living room to find the scene of Jade kneeling on the floor with Talia, Dawn, Mindy, Damon, George, and Gideon standing in a loose circle around her.

"What did we miss?", Caden asked.

They were both out in the field when Damon called them to come to the packhouse because Talia lost consciousness, and this was not what they expected to see.

"I want to know how she got in.", Damon said dryly. "We had shuffling of patrols and loosening protocols, but that doesn't explain how she got in without permission."

Caden was aware of Jade coming into their territory, so he explained, "As Beta's daughter of the pack that is on friendly terms with us, no one questioned her when she said that she wanted to meet with you."

Caden swallowed hard when he saw Damon's glare directed at him, so Beta lowered his head with, "This won't happen again."

"What did Jade do?", Maya asked, obviously referring to the fact that Jade was kneeling.

"She came here with an intention to become Alpha Damon's Luna.", Zina responded, and Maya looked at Talia nervously.

They could all feel Talia's anger swelling again.

"Kitten, you should calm down...", Damon pleaded at Talia who was so tense that it felt like she was going to snap any moment.

"Don't tell me to calm down!", Talia erupted. "How can I calm down in front of a woman who came here to take my spot!? And not only my spot, but she wanted to be the Luna of the Dark Howlers pack. Do you know how that would impact the pack if you hurt your fated mate because of a random woman? How would you explain to the pack members when the Moon Goddess punishes you?"

Damon realized that under that anger, Talia was onto something. "What do you suggest?"

"Miss Jade is making a point how she is Beta's daughter. She used her status gained by birth, to come to this packhouse and get close to you. I refuse to believe that she came here on her own. The Silverfur pack needs to be held responsible."

"You mean...", Damon drawled and waited for Talia to finish.

"I want Alpha Adam to apologize and compensate us for the stress. I was so upset that I fainted. What if I fell and hit my head? That could be dangerous! I will need something like recurring payment to assure their sincerity."

Damon hid his laughter behind a cough. His kitten wanted a tribute! After losing one million dollars on the bet at the Council of Alphas, Alpha Adam was definitely furious and now he will be stuck with a tribute! Will he refuse, knowing that Jade was detained in the Dark Howlers pack? Well, there was one way to find out.

Damon could feel that Talia's emotions were unstable, but he was delighted about the way how she twisted this to benefit the Dark Howlers pack. Another tribute. No matter how angry she was, she was still thinking about the pack. She was a fantastic Luna!

"Caden", Damon called. "Get in touch with Alpha Adam and Beta Milo and ask them to explain Jade's presence. I want an online meeting with them where we will discuss how Jade harmed my Luna."

"I didn't...", Jade protested, but no one paid attention to her.

"Don't forget to ask for educational compensation.", Mindy chimed in from the side. Seeing Damon's and Talia's questioning looks, Mindy explained, "By allowing Jade to work here as an Omega, we are educating her about hierarchy and how every member of the pack is important. Other than that, she will get lodging and food, and all that costs money."

Maya and Caden exchanged confused glances. Jade will stay in their pack as an Omega? They needed more information, but they knew that this was not the right time to ask.

"You want to charge my father for making me work here?", Jade asked in disbelief.

"Not your father, but your pack.", Mindy responded.

Dawn nodded in agreement and added, "Everyone knows that the Dark Howlers pack has the highest score related to the living condition among all packs. By allowing you to spend time here and experience it first-hand, you will not only learn, but you will get to carry that knowledge with you back to the Silverfur pack. That's priceless."

Jade gaped at Dawn like she spoke in a foreign language. What kind of nonsense was that? They were keeping Jade here forcefully and asking for the Silverfur pack to pay the fees? Isn't that extortion? Was she a hostage?

Damon's chin shivered from the suppressed laughter. He knew that Talia was impressive and that Dawn had spunk, but even the dildo-gifting woman was vicious, and he approved.

Clamor at the door got everyone's attention, and they turned to see Doctor Travis arriving with his medical bag.

"Where is my patient?", he asked. They said it was urgent, but no one seemed to be sick or hurt.

Talia gestured toward Jade. "She needs a checkup."

"I want to make sure you are fine.", Damon said to Talia in a low voice and continued through the mind-link, 'Your eyes showed black streaks and...'

'And Doctor Travis can't do anything about it.', Talia interjected.

Damon had to admit that was true. He moved closer to Talia and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her to lean on him.

'How are you feeling?', Damon asked through their mind-link.

She was not sure how to describe it. 'Nervous. Edgy. I want to scream.'

'Don't hold it in.'

Talia lifted her head to look at him. 'Do you really want me to scream at you?'

'If it's going to help, go for it.' He would gladly be her punching bag.

'I feel like ripping Jade into pieces. I feel like erasing every woman you ever touched. Will that help? Or will that turn me into nasty shits as they are? Or maybe it's not them, but it's you. I know, it's not fair, but you asked me how I feel and there it is. I hate everything about this situation, and I hate that I can't do anything about the way I feel, and bullying one of the numerous women you shagged is not helping. How do I get rid of this hate?'

Damon's heart tightened. He knew that this was not Talia. She never hated. This was the dark magic that was corrupting her pure heart and it was his fault. If he was not this dirty, there would be no trigger for the darkness, and if he was not so weak, he would be able to resist the dark magic which seeped from him into his mate.

'Damon?'

'Yes, kitten?'

'Will you love me if I change?'

Damon's heart cracked. In all this mess that he created, Talia was concerned if his feelings for her will change.

He cupped her cheeks and kissed her gently on the lips while talking through their mind-link, 'We are all changing, kitten. It would be strange if you stayed the same considering everything you've been

through. I will love you no matter what happens. I am right here, and we will get through this together. We are planning to visit witches. When we get there, you can ask them more about dark magic and we will find a way to fix it. And maybe this is not a bad thing. Everyone should have some negativity to keep us on the edge.' He tried to sound cheerful.

Damon remembered that mates balance each other. What if Talia made him a better person and she got his darkness in return? And he was back to blaming himself.

Chapter 598 Extortion (1)'I am scared.', Talia's voice sounded in Damon's mind, jolting him out of his thoughts.

Damon chided himself. This was not the time for self-loathing! His kitten needed him to make things better.

Damon released a sharp breath, together with some of his negativity and then he got an idea.

He scooped Talia into his arms and started walking out of the living room. "Let's go."

"Where?", Talia asked while wrapping her arms around his neck to stabilize herself.

"For a run.", he said. "When I feel overwhelmed, a run helps with clearing my head. Let your wolf take over and go wherever your paws carry you. I will be right behind you, kitten, so don't worry about anything and just run."

Jade gaped at the scene of Damon carrying Talia princess style. She followed news about Damon for years and she was confident that he was never this caring toward any female. This proved that Talia was Damon's fated mate and that Jade messed up big time.

Mindy looked through the window to see Damon carrying Talia all the way to the back of the garden, and then their clothes exploded into tatters to reveal two wolves, one black and the other light gray. When they were standing next to each other, Talia's light fur made Damon's even darker, and Damon's black fur made Talia's nearly white. It was like they amplified their colors to become opposite, yet they stood together to create a harmony like they belong next to each other.

Two wolves rubbed their heads together for a few seconds before they dashed into the forest, disappearing among dense bushes.

Mindy jolted when a pair of arms snaked around her waist as Gideon approached her from behind.

"Do you want us to go for a run, princess?", Gideon's breath splashed on her ear.

Mindy's lips lifted into a smile as she remembered their wolves running and bonding on the previous night. It was exhilarating. But Mindy had something else on her mind. "How about we check out a house?"

"A house?"

"It's close by. Talia suggested it as a temporary solution until we find something better, and if we love it, we can keep it."

"How close is it?"

Mindy shrugged. "I'm not sure. Talia showed me the general direction. We can ask one of the guards. What do you say?"

Gideon looked at Mindy helplessly. How can he say anything other than, yes?

With Gideon and Mindy leaving the living room, Dawn, George, Maya, and Caden were left with Doctor Travis who was going through the motions of doing a health checkup on Jade. Travis figured that there was nothing wrong with Jade, but since Talia and Damon told him to check on Jade, he had to do it.

Jade didn't resist when Travis listened to her heart, or when he asked her to open her mouth, and she blinked when he pointed a flashlight in her eyes. It distracted her from staring at George.

"You are Commander in the Red Moon pack.", Jade said to George after some time. He looked familiar as she saw his picture somewhere, and now that the commotion settled, she connected the dots about who he is.

George's silence was confirmation, and Jade's eyes moved to Dawn who was definitely cozy with him. Jade noticed the mark on Dawn's neck. If Dawn was not George's mate, they wouldn't be that close.

"How come your mate is an Alpha?", Jade asked George.

George narrowed his eyes at Jade. Should he just kill her now and remove the risk of Alpha Edward finding out? And why was Jade blabbering in front of Doctor Travis?

Dawn giggled and hugged George. "He was lucky. Not everyone gets as his fated mate Alpha's daughter."

Travis' hands paused for a moment. He knew Dawn's parents and they were definitely not Alphas, but he didn't want to meddle. While working as the main doctor in the pack hospital, Travis heard all kinds of secrets and he learned to keep them to himself. It was for his safety.

"Dawn, no...", George said but Dawn gave him a comforting smile and he knew that she said that to conceal his identity. If Jade talks about how George's mate is Alpha's daughter, George won't be targeted even if Alpha Edward hears about this, but it won't change the fact that the old fart will covet Dawn.

"Alpha's daughter?", Jade asked suspiciously. She was confident that she knew everyone who was someone. "And who is your father if I may ask?", Jade asked Dawn, thinking that maybe she is a child from an affair. It happens.

"You shouldn't ask such questions.", James said from the door with Cornelia one step behind him.

James arrived in time to hear Jade asking about Dawn's background and he frowned at the people in the room.

Maya, Caden, Jade, Travis, Zina, George, and Dawn.

Where was Talia? Wasn't she the reason why they came early from the human city?

"Talia and Damon went for a run.", Dawn said, answering James' question he didn't ask aloud.

Zina and Dawn called Cornelia to the side to give her updates on what happened, and Maya and Caden tagged along because they wanted to hear it also.

James' lips lifted into a smile as he comprehended the situation. This was perfect! Because of this summon, they left Petra, Erik, and Zack in the human city, and it was just him and Cornelia. Since Talia was well enough to go for a run, James and Cornelia can go to his room. Privacy. He will introduce Cornelia to the PlayStation and show her how to use the controller and they will be close and... Ah! He was getting hard already!

"Future Alpha James", Jade called, and James' smile fell as he turned to look at her suspiciously. What did she want?

"You need to help me clear up this misunderstanding."

"I don't need to do anything.", James said dryly. "Who are you?"

Jade's eyes widened. How was it possible that he didn't know her? How embarrassing! She cleared her throat awkwardly. "I am Jade from the Silverfur pack. My father is Beta Milo."

With James not saying anything, she continued. "I came here to..."

"She came to seduce Damon.", George interjected. "Unfortunately, Jade assumed that Talia was Omega, so she showed her ugly face which earned her a punishment of staying in the Dark Howlers pack and working as Omega until she proves her sincerity."

James understood that keeping Jade here meant containing the information leak. It was a smart move, but... "Why did she get to work instead of staying in the dungeon?"

"If she makes a mistake, she will end up in the dungeon.", George explained.

"They want me to work. I am a model, Beta's daughter. How can I work as an Omega? My hands will be ruined." Jade's expression was pitiful. She hoped that James will use his status to get her out of that mess.

"I see...", James said thoughtfully. "So, what do you want me to help you with, Miss Jade? Do you expect me to justify why you came to seduce an Alpha who has his fated mate? Or do you want me to urge Alpha Damon to place you in the dungeon right away so that you avoid ruining your hands?"

Jade couldn't believe this. What the heck was James talking about? She wanted neither of those! She wanted to go home!

Chapter 599 Extortion (2)

Jade was not sure if James was messing with her on purpose, or if he didn't understand the situation. But she chose to believe the latter because James was just a teenager, so she decided to explain, "When I came here, I didn't know that Alpha Damon found his fated mate. If I knew, I wouldn't act so freely."

James didn't buy it. "Alpha Damon announced the pack run which he will lead with his fated mate during dinner that happened a week ago. I find it difficult to believe that you came here one day after the pack run and you had no clue that Alpha Damon was mated. They even marked each other, so even if I assume that you were completely oblivious to the news related to the place you came to visit, you should see the mark on his neck."

Jade pressed her lips into a line. Yes, she heard about that dinner, but the ongoing rumors were related to Marcy being Damon's mate, and since everyone watched the live feed with Marcy announcing that she will be traveling the world, Jade assumed that the position was vacated.

"But I...", Jade stopped talking when James narrowed his eyes at her.

"Miss Jade", James called ominously. "Am I that young and naive looking that you are trying to manipulate me so that I jeopardize my relationship with the Dark Howlers pack? You are Beta's

daughter, insignificant, and that's why your punishment is to do menial work. Bear with it for a few days, and you will be free to leave. However, I am the future Alpha and if I offend Alpha Damon, I will not only end up in the dungeon, but it could cause a war. Do you see the difference caused by our status? Before you try to swindle me to settle your petty grudges, think about the consequences of your actions. Alpha Adam will hear about this."

Jade couldn't believe this. Why was James talking about war? And what will he say to Alpha Adam? Jade was trying to get out of this, yet why was she getting deeper?

"What do you mean?", Jade asked.

James straightened his back and looked down at Jade who was sitting on the sofa and getting a checkup from Doctor Travis.

"As Beta's daughter, you should know better.", James said. "If your target is a regular member of a pack, no one would care. But your target was Alpha Damon. Even if your father didn't send you, it will look like he did. And now you tried to use me. I could brush it off, but the pattern of your behavior shows that you are prone to reckless actions that could cause war. It's in your best interest that you are punished now, than to allow for things to escalate. Depending on Alpha Damon's mood, I might need to involve my father in this. I am not an Alpha and I shouldn't play with these matters."

George's words sounded in James's head through their mind-link, 'Damon will charge her for the offense of trying to seduce him, and for the service of educating her about how packs work. Can we use this situation to get some benefits?'

James wanted to dismiss that idea. He didn't care about making the Red Moon pack richer. And if he asked for himself, benefits from the Silverfur pack will leave a trail that Alpha Edward can use to figure out that James was preparing resources for his life after everyone finds out that he is not of Alpha lineage.

But then James remembered who the woman in front of him was. Jade from the Silverfur pack, the world-renown model. Other than a successful modeling career that earned her a lot of money, Jade also recently launched her fashion brand, Starlight, and it was doing rather well. Now, that was something he could work with.

"I will contact Alpha Adam and my father in order to clarify how the Red Moon pack had nothing to do with usurping the position of Alpha Damon's Luna. You attempted to make me your accomplice, but it didn't work.", James said.

Jade felt the whole room spinning. The Red Moon pack will complain about her also? For the last few years, her father was nagging about how she should stop the modeling nonsense (how he called it), and he wanted her to stay home and find a husband, yet she brushed him off while saying that it was still early and hinting how Alpha Damon was interested in her. When Alpha Adam and her father find out that the two largest packs were complaining about her, it will be bad. Really bad. If her father doesn't skin her alive, Alpha Adam will.

"Please, don't.", Jade pleaded with James.

"I apologize, Miss Jade, but this is beyond you and me. What you did today is on a pack level. It's only right for Alphas to be aware of this, so that the right measurements can be administered. My father will need to send compensation to Alpha Damon to assure him that we mean no harm. But since it's all your fault, my father will ask Alpha Adam to make up for it."

"Can we talk about it?", Jade asked desperately.

"I don't know", James said while rubbing his chin. "I mean, if I skip reporting this and things escalate, I will get in trouble. Actually, you are asking me to be your accomplice by staying silent."

Jade plastered a painful smile. "There must be something I can do to make up for your troubles."

"Well, now that I see your sincerity", James drawled. "If you make it up for my trouble, I might agree."

Jade blinked while eyeing James. He wanted her to make it up to him? How? What could a teenage werewolf want from her? Did he want to sleep with her? She was attractive and desirable, and James was a teenage boy with his hormones flaring. He was on the younger side, but...

"What are you thinking?", James grumbled at Jade. He didn't miss her checking him out.

"I was wondering about how I can make it up to you. I don't have much."

"You have something that might work."

Now Jade was confident that James was aiming for her body, but she still asked, "I do?"

James nodded. "Starlight."

Jade's face fell. "What?"

"Twenty percent.", James said.

"What?"

"Twenty-five."

"Are you nuts!?", Jade raged.

"Thirty."

Jade raised her arms toward James, indicating to him to slow down. "Wait. Wait. You want thirty percent of my company?"

"Thirty-five. And every time you fail to agree, the percentage will go up."

Jade couldn't believe this. Somehow, the idea of her sleeping with James sounded better. It would be one time and done, and none of them was made of soap to perish with use, but giving part of her company was permanent!

"You are extorting me."

James shrugged. "You can refuse, and I will call Alpha Adam. I'm confident that he will give me more compared to forty percent of Starlight, so as you can see, I am agreeing to cover for you at my loss."

Chapter 600 Extortion (3) [Bonus chapter]

Jade gaped at James. Why did he make it sound like he was doing her a favor?

And how did James know that Starlight was hers? Even her father didn't know as she was using an alias!

But this was not the time for these questions. What were her options?

Jade was already in a lot of trouble and if she adds James' complaint that will come with the weight of the Red Moon pack, Jade was confident that things will be bad for her. Really bad. She didn't care about werewolf wars and other nonsense, but what if her father locks her up at home? What if he marries her off to someone old and ugly?

Jade cursed her luck and her decision to come to the Dark Howlers pack, and then she said, "Thirty."

James cocked an eyebrow at her. "Forty-five."

"Please. That's all I have.", Jade said and closed her eyes. "Forty."

James knew that Starlight was the only company Jade had, but she had other assets. Even if he took the whole thing, she wouldn't starve, however, if he became the majority owner, he would need to be involved in the business, and he didn't want to meddle with the operations of a fashion company.

"Forty-two and we have a deal.", James said. "If I ever decide to sell my percentage of Starlight, I will offer it to you first."

Jade exhaled dejectedly. "Can you promise to keep to yourself that I'm the owner?" When James nodded in agreement, she said, "Fine."

James extended his hand toward Jade, and she shook his hand grumpily.

"Beta Caden!", James exclaimed. "We will need a lawyer and a notary to handle the transfer of ownership for a company..."

Jade was distracted at the sight of four warriors that appeared at the door and based on what she overheard from the conversation between Caden and the newcomers, she understood that the warriors came for her. Now what?

With every passing moment, Jade's regret for coming to the Dark Howlers pack was increasing. She thought that there was nothing to lose, yet she ended up losing her freedom, her assets, and they treated her like a homewrecker who came to cause a war.

Wait! Didn't James ask her before who she was? If he didn't know who she was, how did he know that she owns Starlight?

"Future Alpha James", Jade called. "Why did you ask who I was? If you were aware that I am behind Starlight, you knew of my identity."

James cocked an eyebrow at Jade. "I couldn't connect the face with the name. If my sister was here, she might recognize you because she follows fashion. When you identified yourself, I remembered.", James lied with a straight face. How could he not know who she was? He survived so far by observing and collecting information that could be used at the right time, and this was the right time.

So far, James was pretending to be ignorant and obedient in order to not attract the attention of Alpha Edward. Laying low was important for his survival.

However, now there was Cornelia and James needed to think about her, and about their future pups.

James couldn't believe this! Until a few days ago, he didn't think about women at all, yet now he was planning for a future with Cornelia that included pups! And he didn't hate that mental image, not even a little bit.

James decided to use his position as the future Alpha of the Red Moon pack to accumulate resources and connections so that when he can't conceal his inadequacy anymore, he and Cornelia can disappear and not depend on anyone. That sounded perfect.

'I will give you five percent from Starlight', James told George through the mind-link.

George was surprised by this. 'Why?'

'If you didn't disclose that Alpha Damon was extorting money from the Silverfur pack, I wouldn't come up with this idea. It's only fair that you get a cut.', James explained. 'Or do you think I should give you more? I won't go above ten percent.'

George refused. 'That's generous, but I don't need money.'

There was something else James could do for George, and that didn't have a price tag. George already thought of using James, that's why he covered up the fact that James didn't have Alpha aura.

Unexpectedly, during this visit to the Dark Howlers pack, George and James grew closer and James even found out about George's real background.

Now they were tied up by knowing each other's secrets. Well, at least some of them.

George's initial plan was suicidal; he would kill Alpha Edward and he didn't care what will happen after that. However, now he had Dawn and he couldn't jeopardize her, so he needed to reevaluate his priorities.

Could he give up on the revenge he was preparing for a decade and not have regrets? But Dawn said that she will support him and stand by his side, and George's plan needed modifications. Having James on his side will definitely increase his chances of getting rid of Alpha Edward without spilling too much blood. And James could ensure Dawn's safety when the time comes.

George was fairly confident that James will help him, and the fact that the youngster was indebted to him can serve as additional motivation.

'You don't need money? What do you want?', James asked. He knew that nothing comes for free.

George smiled a little. 'I will let you know when the time is right.'

James had an idea what George's intentions were, and James didn't care much about his father or the Red Moon pack because both of those were threats to him, but there was one thing James wouldn't compromise on.

'As long as it doesn't put Cornelia in danger, you can count on my help.'

George approved. 'We will need to collaborate to ensure our mates stay safe.'

...

Jade's checkup was done, and Doctor Travis excused himself.

By now, Zina also left to work on lunch. She had two Omegas helping her out and it made her feel important but also nervous as hell. This was the first day for Stephanie to be absent from the packhouse, and Zina knew that if anything burned or it didn't come out well, it will be her fault.

Cornelia went with Zina, to see if she can help with lunch preparations because James said that he needed to take care of some things.

James was getting his affairs in order before meeting with the lawyer. There were a lot of things that needed to happen before Jade could put her signature to transfer forty-two percent of Starlight to James.

James also wanted to add Cornelia to his current assets, and he was considering an idea of writing a will so that in case anything happens to him, Cornelia was taken care of.

With Dawn and George making themselves scarce, Jade was left in the living room with Maya, Caden, and warriors that were standing in the hallway, out of sight, but Jade was aware of their presence; they were there for her.

Maya and Caden were talking in low voices and acting like Jade was not there, and Jade's anxiety was rising.

Was she really stuck to work here as an Omega? For how long?

Surely, it can't be more than a day or two. But actually, staying longer had its benefits.

If she stays composed, she will catch Damon in private, and they can talk and get closer and... who knows? She was confident that he will let her go from these pesky duties. Why would he keep her? He has so many other people available to do menial work.

Jade remembered their date when they gazed into each other's eyes over a candlelit dinner and the steamy night after that... and Jade was confident that Damon would accept her fake-dating proposal if not for Talia.

They were getting along fine before that wretched mate appeared!

Jade pushed her anger down. Throwing a fit will only make things worse.

Jade glanced around the room and her eyes settled on the oil painting that showed a meadow filled with wildflowers and mountains in the distance. "Now what? Do I start dusting off the paintings?"

"Did anyone say you will be working in the packhouse?", Maya asked and Jade's mouth fell open. Now what?