

## Pride

THIRD PERSON'S POV

Xavier stood by the window of his office, gazing out at the view of the woods. He was lost in thoughts. The memories of the past few days seemed to press heavily on him, and he was feeling a complex mix of emotions.

It was hard to believe how quickly everything had spiraled out of control. He clenched his fists, recalling the day Isabella handed him the divorce papers. For him, the shock and confusion had been overwhelming. It was an act he never saw coming.

"What games are you playing right now?"

At first, he thought that she was just acting on a whim. The idea that she would be the one to bring up about the subject of divorce was so absurd to him. He didn't believe it, after everything she's done to be with him, how could she want to leave?

"This is what you want, right? I've already signed it."

Xavier clenched his jaw. He didn't know what tricks the woman in front of him was playing, and she refuses to admit it. He didn't even once bring up the matter of divorce with her, and now all of a sudden, she was doing this?

He couldn't fathom her reasons. Was she trying to provoke him? Was she doing it to get his attention? He sneered.

"Stop with this act of yours right now." He growled, his patience wearing thin. The displeasure on his chest was growing. Her actions felt like a cruel joke.

But then, he saw it – a flash of genuine pain in her eyes. It was a momentary crack in her composed façade, but it was enough to make something stir on his chest.

"I'm already tired too..."

For a moment, Xavier felt something unfamiliar – a pang of guilt, perhaps? Never once had he seen her so vulnerable during those three years of their marriage. But then, he quickly pushed aside these thoughts, recalling how pretentious she can be.

"In our three years of marriage, did you ever love me?"

Xavier was taken aback one more time. The question caught him off guard. It was a simple question yet loaded with deep emotion and questioning. He once again felt the uncomfortable feeling on his chest.

He was feeling mad, frustrated and something he couldn't quite name. He wanted to demand why she was suddenly asking that question, but he felt as if his words were stuck in his throat.

Pride and anger surged through him. His expression hardened before he turned away from her. In fact, he also couldn't give her the answer she wanted – perhaps because he also didn't know it himself.

Without another word, he left the room. The storm of emotions still brewed within him, clouding his thoughts.

"Xavier, are you okay?"

He saw Sophia's figure approaching him as he passed by the living room. But he couldn't care less for her at that moment. He didn't turn to look her way and continued striding outside the house, denying the need to control his raging emotions.

His thoughts drifted back to the pained expression on his wife's face. The he tried to convince himself that she loved him too much to leave. That she won't leave him and he could still have her play the role of the Luna which was her most efficient use for him.

But deep inside, Xavier knew that he was just deceiving himself. He wanted to mask the truth with denial.

The next day, he didn't expect that she would remain so resolute in her decision that she even wanted to speak to his parents. She really wants to leave, huh? Xavier thought sarcastically, feeling his ego being bruised.

"I can't keep living like this – with you keeping your lover in front of me, I've already suffered enough humiliation and pain."

Xavier's mind was clouded with confusion, quickly followed by anger. Was she talking about Sophia? How dare she accuse him of infidelity?

Sophia was his late best friend's sister. They've known each other since childhood, and once saved his life. Before Sophia's brother died, he asked Xavier to take care of Sophia because they were orphans, and Xavier readily agreed because of his close relationship with her brother. When Sophia went missing five years ago, Xavier had felt guilty for not fulfilling his promise and was determined on finding Sophia.

Now, he could finally breathe a sigh of relief because Sophia's finally been found.

But here's his wife, making things difficult for him. Her accusations stung him. The memory from three years came crashing back in his mind as he recalled how Isabella drugged him to sleep with him – to make him take responsibility and marry her.

She was such a scheming woman, and now she was trying to paint him as the villain?

"That's... that's not what happened."

Xavier looked at her coldly. It was the first time he had confronted her about the incident. He had never blamed her openly, but now his frustration was boiling over, leaving him unable to hold back.

"Save it. I don't need your explanation." Xavier sneered coldly, but the next second, he witnessed something that caught him off guard.

Isabella's eyes dimmed. It was as if the last vestiges of her composure crumbled. He saw how tears formed in her eyes, as she looked at him with a devastated look on her face.

"You never gave me a chance," She whispered.

Xavier was momentarily speechless. He couldn't find the words to respond, unlike moments before. He didn't even notice when Isabella left, her absence only registering when the cold air hit his face, snapping him out of his thoughts.

Suddenly, he felt something... a feeling of reluctance and fear. The look on Isabella's face—the devastation mingled with a strange determination—left him feeling cold. He had a sinking feeling that she might actually leave him, and whether he wanted to admit it or not, the thought chilled him to the core.

He absentmindedly walked towards his office, but just as he wanted to start burying himself in paperwork, a familiar howl pierced the air.

His wolf, which had been silent in the back of his mind, suddenly became alert. In an instant, Xavier shifted into his massive black wolf form and bolted out of the pack house.

"To the borders!" he commanded through the mind link, alerting his pack warriors. Anxiety gnawed at him as he felt the intensity of the emotions through the mate bond.

That howl was from Isabella. And from the mate bond, he had a feeling that she was in great danger.

When he arrived at the scene, he saw that the other pack warriors had already gathered. His eyes immediately found Isabella's familiar golden-furred wolf, engaged in a fierce battle with rogues. Just as he was about to rush to her aid, he heard a cry.

"Xavier, help me!"

It was Sophia, surrounded by more than five rogues. Xavier hesitated for a bit, but then made a split-second decision and rushed to get them off, thinking he would go to Isabella afterward. He was confident in her abilities as a fighter and believed she could handle herself.

But then, a pack warrior's urgent shout pierced the chaos. "Luna!"

Xavier whipped around, and his heart dropped. The last thing he saw was the familiar golden fur of Isabella's wolf form, falling off the cliff.