

Chapter 31: Cheers

"What, in the Moon Goddess's name, are you wearing? Rags?" Sophia scoffed. "As the daughter of an Alpha King, I thought you'd be able to afford nice things. Looks like I was wrong! Ha!"

Seriously? Amelia thought, taking a deep breath. Sophia? What is she doing here? Desiree excused herself. "I have nothing to say to you," Amelia said firmly, throwing daggers at Sophia with her eyes.

"I mean, it was bad enough being a useless Luna, purely a decoration, in the Stormfang Pack. Looks like you should have stayed. At least you had nice clothes when you were Luna." Sophia smirked and then saw that there was only one place setting at the table. "And you're alone!" She laughed condescendingly. Without anyone there to defend Amelia, it was 'game on' as far as Sophia was concerned. "Look at you. Sitting all alone. In crappy clothes. Why, you're no better than a maid! You may have gained your status back, but what good has it done you? You're still pathetic!"

Amelia felt her wolf rising, but she calmly fought it back down. "I have asked you once to leave. I will now ask you a second time. Don't make me ask a third time," Amelia said, firmly.

Sophia flicked over Amelia's wine glass. The red wine

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seeped onto the white linen tablecloth. Sophia met her gaze. "Or what?" she asked defiantly.

"I would like to remind you that this is a safe zone," Amelia said, her voice low so no one could over hear her. "You know as well as I do that we cannot phase here, nor can we cause any trouble." Amelia stood up from the table. "If you won't leave, then I will. I want no part of any of this."

But Sophia grabbed her arm and leaned in close, stopping Amelia.

"Not so fast," she hissed. "You embarrassed me at the banquet. You're not going anywhere. Not before I teach you a lesson." Amelia felt Sophia's claws press into her arm. She had to stop her before she shifted.

Amelia loosened her arm from Sophia's grip. "Perhaps you are the one that should be taught a lesson. I have royal authority. Shall I take you back to my pack to stand trial? You offended the King's daughter and you stole the Stormfang's ruby."

Amelia assumed the threat would put Sophia in her place, but it didn't.

"You. Little. Bitch," Sophia growled, loudly enough for a few tables close by to take notice. Amelia was shocked at Sophia's blatant disregard for the safe zone. But before Sophia could do any more damage, a tall man appeared at their side.

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"Calm down, Sophia," the man said. "I won't have you making a scene here."

Sophia did exactly as she was told. The man was clearly authoritative. Amelia took a closer look.

He was a werewolf, there was no denying that. And a strong one by the scent of it. He had a chiseled face, with a sharp jaw and dark, brown hair. He was muscular under his suit, broad in the shoulders. But it was his eyes that caught Amelia's attention. They were green, but stern, and lacked kindness. He was handsome, yes, but Amelia saw little warmth in this man.

"I will not!" Sophia exclaimed. She lunged at Amelia but the man caught her. Amelia noticed a across his upper arm and recognized the tiny silver tree emblem – the Mandrake mark. Amelia wanted nothing more than to have Sophia seized. But who was this man?

Is she here with him? Amelia asked herself. Clearly, she is. That's why she was so abrasive and dismissive of the safe zone. She has him for protection. And who is this man? He looks powerful – I can sense his authority. He surely has a high position within Mandrake Enterprises. I need to be careful here. I can't damage potential business relationships. Besides, my wolf is not strong enough yet. It's still damaged from the Wolfbane. I really shouldn't fight yet.

Amelia took a step back and raised her hands in the air. "I

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have no interest in fighting any further, Sophia.” The man looked at Sophia sternly. Sophia sighed and lowered her head. They clearly had some sort of relationship, but to what extent, Amelia didn’t know. And where was Gabriel? Why wasn’t he with Sophia?

But before Amelia could finish her thoughts, the man held out his hand.

“Lucas. I’m the Vice President of Mandrake Enterprises.”

Amelia accepted his hand. “Amelia Moonstone,”

But he cut her off. “I know who you are.” Sophia rolled her eyes and huffed. “I’ve seen the emails you’ve been sending.”

“Oh,” taken aback by his blunt demeanor.

“There will be no meeting,” he continued, in the same blunt way. “We’re not considering working with Moonstone.”

“I see,” Amelia responded. “May I ask why?”

“Don’t get me wrong. I know your company is very successful. Despite all the humans. Too many humans, in my opinion” he said off-handedly. “Internally, your business is run by humans! There are some werewolves, granted. But not the sharpest ones from what I’ve heard. Although surely those few don’t represent the rest.”

Amelia didn’t know what to say. On the surface, he seemed polite enough. But his manner was highly dismissive and his words were bordering on just plain rude.

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He motioned for them to follow him to the bar, where the bartender placed a glass of scotch in front of him. He swirled it around, before taking a nice long sip. "You're Gabriel's ex? Correct?" he asked, motioning for another drink. Amelia nodded, unsure of what that had to do with anything. But he didn't even wait for her response. He turned to Sophia instead. "All you pretty woman," he said, shaking his head. "You all fall for men like Gabriel. They seem proper and decent enough. Handsome. But they're all indecisive cowards. The whole lot of them."

Amelia waited for Sophia to defend Gabriel, but instead she giggled. Amelia watched, horrified, as Sophia blatantly flirted with Lucas.

And Lucas flirted back.

I've had enough, Amelia sighed to herself. This feels like taking a step backwards. Sophia up to her old tricks. Gabriel needed someone to defend him. I don't want to do this. I need an excuse to leave.

But before she could find one, Lucas passed her a glass of wine.

"Have a drink with me," he said, leaning back onto the bar. Amelia refused but he insisted. She didn't want to completely sever ties with him, for the sake of her company, so she obliged. She took the wine. But then she saw him roaming her body with his eyes. Sophia stood at the side,

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watching, a disgusted look on her face. "Cheers." He raised his glass and clinked it with hers. Then he winked. "Go on. Take a sip. It's rude not to drink after a cheers." Amelia took a sip, sighing.

Just five more minutes, she told herself. Then I can politely excuse myself.

"You know," Lucas said. "I'm willing to rethink my position. About working with your company. If we were to....say....get to know each other better. If you were to 'keep in touch.' I might be persuaded to change my mind."

Amelia took one more sip of her drink and then said: "Thank you." She tried to hide the scorn in her voice but it slipped through. "However, I must politely decline."

That was enough. It was time to go. Amelia couldn't bear anymore of this. But before she went, she turned to Sophia and said quietly, "You know, I always thought Gabriel ignored my feelings for him because of you. And I hated him for it. But now? Well, now I just feel sorry for him."

Amelia left the bar without turning around to see the shocked look on Sophia's face.

Nor the smirk on Lucas's.

Chapter 32: Ecstasy

Amelia knew before she got to her hotel room that something was wrong. Her vision had gone blurry in the elevator; she almost hadn't been able to find her room number. The hallway lilted as she walked down it and it took her several tries to activate her room key.

She walked to her bedroom, her hand against the wall for guidance.

"What the hell?" she asked, as she stumbled forward, landing on her bed. She felt drunk but she couldn't possibly be.

Just then, she heard the sound of her door opening.

'Who's there?' she tried to ask, but the words won't leave her mouth. She turned to see a dark figure looming in the doorway.

"The drugs are quick," he replied. She recognized the voice even though it seemed distant. The man from downstairs – Lucas. Amelia realized with horror what was happening. It was the wine. He drugged her wine.

The asshole!

He walked towards the bed. She sat up and scooted backwards, until she was up against the head board.

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"Now, now," he said, removing his shirt. "Where do you think you're going?" He reached out and touched her bare leg. She wanted to recoil, but her instincts were slowed by the drug. Then he gave her a hard tug and she was on her back. "Such a pretty little thing." He slid onto the bed. She was under him but she couldn't move away. He pressed himself into her. "Feel that?" he asked. He inhaled his way up her body. "Mmmmm. I smell so many interesting people on you." He pressed himself into her again, harder, while his hand ran up her shirt. He squeezed her breast and ran his tongue along her neck. "Can you feel it? How hard I am? How badly I want you?" He whispered in her ear.

She wanted to throw him off, but she couldn't control her own body. Her limbs felt heavy. He slid his other hand up her shirt and kneaded her other breast. Amelia turned her head away from him but she was trapped under the weight of his body.

Just then, they heard footsteps storming through the suite. There was a loud growl and then Lucas was being lifted from her. She saw his eyes widen with shock as he slammed against the wall.

She sat up, focusing her eyes as best she could.

It was Gabriel - in wolf form. Lucas raged and shifted quickly. Lucas was taller, but Gabriel was thicker. Gabriel howled and lunged at Lucas. Lucas caught him and tossed him backwards. The two wolves tumbled together, out of

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the bedroom, into the main sitting area. Gabriel threw Lucas onto the glass coffee table. It shattered. Lucas stood, shards of glass shining in his fur, stained in spots with blood. He shook the shards free and pounced. He tackled Gabriel to the floor, trying to connect his teeth with Gabriel's neck. But Gabriel was too strong. He ripped at Lucas's flesh with his claws.

Amelia watched in horror as they thrashed around the room, destroying everything in their path.

"Enough," a strong female voice said. "That's enough!" Both wolves turned to see Desiree, the manager from the restaurant, standing at the doorway. Her eyes flashed with fury. "Don't think I won't stop you myself if I have to."

Gabriel and Lucas let each other go, stepping away. They gained control of their wolves and shifted back. Desiree handed them each a towel to cover their nakedness. "Look what you've done," she said. The room was in shambles. Broken glass, ripped curtains, claw marks along the walls. "This won't be easy to cover up. I can. And I will. But someone will have to pay for it."

"I'll pay," Gabriel sighed, running his hands through his hair.

"No, I will," Amelia said. The effects of the drug were changing. She didn't feel as groggy anymore. In fact, she felt good, really good, as though an unnamed happiness was slowly creeping up on her. "Here, take this," she handed Desiree her black American Express card. "I don't need you

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to pay for anything of mine anymore, Gabriel."

Gabriel lowered his head in shame. Lucas saw this and then laughed, out loud. He wiped blood from his lip with the back of his hand. "Sophia and Amelia. Now, this is hardly fair," he mocked. "You have two beautiful women. Surely, you can share?"

Gabriel said nothing. He only glared at Lucas. Amelia stayed a safe distance away. She wasn't sure what was happening. Tiny, pulsating waves were rippling through her body. It was pleasurable; it felt good.

Lucas continued. "I'll take this one," he said smugly. " Obviously, as a princess, she holds more value for me. Plus, I find her interesting."

"Stay away from her," Gabriel seethed.

"You know, once you let a bird go, it won't fly back into its cage easily. She's not yours anymore, Gabriel. You lost her." Lucas made for the door, but as he passed Amelia, he ran his finger along her cheek. "Pretty bird," he said. "I WILL see you again."

Amelia recoiled from his touch and Lucas walked out, with Desiree behind him, leaving Amelia and Gabriel alone.

Gabriel tightened the towel around his waist.

The waves of pleasure began to intensify. Amelia looked at his towel, with a strange desire.

+20 BONUS

"I knew something was wrong," Gabriel explained. "Sophia was acting strange. And I found something odd – something that makes me think her brother's death wasn't what it seemed. He was my Beta so I want to–"

"It's none of my concern." Amelia cut him off. "I don't care what's going on between you and Sophia."

Gabriel shut his mouth, looking hurt. Amelia couldn't help notice the bruises all over his upper body. She wanted to run her hands over his bruises. It bothered her, to see him that beat up.

But something else was happening. Something that bothered her more.

The drug. Her body was heating up. She knew what was right there, under that towel, within reach.

The unnamed happiness that had been creeping in? It had a name now.

Ecstasy.