

## Chapter 120

Liam had to squint at the sight before his eyes narrowed in disbelief as he confirmed it to be his daughter. Marisol was, indeed, swaying to the rhythm of the music that filled the room in the arms of an unknown man. It was definitely the last thing he could've expected of this night.

He stands frozen, a whirlpool of emotions flooding in him. Marisol, his beloved daughter who had only just become of age, was dancing with someone so closely and seemingly relaxed.

She'd stuck closely by him throughout the night, like she'd always done at these parties, never too far from sight as they exchanged proud and encouraging smiles every now and then, but now, she was at the opposite side of the ballroom and looking oh so into the dance with the stranger.

The night had been going seamlessly well so far, and now, Liam couldn't even put a finger on what part of his emotions he should pay more attention to. It is all conflicting and not exactly a great feeling.

"What's gotten you so worked up, Alpha?" Garrett dances his way up to the Alpha, eyes alight with mischief as he nudges Liam playfully to gain his attention.

Liam lets his gaze shift to Garrett for a sliver of a second, the other man suddenly coughing out a laugh as he seemed to have followed the Alpha's gaze, finding the obvious answer to his question.

"Well then." He starts, huffing out another laugh, "Looks like your little girl has found herself a dance partner for the night. Who would've thought?"

Liam's nostrils flared, and he ground his teeth, shoulders pulling taut, but the other man disregarded the reaction in favor of continuing with stating his observations, "They already look pretty cozy with each other. She couldn't have been keeping secrets from her old man now, could she?"

Liam growls lowly, his wolf stirred by the suddenness of the realization that hits him. He wasn't prepared for this moment, the realization that his daughter was growing up right before his eyes and would now be forging her own path in the various aspects of life.

His mind and heart seemed to be at war, the urge to break them up and drag his little girl back home, safe and curled into her bed, conflicting with the feelings of pride at the fact that she was maturing and happiness at the fact that she'd found someone she could look up at with eyes as soft as the ones she regarded her own parents.

"Liam, do you see that? Our little girl is growing up so fast, I can't believe I have to witness this." Liam did not realize that his mate had appeared at his side, but her amused voice announced her presence before she leaned into him, eyes sparkling.

Garrett, still amused, adds fuel to the fire. "Guess she's not Daddy's little girl anymore. Time for the Alpha to share his spot, eh?"

Liam shoots him with a glare, the implications of his words gnawing at the edges of his composure. The notion that Marisol was slipping away from the tight bond they had shared made him feel very unstable.

"I believe this is why she's been acting up." A new voice, James, adds this time, joining them, so they now stood in a circle, taking Liam's attention away from the couple, "She's still new to all of this, and it's not exactly easy trying to navigate through something new."

The more they spoke about it, the more ticked his wolf became.

Nicole finally senses his turmoil through their mate bond and gently releases soothing pheromones, pressing herself closer to him, a hand settling on his chest and patting him at intervals.

The affirmation of her presence and pheromones works like a charm. She always brought him comfort immeasurably, and even his agitated wolf calmed with a small rumble in his throat.

"Love, it's a part of life. She's finding her way, just like we did," Nicole whispered, looking up at him with eyes filled with unspeakable affection. She smiles, and his body returns one, seemingly hardwired with that reaction.

Liam's wolf, still not completely settled, finds solace in her words. Through their recently open bond, he could sense his daughter's joy, the genuine happiness that Marisol was currently experiencing. It softened the edges of his internal turmoil.

"Well, at least she looks happy. That's a relief, isn't it?" James quips brightly, and Nicole agrees, nodding, her eyes reflecting the same sentiment.

"Yes, she does. I can feel it through our bond. Marisol's found something special tonight, I believe." She breathes out, and Liam is unable to stop the growl that tumbles out of his lips.

"Come on, Alpha, it's not the end of the world. Marisol looks happy. That should be all that matters." Garrett scolds lightly. "She's finding her path, and we need to support her in that."

Nicole speaks up next, her voice a gentle reassurance. "Liam, she's still our little girl, but she's also becoming a woman. We have to trust her judgment and support her choices."

Liam sighs, a mixture of resignation and acceptance coloring his features. "You're right, Nicole. I guess..... I just wasn't prepared for this." He confesses silently, and Garrett bursts into laughter. The Alpha feels his brows twitch.

"Admit it, Liam, you're just jealous you will no longer be the center of Marisol's universe." He snorts.

Liam shoots him a stern look, but the corner of his lips twitch with a hint of amusement. "You're pushing it, Garrett."

Garret smiles back before he spares a glance back at the dance floor and the mirth disappears from his eyes, he stares blankly at something and as Liam follows his gaze, he feels his heart stop in his chest.

Sure enough, his daughter was approaching the circle, smiling so brightly that he wondered if her cheeks would hurt later on. Her happiness radiated with every step she took, her fingers linked with the man she was dragging along, and he sensed that Garrett and James took a step back.

"Mom, Dad, this is Caleb Coveton," Marisol introduced, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "Caleb, meet my parents, Alpha Liam and Luna Nicole."

Liam's expression remains stoic, though his stomach churns with something unexplainable, "Caleb," he acknowledges with a nod, studying the young man warily.

Caleb, who Liam now recognizes on closer look as not a stranger, but the Alpha of the Redwood Pack, meets Liam's gaze with a smile and respectful nod. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Alpha. I care deeply for Marisol and would do anything for her." He supplies unprompted, and Liam scoffs silently.

There was something about the Redwood Pack that rang a bell in the depths of his mind, but he couldn't put a finger on it. He felt like something was amiss, searching around his head for something he so desperately felt like he was forgetting.

Caleb extends a hand with a warm smile. "I'm honored to meet both of you. In our short time together, my mate has told me so much about the Dark Moon Pack and you."

Liam took the younger man's hand. The contact had his initial discomfort multiplying. "Caleb, Alpha of the Redwood Pack, right?"

Caleb nodded, his smile growing wider at the recognition. "That's correct. I've heard a lot about your pack's strength and unity and witnessing it today was nothing short of amazing. This place has been spectacular since my arrival, but I have to admit, meeting my mate has been the best part of the night." He says lightheartedly, but Liam remains unamused.

In less than five sentences, he'd used the word 'mate' two times, and it hung in the air, causing Liam's wolf to regress to its aggravated state. "Mate, huh?" he questions, studying Caleb's features with narrowed eyes.

Marisol picked that exact moment to speak up again, taking Caleb's hand and nodding happily. "Yes, Dad, Mom, Caleb is my mate. We have a bond that's... indescribable." She says dreamily, looking between the man and the elders of her father's circle.

The sight of Caleb's fingers wrapped tightly in Marisol's doesn't sit well with Liam. An undercurrent of annoyance simmered within him, despite Marisol's obvious happiness. He wanted to rip Caleb off, his perfect daughter.

Something about Redwood stuck out in his memory, and it was beginning to stress him out how he couldn't remember what it was. He wanted this man off his daughter and away from his daughter and their lives. He wanted him off his territory.

He grits his teeth, hidden by his lips, and clenches his fist. His wolf seemed to be taking it a lot more seriously, wanting nothing more than to show this man just how displeased it was by his mere presence.

Nicole, ever graceful, steps in as the silence made the tension more palpable. "Caleb, why don't you stay in our guest house for the night? We can discuss this further tomorrow."

Liam's initial instinct was to dismiss the idea altogether. But as he sees Marisol's joyous reaction to that, something inside him softens, wanting to preserve that look of contentment and happiness and keep his daughter smiling. He nodded painstakingly, stamping his agreement. He couldn't shake the feeling that something wasn't right.

Giggling, Marisol throws her arms around him, his arm goes around her immediately and Liam doesn't look away no matter how hard he tries to, not wanting to miss the second something goes wrong, but that doesn't happen. When they pull away, Marisol regards her parents with a grateful smile and Caden, another respectful nod before they walk away together.