

## **Chapter 38**

It had been weeks, long weeks since Liam saw Nicole smile. Long weeks since she met his gaze. Long weeks since she was confident in him, and it drove him to the brink of insanity.

On another hand, there was Garrett, who seemed to have also lost his mind since his mate Lola was killed, while he survived with minor injuries. Garrett was the pack's beta and was supposed to be a rock.

He had been up until the moment the voice of reasoning stood between Liam's brashness and the pack duties. Just like Nicole, Garrett remained in an oblivion-like state and refused to communicate with anybody.

Liam was also trying, just like with Nicole, to get Garrett out of his head, but nothing seemed to be working. Liam understood it. He felt he understood a teensy bit of what his friend felt.

He didn't think he would want to live if he lost someone so precious to him. Memories of fear that ate him up when Nicole was missing gave him an idea of what Garrett was going through.

Liam was standing in the open field that led into the forests, waiting for James and his team of

warriors whom he had sent on a mission to find out where their enemies were infiltrating from. It was a trap because he was certain that someone was helping the witch from within.

As he watched James and his team stumble into the one space in their wolf form, he hoped that his plans to catch the traitors would work.

His jaw clenched, and the muscles in his jaw jumped. He would have been out with James, had it not been that Garrett was in no position to head Dark Moon.

"How's it?" He grunted as soon as James changed into his human form and approached him.

"Perfect," James said, patting his back and striding past him.

Liam swallowed. Everything about what they planned was deceitful. It had been one of his and James's best battle tactics to date, and he wanted it to work so badly. His eyes assessed the warriors who had followed James, hoping that somehow one of them would spread the information.

It would have been him in the forest setting traps with James if Garrett hadn't been hit in the worst way possible.

The worst part was that he was supposed to make decisions about Garrett. The beta position was

not one to be left open for long. After staring into the open space for a long while, he turned and went back into the pack house.

The Council had convened and reconvened daily waiting for him to decide, but he found himself unable to make any decisions. Not when his heart was set on Nicole or when Garrett, his closest friend and best friend, was still alive, breathing, and struck with grief.

Liam opened the door to his study and slammed it shut as he walked by. He didn't want to see anybody. Not even James, or Connor, the Gamma. It was like his mind was being hewn to pieces, and he couldn't find solace anywhere. He reached out to his link with Garrett but didn't tug at it. He wanted to be there for Garrett, too.

One thing that feared him the most was Garrett's possibility of turning into a rogue due to anger and grief. It was what happened when most lost their mates.

Then there was Nicole. Liam paced back and forth in his study, his mind consumed with thoughts of Nicole. He had to know what had happened to her, why she thought what happened was real. He wanted to speak to her to make things right, but she refused to even acknowledge his existence. The pain and confusion were overwhelming. He felt like he was losing his mind.

Liam's frustration was growing as the days trickled by. He had increased pack training to ensure that the effects of the last sneak attack weren't repeated, but even as he worked himself and the park members hard, he couldn't fathom why Nicole was so unwilling to talk to him.

He had done everything in his power to protect her and make her feel safe. But now she had shut him out completely.

He understood her trauma or at least tried to and he longed to hold her, to tell her that she was safe now, but every time he approached her, she shied away, fear flickering in her eyes.

It hurt him to see her so scared of him. He wanted to reach out to her, but he didn't know how to make her feel comfortable around him again.

Liam knew that Nicole needed space and time to heal, but he couldn't help feeling angry and frustrated. His wolf was restless and on the edge, growling at the slightest provocation.

He had never been so disconcerted in his life. He felt helpless and powerless to fix the situation.

Nothing seemed to be working, and with each passing moment, the angrier he became.

Liam tried to throw himself into his duties as alpha. He attended pack meetings, trained with his warriors, and went on patrols. But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't shake the thoughts of

Nicole.

Every time he closed his eyes, he saw her face, her smile, her eyes that used to shine with happiness when she was with him. But now, they were empty, cold, and distant.

As the days passed, Liam became more and more heartsick. He withdrew from his responsibilities as Alpha, neglecting his duties to the pack.

He spent most of his time locked away in his study, brooding over what had gone wrong with Nicole. He couldn't control the increasing rage and anger within him.

"Liam, we need to talk," James said, his voice serious as he burst into his study.

Liam looked up from his desk, his eyes dark and brooding. "What is it?"

Scowling, James clenched and unclenched his fist.

"You can't keep doing this to yourself." He growled, "You're neglecting your duties as alpha, and it's starting to affect the pack. We need you to snap out of this and start leading us again."

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