

FERAL – Chapter 7

Adrienne POV

When the first rays of sunlight filtered in through the tiny crack in the drapes, I was still telling myself what I'd been chanting in my head throughout the night, and a long night it was.

I'd thought the Alpha was asleep already when I'd pulled myself up to bed, but I was proven wrong when, a really wrong time later, his breathing suddenly became deep and soft snores emanated from him. I realized that he had been awake the whole time, keeping an ear out. For me? I told myself to discard that thought.

With nothing better to do than lie in bed till someone came or the Alpha awakened, I decided to study the room. Like I noticed the night before, the bed I was lying on was so large, it would comfortably accommodate five me, though that wasn't a fair comparison, seeing as I was smaller than the average werewolf. When I first came to Alpha Marcus's pack, I was bullied because of my size. The situation was quickly rectified though. I realized the direction my mind was going and quickly steered it away and returned to studying the room.

It was a really large room. The walls were painted dark grey and heavy red brocade drapes with gold filigree designs hung at the large French windows with sheer, translucent curtains underneath. I hoped the windows opened out onto the balcony.

A large plasma TV rested against one wall and a small reading desk was pushed to the far end of another wall. A plush carpet covered the area directly in front of the bed and there was a small bench the same grey colour as the bed pushed against it. Identical nightstands with small night lamps on them stood on either side of the bed. On the wall directly opposite the bed, lay a sofa, and on it, the sleeping Alpha.

I glanced at the large clock up above him. It was barely 7am. The Alpha seemed to like large things. Everything in the room, from the TV, to the sofa, to the windows, and even the clock, were large. There were two doors, also grey, that I thought would each lead to a bathroom and a closet. All in all, the room was more finery than I'd seen in my entire life.

I was staring at him when he opened his eyes. I watched as he blinked slowly, then turned towards the bed to stare at me.

"You're awake", he said. His morning voice was a deep rumble that sent shivers down my feet.

I stared dumbly.

He yawned, stretching. I wondered why he chose to sleep on the sofa and not the bed when he could make *me* sleep on the sofa or even the floor. I watched fascinatedly as the muscles under his tight-fitting shirt rippled with his movement. He could squash me if he so chose.

Running his hands through his hair, he stood up and stretched again. I heard his muscles pop and realized that the sofa might be large, but it was still too small for him to fit his large frame comfortably.

"You can have the bed next time", I found myself saying before my brain caught up with me. I quickly slapped my hand over my mouth as I realized what I'd just done.

Now you've done it, Adrienne, I told myself. You spoke without permission!

The man who I'd just disrespected and was probably about to beat me up for that blinked at me. And blinked again.

"You...talked." He looked at me in wonder.

Looking down, I mumbled "I'm sorry", my voice shaky and croaky from weeks of disuse. Or was it months?

"Why?", he asked dumbfoundedly.

I couldn't believe he truly was though.

"For speaking... without permission", I said shakily.

A low growl brought my attention back to him. I saw his eyes shift between black and gold and realized he was struggling with his wolf. Finally, they settled on black.

"You don't need to ask permission before you speak..." He said lowly, looking at me at the end like he was asking me a question. Then he gave a low laugh. "I'm sorry, I just realized I don't know your name."

I stared at him disbelievingly. Wasn't he going to punish me?

My mouth opened of its own accord. "It's Adrienne."

"Adrienne", he tested. The name rolled off his tongue like it was made for it. "You don't have to ask permission before you speak, Adrienne", he said. "Not from me or any other, understood?"

I shook my head in the affirmative.

"Good. You can call me Lucas."

My eyes widened. His name! "B-but that's your name", I stammered.

His brow furrowed. "And..."

"A-and you're an alpha..."

Another growl cut me off.

"Lucas. Just Lucas."

I nodded again, quickly.

He sighed.

"You can look at me when I'm talking to you."

Reluctantly, I raised my head. This was going against all that Alpha Marcus had said. But then again, Alpha Marcus wasn't there. This was Alpha. Lucas. It would be for the best to follow his rules while I was here.

He looked like he was about to say something more but decided against it.

"I'm about to freshen up. Do you want to?", he asked instead.

The thought of finally having toothpaste in my mouth after all these months had me nodding my head almost immediately, making him chuckle.

"Okay. That can be arranged. Do you want me to carry you?"

I paled, remembering that I was too weak to stand, much less walk to the bathroom. I shook my head no, silently hoping that wouldn't annoy him.

He frowned. "Okay then". He thought for a while, before his face brightened somewhat. "Be right back", he told me, walking out of the room and shutting the door behind him.

I frowned, wondering where he was going. A few minutes later, the door opened again and Lucas walked in, pushing a wheelchair in front of him.

He offered me a small smile. "I hope you don't mind? I'll have to transfer you from the bed to the chair, but I won't have to hold you longer than necessary..."

I was silent, considering this for a moment, before nodding, albeit fearfully.

"Okay then..."

He approached me slowly, as if afraid I might bolt, and slowly gathered me into his arms. I flinched, but didn't spill myself out of his hold. My whole body shook as he settled me into a bridal carry and carefully disposed of me of the chair he'd brought in, all the while handling me like I was made of the most fragile china. His touch was so soothing that I found myself leaning into him, even as my mind was in overdrive, wondering what the heck was wrong with me.

After arranging my feet on the footholds, he got behind me and started to wheel me towards one of the doors.

"Do you mind?", he asked politely, gesturing to the doorknob as he stopped in front of it.

I obliged him, stretching forth a hand and turning the knob. He wheeled me into a bathroom that was probably royalty among bathrooms.

Grey marble countertops with gray storage drawers underneath. A large tub in the corner big enough to sit four people at once, and glass shower doors instead of a shower curtain. The walls were all mirrored, making me see multiple versions of myself. It was enough to give me vertigo, even as I was sitting.

Lucas smiled apologetically. "Sorry. It takes some getting used to."

It was more like a large glass room than a bathroom, I thought. Did he like looking at himself so much that he had mirrors installed on all the walls? I suppose he must. After all, a man like that must be pure perfection. Heat rose to my cheeks as I realized what I had thought. A glance at one of the walls told me I wasn't blushing, though it would be hard to tell, seeing as my face was practically hidden by my face. Or it could just be that I was too sick and had lost too much blood to even spare some for blushing. I stared at my pale, wraith-like fingers, littered with little cuts and bruises and bandaged at the wrists. I could almost not feel the sting of the wounds anymore, except for the rare moments when I allowed my mind to travel just a few weeks into the past. Then the pain came rushing back with enough force to make me shudder.

I was so caught up in my thoughts that I didn't notice Lucas had set me in front of a marble grey sink that was set on a countertop. He pulled the brakes on the wheelchair and rummaged in a cupboard for a while.

"Found it", he muttered triumphantly as he held up a new, unopened toothbrush.

He opened it, squeezed a bit of toothpaste on it and handed it to me, a bit uncertain.

"Can you...?" He trailed off, leaving me staring at the offered toothbrush a moment before my brain caught up with me. I was still feeling a bit slow when I tentatively lifted a hand and took the toothbrush from him.

My hand shook like it was lifting fifty pounds of weight as I guided the object into my mouth, promptly breaking into a cold sweat.

You will not drop this. You will not drop this, I chanted in my head. As if on cue, my hand began to shake more violently, and slowly, the rest of me joined in.

Drat.

Lucas stretched out a hand towards me, looking like he wanted to help, then thought better of it.

"May I?", he asked softly, not needing to gesture for me to know what he was talking about.

Slowly, I shook my head no. I couldn't handle it if he tried to touch me anymore than he already had.

He withdrew his hand, looking distressed, but didn't attempt to help anymore.

Finally, I gathered enough strength to move the brush in the up and down motion that would clean my teeth and Lucas turned away, grabbing another toothbrush from the top of the counter and started to brush his teeth. He finished before me, unsurprisingly, pausing every few seconds as I was.

When I had to spit, he made me do it in a small bowl since I couldn't really reach the sink, sitting down. I washed the taste of toothpaste off my mouth with water he provided in a small glass sitting on the sink, his hand supporting the bottom of the cup because I dropped it but not touching me.

Shamefacedly, I watched as he emptied the contents of the bowl into the sink without even cringing and ran my toothbrush under the tap, cleaning it. I wondered what he must've been thinking.

"Is there anything else you would like to do?", he asked.

I shook my head almost too quickly, trying not to wonder if he would help me on the toilet if I wanted to pee, or worse... I decided not to dwell on that fact. There was nothing in my stomach anyway, so I was probably safe for now.

Lucas said nothing more as he wheeled me out of his bathroom and back into the bedroom.

I frowned slightly when he didn't stop but continued towards the door. I didn't ask though, deciding that I had probably done enough talking for one day.

This time he didn't ask for my help opening the door but simply did it himself. We emerged into a small hallway that was surprisingly homey-looking with silver ornate railings and I realized we must've been upstairs. Then I realized the bigger issue. We went upstairs. Wheelchairs couldn't climb stairs. Lucas seemed to come to this realization at the same time I did, because he suddenly paused.

"I'll have to carry you again", he said softly. I wanted to tell him to take me back to the room we had just left and forget wherever it was he was taking me. Carry me? Again? My heart might just give out. I couldn't shake my head no, though. He might be giving me lots of room to choose what I wanted, but I still had the feeling that it wasn't going to last. He was the Alpha here. The master. He could do whatever he wanted, with whoever he wanted, including me.

My breathing hitched up when he put a hand on my shoulder and he instantly squatted in front of me, looking earnestly up at me.

"Breath, Adrienne", he said in a low, soothing voice. "You're alright. No one's going to hurt you."

I so badly wanted to believe those words. Wanted to believe that my days in that torture chamber of a basement were over for good. That I had finally gotten away from people wanting to hurt me. But I couldn't. Not until I knew what I was doing here and how I got here. I didn't even know what pack I was in, for God's sake! This could all be some elaborate play of the alpha. And I wasn't talking about Lucas. This could be a ploy to lure me in, to make me have a false sense of security. I couldn't let that happen.

Lucas must've sensed that his words weren't having the desired effect on me because his hand faltered for a bit, before resuming their place on my shoulder, stroking, trying to sooth.

My heartbeat picked up and I gasped out for air, almost falling forward as my vision blackened, then cleared with alarming speed, my almost non-existent pupils tightening to pinpoints. I felt a slow stirring as pain shot through the back of my head from my spine.

"Adrienne!", Lucas yelled, completely forgetting himself and grabbing me with both arms by both shoulders.

"Adrienne!", he shouted again. "Breath!"

As abruptly as it had started, the stirring stopped and where earlier I'd been able to just feel Lucas's touch as "soothing", now, sparks erupted. He moved one of his hands to my face and the sparks followed.

The pain in my head stopped, my vision went from its sudden sharpness to what I had come to see as normal and my breath returned to normal.

"Wh...what was that?", I gasped out.

"What was what?", Lucas asked confusedly.

"That", I said eloquently. "Sparks"

"Sparks?"

"When you... touched me", I said again.

He furrowed his brow. "You mean the mate bond?"

I gasped. "What mate bond?"

His brow furrowed more. "What happened to you?"

And for once, I forgot that I was supposed to be scared, or at least wary of him.

"I don't know", I said. "I felt a stirring. And then I felt the sparks from your touch".

Lucas was silent for a while. "You're just feeling the mate bond now. I think your wolf is coming back."

I gaped at him. He knew about my wolf? How, if this was not a trick from Alpha Marcus? How could he possibly know that I had no wolf at the moment? I shrunk back from his touch as though it burned and a hurt expression made its way into his face, almost tugging at my heart. Almost. And what was he saying about a mate bond? He didn't really think he could make me believe that he was my mate, did he? My fists clenched weakly at the thought, though I took great care to hide them from his view. It wouldn't do to have him turn on me at this moment.

He must have seen some of the conflicting emotions on my face because he suddenly stood up and said in an impersonal voice, "I suppose you wouldn't want me to carry you down now."

Tentatively, I shook my head. He sighed, but didn't just pick me up anyway like I'd almost expected. I let out an inaudible sigh of relief as he simply got behind me, turned the wheelchair and wheeled me back in the direction we'd come from, entering the room and stopping in front of the large bed.

He looked from me to the bed, and back again. Finally, he decided to let it go.

"I'm going downstairs to get breakfast", he said, still in that impersonal voice, not in the soft one he used to talk to me.

"I - I'm not hungry", I said lowly.

He cast me a look that had me shutting my mouth.

"I'll be back in a bit."

He walked out the door, surprisingly not slamming it. I wrung my hands. My confusion so far was giving me a headache I so desperately wanted gone.

For lack of anything to do while he was gone, I wheeled myself closer to the bed until I was close enough that my knees were touching the sheets. Hoping Lucas wouldn't mind that I got back on his bed and beat the shit out of me, I grabbed a handful of the sheets and, slowly using them as leverage, pulled myself on to my feet on shaky legs. I figured he wouldn't mind though, since he let me stay there the night before. And besides, he wouldn't touch me again... except maybe to hit me.

I pushed that thought from my mind as I crawled around until I was lying at the very edge of the bed. That small movement had left me winded and sweaty again and I tried to calm my breathing as I looked up at the ceiling.

What felt like minutes later, I heard the door open and Lucas came in carrying a large silver breakfast tray with him. His face remained expressionless when he saw me on the bed.

"Try to sit up", he said, which I did slowly, pulling my legs under me. He placed the large tray in front of me and sat opposite.

I stared at the contents of the tray, which were two plates stacked high with pancakes, a jar of maple syrup, and two tall glasses of orange juice.

I wanted to ask how he'd managed to whip up something like this in the short while he was gone, but he kept my mouth short.

"Eat", he prompted when he noticed I was staring too much to pick up a fork.

Slowly, I picked up one on my side of the tray and proceeded to spear one of the berries on my stack of pancakes. I wondered if Lucas was going to force-feed me them if I didn't eat. I placed the small fruit in my mouth and concentrated on chewing slowly, the taste almost foreign to me after months of nothing but stale, moldy bread for dinner. Or breakfast, depending on how you saw it.

Lucas stared at me for a moment, before shrugging slightly and dousing his stack of pancakes in maple syrup. He grabbed his fork and cut a small triangle vertically through the whole stack, stabbed with his fork until he couldn't possibly fit another pancake at the end and shoved it into his mouth. I watched fascinatedly as he repeated this several times, demolishing his stack in mere minutes. I still had the small berry in my mouth.

He glared at me but somehow, with his bulging cheeks, it didn't have the desired effect.

"Why aren't you eating?", he accused.

"I - I am", I stammered.

He rolled his eyes, something I was surprised to see him do.

"I'm not very hungry", I finally said, seeing his fixed gaze.

"Eat one", he said, pointing to the pancakes.

I decided not to protest and shakily folded the pancake at the top into a smaller size and squeezed it into my mouth.

My stomach roiled at the effort it took not to just toss the damn thing back up. Not that it was bad. On the contrary, it was the best food I'd tasted in months but my stomach didn't seem to want to keep it down. Telling myself not to gag as my stomach walls protested, I swallowed, and took a sip of the orange juice Lucas had dipped a straw into, so I didn't have to try raising the glass and turning his sheets into an orchard. I dropped my fork and looked at Lucas, trying to gauge his reaction. He didn't say anything, just swapped my plate with his now empty one, doused the pancakes again in syrup and, just as quickly as he had the first ones, demolished them in a matter of minutes. My eyes widened but I remained silent, wringing my hands in my hands.

I wondered how he would react now if I asked certain questions.

"Is something bothering you?", he asked, not even looking at me.

How did he...?

"I can hear your heartbeat", he said again.

He could? How good was his hearing?

Out with it already, I told myself.

"I - I was w - wondering...what pack am I in?"

Please let it not be near the Blue Moon, I prayed. Let it be far, far away from the Blue Moon.

I racked my brain for any information on any Alpha Lucas but I couldn't find any. I wasn't exactly well-versed in the knowledge of packs and their alphas. I hoped to goddess I hadn't landed with a friend of Alpha Marcus or I was dead meat.

Lucas stared at me for a moment. Then he said, "This is the Blood Moon Pack."

Dumbfounded, I stared at him. Blood Moon? Slowly, realization dawned and what blood I had left drained from my face.

"B - but..." My brain scrambled for words as I tried to say something. Anything.

Lucas simply looked at me with that expressionless expression on his face.

The Blood Moon Pack was rumored to be the most ruthless pack in werewolf history. No, not rumored. They *were* the most ruthless pack in werewolf history! And their Alpha...

"Y...you..."

A humorless smile found its way onto Lucas's lips. "I see you've heard of me". He did a little courtly bow. "Alpha Lucas Monterio, at your service."

My heart screeched to a halt. Together with them being the most ruthless pack, they were also virtually werewolf royalty.

"You're the Alpha King", I heard myself say. My voice sounded like it was coming from far away.

"I am", Lucas - Alpha King Lucas, I corrected - accepted. I watched as his expression changed to worry as he stared at me.

"Adrienne?" He rushed forward, just in time to catch me before my head hit the headboard behind me as I slipped into unconsciousness.

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