

Chapter 0003

[Denali's POV]

"Dad!"

Anastasia's shocked exclamation fills the area around us and causes my father to snap out of his shocked daze. Of course, she would have an issue with being sent away to goddess knew where.

"Wait!" He gasps, drawing the man's attention to himself in order to save his precious daughter. "Anastasia can't. She's..."

"Already mated to someone!" She says quickly, pulling Alexander against herself. "I can't possibly go anywhere when I've already found my fated one, but Denali is single, and she's a great choice."

As she speaks, she motions toward me and gives a brilliant smile that I know is all for the show.

"That's correct," my father agrees, coming to her aid. "Anastasia is also still very young and wouldn't make a good bride."

"Bride?" I hiss, suddenly understanding what is going on here. I wasn't sure what I was expecting, but a bride wasn't it. "Father, who is she supposed to be marrying?"

My head was spinning from how quickly things turned from good to bad, but with the way this conversation was going, it was clear what my father's next words would be, and I wanted to be prepared because I knew that by this point he had already made his decision.

"Rosco Torres," he says slowly, naming one of the most ruthless alphas to exist. Everyone knew that he had a heart of stone and didn't give two shits about anyone but himself. There was even a rumor that he killed his original Luna and mate. "He is looking for a bride, and since our bloodline is one of the strongest, he is interested in your girls."

Us... I almost wanted to laugh. Anastasia wasn't blood-related at all, which meant that from the very beginning, when Rosco came to Father with this topic, he intended to send me off.

"Then why even bother pretending that you have two daughters who could be chosen?" I demand, unable to control my anger. "Why not just..."

I don't get to finish my words before my father's hand connects with my cheek, and I'm sent crashing into a small table beside the door where my stepmother stands silently. As I look up, she meets my gaze with satisfaction before turning her attention back to the conversation at hand.

Letting out a laugh, I slowly straighten myself while I ignore the pain radiating through my cheek.

"Mind your tone," my father warns before shooting the man who came to collect an apologetic look. "I do apologize for her. She's usually quite obedient, aren't you, Denali?"

"Of course," I respond, deciding to play the part. "I apologize for speaking out of turn; I must be tired after such a long day."

Satisfied with my response, my father reaches out and wraps an arm around my shoulders so he can pull me close.

"You see, Denali is the best choice for your master's bride. She is not yet mated, and she is one of the strongest in the pack. After all, she is my daughter."

Nodding, I don't bother arguing with my father since I know how things will turn out. No matter what I said or did, I would be the one sent to Rosco, and Anastasia would be allowed to stay here and be with Alexander.

"I'm sure your master will be very satisfied with her," my father continues now, trying his best to save his precious stepdaughter. "What do you say?"

Remaining silent, the man lets his gaze travel up and down my body, taking in every inch of me before shrugging.

"I am simply a messenger," he finally sighs. "Whichever you decide to send will do as the master wishes to wed and breed with a daughter of Emerald Moon."

"Of course," my father beams. "You heard him, Denali. Be a good girl and go pack your things. I'm positive you will be very happy with Rosco."

"Of course," I sigh, shaking myself free. "If you'll excuse me."

I don't wait for a response before I head upstairs and make a beeline for my room. Once inside, I look around, taking in the few things that I actually own. After my mother's death, my stepmother made sure that Anastasia was given the best, and I was left with whatever she didn't want, and most of the time, that was nothing.

Moving forward, I head into my closet and grab my suitcase, then place it open on the floor so I can throw in clothes. After I'm finished, I dig in my dresser until I find a small pocket watch and pull it out. Satisfied that it was still safe there, I began to dig more for my mother's urn, only to come up empty.

Panic building, I start to yank out my clothes until I'm left staring at an empty drawer.

"No," I whisper, realizing that someone must have found it. "This can't be!"

When my mother passed, my father had her cremated and planned to simply throw her away, but I snuck into the trash and saved her. I had kept her here with me since, but now she was gone, and it was like losing her all over again.

"Mom," I whimper, fighting the tears that suddenly want to come. "I miss you."

If she were still here, then there was no way I would ever be given away like this. Father had changed so much since losing her and finding Beatrice, my stepmother, that it was almost like he wasn't even the same person.

Giving the pocket watch a squeeze, I shove it into my pocket and then close my suitcase before standing and heading back downstairs, where my future husband's servant is waiting for me.

"Do you have everything?" My father asks me as I descend the stairs. "You haven't forgotten anything in an attempt to come back, correct?"

"Of course not," I respond. "I've packed everything; don't worry."

"May I have a word?"

Frowning, I simply nod and wait for him to lead the way.

Nodding, my father looks to Anastasia, who is still cuddling up to Alexander while looking pleased, before looking back at me.

"Excuse us."

Growing quiet, he leads me out onto the porch so we can be alone since my future husband's butler was already waiting in the car.

"You better not make a fool out of me," he warns, his gaze turning stern. "Remember that this marriage alliance is for the greater good of the pack."

"I know."

Of course, I knew that was the reason he was more than willing to give me away; after all, the wellbeing of his new wife, daughter, and him is his only concern.

"If you attempt to run away, I'll have you found and dragged back, kicking and screaming," he continues. "And if that doesn't work, then I'll have you killed. But before that, I'll dispose of your mother."

Eyes widening, I take in his words while trying to find any semblance of the man I used to know, but when I don't seem to find him, I simply nod.

"You took her," I hiss. "How could you?"

"Remember your role."

"Of course, I know my role and what I must do."

"Right, then leave."

Remaining silent, I take in the area around me, knowing that this will be the last time I ever see it. No matter what happens from this point on, I wouldn't be able to return, and despite knowing that I should be upset and aggrieved, all I can feel is a hollowness that radiates from my chest to my entire being.