THE CONCORDAT RITUAL

CHAPTER TWO.

ASHANTI'S POV.

Eerie, pin-dropping silence has been the state of this office ever since Rhea, Conrad and I walked in and greeted the Beta of the Lunar Crescent Pack.

Everyone is well-behaved, including my stepmom who never knows when to shut up. Even my father doesn't have the right to say a word unless permitted by the Lycan Beta. Everyone acts respectfully in the presence of him and the other Lycan soldiers he came along with.

The tension in this room is suffocating.

"Alpha Anderson." The Beta's thunderous voice sounds throughout the room and everyone looks at him. My heart starts beating fast.

"Yes, Beta Ronald." Father bows to him and I cringe.

It feels weird to see my father acting like a subordinate and not a leader to a Beta.

"Is everyone who's supposed to be part of this meeting, present?" His voice is calm, but carries so much power and authority.

If the Lycan Beta makes me tremble as such,I'm surely going to faint the day I'll meet face to face with their Alpha.

I hope that day never comes.

"Yes, Beta. We are all present." Father replies humbly.

"Good. I'm going to go straight into introducing the purpose of my visit." He looks around with searching eyes. I keep making sure my eyes never meet with his. "I am here to enforce the Concordat Ritual." He announces and my mind goes into a frenzy.

The Concordat Ritual.

I've only heard of that from other older members of our pack who said that in the past, every few years, Lycans would go to various packs to pick out girls for their Harem, but that ritual stopped when their previous Alpha, the father of their present Alpha, died. Everyone thought the ritual had been abolished by Alpha Reagan.

"Your pack has been bestowed the honor of presenting young maidens for the ritual." I glance at Rhea and she looks as horrified as I am.

What the hell does he mean by that?

"If you need a girl from this household," my stepmom suddenly speaks up, startling me, " we will be willing to offer you our eldest daughter, Ashanti. She will be the perfect candidate because she is an intellectual and a very brave fighter. What I mean is, she always has very high grades in school and takes first position in her class every academic year. She has won many academic awards and competitions. Everyone in our pack knows she's a brain box and for her fighting skills... oh, they are impeccable. She's so strong and brave! She is a daughter I am very proud of." My stepmother praises me with a smile that doesn't reach her eyes.

I'm staring at her in awe, completely amazed by her ability to lie through her teeth so smoothly.

She is an amazing actress.

I see Rhea grimacing and I feel all of this funny. She was basically telling the truth except for the last part that she was proud of me.

But telling the truth already hurts my poor little sister. They had been ignoring my achievements all the time. My stepmom always tried to prove Rhea is the smarter one through her own fabricated narratives even though all the facts prove otherwise.

I know she's only making me look perfect in the eyes of the Lycan Beta so he can choose me and she'll finally get rid of me like she has always wanted.

Everyone knows this Concordat is no honourable Ritual even though people are too afraid to admit it. When a girl is picked from a pack, the pack receives a fortune and protection from Rogues and other enemies from the Lycans. However, the chosen girl will be serving the men in Lunar Crescent Pack and we all know what that means. Any girl who refuses to go with the Lycans will bring a lot of trouble upon her pack.

"Who is Ashanti between these two?" The Beta demands and my step mother quickly stretches her index finger in my direction.

"The one with pitch black hair. She's my beautiful Ashanti." I nearly fall over when the Beta makes eye contact with me. I feel like my organs are falling from my body.

"Hmmm." He murmurs quickly and I release my breath when he looks away from me. His eyes stop on Rhea.

"What about her?" He nods in Rhea's direction. All the color drains from my stepmothers face.

"She...she..." My stepmother stutters nervously. She turns to look at my father, but he kept his eyes on the Beta and mouth tightly shut.

"I have found my mate already." Rhea blurts out and my eyes widen in shock. I snap my head to look in her direction and the serious look she's wearing ignites fireworks in my body.

What bloody mate?

She's not mated to anyone.

Yet!

"Have you?" The Beta asks quietly, giving her an intense look and she calmly nods her head.

"Yes I have. The guy sitting over there." She points over to Conrad. My soul walks out of my body. "His name is Conrad and he's my mate." The office is filled with gasps and murmurs from other elders who are aware of the fact that I'm the one who's in a relationship with Conrad.

Rhea has done so many daring things before, but this tops it all.

She just lied to the Lycan Beta. That is an offense punishable by death if she's caught!

The elders are still murmuring, my gaze travels over to Conrad and for a millisecond, I see a flicker of nervousness in his eyes. The expression on my stepmother turns from worried to relieved, and it becomes proud. I'm sure in her heart, she's congratulating Rhea for coming up with such a brilliant plan under such high pressure.

For my father, his expression is blank.

Even though this about the safety of the whole pack, he still breaks my heart by not standing for me even once.

I look back at the Beta and notice he's fully examining Rhea with his eyes and I find myself wishing that he has the ability to read minds so he knows she's lying.

"I don't see a mark on your neck, which is a clear sign that the two of you haven't mated yet. So, why haven't you two mated when you have already exceeded the mating age?" the entire office goes dead silent.

My stepmother looks like she'll burst into tears anytime soon and Conrad definitely wishes he had the power to evaporate from his seat.

"Anyway..." Beta Ronald breaks the silence and it looks like he's letting it pass. "We have been preparing to..."

I can't take this anymore.

I have always thought it doesn't worth it to fight against them, but treating me as a fool in front of my face and all these people to a whole other level is beyond me.

"He hasn't been able to mark her because he has been busy dating me for the past two years." I cut him off, darting a glare to Conrad whose eyes grow wide open in shock.

My words are powerful and heavy with conviction.

The Beta's eyes glow with genuine confusion.

I just opened a can of worms.

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