

Chapter 36

Silver

At some point in the night, I must have fallen asleep because I was waking up in my bed, alone. The empty feeling of Elliot not being with me this morning was haunting. An ache formed in my chest; it was something indescribable. I placed my hand on my beating heart, feeling it thudding under my palm.

What could be causing such an ache?

Deciding to put the thought in the back of my mind, I got out of bed and quickly dressed in a tank top and shorts before throwing my hair in a pony and leaving the bedroom. I somehow knew that Elliot wasn't anywhere in this mansion and for some reason, that saddened me. I could still feel the warmth of his embrace and the taste of his lips on mine from last night and heat spread throughout my entire body. He was so sweet and tentative last night. He cared for me in a way that nobody ever has before. He now knows my deepest and darkest secret. He knows of the monster I become during the night of the full moon and yet he still held me and whispered sweet things into my ear until I fell asleep.

Why hadn't he said anything to me this morning? He couldn't even say goodbye or tell me that he was leaving?

I was lost in thought as I walked into the kitchen, and I almost ran over one of the chefs.

"Sorry!" I chirped out as they dodged me.

"It's okay, Luna," the chef said in return.

I walked further into the kitchen and paused when I saw Mariah watching me with a curious look.

Over the course of these last few days, I had gotten to know Mariah a lot and I grew fond of her. I enjoyed our early morning banter while she cooked breakfast. I started to look forward to it now. "What's got you all distracted this morning?" She asked, giving me a knowing look.

My cheeks flushed.

"Did you happen to see Elliot this morning?" I asked her.

She raised her brows.

"This morning, no. But I saw him last night," she said with a twinkle in her eyes. "You two seemed pretty cozy as he carried you to bed."

My eyes widened.

"He carried me?" I asked him, my mouth falling to the floor.

I shouldn't have been surprised; I'm starting to realize that was the kind of guy Elliot was. He wasn't a vicious monster; he was sweet and caring. He most definitely would carry me to bed if I had already fallen asleep. I hated that he had to see me like that, but I'm relieved that he knows my deepest and darkest secret now.

"He left this morning without saying a word," I said, feeling a bit defeated.

"I heard a rumor that there was a rogue attack late in the night," one of the chefs said as they passed.

"A rogue attack?" I gasped, my eyes wide with alarm.

"They've been getting more frequent lately," he replied. "The Alpha had to leave to take care of business."

I nodded, understanding. An unsettled feeling fell into my stomach. I wanted to go see him, but I also wanted to bring him something as a thank

you. Actually, now that I thought of it, I should bring the entire pack something as an apology for leaving them as I did last night. I knew it was going to take a lot for them to warm up to me and last night didn't exactly leave them with the best first impression. So, now I just have to redo it.

"Mariah, can you help me bake some stuff for the pack? I wanted to redeem myself after leaving them last night," I tell her, stepping around the kitchen counter.

She smiled.

"And what are you thinking of baking?"

"Maybe some cookies?" I suggested. "And cupcakes. Definitely cupcakes."

"Sounds like fun," she said.

With that, she helped me bake a ton of cookies and cupcakes. One of her employees was an expert in cake decorating so she helped decorate the cupcakes. She even put a little frosting on the cookies for coloring.

A few hours later, the entire kitchen was a mess, but it smelled delicious with baked goods.

"Do you need help bringing them to the packhouse?" Mariah asked after she finished putting the last cupcake in its holder.

I shook my head.

"No, it's okay. Gamma Erik will help," I told her.

She helped me load Erik's car with the baked goods and soon we were heading to the packhouse.

Once we got to the packhouse, Erik helped me bring in the stuff and set them down in the community dining area. There were a few packmates in there chatting and munching on lunch, but for the most part, it was fairly

empty. The smell of food from the kitchen invaded my nose and made my mouth water.

With everything going on that morning, I completely forgot to eat.

"What do we have here?" One of the girls asked as she walked toward me; her large blue eyes staring at the cupcakes. I swear she had hearts in her eyes.

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Her short curly blonde hair bounced around her narrow features and her pink lips were turned upward in a curious smile. I recognized her from around the pack, but like the others, I hadn't really spoken to her. "Cupcakes and cookies," I announced. "It's my apology for last night."

She frowned.

"What happened last night?" Seemed genuinely curious.

"I kind of ran out on the banquet," I told her sheepishly. "I don't want that to be my first impression on everyone. I'm not usually like that."

That was kind of a lie, but she didn't need to know that.

"Oh, right. I heard about that," she said. "I'm sure you had your reasons. You don't need to explain a thing."

I raised my brows; surprised by her kindness. It was the first real kindness that I received since arriving at this pack.

"I'm Cara by the way," she said. "Gamma Erik's mate."

My mouth fell open as I turned around to see Erik placing the last plate of cookies on one of the tables. He had a smile on his lips and the twinkle in his eyes showed me that Cara was telling the truth. "You didn't tell me you were mated, Erik," I told him, disbelief evident on my face.

His smile widened.

"You didn't ask," he said simply.

I turned back to Cara who was beaming at her mate and then she laughed.

"You're Silver, right?" She asked. "The daughter of the Alpha of the Stormwind pack."

The last part wasn't a question, but an observation.

I nodded.

"That's me," I told her.

"You're lucky to be married to the Alpha. Don't listen to any of the rumors around this pack. He's a great guy and if he married you, he must really like you."

I smiled at that thought, but I couldn't help the unsettled feeling in the pit of my stomach.

"That's very kind of you to say," I told her honestly. "Thank you."

"I hope we can be friends. There are only a couple of others that I really tolerate around here. I'd like to add you to that list, Luna."

"I would like that," I told her.

Her smile was radiant as she grabbed a cupcake.

"Great!" She said excitedly. "I can't wait to tell the others."

She started to walk away, but she paused before passing Erik and she brushed her lips against his. His smile was showing even with her lips pressed against his. My heart swelled for them; it made me happy to see love blooming.

It was rare to find a fated mate, so when it does happen, it's a true blessing.

The dining area started to fill up and I smiled as other packmates took one of the baked goods and then thanked me. Some of them wouldn't come near me and others just gave me dirty looks. After a little while, I decided to find Elliot and tell him about the new friend I had made.

I didn't have a lot of friends other than Rebecca so the idea of making a new one sent me flying over the moon!

Just as I was about to leave the room, a voice sounded from nearby. I paused only momentarily to hear her say, "Did you hear that Miss Shirley is back in town? She hasn't left Elliot's side since she returned." "It's about damn time his love returned. He's been missing her. It was so obvious to everyone. I wondered why he was looking so much happier lately."

"Yup, it has everything to do with Miss Shirley's return. He's hopelessly in love with the female Alpha. She's the most powerful female in the world, not to mention she's rich, a model, and drop-dead gorgeous." "I always knew they'd find their way back to one another."

I felt sick to my stomach upon hearing this conversation and I wished I hadn't had stayed and listened to it. Swallowing the bile of vomit that wanted to rise from my throat, I quickly hurried out of the dining room and down the hallway. I'm not super familiar with this packhouse, but I do kind of remember seeing his office the other day when I was given a tour of this place.

Within minutes, I was standing outside of his office door. I raised my fist to knock but froze when I heard a female voice inside.

"I don't get it, Elliot. Why would you marry someone like her? She's wolfless and weak. You know I'm better suited to be your wife than she is..."

It was Shirley!

Elliot's next words didn't just shatter my heart, but my soul as well.

"I can't divorce her just yet. I still need her."

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I didn't know I could feel as bad as I did just now. My heart ached so much I thought it was going to explode from my chest. I stood at the doorway, staring at it with my mouth hanging open and tears in my eyes. I stood there until my legs could hardly hold me up any longer. I leaned against the wall, trying desperately not to fall over.

Their voice grew quiet and difficult to hear.

What were they saying that required such hushed voices?

A part of me wanted to barge right into his office and find out.

But another part of me, the rational part, kept reminding me that I had no right to be upset. Elliot made it perfectly clear that this was a marriage of convenience. It was a contract and nothing more. I shouldn't have been surprised that it would turn out like this.

Shirley was beautiful and obviously, Elliot was very fond of her.

"Mrs. Crown. Why are you standing outside of the Alpha's office?" A voice behind me brought me out of my stupor.

I turned to see Beta Leo approaching. I realized how ridiculous I looked and the voices inside the office stopped immediately upon hearing Beta Leo.

"Oh, uh. I was just leaving," I told him, and I quickly hurried around him.

"Did you need the Alpha for something?"

I paused for a moment, feeling heat prick the back of my neck as Leo stared at me. But I wouldn't dare turn around and face him.

"No," I said, my voice coming out breathy. "I don't need him at all."

With those words left in the air, I returned to the dining hall, trying desperately to forget about what I had heard.

Cara and Erik were eating at one of the tables along with a couple of other girls. They all turned to look at me when I approached, and Cara gave me a big grin.

"Hey, want to join us?" She asked, glancing at her friends. "Have you met the Luna?"

One of the girls with dark straight hair and glasses peeked up at me and gave me a timid look.

"H..hello..." she stammered.

"This is Emma," Cara introduced. "She's the shy one and quiet but she's very witty. She's been my best friend for as long as I can remember."

"It's nice to meet you," I said, forcing a smile despite the amount of pain I felt deep in my chest.

The other girl with flawless red hair and bright green eyes gave me a curious look, but she didn't smile or say anything.

"And this is Alison. My other best friend," Cara said. "She's the one who keeps us in line."

"You're Silver, right?" She asked, staring at me from head to toe. "That's an interesting name." "My mother named me," I blurted.

"I see," she said, turning back around to continue eating her food.

"Ally stop being a bitch," Cara said, rolling her eyes before looking at me. "Don't mind her."

"It's okay," I said, trying to remain positive.

I glanced at Erik who was busy eating his food but froze when he met my eyes.

"Can you take me back to the palace?" I asked him, trying hard not to show him my emotions.

"Yes, of course, Luna," he said as he took his last bite.

"Is everything okay?" Cara asked, watching me carefully. "You seem upset."

"I'm fine," I lied. "I'm just not feeling well."

None of them looked as if they bought it, but they didn't say anything because they hardly knew me. It wasn't any of their business and they all knew it.

Erik escorted me to his car, and we drove back to the palace in silence. I thanked him before getting out of the car.

As soon as I got inside, I wrapped my arms around my body like I was trying to hold myself together. Luckily, none of the palace staff were around to see me crumble. My legs were weak and I could hardly hold myself up. I rushed down the hallway that led to my studio and once I was securely inside, I allowed myself a moment of weakness. I fell to the ground just as the tears started.

I pressed my knees to my chest and buried my face in my lap. I hated that I was crumbling over a guy, but he was my husband after all. I had every right to be upset over what I had just heard. He was telling another woman that he couldn't divorce me yet because he needed me. I was stupid to believe that he was actually starting to care about me.

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After I allowed myself some time to cry, I decided to not shed any more tears on the matter. Instead, I pulled out my phone and scrolled through the contact list until I found the person I was looking for. I pressed the phone to my cheek and waited with bated breath.

"Hey, what's up?" The voice on the other end of the line asked.

A relieved smile twitched at the corner of my lips.

"Hey. Want to hang out?"

"Holy Moon Goddess! This dress was made for you!!" Rebecca cooed as I stepped out of the dressing room.

I frowned at the little black dress I wore; it was shorter than what I was used to and it really brought out my cleavage.

"You don't think it makes me look like a hussy?" I asked her.

"Of course not," she said, shaking her head. "You look gorgeous, Silver."

I smiled at my best friend; I was glad I called her. She was the exact person I needed to get my mind off things. I hadn't told her what was wrong yet, but I knew she could hear something in my voice when we talked earlier.

We decided to not speak about it just yet and go shopping in the city. Between the two of us, we spent way too much money on clothing neither of us needed. But there was nothing wrong with a little shopping therapy. Especially considering Elliot gave me a black card without a limit and told me to use it to my heart's content. I felt strange using his money for my

own shopping splurge, but I was heartbroken, and it was his fault. The least he could do was buy me new clothes.

We went to a nice restaurant in the harbor and sat outside, looking out onto the beautiful water glistened by the afternoon sun.

The waiter brought us a couple of glasses of water and some white wine as ordered.

"So, tell me what happened," Rebecca said as she shoved a piece of buttered bread in her mouth. "You sounded upset on the phone earlier. I was worried about you."

I took a sip of my wine and nodded, feeling that heavy feeling weighing on my chest once again. The memory of what Elliot had said this morning haunted my mind and I had to bite my bottom lip to keep from bursting out into tears again.

"Did you and Alpha Elliot have a fight?" She asked.

I shook my head and sighed.

"No, not really," I told her. "I overheard something he said to someone, and it hurt me."

Her eyes grew wide.

I opened my mouth to tell her what I had heard, but the waiter returned with our meals. We thanked him before he left and then we started eating.

"What did he say?" She asked as she bit a piece of chicken from her salad.

"He was talking to Shirley Darknight in his office," I told her as I put a piece of pasta in my mouth. The food was delicious and made me feel a little lighter.

"She was asking him why he hasn't left me and he told her he can't divorce me yet."

She nearly choked on her food after I said that.

"Yet?" She asked. "He said 'yet?'"

I nodded; I wasn't able to meet her eyes.

"So, he's planning on divorcing you someday?"

I swallowed the lump in my throat and took another sip of my wine.

"That's what it sounded like," I murmured.

"That jerk," she said, her brows furrowed together. "How could he say such a thing?"

"It must be true if he's saying it behind my back," I murmured. "This marriage had always been for convenience. We both knew this. I shouldn't be surprised that he was saying that to Shirley."

"It doesn't make it right!" Rebecca said, shaking her head. "He needs to pay for what he said."

I raised my brows at my friend, not sure what she meant by that.

"What do you mean?" I asked her, worry starting to fill me.

I could tell the wheels were turning in her mind and it worried me when Rebecca got like that.

A mischief look crossed her face and she smirked at me as she bit into her salad. Then, she leaned back in her seat and met my eyes.

"I'm saying, we need to get revenge on your darling husband."

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I stared at my best friend in disbelief. I couldn't have heard her correctly. She wanted to get revenge on my husband?

"Revenge?" I asked her, my voice sounding distant and unfamiliar. "What do you mean by that?"

She rolled her eyes and leaned closer to me from the other side of the table.

"Yes," she said, that look of mischief never leaving her eyes. "We should do something that'll hurt him like he hurt you."

"I don't want to stoop to his level," I said, folding my arms across my chest. "It doesn't feel right."

She sighed and ran her fingers through her hair as she thought about what we should do. Then I saw the light bulb flashing above her head and her eyes grew large.

"I know exactly what we should do," she said, a twinkle of amusement in her eyes. "His ego is huge; everybody knows that. So, why don't we knock him off his pedestal?" I raised my brows.

"What do you mean?" I asked him, suddenly intrigued.

"You told me that you painted another portrait of him, right? A nude one?"

I blushed at her boldness, but I nodded.

Her smile grew wide like the Cheshire cat.

"Is it possible to alter the painting?"

I thought about it for a moment before I gave her a hesitant nod. I could do pretty much anything to a painting; I was that good at what I did.

"Perfect," she said, rubbing her hands together like some kind of supervillain.

"What's perfect?" I asked, my brows knitting together. "What do you propose I do?"

Dropping her voice to a whisper she said, "Alter his man bits so it's smaller than normal. It'll drive him insane."

I stared at her very serious face for a moment, disbelieving what I just heard her say. My face was on fire, and I knew it was as red as a cherry. My mouth hung open as she leaned back in her seat and grinned like she just had the best idea in the world.

I was too stunned to say anything. Then, the imagery of Elliot with a small manhood in the portrait hanging in our bedroom came into my mind and I snorted.

I wasn't expecting the laughter to bubble out of me, but once it did, I couldn't seem to stop it. I was getting strange looks from those around us. I covered my mouth to stifle the laughter, but it was no use. Tears poured from my eyes and my stomach began to ache.

"I take it you like that idea?" She said, smiling at my laughing form.

I wiped the tears from my eyes; it felt good to let loose and laugh like that.

"How did you come up with something like that? That's hilarious," I chuckled.

She beamed at the compliment.

"I just know men and that'll destroy his ego," she said, clearly proud of herself. "When does he get home?"

"Probably not until this evening," I told her. "I can have it done before he gets back."

"You have to let me know how he responds," she said, laughing. "I bet he'll be pissed."

I shuddered at the thought. I didn't want to upset him and something inside of me scolded me for even the thought. I shook the thought away and smiled at her.

"I'm sure he will be," I told her. "I'll let you know how it goes."

Later, I went home and grabbed the portrait from my bedroom, taking it into my studio. I stared at the portrait for a long while, my belly twisting from the image. He was so handsome that it hurt. I ran my fingers down the torso of his painting and my heart thudded violently against my chest.

I wondered how he would react if I altered it; a part of me didn't want to alter it. The image was quite accurate, and I honestly really liked it. But then the memory of what he was saying to Shirley replayed in my head and I was brought back to that spot outside of his office door.

He had called me a couple of times since then, but I didn't bother answering him. I just sent him a quick text telling him I was out with Rebecca and couldn't answer my phone.

I felt bad for avoiding him, but he should be feeling bad too. After what he said, I wasn't sure I could easily forgive and forget. Then again, I really didn't have a right to be upset with him. I was the one who agreed and signed the contract; I knew what this marriage was since the beginning.

He helped me not marry Gavin and I helped him with his insomnia. I still wasn't sure why I was the only one who could help him sleep at night. Whenever I ask him, he's either short with me or changes the subject, successfully avoiding the topic. It makes me wonder what he's hiding.