

Payment To the Alpha by Ms.M Chapter 26

Avery's POV

"Jingle bells, Jingle bells, Jingle all the way,"

I was skipping down the stairs and on my way to the kitchen to make some hot chocolate while singing Christmas tunes, as much I knew anyways.

It's December 24th, and Christmas Day is tomorrow. If there is any time of the year that all my problems magically disappear, it's around Christmas. The only emotions allowed inside the doors are happiness, relief, gratitude, and love. All other problems, issues, frustration, and disputes will have to wait until the 26th.

On the 1st of December, my Christmas mode was already on, and I asked James how they celebrate here. His answer, however deeply I felt for him, was not acceptable.

"We decorate a little, and on the 25th, everyone celebrates with their families. Alex, Amber, and I haven't celebrated since our parents died."

So I made it my mission to bring the Christmas spirit back into the lives of some of my favorite werewolves.

Amber and I went downtown and did a little Christmas shopping along with one of the pack guards named Emilio. However, Amber more or less used him as a bag holder, and with each bag she put on his arm, I removed and put it on my own.

We bought everything you can imagine from Christmas carpets, drapes, snow globes, Santas both big and small, snowmen, Christmas lights, Christmas bows, Christmas tree decorations, smaller trees, Christmas cups, and so, so much more. The funny thing is, I'm not done.

I have put up two thin trees on either side of the entrance and decorated them with red bows and lights, nothing too much since I want to leave the rest for the main room. A few of the omegas and I have changed the curtains in every room on the downstairs' floor and put up beautiful red drapes with small snowflakes on them. In the main room, where there's a huge U-shaped couch and other seating areas and a big flat-screen TV along with an open fireplace, we have put out the big red Christmas carpet with green stripes on either end.

Above the fireplace are four stockings hanging, waiting to be filled. We also bought the most magnificent tree we could find. It is 4 meters high smells like cinnamon roasted apples. Or that may be the candle I bought. Anyhow, the tree is decorated with bells, bows, glitter, Christmas balls, and lots of lighting. The whole nine yards. On top of this beautiful tree is the most enchanting full moon. I thought it would be a fun little touch.

As I made it to the kitchen, I saw that the only ones there were Alice and three omegas whose names I had yet to remember. But then, I remembered that the others all had practice. I asked James once before if I could join them and learn a little self-defense. However, he said he liked me better alive than dead, and thereafter that conversation dropped.

Alice was preparing breakfast for the pack member, so after greeting everyone there, I took the liberty to prepare some hot chocolate for everyone. When I was done, I poured it into five thermoses and put forward some canned whipped cream and marshmallows on the kitchen island for everyone to make their own.

After I had made mine, I decided to take my cup and sit outside on the bench for a while. It was snowing, and right this second, everything just felt so right.

After Natasha put up the barrier, there had been no altercations, and I was in complete control of myself.

I put on a jacket and then wrapped a blanket around myself before grabbing my cup and heading out. I sat down on the bench right outside the main entrance and watched the snow twinkle down from the sky. There is something so calming about the way the snowflakes fall. So gracious.

James and I are still sleeping in separate rooms while I'm figuring out everything. Some nights we sleep together, but when we don't, I barely sleep. I don't know why. I can't find peace when he isn't beside me. I preferred having him close all the time.

Perhaps it was time to take the next step with him.

"Hey. What are you thinking so hard about?" I jumped when I heard his voice from behind me and quickly turned around.

"Hey. Nothing really, just admiring the view." I said as I flicked my head to the big apple tree in front of us covered in snow and frost.

"Isn't it beautiful?" I asked

" Yes, It really is beautiful." I looked up at him and noticed he was looking down at me, and I felt my cheeks heat up despite the cold weather conditions.

"You must be hungry. Let's eat." I stood up and grabbed his hand. Leading him back to the house and into the kitchen.

He thinks I am beautiful.

"Wow, there, cupcake, you shouldn't be out in the cold so much your face looks like a tomato."

I took my free hand up to my face and covered it as much as possible. I heard James chuckle beside me, making me close my eyes in shame.

"Cupcake?" No one had ever called me cupcake before. I can't say that I like it either.

"Yeah. Cupcake."

"Why?"

"Because you're sweet and ..." He looked over at James, who was pursing his lips together to keep himself from laughing.

"And what?" I put my free hand on my hip and glared at Alex, sensing I already knew what he meant.

"And...you know...innocent." He said the last word as if he had won the jackpot. Clearly thinking right on the spot.

"That's not what you were going to say." My glare intensified as I pierced through his eyes with my own.

"Oh shoot, breakfasts gonna get cold, gotta go!" He scurried away into the dining hall.

"THE FOOD IS IN HEAT CONTAINERS!" I yelled after him in vain.

James put his arm around my shoulders, which I quickly shook off.

He answered by grabbing my hand and spinning me around, making me bump into his chest.

He leaned his face down, dangerously close. How badly I wanted to kiss him right now, or always for that matter.

"Don't be mad. And don't ever push me away again. Alex is the dickhead, not me."

"You laughed." I tried sounding strong and annoyed, but my voice betrayed me when it sounded like I was out of breath. Which he probably noticed, seeing as a smirk crept upon his lips.

"I laughed because you're cute when you get mad. I'm sorry. Now let's get you some food...."

"Don't you dare!" I lifted my finger, pointing it to his nose. He pursed his lips again so he couldn't speak. He was going to call me cupcake, and it would not have ended well.

I don't want to get annoyed, not when I can prevent it.

I turned around and started walking with James' hand on my lower back, doing crazy things to my body.

I turned to look at him, and again, he was already looking at me. However, now there was something different in his eyes. They were dark, with lust. But, unfortunately, that did not make it easier.

We grabbed our plates and filled them. On my plate, there were pancakes with syrup and berries, and bacon. It was the same as mine along with sausages, hash-browns, fruit, two sandwiches, and two bagels on James' plate.

We went to our table and sat down before I said hi to everybody.

"Hi again, cupcake." Alex greeted so kindly with an annoying smile, making everyone at the table laugh.

"You know what, it's Christmas, so I'm going to let it pass. I don't want to be annoyed or angry, and I will not waste energy on such insignificant things." I straightened my back and held my head out, sticking out my chin, feeling very confident.

"Sounds like a good plan cupcake."

A growl left my mouth, and a frown felt permanently stuck on my face. And again, everyone started laughing. Again, I pouted, stabbing my pancake with my fork.

"Hey babe, that pancake has done nothing wrong. Alex's hand is right there on the table." James winked at me and put his hand on my thigh, calming me. Not that I needed it, and honestly, I was still uncomfortable with how my body responded to his touch.

Alex jerked back his hand and hid it under the table before continuing his breakfast, making me chuckle. Okay, good, the frown wasn't permanent.

After breakfast Amber, Lisa, and I headed into town again. This time to shop for Christmas gifts. Another favorite of mine during Christmas time, buying people gifts. Nothing fancy or expensive but rather meaningful and personal. Something that shows that you truly know the person you're giving the gift to.

We went into five different stores. Lisa found some things for Jackson, a shirt, a watch, and some lingerie.

The lingerie was gorgeous. It was red lace with pin-up socks and a furry white ball above the ass. Very Christmasy and sexy.

Amber bought some new workout clothes and a watch for Alex and new shoes, a new watch, and a gingerbread man for James.

When I asked her why she bought him a gingerbread man, I nearly cried.

"When we were children, James and I, I would always bake gingerbread cookies for Christmas and decorate them. When I was eight, I got sick one Christmas, so that I couldn't bake with the rest of the family. I was on bed rest.

James baked a gingerbread lady and decorated it, and brought it up to me.

The next year he got sick, and I made him a gingerbread man. After that, it just became a tradition. We haven't continued it though see our parents passed. But your Christmas spirit made us want to bring the traditions back, one at a time. Baby steps. This was my favorite one."

Amber was going to decorate the cookie once we got back to the house.

I had a little harder time shopping since I didn't really know the three siblings very well. But I wanted to get them all something.

We went into a store that had different things in interior design. First, I stopped by a shelf and rolled my eyes, laughing at myself. Then, I saw a frame in the form of a pink cupcake with frosting and sprinkles on top.

'I guess someone's trying to tell me something,' I said to myself. So I bought the frame regardless of my feelings about the nickname and then went to get a photo printed out of me and Alex for the frame.

For James, I didn't know what to get. It needed to be special. But then, I remembered he told me about a book that his mom read to him when he was a child, and when he grew older, he read it himself. He had looked for it in his parents' belongings after they passed but hadn't found it.

He got so upset that he trashed his bedroom that day and shifted inside the room, breaking the wall by the door. He said he would give anything to find that book again. It was one of the best memories he had of his mother. I knew that buying the book wouldn't be the same thing. That particular book had been passed down for generations.

He also told me about a clearing in the woods around the packhouse that he and his dad used to go to when he was little. It became his haven when he needed to think of a getaway for a little. It was by the lake, and the moon shone right down, illuminating the area. The clearing was destroyed when the rouges attacked many years ago. The trees had been broken and were lying all over, and the lake couldn't be seen anymore. He has lost so much. I wanted to give him at least one of those things back. So I had asked Alex to help me. He and a few of the pack's warriors would go to the Clearing and clean the place up. Remove everything scattered, move the rock and see if the lake is still

there under the wreckage. And I would look around the house to see if I could find the book.

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Before I bought Amber's gift, I told Lisa and Amber to have a coffee so I could do it in peace without her seeing.

I found a necklace in a jewelry store. It was a pendant with a Lilly on it and an eternity sign embedded in the flower.

Their mother's name was Lily, and their father's name was Augustus. So I thought the pendant was fitting. I also bought Amber an umbrella because she always bitches about getting wet whenever it rains but never does anything about it, and the umbrella is written on in big letters,

"It's not raining. It's the tears of my exes."

Which I thought was just too funny.

When we had eaten lunch, we decided to head back. I went straight up to my room to wrap the presents.

I had bought Christmas-themed wrapping paper with a Santa Claus print and another with white snowflakes and glitter on a gray background.

I wrapped all the gifts and put a bow on them and a little note on each gift.

I put the gifts back in the bags and decided to put them in my closet for now. It was a walk-in closet, so there was plenty of space. I didn't want any of them coming in and seeing them just yet.

I was about to put them in the back corner but noticed that there was a little hatch in the corner just above the floor.

I placed the bags down and traced the hatch with my fingers. I gently opened it. I placed the wooden piece on the floor and saw a box also made of wood.

It was beautiful with the letters L.K carved on the top.

I opened it up and saw a letter. And under the letter... I gasped at the sight.

'The Velveteen Rabbit.'

I ran my fingers carefully over the cover as a tear escaped my eye. Then I opened the letter, and another tear rolled down. I placed the letter back in the box and wrapped the box in the same Christmas paper. On the note, I wrote

'Merry Christmas, James. I hope this brings back some of the wonderful memories I know are in there.'

I didn't write my name on it because it wasn't from me. It was from her. From his mother. Lilly Knight. L.K.

I decided to leave the gifts under the tree right away, so I picked up all the bags with gifts, went down to the main room, and placed the gifts under the tree. Amber had also put her presents under the tree. Lisa and Alvin were going to Alvin's family for the Christmas celebration, and Jackson and Trish were celebrating here with us along with his family. I had bought a little something for them too but nothing too special since I couldn't afford it.

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I was in the communal area playing foosball with Trish when James came barging in looking panicked. He looked around the room until his eyes landed on me and released a breath.

"Thank god." He said as he came up and hugged me tightly.

"What's wrong?" I asked him. Worry was starting to build in my stomach.

"There were rogues in the woods around the village. I thought you were still there." I pulled back and looked him in the eyes.

"I'm right here." I said with a smile. His worry was sweet somehow. To see how much he cares.

"Why were there rogues, and how come we didn't know?" Trish asked, sounding annoyed.

"I don't know. The patrol guards didn't notice them coming in. It's weird, but it's been taken care of. Also... it looked as if they were searching for something or someone." James replied, looking down at me.

"Did you kill them?" I don't know why I asked that; I just wanted to know.

"There were three, I killed two of them, and one of them is in the dungeons. Damon and Alex are trying to talk to him." I nodded and took his hand in mine.

"You hungry?" He smiled and squeezed my hand at my question.

"Yeah, let's go eat." I turned around and looked at Trish, looking at me quizzically, but she shook it off and smiled sweetly when I turned.

"You coming?" I asked her.

"Yup, I was leading anyways, so might as well quit when you're ahead, right?" She winked, and we all started walking to the dining room.

Once seated, Jackson, Lisa, and Alvin joined us. The only one missing now was Alex.

"So I heard you're really crazy about Christmas?" Jackson asked as he spun his fork in the spaghetti.

"yes, I am; why?" I chuckled while answering him.

"I'm gonna have to pick your brain later if that's okay with the alpha, of course. I've noticed how every male in this pack keeps their distance." It was meant as a jab against James. I sighed heavily.

"Yeah, I don't really have any male friends here. They've all been scared off." I said, glaring at James, who only laughed and sat there looking proud.

Jackson laughed as well.

"I'm not surprised. I wouldn't want any males around Trish either. It would ruin my reputation as the nice Gamma male." Trish chewed on her food while side-eyeing her mate.

"And also, what I wanted to say is... it's nice to have someone with the Christmas spirit here again. You've gotten everyone else fired up as well. It's been a long time since anyone was really excited about Christmas." I gave Jackson a sad smile and looked up at James, who was eyeing his plate with sorrow on his face.

I carefully placed my hand on his, not sure if he wanted the contact right now. Finally, he turned his hand and intertwined our fingers. My eyes were on our hands, so I hadn't noticed that he was looking at me.

He leaned into where his mouth was close to my ear.

"Thank you." He whispered, and immediately, my cheeks started to heat. I hated when they did that.

Once we had all eaten, I was exhausted from the days of shopping and decorating, so I decided to head to bed early. I was walking with James up to my room; however, when I was about to stop by my door, he grabbed my hand and went to the door in front of mine. His room.

"I know it's not Christmas yet, but..." He opened the door, and I gasped at what I saw.

"James..."

He had put up pictures of us two around the room, and on the door to the walk-in closet were two robes hanging: one maroon red and one navy blue. On the bed, there were more pillows, and there were two desks with their own chairs down by the window. In the huge seating area he had in his room. There were candles and maroon red pillows with white blankets. Not at all how I remembered his room.

"You remembered my favorite color." I stated in shock while looking around the room in awe. I was shocked because during my and Liams three years together, he would always forget whenever I told him.

"Why have you done all this?" I asked him.

"Well, as I said, I know it's not Christmas Day, but I thought I'd give you an early present. It's no pressure. Just whenever you're ready, the room is ready for you to move in. But, of course, I would love it if you were here, with me." He said, looking a little uncomfortable. He isn't used to talking about feelings or sensitive things, so this was massive.

"Help me pack?" I asked, and his face lit up. Both with happiness and relief.

"It would be my pleasure." He said in a low husky voice. How can he switch like that?

James and I had moved everything from my old room to our room, and I had showered and was ready for bed.

I put on a pair of shorts and a t-shirt before crawling under the covers. James was in the office. He had some pack business to take care of. It was, after all, only 22:00, but I was drenched in energy.

Once I switched off the lights, it didn't take long for me to fall asleep.

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Avery's POV

I woke up to the smell of hot chocolate and thought I was dreaming.

Wait a minute...

"IT'S CHRISTMAS!" I bolted up from the bed and ran to the window to see that it was snowing.

I turned around when I heard someone chuckling and saw James standing there with a tray in his hands, looking amused.

"You're as happy as a child would be." He laughed, and I just smiled even bigger.

I started jumping up and down in excitement.

"Well, everyone has a child within them. Mine just happens to love Christmas." I said in a smart-ass tone.

I went over and sat on the bed as he laid the tray down and sat beside me. There was hot chocolate with whipped cream, chocolate, and tiny marshmallows. As well as pancakes with strawberries, raspberries, and syrup.

I drooled while looking at the food and quickly took a bite and moaned as soon as the piece of pancake touched my tongue.

"You made these?" I asked, hopefully not sounding as surprised as I was.

"Haha, yes, actually I did. Is that so surprising?" Oh, so he did hear it...

"No, not surprising. It's just. I didn't know you could cook."

"I can't. I can make pancakes, that's about it." He said, and I chuckled while cutting another piece.

We sat there and ate and talked until both our plates were clean. I then licked my lips and grabbed our hot chocolates. I gave James his cup and took his hand.

"Come on." I said with a smile.

I laid a blanket on the floor in front of the big floor-to-ceiling window. James' room was the only one that had this view.

James soon joined me on the floor, and we watched the snowfall and the snow-covered garden while sipping our drinks.

This was perfect.

"How come you like the snow so much?" He asked me. I shrugged and looked at him before looking back out.

"I don't know. There is just something so beautiful about the way that the snowflakes fall. And the way that they look. It's like they're dancing on their way down. It's soothing in a way. And beautiful." I smiled while speaking because I truly loved the snow. I felt a shiver and looked to my side to see James looking at me with an intense glare that's making my body heat up.

His eyes dimmed over, and I knew he was mind linking someone.

"Amber wants us all gathered downstairs in 20 minutes." He said mockingly, making me laugh. Amber tends to be a little bossy, but not in a mean way.

"Well, we should probably get ready then. Thank you for breakfast, by the way." James smiled back at me, and we both started getting dressed and headed down.

Everyone was already gathered in the main room, and the entire atmosphere was so cozy. I wanted this every year. I smiled as I looked around the room and at everyone in it, feeling blessed.

Whatever reason it was that had me ending up here, I feel that this is where I belong.

"Let's open presents!" Amber screamed, and everyone went to the tree. The gifts were given to each person, and then we went to it on the couches to open them.

"HAHAHA!" I looked up and saw Alex laughing his ass off. He looked over to me and held the frame with our picture in it against his chest.

"I love it, sis. Thank you." I smiled at him and nodded.

"Well, good because it wasn't easy accepting it." I said mockingly. It was true though, I still haven't accepted it, but I guess eventually I will. That's the thing when it comes to the people we love; we learn to accept even the things we don't like.

"NO WAY?!" I yelled as I opened my gift from Alex. James looked at me, and his eyes widened.

"Oh no..." I slapped his arm and gave him a mean glare.

"Thank you so much, Alex. I love it!"

"Dude..." James whined.

"Why don't you like it? I can finally play my music from something else than my phone."

"That's the problem." He groaned.

"My phone is the problem?"

"Not your phone, your music. Your taste in music is like Alvin's singing. You probably think it's excellent, but you shouldn't let other people suffer for it." My mouth dropped at his words.

"You little—"

"NO! It's Christmas, no bad words, no whining, only smiles, and happiness remember?" Amber said, putting her hands on her hips.

"Using my own words against me." I shook my head and glared at her before we both broke out in laughter.

"Avery... oh my goddess" Amber looked starstruck as she opened the little jewelry box with her pendant in it. She wiped a tear rolling down her cheek and picked up the pendant.

"Avery, thank you." She said with the utmost sincerity.

I opened another one of my gifts, this one from Amber. It was a beautiful rose gold bracelet with the letters A & A on it.

"Amber, this is beautiful." I said while holding up the bracelet and looking at it.

"I always wanted a sister. Now that I have one, I'm never planning on letting you go."

I went up to her and hugged her. We hugged for a while before pulling away, and both of us wiping away tears.

"What the f..." I turned around and saw James with his mother's box in his hands. I walked up to him kneeled in front of him.

"I was putting the presents away in my closet yesterday when I saw a hatch in the bottom right corner. I opened it, and this was there. Open it." I encouraged him. All eyes in the room were on the box and James. He slowly lifted the top and took out the letter.

When he saw what was underneath it, his breathing stopped, and he swallowed hard.

"The velveteen rabbit." Everyone gasped, and Amber's hand flew to her mouth as her eyes started to water, as was Trish's and Jackson's mom.

James took out the letter from the envelope and started reading it. I saw his eyes start to water, and when he was done reading, he jumped up from the couch and stormed off.

I looked behind me in shock when Jackson's mom Anna spoke with a weak voice.

"Go after him, honey."

I did as she said and walked after James. I was by the entrance, unsure where he had gone when I heard sobs coming from the kitchen. I walked in there and saw James sitting in a crouched position on the floor by the island.

I went and sat by his side, putting my arms around him like a protective wall.

Slowly but surely, the sobs eased up, and he looked up. His eyes were red, but other than that; you couldn't tell that he sat on the floor crying his heart out.

"You okay?"

"Have you read it?" He asked me.

I nodded as I wiped a tear from my cheek. He leaned in and kissed my cheek before getting back on his feet. He extended his hand for me to grab.

"Let's get back. I just needed a moment." I took his hand, and together, we walked back to the others.

Everyone looked at us as we entered the room, and we took our seats on the couch.

"The letter, it's from mom, it's from the day she and dad died." Alex was twisting uncomfortably in his seat, and his eyes were starting to get glossy. Amber was crying, and everyone else wasn't far behind.

James unfolded the letter and cleared his throat.

"Dear James, Alex, and Amber. I hope this finds you someday so that you can have some closure. I am so sorry for the things that have happened to you. I'm so sorry that you lost us. The truth is, your father and I know what today will bring. Natasha had a vision of the war and deaths. She told us to stand back or to run. But if there's one thing that we do not do in this family, it is to run.

Your father and I will fight beside the pack, whatever the outcome. We thought that now that we know what we know, maybe we can change the vision, but in case we can't, I'm writing you this.

We love you children so, so, so much. And there is no one I would rather die to protect than you three. You have so much life left to live, and if something were to happen to either of you, it would be much worse than death. So I need you to know that this wasn't how we envisioned it; none of us did, but we have to protect the pack, and most importantly, we need to protect you.

James, I don't know if Avery is with you just yet, but if she is, hold on to her. She is an extraordinary girl. And please, my wonderful children, never stop smiling. Life is too short to be mad and unhappy. Find your happiness and hold on to it with your lives. I love you so much, my soul will always be with you, and my heart will always belong to you.

PS: just in case something happened to the house, I wanted to keep the book safe. You will always find me in the story, my beloved James.

With all my love- Mommy."

I looked around the room, and everyone was crying. They were tears of sadness mixed with tears of happiness.

They just heard from their mother one last time.

James put the envelope down and embraced me in a big hug. I don't know if it was because of the book or because he needed the comfort; either way, I'm glad he did.

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Everyone had opened their gifts, and we had eaten our Christmas dinner with Jackson's dad Alan and James reminiscing about the days when James' parents were alive. The rest of us listened eagerly with the occasional laughter and tear.

Now it was time for one last gift.

"Wait here. I'll be right back." I told James, who was standing by the stairs. I ran up to our room and grabbed our coats and hats before heading back down.

I handed James his coat and his hat. He lifted an eyebrow at the gesture.

"Babe, it's snowing, and it's cold. I'm a werewolf you're not; you're gonna freeze." I rolled my eyes and buttoned my coat.

"Just put on your jacket and come." I said as I took confident steps towards the doors.

However, as soon as I opened them, the confidence was swept away by the bone-chilling wind.

"It's Christmas, so I won't say I told you so." He said with a glum look on his face as he strutted past me and walked outside as if it were nothing.

"You coming or what?" I looked around me, trying to muster up the confidence I had 30 seconds ago.

I pulled my coat over my mouth and closed the door. We started walking to the clearing.

Alex had told me before that it was all cleaned up and ready. The lake was there too, which made me really happy.

When we had walked for fifteen minutes, my hands and toes were numb. Maybe I could've given him this as a birthday present next year instead.

"Where are we going?" James asked as he looked around his surroundings with a scrunched nosed squinting his eyes from the snow hitting us.

"Almost there." I replied.

Another ten minutes, and the clearing was just behind a few more trees. James stopped, and I did too.

"Where are we going, Avery?" He asked me again, but this time, his facial expression was angry, and his voice was much more serious. I must admit I was a little scared and starting to wonder whether this was a good idea.

"Do you trust me?" I asked him.

He looked at me for a while before nodding.

"Good, let's continue."

When we reached the clearing James' mouth dropped open and his head was spinning around trying to take everything in. The sun was about to set and the wind had become tamer. Soon the moon would be on full display right above our heads.

"You did all this?" He asked me

"Oh god no! There were trees and rocks James how the hell would I... never mind. No, I asked Alex for a favor. He and a few of the warriors did this." I said with a big smile on my face.

James walked around before going up to the lake and sitting down.

"Your ass is gonna freeze." I told him as I stood beside him.

He grabbed my arm and in one swift motion I was sitting down on his lap with our faces inches apart.

He leaned in. This is it.

Our first real kiss.

It's happening.

James' lips pressed against mine in the most romantic, sweet kiss I have ever had.

I put my hands on his cheeks deepening the kiss. James' hand tangled in my hair at the back of my head and heat filled my entire body.

We pulled away to catch our breaths and stared into each other's eyes.

" Merry Christmas." I said as I giggled.

" Merry Christmas." He replied in that dark, husky voice.

Merry Christmas And Happy New Year.

Payment To the Alpha by Ms.M Chapter 29

Avery's POV

Christmas time has passed, and the niceties along with it. We had a few calm and nice weeks where everyone was on their best behavior. But now, one week after Christmas, it's like a free pass for everyone to bring their shit.

I guess I can't blame them, though. It was, after all, me who had set the rule.

James is currently in his office catching up on pack business with Alex and Jackson. Amber is at practice, and so are Trish and Lisa. And me? I'm in the library reading my second book of the day.

I don't mind reading; I love it, in fact. Diving into a book is like placing a bubble around me where reality stops for a while.

However, I would've liked to have something else to occupy my time with as well. After 3-4 hours, I get bored and just stare at the wall.

Also, when I'm not doing anything, my mind and thoughts spin around like crazy, thinking about the barrier in my head and the wizard controlling it, and on top of that, James seems to be hiding something from me.

I asked if I could get a job in the village at a small cafe or something so I wouldn't be stuck in this house forever, but James bluntly said no. He said that me having a job would be too risky, seeing as we still don't have any information regarding the wizard or his plans.

I understood where he was coming from with that, but I'm going mad not doing anything all day.

I was walking down the hall on the second floor to grab something to eat on my way to the kitchen. Once I reached the stairs, I'm met by the one person in this place that seems to hate me.

"Well, if it isn't James' new toy." Sofia said, sounding a little too calm and happy.

"Excuse me?" I replied with one eyebrow lifted.

"You do know he doesn't really like you, right? Sooner or later, he'll get bored of you and realize that there is someone much more suited to be the Luna and his mate."

"If I remember it correctly, you don't get to choose your mate. And also," I continued taking a step forward to where I was standing right in front of her, only inches away.

"Do you think he'll get bored of me before or after we get married?" I said calmly with a sweet smile. Her face dropped, and her jaw ticked.

"YOU WHAT?" She yelled in a high-pitched scream that could attract dogs.

"You didn't know? I am going to be James' wife, and I think that also implies that I will be the Luna of this pack, including you. So if I were you, I would butt off and stop putting my nose where it doesn't belong, or you might end up with something much worse than a broken heart." I spat venom with every word and saw how she was trying to contain her anger. Her face was heating up and her brows furrowing. Her chest swelled, and her breathing became heavier.

I like the sight, but why the hell did I say those things? It's not me. I don't stoop to someone's level merely to hurt them.

"YOU BITCH! You will never be my Luna! You're nobody!" She raised her fist and threw a punch. I closed my eyes and prepared myself for the impact. However, her fist never made contact with my face.

I opened my eyes again to see Sofia's eyes wide as hell and staring beside me. Someone had a grip around her hand. I looked to my side and saw Alex staring at her. His eyes were pitch black, and his nostrils were flaring.

"HOW DARE YOU HURT THE LUNA?!" He roared so loud that it echoed through the house, shaking the windows.

Sofia started shaking and tried leaning back away from Alex. Her eyes started glistening, and it looked like she wanted to run away, but Alex didn't seem like he was going to let that happen.

Sofia's mouth made an O-shape, and I saw blood trickling from her arm. Alex had extended his claws, and they were digging into her arm. How did she not scream?

"ANSWER ME!" His eyes were now golden and glowing, which I had come to know means his wolf was surfacing, or already had, I don't quite remember.

But by the looks of Sofia, who bowed her head and didn't make eye contact, I'm guessing his wolf Cesar had made an appearance.

"I-I'm sorry, Beta." That was all Sofia said.

"YOU KNOW THE RULES! Violence amongst pack members is NOT acceptable, and you thought hurting the future Luna was!?"

"No Beta."

Alex held on a little longer before retracting his claws and letting go of Sofias' arm. Her eyes were still on the floor.

"Do not let it happen again!" Alex warned.

Sofia nodded before walking past us and up the stairs.

I looked over at Alex, and he was pinching the bridge of his nose.

He looked over at me, and I awkwardly smiled. He was still mad, and when our eyes met, I wanted to run.

"YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES WHEN SOMEONE THROWS A PUNCH AT YOUR FACE!?" He yelled at me. I'm thankful he didn't roar.

"Wha-I-I-Yeah?" I stuttered, not able to build a sentence or speak at all, for that matter. That's what he was mad at me about?

"Are you fucking kidding me!? And then what? After they throw the punch, you'll just stand there and let them continue the assault?" I honestly didn't have an answer for that. I don't know what I would've done because I've never been in a situation where I've had to know. It was a valid question, though. I don't know why I closed my eyes.

"No, of course not. Or at least I don't think so..." I said, probably looking as unsure as I sounded.

"I don't know, Alex. I've never fought before." I shrugged and looked up at him.

He stood still and silent for a moment before grabbing my arm and dragging me down the stairs.

"Come with me." His voice was low and dark. Intimidating even.

"Wha-where are we going?" I asked him in shock as he kept dragging me and my body followed as I had no chance of stopping him, obviously.

"Out." Alex said.

"But Alex! Wait!" He stopped, but his hand still had its grip on my arm.

"What?" He looked like he was on a mission, and I was annoying him.

"I'm hungry...." I said in a low voice, hoping we could at least eat something first.

"YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES WHEN SOMEONE FIGHTS YOU! You can eat when we're done!" He said as if I had just told him that vampires exist. Oh, wait, they do. Okay, as if I had told him that aliens exist. Maybe they do too. Why do I think about this?

Alex continued dragging me out of the house and around the back to the fields where the warriors and members train. He stopped by a shelf, grabbed a pair of pads, and threw me a pair of boxing gloves. I looked around at the others who weren't wearing any and felt very, very human.

I held the gloves in my hand and waved them around while waiting for Alex to explain what we were doing here.

"Put them on." Why did he have to sound so mad?

I put on the gloves, and he came to stand in front of me, holding the pads up.

I raised an eyebrow at him, and he sighed and shook his head.

"You're supposed to raise your hands and hit the pads." He said in a condescending tone that was getting on my nerves.

"I know what I'm supposed to do, but why do I have to do it?!" I asked him.

"You closed your fucking eyes, that's why. What if it hadn't been Sofia, and what if I hadn't been in the house? What if it would've been somebody else, somewhere else where there is no one to protect you?" He had a point. But that didn't excuse his way of speaking.

I stayed silent, which looked pleasing to him.

"Great. Now punch." I bit together and clenched my jaw. I raised my right hand and threw a straight punch at the pad Alex was holding. It didn't even move. He didn't bat an eyelash and looked just as disappointed at the lack of strength in my punch as I was.

I threw another with my right hand and then one with my left. Nothing happened. I continued throwing punches until I was out of breath before stopping. I looked around at the fighters who were training and saw how their hands were flying, and the hits made an impact.

I looked back at Alex, who was looking at me with pity.

"You're human, and they're not. Don't compare yourself to them." He said, this time, he was actually nice.

"Here, hit with your right hand first, and then when you hit with your left, put your entire body into the punch. Your whole body weight should lean in when you're hitting me. That way, the hit will have more strength to it." He said as he showed me how he meant by doing it himself. I nodded and raised my hands again.

I did as Alex said and put my entire body weight into the left-handed punch, and again, nothing happened. He didn't budge. This is pointless.

I took off the gloves and threw them on the ground.

"What do you think you're doing, Avery?"

"I'm leaving. This is pointless." I was aggravated. I couldn't fight. I'm human. I can fight humans, not werewolves.

"Put the gloves back on." Alex said, trying to change my mind.

"Why?! So that I can continue throwing weak punches and embarrass myself?"

"Avery, nobody learns right away. It takes practice, and with practice, you're going to do great. You'll become stronger, and you can't just give up after 20 minutes."

"Watch me." I started walking away when I heard footsteps behind me, and Alex grabbed my arm.

I jerked it back. He stared at me in shock.

"Why do you care so much?!" I asked him.

"Because I care about you!" He retaliated.

"Well, maybe you should stop!" I yelled. He frowned and shook his head as if in disbelief.

"What the hell is wrong with you?!"

"I don't know!" I honestly don't know. Maybe I need some rest.

I turned my heel and walked away. Wanting to get back in the warmth.

Although most of the snow had melted away and the grass was visible, the sun was shining, and I was wearing warm clothes, it was still freezing cold outside.

James' POV

I was in my office catching up on the things I had neglected during Christmas. There was a lot to do, but I didn't mind. This was the first Christmas since my parents died that I actually enjoyed and was happy. I was thankful for that.

A few of the neighboring packs were having problems with rogues and had asked if we were too. Except for the rogues around the village a week ago, we hadn't had any problems. Not many would risk stepping onto our territory.

We weren't ones to normally take hostages. The one we had taken the other week hadn't said anything. He was in his late thirties and looked like a hobo. He had the appearance of a harmless man, but something in his eyes told a different story. He has been chained with silver ever since we caught him, the pain would get most werewolves talking within hours, but he didn't.

We have an alliance with most of the packs in the north of America. Out of ten, we have alliances with nine. People prefer to have us on their good side rather than bad. There is one pack, however, the celestial pack three hundred miles away that didn't want an alliance. We haven't had any problems with them, so it's nothing that bothers me. They aren't very close to us either, for that matter.

I heard a high-pitched scream and realized that it was Sofia. Who was she with?

Avery. I quickly went to the door, but before I could open it, I got a mind link from Alex.

'I got this.'

'Good. Make sure nothing happens to Avery.'

'Will do.'

With that, I could continue the work I had and be positive that Avery would be fine.

When I was done making some necessary calls and checking in on the rogue issue, I decided to find Avery and spend some time with her.

I walked to our room to find it empty, and so was the library, so I walked outside.

There she was, hitting on Alex while he held pads. She looked adorable when she tried to fight. I had heard their conversation, and the fact that Avery had closed her eyes when Sofia had thrown the punch angered me as well, first off because Sofia had actually thrown a punch at her future Luna and secondly because it meant that Avery was even more defenseless than I had thought.

I should be the one training her. I'm just worried I'll hurt her.

'She's stronger than you think.' Blade argued.

Maybe. But she's still human. She hurts much easier than us.

'She may be stripped of her powers, but she will never be human. Who we are is at our core. It can't be removed.'

Are you saying that she has her wolf?

'I'm saying that she's not defenseless. She's special....'

And?

I rolled my eyes in frustration because I knew there was something that he wasn't saying.

'And we need to protect her and believe in her.'

I am, and I do.

'I said we, you dumbass. We need to believe in her. Regardless.'

What do you mean?

Avery stopped punching, and I saw her looking around the field at the warriors' training.

"Oh no..." If she starts comparing herself to them, she will feel useless. There is no comparison between human and werewolf strength.

I heard Alex explain that to her. Thank the goddess. Wait, what the hell is that?

'Something is wrong.'

I know Blade. I can see that.

'What's going on with her?'

I'm not sure.

'Is it him?'

Every time I or blade thought about the wizard doing all this shit, we both began to lose it. Blade was growling in the back of my mind, ready to fight. But I don't think it's him.

No. That's impossible, the barrier is still up, and no wizard has the strength to break through it this fast. It's something else.

Avery's eyes were different. They looked lifeless. She was getting mad and frustrated but not the normal kind. This was something else. Was she really that bothered by not being able to fight?

I watched as she threw the boxing gloves on the ground.

"What do you think you're doing, Avery?"

"I'm leaving. This is pointless."

"Put the gloves back on."

"Why?! So that I can continue throwing weak punches and embarrass myself?"

"Avery, nobody learns right away. It takes practice, and with practice, you're going to do great. You'll become stronger, and you can't just give up after 20 minutes."

"Watch me."

I saw Alex following Avery and grabbing her arm. What the fuck is going on?

Avery was facing me a second ago, but she acted like she didn't even see me. Is she that pissed at Alex that she would ignore me?

"Why do you care so much?!" Avery yelled.

"Because I care about you!"

"Well, maybe you should stop!" What the fuck?

"What the hell is wrong with you?!"

"I don't know!"

Avery walked right past me. Like I didn't exist. That shit hurt.

"Avery!"

"AVERY!!"

I yelled after her, but she didn't react. She didn't stop or turn around or say anything. She kept on walking. I turned around to face Alex.

"What the fuck was that?!"

"I don't know, man. But something is up with her. You should call Natasha." Alex said. Maybe he was right; maybe I should call her so she can make sure that her spell worked.

I was starting to get annoyed. First, my mate ignores the shit out of me, and now the witch may have fucked up the spell.

"Maybe she's just mad. I'll give her some time to relax before I call Natasha."

"James," Alex said as he laid a hand on my shoulder.

"She walked past you like you were invisible. Human or not, you two are mates. It doesn't add up."

Alex was right. It didn't make sense. She shouldn't have been able to walk past me without at least throwing me a glance.

"I'll give her some time." I said with a stern voice, indicating that it wasn't up for discussion. Whatever it was that was going on, time couldn't possibly make it worse. Alex raised his hands in surrender, and then we headed back to the house.

Alex, Damon, and I decided to play some pool before dinner. Amber was sitting by the bookshelf, trying to find a book about martial arts that she read when she was younger. She wanted to give it to Avery after we had explained what happened earlier out on the field.

"Dude, you do know you're supposed to actually hit the balls, right?" Alex told Damon, who was losing.

"If you don't shut up, I'll start aiming the stick at two other balls!" Damon yelled back. Alex backed away with a frown on his face, his hands covering his package, and I broke out in laughter.

"You both suck. Now Damon, hurry up and lose so I can play." I told him as I patted his back.

"Fuck off." Damon said. He aimed the stick at the striped ball and took a shot. It didn't go in. However, it hit another ball that bounced on the 88 ball, and that went in.

Alex and I both pursed our lips, so we didn't laugh. Damon looked about ready to hit us, not that he would have had a chance, but even though I'm the alpha, even I must admit that Damon's punches hurt like a bitch.

"Fuck this shit." Damon threw the stick on the ground and walked towards the hall.

"Oh, come on! Nobody likes a sore loser!" Alex yelled after him.

"How can you guys go from being all strong and tough to five years old?" Amber asked with a finger on her chin.

Alex flipped her the finger, and Amber stuck her tongue out.

Just as Damon was about to exit the room, a furious mate of mine comes running in, looking mad as hell, with a silver dagger in her hand.

"YOU SLEPT WITH HER!!!"

Payment To the Alpha by Ms.M Chapter 30

Averys POV

* * * * *

Stupid fighting, stupid werewolf strength, everything is just stupid.

I made it back to the house with a frown on my face and kicking everything in my path that wasn't breathing. So what if I close my eyes? I will not stand and be humiliated so that Alex can have some gratification over the fact that I can't fight.

I'm human; any doubts I had of that before are gone. Even though my mother is a werewolf and my father is a god knows what, I am human, at least if today was any proof of it. Why does James even want to be with me? Perhaps Sofia was right, and he should be with someone more fitting for the role of Luna and his partner. That's not me.

I needed to find James and talk to him about this. I was starting to come around to the idea of marriage, of marrying James. I wanted it, but does he? He does seem hell-bent on marrying me, but maybe he doesn't know who he's marrying.

The thoughts spun around my head like crazy while I walked through the house and up to the first floor.

"Hello, Luna." Elisabeth, the omega, bowed her head as she was descending the stairs. "Hello Elisabeth, I told you, 'Avery' will do just fine." She gave me a shy smile but nodded her head slowly as a sign of understanding. "My apologies. Would you like something to eat? I could make you something small before dinner. I make amazing pancakes!" She squealed in excitement, but in my head, I was reminiscing about James' pancakes he made me on Christmas day.

"That sounds amazing, but I was actually on my way to find James. Do you have any idea where he might be?" Elisabeth looked at me funny,

"He went out, Lu-Avery." She corrected herself, and I giggled.

"He'll probably be back later. So if you'd like, I can make you those pancakes." James went out? How come I didn't see him? Odd. I thought for a minute before accepting Elisabeth's invitation and following her to the kitchen. "So, if you don't mind me asking, what's up with the frown you were wearing earlier? You looked worried." The Omega sure is observant.

"I was practicing with Alex, and I realized how I would never exceed any expectations. I will never be like you, especially not strength-wise, and it bummed me out, I think." I looked down at the cup of coffee in my hands. I will never be like them. This will never be my home, and I will always be the weak human they have to protect.

"Stop." I looked up to see Elisabeth looking at me with compassion but not pity. It felt nice. "Stop what?"

"Stop thinking. You may not be as strong physically as a werewolf, but trust me, you are much stronger in other areas. Your whole world was turned upside down in a matter of days, you found out about the werewolf and witch existence, amongst other things, and you're still here. I know it may not have been your choice to stay, knowing the Alpha, but you could've locked yourself in your room and never came out. But you didn't. Don't underestimate yourself, Avery. Had it been me, I would've been crawled up on my bedroom floor crying for the rest of my life."

Holy shit, how old was she, fifteen? The kid is good. Kid? I'm eighteen. Who am I calling a kid? "Thank you, Elisabeth. You know, you're very mature for your age." I said, taking a sip of my coffee.

"I have to be. I have two younger siblings, a sister and a brother, our parents are warriors in the pack, and that keeps them busy, so sometimes I'm the only one they have." She shrugged. I nodded my head in response, "So you're the oldest?"

"I am now. I had an older sister, Emely. She was also a warrior. She died in the attack that killed the late Alpha and Luna." Elisabeth looked down at the pan she was making pancakes on. My heart broke for the young girl. She had to grow up too fast, become a parent to her siblings.

"I'm very sorry for your loss. But you know, if there is ever anything you need, I'm right here. I mean it." It may not be much, but it is all I have to offer. I would help her with anything she needed.

"Thank you, Luna." I gave her a disapproving look.

"It's Avery," I stated. She shook her head,

"No, that was very much Luna." I smiled at her response, a warm, loving feeling of acceptance flowing through me. I never realized how badly I needed to hear that.

"Here you go!" She said with a smile as she put forward a plate with cinnamon pancakes beside my coffee. I took a bite and moaned in approval, which made Elisabeth giggle and blush.

"These are amazing!!"

"I'm glad you like them." I finished the entire plate and drank my coffee. Elisabeth and I talked all through my meal, and I learned a lot about the pack and its members; I found out that Sofia has had a crush on James for the past few years and would cling to him every chance she got. I made a mental note to myself to get to know Elisabeth better. She was an amazing person.

"Thank you so much for this, Elisabeth, and I don't just mean the food. I really needed this." This had really been amazing. This house can get lonely at times when everyone is doing their thing, but now I feel like I have a friend.

"I think that I did too." We hugged for a while before pulling away.

"Now, if you'll excuse me, I have an Alpha to find." We both laughed as I walked out of the kitchen and up the stairs. James must be home by now.

I walked over to our bedroom and had a sense of calm in me that I didn't have before. I felt genuinely happy. I don't think I had been this happy since Christmas. I needed to talk to James and then apologize to Alex.

As I was about to reach for the handle, a wave of nausea hit me when I heard moaning coming from inside the bedroom. "AH James!" No. This can't be.

"Yes! Yes, don't stop!" I recognize that voice.

"Keep it the fuck down, Sofia or Avery will hear us."

"Oh fuck yes!" I'm gonna be sick. This can't be. James wouldn't do this to me. He would never cheat on me, he-he wouldn't. I put my hand on the doorknob and turned it, opening the door.

And there they were, on our bed, where we sleep. James was fucking Sofia. I felt my tears rolling down and my voice ceasing to exist.

"FUCK Avery!" James jumped off the bed and grabbed a pillow to cover his package. Sofia, on the other hand, only rolled over so that she was lying on her stomach. She placed her hands under her chin.

"Hello Avery, see what I mean now?"

I turned on heel and ran out of the room and up the stairs until I reached the top floor.

"Avery, wait!" I hear James' voice behind me, but it was fading the higher up I got.

He wasn't following me. He was staying down there with her. James, the man that my head kept screaming, was my mate and slept with the girl who hated my guts. The girl that has had a crush on him for years. He cheated on me, yet again a man cheated on me.

I was right.

I'm not made to be Luna or James' wife.

Am I that hard to love? Am I that hard to be faithful to?

What is it that I lack, but other girls have?

WHY AM I NEVER ENOUGH?!

I ran down the hallway until I reached an old wooden door that didn't seem to be used much. On the other side was what looked like an old classroom with spiderwebs, old desks, and dust everywhere.

He cheated on me.

He fucking cheated on me!

HE CHEATED ON ME!

My hand slammed through the board standing next to me and left a hole in the middle.

I grabbed a desk, flipping it over, and started hitting everything in sight.

"HE CHEATED ON ME!" I want to kill him. I'm gonna kill him. He slept with another girl and in the bed where we sleep together!

My fists were bloody, and my shorts and shirt were dusty and grey.

The dagger, in his office, no, it has to be silver. I looked around and found a small box on the floor, covered in dust.

In it lay an enveloped knife, silver.

I grabbed the knife in my hand and gripped it tightly. I was filled with rage, pure, blind rage. Nothing else mattered at this point.

I opened the door and walked back out into the hallway. I made my way down the stairs and back to our bedroom, slamming the door open but only to find it empty, and the bed looked as if it hadn't been touched. Where the fuck is he!? I walked down the stairs and into the kitchen, which was also empty, and then I heard it, laughter, coming from the communal area.

I walked over there faster than I had ever walked before, my hold on the knife so tight that my knuckles were turning white. I saw Damon exiting, and my eyes quickly scanned the room, and there he was. Standing by the pool table with Alex like he hadn't just fucked another girl.

"YOU SLEPT WITH HER!"

James' POV

Slept with who? Avery was breathing like a dragon, and her face was flaming red. Her knuckles are bleeding. What the fuck is happening? What is she talking about, I looked over at Alex, but he just seemed as confused as I was. I put the stick down on the table and walked over to Avery.

"Baby wh-"

"NO! Don't you dare pretend as nothing happened; I saw it! I saw you fucking her in our bed!"

"What!?" Amber stood up from her seat and looked at Avery.

"Babe, he has been here with us the entire time." Amber tried reasoning with her, but something wasn't right.

"Avery, I was there when you walked away from Alex outside earlier. You walked past me, remember?" I asked her, mostly for myself.

"You're lying!" She hadn't seen me, and she wasn't ignoring me. She hadn't seen me fucking standing there. SHIT. Why didn't I just call Natasha as Alex suggested?

"YOU CHEATED ON ME WITH THAT WHORE!" Avery charged at me with the knife in her hand, aimed at my chest.

' Everyone stand back.' I sent out a mind link. I don't want Avery getting hurt, I don't know what the fuck is going on, but I do know that it isn't her fault. They all stepped back, and just as Avery reached me, I grabbed her hand and spun her around so that her back was against my chest while straddling her arms.

"Avery, baby, listen to me; this isn't you. Someone is doing this to you. Fight it!" Holy shit, the strength isn't Avery's either. She isn't this strong.

"It's all me! You cheated on me! I saw you two!" She was almost out of my grip. I turned her around, holding her arms down, and looked into her eyes. She was trying her best to get out of my grip, and she was almost succeeding.

"Avery, please listen! I haven't slept with anyone. I would never do that to you!" Please, baby, please hear me.

"You're lying." An immense strength shot through me as she broke my hold on her, and she raised her hand, ready to stab the dagger into my heart.

"Baby, please, please hear me. I would never hurt you." Something changed in her eyes. I had come to know it as humanity, but only for a split second before it was gone again.

" AVERY!" Everything went in slow motion after that. I just stood there, ready to take whatever it was that she thought I deserved.

The tip of the dagger penetrated my flesh, and I felt the burn of the silver spreading quickly. It wasn't a pain I couldn't handle. The worst pain came from the person inflicting it, not because she wanted to kill me, but because I knew she was in there watching everything, unable to do anything to stop it. Her eyes were filled with rage and determination, the knife kept digging into my flesh, and there was no remorse showing on Avery's face.

Before it could go any further, Avery inhaled deeply, and her eyes slowly rolled back into her head, her hand slowly falling as she lost strength and fell limp onto the floor before Alex caught her and placed her down softly.

Behind her, Amber stood with a syringe in her hand. The liquid container was empty, swirling around in Avery's veins.

"Alex takes her to our room. Damon, call Natasha and Amber, stay with her till she wakes up." I gave out the orders,

“yes, Alpha.” They all bowed their heads, but before they could get on with their tasks, an annoying voice came ringing in my ears.

“Shouldn’t it be the dungeons?” Sofia was standing by the door along with her posse of friends; amongst them was Chase, the guy who seemed to have an interest in my mate.

“What did you say?!” Amber quickly got up in Sofia’s face, making her cower back.

“Well, Avery did try to kill the Alpha. Isn’t it said that a threat against the Alpha is punishable by death? The threat must be in the dungeons so as not to pose any greater threat than already executed.” This girl was a sly bitch. It wouldn’t surprise me if she had any part in this, and if she had, I would kill her myself.

“Don’t the same rules apply to everyone?” Blade was growling in my head, wanting to rip this bitch’s head off, and I was about to let him.

“James, she is correct...” Amber chimed in, looking defeated. I know she is, but I’m not sending my mate to the fucking dungeons!

I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked to my right to see Alex looking just as pissed off as I was but with a hint of pity.

“Maybe it’s the safest choice until we get Natasha here and figure something out. We all saw the strength she fought you with, brother. That wasn’t her.” I closed my eyes to have a moment of peace. He wasn’t wrong, it was the safest choice, but that still implies that I have to send my MATE TO THE FUCKING DUNGEON!

I opened my eyes again to see everyone shaking and bowing their heads, showing their necks. They were submitting, all their eyes were cast down on the floor, and I could hear their wolves whimpering. Amber held my hands, stroking them gently.

“ We can all sense your wolf, James. You need to calm down.” Oh fuck.

I calmed Blade to where his aura wasn’t forcing everyone into submission and saw how they all started to recover. I then turned back to Alex. “Take her to the dungeons, but make sure she’s fucking comfortable, or you’ll join her.” I warned before sending out a mind link to all the ranked members. ‘Meet me in my office in one hour.’

“Why one hour?” Amber asked me, looking worried. “I need to take a run.” I went out of the house and changed right away, not minding my clothes being ruined.

‘It’s him. He’s back.’ Blade was just as mad as I was, if not more so. He had what some people call anger issues.

How do you know?

'Trust me, I just do. I hate to admit it, but the dungeon is the safest place for her to be. This time will be much worse than the last.'

Are you going to tell me how you know this?

'I can't.'

You can't!? You realize we're the same body and mind, right? How come you get to know what I know, but I don't get to know what you know?

'Huh?'

Just fucking tell me, blade.

'You'll know in time. I can't tell you because what I know isn't for me to tell. But it will show soon.'

Fine.

So the bastard dog knows something that may or may not help the situation, but he won't share. Suit yourself. I blocked him out for the rest of the run and just enjoyed a moment of peace. The only noises being the wind blowing through the branches and the water from the lake up ahead.

I ran around a little before going to the clearing where my dad and I used to go. I sat down and stared up at the sky.

'Why didn't you run. I would've really needed you guys right now, especially you mom. And dad; you always followed her wherever she went so that I would've gotten you both either way. What am I supposed to do? Find the wizard and kill him is already in the checkbook but how, and how do I keep Avery and everyone else safe while still being there for her? Her birthday is in June, and we have to get married, or we both die. I might be able to talk to Natasha about that, though, see if there is a way around it. I miss you guys. Take care of each other.'

I got back on my paws and started running to the cave not far from the clearing; Alex and I put a bag of clothes there for whenever we shifted before thinking. We did it so often that the bag of clothes became a must. I grabbed the bag between my teeth and ran back to the house.

I ran behind a tree and shifted back, putting on my clothes and heading in. "Alpha!" It was Elisabeth, the kitchen omega. She waved her hand, running over to me. "How is the Luna?" The question alone made me sick to my stomach.

"She just needs some rest." I said as convincingly as possible.

"In the dungeon?" My eyes turned black, and Elisabeth stepped back, fiddling with her fingers. "I-I'm sorry, Alpha, word travels fast." I took a few deep breaths to calm myself before addressing her. "Some things are happening to the future, Luna, and they are being taken care of. I want no more speaking of her amongst the pack members, is that clear?" I used my alpha authority on the poor girl, but the things happening to Avery are nobody's business.

"Yes, Alpha." She bowed her head before running back to the kitchen. Guilt spread through me quickly, but I suppressed it. Although Elisabeth won't be speaking of Avery, which she probably wasn't doing initially, it doesn't mean that the others won't. I'll have to deal with that later.

I walked up to my office, where all the ranked members were waiting. We had a meeting a month or so ago regarding Avery. Trish had noticed her acting odd when we were in the communal area the day before Christmas. Her behavior and her eyes also changed from time to time. I had noticed it too. At the meeting was where we came up with the sedative plan in case something were to happen. This way, we could immobilize her without hurting her.

That is what Amber gave her earlier that made her fall asleep. We expected something to happen, but not something like this, not by the wizard and not this quickly.

"Natasha is on her way." Alex informed me the second I stepped in. I gave him a nod and went to sit at my desk. I dragged my hand over my face, unsure what to say anymore, not sure what to do. This is the first time I've felt helpless.

"James, we're going to figure this out. Avery is going to be okay. She has to be. You're not the only one who has fallen for that girl." Lisa said, giving me some hope that I didn't know I needed, and everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

There was a knock on my door, please let it be Natasha. No sooner had I prayed than the door opened, and in came the witch I had learned to love.

"Everyone, it's time. We have to kill her." Everybody's eyes widened, and Amber looked close to tears, and I, I was about to shift right here, right now. I jumped up from my seat, but before I could make a move on the bitch, she continued, erasing any love I had learned to have for her.

"Haha, guys, I'm just kidding. Please have a seat. We have important matters to discuss." Her voice was full of amusement. Suddenly I wasn't the only one about to shift anymore.

I could sense everyone's wolf was close to surfacing.