

A Gift from the Goddess by Dawn Rosewood Chapter 3

A shiver went down my spine. I knew this expression well.

...He was furious at me.

I immediately tried to back away from him but I knew it was too late. He strode up and quickly grabbed my neck in his hand, pinning me against the wall behind me. And, instantly, the pain shot down from my shoulder where it hit the wall roughly.

“Aleric... Please...,” I whimpered out against his choke, struggling to breathe.

His hand loosened slightly but only to ensure I listened to him properly.

It was crazy, but even in a moment like this, the mate bond was still making sparks erupt from where his hand touched my skin. It was sickening how a Goddess could do this to her child, make them feel these sensations even in a situation like this.

“Do you think you’re so important that you can treat Thea that way?” he roared into my face.

“Aleric... she came to me first and□.”

“Enough!” he cut me off. “I don’t want your excuses. Thea isn’t like you. She is a gentle, sweet girl! What if you had caused her enough stress to induce a miscarriage? Are you really so petty as to kill a child out of spite? A future Alpha no less?”

Even in his distorted expression of rage, he still looked so handsome. A curl of his shaggy midnight hair had fallen out of place and was framing his forehead, his green eyes gleaming. He stood a foot taller than me, broad shoulders, and built like a God. In times like this, I could feel the height difference so clearly when he stood close to me in this way. He was an imposing, scary man, but I had no choice but to find him irresistible.

I cleared my thoughts, reminding myself it was only the mate bond making me feel these things for him. His touch and scent were intoxicating but it wasn’t *me* who really felt this way about him anymore. It was just the curse.

“Aleric... no, I would never. She came to me even though she knew□.”

And suddenly, he slapped me across the face. Hard.

I blinked as my vision blurred and my cheek burned.

“You’re nothing, Ariadne. You are only here because I let you be here, don’t ever forget it. You may be chosen as Luna by the Goddess but I have the final say in this pack. If you dare to hurt Thea again, I will make sure you regret it.”

And, with that, he let me go, my back sliding down the wall as my legs gave out.

I was sure that he had contemplated killing me in that moment. His anger wasn't anything new to me but this was the first time he had threatened to remove me from my position completely... or worse.

With one final look down at me in disgust, he then left just as abruptly as he'd arrived. But as soon as the door closed behind him, I erupted in a fit of hysterical laughter, tears flowing from my eyes once more.

If he had just removed me from my position at the start then this would have never happened. If he had just rejected me immediately as his mate, instead of submitting me to this torture over the last six years, then maybe one day I could have learned to live a decent life without him.

I was here only because of him. Because the pack and Aleric asked me to be their Luna. I could have tried to live a normal life and tried to forget about him if he'd just freed me earlier.

...Maybe I could have even found someone to love me one day.

"Aria?" Sophie asked hesitantly, watching me laugh with concern.

She must have thought I had finally gone crazy, and she was probably right. Sophie watched what I had just suffered through, only to see me laugh about it all.

Perhaps I really had finally snapped. Who knew it would happen today?

"It's just a joke, Sophie, don't you see?" I smiled widely, still giggling. "It's all one big joke. My whole life! I bet the Goddess is looking down at me as a form of entertainment. Do you think Gods get bored? I wonder why else someone would make me Luna only to endure the things I have had to endure."

"Oh, Aria," Sophie said, crouching down to engulf me in her arms once more. "My poor baby. It's okay. You're going to be okay."

She stroked my hair as my laughter then slowly turned into sobs against her chest.

"I'll come with you," Sophie finally said once I had calmed down. "We can leave together. I'm sure we'll have more success at escaping if we work together."

Sophie... would come with me?

I looked at the older lady in shock. She would be risking a lot to become a rogue with me and escape. If we were ever caught, she would probably be executed.

“Come on, I’ll make you a cup of tea and we can talk about what we’re going to do,” she said, pulling me to my feet.

Hesitantly, I nodded my head and smiled at the old lady.

Sophie cared for me. It would be okay. We would be okay.

The next day I got ready for the meeting at eight o’clock with the higher members of the pack council. My long silver hair was still messy but I had done my best to tame it as much as possible.

Underneath my violet eyes, I could see the dark bags from the stress and lack of sleep I had experienced the night before. Unfortunately, using makeup had shown little results at covering it up.

My appearance was a clear representation of my family, Chrysalis. The silver hair and violet eyes were a dead giveaway to our ancient Beta lineage. It was an unusual sight for people who were not from our pack, but I was proud of my reflection. I was the first daughter born to our Beta family in over a century and the only child of my parents. I was also born two years after Aleric so it was almost guaranteed we would be mated, our families always having been so closely knit. The elders had even prophesied our union would bring great success to the pack; they had been correct.

Inside the meeting hall, I sat to Aleric’s right. But unlike a normal day, today I could feel the gaze of the other ranked pack members and elders as they bore into me. There wasn’t anything I could do about it though. No, all I could do in response was keep my eyes cast down. Always down.

Everyone knew. They knew how humiliated I must feel, how scorned I am, and yet they looked at me as though I were a circus attraction. Like I wasn’t just a girl tired of being used.

The meeting was the usual items; border patrols, rogue sighting, territory alliances. But for once, no one dared to ask me any questions. They all acted as I wasn’t even there. And to be honest, I wish I wasn’t.

I had told Sophie we would leave at the end of the week. There were still things I needed to organise, and I wanted to ensure the pack had enough prepared to keep it running for at least a little while in my absence. My hope was that no one would notice me missing for a few days and, with any luck, we could cover enough ground to stop them from finding us even if they tried; our tracks and scent hopefully disappearing by then.

“—What do you think, Luna?” Elder Luke suddenly asked me.

I looked up sharply in surprise, breaking me from my deep thoughts. I hadn't expected anyone to address me during this meeting.

I coughed, clearing my throat, and tried to think back on whatever they had just been discussing. Carelessly, I'd let my mind wander too much.

"Well... that's umm..." I started.

But, thankfully, the door then burst open at that exact moment, sparing me from having to answer.

However, what I didn't expect was for my father to be the one storming in. I hadn't even noticed he was absent in the meeting, having kept my eyes down the entire time.

Well, he was here now, standing before us, and he looked... *furious*. Something that caused me to internally whimper.

Did he agree with Aleric? Was he angry at how I had treated Thea?

"What is the meaning of this?!" he demanded. And, instinctively, I flinched. Though it was a reaction that ended up being for nothing.

Because, to my surprise, his eyes then turned not to me... but to Aleric.

I looked over sharply and saw Aleric staring back stoically, his face completely unreadable. Or maybe he just genuinely didn't care.

"What seems to be the matter, Beta Jarred?" Aleric asked. "You've shown up not only late but now you've also caused a huge disruption to our meeting."

"Don't play dumb with me," my father growled. "You think you can humiliate my family like this and I'd just continue to loyally serve you? She's my daughter! Our Luna, your mate! And yet you let some tramp bear your child and name them heir?"

The breath instantly caught in my throat, almost making me choke. My father was... defending me? Against Aleric, our Alpha? He had always been more loyal to the Alpha family than anything else.

Though it was sad, we had never been particularly close because of that, his only show of emotion to me being disappointment over the years. Disappointment even though I continued to do my best despite this hellhole of a life I was given.

Aleric's jaw quickly tightened at his words. "I think you need to calm down," he said slowly. Everyone could hear the warning in his words but my father seemed to either not notice or care.

“Calm down? *Calm down?!*” he roared. “No, I have allowed you to disrespect her for too long, pup. She is a daughter of Chrysalis and deserves your respect, even if only purely for her Beta lineage. To think you would throw her aside as if she were trash and impregnate another woman. It’s unacceptable.”

Aleric was clearly becoming angrier by the second. Something the entire room could feel.

“Beta Jar□.” He attempted to speak but my father continued to rant, cutting him off.

“Your father would be disgusted if he were alive. If Aria cannot have a child then that is the Goddess cursing *you*, and *your* disdainful manner during this mate bond. Aria doesn’t deserve this. You don’t deserve her.”

That was it. Aleric finally lost it.

“You dare to insinuate that I am the cause of your daughter’s infertility as a message from the Goddess?! Do you realise you are saying treasonous things right now? The Goddess chose me above all else to be Alpha, and to continue this pack’s leadership and lineage. If Aria cannot accept that, then that is on her. Thea will be having my child, and they *will be* named heir. That is final. Now I suggest you remove yourself from this meeting immediately and go calm down, Beta.”

A murmur of agreement echoed in the room from everyone present. But despite Aleric having used his Alpha tone, it seemed to have little effect on my father.

Instead, my father erupted in a cry of rage at the complacent attitudes of everyone around him and, immediately, everyone became silent, bowing their heads. His eyes darkened to warn that his wolf was on the surface about to take control and the room became tense. He looked as if he was about to lose control at any second.

Everyone could feel his power exuding off of him. He was the second strongest member in the whole pack, his authority and power enough to make anyone crumble; except, of course, Aleric and I. Moreover, given that we were the strongest pack in the country now, it could be argued that my father was stronger than even most pack Alphas.

Yet somehow, even in the face of such anger, Aleric merely scoffed at his attitude....

...And it was enough for all hell to break loose, almost as though you could see my father finally snap internally.

“*I’ll kill you,*” he yelled, eyes manic as he launched himself across the table towards Aleric.

“*Father! No!*” I screamed, but it was too late.

Because he shifted mid-air into his grey wolf and tackled Aleric to the ground.