

CHAPTER 163

163 Ava: Mom (III) Each word is like a dagger to my heart, twisting and tearing at the fragile threads of my composure. I feel myself crumbling beneath the pain, a tear slipping down my cheek, hot and heavy with the weight of a lifetime of misery. But then, amidst the chaos of my emotions, Vanessa's words echo in my mind: "Your mother no longer has any power over you. All the power she holds is in the past, in memories." I cling to those words like a lifeline, using them to anchor myself in the present. Taking a deep, shuddering breath, I meet my mother's gaze head-on. "No. Mom," I say, my voice growing stronger with each word. "I didn't ruin anything. Nor did I fail. I was a child who deserved to live with her family. With happiness. You failed me. You should have sheltered me. Loved me. And you never did." My voice cracks a little, and I clear my throat. "I'm not here for you. I'm not here as your daughter. I just want to know what information you have about the vampires." My gaze meets hers, and this time I make sure to keep my face flat. Devoid of emotion. I can't let her see how much she affects me. "This is your last chance, Mom. The moment I tell Lucas that you have nothing to tell-" "He will kill me as soon as I give him the information he seeks," she says, turning her face away from mine with a wave of her hand that I recognize. by that worl You make me as if baby You changed ou ki*sed me every night before I went to derp tam Dame it. I can't stop the anger. "You are a deceiver. You cannot be my child. No defect would be borne of my womb Her weak voice grows strong as she screams. This is not the mother I remember This is not an elegant lady. Her face is twisted with hate, her mouth spitting vitriol, her eyes wild and bulging. "You are no wolf. You are no child of mine. You should be grateful I kept you alive all these years!" "Do not call me by that name!" She reaches in a frenzy for anything that she can throw, and settles on a pillow, tossing it ineffectually in my direction. "Get away from me, you demonspawn child. You are not mine! You were never mine!" The shrill beeping of the machines pierces the air. I stare in shock as the room erupts into chaos. Nurses rush past me, their faces set in grim determination as they surround my mother, now thrashing in some soit of frenzied rage. Vanessa's hands grab my shoulders, firm and steady, guiding me away from the bed. I stumble, my legs quivering beneath me. "Ava, we need to go." Vanessa's voice is low and urgent in my ear. "Let the nurses handle this." But I can't tear my eyes away from my mother. She writhes on the bed, her screams rising above the beeping and the nurses' calm commands. Her eyes, wild and fevered, lock onto mine, and for a moment, I'm frozen in place. word slips from my lips, barely audible above the commotion. But she doesn't hear me. Or if she does, she shows no sign of it. Her screams only grow louder, more frantic, as she fights against the nurses' restraining hands. "No!" she shrieks, her voice raw and ragged. "Get away from me! You're all in on it! You're all trying to kill me!" Vanessa's grip tightens on my shoulders, and she pulls me towards. the door with more force. "Ava, we need to go. Now." This time, I don't resist. I allow her to guide me out of the room, my feet moving of their own accord. The screams and beeping fade behind us as the door swings shut, but they echo in my mind, wWWW.nov@Lw@rM.(c)OM

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Haunting. Horrible. A nightmare of a reunion, and—I know deep in my heart—the final chapter in our mother-daughter story. Holding afrodit he sus the verbal uw wether in faded, helging me hours it E Camisas & lumelle fall away from my pholders as she steps in Nort of the her eyes searching my face Both A right? she asks softly CEST open my mouth to respond, but no words come. Am I alright?! don't know feel nuh, hollowed out, as if my mother's words have carved away a piece of me. Selene presses against my leg, her warmth seeping through my jeans I reach down automatically to stroke her fur finding comfort in the fandhar texture. Now he okay, she whispers in my mind. You're safe. od more to myself than to Vanessa or Selene. Yes, I'm safe. But the ache in my chest, the dull throb of an old wound reopened, suggests otherwise. It's Fune I'm going to be okay Mamoon't hurt tv zoyawue The pain will fade. Vanessa's hand comes to rest on my arm, a gentle pressure. "Ava. I know this is hard. But you did the fight thing, coming here. Now we know she has no information to give willingly. We can focus on other leads." There are nurses staring at us, whispering behind their desks. I'm sure rumors will fly soon. I'm not sure how many of these humans realize that they're watching their own wolfish drama, no subscription required. The thought makes my lips quirk. Yes, today would have been an excellent episode for one of Selene's trashy shows. Perhaps that's all my life is. A story, meant for the masses, bringing my wounds on display-Your life story doesn't define you. Selene murmurs. Your choices do. Right. I square my shoulders, trying to fake confidence. Nothing gets past Vanessa's eyes, of course, but I'm determined to walk out of this damn building with my pride intact. "Can you let Lucas know this was a waste of time? We should get a flight ready to go back to Granite City soon." There's no point being here anymore. It was silly to think this would have ever taken more than the few minutes I spent in there. Why even pack? I should go home tonight.

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