

CHAPTER 69

69 Ava: Sister Miriam (1) Mom's fingers deftly twist and turn my hair, pinning it into some sort of elaborate style. Her touch is clinical, devoid of any maternal warmth, as she secures each lock into place with sharp tugs. She's been doing this for hours, trying to figure out the best style for the mating ceremony. The only comfort I have is in knowing she'll never have the chance to dress me as planned. "Honestly, Ava, couldn't you have made more of an effort with your appearance?" she chides, as disapproving as always. "Your hair is little better than a rat's nest." This is something she's said at least three other times in the hour she's been here. I bite back the retort that hovers on my tongue, knowing better than to provoke her ire. A musical jingle causes her to pause, and she checks something on her phone for a second, before returning to her project. "It's a good thing your worth isn't tied to your looks," she continues, her words 12:40 1/7 < 69 Ava: Sister Miriam (1) cutting deeper than any physical blow. "You should be grateful that Alpha Renard has deigned to mate with you, despite your deficiencies." There's a little chip in the paint of the wall above the mirror, and my eyes are drawn toward it. It's something to focus on as I tune out her nagging and cruel remarks. For a woman who's capable of so much love toward her older children, it's amazing how much vitriol she can throw at another. If I wasn't positive I were her child by birth, I would definitely assume I'm adopted. "But, Ava," she warns me, still yanking and tugging, "Don't let it go to your head. The title of Luna is not for the likes of you. You'll be a mate in name only. It's still an honor, but the pack can never have a blemish as its figurehead." It's a struggle to maintain my composure, to keep the bitter resentment from showing on my face. "Do you understand?" she presses, looking into the mirror so I'm forced to meet her gaze. She's almost manic in her quest for my acquaintance. "This is your duty, your obligation to the pack. You will mate with 12.46 C 69 Ava: Sister Miriam (1) Alpha Renard, and you will bear his children. That is the extent of your purpose." I nod, the motion stiff and mechanical, like a puppet on strings. My mind, however, is already spinning, formulating a plan to escape this waking nightmare. As soon as Phoenix grants me the freedom to return to the Aspen pack, I'll contact Lisa. We'll run far away from the suffocating confines of this stupid pack and their twisted expectations. The door creaks open, interrupting my mother's nagging monologue. An older woman with an elegant bearing and a bright, unsettling gleam in her eyes enters the room. She exudes an aura of authority that sends shivers through my body. She isn't a wolf, but she isn't human, either. Her eyes are a dark, glittering red and her hair is black without the faintest sheen of color in its highlights, adding to the otherworldly presence she has. My mother straightens, a look of respect crossing her features. "Sister Miriam," she greets the stranger. "What an honor to have you grace us with your presence." 12:48 307 69 Ava: Sister Miriam (1) Sister Miriam inclines her head, a faint smile playing on her lips. They're pale and thin. "The honor is mine, Grace. Alpha Renard requested my expertise in a delicate matter." Her inhuman stare settles on me, sending prickles of unease over my skin. It's hard to hold her gaze. If I had hackles, they'd be standing. This woman is a predator. She's an existence that's dangerous even to wolves. I can feel it, even if I don't know what she is. "Of course," my mother says, her cultured voice a little tense. She's affected, too. "Alpha Renard said you would be able to see if our Ava is pregnant." A flush creeps up my neck, and I avert my gaze, suddenly unable to meet Sister Miriam's probing stare. I don't know what she can do that a pregnancy test can't this early on, and I'm not sure I want to. "Indeed," Sister Miriam murmurs, her footsteps soft as she approaches. "I am the most sw@W.n0velw0rm.com

Updates...

www.n0v@lW0rM.CoM

killed in detecting the earliest signs of breeding. The alpha can rest assured that I will provide an accurate assessment." She stops by my side, meeting my eyes again in the 12 69 Ava: Sister Miriam (1) mirror. Her smile is wide, her teeth too white. It looks unnatural on her face, as though no other muscles move with her mirth. "There's no need for concern, child," she says. Her voice is sweet in a way that should be soothing, and yet paired with her face, it's terrifying. "I will be gentle." Long, cold fingers tilt my chin upward as she turns to look at me. I shiver at the touch, something inside me protesting the close contact. It's like my skin burns. where she touches, but when I try to jerk away, she grips my chin hard, inspecting me with calculating eyes. "Hmm," she murmurs, letting go to trail her hand down my neck, across my collarbone, down my chest and finally coming to rest on my abdomen. "Tell me, have. you experienced any unusual fatigue? Nausea? Tenderness?" "No." Her hand presses firmly against my stomach, and I flinch. Though her hands are cold, an unwelcome heat eats at my skin. It hurts. 12:48 517 69 Ava: Sister Miriam (1) "Relax, dear," she chides, as if talking to an unruly child. "This will go much smoother if you cooperate." Taking my eyes off her reflection in the mirror, I watch my mother, instead. A faint hint of disgust furrows her brow, and her lips are tight. She's a lot less respectful when the woman isn't looking at her. Interesting. What manner of person is Sister Miriam? I'm surprised Alpha Renard would ever work with someone other than shifters, with his supremacist views. "Interesting," Sister Miriam murmurs, her crimson eyes inspecting me as closely as my mother inspects dust on the furniture. "You can't shift at all, can you?" She doesn't wait for my response. "Your energy is... muddled. Unfocused." She leans in closer, her dark hair brushing against my arm as she whispers into my ear. "Almost as if you're fighting against your true nature." Keeping my face impassive is a phenomenal effort, but I think I manage. "I can sense the potential within you, though," she continues, her cold breath fanning across my face. "A nousar lian dormant uniting to he unlaashad" 12.40 617 < 69 Ava: Sister Miriam (1) She taps her fingers at the pendant at my neck, and I fight everything in my body to stay still. "Don't fret, child. I can help awaken that which slumbers inside you." The predatory gleam in her eyes sends a sinister wind through my soul. Comment 12 View All >Ww.n0v@lW0rM.CoM

www.n0v@lW0rM.CoM