

Chapter 7 – The Escape

"I didn't want to wake up. I was having a much better time asleep. And that's really sad. It was almost like a reverse nightmare, like when you wake up from a nightmare, you're so relieved. I woke up into a nightmare." - Ned Vizzini

Neron

I wanted it dead! I wanted it out of my life!
My father allowed it to live this long, but it
was time for it to go!

That thing was my mate? My other half? I
wanted to vomit at the thought of it. How
dare my Moon Goddess pair us together! I
was the goddamned Alpha, and my Luna was
to be strong, beautiful, and fierce. Not this
sack of quivering shit.

The rage that erupted the moment we
touched outmatched what I had felt before.
The fated sparks, the fated touch, were to
only come from anyone else but this thing.
Out of all people in the world, I should've felt

Chapter 7 – The Escape

the fated sparks with Odessa! Why was it now that fate revealed that the slave was my mate and not the other times I hit her? Why didn't I feel the sparks then? I gripped the bloodied knife in my hand, watching the blood from the wound on its head and shoulder blade drip onto the marble floors, seeping into the crevices.

The slave now bears the Mark of the Betrayer. In ancient times, when a pack member had committed a crime so horrific against their pack or pack members, the alpha had the power to brand that individual as a betrayer. The alpha takes a knife or a dagger and slashes the pack mark in one swift cut. It marked the betrayer for death or exile, whichever fate the alpha decided. The mark was to never heal so that other werewolves could see and know the mutt for who he or she truly was. **Scum.**

This worthless cur was and never would be a genuine member of my pack. The tension in the air was so thick that I could butter a piece of toast with it. It did nothing but aggravate

Chapter 7 – The Escape

the pain in my heart as the mate bond disintegrated. I could hear her wolf howl in pain, as it felt the destruction of what could never be. Onyx howled and convulsed in pain. Knowing that I hurt Onyx also hurt me, but it had to be done. Throwing my plate at its skull was only the beginning of its torture. Onyx would understand one day.

“Please...” It wheezed as its feeble hands tried to cover her bleeding wound. “I didn’t mean for this to happen—!”

“Just as you didn’t mean to rip out the pack’s heart that day eight years ago, right?” I roared at it. It pressed its body further against the floor, fearful of my approach. “But, not to worry. As my first decree as Alpha, I’ll have you executed. You will not have the honor of being buried in our cemetery next to honorable werewolves. No, I will burn your corpse to ash, and I will dispose of your ashes far from this territory. Any trace of you will be destroyed and from this day forward, you no longer exist in the Zircon Moon Pack.” I smirked. “Be grateful. I’ll grant you the death

Chapter 7 – The Escape

you always begged for down in your cell.”

The murmurs behind me grew louder, many agreeing with my decision. I was not the only one who wanted this cur gone.

“Get rid of it!”

“It’s an awful sight. It deserves to die!”

“May its death heal us all. It will face punishment from our goddess!”

“Make her execution public, so we can all bear witness!”

“You’re making a colossal mistake, you fucking idiot!” Onyx roared in my head, fighting for control over my body. His anger seared through me like lit gasoline, nearly causing me to buckle over. **“I won’t let you harm our mate!”**

“It is not our mate and would never be our mate! Our mate is Odessa, and its high time you realized that! I’m doing this for our good, O

Chapter 7 – The Escape

nyx!" I screamed back, shutting down our mind-link. I growled low, ready to wipe those damn brown eyes from my mind. Onyx knew this entire time we were mates and didn't tell me! My wolf betrayed me! This madness ends now, starting with the death of this stupid slave!

Before I could make any move against her, two powerful arms wrapped around the underside of my arms, forcing me away from her. I didn't need to look behind me to see who it was. By the scent of frankincense alone, I knew Kwame was holding me back. His strength matched mine, and he was pulling one hell of a fight. I won't let my gamma stop me from exacting justice.

"Run quick, Halima!" Kwame roared, pivoting to the side and tackling me to the ground. All hell broke loose behind me.

Halima

Chapter 7 – The Escape

“Run quick, Halima!”

This couldn't be real. This couldn't be the world I was living in. Neron injured me, rejected me, and was marked for death in under two minutes. My mate, someone who I dreamed would rescue me from this hell, had pulled me further into it. The Mark of the Betrayer would never go away. This mark will stay with me until I die. No werewolf pack would ever want me. Once you're branded, that's it. I was officially a criminal to all werewolf kind. Without trying, Neron destroyed the hope in my life, never to return.

No one had dared to help me, not my family or any other pack member. But Kwame, the new Gamma, is...fighting for me? He body slammed Alpha Neron to the ground like a weightless dummy. I heard a scream coming from a little boy, his brother, to draw the attention away from the spectacle, and his father flipped the Gamma table to crash into another.

Chaos erupted, and I caused it. All because

Chapter 7 – The Escape

the damn mate connection set the new alpha off. Screams and shouts echoed left and right through the hall as I tried desperately to stop the bleeding on my shoulder blade. But nothing was working. I was heading to hell in a handbasket. I might as well accept my fate. The fight in me was gone. The guards flanking my left and right were coming to take me back to the dungeons, where I would be tortured and promptly executed. Nothing mattered anymore. I was finished.

I could only hope that, in my new life, I'd have a better outcome than this.

But something I never thought would happen, happened. Amani Dubois, the former Gamma Female, ran to me at near-blinding speed and scooped me up into her arms. "I'm getting you out of here, sweet child." She whispered in my ear.

She was saving me. Why?

We burst through the assembly double doors, dashing towards the pack house's exit. I heard

Chapter 7 – The Escape

former Alpha Jonathan's roar behind me, ordering the guards to not let us escape. To capture us and bring us back. This was no longer just a minor disagreement; this was a battle for my life. My freedom. I knew both the Gamma and Gamma Female were to be not only expert combatants but also strategic analyzers. They knew how to exploit the weaknesses of enemies and could uncover secrets and hidden things that no one else could find. Third in command of their packs, and yet, the most intelligent of all leaders.

Avoiding all hindrances to my escape, Mrs. Dubois brought me out of the pack house. The moon was high, and the cool breeze licked my skin, making me shiver. However, the moonlight made the fire of determination clear in the older woman's brown eyes. The blood seeping from my wounds stained her dark green dress, yet she was unbothered by it. From her looks alone, I knew this woman wanted me to live. She was risking so much for me and didn't aim to reap the benefits of it.

Chapter 7 – The Escape

Footsteps and tramples of the guards echoed behind us, edging closer. Alpha Neron must've mind-linked anyone and everyone possible to stop us from escaping because Mrs. Dubois frantically looked around for an exit. Guards and pack members spilled out from all sides of the pack house, making the situation even more serious.

"Here! This pathway is clear!" She deduced, bolting toward an unfamiliar route into the woods. The full moon, bright as a diamond flame, illuminated our path toward freedom. As if the Moon Goddess herself is showing us the way. Mrs. Dubois's heartbeat thudded against my ears, along with multiple footsteps and shouts from the distance. We're being chased down!

"Why are you helping me?" I asked the former Gamma Female. If there was any time to ask a question, why not now when I was near death? "Why aren't you leaving me to die?"

"Because, dear..." Mrs. Dubois spoke through

Chapter 7 – The Escape

pants, adrenaline pumping through her veins as she dodged every tree and jumped every log in her high heels! I don't know whether to be terrified or amazed. "You don't deserve this treatment. You won't believe me, but I speak the truth. You are innocent. And you deserve to be free."

"How do you know I am innocent?" I questioned dubiously. "Everybody decided I was guilty years ago. What not you too?"

She cast me a smile filled with reassurance and confidence. I peered into her eyes and see no hint of malice or deceit. She was telling me the truth. "My husband and I have been working quietly to prove your innocence. The death of our Luna and Angel hurt our pack deeply, and they still hurt to this day. Blinded by their pain, they hurt you. However, that gives them no authority to break you as they've done. Pain upon pain is just an endless cycle where nobody wins."

The woman leaped over a small pond in a single bound, her arms locked and tucked

Chapter 7 – The Escape

under my body. “Why now?” I asked.

“The Alpha is committed to executing you for a crime you have no fault in. The animal responsible for killing his mother and sister is still out there. The Gamma Family works quietly for a reason, baby girl.” She stopped for a moment to look at me with an expression full of determination. “My only regret is not taking you out of Alpha Jonathan’s clutches sooner.”

The rapid footsteps behind us quieted down, the farther away we got. In the moonlight, Mrs. Dubois’s eyes glazed over, meaning she was mind-linking with someone, probably to her husband. Sooner than later, we came across a clearing that stood over the rocky edge of a cliff. The faint scent of freshwater tickled my nose. There was a river flowing far below us, and it pacified me. It felt good. Mrs. Dubois gently set me on my bare feet as my eyes glued to the woodsy horizon.