

## Chapter 17

Tabitha's POV

To my surprise, the person I missed the most till this point was still Derek.

Memories came flooding back, overwhelming me. I recalled us running together in the moonlight after we shifted. Back then, we had just confirmed we were each other's mates, all thrilled.

Even after all this time, his face that night was etched in my mind.

And after he marked me, he was so gentle and considerate, taking care of me like no one else.

Our love used to be the envy of all. And we had thought it would last forever.

But now, he was with someone else, even having a kid of their own.

I had to remind myself again and again of his betrayal and ruthlessness, trying my best to forget about the good old days.

In intense pain, I gritted my teeth and told myself that I gotta hang tough. There were truths not yet dug up, so I couldn't just die.

The cold moonlight shone on my wound, the skin beneath my fur warming up.

As time passed, the pain turned numb.

By dawn, I shifted back into human form.

Feeling exhausted, I collapsed on the ground, too done in to even get dressed.

I finally understood why Orson asked me to treat myself alone in the depths of the forest.

I kept doing it for a whole week. During the day, I took water and food that Orson brought me from the place that we had agreed. And at night, I used the moonlight to heal myself after shifting.

On the last morning, I felt less pain, and my wound started to scab.

I put on my clothes and ventured to the edge of the forest as usual.

Heading straight for me was Orson, who had been delivering food to me these days.

He seemed to have rushed here, his black wool coat damp, his blond hair moist.

"How are you feeling?" He lowered his head and looked at me with concern.

"Much better. My wound doesn't hurt as much as it used to," I feebly replied.

"Let's go. You need some nutrition." Orson reached out to hold me up.

I dodged, but since I was too weak, I couldn't help but lean on him.

"I got you. Slow down."

Orson took me back to the apartment. Then he poured some milk and fried some eggs for me.

It was my first hot meal in a week. After finishing the food, I washed up, threw myself onto the bed, and soon fell asleep.

It was already the next morning when I opened my eyes.

I looked at my haggard, emaciated face in the mirror with mixed feelings.

Such treatment was torture for me.

I gotta wrap up the rejection ceremony ASAP.

Snapping back to reality, I turned on my phone. Then I dialed Derek's number at once, ignoring the pile-up of messages.

He picked up right away, snapping, "Tabitha, where the hell have you been?"

Instead of explaining, I said anxiously, "Derek, I'll meet you at the Council of Elders in an hour. I don't wanna drag this out any longer. Let's get this divorce over with."

To hide my haggard face, I put on some makeup—something I rarely did.

Then I threw on a baggy coat over a chunky jumper, so he wouldn't tell how skinny I'd become.

As a doctor, Orson, of course, was strongly against me doing it. "Tabitha, you aren't fit to go out," he said.

I pleaded, locking eyes with him, "I just wanna dip out of his life looking sharp."

He sighed, "Alright then, let me take you there."

This time, I didn't turn him down. I just wanted to get the divorce done ASAP.

On the way, I checked my phone. Derek texted me a bunch of times, even stooping so low as to use my dad's precarious health as leverage. I never knew he could be so disgusting.

A while later, Orson pulled over. Then he got out of the car in advance to open the door for me, all gentleman-like.

Murmuring my thanks, I managed to drag myself out of the car. I was just a smidge better than last week, still weak as a kitten.

"Careful. Go slow and watch your steps," reminded Orson.

I smiled gratefully, "Relax. I'll definitely be careful. I wanna live more than anyone else."

I wouldn't let myself die so easily. Not until I found out the truth.

When I walked slowly to the Council of Elders' entrance with Orson's help, I locked eyes with Derek standing across from me.

His gaze was fixed on Osborn's arm over my shoulder, the icy look in his eyes sending a chill down my spine. I know too well how Derek played.

True. He'd been hanging out with Daphne to get back at me.

But that didn't mean he would allow me to do the same. And it was exactly why I kept turning down Orson's kind offer these days.

Derek glared at me, uttering in a cold voice, "So he's the reason why you're rushing me for this rejection ceremony?"

I shoot back with a sneer, "You cheated on me, remember? You're the one breaking our mate bond. And now you're accusing me? Have you no shame?"

Derek gave no reply. Instead, he walked closer until we were one step away.

Then he whispered in my ear, his voice carrying a hint of danger, "You've been with him the past few days?"

"No."

"Liar!" he growled. "Someone saw you entering the forest with him. You want me to send someone to his pack to ask his Alpha about it?"

"That's none of your business." I glared at him. "We're getting a divorce anyway."

Derek looked at me evilly. "Good news. I don't wanna divorce you now."