



8 Chapter 8 The Unexpected Lunch

Elara 1

I checked the time. It was only eleven in the morning.

"Now?" I asked, caught off guard.

"Yeah, they're pretty eager." He paused, his voice carrying a hint of frustration. "You know how pack stuff works. Even with our deal, certain things need to be done properly."

Though ours was a contract marriage, we still needed to follow werewolf customs.

"Okay. Where should we meet?" I finally agreed.

"Moonlight Restaurant downtown. I'll be waiting for you there."

An hour later, at Moonlight Restaurant

This was one of the fanciest places in the city, with elegant decor and rich clientele only. I was somewhat surprised Damian had chosen this spot, given his position in the Sterling Pack.

"Elara."

I turned to see Damian walking toward me.

He wore a dark gray cashmere sweater and



black pants today, looking more formal than yesterday at the club, but still with that natural elegance that seemed to come so easily to him. His bronze hair caught the light as he moved, and I couldn't help but notice how several she-wolves in the restaurant subtly lowered their heads as he passed.

My breath caught slightly as he approached.

There was something different about him today—more controlled, more calculated. His movements were fluid and purposeful, like a predator who knew exactly where he was going.

"Where's your family?" I asked, looking around but seeing no one else waiting.

His expression turned slightly uncomfortable. He ran a hand through his bronze hair, a gesture that seemed almost nervous. "They had to leave suddenly. Some urgent pack business that needed immediate attention."

"They left?" I frowned, feeling both relieved and annoyed.

Something about his explanation felt off, but I couldn't put my finger on what.

"Should we still do this lunch then?"

"If you don't mind," he replied, looking genuinely uncomfortable.



His amber eyes flickered away from mine for just a moment before meeting them again. "Actually, I think this might be better. At least we can talk properly without dealing with complicated pack drama."

The waiter led us to a quiet corner table. Damian pulled out my chair for me.

"You look upset," he observed once he sat across from me, those amber eyes studying me with surprising focus. My wolf shifted uncomfortably under his gaze. "What happened?"

"Just some workplace drama," I said with a shrug. "Nothing I couldn't handle. Actually, I quit today."

"Quit?" He raised an eyebrow. "To focus on your family business?"

I nodded, choosing not to get into the office drama with Kate and the others. Some things weren't worth talking about.

The waiter came to take our order. Damian recommended several dishes with the easy confidence of someone who knew the menu well.

His voice was smooth and assured as he spoke to the staff, the natural authority of someone used to being obeyed.

Yet when he turned back to me, there was



something almost vulnerable in his expression.

"About my family not being here today," he began somewhat awkwardly, "Honestly, my position in the Sterling Pack is complicated. The higher ups don't usually care about my personal choices as long as I don't cause problems for the pack's reputation."

I looked at him, suddenly feeling sorry for him.

Behind the confident front, I sensed a familiar loneliness that matched my own experiences as a hybrid.

The way his jaw tightened slightly when he spoke about his pack told me there were deeper wounds there than he was letting on.

"So our marriage basically doesn't need their approval," he continued, his voice carrying a hint of bitter humor that made my wolf whine softly in response.

"Damian ..." I found myself leaning forward, wanting to comfort him somehow.

"It's fine," he waved it off, forcing a smile that didn't reach his amber eyes. "I'm used to it. Sometimes staying under the pack's radar gives you a certain freedom, right? At least we can handle this marriage arrangement on our own terms, without too much interference from pack elders."



I suddenly felt we had some unspoken understanding.

Both of us existed somewhat on the edges of our packs. Me as a hybrid never fully accepted, him for reasons I couldn't figure out, but could clearly sense.

"Maybe this is better," I said softly. I reached across the table without thinking, my fingers barely brushing his before pulling back.

The brief contact sent a spark through my wolf that I tried to ignore. "At least we both understand what this relationship is. No crazy expectations."

"Exactly," his smile became more real, warming his amber eyes. "We're both practical people."

I looked at him for a moment.

Then I finally asked the question that had been sitting in my chest since Zack left.

"Then can you explain something to me now?"

His gaze lifted slightly. "What is it?"

"What does Wolfe really mean?"

The air between us seemed to shift.

I kept my voice calm, as if I were only asking out of casual curiosity.

"As a hybrid, I rarely paid attention to pack politics. But honestly, Zack's reaction made me curious about the story behind that name."

For a second, something changed in Damian's eyes.

It was gone too quickly for me to understand.

Then the corner of his mouth curved into a beautiful smile.

He looked at me with quiet amusement, almost as if he had been waiting for me to ask.

"That," he said slowly, "is a very interesting story."

I waited.

He leaned back slightly, his gaze still fixed on me.

"And for now, I would rather keep it interesting."

I stared at him.

"So you're not going to tell me?"

"Not tonight."

"Why?"

His smile deepened.

"Because if I tell you everything too soon, Mrs. Wolfe, what reason will you have to stay curious about me?"

The way he said my new name made my fingers



tighten around the stem of my glass.

"Well then, Mrs. Wolfe," he said, raising his glass. His voice dropped slightly, deep enough to send an unexpected shiver down my spine. "To our practical arrangement?"

"Cheers."

My hand trembled slightly as I lifted my glass to meet his.

As our glasses touched, I noticed that mysterious look in his eyes again.

This time, I did not ask.

After all, every wolf had secrets.

And something told me Damian Wolfe had more secrets than most.