The Truth That Broke the Bond

Darius scoffs. “Of course I’m sure, Your Majesty.”

The Alpha King frowns deeper. “If that’s true—which I find very hard to believe—then here.” He reaches into a drawer and pulls out a small, ornate key. “You may free her from the cuffs, since she’s been… well-behaved.”

Darius blinks. “Cuffs? She wasn’t wearing any cuffs when she came to me.”

The Alpha King stares at him as if he’s grown another head, trying to solve a riddle with missing pieces. “What do you mean she wasn’t wearing cuffs? We both know I had her restrained to tame her inner beast. You saw how disrespectful and wild she was in the throne room.”

Darius mutters, “I thought you already freed her before she came to me.”

The Alpha King’s frown deepens, and a spike of unease twists in my gut.

This is my opening.

“Speaking of cuffs,” I say. “That’s the reason I’m here. My mate—she’s an omega from your palace. She’s wearing magical cuffs. Ones only you can unlock. I’m here to find out what she did… and to ask for her pardon, and what it will take to free her.”

The Alpha King stares at me as if I’ve spoken nonsense.

“Cuffed?” he repeats. “I haven’t imprisoned any omega. If an omega commits a crime, they’re executed immediately. No trials. No pardon. You know that, Alpha.”

“She said you ordered it,” I say slowly.

“I don’t waste time on omegas,” he snaps. “They’re insignificant to me.”

Darius shifts uneasily. “The only one imprisoned with magical cuffs… is the princess.”

Silence slams into the room like a door shutting.

I look at them. They look at each other. Nothing lines up.

The Alpha King turns back to me, his gaze sharp and assessing.

“What is your mate’s name, Alpha Kei?”

I open my mouth—and realize—

I don’t know.

Fuck.

How can I not know her name?

I was too busy trying to claim her, mark her, chase her. The realisation hits like a punch to the ribs. I feel like a fool.

And suddenly, I’m not even sure I know who she is at all.

“…I don’t know,” I admit, fear curling tight in my chest.

Silence stretches—heavy, sharp, dangerous.

“I may be mistaken,” I say finally, the words tasting like iron. “But the cuffs on my mate are real. Magical. Perhaps I was wrong about you holding the key. I’ll need to question her again to be certain.”

The Alpha King studies me for a long, tense moment, then exhales slowly.

“Bring her to me,” he says. “Whoever this omega is… let me see these cuffs myself. If I forged them, I will know the key.”

Relief flickers through my chest. I dip my head.

“Thank you, Your Majesty.”

I turn to leave.

“Alpha Kei.”

I pause.

“Join us for the wedding,” the king says smoothly. “The highest of all.”

“That won’t be necessary.”

“It wasn’t a request.”

I open my mouth to argue, but he cuts me off with a raised hand.

“You may leave immediately after the ceremony. Consider your presence a great favor to the crown.”

Before I can push further, an elder rushes in, breathless.

“Your Majesty, everything is prepared. The ceremony is about to begin.”

So that’s that.

I fall into step with them as we move through the palace corridors, my senses on edge. The ceremony hall is massive—golden pillars, moonstone floors, banners flowing like liquid silver, flowers so rare they probably required blood sacrifices to obtain.

Lavish. Excessive. King-worthy.

Nobles fill the seats, their whispers slithering like snakes.

The Alpha King takes his place, and beside him sits the Queen.

And my breath f*****g stops.

For a heartbeat, I genuinely think I’m losing my damn mind.

Because the woman seated there—

She looks like my mate.

Not similar.

Not reminiscent.

A carbon copy—older, more refined, but unmistakable. Same bone structure. Same proud mouth. Same eyes, only tempered by time and pain. The same impossible presence.

Get it together. You're imagining things. Mate bond. Stress. Lack of sleep.

That's all.

I take the seat offered to me—large, elevated, positioned close to the throne. Clearly chosen to remind everyone exactly who I am.

Power bows to power.

Darius steps forward, chest puffed out like a peacock in heat. The priest follows—ancient and solemn, beard white as snow, hair cascading down his back.

"Presenting the Princess," an elder announces.

The doors open.

She walks in veiled, dressed in ceremonial white and gold.

She stops before Darius.

He's grinning like he's already won the world.

Something about her feels… off.

I don't know how else to explain it. Her aura is shallow. Polished, but hollow. Her posture is wrong—too eager, too soft.

Even my mate—an omega—had fire. Teeth.

This girl feels like silk stuffed with straw.

I find myself irrationally glad she isn't mine.

I relax slightly.

The priest begins the vows.

"Do you take—"

"Yes," the princess answers immediately. Too fast. Too eager. "With my life." Her voice trembles with anticipation, like she's been waiting her whole life for this moment.

She practically vibrates as she repeats each vow, as if she's afraid someone might snatch them away if she hesitates.

Darius responds just as eagerly.

The priest nods, pleased. "Seal the union with a kiss."

Darius reaches up, smug, and lifts the veil.

Then—

He staggers back.

Like he's seen a ghost.

He rubs his eyes, scrubbing at them wildly. Blinks. Looks again.

"What—what is this—?"

Gasps explode through the hall.

The Alpha King is on his feet in an instant. “THAT IS NOT MY DAUGHTER!” he roars.

Chaos erupts.

“That’s not the princess!”

“What’s happening?”

“By the Moon—”

The Alpha King’s aura slams down, crushing. “You marked and mated another woman,” he growls at Darius. “Not the princess.”

Darius looks like the ground just vanished beneath him. “S-she came to my room,” he stammers. “Escorted by royal guards. Her face was covered—I didn’t—”

“You didn’t THINK,” the Alpha King barks. “For the Alpha of the second strongest pack, you are disappointingly foolish.”

His gaze snaps to the girl.

“WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?” he snarls. “Explain yourself before I rip your heart out where you kneel.”

The girl drops to her knees, sobbing. She starts shaking—literally shaking.

“I—I don’t know!” she cries. “We—we switched clothes in the women’s chamber after class. She asked if I loved Alpha Darius—if I wanted to be princess—”

“Enough.”

The Alpha King turns, fury radiating from him in waves. “Find the princess,” he commands the guards. “Now. Or every single one of you dies.”

The guards move immediately.

The hall is still boiling with panic when the doors explode open—literally explode.

Wood cracks. Metal shrieks. Every head snaps toward the entrance.

And then my brother storms in.

Kael.

He comes in like a force of nature—and for half a second, relief flashes through me… until my brain finally catches up to what he’s doing.

He’s dragging her.

By the hair.

My mate.

My wolf howls so loudly inside my skull that it feels like my bones vibrate.

“What the—KAEL!” I roar.

He doesn’t stop. He drags her across the marble like she weighs nothing, her feet barely touching the floor, her breath hitching—

I don’t think.

I move.

Inhuman speed. A blur. One heartbeat I'm seated—the next, I have my brother by the throat, lifting him clean off the ground by his hair. He releases my mate.

The hall erupts.

"KEI—wait—"

Too late.

I slam Kael into the floor hard enough to crack stone.

The sound echoes.

Silence follows.

"You touch her," I snarl, my voice shaking with fury, "and I'll kill you. Brother or not."

Kael coughs, eyes wide—not in fear.

In shock.

"She—in your way—" he gasps. "I thought—"

I don't hear the rest.

I drop to my knees and pull her into my arms.

Her body is trembling.

Her hair is a mess, cheeks flushed, eyes bright with unshed tears, fury, and—Moon help me—defiance.

"Are you alright?" I ask, my hands everywhere, checking her, grounding myself, needing to feel her breathe.

She blinks up at me, then huffs. "I told him not to touch me. Men never listen."

I almost laugh. Almost.

A soft, broken whisper cuts through the chaos.

Quiet.

Devastated.

"Ravelle…"

Every muscle in my body locks.

The Queen is standing.

Her eyes—those same eyes—are filled with tears.

Every head turns to her.

The Alpha King's aura spikes like a storm. "RAVELLE!" he roars, the name cracking the air like thunder.

I stiffen, confusion slams into me like a wall.

I look down at the woman in my arms. “That’s not Princess Ravelle,” I snap, looking back at him. “This is my mate. The omega I told you about. The one you imprisoned.”

The room goes dead silent.

The Alpha King stares at me like I’ve lost my mind.

Then at her.

Then at the Queen.

Then back at me.

“What?” he says softly.

Then louder. “What?”

He steps forward, his voice breaking into a roar. “That is not an omega.”

My chest tightens.

“That,” he says, pointing at the woman clutched against my chest, “is my daughter.”

My heart stops.

“She is the Crown Princess of this kingdom.”

The world fractures.

I laugh once.

Sharp. Broken.

“No,” I say. “No, that’s not—”

“The King is right,” the Queen whispers, tears finally falling. “That is my daughter. Our daughter who escaped before her arranged marriage.”

My heart stops all over again.

I look down at her.

She looks back at me, jaw tight, eyes blazing—very much not denying it.

“You’re saying,” I breathe, dread crawling up my spine, “that my mate… isn’t an omega?”

“She is not,” the Alpha King says coldly. “She is my heir.”

Silence.

Then it hits.

Not an omega.

Not just some mouthy, brave, infuriating woman who lied straight to my face.

She’s the Alpha King’s daughter.

She’s the princess.

My gaze never leaves Ravelle, and for a moment, something like guilt flashes across her face—before it disappears.

"You lied to me," I whisper.

She swallows. "I had to."

The mate bond tightens around my ribs, painful and unforgiving, like a chain snapping shut around my chest.

Slowly, I rise to my feet, still holding her—still feeling the bond burn—still staring into her eyes

Something cold and ugly unfurls inside me.

To hell with the mate bond.

She will pay for her lies.