



## Chapter 7



Three weeks of this shit and I'm losing my mind.

Late nights in glass offices where every surface reflects my growing paranoia. Pretending I don't go home to three kids who have their fathers' faces stamped on them.

Pretending proximity to both doesn't slowly shred my carefully constructed self-control.

The Silverton case is my personal torture device. Requires constant contact, which I'm convinced they engineered specifically to destroy me.

Depositions where Kieran sits too close. His thigh pressing against mine under conference tables for three damned hours. His hand occasionally dropping to his leg, fingers drumming inches from where I'm clenching my thighs together, discussing liability clauses like he's not currently burning a hole through my composure.

Strategy sessions where Lysander shows up in just his dress shirt. That cocky lean against my desk while reviewing documents, close enough that I can see his pulse point, remember exactly how it tastes.

Sleeves rolled to display forearms I remember gripping during my heat, nails digging in while he...

*Stop. Don't go there.*

They're weaponizing proximity. Casual touches that look

accidental to anyone watching but absolutely aren't.

A hand on my lower back guiding me through doors. Fingers brushing mine when passing documents. Standing just close enough that I'm drowning in cedar-and-smoke or pine-and-rain.

Death by a thousand professional interactions.

"You're distracted." Kieran's voice cuts through my spiral.

Another late night, office empty except for us. This is becoming a pattern I can't afford.

"The Hartley deposition is tomorrow." He's watching me with that laser focus that makes my skin prickle. "You've read that page three times."

I don't answer. Keep staring at liability clauses like they're the most fascinating thing I've ever seen instead of acknowledging that this room feels about three sizes too small right now.

"You've done well for yourself." His tone is conversational but there's an edge underneath. "Law degree. Impressive case history. Built a whole new life."

He sets down his pen. The click echoes too loud. "Where did you go, Thalia? After that night? Really."

The question detonates between us.

"Away." I keep my voice flat, eyes on the contract.

"Just... away?" He's studying me like I'm a puzzle he's determined to solve. "Eight years. No contact with the pack or your family. No trace."

I force myself to meet his gaze. "There was nothing left for me there." My smile could cut glass. "You made sure of that."

Something flickers in his eyes. Regret, maybe. Guilt, possibly. "That's not—"

"Fair? True?" I laugh, sharp and brittle. "Why do you even care? I was nothing to you."

Less than nothing, really. The wolfless shame who made for decent entertainment during her heat.

He moves closer then. Not touching yet but invading my space, and I can feel his body heat radiating. Smell that cedar and smoke that makes my neurons misfire.

"You know that's not true." His voice drops to something dangerous. "That night..."

"Don't." I stand but he mirrors me, keeping that lethal proximity. "Don't you dare romanticize it now."

My heart's trying to punch through my ribs but I keep my voice steady.

"You fucked the wolfless girl during her heat. You and your brother. Then went right back to your perfect life." I let the words land like punches. "Engaged two months later. Had your perfect pack princess while I—"

I caught myself. Almost said too much and his eyes sharpen. "While you what?"

He's backing me against the table now. Arms bracing on either side, caging me in with muscle and heat and that scent that's

demolishing my defenses.

"What happened after you ran?" The possessive edge in his voice does things to me I absolutely hate. "Who helped you disappear so completely that even pack trackers couldn't find you?"

He leaned closer when I didn't answer.

"What happened out there, Thalia? Who helped you?" His voice drops to gravel. "Who hurt you?"

"You don't get to ask that." My hands grip the table edge behind me, knuckles white. "You don't get to play protective Alpha male now. Eight years is far too late."

His control cracks and I watch the polished CEO veneer splinter, something raw and desperate bleeding through.

"Do you know what that night did to me?" His voice goes rough, stripped of pretense. "What you leaving did?"

His hand moves to the back of my neck. The touch sends electricity cascading down my spine and I hate my body for responding.

"I looked for you." The confession comes out strangled. "Every. Fucking. Day. For eight years."

His other hand comes up, fully caging me now.

"I couldn't eat. Couldn't sleep. Couldn't function. And Lia..."

He closes his eyes briefly. "Christ, I couldn't even look at her without seeing your face. When she announced our engagement, when she kissed me in front of the whole pack—"

"Good." The word rips out of me. "I hope it destroyed you. I hope it ate you alive from the inside."

His eyes flash open. Something dark and hungry and desperate flares there. "It did." He leans in, breath against my ear. "Still does."

His lips are so close to my neck I can feel every word vibrating through me.

"Seeing you here every day. Smelling your scent. Being close enough to touch but knowing you hate me..." He breathes me in. "Do you know what torture that is? Wanting something you destroyed?"

My body's trembling. Caught between desire and rage, between the girl who loved him and the woman who survived him.

"Then stop." My voice comes out barely a whisper. "Let me transfer to another team."

Please. "Let me go."

A knock shatters the moment. His assistant's voice filters through: "Mr. Fenris, your 9 PM is here—"

"Cancel it." He doesn't break eye contact. "Cancel everything tonight."

Her footsteps retreat fast. Smart woman.

The silence that follows feels like standing on the edge of a cliff. One wrong move and we both fall.

"This isn't over." He finally steps back but his gaze holds me pinned. "Whatever you're hiding. Whatever happened during

pinned. "Whatever you're hiding. Whatever happened during those eight years." His jaw clenches. "I'll find out."

He moves to his desk. Voice dropping to pure Alpha command that makes my knees weak and my pride flare simultaneously.

"And Thalia? Don't even think about running again."

His eyes flash. Possessive. Feral. Dangerous.

"You're mine..." He catches himself. Jaw clenching so hard I can see the muscle jump. "My employee. Under contract. " The words come out cold, controlled. "And I don't let go of what's mine."

I force my legs to work. Walk to the door with steady steps that cost me everything.

"I'm nobody's." I say it without looking back.

"Not anymore."

I make it to the elevator before my legs give out. Slump against the wall as doors close and his scent finally fades enough that I can breathe.

My phone buzzes. Text from Rosalie: "Phoenix had another incident at school. We need to talk."

Perfect. Because my life wasn't enough of a dumpster fire without my seven-year-old developing uncontrollable Alpha powers in front of humans.

I pull myself together. Straighten my suit. Fix probably-smudged mascara.

Commented [Ma1]:

Commented [Ma2R1]:

Commented [Ma3R1]:

smudged mascara.

Become the woman who survives impossible situations.

The elevator opens to the parking garage. I walk to my car, get in, lock the doors.

Then I let myself shake.

Let myself feel the weight of his confession: *I looked for you.*  
*Every fucking day.*

My hands grip the steering wheel until my knuckles go white.

Three weeks down. God knows how many more to survive.

And Kieran Fenris just declared he's not letting me go this time.

The broken girl inside me—the one who never healed, who still remembers what his hands felt like when they were gentle—is thrilled.

The woman I've become knows that's the most dangerous thing of all.

I'm so completely fucked.

## **End** *of* *The* **Chapter**

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