

Chapter 15

Riley's POV

I looked at Scarlett calmly.

She hadn't even touched me, but she shrank back like she'd seen a ghost, trembling as she whispered, "Sister, please don't look at me like that. You're scaring me."

Kael's hand suddenly shoved me hard.

"What are you trying to do to Scarlett?" he barked.

I staggered back from the force, my injured leg wobbling under me until I slammed into the second-floor railing. I could've fallen if I'd lost my balance just a little more. But no one cared. No one even flinched.

Alpha Alaric and Luna Zara both immediately moved to shield Scarlett, staring at me like I was some feral wolf about to pounce.

Kael opened his mouth to scold me, then hesitated. Maybe he remembered the bruises, the wounds, the prison scars that hadn't yet faded.

I smiled faintly. Not out of amusement, but out of a bitter realization.

This was my family.

The second Scarlett showed a trace of weakness, I became the villain. The enemy.

Once, I used to crave their approval. One word, one look could send my emotions spiraling. But now? Their judgment didn't even graze the surface.

I said nothing. Let them guess. Let them paint their own versions of the story.

"Did you hurt yourself?" Kael asked, the concern in his voice almost jarring.

I raised my head and looked at him, confused. Since when did he speak to me like that?

"I'm fine," I replied. A little bump like that was nothing. It couldn't compare to having your bones shattered and reset wrong.

"You heard everything just now, didn't you?"

I gave a small nod.

He said nothing more.

That was it?

He'd dismantled a multi-million-dollar alliance with the Blackmaw Pack because of me. The fallout would ripple across both packs for months. And all he wanted was a nod?

I saw it in his eyes. The glimmer of hope. The way he waited for even the smallest trace of gratitude.

But I had none to give.

"If there's nothing else, I'm heading back."

I turned and limped down the stairs. Slow but steady. I wouldn't fall.

Kael leaned on the banister, eyes locked on me, pain etched across his face. It shouldn't have been like this, I could hear him thinking. You used to care.

"Riley," he called after me.

I paused.

His voice softened, trembled even. "Riley, my stomach hurts."

I almost laughed.

So this was the olive branch?

I glanced up, met his eyes. "Kael, if you're unwell, call a Healer. I'm not your caretaker."

His face crumpled as if I'd stabbed him. He dropped to his knees, clutching the railing, the pain in his body no match for what now clouded his heart.

But I didn't stop.

Alpha Alaric roared, "Riley! Get back here! Go fetch your brother's medicine, now!"

Luna Zara cried, "Riley, you always helped him before. How could you be so heartless now? He's your blood!"

Even Scarlett dared speak. "Riley, I know you carry resentment for what happened. But you can't play with Kael's life like this. You know better than anyone what medicine he needs."

I stopped once more.

And then I turned.

They expected tears. Repentance. Instead, they saw a smile. A cold, cutting thing.

"So you knew," I said quietly. "All those times I helped him, you noticed. You remembered. You just didn't care. Because it was expected. It was convenient." Their silence confirmed everything.

"That stops today. Whatever happens to the Ebonclaw Pack is no longer my concern. You never treated me like one of you. So don't expect me to act like I am."

Luna Zara's face crumpled as she sobbed. "It's not like that. You're my daughter. I carried you for ten months, prayed for you, bled for you."

Alpha Alaric's face darkened. "You ungrateful child! We should've left you with the rogues when we had the chance. All you've brought to this house is chaos and shame."

Zara tried to calm him, tugging at his sleeve, but he shook her off.

Scarlett played her part flawlessly, eyes glistening. "It's okay, Dad. I deserve Riley's anger. I took her place as the real daughter of the Ebonclaw Pack. If she wants me to suffer, I will. Just please don't fight because of me."

Tears streamed down her cheeks as she choked on her own sobs.

I let them finish.

Then I said, "Are you done? I'm going to bed."

Alpha Alaric exploded. "You say you don't care about this family? Then why come back at all? You think we owe you something?"

His voice dropped, venomous. "Let me be clear—just because we brought you into this world, doesn't mean we owe you a damn thing."