

Alpha's STOLEN Mate c 4

hello mate

Kaius

The amber liquid burned down my throat as I watched flames dance in the hearth, their light casting shifting shadows across the stone walls of my study. The executions had gone smoothly today—clean, efficient, sending the right message to anyone foolish enough to test my authority. Yet something nagged at the edges of my consciousness, a restlessness I couldn't quite name.

"Those executions today..." Frost's voice cut through the silence, his tone carefully neutral but carrying an undercurrent I recognized. He stood by the window, back turned to me, gazing out at the moonlit courtyard. "Was it really necessary to make them public?"

I set down my glass with deliberate control, feeling my expression cool. "My dear beta, do you realize how many packs we've conquered in recent years? How many survivors escaped into the wild, nursing nothing but hatred for everything we've built here?"

Frost turned to face me, arms crossing over his chest. The firelight caught the concern in his eyes—concern that might be mistaken for weakness by others, but which I'd learned to value over our years together.

"Iron-fisted rule is the only thing maintaining peace in our territory," I continued, refilling my glass. "Every public execution reminds potential enemies what happens to those who challenge us."

"I understand the necessity of strength," Frost said, his voice gaining edge. "But the rogue coalitions are scattered, disorganized. Their forces are nowhere near our borders. They wouldn't dare make any significant moves against us."

A bitter laugh escaped my throat. "The Eastern Coalition? You're right—they're hardly worth my concern." I took another drink, feeling the familiar burn. "I'm talking about something far more dangerous. Border guards have been reporting white wolf sightings along our territory lines."

Frost's expression shifted to something between disbelief and amusement. "White wolves? The legendary creatures that appear once every thousand years?" He actually laughed. "Kaius, with all due respect, that sounds like bored sentries creating entertainment."

"Perhaps." I smiled, though the expression held no warmth. "These sightings describe a white wolf moving with unusual patterns—appearing along our borders for extended periods, always alone, always avoiding direct contact. If it exists, it has an agenda."

Before Frost could respond, urgent knocking shattered the quiet atmosphere. Without waiting for permission, one of my lieutenants burst through the door, his face flushed with exertion and panic.

"Alpha King!" he gasped, struggling to catch his breath. "There's been an incident in the dungeons!"

My entire body went rigid. "Explain. Now."

"Captain Marcus is in the medical wing with severe injuries. A bite wound that required thirty stitches." The lieutenant swallowed hard, clearly dreading what came next. "The female prisoner from this afternoon's execution... she attacked him."

Frost straightened, immediately alert. "What was Marcus doing with the prisoner? I gave explicit orders that she remain untouched until the Alpha King's personal interrogation tomorrow."

The lieutenant's face went pale. "Sir, Marcus conducted an unauthorized interrogation. He... he used the wolfsbane whip. The medical staff estimates over a hundred lashes."

The glass in my hand shattered.

Blood dripped from my palm where crystal shards had bitten deep, but I barely felt it. White-hot rage coursed through my veins, threatening to consume what remained of my rational mind.

"He did WHAT?" The words came out as a growl, my voice dropping to the dangerous register that made seasoned warriors step back.

"A hundred lashes with wolfsbane," the lieutenant whispered. "She's... Alpha King, no one survives that level of poison. She's likely already dead."

My fist slammed into the desktop, sending papers and ink flying. "That fucking bastard! When Marcus recovers, he'll be stripped of rank and exiled. No exceptions."

I forced my breathing to steady, wiping blood from my hand with methodical precision. "Have someone dispose of the body. Quietly."

"Wait." Frost's voice carried the authority he rarely exercised. "I want to see her first."

"Why waste time on a corpse? You know she won't survive that much wolfsbane."

"Marcus's insubordination reflects poorly on our entire command structure. We need to go examine the situation. " His brown eyes held mine steadily. "But honestly? I want to see what kind of prisoner could take a piece out of our supposedly elite captain before dying. Five minutes. Then we'll handle disposal."

I wanted to refuse. Every instinct screamed that I should be reviewing security protocols, planning Marcus's punishment, focusing on matters that actually mattered to the kingdom. But something in Frost's expression made me pause.

"Fine. But we're not lingering."

The descent into the dungeon depths felt endless. Stone steps worn smooth by countless prisoners and guards echoed our footsteps, each sound growing more hollow as we moved deeper underground. Guards snapped to attention as we passed, their eyes carefully averted—smart men who understood that my presence here was unusual and potentially dangerous.

The air grew heavier with each level, thick with the stench of fear, unwashed bodies, and something else. Something that made my skin crawl with inexplicable unease.

We were halfway down the final corridor when it hit me.

The scent stopped me dead in my tracks, every muscle in my body locking into place. Vanilla and wildflowers, buried beneath layers of blood, sweat, and the acrid burn of wolfsbane poisoning. But underneath the corruption, beneath the pain and terror, that delicate fragrance remained unmistakable.

No. Not possible.

My feet felt like they were sinking into quicksand as I forced myself to continue walking. Each step became a monumental effort, my heart hammering against my ribs for reasons I couldn't understand. The scent grew stronger, more familiar, dragging up memories I'd buried four years ago.

"Kaius?" Frost's voice seemed to come from very far away. "You've gone pale. What's wrong?"

I couldn't answer. Couldn't think past the growing certainty that was building in my chest like a tumor.

The cell came into view, and there she was.

A small figure slumped against the stone wall, silver shackles gleaming around her wrists and ankles. Her clothes were shredded, soaked in blood that had long since dried to a rusty brown. Silver hair fell across her face like a curtain, but I didn't need to see her features to know.

The scent was unmistakable now. Vanilla and wildflowers, the same combination that had haunted my dreams for four years. The same fragrance that had made every other woman taste like ash in my mouth.

She shouldn't be here. Shouldn't be alive. The last I'd heard, she'd disappeared completely after our... after I'd rejected the mate bond. Gone without a trace, leaving only questions and a strange emptiness I'd refused to acknowledge.

As if sensing our presence, her head lifted slightly. Through the tangled mess of her hair, I caught a glimpse of those familiar amber eyes—eyes that had once looked at me with hope, with love, with devastating trust.

Now they held nothing but cold defiance.

"Hello, mate." Her voice was barely a whisper, each word clearly causing her pain, but she delivered them with surgical precision. "Did you come to watch me die properly this time?"

The words hit me like physical blows. A thousand emotions crashed through me at once—shock, disbelief, something that might have been relief, and underneath it all, a rage I couldn't begin to understand.

"Elowen Ravenscrest." Her name ripped from my throat like a growl, equal parts accusation and anguish. "What the hell are you doing here?"

But she was already slipping away again, her head lolling forward as consciousness abandoned her. Her small body went limp against the silver chains, leaving only the sound of metal links bearing her dead weight—and the echo of her defiant words hanging in the fetid air like a curse.