

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 31

Faith's Pov

The meeting with Alpha Kyle had gone well. That was good and he had even decided to stay. I left them to their important talks and walked back home since I was done for the day.

Home. The word felt strange in my mouth lately. I wish Alice hadn't tainted this place. Even though Alpha Kyle assured me this was where they had spent the night my mind just wouldn't let go. The memories, like clung to the walls and to the air.

I had cleaned. The other omegas had cleaned too. We scrubbed and polished until our hands were raw. But it never felt clean enough. Not to me. That's why I had done it again today. By the time Astor arrived, I was sure the house smelled less of dust and more of desperate attempts to scrub away something unseen.

"The place won't get any cleaner than this," Astor said, his voice gentle as he found me in the kitchen, my fingers still scrubbing a stubborn mark on the counter. Dinner was nearly finished, the comforting aroma of stew filling the air.

I didn't look at him, my focus locked on the mark. "Maybe it's because I'm not just cleaning away the dirt," I mumbled, my voice rough, "but someone's presence as well." I went back to scrubbing.

Then, I felt him. Astor's presence was a warm tide behind me. His arms wrapped around my waist, pulling me gently against him. It was a touch, an embrace, that sent a ripple of unfamiliar sensations through me.

On one hand, it made me feel uneasy. This closeness, this comfort, was not something I was used to. It was new, and new things often scared me. But on the other hand, a part of me, a small, hopeful part, craved it. It was the warmth of his body against mine, the steady beat of his heart against my back, and a fluttery, almost giddy feeling, like tiny butterflies, spreading through my chest.

I closed my eyes, a soft sigh escaping my lips as I felt him lower his head, his scent a mix of pine needles and something uniquely him filling my senses as he inhaled deeply from my hair. His presence was too consuming.

Once upon a time, I had dreamt of this. Of being held, of feeling cherished. And I would be lying if I said that part of me didn't still yearn for it. But even with Astor's comforting embrace, a shadow of unfairness lingered. It felt like a stolen moment, a happiness I didn't quite deserve.

The stew was perfect, rich and hearty. Astor and I sat at the worn wooden table, the silence between us comfortable, not heavy. He spooned a portion onto my plate, his gaze soft.

“You know,” he began, his voice thoughtful, “this reminds me of when I was a kid.” A smile touched his lips, crinkling the corners of his eyes. “Dad was often busy around the pack so this was probably the only time I got to spend with him.” he said and I looked at him.

Astor is not sentimental by only and he has never felt the need to share certain parts of himself with me but he was really doing it.

“He once tried to teach me how to cook but the problem is that he is not much of a cook himself so we found flour at some point and we ran around the house pretending we were ghosts.” he said smiling at the memories and I found myself laughing too, a genuine, light sound that surprised even me. The image of a sheepish-looking father and a flour-covered child was so endearing. “Ghosts?” I asked, wiping a tear from my eye.

“Yep,” Astor chuckled, his eyes twinkling “We ran around the house, bumping into furniture and making spooky noises. Mom would just stand there and look at us laughing.”

I think I miss his parents and don't get me wrong they are one of the most amazing parents I've ever seen and it's probably because I was never seen a lot of those.

I know he is the most important person in their lives but last couple of years they've prioritised traveling and spending time together so I think a part of him does miss them.

We talked more, about simple things, about our days, about the strange, comfortable rhythm that was starting to form between us.

After dinner, the dishes waited. Usually, this was my solitary task, another quiet chore to fill the empty hours. But tonight, Astor stood up. “Let me help,” he said, his voice matter-of-fact.

I hesitated for a moment, then nodded. We worked side-by-side at the sink, the warm water and the gentle clinking of plates a new kind of harmony. It didn't feel like a burden anymore, not with him there. His large hands carefully washed, my smaller ones dried. It was simple, domestic, and surprisingly, not uncomfortable at all. It felt...shared.

As I put the last plate away, Astor turned to me. The warm glow of the kitchen lights cast a soft light on his face. He reached out, his thumb gently brushing a strand of hair from my cheek. My breath hitched. His eyes, so kind and steady, searched mine.

Then, slowly, he leaned in.

My heart thudded against my ribs, a frantic drumbeat. I could feel his breath on my lips, warm and intoxicating. He smelled like pine and the clean scent of soap from the dishes. It was a moment suspended in time, a breath held too long.

And then, his lips met mine.

It was a soft, tentative touch at first, a question. My lips were dry, unsure. But then, he deepened the kiss, gently, patiently. It was a sensation so new, so overwhelming, it sent a shockwave through me. It wasn't rough or demanding, but a sweet, melting exploration. A warmth spread from my lips, through my chest, and down into my very core. It was like tasting sunshine, like finding a forgotten melody.

My eyes fluttered shut, surrendering to the unfamiliar bliss. This was what I had craved, what I had secretly yearned for. The feeling was intense, a heady mix of wonder and a strange, exhilarating fear.

When he pulled back, his eyes were still locked on mine, a question lingering there. My breath was coming in short, quick gasps. The butterflies in my stomach had erupted into a full-blown storm. It had been... beautiful. Undeniably, wonderfully nice.

But it was too much, too fast, too new.

Before I could even think, my feet moved. I turned, a strangled sound escaping my throat, and practically fled.

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The sun came up, but it didn't feel nice. I just wanted to forget last night even happened. I don't know whether to feel uncomfortable or happy that it finally happened and it was just messing with my mind.

My heart was still beating fast, like a bird stuck in my chest. Last night. That kiss. Our first kiss. It had surprised me, shocked me so much that I ran away. My face felt hot with embarrassment and... something else. I didn't want to think about it. It was easier to be angry. Anger felt like a shield.

I got out of bed. The floor was cool under my bare feet. The quiet house was peaceful. I needed this quiet, this time alone, to sort out the tangled feelings Astor had made me have. I splashed cold water on my face, trying to get my wits back together.

Then I started my morning. Doing normal things like brushing my hair, picking out clothes, and making a simple breakfast helped me feel normal again.

Today, I wanted to go to the orphanage. The sweet faces of the children, their happy laughs, and their need for a hug – that was a world I understood. That was where my heart felt like it

belonged. I needed to see the children, to make sure they were okay, and maybe, to remember what was really important.

I walked out there and I enjoyed the quiet outside because nobody talked to me so I didn't have to worry and it gave me the chance to try and think about something different other than my life that is falling apart in front of me.

I noticed something different as soon as I got there, there were two shadows in the hallway. It was Liam, usually serious, but he had a kind smile. He was talking to a man I didn't recognize at first until I got closer.

Liam is the lead warrior. A man of a few words but out of a lot of these men I rate him above.

"Faith, good morning," Liam said kindly. And I finally took a good look at the man next to him and it was none other than Alpha Kyle.

Alpha Kyle held out his hand. "It's nice to meet you again, Luna Faith. Liam has told me a lot about your work here. His voice was smooth, and his handshake was strong but not rough.

I tried to smile, hoping not to show my discomfort about being called Luna. "Alpha Kyle. I hope you're finding our pack welcoming." I said that because I made sure that you got the best room and he was served by our best omegas so I'm hoping everything was to his liking.

"I'm really enjoying my time here and getting to know your people," he said and surprisingly that's what everybody always says about the people around here.

Apparently they are kind and welcoming but they can't extend the same courtesy to me.

Liam pointed to the room where the children played. "We were just heading there. Kyle wanted to see the little ones.

I looked surprised. It was unusual for an Alpha, especially a visitor, to be so eager to spend time with the orphans. Still, I was a little curious.

We walked together, Liam and Alpha Kyle in front. When we entered the room, the children shouted, "Hello!" Their faces lit up, and their shyness disappeared, replaced by excitement. Alpha Kyle got down on his knees, moving slowly so he wouldn't scare them.

"Hello, everyone," he said, his voice softer. "I'm Kyle. And I hear you're all very special."

What happened next surprised me. Alpha Kyle didn't just make small talk. He sat on the floor with them, building towers of blocks that they happily knocked down. He listened carefully as a little girl named Lily, with big, serious eyes, told him the story behind her drawing of a dragon. He gently untangled a knot in little Leo's shoelace, his big hands surprisingly skilled. He was really good with them. He asked them about their favorite toys, their dreams, and their favorite colors. He treated them not like a problem, but like people with stories to share.

I watched him, and I had to admit I was a little impressed. He had a quiet strength and a real warmth that spread around. He was exactly the kind of person you'd want looking after innocent children. But even as I saw his kindness, a feeling of sadness stayed in my chest. It was like the memory of Astor's smell, the feel of his lips on mine. My feelings for Astor were like a wildfire, strong and impossible to ignore, no matter how hard I tried.

Just then, the big wooden door opened slowly. Astor stood there, his wolf eyes looking around the room. His eyes found me, then looked at Alpha Kyle, who was being covered in crayon drawings by excited children. A muscle in Astor's jaw tightened. The air in the room got heavy. The happy mood suddenly became tense.

"Faith," Astor's voice was low, a dangerous sound that cut through the happy noise. "What is Alpha Kyle doing here?"

I stood up straighter, feeling annoyed. "I found him here, Astor. He's visiting. And he's spending time with the children." I couldn't hide the coldness in my voice. The way he was talking to me, like I was a child who had done something wrong.

Astor took a step closer, his eyes locked on Alpha Kyle. "And you didn't think to tell me?"

"Tell you?" I asked, my anger growing. "Why? So you could come and question me about everyone I talk to? I don't like the way you're talking to me, Astor. I found him here, and he's a guest. That's all." I could see the jealousy in his eyes, a thick, heavy feeling. And it made me angry.

Before I could say anything else, before he could say more hurtful things, Astor walked towards me. The children, noticing the change in the mood, became quiet, their eyes wide with confusion. Alpha Kyle looked up, a look of surprise in his kind eyes.

Right in front of everyone, in front of the innocent children and the visiting Alpha, Astor grabbed my chin. His thumb touched my lower lip. I gasped. My mind screamed a million protests, but my body felt stuck, caught by the strong pull of his presence. And then, with a fierce, possessive kiss that took my breath away, Astor's lips crashed onto mine. It wasn't a gentle kiss. It was a statement. A claiming. A challenge.

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The sting of Astor's kiss lingered on my lips, a warmth that felt more like a betrayal than a declaration. I pulled away sharply, my heart thudding a frantic rhythm against my ribs. "Don't. Don't ever do that again, Astor." My voice was rough, laced with an indignation that surprised even myself.

He blinked, his handsome face momentarily clouded with confusion, then a flicker of something I recognized as guilt. “Faith, I...”

“No,” I cut him off, my gaze fixed on the spot where his lips had been, trying to erase the feeling. “I know why you did that. You did it for Alpha Kyle. You saw him watching, and you wanted to show off. You were jealous, weren’t you?” The words spilled out, raw and unvarnished. This wasn’t the way I wanted to be kissed, not for a show, not out of spite. My heart ached for something genuine, something earned, not stolen in a moment of alpha arrogance.

A sigh escaped him, long and heavy. “Faith, it wasn’t just that. You know it wasn’t.”

“Then what was it, Astor?” I challenged, my frustration bubbling over. Because it certainly wasn’t because you actually wanted to kiss me. It was a game, and I don’t play games.” I turned away, unable to bear his gaze any longer.

I was embarrassed to even look back at alpha Kyle or the children before I left because I’m pretty sure he heard a whole conversation.

The familiar path back to our house suddenly felt miles long. I walked with a determined stride, each step a silent declaration of my annoyance.

Astor followed, his footsteps a soft echo behind me. I could feel his presence, a heavy weight in the air, but I refused to look back. I just wanted to be home, to be in my own space, away from his games and his displays.

When I reached the familiar oak door of our house, I was ready to slam it shut and lock myself away. But as my hand touched the cool wood, I hesitated.

And then I froze.

My parents. Standing in the middle of our living room, looking... expectant. My mother, with her had a worried frown etched deeper than usual, and my father, his arms crossed, his expression unreadable.

A cold dread washed over me, chasing away the lingering annoyance with Astor. “Mom? Dad? What are you doing here?” My voice was barely a whisper, laced with an unwelcome surprise. I hadn’t expected to see them, not anytime soon. And if I was honest, not seeing them was precisely what I’d preferred.

My mother offered a strained smile. “Faith, darling. We... we decided to pay you a surprise visit.”

“A surprise visit?” I echoed, my mind reeling. “But... you didn’t call.” I looked from my mother to my father, then my eyes landed on Astor, who had entered the house behind me. His jaw was

tight, his gaze fixed on my parents with an intensity that mirrored my own confusion and even annoyance.

He stepped forward, his arm instinctively coming to rest on the small of my back, a possessive gesture that, for once, felt comforting. “You could have at least warned us,” he said, his voice low and even, but with an undercurrent of steel. He addressed my parents directly, his eyes flicking between them.” Faith and I... we don’t appreciate surprises like this. Especially when they clearly upset her.”

I’m glad he pointed it out because I would seem like a bad person if I told them directly that I never wanted to see them.

My mother’s smile faltered. “Astor, we meant no harm. We just wanted to see how you both were settling in.”

“You could have done that any other day” Astor retorted, his tone hardening.

“Without ambushing us. And to be frank, Alpha Connor and I have nothing pack-related to discuss. So unless there’s a very pressing reason for your unexpected arrival, I suggest you explain yourselves.” His alpha authority was a palpable force, filling the small space.

My father finally uncrossed his arms. “This isn’t about pack business, Astor.

It’s... personal.”

Personal. The word hung in the air, heavy with unspoken implications. Personal between whom? My parents and me? My parents and Astor? My stomach tightened. I hated this feeling of being in the dark, of not knowing what was coming. “Personal how?” I asked, stepping away from Astor’s embrace, needing the space to think, to process. “What could possibly be personal enough to warrant showing up unannounced and making us uncomfortable?”

My mother wrung her hands. “Faith, we... we’ve been worried.” that is the craziest lie that they’ve ever said because there is no love lost between me and them and our last conversation solidified exactly that.

“Worried about what?” I pressed, my voice rising. “We’re fine. We’re happy. You have no reason to be worried.” I said it more to sound sarcastic because this is exactly what they wanted so I don’t understand why they are here because they are wish was for me to come back to Astor and it was fulfilled.

My father sighed, a resigned sound. “There are things you don’t know, Faith. Things we haven’t told you.”

Before I could demand an explanation, before my mother could utter another hesitant word, the front door of the house creaked open. Alice, her face pale and her eyes wide with a mixture of fear and exhilaration, stood there. She looked directly at Astor, her voice trembling as she spoke.

“Astor,” she breathed, her gaze locked onto his, phone moment today I felt every part of me go cold and silent because I knew it was coming and I wasn’t ready for it. “I... I have something to tell you.” She took a shaky breath, her hand instinctively going to her abdomen. “I’m pregnant. And... it’s yours.”

The words hung in the air, a bombshell that detonated in the already charged silence, leaving me utterly breathless.

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Astor’s Pov

The world tilted. The carefully constructed reality I’d been living in shattered into a million sharp pieces. Alice stood before me, her eyes wide, a strange mix of triumph and something I couldn’t quite decipher swirling within them.

“I’m pregnant, Astor,” she’d said. “And it’s yours.”

The words hung in the air, heavy and suffocating. My gaze, unbidden, snapped to Faith. She was standing by the door, her face a mask of... what? Shock? Hurt? I couldn’t tell. My heart ached, a dull, throbbing pain that had nothing to do with Alice’s announcement and everything to do with the woman I loved.

“What?” The word was a choked whisper, barely escaping my lips. “Alice, are you... are you joking?” My voice cracked, a pathetic sound even to my own ears.

She stepped closer, her chin lifting. “Astor,” she said, her voice firm, leaving no room for doubt. “You’re going to be a father.”

The biggest shock of my life wasn’t the pregnancy itself, not entirely. It was the implication. It was the sudden, terrifying realization that this wasn’t some cruel prank. For a few agonizing seconds, I clung to the faint hope that I’d misheard, that my brain, reeling from the initial blast, had twisted her words. But she made it crystal clear, her gaze unwavering. I was the father.

“No,” I breathed, shaking my head, the movement jerky and uncontrolled.” No, it can’t be. It’s... impossible.” My mind scrambled and the world around me was just going round and round.

Then, Alice’s expression shifted. A cunning glint entered her eyes, and she turned the tables, her voice laced with a subtle accusation. “Didn’t she tell you?” she asked, her eyes flicking back to Faith.

The blood drained from my face. Didn't she tell me? What was she talking about? I looked at Faith, searching her face for answers, for a denial, for anything that would dismiss Alice's words. My stomach churned. Did Faith know? Did she know about this, about Alice, about... this? How could she?

"No," I blurted out, my voice stronger now, fueled by a desperate need to defend her. "No, Faith couldn't have known. And even if she did... she wouldn't hide something like this from me." I looked at Faith, pleadingly, willing her to confirm my words, to erase the suspicion Alice had so carelessly planted.

Alice let out a short, humorless laugh. "Oh, she knew, Astor. I told her. Before we left." The words landed like a physical blow. She told Faith. And Faith... Faith said nothing.

My heart felt like it was being squeezed in a vice. I turned back to Faith, my voice raw with a pain I hadn't known I possessed. "Faith? Is that... is that true? Did you know?" I needed to hear it from her, needed her to look me in the eye and tell me it wasn't so. My world, my trust, hinged on her denial.

She didn't answer. Her silence was deafening. She simply stood there, her gaze locked with mine, and in the depths of her eyes, I saw it. The undeniable truth. A truth that shattered me into even smaller pieces. She knew. She had known all along and had said nothing. The woman I loved, the woman I had sworn my life to, had lied to me. She had kept this monumental secret from me.

My soul felt like it was being flayed alive. The pain was visceral, a burning agony that spread through my chest and clawed at my throat. I trusted her. And she kept quiet about something like this.

I looked back at Alice, the words catching in my throat. "I... I can't believe you're pregnant. I can't be the father of your child." It was the truth, raw and ugly. The only thing I thought about was of Faith. Of our future, the future I had envisioned with her. I had always wanted my first child to be with Faith. She was my mate, the one woman I loved, the only one I had ever truly loved.

And now, this.

Alice's expression softened, a flicker of something I might have mistaken for sympathy, but it was too late for that. "Listen, Astor," she said, her voice quieter now. "Listen to the heartbeats in this house."

I frowned, confused, but I did as she said. I closed my eyes, and strained my ears. The silence of the room seemed to amplify. Then, faintly at first, I heard it. The steady, strong thrum of my own heart. The softer, faster beat of Alice's. And beneath it all, a new rhythm, a gentle pulse, undeniably separate. A second heartbeat. Faint, but present.

My eyes flew open. The pregnancy was real. This wasn't a dream, or a delusion. Alice was carrying my child. The impossibility I had clung to had evaporated, replaced by a stark, undeniable reality. The moment of denial was over. The realization hit me with full force. That one night had consequences. Consequences that were now staring me in the face, personified by Alice and the life growing inside her.

And Faith. She had known. She had chosen to let me walk into this blind. She had let me believe... what? That I was free? That I could move on? What twisted game was she playing? The anger, hot and acrid, began to bubble beneath the surface of my shock. How could she?

My mate, my love, Faith, had known. She had known and had let me believe a lie. The betrayal cut deeper than any physical wound. My heart, already bruised, felt like it was being ripped apart. This was a nightmare from which I couldn't wake.

I know I made her angry and I betrayed her but at least I think I deserved to know that I was going to be a father.

I don't understand why?

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Faith's Pov

The world blurred as Astor pulled me away from the living room. His grip on my arm was like iron, hard and unyielding. Not a gentle touch, not a loving pull, but a raw, forceful yank that left a burning trail on my skin.

He didn't say a word, just dragged me, practically running, through the quiet hallway. My feet stumbled to keep up, my heart a frantic drum against my ribs. This wasn't the Astor I was getting used to, not the one who had finally started to look at me with something soft in his eyes. This was someone else, someone cold and hard. The man stayed with for 3 years.

When we reached his room, he didn't even bother to open the door properly. He just shoved it open with his free hand and then, with a sharp, sudden movement, let go of my arm. I stumbled forward, almost falling, the sudden release leaving my arm aching and tingling. My head snapped up, my eyes finding his.

And that's when my world truly shattered.

The new 'trying to be sincere' Astor, the one I had started to hope for, was gone. In his place was the one I've always known. His eyes, usually so warm, so full of a fierce light, were now

like chips of ice. Cold, yes, a cutting coldness that seeped into my very bones. But it wasn't just coldness. Beneath that, I saw anger, a simmering rage that twisted his handsome face. And then, like a punch to the gut, I saw it: hate.

Hate. For me.

The word echoed in my mind, a desolate, heartbreaking sound. We were finally, finally, getting somewhere. I thought we were past the hard parts, that we were building something real, inch by painful inch. And now, this. This look in his eyes had just torn everything down, ruined it all in a single, devastating moment.

My voice came out as a whisper, thin and fragile. "I didn't mean to lie to you, Astor But... it was never my secret to tell. It wasn't mine to disclose." The words felt hollow, even to me, against the storm in his gaze.

He took a step closer, his presence suddenly huge and threatening. "You didn't think it was important?" His voice was low, dangerous. "You didn't think it was important to tell me I was going to be a father?"

The injustice of it flared, hot and sharp, pushing past the pain. My own eyes, I knew, must have hardened, "Oh, really?" I snapped, the words coming out more forcefully than I intended. "How would you feel? How would you feel if it was you who had to tell your mate that he was having a child with someone else? Someone who isn't her?"

A bitter, broken laugh escaped me. It wasn't funny. Nothing about this was funny. "You cheated on me," I murmured, the truth a heavy stone in my mouth. "And yet, I'm the one who has to apologize. Because you're angry." My gaze met his again, defiant now. "I don't owe you any explanation, Asta. Not after all this. I'm not the one who slept with my mate's sister dammit.

I'm f***** drowning, my whole world has been turned upside down and you think It's All About you.

why can't you see what you did, why can't you see the pain in my eyes Astor."

I asked.

The words hung in the air, thick and poisoned. His face tightened, a flicker of something, maybe guilt, maybe just more anger, crossing his features. He opened his mouth, a desperate attempt to justify himself, to make excuses. But I was done.

I should have known better than to think that he was changing, it's not his fault though because he already showed me what kind of person he was a long time ago but I keep breaking my own heart with this false hope and love.

"No," I cut him off, shaking my head slowly. "Don't. Don't even try. You'll never change, will you?" My voice was trembling, but I wouldn't let it break. "I see it, Astor. I see the

disappointment in your eyes. The hate. That coldness you always used to hold only for your enemies, now you hold it for me.” A tear finally escaped, tracing a lonely path down my cheek. “It means that every time something happens between us, it will always be my fault. Always. And I can’t. I can’t stay in a relationship like that.”

His eyes widened, his anger suddenly replaced by something close to panic. He reached for me, his hand outstretched. “Faith, no! Please, don’t say that.

Wait, I-”

I pulled back, recoiling as if I’d been burned. The thought of his touch, after seeing that hate, was too much. “I need space, Astor,” I said, my voice flat, empty. “I need to breathe.”

I lied to myself and tried to convince myself that maybe she was lying to me but she was telling the truth and I’m sure the reason why she didn’t tell him that day was to f*** with me and she was very successful.

I turned, heading for the door, my legs feeling like lead. Just as my hand touched the cold metal of the doorknob, his voice stopped me. “Where are you going?” he demanded, a strange mix of fear and possessiveness in his tone.

He has the nerve.

I looked back at him, my gaze unwavering. “Don’t worry,” I told him, a strange calm settling over me despite the storm inside. “I won’t run away.” A cold, hard truth, a promise I knew I had to keep. “You’re keeping my father, God knows where. I would never leave you in that kind of trouble.” I forced a little half-smile, a bitter twist of my lips. “So relax, Astor. I’m not going anywhere, And then, I opened the door and walked out, leaving him alone in the room, leaving my shattered hopes behind me.

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Faith’s Pov

I sat by the lake, knees drawn to my chin, watching the calm, dark water t mirrored a still and peaceful world, so unlike the storm raging inside me. My heart felt heavy, a constant against my ribs.

A sudden shift in the air, a scent of fresh pine and raw, untamed power, sent a jolt through me and my muscles tensed, every nerve screaming a silent warning.

Alpha Kyle.

He emerged from the line of ancient oaks his presence was a towering shadow and it was immense. My breath caught in my throat.

For some reason being alone with him felt uncomfortable and he was very intimidating.

I was a Luna, yes but I had no wolf. No primal instinct to rise to the challenge, no fierce animal to lend me courage in the face of such a powerful male. My human heart, stupid and fragile, hammered a frantic, cowardly beat against my ribs, a drum telling me to run.

No. Stop this, Faith. I straightened, my spine stiffening. My shoulders went back, a silent command to my own body. I was Luna. I could not cower. Not in front of Alpha Kyle, not in front of anyone. I took a deep, shaky breath, pushing down the fear, forcing my hands to unclench. I could pretend like his presence didn't make me uncomfortable. I would act as if his sudden appearance meant nothing, as if my heart wasn't trying to beat its way out of my chest.

He stopped a few feet away, his dark eyes, sharp and intelligent, studying me with an intensity that made my skin prickle. I met his gaze, schooling my face into a calm, unreadable mask. "Alpha Kyle," I said, my voice, to my relief, steady and clear. A small, knowing smile touched the corners of his lips.

"Luna Faith," he replied, his voice a low, rumbling sound that vibrated slightly in the air. "You don't need to be nervous, Relax." My eyes narrowed just a fraction. "Nervous about what?" I asked, a hint of defiance in my tone.

He took a slow step closer, and I felt my muscles tighten, though I fought hard to hide it. "That my presence doesn't affect you," he said, his gaze dropping briefly to my chest. "I can feel your heartbeat, Luna. It's quite fast." Of course he could. His senses were probably a hundred times more refined than mine, picking up every tremor, every accelerated beat.

The discomfort swelled, pressing in on me. I stood up, my intention clear. I couldn't stay here, not under his dissecting gaze. I needed to escape, to regain my composure far from his knowing eyes. "If you'll excuse me, Alpha," I began, taking a step away from the lake. "Wait." His voice, though gentle, was firm, a quiet command. He didn't touch me, but his powerful presence seemed to block my path, a solid, invisible wall. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you. If I interrupted something, I can leave." He sounded genuinely regretful, his dark brows drawing together in a slight frown. "You seem... really upset."

His unexpected kindness, the soft concern in his voice, surprised me. It was a tiny crack in the thick wall I had built around myself. My shoulders slumped, the pretense suddenly too heavy to maintain.

Without a word, I sank back down onto the cold grass, not looking at him, my gaze fixed on the endless shimmer of the lake. Then, the words, raw and unthinking came out of me, a testament to how truly broken I felt in that moment. “Have you ever been in love, Alpha Kyle?” I asked, my voice barely a whisper, thin and fragile in the vast silence. “And I don’t mean a mate, I know you haven’t found yours. But just... truly and deeply in love with someone?”

He was silent for a long moment, and I could feel the weight of his gaze on me, sharper now, more probing, trying to piece together the shattered landscape of my emotions. “No,” he said finally, his voice oddly soft and reflective. “I haven’t.” I looked up at him then, a bitter, humorless smile twisting my lips. It felt more like a grimace. “You’re very lucky to have found someone who told him the words laced with a pain I couldn’t quite hide, a deep, aching sorrow. There is no greater misfortune than love.” His expression shifted a flicker of confusion crossing his face. “How come?” he asked his voice low. “You and Alpha Astor... you seem happy.”

My heart gave a fresh, agonizing wrench. Happy? The word felt like alien to my tongue, a cruel, mocking joke. I quickly looked away my gaze flying to the still, cold surface of the lake. “Oh, no, I’m happy” I said trying to make my voice sound light, dismissive, as if it were of no importance it was added, even to my own ears. “I was just asking in general. You know it can be... complicated, for some people.” I tried to sound formal and distant, as if discussing a topic from a textbook, not pouring out the agony of my own bleeding heart.

I stood up again, this time with a surge of desperate resolve I couldn’t stay here, not with him seeing so much, feeling so much of my raw, exposed pain. “Is something wrong, Luna Faith?” Kyle asked, his voice even lower and full of a quiet concern that I found almost unbearable. I paused my back.

The dam I had so carefully constructed around my emotions, built with Lute duty and practiced composure, finally cracked. A single, hot tear escaped tracing a lonely path down my cheek, unheard, unseen by him. “Nothing,” I whispered, the words thick with unshed grief, heavy with a pain that encompassed my entire existence.

“Everything about my life is wrong.” I didn’t wait for him to respond and I walked. I walked away from the lake, away from Alpha Kyle’s quiet understanding gaze, away from the questions I couldn’t answer, and the searing agony I couldn’t explain.

Alpha’s Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 37

The air in the living room was thick, heavy with unspoken things. It pressed down on me, making my skin crawl. Alice sat on the plush sofa, her hands resting gently on her belly, a small, knowing smile playing on her lips.

Her parents stood behind her, looking somewhere between proud and deeply uncomfortable. I stood in the middle of the room, my hands clenched into fists, my heart a hammer against my ribs.

“Alice,” I began, my voice a low growl that barely kept my anger in check. “What is this new game?”

Her smile widened, a triumphant, sickening smirk. “Oh, Astor! Fancy finding out this way, didn’t you? Yes, it’s true. I’m having your baby.” She even let out a small, happy giggle, like she’d just won the lottery. “Isn’t it wonderful? We’re going to be a family!”

My jaw tightened. “Stop playing these games, Alice,” I snapped, my eyes boring into hers. “You know very well why you did this. You did all of this to hurt Faith.”

Her eyes flashed, but the smile didn’t leave her face. It was chilling. “Hurt Faith? Astor, darling, the person who hurt Faith is the one she’s mated to. Not me.” She even emphasized the word ‘mated’ like a poisoned arrow.

I stared at her, utterly disgusted. “Have you no shame, Alice? To do this to someone who is your own sister?” I asked because I genuinely don’t understand her anymore.

She shrugged, a careless flutter of her shoulders. “I don’t care about Faith. and she’s not even my sister” The words were so cold, so flat, they sent a shiver down my spine.

And in that moment, something clicked. A thousand little pieces of memory, of conversations, of tiny, sly remarks she used to make about Faith when first came to stay with me. Faith is evil. Faith is always causing trouble. Faith is so selfish. All those little seeds of doubt she’d planted, making me question Faith’s intentions, making me think my mate was some kind of burden. It all made sense now. The bad person, the manipulative one, wasn’t Faith. It was Alice. It had always been Alice. She had twisted everything, made me believe lies.

A cold, hard resolve settled in my chest. Listen to me very carefully, Alice, I said, my voice low and dangerous. “You may carry my baby, and I will take full responsibility for that child. I would never abandon my own flesh and blood.” I met her eyes, letting her see the steel in mine. “But I will never love you. Not one bit. My heart belongs to Faith, and only Faith. And I swear to you, I will protect her from you, from everything.”

Without waiting for her to speak, I mind-linked one of the Omegas. Prepare a room in the packhouse. A comfortable one, but not lavish. For Alice. She will be staying there.

“You are going to stay in the packhouse, I told Alice, my voice flat.

Her triumphant smile finally faltered. Her eyes widened, a flicker of panic.” What? No! I can’t stay there! But the father of my child stays here, so why can’t I”

I scoffed. “No. Nobody but Faith will stay in this house with me. This is my home, and only my mate lives under my roof.”

Her face crumpled. Large, fake tears welled in her eyes, threatening to spill. She looked at her parents, who seemed just as helpless. She started to cry, soft, heaving sobs, trying to make me feel something.

I didn’t give a damn. Her tears meant nothing to me. They were just another performance.

she is the reason why I have treated Faith like this and I might never get my mate back because of her so she deserves to suffer,

I turned and walked out, leaving her sobbing in the living room. My only thought was Faith, I needed to find her. needed to see her, to hold her, to explain everything, to apologize for being so blind, lunged out of the house, my Alpha senses flaring, searching for her scent. There! A familiar, sweet scent, tinged with sadness, drifting from the direction of the lake. I followed it, my legs pumping, my heart urging me faster.

As I neared the lake, the air became thick with her scent, but something else hit me too. Another Alpha. A male. My gut twisted with an immediate, searing jealousy. Alpha Kyle. What is he doing here?

I don’t know what it is about him but ever since the day he came to this pack I have been noticing that he has paid an awful lot of attention to my mate rather than trying to find his own and it’s irritating me now I crept closer, hiding behind the dense trees, my eyes scanning the shimmering surface of the water. And then I saw them. Faith, sitting on a fallen log, and Kyle standing beside her, talking, his posture open and friendly. My teeth clenched. A low growl rumbled in my chest, a primal, possessive warning. He was too close. Why was she with him?

My blood boiled, a mix of anger and fear. Anger at myself, for letting Alice do this, for not being there for Faith. Anger at Kyle, for daring to be near her, for comforting her when it should be me.

I stayed hidden, watching, waiting for Kyle to leave. The jealousy was a hot, burning fire in my veins. When she finally, reluctantly, turned and walked away, I stepped out from the trees.

Faith left him standing there and I could tell that he still had something to say but she was already away from him. Her scent was still heavy with sorrow.

As she turned, her eyes, wide and red-rimmed, met mine.

My anger and jealousy flared, burning away any other thought.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 38

His face was a furious storm, a terrifying mix of dangerous jealousy and raw anger. His jaw was tight, his eyes narrowed, and a deep flush spread across his cheeks. I braced myself, ready for the explosion, ready for anything but this. But then, to my total surprise, his shoulders dropped. The anger seemed to drain out of him, leaving a strange, quiet desperation.

“Please,” he said, his voice surprisingly soft. “Can we just talk?”

I felt a weary sigh escape me. “I’m tired of talking, Astor,” I told him, my voice flat. Because that’s all we ever did. We talked, we argued and we always, always end up in the same place. No closer to understanding where we stand, or where we were going.

He shook his head slowly. “No, I don’t want to apologize or make promises,” he said, his gaze fixed on some point beyond my shoulder. “I don’t think I deserve that right now.”

My head snapped up. Whiplash. That’s exactly what it felt like. One moment he was a raging Alpha, the next he was... this. Humble? Broken? I didn’t know what to think of him anymore. My mind was a tangled mess.

“Why are you doing all of this?” I asked, my voice barely a whisper. “Nothing will change.” I just wanted things to go back to how they were. Before all the pain, before all the confusion. I wanted him to go back to ignoring me, so I could try really try to forget my feelings for him. That felt safer.

He took a step closer, his eyes finally meeting mine, full of an raw emotion I couldn’t quite decipher. “Can you just listen to me?” he pleaded. “Without responding, without saying anything. I just want to say a few things to you. After that, it’s your choice what happens.”

I looked into his eyes, searching for a trick, a lie. But there was only this strange, vulnerable honesty. A part of me screamed to run, to refuse. But another part, a smaller, quieter part, knew there was no escaping him, not really. Not until I heard him out. I nodded, a slow, reluctant moment

“Let’s go,” he said, and before I could even process it, his hand reached out and found mine. His touch brought back the sparks, I didn’t pull away, I didn’t argue. I just let him lead me, wondering where he was taking me

I expected him to lead us back to the pack house, to his office. So, I was completely surprised when he turned in the opposite direction, away from the familiar buildings and sounds of our pack.

We walked in silence for what felt like an eternity, maybe five minutes, but filled with unspoken questions. The air was cool against my skin. The tension between us was thick, a silent hum. Then, we stopped.

It was a small, hidden space I never knew existed around the Pack lands. A little clearing, tucked away behind a thick cluster of ancient oak trees. The sunlight dappled through the leaves, painting shifting patterns on the ground. It was beautiful, filled with a burst of color from wildflowers I'd never seen before – vibrant blues, soft yellows, fiery reds, all swaying gently in a breeze only they seemed to feel.

A simple wooden bench sat beneath a weeping willow. I sat down, my gaze sweeping across the peaceful scene. A genuine smile, small and soft, touched my lips. I loved nature, and this place felt like a breath of fresh air after the suffocating storm inside me.

“This is my favorite place,” Astor said quietly, his voice a low rumble beside me. He looked around, his eyes distant, as if reliving countless memories in this quiet sanctuary. “Whenever I need a break, or just need to think, this is where I come.”

I didn't say anything, but my mind whirled. I hadn't known this about him. And why was he bringing me here, to his secret place? It felt intensely personal, a level of intimacy I hadn't expected, especially not from him.

He cleared his throat, pulling my attention back to him. His gaze was fixed on the colorful flowers now, as if they held the answers he was searching for “I didn't believe in love,” he began, his voice barely above a whisper. “I know, it sounds crazy, doesn't it? My parents... they would literally die for each other. They look at each other like the sun rises and sets with them. But I always thought that was just the mate bond.”

He turned to me then, his eyes searching mine. “I believed it was a feeling forced on you. Something you had no choice but to accept, a destiny laid out by the ancestors. And in a way,” he paused, “the mate bond is something you can't control, something you don't choose. But it's more than that, isn't it?”

My chest tightened.

“I have an obsession with control,” he admitted, his voice laced with a raw honesty that stung. “Probably because I never chose to be who I am. From the moment I could walk, I knew I would be the Alpha of this pack. So, I thought I should at least have the right to choose who I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. Who I wanted to love. But then... you came along.”

He let out a short, hollow laugh, devoid of humor. “I think I resented you the moment I met you. You were just... a ray of sunshine. A bright, annoying glow in my carefully ordered world. You had a smile that looked like the rest of the world didn't affect you. And I thought, ‘It must be nice to have it so easy in life.’ Especially since you were about to become the mate of an Alpha, without having done anything to earn it in my eyes.”

The words were like daggers, sharp and precise. He had judged me. He had hated me. My throat burned.

“I judged you,” he continued, his voice heavy with regret. “And it wasn’t hard to make assumptions about you because I had people whispering things in my ears. Lies. And I believed them.”

The truth hurt more than I thought it possibly could. A sharp stab in my chest, leaving a cold ache. I squeezed my eyes shut for a moment, fighting back the tears that pricked at them. I had promised I would listen. I wouldn’t speak. But I couldn’t stop the unwanted, burning tears from finally spilling down my cheeks.

“I watched you for years,” he confessed, his voice growing rougher. “Every time, I hoped. I hoped that you would fail. That you would be bad at something. Anything. So that I could justify why I hated you, or find a reason to hate you even more. But you didn’t. You excelled at everything. You worked harder than anyone. You made friends. You were good.”

He paused, taking a shaky breath. “I don’t want you to forgive me anymore,” he said, his voice surprisingly gentle. “Because that would be forcing you to do something you don’t want to do. But... I’m just asking if you would give me a chance to make up for everything. And I’m not forcing you this time. I’m not perfect, I know that. But I know I can be everything you deserve.”

My tears were coming faster now but I still kept quiet.

Then, he dropped another bombshell. “I don’t want you to give me a chance because you feel like you have to save your father’s life,” he stated, his voice firm. “Because his life was never in danger.”

My breath caught in my throat. Never in danger?

“You can call him,” Astor continued, his voice soft, “and find out for yourself. I sent him on a much-needed vacation. He loved you, he understood you more than anybody, and I couldn’t do anything bad to a father like that.” He finally looked up, meeting my tear-filled gaze. “I’m sorry that I used him against you. I truly am. But I’m not sorry for trying everything I could to bring you back. The last couple of days, without you were the hardest of my life. But the days you were there... they were some of the best days I’ve ever spent.”

“You hurt me, Astor,” I choked out, the words thick with emotion. That was the raw, undeniable truth. A truth I couldn’t run from, even now.

He nodded slowly, accepting my pain. “I know,” he confessed, his voice heavy. “And I’m pretty sure I’ll hurt you again in the future. But it will never be intentional. Never again.”

The tears kept falling, but a new anger sparked within me, cutting through the grief. He seemed to be forgetting something very important. “You’re having a baby,” I reminded him, my voice suddenly sharp, “with Alice.”

He flinched, as if I'd slapped him. The mention of my sister and the baby brought a fresh wave of reality crashing down. He had acknowledged so much, but this was a wall that seemed impossible to climb.

He closed his eyes briefly, then opened them, his gaze pleading. "I just need you to give me one month," he said, his voice quiet but firm. "Willingly. Stay with me for one month, and I promise you, I will make you happy. And if, after that month, you still want to leave... I won't stop you."

A month. One month. The proposition hung in the air between us, heavy with unspoken promises and lingering doubts. It was a gamble. A desperate, hopeful, and terrifying gamble.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 39

Faith's Pov

You can call it stupidity, or maybe just a hopeless kind of love. But I agreed. Even though I knew, deep down, it was going to tear me apart. Maybe it's because when you truly love someone, you can't stand to see them hurting. and that's exactly what he looked like, defeated and broken.

The minute the words left my lips, "I agree," regret clawed at my throat. A heavy, bitter feeling. But at least now, I can live with the fact that I tried. I tried and I failed.

I wanted to cry. My eyes burned with the urge. He pulled me into a hot, warming hug, his arms tight around me, and promised I wouldn't regret it. He promised I wasn't going to cry anymore. So I swallowed my tears, determined to see him live up to that. I had to.

Unfortunately, the real world had other plans. Just moments after our quiet conversation. He was needed in the office.

Apparently, there had been an attack on another pack. I wasn't really familiar with all the pack politics, but I'd heard him talking about these constant attacks. If he was worried, maybe I should be too. But for now, I didn't want to think about it. My head already throbbed with a dull ache. I was just tired. Bone-weary tired. I couldn't imagine doing anything right now, so I decided to go back to the house and maybe take a nap before I had to think about dinner.

was halfway up the stairs, my thoughts still muddled with Astor's pained face and his warm hug, when a small, young omega stumbled into the hallway, panting. Her eyes were wide with panic.

"Luna Faith!" she gasped, clutching her side. "There's a problem... a big problem in the kitchen!"

My heart sank a little further. Just what I needed. Ignoring my own exhaustion, I turned and followed her quickly, my mind already running through possible kitchen disasters. Burnt food? A fight over ingredients?

I genuinely hate the fact that they intentionally sometimes call me when it's something stupid.

The moment I stepped into the pack house kitchen, chaos erupted around me. It wasn't the usual busy hum of cooking; it was a loud, angry din. Women were gathered in a tight circle, their voices rising and falling. And in the middle of it all, standing like an enraged queen, was Alice. Her face was flushed, her hands on her flat belly, her eyes spitting fire.

"This is unacceptable!" Alice shrieked, her voice cutting through the noise. "How dare you give me this slop? I'm pregnant! My child needs proper nutrition, not this... this garbage!"

One of the cooks, a kind-faced woman named Clara, looked utterly defeated. "But Alice, this is what everyone is eating. It's the best we could do with what we have tonight."

Alice scoffed, tossing her head so her long, dark hair whipped around her shoulders. "I don't care what everyone else is eating! My baby is special! My baby deserves better!" She pointed a dramatic finger at Clara. "And before you ask any more stupid questions, I'll tell you who the father is, so you know just how special this baby is!"

She looked at me with a look of Triumph and Victory before doing exactly what I anticipated she was going to do.

My breath hitched. A cold dread seeped into my veins. The women in the kitchen, who had been asking Alice questions, suddenly fell silent. Their eyes darted from Alice to me, then back to Alice, a strange, knowing glint in them. Alice's gaze swept over the stunned faces, finally landing on mine, a smirk twisting her lips. "The father of my child, she announced, her voice booming with triumph, "is Astor"

My heart, already bruised, shattered even more. I don't think it will ever stop hurting a breaking and that's the most painful part. The air left my lungs in a painful rush. Her words echoed in the sudden, crushing silence.

I felt a sharp, icy sting, like a thousand tiny needles piercing my skin. Humiliation, hot and searing, washed over me, then quickly froze my insides. Every single woman in that kitchen stared at me. Their faces, usually filled with indifference, now held a mix of pity and what looked suspiciously like satisfaction. They were enjoying every second of it.

And then, as if on cue, they turned away from me. One by one, their faces softened as they looked at Alice. Whispers started, not of anger at Alice, but of comfort. "Oh, Alice, dear!" "How wonderful!" "You poor thing, let us help you!"

A wave of women surged forward, embracing Alice. They hugged her, patted her belly, offered words of support and congratulations. Their smiles were wide, genuine. For them. Not for me.

They practically formed a wall between Alice and me, their backs to me, shutting me out completely.

My heart ripped open. It was a physical pain, like a fist squeezing my chest. I felt like I was drowning in a sea of mocking eyes and joyful whispers that weren't for me. Astor's promise – you won't cry anymore- rang in my ears, a cruel joke. My eyes burned again, but I wouldn't let the tears fall. Not here.

Not now.

I sucked in a shaky breath, forcing my shoulders back, my chin up. The “problem” the omega had rushed to tell me about? It wasn't the food. It was this. This public, brutal announcement. But I couldn't show my heartbreak. Not to them. I was the Luna, even if they didn't want me.

“Clara,” I said, my voice surprisingly steady, though it felt like shards of glass in my throat. I pushed past the joyful throng, ignoring their cold stares and averted faces. “What seems to be the actual issue with the food? Can we quickly find a solution?” I focused on the problem, the actual, solvable problem. It was the only way to breathe. The only way to survive.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 40

Astor's Pov

The low, venomous laughter and words from the kitchen had been like a punch to my gut. Each cruel laugh they aimed at Faith twisted something inside me. I'd heard enough to know they'd been humiliating her, laughing at her, making her feel small. And then I saw her face, the way her shoulders slumped, the unshed tears in her eyes. It was a sight that made my wolf roar. Fury, cold and sharp, ignited in my chest.

I took a deep breath, letting my presence expand, forcing the air out of the room. The chattering stopped abruptly. Silence, thick and heavy, fell. My voice, low but laced with steel, cut through it. “Everyone. To the main hall.

Now.”

A shiver went through the pack members nearby. I didn't need to yell. They knew that tone.

“George, Liam, I want every single pack member in the main hall within five minutes,” I mind-linked my Beta and Lead Enforcer. “No exceptions. This is not a request.” My command echoed in their minds, carrying the weight of my anger.

I turned to Faith, her head still bowed slightly. My heart ached for her. She was trying so hard to be strong, but I could see the cracks. I stepped closer, closing the distance between us. Her eyes, shining with unshed tears, finally met mine. I gave her the most reassuring smile I could manage, a silent promise that everything was about to change. She flinched a little, unsure, but I gently took her hand in mine. Her fingers were cold. I squeezed them, a silent message: You are not alone. I am here.

As we walked towards the hall, I felt a familiar, irritating presence. Alice. She stepped into my path, a simpering smile on her face, trying to catch my eye.” Astor, darling, are you alright? You look upset-”

I didn’t even break my stride. My gaze remained fixed forward, my hand firmly holding Faith’s. I walked straight past Alice as if she were a piece of furniture, not even bothering to acknowledge her presence. Her voice died in her throat, a frustrated gasp the only sound she made. My complete indifference was a clear message to her, and to anyone else paying attention. My priority, my only focus, was the woman whose hand I held.

The great hall buzzed with nervous energy when we arrived. Pack members, from the oldest elders to the youngest adults, were already gathering, hushed and expectant. My mind-link had worked. As Faith and I entered, a ripple of silence spread, every eye snapping to us. I could feel the tension, the fear, the curiosity.

I stopped in the center of the hall, my posture rigid, my eyes sweeping over the faces of my pack. There were the women from the kitchen, looking pale and suddenly very small. Good.

“I have made it clear, time and again,” I began, my voice steady, carrying to every corner of the room, “that my mate will not be disrespected. Yet, today, I witnessed it with my own eyes.” My gaze sharpened, landing directly on the group of women who had been in the kitchen. “I witnessed my mate, the Luna of this pack, being humiliated by some of you in the kitchen.”

A collective gasp went through the hall. The women I was looking at paled further, some dropping their eyes to the floor.

“Because of this,” I continued, my voice gaining a dangerous edge, “every single one of you who was in that kitchen, participating in or allowing that disrespect, is hereby stripped of their positions. Any duties you held, any authority you thought you had, is gone. You are lucky,” I added, my voice dropping, becoming a menacing growl, “because everyone in this pack knows what happens when someone shows disrespect to Faith. Do you remember Chase? My Gamma? The man who was like a brother to me?”

I let the question hang in the air, the memory of Chase’s banishment a stark warning. No one spoke. They remembered. They remembered the fury I had unleashed, And they better not forget

“He was banished,” I stated, answering my own question, “because he disrespected my mate. He lost everything. Consider yourselves fortunate that you are simply losing your positions today. But let me be clear: this will not be happening again. Not to Faith. Not to my Luna. From this

moment forward, if you have a problem with her, if you wish to speak ill of her, if you wish to disrespect her in any way, you will first have to face me. You will face your Alpha. And I promise you, that will be a meeting you will regret for the rest of your days.”

The silence that followed was absolute. No one dared to move, no one dared to speak. My message was understood.

Then, a brave, or perhaps foolish, voice broke the stillness. It belonged to a younger pack member, barely out of her teens. “Alpha Astor... is it true that Alice is having your baby?”

The air in the room seemed to crackle. All eyes swiveled from me to Alice, who stood frozen, her face a mixture of happiness and defiance.

I took a moment, letting the question hang. Then I looked directly at the young woman who had asked, my expression unreadable. “Yes,” I said, my voice flat, devoid of emotion. “It is true. Alice is carrying a pup that is biologically mine.”

A murmur rippled through the pack. Faith’s hand in mine tightened almost imperceptibly, and I squeezed back, a silent anchor.

“But let me be equally clear,” I continued, my voice ringing with absolute finality, “that fact means absolutely nothing to me. Emotionally. Spiritually. That baby does not, and will not, change who my mate is. It does not change who I am. I messed up,” I admitted, my voice hard with self-loathing, “I made a mistake. A colossal, unforgivable mistake. But that mistake does not mean that I value my mate, Faith, any less. It does not mean my loyalty, my devotion, my entire being, is not here and hers alone.”

My gaze swept over the pack once more, ensuring every person understood. “The only person in this pack, or in this world, that I owe an explanation to for that mistake, is my mate, Faith. And I will give her that explanation, in private, at a time and place of her choosing. But it is not for any of you to question, or to judge, or to use as an excuse to disrespect the woman standing beside me.”

I looked down at Faith, whose head was now lifted, her eyes wide, searching mine. I saw a flicker of hope, of understanding, and a deep, raw pain.

Without another word, I squeezed Faith’s hand once more, a powerful reassurance. Then, I turned, keeping her hand held firmly in mine, and we walked away from the stunned silence of the hall, towards the private chambers that awaited us. The pack parted like the Red Sea, their eyes following us until we were out of sight. My message, I knew, had been delivered. And for Faith, I would burn the world to make it stick.

