

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 51

The reflection staring back at me in the dresser mirror was not mine

It had my eyes, my lips, and my slightly messy brown hair, but the smile plastered across her face was so wide, so bright, it looked like a mask. A cheap, plastic mask.

Three days.

It had been three full days since I went to Alpha Kyle for help.

And in those three days, nothing in my life had changed.

I still woke up in my perfect bed. I still made coffee and pretended that the laughter I gave me over breakfast was genuine. Astor was trying so hard to play ‘Happy Family.’ He was trying things he never bothered with before.

He took me on a ridiculous hot air balloon ride yesterday. He bought me a tiny silver chain with a wolf pendant today. He kept telling me, “He was trying to be better for me and our relationship.”

I let him. I went on the dates, I took the gifts, and I kept the fake smile glued on.

He never noticed it was fake.

He didn’t notice because he wasn’t looking at me. He was looking at his idea of me—the perfect, docile mate who should just be happy he decided being an asshole of course and tell somebody tells him something about me and he believes it without even asking me again.

It reinforced my decision. If three days of effort from him didn’t make me feel safe, then nothing ever would. I was leaving. Tonight.

I also spent the last three days thinking about Alpha Kyle. He agreed to help too easily. He promised me a route out and guaranteed that Astor would never be able to track me across the border. But deep down, I knew he wasn’t doing this just out of the kindness of his heart

I don’t care though.

Whatever Kyle was planning, it wasn’t going to work on me because he is not going to see me either. I didn’t need a savior; I just needed a key to unlock the exit door. I need his help to cover my tracks, and that was it.

My fingers traced the edge of the mirror, my eyes fixed on the distant, cold look in my own gaze. I was ready.

“You look beautiful, mate.”

I froze. Astors voice was a deep rumble right behind me. He hadn’t made a sound. He was right there.

His large hands settled on my bare arms, right above the lace straps of my black dress. He started rubbing slow, circular motions on my skin. It was meant to be comforting, familiar, but it felt like a cage closing around me.

I inhaled, held the air for a second, then quickly pulled my mask back down.

I pivoted slightly, forcing a dazzling, excited smile. “Do I? Good. I want tonight to be perfect.”

“It will be.” His eyes were dark and possessive, sweeping over the sleek black material of the dress. “We are going to have fun. I still can’t believe you’ve never been to a club.”

I shrugged, trying to keep my breathing even. “I’ve been busy, I guess.” Or, rather, he and everybody in my life has kept me locked away so tightly that socializing wasn’t an option.

When I mentioned earlier that I had never been dancing at a club, he insisted that we had to go. He needed to be the first. He was my mate, and he needed to show me everything. I let him because it works perfectly with the plan at hand.

“I’m ready,” I said, my voice falsely light.

Astor leaned down and placed a hard, deep kiss on my neck, right on the scent gland. “Good. Let’s go make some memories we’ll never forget.”

No, Astor, I thought fiercely, pushing back the small wave of nausea. Let’s go make the last memory we will ever share.

The club was everything I imagined: loud, crowded, and pulsing with music that vibrated in my chest. Thick sweat hung in the air, smelling of cheap cologne and expensive liquor.

But I wasn’t paying attention to the flashing lights or the pulsing lyrics. I was watching Astor.

He was drinking too much. Heavy shots of whiskey, one after the other. He kept insisting he was just “loosening up, but I knew the truth. He was trying to medicate his guilt, trying to make the past few years disappear.

He dragged me to a corner booth and leaned in, his breath hot and sticky with alcohol.

“Faith,” he slurred, grabbing my hand and squeezing it too tightly. “I am so sorry.”

The words tumbled out of him like spilled water: “I was bad to you. I know I was. I wish I wasn’t that man. I wish I could go back and fix it.”

He looked pained and heartbroken. His eyes were red-rimmed and glassy, completely unguarded for the first time in a while.

“I love you,” he whispered, pressing my hand against his cheek. “God, Faith, I love you, and I promise, I will be better. I swear it.”

I stared at him.

Weeks ago, those three words would have shattered me, crumbling all my defenses. They would have made me stay.

Now? They were just noise. They didn’t move me. They landed flat, distant, like a radio playing in another room.

I gave him a sympathetic, weak smile—the real version this time. “I know, Astor. I know you do.”

I knew he loved me in his own broken way. But love wasn’t enough to heal the scars he left on my soul. Love wasn’t enough to make me forget the terror.

He drank until he was barely coherent. He was clinging to my arm, leaning his massive weight against me as I guided him out of the deafening club and into the cool night air.

“Home,” he mumbled, letting his head rest against my shoulder in the car. “I want to go home with my mate.”

I drove us back to the house, my plan clicking into place. Freedom was only a couple of hours away. I just had to get him settled, wait for the designated signal, and walk away.

I practically carried him up the sweeping staircase and into our bedroom. He was too heavy, too drunk to help himself.

I gently lowered him onto the bed, and started working on his buttons.

I pulled his sharp suit jacket off first, then started on the complicated ties of his dress shirt. I unbuttoned the cuffs and slipped the expensive fabric off his thick shoulders.

As I undid his final buttons, exposing his powerful chest, my hand brushed against his warm skin.

It was strange. He was never this vulnerable. Usually, he was a wall of aggression and control. Now, he was just a heavy, sleeping and hestarken man.

A sense of closeness, terrible and unexpected, washed over me. This man the man who broke me, was also the man who held my heart. The man I still maddeningly, loved.

I hesitated, his shirt pooling around his waist. I could feel the heat radiating off him.

He stirred, his eyes opening halfway. They focused on my face, blurry with alcohol, but the raw need in them was still there.

“Faith,” he breathed, reaching up clumsy hands and cupping my jaw.

I didn’t pull back. Logic screamed at me, reminding me that this was the very last moment I would ever be this close to him, and I needed to use it to escape.

But my heart, that foolish, stubborn thing, didn’t listen.

He pulled me down, his lips crushing against mine. The kiss tasted like whiskey and regret, hungry and desperate. I welcomed it, leaning into the warmth of his body, letting myself pretend, just for a moment, that the man who killed my soul was gone and only the mate remained.

I kissed him back, a flood of repressed emotion rising up, and I let my fingers tangle in his thick hair as he rolled me onto the mattress.

The plan was seconds away. Freedom was waiting.

But right now, all that mattered was the weight of his body pressing down on mine, and the terrifying, wonderful realization that I was sinking, one last time, into the arms of the man I was leaving forever.

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I looked at the empty glass near the bedside table. My hand still trembled slightly. I had mixed the sleeping powder a strong human sedative into his wine glass. It worked fast on a normal person and it was going to take a while for a wolf especially and Alpha but he was drunk.

I just drugged the man I love.

A wave of crushing guilt hit me, cold and sharp. I had to push it away. If I let myself think about the cruelty of this act, I would stop, and if I stopped, I would stay.

You have to go, Faith. This is the only way.

I moved quickly and silently, adrenaline erasing my exhaustion. I didn't take much. A few changes of clothes and the sturdy boots I kept hidden under the bed.

The next part was the hardest, and the most shameful.

I slipped out of the bedroom and padded down the hall to Astor's private office. My heart pounded against my ribs like a trapped bird.

I went straight to the large, hidden safe behind the painting of his great-grandfather. I remembered the code. He had shown it to me carelessly one bored afternoon.

His mother's birthday.

The tumbler clicked.

I pulled the heavy steel door open. My eyes immediately went to the stacked bundles of cash inside. It felt wrong, monstrous, to take it.

But I forced myself to reach inside. This wasn't stealing. This was payment.

For three years, I had been the perfect Luna. I smiled when I was tired, I organized every event flawlessly, and I stood beside him, strong and supportive, even when he was cold and terrible to me.

This money was the wages I was never paid for selling my life to his pack.

I grabbed two thick wads of cash and tucked them deep inside my backpack.

As I was about to close the safe, something else caught my eye. Tucked away next to the important pack documents, inside a small, worn wooden box, were things that didn't belong with land deeds and financial reports.

I pulled the box out. My fingers fumbled with the lid.

Inside, resting on a bed of soft, red velvet, were a few senseless, sentimental items: a dried, brown rose from the bouquet he'd given me the morning after our mating ceremony, it's funny because I always believed that he wasn't the one who bought me those flowers because of how much he was against our relationship.

I also found folded-up ticket stub from the human movie theater we visited because his father believed we were not spending enough time together and a small, smooth stone I had picked up by the river and given him on the day he took me hiking.

My breath hitched.

He kept them. He kept the memory of the real us.

My eyes burned with tears I refused to shed. It broke me, just a little, because maybe he truly did love me the regretful man who had promised forever a few days ago.

It wasn't enough anymore. Nothing he had or felt was enough to keep me from myself.

I closed the wooden box, pushed it back gently, and slammed the heavy safe door shut.

Back in the bedroom, the moonlight streamed through the window, kissing Astor's face. He looked so vulnerable, like the man I fell in love at first sight, not the demanding Alpha who chose to believe everybody but me.

I sat down at his huge mahogany desk and pulled out a sheet of paper.

I wrote quickly. I didn't apologize for leaving, but I did explain why I had to go. It was a goodbye, clean and final.

I went back to the bed. I tucked the letter under his pillow, where he would find it first thing when he woke up—or whenever the drug finally wore off.

I looked at his face one last time, memorizing the sharp line of his jaw and the relaxed curl of his thick lashes.

I leaned down and pressed my lips against his, a deep, mournful kiss that ended everything between us.

"I love you, Astor," I whispered to his unconscious state.

Then, I turned my back on the Pack House bedroom forever.

The front door clicked shut behind me, a sound that felt deafening in the sleeping quiet of the early morning. I stood still for one agonizing second, waiting for the howl of an alarm, for the rush of pack warriors.

Nothing. Just the chirp of crickets.

A tall, dark shadow detached itself from the edge of the porch, making me jump. It was Alpha Kyle. The relief was instant, followed by a fresh spike of anxiety.

He moved toward me, his face grim.

"What took you so long, Faith?" he hissed, his voice low and strained. "We had to leave two hours ago! My Beta has been waiting."

I didn't answer right away. I pulled my backpack higher on my shoulder, feeling the weight of the stolen money pressing into my back.

“Kyle,” I whispered, holding his gaze. “Why are you willing to do this? You know very well that Astor will no longer be allies with you, he will never forgive this.”

Kyle’s eyes were hard, fixed on the darkness of the woods beyond the yard. “I will tell you why when we get to my pack borders. Right now, we move.”

He didn’t wait for my agreement. He simply started walking quickly toward the thick boundary of trees, and I followed, my boots crunching softly on the gravel path.

Every second felt exposed. I was worried sick that the pack warriors guarding the perimeter would spot me before I reached safety.

“The patrol schedule,” Kyle said, sensing my fear without looking back. “I studied it. The shift change happened twenty minutes ago. We have a clear window for the next hour. Nobody is going to find you.”

His confidence barely eased my worry. How did he know the schedule so well?

We didn’t walk far before we plunged into the deep shadows of the woods. The air was colder here, smelling of damp earth and pine needles. We moved silently, like ghosts.

Finally, deep enough that the Pack House was only a distant, pale blur, we found him. Kyle’s Beta, Elias, was waiting far away from the house, but still technically on our pack territory. He was lean and tense, his eyes sweeping the darkness constantly.

The fact that Kyle and his Beta knew so much about our pack’s routines, our patrols, and our schedules sent a shiver of dread down my spine. Could they be planning a real attack later?

No. Astor is the Alpha. He won’t let that happen. He will protect his pack. I clung to that thought, even as I ran away from him.

“Elias will take you,” Kyle said, stopping abruptly. “You will travel with him to my territory. I need to stay behind for a couple of days.”

I nodded, pretending to be fine with his plan.

“Okay,” I agreed, my voice flat.

But my mind was already racing, forming a new, secret path. I knew I couldn’t trust Kyle completely, and I definitely didn’t trust his Beta. The moment we crossed the border, I was going to ditch Elias and run. Solo. I wasn’t running to another pack; I was running away from this life.

I turned my head for one last look. Through the trees, I could see the tall, proud outline of the home I had called mine for too long.

I didn't regret leaving. I didn't regret the plan, the drugs, or the theft. I only regretted that I couldn't say a proper goodbye to the man I loved, the one I had shared so much life with.

But this silent, messy, broken escape was what was best for the two of us. It had to be.

I turned my back fully on the pack house and followed Elias deeper into the darkness, towards a freedom I wasn't sure I could truly find.

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Astor's Pov

The first thing I felt a knife digging into my skull.

I groaned and pushed myself up, scrubbing a hand over my eyes. My whole body felt heavy, like I had been running for a week without rest. Exhausted.

This felt wrong. Totally, completely wrong.

I am an Alpha. My wolf healing is strong. We drink, yes, but we never get this kind of heavy hangover. A headache this fierce? It felt like someone had used my head as a drum. I frowned, trying to remember how much I had drunk last night. It wasn't an overly wild evening.

It shouldn't have had this effect on me. It felt like I had been poisoned, not just slightly drunk.

I swung my legs over the side of the bed, the action making the room spin. I needed a clear head. I stumbled toward the adjoining bathroom and splashed cold water on my face. The shock helped a little.

When I looked into the mirror, I saw the weariness etched deep around my eyes. Still, the cold water washed away the worst of the fog.

I decided a strong, cold drink was needed—something to fully cool down this headache.

Something came in mind. Faith.

Usually, her sweet, gentle flower and honey scent fills this entire wing of the house. It's the scent I breathe in when I wake up. but I couldn't scent her.

"Faith?" I called out, my voice slightly raspy.

Silence.

I still told myself not to worry. She was the Luna. Maybe she had gone down to the pack house early to sort out some duties. Today was a busy day for supply checks. She could be anywhere, doing something important.

I decided to just get on with my own work. I needed to check some files before heading to the pack house myself.

I settled into my leather chair in my office and pulled out the large binder I needed. But something caught my eye.

The safe.

It was a heavy, steel safe built into the wall. It held emergency cash, old legal papers, and some of the pack's most valuable jewels. It was closed, but the small silver dial seemed... out of place. Moved slightly.

I walked over to it, curiosity turning into a knot of unease in my gut. Why would it have been touched? Only Faith and I knew the code.

I input the codes, my hands shaking a little now, though I didn't know why. The heavy door swung open with a quiet thunk.

I looked inside.

The legal files were there. The jewels were there.

Most of the emergency reserve cash was gone. My heart dropped into my stomach. It was a significant amount.

A cold, awful spike of realization hit me hard. No one had access to this safe except Faith. No one.

My mind started spinning. Why would my mate steal from the pack? Why would she steal from me? What was going on? Something was terribly, terribly wrong. The headache that had been trying to fade now returned with a vengeance.

She ran away.

The thought was horrible, burning. No, she couldn't have. She loved promised me.

I tried to deny it, but the missing money was proof. I needed answers, fast.

I closed my eyes and reached out with my mind, focusing on my, my Beta, George.

George. Where are you?

His mind-link reply was immediate, edged with confusion. Alpha? I'm down in the main kitchen, sorting the morning schedules. Is everything alright?

No. Tell me, have you seen Luna Faith this morning?

George paused for a beat, and I could feel the strange delay even through the link. No, Alpha. Not since early yesterday afternoon. I assumed she was with you. Why?

His answer confirmed my darkest fear. She didn't just step out for duties. She was gone.

The shock was a physical blow. Not again.

I felt anger rising hot and fast, but beneath it was a deep, aching hurt. I locked the safe, deciding I would deal with all of that later. I needed to find her. I needed to look her in the eyes and demand an answer.

I hurried back toward my bedroom to grab a fresh shirt and get properly dressed, preparing to organize a full search party.

I burst into the room, ready to move, but I stopped dead at the sight of something on the bed.

Faith's handwriting: To My Astor.

My breath hitched. My hands started shaking again, worse than before.

I didn't need to open it to know what it was. This letter could only mean one thing. It was a final goodbye.

A deep sense of intense, heavy pain settled over me. It felt like my soul was being ripped in two.

Slowly, I reached out and picked up the letter. The paper was cool beneath my fingertips and unfolded the page inside.

I started to read, and with every sentence, the world around me began to crumble.

My dearest Astor,

I know you are hurt. I know you will be angry, maybe even furious, and you have every right to be. But please, try to understand.

I love you. I need you to know that love is why I stayed so long. I will never be able to love anybody the way I love you. You are my mate, the other half of my soul. But sometimes, Astor, love is just not enough to stay.

I really, truly tried. I fought every day to be the Luna you needed, the mate you deserved. But the longer I stayed, the more I realized that I was only here for your needs, not my own. The more I stayed, the more you unknowingly broke my spirit and crushed my soul. I'm just so tired, Astor.

I need to be free. I need to be whole again.

Maybe one day, in a long time, you will look back and forgive me. If you don't, I still want you to know that I am truly sorry.

Now, for the last things I must tell you. You are going to be a good father to Alice and to your baby.

You can finally be with Alice.

I know that deep down, you and Alice have always wanted to be together. I was always the reason why you could never be together. I was the duty, the barrier. But now, I am giving you the freedom to do whatever you want. Live the life you always wanted.

The pain she spoke of, the breaking of her soul—it was me, pushing her away while holding onto her out of duty, while keeping Alice waiting nearby. I had broken her.

Tears welled in my eyes, but I blinked them away, the hurt now mixing with a rising wave of guilt and confusion. I reached the end of the letter.

By the way Alpha Kyle helped me.

My jaw tightened. Kyle? Of course he did. I saw the way he looked at her.

Even though he helped me escape, please do not trust him. I don't trust him, and neither should you.

Do not worry about me. I am never going to return.

Goodbye, my love.

I dropped the letter. It fluttered to the carpet, a silent witness to the destruction of my life.

I stood there, surrounded by the scentless, empty air of the room, my hands clenched into useless.

Faith was gone. She light to me and gave me hope that we were going to stay together but ended up giving me up to another woman like I'm something to be passed down from one person to another.

My soul wasn't just broken; it was shattered. The exhaustion and the headache suddenly made sense; the alcohol must have been drugged, enough to put down a regular person, but only enough. to slow an Alpha.

She had planned this. She had taken the money and most importantly she was probably having an affair without Kyle all this time right under my nose.

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Faith's Pov

The cool night air bit at my exposed skin as I followed Elias. We moved like shadows through the dense woods, the only sounds our soft footfalls and the rustling leaves. Each step away from the Pack territory felt like a physical severing, a piece of my old life flaking off into the darkness behind me. My heart still hammered, a frantic drumbeat against my ribs, but now it was fueled by anticipation, not just fear.

Elias was fast, lean and focused. He kept his eyes ahead, scanning the place, listening for any sign of trouble. He didn't bother to look back often, trusting that I, a Luna, would keep up. That trust, however misplaced, was my greatest advantage. He thought I was running with him. He didn't know I was running from him, too.

The air shifted, subtle but undeniable. A different scent, a change in the subtle hum of the forest.

We had crossed the border. We were no longer on Astor's land. This was it. This was the moment.

Elias slowed slightly, his shoulders relaxing just a fraction. He turned his head, scanning the shadows. "Almost there," he muttered, his voice a low rasp. He thought the most dangerous part was over.

Now.

I didn't think. I just acted. My backpack, heavy with changes of clothes and Astor's money, became a tool. I swung it forward, not at Elias, but towards a thick, overgrown bush to his left, letting it hit the branches with a muffled thwack.

Elias flinched, his head snapping towards the sound, his senses on high alert. That split second of distraction, that flicker of confusion in his eyes, was all I needed. I ran hard right, away from the direction we were meant to go. I sprinted. Harder than I ever had in my life, ignoring the burning in my lungs, the ache in my legs.

“Luna” Elias’s voice, sharp and surprised, cut through the night. He had realized and he was now he was giving chase.

I didn’t look back. I couldn’t. Every ounce of my focus was on putting distance between us. I plunged deeper into the woods, knowing I couldn’t outrun a Beta in a straightforward chase. He was trained for this. I wasn’t. But I was desperate. I twisted, turned, dove under low branches, using every obstacle the forest offered. I heard him crashing behind me, closer than I wanted, but not close enough.

Then, a faint, distant sound broke through the trees – the rumble of a road. Civilization. My escape.

I pushed harder, bursting through the last line of trees and stumbling onto the paved shoulder of a small, dark highway. No streetlights, no houses, just the ribbon of asphalt stretching into the darkness. I could still hear Elias, his frustrated snarls fading slightly. He wouldn’t follow me onto the road in wolf form, not with the risk of being seen. He wouldn’t risk exposing himself.

I ran along the shoulder, my boots pounding on the gravel, until I saw the distant glow of lights. A gas station, maybe a diner. Hope, raw and bright, surged through me.

It took me another twenty minutes of running, my body screaming with protest, to reach a small, rundown truck stop.

I headed straight for the women’s bathroom, locking the door behind me. I splashed cold water on my face, scrubbing at the dirt and sweat. My reflection stared back, wide-eyed and wild.

I quickly changed into the clean, simple clothes from my backpack jeans, a plain t-shirt, a dark hoodie. I tied my hair back, securing it tightly. I pulled out the wad of cash, my heart clenching with a fresh wave of guilt, but I pushed it down. Payment. This was my freedom.

I found a phone booth outside – a relic, but functional. I needed to get far, far away. The farthest place I could think of. A place where a wolf from a quiet, forested pack would never be found. I bought a prepaid phone inside the truck stop, then looked up flights.

A flight to New York City. The idea was absurd, terrifying, and perfect. A concrete jungle, millions of people, a place where a single wolf would be utterly lost in the crowd. A place as far from Astor and our pack’s dense forests as possible. I bought a ticket for the next available flight, which surprisingly, was in just a few hours from a regional airport not too far away.

A taxi ride later, I was at a small, sleepy airport. It felt strange, like another world.

The plane itself was small, packed with humans. I looked out the window as we ascended. The world below shrank, houses becoming dots, roads thin lines. I felt a strange lightness, a sense of detachment. With every mile, every cloud we passed, the distance between me and my old life grew. Astor, the Pack House, the expectations, the pain – it all became smaller, more distant.

When we landed in New York, the sudden rush of noise and lights was overwhelming. Taxis honked, people shouted, buildings scraped the sky. It was nothing like I had ever imagined. It was chaos, and it was beautiful. Here, I was nobody. Just another face in a sea of millions.

I found a cheap motel near the airport for the night, the kind with thin walls and a buzzing neon sign. I ate a stale sandwich and watched the anonymous human faces stream by outside my window. No one knew who I was. No one cared.

The next morning, I stepped out into the bustling city. The air hummed with energy. I bought a second-hand coat, hid my hair under a baseball cap, and started walking. I found a small coffee shop and sat for a long time, just watching. People walked by, lost in their own lives, none of them sensing the wolf hiding inside me. None of them looking for a missing Luna.

I was free. The guilt of leaving Astor, of still gnawed at me, a dull ache beneath the surface. But it was overshadowed by a fierce, soaring relief. I was in a place where no one would ever expect to find me. I was just Faith, a human girl, lost in the big city. And for the first time in three years.

I left the man that I love more than anything anybody in the world but I felt like I could breathe. I could finally begin to find out who Faith really was, away from the shadow of any Alpha, any pack, any expectations. This was my new life, anonymous and terrifyingly, wonderfully, mine.

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Astor's Pov

6 years Later

The scent of her or rather, the ghost of it still clung to me, a cruel joke played by my own memories. Loving somebody with every bone in your body is the worst kind of torture. It's like having your heart ripped out and then handed back, still beating, just to remind you what you've lost.

The only good thing she ever did by leaving was showing me Alpha Kyle's true intentions. He stood there, bold as brass, after what he'd done claiming he was here for me.

I guess she didn't tell him that she left me a letter.

Chasing him away from my pack didn't help me as much as I wanted it to. It didn't make the hollow space in my chest any smaller, and it sure as hell didn't make my heart hurt any less. Especially when he'd thrown that final knife, claiming she'd thrown herself on him. A lie? Or the bitter truth? It didn't matter. The wound was already there.

I admit it, I wasn't the perfect mate. God knows I treated her badly at times. My temper, my moods, my distant nature... I know I pushed her away. But for her to cheat on me? That was soul-crushing. Like the ground under my feet had simply given way, leaving me to fall into endless dark.

I was buried in paperwork, the numbers blurring on the page, when a flash of bright pink darted into my office. Before I could even react, a small, warm body slammed into my legs.

"Daddy!" Isabella's voice, a sweet song, filled the quiet room.

I looked down, and a genuine smile, one that hadn't touched my face in what felt like forever, spread across my lips. Her bright blue eyes looked up at me, full of pure joy. I scooped her up, burying my face in her soft, strawberry-scented hair. My wolf gave a tiny, almost imperceptible purr deep inside me, a flicker of warmth in the cold.

She saved me. Faith's leaving had turned me into a shell, a hollow echo of the man I used to be. I was just going through the motions, leading the pack, but inside, I was crumbling. Then Isabella came. Having her changed everything. Suddenly, I had somebody I loved enough to live for. Enough to fight the darkness that always threatened to swallow me whole.

"Mommy says dinner is ready!" she chirped, wiggling in my arms.

My smile faltered, a tight knot forming in my stomach. Mommy. Alice. The more the years passed, the more Alice behaved like she was my wife, the Luna of the pack. She wasn't. She was Isabella's mother, yes, but that was it. I hated it. Every time she cooked, every time she organized something for me, it felt like a trap, another step in her slow, deliberate march to take Faith's place. But I tolerated it. Only for Isabella.

"Daddy, are you coming?" she asked, a pout forming on her lips.

"Go tell your mom I don't want any food, sweetie," I said, trying to keep my voice light. "I'm full."

Her lower lip trembled. "Please, Daddy? Mommy made your favorite stew! And I helped!" Her big eyes widened, pleading with me. The one thing I couldn't say no to.

A sigh escaped me. "Alright, alright," I chuckled, setting her down. "Lead the way, my little boss."

She practically skipped out of the office, her small hand clutching mine. When we got to the dining room, Alice was already there, setting the table with a practiced ease that made my teeth clench. She wore a soft, flowing dress, her hair perfectly styled. She looked... domestic. Too domestic. I knew what she was doing. Using Isabella, her innocence, to get to me, to push her way further into my life.

We sat down. The stew was, as always, good. Alice was a decent cook. Isabella chattered happily about her day, oblivious to the tension that hummed under the surface. It was when we were halfway through eating that Alice's voice cut through the innocent chatter.

"Astor," she began softly, a little too softly, "do you think... you'll ever forget Faith completely?"

The spoon clattered against my bowl. A rush of pure, white-hot anger flared inside me. My wolf, usually quiet, stirred with a low growl. I hated talking about her. Hated the pain it brought, hated the way the question felt like a poke at an open wound.

"Alice," I said, my voice low and tight. "Mind your own business."

She bristled slightly, but didn't back down. "Perhaps it's time you let go of the woman who cheated on you, Astor. For your daughter's sake, at least."

That was it. I'd had enough. My chair scraped against the floor as I stood up, the anger a cold, hard knot in my gut. "Isabella," I said, looking at my daughter, ignoring Alice completely. "I'll come and tuck you into bed."

I didn't wait for an answer. I walked out, the anger a raging fire, but underneath it, a terrifying new dread.

I went to my room, pacing like a caged animal. Every nerve was frayed, every muscle tense. But what was even more frustrating, more terrifying, was that my wolf had been dying. Not in spirit, not just from the heartbreak, but physically. He hadn't been that vocal ever since Faith left, a dull ache instead of a roaring presence. But it was tolerable. Now, though, he was completely withering away, a constant, debilitating sickness. Especially for the last couple of days, his presence had been a weight, a burning, fading ember.

I had tried to talk to pack doctors, to healers, to anybody who might have an answer. But nobody had an explanation for what was happening to my wolf. He was my strength, my second half, my very essence. I couldn't afford to lose him.

And what's worse, his sickness had been affecting me as well. I was getting weaker and weaker by the day. Headaches that pounded behind my eyes, a constant weariness that no amount of rest could fix, a dull ache in my bones. My senses, once razor-sharp, felt muted. My strength, once unquestionable, was dwindling. I had been trying to get a solution, desperate for an explanation, for a cure. But every face I saw was filled with confusion and helplessness.

I stood by my window, looking out at the pack lands. The moon, full and bright, cast long shadows. I felt like a shadow myself, fading away, and no one knew why.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 56

Faith's Pov

Six years. That's how long it had been since I stepped out of the woods and into the noise of the human world. Six years since I walked away from Astor, from the pack, and from a life that demanded I be something I just wasn't.

New York City was everything the packlands weren't, loud, fast, and completely indifferent. It was perfect. Indifference meant peace.

I had found my routine. Early mornings, the smell of yeast and sugar, and the comforting presence of Mr. and Mrs. Gable at "The Gables Cake." They were an old couple who treated me just like the daughter they never had. They didn't ask about my past, and I didn't offer it. I just kneaded dough and stacked loaves, and for the first time in my life, I felt safe.

I had even managed to buy a little house in a quiet part of Queens. It was small and needed work, but it was mine. No pack guards, no alpha demands, no agonizing pressure to complete myself.

I missed Astor. That was the one constant, heavy truth. He was my mate, and that bond doesn't just cut—it stretches and tears, leaving scars. But I had to leave. I had to find out who Faith was without the shadow of a pack or the expectation of a powerful Luna. Frankly, I think I prefer Faith the baker. I may never fall in love again, but I was happy. This new life was mine.

But lately, the peace had started to pull apart at the seams.

For the last three days, I had felt horrible. It wasn't a normal cold. It started as exhaustion, the kind that medication can't touch. Then came the fever. I was sweating through my pajamas every night, waking up freezing, only to start boiling hot again an hour later.

My whole body was sore. Not just tired, but deep, throbbing soreness, like I had run a marathon and then been hit by a truck.

"Faith, dear, you look terrible," Mrs. Gable said yesterday, her brow furrowed as she handed me a cup of strong tea. "Go home. We can manage the afternoon rush."

I had tried everything. I went to the walk-in clinic twice. They gave me antibiotics, then a stronger anti-inflammatory drug.

"It sounds like a severe viral infection," the doctor had concluded, looking bored. "Rest, fluids, and these pills."

I took the pills. I rested. Nothing changed. In fact, things were getting worse.

Tonight, Tuesday, I didn't even make it home from the bakery before feeling truly terrified. The pain was no longer just in my muscles; it felt like it was in my very bones, twisting and shifting.

I managed to lock the front door of my tiny house, drop my bag, and stumble to the couch. I was shaking so hard my teeth rattled.

This is it, I thought, pulling a blanket around myself despite the intense heat radiating off my skin. I must have caught something deadly.

I closed my eyes, trying to focus on breathing slowly. The pain sharpened, starting in my lower back, moving up my spine, and settling in my skull like a vice. It felt like pressure, unbearable, internal pressure, trying to push out of my skin.

I groaned, a long, ragged sound that echoed in the quiet house. I tried to reach for my phone to call the clinic again, but my hands were suddenly too clumsy, shaking too violently.

Then the heat became a searing inferno.

It wasn't just a fever anymore. It felt like my blood was boiling. I threw the heavy blanket off me and crawled to the bathroom, desperate for cold water.

As I struggled to stand up, a searing, cracking sound ripped through my body. It wasn't an external sound; it was my sound. It felt like the largest bone in my leg had just snapped in half.

I screamed, a guttural, inhuman sound, and collapsed onto the hardwood floor of the living room.

"What is happening?" I gasped, tears streaming down my face from the pure agony. "I'm dying! I am really dying!"

Another violent crack. This one came from my ribs. It felt like my entire skeletal structure was trying to reorganize itself.

I clenched my jaw so hard I thought my teeth would break. This pain was beyond anything human.

It was primal, terrifying, and utterly consuming.

Then, a wave of cold dread washed over me, even through the burning heat.

This wasn't sickness. This felt... familiar. It felt like the stories whispered in the pack nursery, the terrible tales of the first shift. But that was impossible.

I am twenty-seven years old.

I didn't shift when I was eighteen, or nineteen, or twenty. I was the failure. The broken one. The one who had no wolf. That had been my deep shame, the reason I always felt incomplete next to

Astor. I had mourned the lack of a wolf for years, and eventually, I made peace with being only human—or at least, only half—werewolf.

No. No, no. This is impossible.

My hands—I looked at my hands, shaking violently—they were swelling. The fingers were thickening and shortening. The skin on my knuckles was stretching tighter than drum skin.

The pain surged again, focused now on my joints. My elbows popped with a terrible, wet sound, and my arms extended, lengthening and drooping down to the floor.

I started to sob, not from the pain, but from the realization.

The wolf. The wolf I didn't get. It's coming now.

And it was tearing its way out.

My skull felt like it was being stretched and reformed by invisible, brutal hands. My nose and jaw elongated, popping out and forward. The agony was so immense that my consciousness flickered, white hot spots dancing behind my eyes. I couldn't focus; I could only feel.

A low, involuntary growl ripped from my throat—a sound I didn't recognize, deep and raspy, full of true, wild pain.

Then came the skin.

It was the worst part. My clothes were just rags, tearing as my body widened and bulged. The skin covering my back was too small, too tight. It felt like hundreds of tiny, simultaneous paper cuts, then the tearing sound—shhh—rip! shhh—rip!—as new fur erupted through the skin pores.

It was like being flayed alive, while simultaneously having every bone broken and reset by a monstrous force.

I thrashed against the floor, gritting my teeth to keep from screaming loud enough for the neighbors to hear. My spine arched violently as my tailbone began to lengthen, pressing painfully against the floor, forcing my body up into a four-point stance.

Short, coarse hair, dark as rich soil, was covering me completely now. It smelled of ozone and musk and blood.

The last agonizing moments were spent on my hands and feet. My fingernails blackened, thickened, and became sharp claws. The small bones in my feet snapped, reforming into massive pads, my heel lifting high off the ground.

With a final, terrible shudder, the pain receded. It didn't vanish entirely, but the screaming agony was replaced by a deep, vibrating thrum of overwhelming power.

I lay still for what felt like forever, breathing heavily, the smell of dust and torn wood filling what was now a snout.

My ears—they were higher on my head now, sharp and alert—picked up the distant siren sound of an ambulance, the hum of the fridge, and the frantic, heavy thump of my own beating heart.

I was breathing the air through a nose that could pick up a hundred scents at once.

Slowly, carefully, I pushed myself up onto four massive paws. I felt heavy, solid, and utterly primal.

I was standing in the middle of my small living room, my human clothes shredded around my feet.

I moved my head, testing the new weight of my neck. I looked down at what had once been my hands—now massive, clawed, white paws.

I stared at the thick fur covering me from head to toe. I was large, terrifyingly so. My flanks were lean, my muscle tone immense.

My wolf.

Nine years late, without warning, and with enough violence to nearly kill me, my wolf had finally arrived.

The reality hit me with the force of a physical blow, the small peaceful world that I had built for myself was no more.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 57

My throat felt like sandpaper. I tried to sit up. A thin tube ran from my arm into the wall, and the beeping of the monitor sounded like a slow, angry heartbeat.

“Nothing’s wrong,” the nurse said, flipping through a clipboard. “Your vitals are fine. We can’t find any injury or infection.”

Her words floated around me, empty. My head throbbed, and the pain in my chest felt like a fist crushing my heart. I wanted to scream, but the words got stuck, tangled in the darkness that was growing inside me.

I closed my eyes and tried to reach out to the wolf I had felt when I shifted. I breathed in hard, trying to dig deeper, to find the familiar pulse that would tell me she's real.

But the more I tried, the more the pain grew. It was as if a heartbreak had split my chest in two, each half pulling in opposite directions. I could feel the wolf's presence, faint and distant, like a howl swallowed by a storm. My mind shouted, "Come back," but my body refused to answer.
updated by jo_bn_ib.com

The door opened with a soft click. Mr. and Mrs. Gable stepped in, their faces worn with worry. Behind them, a small boy clutched a stuffed rabbit, his eyes wide and frightened. My miracle and my reason to live and breathe.

"Mommy?" he whispered, his voice trembling. "Are you okay?"

I wanted to smile, to tell him everything would be fine, but the pain surged and stole my voice. My throat felt raw, and all I could manage was a weak, "I... I'm okay." The words sounded like a lie even to myself. I wish he never had to see me like this.

Mrs Gable slipped a hand onto my arm. Her fingers were warm, but they couldn't chase away the cold that was seeping into my bones.

"We're here," she said. "We'll stay with you."

My little's boy's eyes filled with tears. He pressed his little hand against mine, and I felt his tiny fingers squeeze, as if trying to hold together the pieces of the broken woman before him.

He is usually a bowl of sunshine always smiling and running around with a big smile on his face but he looked pale and ashen and I hate it.

I've always gone above and beyond to make him happy and I hate this for him. I'm all he has just like he's all I have.

A sudden, sharp scream escaped from my throat. It was raw, animal, and it ripped through the quiet room. The Gables gasped, and my son's face turned as white as the sheet covering my body.

The monitor beeped louder, as if answering my cry. A doctor in a white coat rushed in, his face serious but calm. He knelt beside the bed, his eyes flicking over the charts, then he leaned close enough that I could hear his breath.

"Are you... a werewolf?" he whispered, his voice barely louder than a secret.

My blood froze. Werewolf. The word hung in the air, heavy and terrifying. For six years I had lived as a human, pretending I didn't know what existed outside in the quiet woods and forest.

In my world, if someone discovered a werewolf, hunters would be sent, men with silver bullets, dogs that could smell blood, and wolves that would hunt us down.

I stared at the doctor, my heart pounding like a drum in a war. “No,” I whispered back, my voice shaking. “I’m not... I’m human.”

He didn’t smile. He didn’t laugh. He looked at me with a kind of sorrow that made my skin prickle.

“The pain you’re feeling,” he said slowly, “it isn’t just a physical injury. It’s a call. You’ve been shifted, yes, but you’re also... incomplete.” He placed a gentle hand on my forearm. “The only way to heal, to stop this burning, is to find your mate.”

My mind spun. Mate? The word felt like a chain tightening around my throat. I thought of the man who looked like my son. The one I left behind.

“No,” I said, shaking my head violently. “I can’t... I don’t want that.”

The doctor’s eyes softened, but there was a firmness behind them that I couldn’t ignore. “You already have met your mate,” he said quietly. “Your body knows it, even if your mind does not. The pain you feel is the bond trying to form, and until it’s complete, the wound will not close.”

Tears welled up in the corners of my eyes, not just from the pain but from a sudden, terrifying realization. All this time I had tried to hide who I was, to live a normal life, to protect myself. But the truth was clawing its way out, raw and unforgiving.

The Gables stood silently, their faces a mix of compassion and fear.

I felt my heart beating faster, as if trying to break free from my ribs. I wanted to run, to flee from the doctor’s words, to disappear yet again and forget this conversation ever happened.

I swallowed, the ache in my chest tightening like a knot. My voice was barely a whisper, but I managed to speak, “Please— No.” I tried to beg.

How could I go back. I have done everything I can to build a life for myself away from everything for the past 6 years.

I wasn’t even sure I could do it before Marco. He was a result of a parting gift from the name I love.

It doesn’t matter that he was conceived on a night of a drunken haze.

Going back doesn’t just mean losing the last 6 years but also losing my son and I cannot lose him.

Astor is my past and I cannot let it come back to haunt me.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 58

My throat was still raw. Every breath felt like sand blowing across a wound. The monitor in the corner kept thumping like a slow, angry heart. I could feel the wolf inside me grow louder with each beat, a low growl that would not be quieted.

The door opened again. Mr. Gable stood in the doorway, his eyes tired but firm. He walked straight to the bed, lifted my son Marco from my arms and carried him out of the room. “I’ll take him to the hallway,” he whispered to me. “He’ll be safe.” I could not see him leave, but I heard his footsteps fade away.

Mrs. Gable stayed. She pulled a chair closer to the bed and sat down, her hands resting gently on my shoulders. Her voice was soft, but it cut through the fog in my mind.

“You have to stop being selfish, Faith,” she said. “You are a mother. Marco needs you. He needs his mother to be here, alive.”

I tried to speak, but the pain in my chest tightened like a rope. The wolf inside me snarled, hungry for something I could not give.

“Are you afraid of me?” I asked even though it was hard to even speak “Are you scared of what the doctor said?”

She shook her head and my eyes were wide, tears spilling down my cheeks.

Mrs. Gable smiled, a tired but steady smile. “I have seen many things in my years,” she said. “I cannot tell you what is real or not. I can only tell you what I feel.” She placed her hand over my own, warm and steady. “You have been our family for six years. We have watched you raise Marco, we have laughed with you, we have cried with you. You are not alone.”

Her words were a blanket over the cold. I felt a small flicker of hope, like a candle fighting a gust of wind. I wanted to believe her, to believe that I could make all of this work and fix everything and most importantly that I could protect Marco.

But the doctor’s words still echoed in my head: find your mate. The wolf inside me thumped louder, demanding a bond I did not want. I could not think of anyone else but Marco, of the life we had built together. I could not imagine losing him.

The silence stretched between us until she reached for my phone and gave it to me even though my hands were trembling and I looked at her begging her to stop me from doing what I was about to do but she shook her head.

It rang. My fingers were trembling, and even though I wished I could not stop the call—something in me knew I had to hear a voice from my past.

“Hello?” I whispered, my voice breaking.

A small, high-pitched voice answered. “Daddy isn’t home,” it said. “He’s at work.”

I stared at the screen. It’s surprising that I’ve had this number for the last 6 years and I’ve wanted to call every day ever since just to be here he is voice but now I finally did it and my heart slammed against my ribs.

I heard a faint giggle behind the little girl’s voice. “Hold on, Mommy,” the child said, and handed the phone to someone else. Another voice, softer and older, slipped onto the line.

“Who is this?” I asked, my throat raw, my eyes burning with tears.

There was a pause. I could hear a mother’s sigh. “It’s me, Alice,” she said, but the words felt distant, as if they were coming from far away.

I thought maybe I called the wrong number and maybe the girl wasn’t who I thought she was but the little girl on the other end had been their child, a tiny life I had imagined.

A part of me wanted to forget that she existed and completely remove a picture of something like that happening in my mind but it was real.

The wolf in my chest roared. My skin prickled with a cold that was not the hospital chill. I could feel the bond trying to stretch, to reach for the mate I had never chosen. My mind scrambled for answers, for a way to stop the pain.

My hand shook and the phone slipped from my grasp, clattering onto the floor. The call ended. The line was dead.

“Please... please,” I begged, voice cracking. “I can’t... I can’t hear this.”

I sat back, gasping for air. Mrs. Gable’s hand squeezed my shoulder. “You are hurting, Faith,” she said, her voice low. “You are hurting because you love. A mother’s love is a fire; it can scorch the heart if it burns alone.”

My chest ached. The wolf’s howl grew softer, as if it listened to my tears. I knew the pain would not stop until I faced the choice I had tried to hide.

now I couldn't go back even if I wanted to because I wasn't just going to destroy their lives but a small child who probably had the perfect family.

"He has a family." I whispered pained with the realization that his life moved on without me.

Mrs. Gable leaned close, her breath warm on my ear. "none of that matters think about your child, think about his future" she whispered. "The world will try to pull you in different directions. You must decide which path you will walk, for Marco, for yourself, for the wolf that lives in you."

I closed my eyes, feeling the beat of my heart, the rhythm of the monitor.

I don't know what to do. Old me would have never considered going back because she would have thought about everybody else but the mother in me will do everything for her son.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 59

I remember when I got to New York. I was going to start fresh.

And let me tell you, starting fresh was hard.

What made it very difficult wasn't just the loneliness or the lack of money. It was the fact that I was keeping a secret. A huge, terrifying secret that tasted like acid every time I swallowed.

Yes, I thought I didn't have the werewolf gene. I was the fluke, the broken little human girl raised in a pack. But I knew everything about them and I had to carry the weight of that knowledge.

I was terrified that maybe somebody would find out, some way or somehow. They would realize I wasn't just a simple girl; I was a living archive of their weaknesses. If they found me, they would torture me in order to reveal what I knew. So I had to be careful about what I said, when I said it, and especially who I spoke to.

For the first few days in the new city, I had the whole chance to make friends, but I was guarded. I didn't trust smiles. I didn't expect kindness.

That all changed the day I met Mr. and Mrs. Gable.

I was walking past a bakery for the tenth time that week, trying to gather the nerve to ask if they needed help. I didn't have the kind of education the humans required to work those pretty, high–

paying jobs. My schooling had been mostly focused on things like reading pack law and how to be a good luna, wife and mother.

But I was good at cooking. Really good. I learned to domesticate myself at a terrifyingly young age in order to please my adoptive mother and that skill, born of desperation, was suddenly my only marketable talent.

Mr. Gable, an older but kind and humble man saw me hovering outside.

“Are you going to keep admiring the window display, doll, or are you going to buy a scone?” he boomed, but his voice was warm, like fresh bread.

I stammered out my need for a job.

They weren’t big on hiring people. In fact, they told me later, I was the first person they had ever hired. They were growing old, and they couldn’t do the things they did in their younger ages. Their backs hurt. They weren’t as productive. They needed help.

Mrs. Gable, whom I soon started calling Ma, was petite and fierce, with flour permanently dusted in her gray hair. She watched me knead dough the first day.

“You have strong hands, dear,” she observed.

“I learned early,” I simply replied, not mentioning my past.

They taught me how to bake the complicated things the flaky croissants, the elaborate wedding cakes. And most importantly, they became the parents and grandparents that I needed. They didn’t ask about my past. They just asked if I wanted more coffee.

I gave them my name but a fake history. They gave me safety and purpose. I stopped looking over my shoulder every minute.

Life settled into a rhythm of sugar and butter. I was happy, or as happy as a girl hiding a secret could be.

Then the nausea started.

When I found out I was pregnant, I was completely shattered and overjoyed at the exact same moment.

Astor.

I wondered what I would have to tell my child when he asked about his father. But despite the terror, I carried a piece of him with me, a tiny, fragile hope, nestled right under my ribs.

Then the months started blurring.

I think I'm definitely the crazy one because Mr. and Mrs. Gable must have realized it a long time ago that I was not completely human.

One week, I was slightly bloated. The next, I couldn't comfortably tie my apron.

"Faith," Pa said one morning, his voice careful as he handed me a large glass of milk, "you're moving awfully quickly."

"Just good metabolism, Pa," I lied, though I knew the truth was screamingly obvious.

Ma just patted my arm. "Well, you certainly have a glow about you, dear."

All of a sudden, I was heavily pregnant. And then, three months after I found out, I was giving birth.

I was expecting to give birth after nine months, like normal humans. Instead, one cold evening I gave birth to a healthy pup.

It was shocking, painful, and terrifyingly fast. Ma and Pa, bless them, handled it like seasoned grandparents. They never pressed. They only loved.

The only consolation this gave me was that my child would probably never end up like me. It seemed like his werewolf gene overpowered his human one because of the accelerated rate he grew in. I had been human enough to be rejected, but Marco was pure werewolf.

From the moment my baby boy opened his eyes I had so much to live for. So much to look forward to. So much to smile for.

Which is something that I was seeking a lot with Astor.

It was never about love, not in the way people write in cheesy romance novels. I think I loved Astor enough for the both of us. But I wasn't happy. Not even close.

And yet, my son's tiny hand gripped my finger, and I felt a profound, overwhelming peace that Astor never gave me. Marco gave me joy.

He grew so fast in those first few years. He walked before one, and by age three, he was nearly the size of a five-year-old. Pa told everyone Marco was "big-boned and a good eater." Ma just doted on him, slipping him extra bits of cake crust and teaching him everything.

I think about Astor more times than I would like in a day. I still cry over him sometimes, usually late at night when I'm alone.

But the only person who makes me feel better is Marco, because he smells and smiles exactly like his father. The scent of pine and something wild, something dangerous, clings to him.

I've had to stop myself on a daily basis before taking the phone to just call him—the burner phone hidden deep in a shoe box—and ask him how he is. To tell him that he has a son, a very handsome son who looks exactly like him.

But I never call. I know what would happen.

“The plane is ready.”

The doctor's voice broke my chain of thoughts. I looked at the exhausted couple sitting right by my side since yesterday. Pa and Ma. They looked older than ever.

The same couple who have had to dig into their entire life savings just to make sure that I was being flown to a specialist facility in Maine by a medical plane.

“You don't have to worry about Marco, honey,” Pa said, placing a kiss on my forehead. His hand trembled slightly. “We will take care of him.”

I know I don't have to worry about him. They've been taking care of him ever since he was born.

“I wish I could come with you,” Ma whispered, clutching my hand. I think hearing me call them Ma and Pa makes them even happier than it does me, because they never had children of their own.

Marco was the grandchild they never dared to dream of.

“I'm going to be fine,” I assured them, and not so much myself, because I don't know what's waiting for me there.

I asked the nurse for five minutes alone. They kindly wheeled my hospital bed closer to the window where Marco was standing, gazing up at the enormous sterile medical jet.

My heart felt like it was tearing itself in two.

“Mommy” he said, his voice deep for his age. “Pa says you're going on a mommy adventure.”

I smoothed his hair, which was the exact dark bronze shade of Astor's. “That's right, sweet boy. Big adventures.”

“Are you coming back for my birthday?” he asked, the question laced with a doubt he shouldn't have to feel.

I hugged him tight, ignoring the sharp pain across my abdomen. His scent pine and wildness filled my lungs. “I promise. Mommy will be back very soon. You be good for Ma and Pa, okay? Listen to every word they say. And eat your vegetables.”

“Okay, Mama. I love you.”

“I love you more than all the stars Marco.”

I released him, a tear finally sliding down my cheek. I watched him walk back to Ma, who wrapped him up instantly. The nurse wheeled me away.

I got onto the plane. The humming of the engine filled the small cabin. The pain that I was feeling continued to intensify as we flew across state lines, across the country. I tried to focus on the sterile lighting and the kind face of the flight medic, but I couldn't.

The pain wasn't just physical anymore; it felt like a cage being rattled from the inside.

We set down in Maine. The door of the plane hissed open, and the cold, dense air of the Northeastern forest rushed in.

As soon as that foreign air hit my lungs, the intense darkness of the pain suddenly spiked, then cracked.

My wolf, which had been hiding itself was waking up.

The scent was overwhelming. Earth, snow, and a deep, powerful musk that hammered into my consciousness, bypassing pain and logic.

Mate.

I was near Astor. And my nine years of hard-won freedom were about to officially end.

Alpha's Regret: Begging For My Luna Back – Chapter 60

Astor's Pov

The hammer was still hitting the inside of my skull. It wasn't just a headache; it was a deep, throbbing migraine that had been my unwanted companion for days now. I leaned back in my chair, rubbed my temples hard, and let out a grunt of frustration.

I was staring at the stack of patrol reports and it was all bad news when my desk phone buzzed.

Alpha Connor. Great. The one person who was somehow louder and more stressed than me these days.

I forced lightness into my voice, even though every word felt like sandpaper scraping against my throat. “Connor. What’s the status?”

“It’s bad Astor,” Connor’s voice rattled through the speaker, tight with fury. “I’m calling because I need to know if you’re seeing the same pattern I am.”

I didn’t even need to ask. I just sighed. “The rogue attacks. Twice the number since last week. They’re organized, they’re coming in waves, and they’re not just sniffing the borders—they’re trying to breach.”

A heavy pause settled between us. It was the same story, territory by territory, across the country.

“Exactly,” Connor whispered, the fury replaced by a chilling dread. “I’ve lost three patrol wolves in five days, Astor. The level of aggression... it feels like it did before. The beginning of the end, two years ago.”

I sat up straight, the headache momentarily forgotten, replaced by a cold spike of alarm. “Don’t even say that, Connor. We dealt with the problem.”

“Did we? Did we really?” Connor pressed. “Because these attacks, they’ve got the same brutal signature, the reckless disregard for their own lives. They’re being led, Astor. And that only leads back to one name. The Rogue King.”

I slammed my fist onto the desk. The pain flared, but I ignored it. “I killed him, Connor. I looked him in the eye and snapped his neck two years ago. And that was the last we heard of him.”

My certainty seemed to calm Connor, but only slightly. “Okay. Okay, if you say he’s dead, then he’s dead. But something else is leading them, Astor. Something just as bad.”

We spent another ten minutes discussing strategy, agreeing to double the boundary markings and increase surveillance, before Connor switched gears, adopting a strangely light, familiar tone.

“Right. Enough war talk. On a different note, how are things back home? How’s my daughter and my granddaughter?”

“They are fine,” I said, my jaw tightening instantly. I hate talking about this. Connor knew this.

“Good, good. They’re lucky to have you. Listen, six years is a long time, Astor. When are you finally going to propose to Alice? You two have built a life, you have a child well. Don’t you think it’s time to make it official?”

The air in the room seemed to freeze.

“Connor,” I growled, letting my Alpha voice bleed into the phone line just enough to make him stumble. “Keep your opinions on my personal life to yourself. We have bigger problems than my relationship status.”

He mumbled an apology, understanding he'd hit a very hard wall, and quickly ended the call.

I dropped the receiver back into its cradle, scrubbing my face with my palms. i***t. Why did everyone feel they had the right to talk about Alice? She was important to my life, yes, but she wasn't- Jolt.

It wasn't the headache. The headache was fire, but this feeling was raw electricity. It started low in my abdomen, a deep, pulling ache I hadn't felt in six long, cold years.

The Mate Bond.

It was faint, like a distant star trying to shine through a thick fog, but the moment I recognized it, it flared into an agonizing, undeniable burn. My lungs seized up. She's close. My body roared with a desperate, ancient recognition. The pull wasn't gentle; it was a physical cord yanking me forward, demanding that I move.

Just as the bond hit full force, a frantic voice tore into my mind—my Beta screamed.

‘Alpha! Intruders! Not rogues!’

I stood up so fast my chair crashed backward. The scent, the pull of the bond, was leading me directly toward the commotion he was describing.

‘What is it?’ I mind-linked back, already shedding my clothes as I shifted. Bone cracked and stretched, blurring the office around me. My wolf landed silently on the carpet.

I ran across the western border. ‘We have a visual, and we are moving in to subdue-’

No! Stop! Do not engage! I commanded, already sprinting for the door, smashing through the wood frame in a rush of need.

George was confused. Alpha? Why? It's a breach!

I said ‘stop! Get back!’

I ran faster than I ever had, my paws thundering over the packed earth of the territory. The pain in my head was gone, overridden by the terrifying, exhilarating strength of the mate bond. It was pulling me towards the very edge of the territory.

I could smell them now: my patrol wolves, stiff with tension, and another scent, faint beneath the pine and earth, but utterly unique and somewhat familiar.

George and two senior warriors were frozen, their muzzles pointed at the figure fifty feet away.

It was a wolf, but unlike any I had seen in decades. It was large, poised for flight, and its fur was the purest, untouched snow.

A White Wolf.

They were near-mythical, rumored guardians, but they were also hunted and killed for their devastating, untamed abilities. Seeing one here, in my territory, was impossible, and yet, the mate bond screamed that this impossible creature was mine.

The white wolf turned its head. Its eyes, the color of molten silver, locked on mine. In that moment, the pull became violent, a recognition so profound it shook the ground under my paws.

I took one deliberate step forward, my hackles raised not in aggression, but in sheer, territorial demand. I let my Alpha aura flood the clearing heavy, demanding, and utterly irresistible.

The White Wolf trembled, fighting the command to submit.

I didn't care about the laws, the danger, or the rarity. I only cared that I needed to see who was behind those eyes.

I used my voice. Deep, metallic, and inescapable.

“Shift.”

The wolf let out a strangled, primal cry as well as half defiance and half shattering pain and for some reason it looked like it was shifting for the first time. and its body began to convulse. Fur retracted, bones reformed with sickening clicks, and the magnificent beast melted into the form of a fragile, naked woman.

She collapsed onto the dirt, clutching her chest, her silver eyes squeezed shut against the sudden exposure.

My heart stopped its frantic rhythm. The air left my lungs. The mate pull solidified into a crushing weight of six years of misery, betrayal, and longing.

I stared at the pale skin, the slender frame, the fall of dark, tangled hair.

It was her.

Faith.

The woman who had walked away, who had shattered my world and my sanity, was now lying helpless on the ground of my territory.