

SECOND CHANCE FOR THE BARREN LUNA

Dust within ancient walls Miles Brooks 10

CHAPTER TEN

+25 Bonus

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Talia's POV

There was a knock at the door just after sunrise.

I sat up in bed, rubbing the sleep from my eyes. I assumed it was a maid bringing in breakfast or the gown I'd be wearing to the banquet tonight. With a groggy yawn, I shuffled across the room and opened the door.

"Finally," a familiar voice snapped, and an armful of fabric was thrust into my face. "I thought I was going to have to drag you out of this room myself. You slept the whole day away."

“Della?” I blinked, stunned.

She breezed past me, dropping half a dozen designer dresses onto my bed and tossing a makeup case onto the nearby table.

Della, my closest childhood friend, looked the same as I remembered: petite but fiery, with tanned skin, red hair soft as silk cut in a bomb to frame her face, and olive green eyes that sparkled with mischief.

“You barely messaged me for three years and you thought I wouldn’t crash this party prep? Please.”

I shut the door behind. I stared at her, still surprised that she was here. “I..I didn’t think you’d want to see me,” I stammered.

She froze, mid-unpacking a bottle of foundation, and turned to me sharply. “And why the hell would you think like that?”

“I was ashamed,” I said softly. “I didn’t think you’d forgive me after I left with him, even after you tried to stop me.” I sighed, sitting on the edge of the bed. “I thought you’d be disappointed in me.’

Della scoffed, tossing a curling wand on the dresser like it offended her. “Talía, nothing he could ever do would make me disappointed in you. He’s the one in the wrong, not you.”

“But you never said-”

“You never asked.” She came to sit beside me, wrapping an arm around my shoulders. “He wasn’t worthy of you. Yes, I was angry when you left, but I’m overjoyed you’re back now. Don’t ever think I wasn’t on your side.”

My throat tightened. “Thank you.”

She nodded. “Now, enough emotional stuff. You have a party tonight and you’re going to remind the kingdom exactly who the hell you are.”

Della stood and yanked open one of the garment bags. The gown inside shimmered like moonlight: It was silver with a high slit, a flowing train, and embroidery at the bust that sparkled in the light.

“We don’t need to look at any of the other dresses. This is the one,” Della declared. “It screams ‘Luna Royalty.’”

“I’m not a Luna anymore,” I murmured, tracing a finger over the embroidery.

“No,” she said with a knowing smile, “But you’re still a princess. And you’ve always been our Luna, no matter what.”

I let her push me into a chair by the vanity, where she pulled my hair into soft, elegant waves, applying light silver and rose-toned makeup, and lining my lips with a shimmering gloss that brought out the sharpness of my cheekbones and the violet hue of my eyes.

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When she was done, she stepped back and nodded in approval. “Damn. You’re going to outshine every she-wolf in attendance tonight.”

I looked in the mirror and for the first time in years, I recognized the woman staring back at me. I wasn’t the burnout Luna who barely had time to comb her hair anymore. I was the Werewolf King’s princess: strong and regal.

Just as I stood to change into the gown, Della gasped.

“Oh! I almost forgot.” She darted over to her bag and pulled out a small black box. “Solon said this was important. He told me to make sure you wear this tonight.” She handed it to me carefully.

“What is it?” I asked as I opened the lid.

Inside lay a ruby necklace. It was deep red, cut into the shape of a blooming rose, the stone set into a delicate platinum chain. My breath caught in my throat.

“Rosecrest,” I whispered.

Della blinked. “That’s what it’s called?”

I nodded slowly, still staring at it. “It belonged to my mother. It was specially crafted by my father when they mated. The ruby was infused with his blood and bound to the Luna spirit line. It was lost during the last war. Everyone assumed it was destroyed.” (1

Della looked impressed. “Well, apparently someone found it and auctioned it off in the human world. Solon tracked it down and bought it yesterday. Said it was time it came back to you!”

I touched it, still in disbelief that it was there. The moment my skin brushed the ruby, it warmed gently at first and then pulsed once like a heartbeat.

“No one else can wear it,” I added. “Only the true Luna. Anyone else would be burned.”

“That’s amazing!” Della gasped.

She took the necklace from me carefully and gently clasped the chain around my neck. As the ruby settled against my skin, it lit up, glowing a soft, warm crimson that sent a wave of energy down my spine. My wolf stirred, calm and proud for the first time in days.

Della stepped back with a smile and gave me a mock curtsy. “Welcome home, Princess Talia.”

I couldn’t help but laugh.

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