

Chapter 18: Moon Biology

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"Mating is a sacred bond between two wolves," our Moon Biology teacher began, writing the term 'The Heat' on the board. "It's triggered by proximity, emotion, and most significantly, by blood recognition. The heat cycle usually begins during adolescence, but may remain dormant in omegas depending on suppression, trauma, or bond restrictions."

I stared ahead. I'd been sleepy since this morning, but the topic we were having seemed to jolt me awake.

It had been a week since I started attending school and training.

It was a long, exhausting, aching week. I don't even remember the last time I had a decent sleep. I go to bed late—there hasn't been a single night without training—and I wake up early just to make it to school.

It's hard.

But I'm still here, trying my best to survive.

I sat up straighter, forcing myself to absorb every word our teacher spoke. This was important.

I mean, everything I learn here matters. I should pay attention.

But the more she explained, the tighter my chest began to feel.

Talk of heat, instincts, and physical and emotional needs made me shift uncomfortably in my seat.

My fingers moved on their own, lightly brushing the silver band around my finger.

The ring.

A symbol of my marriage to Darius Vane.

Does being his wife... mean we're mated?

No. That can't be right.

Mating is a bond—a sacred one. But there has never been a moment between us where my body reacted as our teacher described—no tug in my chest. No heat. No desire.

Only fear.

Only cold silence and sharp commands.

He's not my mate; I'm sure he wouldn't want me to be his mate, either.

But we're husband and wife.

But he's a king. He'd need an heir... would that mean we'll eventually...?

No.

That won't happen, right? He hates me. He looks at me like I'm nothing.

Like I'm a disgrace.

I flinched when a low voice beside me broke through the fog.

"Elira."

I blinked and turned slightly.

Cassiel.

His brows were furrowed, his eyes flicking down to where my hands rested tensely on the desk.

"What happened to your hands?" he asked quietly.

I followed his gaze—and panicked.

Before I could stop myself, I quickly pulled my hands back under the desk, curling them into fists.

But I saw it—the flicker of concern in his eyes. He had already seen enough.

The skin over my knuckles was still raw, darkened with bruises and tiny scrapes. My palms were lined with faint rope marks, still tender from last night's training.

I swallowed hard.

The ropes.

My trainer tied them around my wrists and ankles for a resistance exercise to teach control and force. I'd spent hours trying to get free—shaking, trembling, sweating, trying not to cry. My hands had gone numb at some point, but I never stopped.

Because Darius was there.

Watching. Always watching.

"Nothing," I whispered to Cassiel, my voice barely audible.

He didn't press.

But he didn't look convinced either.

Dianne seemed to have overheard Cassiel asking me something. Her eyes flicked toward us, her brows arching in a silent question, but she didn't say anything right away. Instead, she leaned in slightly, changing the subject.

"Our research analysis," she said softly, "we're supposed to do it in threes. The teacher wants us to start brainstorming this week."

I nodded slowly, grateful for the change in topic. "Okay," I murmured, stealing a glance at Cassiel.

He just shrugs his shoulders. He really didn't mind working with us.

Cassiel was... nice.

Even if he was an alpha.

If there was one thing I could say I was truly grateful for after being sold to Darius, it was this—the small flickers of kindness I never expected to find here.

The friendships.

Dianne, especially. When I first met her, she was quiet, almost emotionless.

She spoke like a soldier—calculated, calm, efficient. At first, I thought she was just another one of them. A tool assigned to watch me, maybe even report on me if I slipped.

But over time... she opened up.

And now, when I look at her, I don't see a babysitter. I don't even see an assigned companion. I see someone who cares.

She brings me food without asking.

She reminds me when I forget to take breaks.

She really listens even when I talk about things like the curse.

The curse...

I told her once, in a hushed whisper, that I was branded as a cursed omega in my previous pack. That people who got close to me—truly

close-ended up hurt.

I told Dianne she should keep her distance.

But she only shrugged and said, "If I'm meant to get hurt or die, that's just my fate."

As if she wasn't afraid of it. Of me.

It terrified me more than anything else.

And then there's Cassiel.

He's younger than me—I can tell by how he sometimes frowns when he's concentrating or bites his tongue when he's holding back a question.

There's something boyish about him. Innocent, even. It makes me feel protective.

Like a sister would.

I've never had a little brother before, but I think he'd be a little like Cassiel if I did.

Curious. Blunt. Occasionally annoying, but always honest.

He's an alpha but doesn't wear it like the others. No pride. No cruelty. Just... quiet strength. And he's kind to me, even when he doesn't have to be.

Though I've seen him snob others, brush them off with sharp words or no words at all. Maybe he's only kind when he chooses to be.

But I'm grateful that, somehow, he chose me.

Even in this place where I feel like I'm drowning every day, I have Dianne and Cassiel.

And that... makes surviving a little less lonely.

"...the heat cycle varies greatly depending on one's rank. For alphas, it may heighten aggression. For betas, it might barely be noticeable. But for omegas... it's often intense, overwhelming, and in rare cases—dangerous if left unfulfilled."

Dangerous?

I swallowed hard, my fingers subconsciously brushing against the ring again.

Would I ever experience that?

Then I remembered Kael... who rejected me.

There was a pain in that memory. I had felt something with him—almost close to what Miss Helga was talking about...

Though there was no burning warmth. No unbearable longing. I'd read about heat in books before—but I always thought it would come with the bond.

With love. With safety.

But before I could reach that... Kael rejected me.

Miss Helga continued, "It is vital to understand that the mating bond is not simply physical. It's emotional. Spiritual. Once it's triggered, it's nearly impossible to sever."

"Mated pairs can feel each other's pain, anger, even joy. That's why choosing a mate—allowing the bond to form—is sacred. And dangerous, when done without care."

My stomach twisted.

Darius is my husband...will we do that?

What would happen to us if we did?

I flinched at the thought.

"Elira," Dianne whispered beside me.

I turned my head slightly.

"You're zoning out again," she said gently.

I nodded, forcing a small breath out of my chest. "Sorry," I whispered.

I picked up my pen, writing a few words on the page to keep my hands busy. Notes I wasn't even sure I'd remember later. I just needed to do something. Anything.

But my mind was still tangled in questions.

What if I felt that? The heat?

Would I... do it?

With Darius Vane?

I blinked, pressing my fingers lightly against the ring on my hand.

He hated me. I knew that. Not gonna happen.

But for a moment, I wondered—if he ever touched me without anger, without coldness... would it feel different?

Would it feel... warm?

Elira, stop those thoughts!

Why would you think about something so impossible?

I felt warmth creeping up my face. Even without a mirror, I knew my cheeks were turning red.

"Well, well..." a smug voice said, loud enough for others to hear. "Are you going into heat, Elira? You're all red."

Laughter rippled across a few nearby seats.

My face flushed deeper.

I froze.

My hand gripped the pen tightly, my gaze locked on the page before me.

I didn't respond. I couldn't. My throat was too tight. Shame climbed up my spine like thorns.

"Must be hard keeping it together around alphas, huh?" the voice added with mock sweetness.

Don't react.

Just breathe.

But before I could remind myself again, the sound of a chair scraping harshly against the floor made me flinch.

A blur moved past me.

Cassiel:

There was a sudden crash, followed by gasps and the screech of desks being shoved aside.

I turned my head in time to see Cassiel slam the boy against the wall, his forearm pressed hard against his chest.

"Say that again," Cassiel growled, his voice low and dangerous.

The classroom went still. Completely silent.

The smug boy's eyes widened. "I—I was just joking—"

Cassiel's jaw tensed. "You don't talk to her like that. Ever."

Commented [Ma1]: