

## Chapter 2

Lyka's POV

I gasped some air as I breathed rapidly. My eyes roamed around the room, looking for that man who had sparkling crimson eyes but he was nowhere to be found.

"It's just a dream," I whispered when I realized that everything was just in my head, but seemed so real.

Suddenly, the cold breeze of the wind touched my skin, and that's when I saw that the window was open and the wind was blowing the curtain.

"I'm sure someone was inside this room. I can smell the scent of his blood."

But his fragrance was different and somehow gave me a familiar scent, making my body heat up.

Those dreams keep lingering in my head which keeps me awake until morning.

I never mentioned anything to Sage. I don't want him to get worried. He had a lot of things on his hands and I didn't really want to add to his burden.

\*\*\*

The sun was already up, and I couldn't count how many times I yawned. I felt like I hadn't slept at all and just wanted to lie down on the sidewalk, but I knew I couldn't. Sage needed me today.

When I arrived at the company building, I quickly lowered my head to avoid the sharp, judging stares. Until now, the people here were still like this, their eyes seeming to condemn my very being.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I reached the elevator and nally arrived at the oor where the president's oce was located.

But upon entering the room, my eyes widened and my chest tightened at the sight of the person who greeted me.

"S-Shina?" I stammered her name barely a whisper.

She was sitting on the sofa in the oce, and when she heard my voice, she slowly raised her head and our eyes met.

"You're here, nally," she said without hesitation, her tone was cold and composed.

"M-May I help you?" I asked, remaining standing and staring at her while my heart was pounding.

She stood up with effortless grace and elegance. I couldn't deny her beauty; no wonder she was Sage's ex-girlfriend.

Shina walked slowly, steadily approaching me. She stopped in front of me and her gaze was unwavering as it met mine. I couldn't count how many times I swallowed while I was feeling the intensity of her presence.

"There's only one thing I want to say, Lyka." Her eyes were erce, blazing with anger. I didn't know where that rage came from, but I felt the intensity of her message. "Stay away from Sage. Can your conscience handle it if something bad happens to him? If you can do that to your family, you can do the same to Sage, so please, leave him alone," she warned.

I swallowed hard because, in a way, I knew she was right. There might come a time when I might hurt Sage.

I stood my ground, meeting her gaze.

"You're not the one to say that, only Sage is," I retorted deantly.

She clenched her st and this time, I felt the overwhelming anger she was barely containing.

"What's going on here? Is there a problem?"

Both Shina and I turned to look when we heard the sound of Sage's voice. He stood in the doorway, looking at both of us. Shina gave me one last, sharp look, rolled her eyes, and then walked towards Sage.

"Nothing... I'm just asking how she is," Shina lied to Sage, throwing another sharp glance in my direction. "Anyway, Sage, I want to talk to you privately," she said, emphasizing the word 'privately'.

I hung my head and went back to my desk. Hours passed and the two of them still hadn't come out of the conference room. I frowned, staring at the door.

"I wonder what they're talking about?" I whispered, my curiosity piqued.

Then, a moment later, my eyes sparkled and a smile touched my lips as I saw Sage emerge from the conference room. But he didn't look at me. He didn't even glance my way; his expression was blank, his gaze xed ahead as he walked directly out of the oce.

"What happened?"

Suddenly, Shina came out of the room, and just like Sage, she didn't look at me, as if I didn't exist. I was left wondering what had transpired. Then, a moment later, I received a message in my email.

A smile played on my lips as I saw Sage's name. I immediately opened and read it.

"Meet me at the Ridgewood Forest. There is something I need to tell you."

That's what his email said. I had no idea what it meant, but even so, my heart felt a sense of reassurance because he wanted to see me and talk.

\*\*\*

The sun was setting and I was still lingering in the oce. After Shina and Sage left the conference room, they never came back. I'd lost count of how many times I'd reread Sage's message, and only now did I realize something felt off about it.

I looked out the window at the ery red sky. My chest began to tighten, and I felt a shortness of breath.

"A-Arg! T-This feeling..." I gasped, clutching at my chest.

After a moment, the feeling gradually subsided. I had no idea what happened, but I didn't like it.

I quickly stood up and grabbed my bag. I took public transportation and headed straight to Ridgewood Forest.

It was already night when I arrived, and only a single lamp hanging from a tree provided meager light.

"Sage? Are you here?" I called out, but there was no answer.

I started walking. The crackling of twigs under my feet echoed through the woods. Soon, I saw a shadowy gure not far away.

My lips curved into a smile, assuming it was Sage. I ran towards the gure. But as the moonlight touched the person standing there, my eyes widened in shock. It was Shina.

"W-What are you doing here?" I asked.

She folded her arms as a smirk played on her lips.

"Did you really think Sage would meet you in a place like this?" Shina taunted her voice dripping with sarcasm.

"W-What do you mean?"

"How naive of you not to realize it was a trap. I'm the one who sent you that message, and you fell for it so easily!" she laughed, mocking my innocence.

As Shina snapped her ngers, I heard footsteps behind me. My eyes widened as I saw two wolf warrior women standing behind me.

"Now show me your true self, Lyka. I know you're a monster. A threat to our pack. A threat to my beloved alpha!" Shina shrieked, pointing at me.

My feet were pinned on the oor. I couldn't move; I couldn't believe she'd tricked me.

My eyes closed tightly as I felt a sharp pain, a nail tearing into my skin.

"Aaah! Stop it! You're hurting me!" I screamed in pain as one of the warriors grabbed my arms from behind.

My eyes ew open as a woman suddenly stood before me. Her lips curled into a cruel smile, silencing me. My muscles convulsed as she punched me in the stomach, sending a wave of searing pain through me.

The other woman nally released my arms, letting me scream in agony, clutching my stomach and rolling on the dry leaves.

"Does it hurt? Why aren't you ghting back? I thought you were strong?" Shina said, walking towards me.

She looked down at me, her eyes lled with judgment.

"Aah!" I cried out again as one of the warriors grabbed my hair and yanked my head back, forcing my eyes towards the huge round moon.

"Change yourself, you monster!"

As my gaze met the full moon, my heart pounded wildly. My breathing became ragged and I gasped for air.

"What is happening to me?"

My body began to overheat.

"Ouch!"

One warrior quickly removed her hands from my skin.

"H-Her skin is burning!" she exclaimed, her eyes wide with shock.

Fear and surprise were etched on their faces as they felt the heat radiating from my skin. I tried to tear my eyes away from the moon, but it was as if they were glued to its mesmerizing beauty. I was completely enthralled.

The full moon hung heavy in the sky, it was watching me. I'm beginning to feel a familiar tingling inside my body, a creeping sensation that started in my toes and spread like wildre through my veins. My bones started to ache, a deep pain penetrating my body.

The transformation was a brutal ballet of pain. I can feel my ngernails elongate into claws, my skin slowly rippling and torn, making me scream like I was being tortured. Then, suddenly, my skin was replaced by thick, white fur that shimmered in the moonlight.

My teeth sharpened, and my jaw lengthened. The human form I was before was slowly dissolving and turning into something wild and untamed.

The nal agony came with the shift in my eyes, the familiar brown color replaced by two blazing crimson orbs.

I stood up and looked at the female human in front of me. They look like ants that I can easily smash anytime I want.

The white fur covering my body was shining against the dark forest, emphasizing my ery eyes.

Lyka, the woman inside me, was gone.

"Y-You monster!" Shina shouted.

She raised her hand and her body rapidly transformed. A large wolf, with brown fur and striking green eyes now stood before me.

I looked at my own hands and saw the shimmering light of white fur. This was the rst time I'd seen myself like this, but something was wrong. It felt as if I could control my mind, but my body was completely unresponsive.

In a ash, I saw Shina running towards me. I tried to avoid her, but my body wouldn't move. It was as if I was simply watching a movie, a helpless spectator.

Suddenly, my body bent down, ready to attack.

"N-No! Please don't do this!" I pleaded silently, desperately trying to regain control.

I felt my paws push off the ground, and I lunged toward Shina. I saw the shock in her eyes as I closed the distance. Unconsciously, my hand rose and sharp claws extended.

Tears streamed down my face as I remembered the day I killed my family—the same uncontrollable rage consuming me now. No matter how hard I pleaded with myself, my body wouldn't obey my will.

"Aaah!"

A bloodcurdling scream erupted from Shina. I squeezed my eyes shut, unable to bear witness to what I was doing. Then, I felt the warm spray of blood on my white fur, staining my face.

Opening my eyes, I gasped. My claws were embedded in the chest of a female warrior. She had thrown herself in front of Shina, shielding her from my attack. Shina was frozen in shock.

"W-What have I done?" I whispered, staring at the woman before me.

She gasped for air as a blood trickling from her mouth.

As I pulled my claws free, blood splattered and her body collapsed to the ground.

"Y-You! You are a monster! You're a killing beast!" Shina shrieked, her voice laced with anguish and tears, cradling her fallen comrade.

"I-I didn't mean to," I choked out, the words barely audible and my heart aching with remorse.

I felt my body begin to shrink, my fur receding as my human form returned. I stood before Shina and her grieving companion. Then, Shina changed into her human form.

"Lyka!"

I whipped around at the sound of a deep voice. My eyes widened at the sight of Sage standing a short distance away, his face etched with disbelief and pain.

"S-Sage... I-I didn't—"

I didn't know how to defend myself; I had witnessed my own actions.

"This is unforgivable, Lyka!" Sage roared, his voice lled with fury, while my own heart shattered into a million pieces.