

Fated To Not Just One, But Three #Chapter 391: Sex Two

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Chapter 391: Sex Two

Olivia's POV

Louis's pace was maddeningly slow and steady, every push of his cock dragging against my walls until I was trembling, desperate for more. He held me firm, making sure I took all of him, groaning in my ear as if he were savoring every second of fucking me.

But Levi wasn't done with me either.

I felt him shift on the bed, his hands tugging me down until my chest pressed lower, my breasts swaying with every deep thrust Louis drove into me. Levi slid beneath me, his hot breath ghosting over my skin before his mouth closed around one aching nipple.

"Fuck—!" The cry tore out of me, muffled around Lennox's cock that still filled my mouth.

Levi sucked hard, his tongue swirling, his teeth grazing just enough to make me jolt. His hands cupped my breasts, squeezing them roughly, forcing them to bounce with every thrust Louis delivered from behind. The double sensation made my body quake—Louis stretching me deep, Levi's mouth pulling moans straight from my chest, Lennox groaning above me as I struggled to keep sucking him down.

Louis's grip tightened on my hips, and his thrusts grew sharper, faster, like he couldn't hold back anymore. Each slam forward sent me crashing down onto Levi's mouth, my breasts bouncing into his eager lips. He groaned hungrily against me, sucking harder, like he wanted to mark me just as much as his brothers did.

Pinned, filled, fucked from every angle, I couldn't hold back the scream that tore from my throat—choked around Lennox, muffled against his cock. My whole body convulsed, pleasure crashing through me as Louis pounded harder, Levi devoured my breasts, and Lennox pulled my head down until I gagged around him.

Louis's thrusts grew rougher, each one deeper, harder, until my body was shaking uncontrollably. His groans grew ragged, his breath hot against my ear, his pace frantic, as if he couldn't stop even if he wanted to.

"Fuck, Olivia—" he snarled, slamming into me one last time, burying himself deep as his release spilled inside me, hot and overwhelming. His whole body shuddered, his grip

bruising on my hips as he held me there, buried to the hilt while my walls clenched around him, milking every drop.

I whimpered around Lennox's cock, the vibration making him groan above me, his hand tightening in my hair. Louis lingered for a moment, panting, then slowly pulled out, leaving me trembling, wetness dripping down my thighs.

Before I could even catch my breath, Lennox tugged me upward by my hair, forcing me off his cock with a wet gasp. My lips were swollen, spit shining down my chin as I panted, looking up at him. His eyes burned, wolf blazing, hunger and possession written all over him.

"You're not done, mate," he growled.

In one fluid motion, Lennox hauled me up onto the bed, flipping me onto my back. My gown was shoved up to my waist, my body exposed, trembling, glistening with sweat. He gripped my thighs, spreading them wide with no room for refusal, and positioned himself between them.

This time, there would be no slow build. He lined himself up, then slammed into me in one brutal thrust that ripped a scream from my throat. My back arched off the bed, hands clutching at the sheets as his cock filled me completely, stretching me to the edge of madness.

"Gods, Oli..." Lennox groaned, his voice broken with desire as he set a punishing pace, his hips slapping against mine, the bed rocking beneath us.

Levi was still there too, his mouth finding my breasts again, sucking one nipple deep into his mouth as Lennox drove into me. Louis's hand stroked up my thigh, spreading me wider for his brother's thrusts, his thumb brushing my clit in perfect rhythm with Lennox's pounding.

Every nerve in my body was lit on fire, my cries filling the room as Lennox took me harder than either of them had yet, raw and relentless.

Lennox's pace was merciless, each thrust slamming me deeper into the mattress, my nails clawing at the sheets as pleasure and pain tangled into one unbearable storm. His growl vibrated in his chest, his eyes locked on mine—hungry, possessive, wild.

Then, with a sudden shift, he hooked his arms under my thighs and shoved them up over his shoulders, folding me open completely. I gasped, the new angle making him sink even deeper, so deep I swore I could feel him in my very soul.

"Fuck!" I cried, my head falling back, tears pricking my eyes from the sheer intensity.

"Look at me," Lennox snarled, his grip tight on my legs as he pounded into me, his cock hitting that devastating spot again and again. "You take me so damn good, Olivia. Mine. Say it."

"I'm yours," I sobbed, my voice breaking, and his answering groan shook through me.

Levi's mouth stayed on my breasts, sucking and biting, his tongue swirling over my sensitive nipples while my chest arched into his mouth helplessly. Louis's fingers were still at my clit, circling mercilessly, every flick of his thumb sending sparks of heat straight through me until I thought I'd shatter apart.

Lennox's thrusts became savage, relentless, each one making my body quake beneath him, but his eyes—gods, his eyes—never left mine. That burning, wolf-bright gaze pinned me to the bed harder than his body did.

"Fuck, Olivia..." he growled, sweat dripping from his temple onto my cheek as he folded me tighter beneath him. His cock slammed into me again and again, and my cries turned into broken sobs of pleasure.

Louis's thumb never left my clit, circling with ruthless precision, while Levi's mouth sucked harder at my breasts, his teeth scraping over my aching nipple until I nearly screamed. My body was a live wire, every inch of me burning, trembling, begging for release.

Lennox's grip shifted suddenly, one hand sliding to cup my face. His thrusts slowed for half a second, then surged forward again, deeper, harder, as his lips crushed mine. The kiss was brutal, desperate, stealing the very breath from my lungs. His tongue drove into my mouth with the same punishing rhythm as his cock, claiming me, devouring me.

I whimpered against his lips, the sound swallowed by his growl, and he only kissed me harder, groaning into my mouth as if the taste of me was undoing him. My tears smeared between us, hot and salty, and his kiss softened for the barest moment before he slammed into me again, making me cry out against his tongue.

"Mine," he growled into the kiss, the word vibrating in my chest.

The sound tore me apart. My climax ripped through me violently, my body convulsing beneath him, my walls clenching so tight around his cock that his growl broke into a ragged curse. His thrusts faltered, then deepened, driving home one last time before he roared into my mouth, spilling inside me in hot, pulsing waves.

His whole body shook with the force of it, his kiss never breaking, his groans vibrating against my lips as he emptied himself inside me, deep and raw, until I could feel nothing but him.

Pinned under his weight, trembling and shattered, I clung to his kiss like it was the only thing keeping me from breaking completely.

When he finally tore his lips from mine, panting, his forehead pressed against mine. His wolf glowed in his eyes, fierce and blazing, and his voice was ragged, broken when he whispered:

"I'll never stop wanting you, Olivia. Never."

Chapter 392: The Kitchen

Olivia's POV

At some point, exhaustion won. Their warmth, their arms around me, the steady thrum of their heartbeats—it was too much comfort for my restless body to fight. My eyes grew heavy, and before I knew it, sleep claimed me.

When I woke, the bed was empty. The sheets beside me were still faintly warm, their scent clinging to the air, proof they hadn't gone far. My wolf stretched lazily inside me, confirming what my nose already knew—they were in the mansion. Somewhere close.

My stomach grumbled, dry and demanding water, and I licked my lips, parched. I thought about calling one of the servants, but the thought felt suffocating. I needed air. A walk. Something to clear my head.

I slipped on my clothes, smoothed my hair back, and stepped out of the room.

The mansion's halls were quiet, but every corner carried a memory. Some good. Some painful. Shadows of the past crept in with each step—moments of laughter, of betrayal, of pain. My chest tightened, but I pushed forward.

As I passed, the staff I met along the way bowed their heads low, murmuring respectful greetings. Their deference made my wolf stir with pride, but it also reminded me of the weight I carried on my shoulders.

Finally, I reached the kitchen. The smell of roasted herbs and warm bread clung to the air, and I let out a breath I hadn't realized I was holding.

But the moment my eyes landed inside, my steps faltered.

Selene was there.

She stood by the counter, speaking quietly to one of the cooks, her posture too casual, too at home for my liking.

Our eyes met across the room.

And just like that, my hunger was gone, replaced by the simmering heat of irritation.

Selene's eyes slid over me slowly. Then she turned to the cook with a faint smirk.

"You can leave us."

The cook hesitated, glancing nervously between us, but Selene's tone carried that air of authority that made obedience instinctive. With a quick bow, the cook left, and silence wrapped the room.

Selene leaned against the counter, folding her arms, her eyes never leaving me.

"So, the queen finally decided to grace us with her presence."

I ignored her, stepping toward the jug of water. My hand was steady as I poured, but inside, my wolf bristled, pacing hard.

Selene's voice carried again, sly and cruel.

"You know, I heard a little gossip. They say your mates were once taken away from you by your own best friend. That you don't know how to keep them."

My jaw tightened, but I forced myself to drink, ignoring her.

She chuckled.

"I also heard you lived here like a slave once. Gods, I wish I'd been around then. I would have loved to meet you in that state—maybe you could have polished my shoes with your tongue."

My wolf snarled inside me, but I swallowed it down.

Selene continued.

"Oh, and the best part—I heard you used to serve Anita water after the triplets were done with her. Tell me, Olivia—how did that feel? To bring her water while she still smelled of them?"

The glass cracked in my hand.

That was it.

My wolf surged forward, and before Selene could blink, I moved. One breath, one heartbeat, and my hand was around her throat. I slammed her against the wall so hard the shelves rattled.

Her eyes widened, but she smirked even through my grip, like she'd wanted this all along.

My wolf roared through me, my fists shaking with the need to tear her apart. I drew my arm back, ready to punch, to break that smug face—

"Olivia!"

The voices crashed into me. The triplets.

They rushed into the kitchen, their presence heavy, their wolves on edge. They knew. They could feel the anger raging inside me.

"Liv—let her go," Levi pleaded, his voice sharp but gentle.

Louis's hand hovered near my arm, his wolf barely restrained. "Please."

Lennox's tone cut through the air, low and commanding.

"Olivia. Now."

For a heartbeat, I stood frozen, my nails digging into her skin, her pulse hammering beneath my grip.

Then, with a growl, I released her—only to slap her hard across the face.

The sound echoed in the kitchen.

Selene's head snapped to the side, her cheek red, her smirk finally gone.

And I stood there, chest heaving, my wolf still snarling, every part of me trembling with rage. I just wanted to disfigure that pretty, annoying face of hers, but I held myself back as my wolf paced restlessly inside me while Selene held her cheek, glaring at me.

Levi stepped closer, his brows furrowed.

"What happened? What did she say to you, Liv?" His tone was gentle, but his wolf was already bristling beneath the surface.

Before I could even answer, Lennox's angry voice cut across the room.

"I don't care what she said." His tone was sharp, commanding, heavy with Alpha authority. He stepped forward, his eyes locked on Selene like steel. "You're going to get on your knees and apologize to her."

Selene's eyes widened in shock.

"What? I did nothing to her!"

My wolf snarled at her defiance, but it was nothing compared to Lennox's. His aura burst outward, thick and suffocating, filling the kitchen like a storm. His voice dropped lower, angrier, every word laced with dominance.

"Don't test me, Selene. Don't make the mistake of thinking I'll let this slide. You don't insult our mate. Not here. Not ever."

Selene's mouth opened like she wanted to argue, but Lennox's growl rumbled through the air, vibrating the very walls.

"On your knees," he ordered again, his eyes glowing, his wolf riding close to the surface. "Now. Or I swear to the Moon Goddess, you'll regret it."

The kitchen was dead silent.

Selene's smirk was gone, her confidence faltering under the crushing weight of Lennox's Alpha command.

I stood there, my glare sharp, watching her face twist between defiance and submission—knowing exactly which one would win.

Chapter 393: Hate Each Other

Olivia's POV

Her breath hitched, and her knees buckled against the floor.

She landed hard, her palms slapping against the tiles to steady herself. Anger flickered in her eyes, but she dared not raise her chin.

"Say it," Lennox ordered, his voice raging. "Apologize to her. Now."

Selene's jaw worked, grinding back against her own pride. For a heartbeat, I thought she'd refuse, consequences be damned. But then her gaze flicked up—straight to me—and I saw the pure hatred burning there.

Good, she should hate me because I hate her too.

"I'm sorry," she muttered, her words tight, laced with hate.

"Louder," Lennox snapped. His wolf was right there, riding the edge, vibrating in his chest.

Selene flinched, her lips parting. "I said, I'm sorry."

The words echoed across the kitchen, small and hollow, but still an apology.

Levi stepped closer to me, his hand brushing mine, steadying my trembling fingers. "This should never happen again," he said coldly to Selene. "She's our mate. You'll show her the respect she deserves, or you'll answer to all three of us."

Louis's wolf flared, his eyes sharp, his presence crowding the space as he leaned forward slightly. "If not for our plan, I would have thrown you out of here, but we're giving you one chance. One. If you ever disrespect her again, family or not, you won't stay under this roof another day."

Selene's lips pressed into a thin line as she clenched her fists against the floor.

I stood there, my breath uneven, my wolf finally settling just a little. Seeing her on her knees, hearing those words—even forced—soothed something inside me that had been clawing to get out.

But deep down, I knew this wasn't over. Not by a long shot.

Selene hated me. And I hated her.

And sooner or later, that hatred was going to spill over again.

I couldn't stand being in the same room as her another second. My wolf still snarled under my skin, restless and angry, but all I wanted was distance.

"Let's go," Louis said quietly, his hand brushing mine, pulling me away from the kitchen. I didn't argue. I let them guide me back through the halls, away from her sharp eyes and venomous tongue, back to the safety of our room.

The door shut behind us with a soft thud, and for the first time since I'd walked into the kitchen, I let out a breath. My shoulders slumped as I leaned against the wall, pressing a trembling hand to my chest.

"I don't think I can stand her," I whispered, my voice raw. My throat tightened as the words left me. "Every time I see her, every time she looks at you three... I feel like I'm burning from the inside. I hate it. I hate her. I don't want her here."

Levi stepped forward first, his arms sliding around me. "I know, Liv," he murmured against my hair. "I know it's hard. But it's only for a while. Just until Frederick is dealt with. Then she's gone. We promise."

Lennox moved closer, his hand cupping my cheek, his thumb brushing gently across my skin. "We hate this too," he admitted, his voice low and heavy. "But she's a piece of the plan we can't throw away. It won't be forever. Just a while longer."

Louis's hand settled on my shoulder, grounding me. His gaze was firm but soft. "We'll handle her. You don't have to worry, Olivia. All you need to do is hold on—to us. We'll get through this together."

I closed my eyes, my wolf pressing closer, soaking in their warmth. Their voices, their touch, their presence—together they pushed back the chaos inside me.

And though the fire of my jealousy still burned, for a moment, it dimmed.

Just a while, I told myself. Just a little while longer.

I inhaled deeply and nodded before flashing an assuring smile to them. "I have to bathe and go back to Frederick... I have to follow him to the party."

Their faces hardened immediately.

Louis's jaw clenched, his arms crossing tightly over his chest. "I still don't like this," he muttered. "The idea of you being at his side, of people seeing you with him... it makes my blood boil."

Lennox's eyes narrowed, his wolf growling possessively. "I hate it too. Every second you spend near him feels like a thorn in my chest. The thought of you walking into that party with him, being seen as his..." He shook his head, anger flashing in his eyes. "It's unbearable."

Levi's hand found mine, his touch softer but no less tense. "But we know you're right. We know why you're doing it. Just... please, Liv. Promise you'll be careful."

I looked at each of them, their wolves restless, their hearts aching—and guilt hit me. I didn't want to be near Frederick any more than they wanted me to. But this was war. And in war, comfort wasn't always an option.

"I'll be careful," I whispered, squeezing Levi's hand before stepping closer to Lennox. I pressed a kiss against his lips, slow and deep, pouring all my reassurance into it. His growl softened into a low rumble, and through the bond, I felt the ache in him ease just a fraction.

Pulling back, I glanced at Louis, who still looked like he wanted to smash something. I moved to him, cradling his face in my hands. "It's only for a while," I promised. "Just until Frederick is gone. Then this will all be over."

He kissed my forehead, lingering there, his voice rough. "It had better be, Liv. Because I swear, I won't let you stand beside him longer than necessary."

Levi pulled me for a hug and whispered into my hair. "Reach out to us if anything goes wrong."

I gave a small nod, my chest heavy, and pulled away. My wolf stirred uneasily, already dreading the scent of Frederick, but I straightened my shoulders.

I looked at their tense faces. "I have to go."

They gave a reluctant nod. I noticed they were itching to pull me to themselves, but they held themselves back, and with a warm smile, I teleported away.

Chapter 394: Love Him

Olivia's POV

When I arrived at Frederick's home, I was met by his sister instead. She stood in the doorway, calm and friendly, and told me Frederick had gone back to his estate with his son.

"Frederick isn't a bad man, Olivia," she said softly, her eyes searching mine. "People paint him as a monster, but he just wants to be loved."

I couldn't help the scoff that escaped me. "Loved by force? Is that what you call love—clinging to someone who barely wants you? Can't he let another woman love him instead?"

Her lips curved faintly, though her eyes held something like pity. "You don't understand him. Frederick grew up with everything except affection. Power, respect, fear—he had those in abundance. But love? Genuine, unconditional love? He's never truly had it."

I folded my arms, my wolf bristling. "That's his fault. He doesn't know how to treat people right. He pushes, manipulates, forces. That's not how you win love."

She shook her head slowly. "Maybe. But deep down, he's still searching for it. Even when he lashes out, even when he hurts people—it all comes from that hunger. He's desperate for someone to stay, to choose him freely. You can hate him all you want, Olivia, but that's the truth. My brother is lonely."

Her words sank in, but I forced my face into a mask, unwilling to let her see any crack in me.

Because no matter what she said, Frederick's loneliness didn't excuse his sins.

And it certainly didn't change the fact that I would be the one to end him.

Her words were already biting at me, but she didn't stop there. Her eyes softened, a strange sadness flickering across her face.

"You know what hurt him the most?" she asked quietly. "Hailee."

My stomach tightened at the name.

"She disappeared," Frederick's sister went on. "One day she was there, the next... gone. He searched for her, Olivia. He searched everywhere. He tore apart borders, called in favors, threatened packs—anything to find her. And when he finally did..." She paused, her jaw clenching. "When he finally found her, she chose them instead. Those three men—the fathers of her sons."

I stiffened, my wolf pricking up sharply.

"He did everything for her," she whispered, her gaze locking onto mine. "Protected her. Spoiled her. Gave her every chance to love him back. But she couldn't. She wouldn't. And when she turned away from him... it broke something inside my brother. Something that never healed."

For a moment, I couldn't speak. My thoughts spiraled.

So Hailee knew. She knew Frederick loved her.

And still... she chose them.

I swallowed hard, forcing my voice steady even as a storm built inside me. "Love doesn't excuse cruelty. He hurt people. He hurt me. He hurt so many. You can't dress that up as heartbreak."

But even as the words left my lips, a sliver of unease crept into me. Because now I knew the truth—her rejection was the wound Frederick never recovered from.

Her words didn't stop there. She leaned forward slightly, her tone lowering into something almost conspiratorial.

"Olivia," she said gently, "you could love him. If you gave him a chance. He would give you the world in return. You wouldn't regret it. When my brother loves, he loves with everything. Listen, Olivia: if you give him the chance he will treat you better than the triplets have ever—trust me on this. Just love him."

I almost laughed in her face. Almost. The only thing that stopped me was the sheer sincerity in her eyes, like she was spilling a deep secret to me.

Love Frederick?

I wanted to spit the words back at her—never. I would die before I let that happen. But then my plan whispered in the back of my mind, reminding me to stay careful. To play along until the time was right.

So instead of cursing him, I forced my voice to soften. "It's not like I have much choice," I murmured, lowering my eyes. "He owns my life in his hands. Whether I like it or not, my path leads back to him."

Her smile was faint, almost triumphant. "Then don't fight it, Olivia. You might be surprised by what you find if you let yourself try."

I said nothing. I only dipped my head in a small nod, then let the bond of my power tug me away.

In a blink, I teleported straight to Frederick's home.

The air shifted, colder, heavier. I followed the sound of movement until I reached his chambers. He was there—standing tall in front of a mirror, fastening the cuffs of his dark jacket. He looked up at me through the reflection, one brow arching.

"Well, well," he said smoothly. "I was just about to reach out to you."

I stayed quiet, my face unreadable, while inside my wolf coiled with hatred. His mere presence disgusted me. He was the reason so many things were going wrong with my life... I should be having my happy ending with the triplets if not for him...

He smirked faintly, as if amused by my silence. "Not lashing out at me today? Interesting. But I love it when you lash."

I didn't give him the satisfaction of a response. Instead, I tilted my head and asked lightly, "Where are you going?" Pretending ignorance, even though I already knew.

"A birthday party," he replied casually, turning to face me fully now. "Do you want to come?"

I tapped my chin, pretending to think about it, letting the pause stretch. Finally, I sighed and nodded. "Alright. I'll come."

He smiled genuinely, like a man who had just been handed something precious. "Good," he said softly. "I'm glad."

And in that smile, I saw it—the hunger his sister had spoken of. The loneliness. The need.

But no matter how real it looked, it didn't change my truth.

Because behind my calmness, behind my forced agreement, one vow echoed clear in my heart.

I would end him.

Chapter 395: The Act

Olivia's POV

The car ride was quiet, Frederick sitting beside me with a strange calm that unsettled me more than his rage ever did. When we arrived at the estate, music and laughter spilled into the night. The birthday celebration was in full swing—nobles mingling in fine silks and jewels.

The moment we stepped into view, all heads turned. Whispers rippled through the crowd. Frederick's hand brushed my back, possessive, guiding me forward. "Walk with me," he said smoothly, his pride radiating like fire. "Let them see you."

I gritted my teeth, forcing a soft smile onto my lips. My wolf snarled at his touch, but I composed myself, forcing out a smile.

As we moved through the hall, I caught sight of Selene. She was across the room, dressed elegantly, her posture poised. She held a glass of wine in her hand, laughing softly with the birthday celebrant—a noblewoman she clearly knew well. But her eyes weren't truly on the party. They flicked, just once, toward me. Toward us.

The bond between my mates and me buzzed faintly in my chest. I knew they were watching, waiting, trusting this plan to unfold.

Frederick didn't notice her at first. But fate—or maybe Selene's subtle game—ensured their paths crossed. She brushed past him with a polite bow, her hybrid scent faint but distinct. Frederick's head snapped toward her instantly.

I felt it. His desire. His hunger.

Selene dipped her head again, murmuring a greeting, before slipping away like it was nothing. But Frederick's eyes followed her retreating figure, lingering, calculating.

I swallowed, my stomach twisting.

It had begun.

The trap was working.

"You like her."

The words slipped out of my lips as my gaze was fixed on Frederick, whose gaze had been glued to Selene since she passed.

He scoffed, shaking his head. "Don't be ridiculous."

"Don't lie to me," I hissed, pretending to be jealous. "You've been staring at her since she walked in."

His lips twitched in something between annoyance and amusement. "Her scent is... unique. That is all."

"Unique?" I shot back, my jaw tight. "But I'm the special one, aren't I? Or has that changed already?"

Frederick's brows lifted, interest flickering in his eyes. He leaned a little closer, lowering his voice. "Are you jealous, Olivia?"

I scoffed inside me, joke on him to think I would ever be jealous of him being interested in any other lady.

I lifted my chin stubbornly, pretending to be annoyed. "The triplets would never look at another woman. Not the way you just did."

His expression darkened, his pride clearly pricked by the comparison. But before he could reply, the music shifted, and couples began gathering at the center of the hall.

Frederick's eyes locked onto mine, a slow smile curving his lips. He extended his hand toward me, his voice smooth and commanding.

"Dance with me."

Every muscle in me wanted to refuse. To spit in his face. But I forced my wolf down, plastered on a smile, and slid my hand into his.

If Selene was playing her part, then so would I.

And as Frederick pulled me into his arms, guiding me onto the floor under a thousand watching eyes, I realized something terrifying—his smile wasn't cruel this time. It was genuine, like he was really happy being with me.

Frederick's hand rested firmly at the small of my back, his other clasp mine as he guided me across the polished floor. For once, his movements weren't harsh or demanding—they were smooth, steady, almost tender. His gaze never wavered from my face, and that smile... gods, it was still there. Soft. Real.

"You look beautiful tonight," he murmured, his voice low enough that only I could hear.

I forced a polite smile, keeping my wolf pressed down. "You say that because people are watching."

He shook his head slowly, his fingers tightening ever so slightly on mine. "No. I say it because it's true. You glow, Olivia. And it kills me to think the triplets are the only ones who get to see it."

My chest tightened, but I kept my expression cool. "You're imagining things."

His eyes darkened, his tone shifting, heavy with unspoken meaning. "Am I? Because when I look at you now, I don't see the woman who spits fire at me. I see the woman who could have been mine... if things had been different."

I stiffened, but he pulled me closer, spinning me into a graceful turn before I could answer. His breath brushed my ear as he whispered, "Do you know what I envy most about them? Not their power. Not their pack. It's the fact that when they reach for you, you don't pull away. You let them hold you. You let them love you."

My wolf growled inside me, furious at the dangerous intimacy of his words. But beneath it, my mind screamed a reminder—this was the game. Keep him hooked. Act along. Still, the sincerity in his voice unsettled me more than any threat ever had.

"I really like you, Olivia..." he whispered, sounding wholehearted.

I scoffed. "Like? Not even love?"

He smiled. A genuine one. "My heart was broken years ago... I am scared of loving..." He paused and tucked a strand of hair behind my ear, his ice-cold fingers brushing my warm skin. "But I can love you if you want me to."

My wolf growled low in my chest, disgusted, but I didn't answer. Couldn't. Because right then, movement in the corner of my eye caught my attention.

Selene.

She had drifted away from the noblewoman she'd been speaking with, as she eased closer to where Frederick and I danced. Every step she took was calculated, deliberate, weaving her scent into the air like bait on a hook.

Frederick's grip on me tightened just slightly. His nostrils flared, and I felt it—the way his hunger sharpened. Not for power, not for control... but for her. For that hybrid blood he didn't yet understand he craved.

Perfect. The plan was taking shape.

Selene passed nearby, speaking to a nobleman. Her hair shifted just enough to reveal the faint shimmer of her hybrid aura, and I didn't miss the way Frederick's gaze snapped to her again.

I pulled back slightly, forcing his attention on me, even as I marked the success in Selene's move. Good. He's noticing. He's tempted.

Frederick spun me once more, his lips brushing dangerously close to my temple. "There's something... unusual here tonight," he whispered, almost to himself.

I feigned confusion, tilting my head. "Unusual? Or distracting?"

His eyes narrowed, but he didn't answer. His focus flicked again toward Selene, who now stood laughing softly at some joke, her posture graceful, her presence impossible to ignore.

And I knew, with a surge of both relief and dread—the hook was set.

Frederick wanted her.

Now, all we had to do was let him take the bait.

Chapter 396: Her Blood

Olivia's POV

The wine glass tilted in her hand, the crimson liquid splashing across the floor as she gasped. The sharp edge of the broken glass cut across her palm.

Blood.

It hit the air instantly.

Rich. Sweet. Potent.

My wolf stiffened at the scent, but it was Frederick who reacted most violently. His head snapped toward her, his nostrils flaring. His grip on my waist slackened as his pupils dilated, dark and hungry.

Selene clutched her hand dramatically, the crimson dripping between her fingers. "Oh—excuse me," she murmured softly, her voice carrying just enough tremor to draw attention.

Several nobles gasped. A servant moved forward with a cloth—

But Frederick was already moving.

"Wait," he commanded sharply, his voice slicing through the chatter. In two long strides, he reached her side, his hand catching her wrist before the servant could touch her.

His eyes locked on the wound, his lips parting as he inhaled deeply and greedily.

"Are you okay?" Frederick's voice cut through the crowd, sharper than I'd expected. His hand tightened around Selene's wrist, tilting it gently so the light caught the crimson flow.

But I wasn't fooled.

It wasn't concern driving him—it was hunger. His pupils were blown wide, his chest rising and falling too fast. He wanted to taste it. Every nerve in his body screamed for it, even as he fought to control himself.

Selene lowered her gaze, shoulders tensing as though she could feel the weight of his restraint.

"I... I'm fine," she said quietly, pulling slightly, but his grip didn't ease.

For one long heartbeat, I thought he'd cave—thought he'd lean down and sink his teeth into her right there in front of everyone.

But he didn't.

Well, she has to consent to it.

With effort, Frederick released her wrist and straightened, his expression smoothing into his cold formality. "Lord Frederick," he introduced himself, bowing his head just slightly. "And you are?"

Selene's breath caught. Her voice wavered as she answered, "You... you're a vampire."

His lips curved faintly. "That doesn't answer my question."

Selene stepped back quickly, clutching her hand tighter against her chest. "Please... excuse me. I can't... I can't be near you." Her voice cracked with just enough fear to sound real, but I knew she was pretending. I hate to say it, but she was pretty good at this.

Then she turned, slipping into the crowd without another word.

The room buzzed with whispers, nobles exchanging knowing glances, but my eyes were on Frederick.

His jaw was tight, his hands curling slowly into fists. But it was his eyes that gave him away.

Pain. Hunger. Want.

He didn't just notice her. He felt her.

And as he watched Selene's retreating figure vanish into the crowd, I knew the hook had sunk deeper than either of us had imagined.

"Selene has laid the bait, and I think Frederick wants to taste her," I whispered to the triplets through the mind link.

"Good," Lennox answered. "All she has to do is make sure she poisons her blood and he feeds from her, then we take it from there."

I nodded inwardly. "But that cannot happen today... Selene is acting scared of Frederick."

"Good," Lennox's voice hummed through the link. "If she acts afraid, he won't suspect a thing. He'll think her blood tempts him, but she's too scared to come near. That'll only make him want her more."

Louis added, "It's better this way. If she gave in too fast, he'd question it. The chase will make him hungrier. More desperate."

Levi's voice followed, "And when the hunger is unbearable, that's when she'll let him take the bait. Not before."

I swallowed, my chest tight. They were right.

Frederick's footsteps pulled me from my thoughts. He was walking back toward me, his eyes still dark with that lingering hunger from Selene's blood.

I pasted on a frown at him, but before he could reach me, I spun on my heel and strode toward the barstand.

Let him think I was upset. Jealous. Anything but suspicious.

The bartender blinked as I ordered sharply, "Something strong." My voice was tight, my hands curling into fists against the polished wood.

Behind me, I felt Frederick's gaze settle, heavy and probing. Exactly as I wanted.

Let him think my jealousy was about him. That way he won't suspect Selene is in a game with us.

Frederick's presence pressed against me as he came to stand beside me at the bar, his scent dark, commanding, and heavy.

I didn't look at him. Instead, I let the words drip from my lips, sharp and full of anger. "You look like you want to fuck her."

His head snapped toward me, his eyes narrowing, but I didn't stop. I turned, meeting his gaze directly. "If you want her, Frederick, then go. Go chase her. Go fuck her. And I'll go back to the triplets where I belong."

His jaw tightened, his nostrils flaring. "No."

The word was firm, almost desperate. His voice dipped lower, his tone sharp. "Don't twist this, Olivia. I don't want her. I don't understand it either—her scent, her blood—it pulled at me. But it's not her I want." His eyes darkened. "It's you."

I scoffed bitterly, grabbing my glass and draining half of it before slamming it back onto the counter. "I want to go home."

His stare lingered, unreadable, before he finally nodded once. "Very well."

We left the hall, his hand heavy at the small of my back again as the night air cooled my heated skin. But before I could breathe easier, movement caught my eye near the side of the estate.

A commotion.

Two vampires.

They had Selene. She struggled in their grip, her voice breaking in a terrified cry. "Let me go! Please—let me go!"

Her wine glass lay shattered near the grass, her body thrashing against their hold. Fear poured from her in waves—loud, frantic, believable.

It was an act. I knew it. But God, she was good at it.

Frederick reacted instantly. His body went rigid, then he shot forward, faster than the eye could track. His growl ripped through the air, feral, deadly.

The two vampires flinched at his approach, dropping Selene in their haste before vanishing into the shadows.

Selene collapsed onto the ground, trembling violently. Her body shook, her eyes wide and wet with fabricated terror.

"Please," she gasped, curling in on herself. "Don't let them take me. Please..."

Frederick knelt beside her, his hand slipping under her arm, pulling her against his chest. "You're safe now," he said firmly, his voice low, almost soothing. "I've got you."

She sagged against him, trembling harder, her act flawless and believable.

And as I watched, realization hit. Frederick wasn't just intrigued anymore.

Now... he felt protective.

Exactly what Selene wanted.

Chapter 397: Concerned?

Olivia's POV

I stood frozen, watching as Frederick bent and lifted Selene off the ground. For one terrifying second, she let herself lean into him, trembling like a wounded bird.

Then, well played, she pulled back, stumbling as though realizing whose arms she had fallen into. Her wide eyes darted to his face, faked terror making her look small and vulnerable.

I rolled my eyes. Well played, Selene. Well played.

"Don't touch me," she whispered, clutching her injured hand tighter against her chest. "You're... you're a vampire..."

Frederick straightened, his face carved in something unreadable, anger, yes, but not at her. At the ones who had touched her. And underneath it all... there was something else. Hunger. Possession.

"You're bleeding," he said, his voice low, almost filled with concern. "You shouldn't be out here alone."

Then, to my surprise, he added, "Let me take you home."

Selene's eyes widened, her acting flawless. She stumbled back another step, clutching her hand tighter. "No... I can't. You're just like them." Her voice trembled, soft and broken, painting him as the monster she wanted him to be.

Frederick didn't frown; his eyes softened. "I am not like them," he said firmly, his tone calm, almost soothing. "I don't force. I don't feed unless I'm given permission."

Selene shook her head quickly, her breath hitching. "I... I can't. I'm staying at the Royal Crescent Hotel for a month. I came here for study." Her words came rushed, shaky, and

I smirked inwardly. All lies, yet believable enough to make her look desperate to escape him.

Frederick studied her closely, his jaw tightening. Then he shook his head slowly. "That place isn't safe. Not for you. Too many eyes. Too many dangers." His voice lowered, possessive and with concern. "You should come with me. Stay at my estate. I'll keep you safe."

Selene shook her head immediately, her performance so good that I could see the way her pulse flickered, her shoulders trembling like prey.

And I smiled to myself.

The motion was working.

Selene was sinking into her role, and Frederick was already caught in the net.

"Thank you, but I can take care of myself." She whispered and turned to leave as she began walking away, but, shockingly, Frederick went after her and grabbed her hand, making her flinch in fear.

"Fine... just stay at my home tonight... for security reasons." He pleaded.

Now I became confused. Why did he seem so desperate for Selene to come to his home? Was this to lure her into his home so he could feed on her forcefully? Or was it that he was really concerned about her?

Selene's frown deepened. "Why? So you can forcefully feed on me?" she spat.

Frederick groaned, dragging a hand through his hair in clear annoyance. "Stop it. I'm not some newborn vampire who can't control himself. I am three hundred years old. I've seen your kind, I've smelled blood stronger than yours, and I didn't touch. I don't feed forcefully. That's not who I am."

For a moment, her wide eyes studied him, as if weighing his words. Then, slowly and deliberately, she turned her gaze toward me.

Her lips parted. "What about your woman?" she asked softly, tilting her head toward me as though she truly cared. "Will she be okay with it... if I stay under your roof?"

Every muscle in me went rigid.

Oh, she was good. Too good.

Frederick didn't even spare me a glance when he answered. "She won't... you don't have to worry about her."

Selene parted her mouth. "Oh." And then she acted as if she were in deep thought. Her lashes fluttered, weighing impossible choices. I already knew where this was going; she was going to accept. But the act... gods, she was dragging it out for Frederick's sake.

Then she drew a shaky breath, straightening her shoulders as though concluding some grave bargain.

"Fine," she said softly, her voice trembling just enough. "Just for tonight."

Frederick's jaw unclenched, the tight lines in his face easing into something dangerously close to relief. "Good." His hand twitched, as if he wanted to touch her again, but he held himself back. "You'll be safe with me."

Selene nodded, clutching her wounded hand like a shield. "But only tonight," she added quickly, keeping up the pretense. "After that, I leave."

Frederick's lips curved in the faintest smile, one that didn't reach his eyes. "Sure. Let's go,"

I frowned, letting my expression twist into one of jealous anger. He didn't even notice—or maybe he did and didn't care.

We walked in silence to the car. Frederick slid into one end of the back seat, his posture stiff. Selene slipped into the middle, her hand still wrapped in cloth, while I took the other end.

The air was thick. I kept my glare fixed out the window, my jaw clenched, and my arms crossed as if I were fuming. I wanted him to see it. Let him think I was angry, jealous, and possessive. Anything but suspicious.

The ride stretched long and heavy. Frederick didn't speak. He didn't even look at me. His gaze was fixed too often on Selene, lingering on her profile when he thought I wouldn't notice.

When we finally reached his mansion, Frederick flashed a warm smile at Selene. The great iron gates creaked open, and the car rolled smoothly inside.

The moment we stepped out, a human maid hurried forward. Frederick gestured sharply toward Selene, his voice calm but commanding.

"Tend to her wound," he ordered.

Then, to Selene, his tone softened. "You'll rest in one of the guest houses. I'll have everything prepared for you."

Selene dipped her head meekly, whispering a small, "Thank you," before following the maid. She didn't look back, but Frederick's eyes followed her until she disappeared inside.

Only then did he turn toward me.

"You like her, don't you?" I asked, sounding angry and jealous.

His brows lifted slightly, but he didn't answer right away.

Chapter 398: Something Else

Olivia POV

Frederick's brows rose faintly. For a moment he didn't answer — he just studied me with those cold, unreadable eyes of his. Then, slowly, he shook his head. "You misunderstand me, Olivia." His tone was calm, almost gentle. "I don't like her. But I can't deny... she's different. Her scent, her blood — it's unlike anything I've encountered in a long time."

I scoffed, folding my arms across my chest. "Different? That's all it takes for you to lose your composure? You looked like you wanted to rip her apart right there in front of everyone."

His jaw tightened, his lips pressing into a thin line. "You are misunderstanding things, Olivia."

I forced a bitter laugh. "Misunderstanding? Is that what you call it? Because from where I stood, you looked like you couldn't take your eyes off her. If you want her, then go be with her and let me return to my mates."

A big frown spread across his face. Then he leaned back, exhaling slowly. "Jealousy doesn't suit you, Olivia. You're too clever for it. You should know by now — I don't replace one woman with another. I never have."

His words pricked at me, but I held my glare. Frederick glanced once more toward where Selene had gone, then back at me. His voice dropped lower, almost a whisper. "Her blood is just tempting. That's all."

I scoffed and sat on the sofa, my angry glare fixed on him. Frederick chuckled, a light, amused smile appearing on his face as he shook his head. "I can't believe a day like this will come when you, Olivia, will get jealous over me..." He smirked. "I like it."

Inwardly I scoffed. Fool. Joke on him for thinking this was actually real. "I'm not jealous," I shot back, though it sounded exactly like I was.

"Sure," he murmured, nodding like he knew better.

I rolled my eyes, my arms folded tight across my chest. "Where am I sleeping? I'm passing the night here. Who knows... if I leave you alone, you might sneak into her room."

Frederick froze for a second, then chuckled low, the sound vibrating in his chest. His lips tugged into that infuriating smirk. "Sneak into her room and what, Olivia?" He tilted his head, his eyes gleaming with dark amusement.

"Fuck her." I spat the word, glaring at him.

But instead of snapping, Frederick only leaned back against the sofa, his eyes drinking me in like I was the funniest, most fascinating thing he'd seen in centuries. "You're jealous," he said again, his voice rich with satisfaction. "And moon, I like it. You — Olivia — burning because of me."

I scoffed, my arms tightening around myself. "You're delusional."

"Maybe." He shrugged, still smirking. Then he stood, his tall frame looming as his gaze pinned me to the sofa. "But since you're so worried about what I might do..."

He leaned closer, his voice dropping. "We'll be sharing a room tonight."

I stiffened, my jaw locking.

"At least that way," he added smoothly, brushing past me toward the hall, "you can keep an eye on me. Make sure I don't sneak into anyone's bed."

He didn't even look back as he chuckled again, sounding pleased with himself. He liked this. He liked the attention. He liked my jealousy.

I closed my eyes, forcing my wolf to calm, and reached for the bond. "It's working," I whispered through the link.

Lennox's voice was the first to come. "Tell me."

"He's hooked. Selene played her part perfectly — he's already circling her like prey he wants to claim. He invited her into his home tonight. She's pretending to resist, but she agreed for just one night. He thinks it's his idea."

A ripple of satisfaction pulsed through the bond.

Louis answered next, his tone edged with grim approval. "Good. That's the first step. Now he'll want her even more. Hunger like his only grows."

Levi's voice followed. "And you? Are you okay?"

I hesitated, my throat tightening. "I'm fine." It was a lie, and I knew they felt it. "I'm keeping him distracted. He thinks I'm jealous. He believes every word of it. He has no suspicion of us or Selene."

For a moment, silence lingered. Then Lennox's voice returned. "Be patient for us, Liv. We're close now, closer than ever. Soon he'll take the bait, and when he does — we end this."

I breathed deeply, nodding to myself. "Soon," I whispered aloud, my eyes narrowing toward the stairs Frederick had used. Soon, this charade would end. And Frederick would fall.

When I pushed the door of his room open, the scent of aged wine and smoke filled the room. Frederick stood near the mantle, glass in hand, the firelight dancing against his sharp features. He swirled the crimson liquid lazily before taking a long sip.

I arched a brow, letting mockery drip from my voice. "What is that — wine, or blood?"

His eyes flicked toward me, cool and unbothered. He didn't rise to the bait, just set the glass back on the table with a faint clink. "You're amusing when you try to provoke me, Olivia."

I scoffed and crossed my arms. "Who said I was trying?"

Turning away, I muttered, "I'll teleport home to grab my nightdress."

But before I could move, his voice cut through the air. "No need."

I froze, narrowing my eyes. "Excuse me?"

He moved toward the wardrobe, pulling it open with a casual sweep of his hand. "You don't need to leave. You can use one of my shirts." He glanced back, his expression unreadable, but the smallest hint of a smirk touched his lips. "They'll suit you just fine."

I wanted to refuse — gods, every instinct in me screamed to refuse — but then I remembered the plan. The game. My role. I forced my lips into something like a reluctant smile. "Fine."

He studied me for a moment longer, then reached into the wardrobe and pulled out a crisp black button-down shirt. The fabric looked expensive, smelling faintly of his cold, sharp scent. He didn't hand it to me immediately. Instead, he held it in one hand as he spoke. "Selene may not have anything suitable to wear."

My chest tightened as his words sank in. He folded the shirt carefully and turned toward the door. "I'll give this to her." And then — without another word — he walked out.

I stood frozen, staring at the empty space where he had been. My wolf shifted uneasily inside me, her hackles raised.

This wasn't just about her blood anymore. No... this was something else. Was Frederick really only tempted by her scent — by her blood? Or was it becoming something deeper? The plan was working, yes. But from where I stood, it also looked like something was slipping out of my control.

Chapter 399: Alone

Olivia's POV

It had been more than fifteen minutes.

I glanced at the clock again, my foot tapping restlessly against the floor. Still nothing. No sound of footsteps in the hallway. No sign of Frederick.

My stomach twisted. This was the first time they were truly alone together, and the thought made my wolf pace inside me, snarling.

What were they talking about? What could possibly take this long?

I didn't trust her.

The triplets might believe Selene, might think she was loyal to the plan, but me? I couldn't shake it. There was something about her I didn't trust.

What if she betrayed us?

What if this was her chance—to turn everything upside down while I sat here waiting like a fool?

My frown deepened. I desperately wanted to know. To hear. To see. Anything to prove she wasn't using this moment to tell Frederick the truth.

My wolf growled low, a warning. We should go. We should check. We should not trust her.

I closed my eyes, reaching through the bond to my mates. "He's been gone too long," I whispered. "I don't like this."

Lennox responded. "We just spoke to her... she said he is watching her eat... but you can go check it yourself," Lennox suggested.

"Sure."

I got up on my feet and left the room. I located the room Selene was in through her scent, and when I got to the door, I didn't knock; I just pushed it open and stepped inside. My eyes immediately swept the room.

Frederick sat on the sofa, one leg crossed over the other, a glass of wine balanced loosely in his hand. His eyes flicked up to me lazily, like he'd expected me to barge in.

On the bed sat Selene, a tray of food perched on her lap. She picked at it slowly, every bite deliberate, her posture stiff like a cornered rabbit.

My wolf snarled.

"What is going on here?" I demanded, my gaze snapping between them.

Frederick didn't flinch. "She's hungry," he said simply, swirling his glass.

My brows arched, my tone sharp. "So you have to watch her eat?"

His jaw ticked, but his voice stayed calm. "She isn't calm yet. I was just... trying to make her feel safe."

I scoffed, folding my arms tight across my chest. "Safe? While I sit in your room waiting with nothing to wear because you never brought me what you promised?"

Selene's wide eyes flicked to me, her lips parting. "I'm... I'm sorry," she whispered, bowing her head slightly. "I didn't mean to cause any trouble—"

"Then leave," I snapped, cutting her off. Faking anger. "If you think you're causing trouble, then go. Don't sit here pretending."

Selene blinked, her lashes fluttering, but she didn't argue. She rose slowly, as if she wanted to leave.

"Stop. Sit back down, Selene... you are not going anywhere." Frederick declared firmly, his angry glare at me.

I scoffed in fake anger, turned sharply, and left as I stalked back to Frederick's room.

Minutes later, the door slammed behind me, making me jump. Frederick strode in, his expression dark, his voice edged with something close to fury.

"This jealousy of yours," he said, his voice rising, sharp with anger. "It needs to stop." His eyes blazed, pinning me in place. "It's becoming irritating, Olivia."

I fought to keep my smirk hidden, letting only a fake anger curl at the corner of my lips.

Perfect.

He was getting pissed.

Exactly what I wanted.

"Really?" I scoffed bitterly. "I'm irritating now?"

I stepped closer, my frown deepening. "I had a perfect life with my mates, Frederick. Do you hear me? Perfect. Until you came crashing in—claiming me, threatening me with death if I didn't obey. And now, when I'm actually trying to live under the same roof as you, trying to at least endure you—you're running after another woman?"

His nostrils flared, his jaw clenching. His frown deepened. "I'm not running after another woman," he spat.

"Then what is it?" I spat, my voice rising. "Because from where I stand, it looks like you can't take your eyes off her. If you like her so much, then set me free. Go be with her. Or is that it, Frederick? You can't. Because it's not about me, or her, is it? It's about Hailee. You're still so obsessed with her that you see me as a good replacement for her."

His frown deepened, and I expected him to snap back at me, but he didn't. What he simply did was exhale, long and sharp. Then, without a word, he moved to the wardrobe, pulling open its carved doors.

A crisp white shirt hung from his fingers when he turned back. He didn't throw it at me or shove it into my chest—he simply held it out, as though offering me a peace token.

"Go bathe," he said evenly. "Change into this. Then come to bed."

I glared at the shirt, my arms still folded tight. "I don't need your clothes." My voice was sharp. "I'll manage."

He didn't argue. Just set the shirt on the edge of the bed, his expression unreadable. Then he stripped off his jacket, tugged at his cuffs, and lay back against the pillows. His eyes closed almost immediately, his body settling as if sleep claimed him without effort.

I scoffed quietly to myself and crossed the room, sinking into the sofa. I made no move toward the bathroom. No move toward his shirt. No move toward his bed. I sat there, arms wrapped around myself, stewing in the silence.

Minutes passed. Then, to my surprise, his voice drifted through the dark. Low. Calm.

"You're not going to bathe?"

I stiffened, keeping my gaze fixed on the floor. I didn't answer.

Silence stretched, heavy and suffocating.

And then—something I never expected.

"I shouldn't have raised my voice," Frederick said softly, his words carrying a weight that startled me more than his anger ever could. "I was... harsh. You didn't deserve that."

My eyes snapped to him, searching his face for mockery. But his expression was calm, his eyes steady, and his tone void of the usual smirk.

"I'm sorry." He apologized.

Chapter 400: Dreaming

Olivia's POV

For a moment, I went dumbfounded. Frederick... apologizing? That was something I never saw coming. What the hell! This man kept surprising me, and I wondered what he would do next. I raised a brow slowly. "Are you apologizing?"

"Yes." He answered with a curt nod, his tone calm, almost too calm.

My frown deepened as I studied him carefully. This wasn't what I expected. Who was this soft-spoken Frederick sitting in bed, staring at me like I mattered? Where was the cruel, carved man I knew? Where was the monster who claimed me, threatened to kill me?

"Now," his voice lowered, gentler than before, "could you please change and come to bed?... It's late." He wasn't ordering this time. He was pleading.

The sound of it made my chest tighten with unease. My wolf snarled inside me, unsettled. Pleading wasn't his style. It felt wrong. Off.

I tilted my head, arms still folded. "And what if I don't?" I asked, trying to annoy him.

His eyes held mine, calm, unblinking. "Then I'll still be here, waiting. Because no matter how much you fight me, Olivia, I want you close. Not across the room. Not on a sofa. Beside me."

The words rattled through me and I swallowed hard, forcing my mask of irritation back into place. He was playing a game; he had to be.

But goodness — he was playing it well.

Huffing, I stood to my feet, grabbed the shirt he'd laid out for me, and stalked into the bathroom. The water was quick and cold, doing little to settle the emotions raging inside me. My wolf paced restlessly, snarling at the thought of wearing anything of his, but for the sake of the plan—I forced her quiet.

When I stepped out, the shirt clung loosely to my damp skin, its fabric carrying his faint scent. It made my stomach twist.

Frederick was still on the bed when I came out, reclining against the pillows, a wine glass resting on the nightstand. His gaze lifted instantly, sweeping over me with an intensity that made my skin prickle.

"Better," he murmured, his voice smooth, unreadable. "My shirt suits you much better than I—"

I rolled my eyes and moved over to the sofa, dropping onto it with a thud. "Don't get used to it," I snapped, tugging the shirt tighter around me.

A shadow of amusement crossed his face, though his tone stayed calm. "Olivia, stop fighting me. I'm not asking you to fuck me tonight. I only asked you to share the bed. Nothing more."

My lips curved in a bitter smirk. "You expect me to believe that? Who knows—you might force yourself on me."

His eyes locked with mine, calm but serious. "I expect you to trust that I meant what I said. I don't force. Not food. Not blood. Not women."

The gentleness in his tone unnerved me more than his threats ever had. I looked away, feigning annoyance, but my chest tightened in confusion.

Minutes ticked by. He leaned back, stretching out, his eyes fluttering shut. For a heartbeat, it almost looked like peace had settled over him.

Then, without opening his eyes, he spoke gently. "Come to bed... it's late."

With a heavy sigh, I finally pushed myself up from the sofa. Frederick hadn't moved, though I could feel his gaze following every step I made.

I switched off the bright chandelier light, leaving only the dim wall sconce glowing in the corner. Without another word, I slipped under the covers, careful to keep as much distance between us as the bed would allow.

Frederick didn't push, didn't get closer. He only exhaled deeply, as though my presence beside him had been enough.

Minutes stretched into silence. My eyelids grew heavy, and sleep finally took me.

But I overheard... a sound. A whisper.

I stirred, my wolf snapping awake in my chest. My eyes fluttered open, the dim light still glowing faintly, and I turned my head.

Frederick. He wasn't awake. His eyes were closed, his brow furrowed, and his lips parted in soft, broken words.

"...Hailee..." he breathed, so faint I almost thought I imagined it. His voice cracked, low and raw, like a man haunted. "...don't... don't leave me again..."

I lay frozen. Even in his sleep, he thought of her.

I watched him. He kept muttering words, some in French, which I couldn't understand... It was as if he was seeing her in his dream and conversing with her. I noticed his brow furrow as he kept speaking in a strange French language, and I wished I could understand what he was saying.

He mumbled more, strings of French slipping past his lips—words I couldn't understand, but the tone was enough for me to know what was happening. Frederick was pleading. Longing. Like he was begging her, holding on to a ghost only he could see.

It felt wrong, sitting there in his bed, listening to him pour his soul out to another woman in his dreams. I swallowed hard, not knowing what to do. Should I wake him up or pretend to sleep while ignoring his mumbling?

Then, suddenly, his body jerked. His eyes snapped open, filled with something raw and unsettled.

He turned his head sharply, his gaze colliding with mine.

For a moment, a tense silence stretched between us. His chest heaved, his lips parted, but no words came. Whatever he'd seen, whatever he'd felt—it was still clawing at him.

And then, without explanation, he pushed the covers aside and swung his legs to the floor.

I sat frozen as he stood, his movements sharp, restless. He didn't spare me another glance; he only put on a robe, walked over to the door, pushed it open, and just walked out, shutting the door behind him. I didn't know what came over me, but I didn't even think before I got up and left the room.

His scent lingered around. I followed it, my feet carrying me down the corridor until I found him.

Frederick stood on the balcony, robe hanging loose on his tall frame. The night wind swept through, tugging at his hair, carrying the heavy silence between us. His hands gripped the railing so tight I could see the tension in his knuckles.

I hesitated in the doorway, my wolf urging me to turn back. But something in me—something I couldn't quite name—pushed me forward.

"Are you... okay?" I asked softly, the words strange on my tongue. I didn't know why I was asking. Why was I feeling sorry for him of all people?

For a long moment, he didn't answer. His shoulders rose and fell slowly, the weight of centuries pressing against him. Then his voice came low, rough, almost broken.

"For years," he said, eyes fixed on the stars, "since the day she died... I never saw her. Not once. No matter how much I drank, no matter how much I bled, no matter how much I begged the gods, Hailee never came to me."

He turned slightly. His jaw was tight, his eyes shadowed with pain.

"But tonight..." His throat bobbed, his voice filled with pain. "Tonight she came. And she was angry, Olivia. So angry. She looked at me like I was the monster she always feared I was. She didn't speak with love. She didn't smile. She... hated me."

His voice cracked at the last word, so faint I almost missed it.

And for the first time, staring at this cruel, relentless man, I saw something else entirely.

Not a monster.

But a man haunted. A brokenhearted man.