

Fated To Not Just One, But Three #Chapter 411: Leaving - Read Fated To Not Just One, But Three Chapter 411: Leaving

Chapter 411: Leaving

Frederick's POV

I didn't think twice. In the blink of an eye—moving with the speed only a vampire possessed—I was standing in front of her. The small bag barely had time to shift before I ripped it from her grasp and flung it into the corner of the room.

Selene startled, half-turned, and for a second she looked so small and scared I hated myself a little for the way my hunger twined with the urge to protect her.

"You're not leaving," I said in an authoritative voice.

She swallowed. Her voice trembled when she answered. "I... I can't stay here. I don't want to cause trouble."

"You caused trouble the moment you walked in," I shot back, but the anger in me was fractured now, threaded with something else I couldn't name. "You will not walk out that door unprotected. Not when you—"

I stopped. The words I'd been about to say sounded ridiculous in my head. "Not tonight."

She looked at me, worry in her eyes. "Please. I—"

"No," I said sharply, then softer, "No more leaving. You stay."

I watched her chin lift, watching the stubborn flare in her eyes as if it were a dare.

"I'm not a child, Lord Frederick," Selene said, her voice hard even as it trembled. "I can take care of myself. I've done it my whole life before you met me."

Her words hit with a strange mix of pride and brittle fear. She squared her shoulders like she meant it.

"I'm leaving. I'll go back to my hotel and finish my program."

Heat flared under my skin. "You'll go back alone?" I snapped. "Do you have any idea what you're asking? You'd be walking straight into danger. There are hundreds of vampires here... this place is not your hometown; it is a city of vampires."

She laughed, but it was bitter. "Danger is everywhere. I'm not here to be coddled, Lord Frederick. I didn't come here to be someone's pet."

The tone in her voice pushed a part of me I hate to be unleashed.

"This isn't about petting you, Selene. It's about keeping you alive."

She stepped toward me, defiant. "Keep me alive by keeping me prisoner? No. I can do my work without—"

"You think I am asking you to stay here for my own benefit?" I cut in, my voice filled with annoyance. "You think I brought you into my house because I enjoy your company?"

Her eyes flashed. "Then why did you bring me here?" she spat — her eyes filled with pain that for a strange reason, made my heart ache.

"Why are you showing me such love and care... why did you kiss me and act like it was the worst mistake of your life? Why!" she spat at me.

Where I stood inches from her, I didn't know what to say... All I could feel was the panting of my heart like it was about to explode.

Selene quickly wiped away a strand of tears with the back of her hand and looked me straight in the eyes — those haunting eyes that reminded me of Hailee in her youth.

"You have a fiancée, Lord Frederick, and I am causing trouble for you two... I need to—"

Before she finished, something in me snapped: a mix of fury, desire, and a hunger I couldn't fully name. I closed the distance between us in one stride. She opened her mouth — surprised, angry — but I crushed my lips to hers.

It wasn't soft. It wasn't tender. It was sharp and angry and full of everything I had been trying not to admit. I kissed her as if to silence the defiance, as if to force something raw and honest out of both of us.

Her lips were soft but stubborn under mine, and for a moment she stiffened, her hands pressing against my chest. I felt the push — her small frame trembling against my strength — and for a heartbeat I thought she'd pull away.

But then her eyes lifted to mine, shimmering with tears and desire.

"Frederick..." she breathed, her voice breaking, "we can't. You have a fiancée."

I should have stepped back. I should have ended it.

Instead, I growled low in my chest, cupping the back of her neck, deepening the kiss until she gasped.

I lifted her effortlessly, her legs instinctively winding around my waist, her mouth still clinging to mine. She kissed me back, her breath hot, the sound of her gasp filling me as though it were my own air.

In a flash, I carried her up the stairs, moving with vampire speed. She held on tight, her eyes wide, but her lips still pressed to mine.

When I reached my room, I laid her on the bed, but I didn't let go. I kept kissing her, harder, deeper. Her hands pushed at my chest for a moment, but then she pulled me closer, like she didn't know if she wanted me to stop or keep going.

"Frederick..." she whispered. My name on her lips shook me.

I kissed her harder. "Say it again," I growled.

"Frederick," she breathed, and it broke something inside me.

I slid my hands up her thighs, pulling her closer. Her body was warm against mine, and the smell of her arousal made my head spin. I kissed her neck, slowly and hungrily, fighting the sharp need in my chest.

Her fingers curled in my hair. She gasped when I lifted her dress higher, my hand gripping her hips as I squeezed them.

Driven by hunger, I unexpectedly tore her dress. Selene gasped, her cheeks flushed, her body trembling beneath my touch.

What remained was lace that clung to her curves, thin and tempting, and for a moment all I could do was stare, my breath ragged in my chest.

Her hands went to cover herself, but I caught them, pinning them gently above her head as I hovered over her.

"Don't hide from me," I growled, my voice rough with hunger. "You are fucking sexy."

Her eyes widened, glassy with fearful desire. She didn't fight me. Instead, her chest rose and fell in quick, shallow breaths, and when my lips claimed hers again, she melted against me.

I unclasped the bra, freeing her breasts from its hold, and lowered my mouth to the soft skin of her chest.

Her sharp inhale, the way she arched into me, the trembling sound of my name on her lips — it was almost my undoing.

"Frederick..." she whispered, half a plea, half a cry.

My fangs ached with the urge to bite, to mark, to claim, but I forced myself to kiss, to taste, to worship instead.

Her hands tangled in my hair, holding me to her, and in that moment there was only one thought in my head:

The overwhelming need to sink into her.

Chapter 412: Keeping it for her Mate

Frederick's POV

I pushed myself back, breathing hard, my eyes locked on hers as I reached for the buttons of my shirt. Slowly, deliberately, I tugged it open, one button at a time. Her gaze followed the movement, her lips parting, her chest rising with each shallow breath. I peeled the shirt from my body and tossed it aside, relishing the way her eyes traced every line of me as though she couldn't look away.

"Your turn to watch," I murmured darkly, unbuckling my belt. The sharp clink of metal echoed in the room. Her breath hitched. My hunger deepened at the sight of her thighs pressing together, the nervous way her fingers gripped the sheets.

I stripped the rest of the way, slow enough to make her squirm beneath my gaze. By the time I slid between her legs again, I was shaking with restraint. I hovered at her entrance, pressing the head of my cock forward just enough to make her tense—then froze.

Her pussy clenched, resisting me. Too tight. Too closed. My eyes snapped up to hers.

"You're..." My voice broke, raw with shock. "Selene, you're a virgin."

Her lashes lowered, her lips trembling. "I was... saving myself. For my mate."

Her words hit me harder than any blade could. Her mate. And I wasn't him. I never would be.

I should have pulled away. I should have stopped. Instead, I snarled, pressing my lips to hers with a bruising hunger, pouring every ounce of anger and want into the kiss. I wasn't her mate. Fate had not chosen me for her, and yet here she was, laid bare, trembling, offering me everything she had kept untouched.

I started to pull back, but her hands shot up, clutching me. "I don't care," she whispered fiercely, her voice cracking with desperation. "I want you, Frederick. I want this."

Her eyes burned into mine, stripping me of every excuse, every reason to stop. My chest rose and fell heavily as I stared at her, fighting with the savage hunger and the strange, aching tenderness twisting inside me.

I lowered my head until my lips brushed her ear. "Then I'll make you mine... my way."

Before she could speak, I slid down her body, kissing a trail over her trembling stomach until I reached the sweetness between her thighs. Her gasp filled the room, sharp and beautiful, as I spread her open and lowered my mouth to her heat.

Her cry when my tongue touched her was everything. Pure. Shattering. Addictive.

If she was giving me her first time, then I would claim it slowly—by worshipping her until she broke apart beneath me. The moment my mouth brushed her pussy, Selene gasped, her back arching off the bed.

"Frederick!" Her cry was sharp and alluring.

I growled low in my chest, the sound vibrating against her. "You taste... intoxicating," I rasped before lowering my mouth again.

I licked her slowly at first, savoring the sweetness of her untouched body, dragging my tongue along her folds until she was squirming beneath me, her fingers gripping the sheets so hard. Her thighs tried to close, but I pressed them open firmly, refusing to let her hide from me.

"You're mine now," I growled against her, my tongue circling the tight bundle of nerves that made her jolt and whimper.

Her cries filled the room, soft at first, then louder, each one breaking me further, feeding the monster inside me. She had never been touched like this—I could feel it in every shudder, every gasp, every desperate clutch of her fingers in my hair when she finally gave in and held me there.

I sucked gently on her clit, then harder, flicking my tongue until her body bucked against me. She sobbed my name, her thighs trembling around my head.

"Frederick... oh god, I—"

"Don't hold back," I commanded darkly, sliding a finger inside her slick entrance, slow but steady. She tensed, then cried out, her body so tight around me it nearly shattered my control. I worked her slowly, curling my finger while my tongue worked mercilessly above, coaxing her body open, coaxing every broken moan from her lips.

Her taste flooded my senses, sweet and addictive, and I knew then I could never let her go. Not after this.

She writhed beneath me, her head tossing side to side, her hands tugging at my hair as though she couldn't decide whether to pull me away or push me deeper into her. Her body trembled violently, on the edge of something she had never known before.

"Let go, Selene," I whispered against her, my voice rough, hungry. "Give it to me. All of it."

The moment I sucked harder, her body shattered. She screamed my name, her thighs clamping around my head, her whole body trembling violently as she came undone against my mouth. I drank in her release greedily, savoring every drop, every cry, every shiver that told me she was mine in a way no one else could ever claim.

Her scent filled me, thick and sweet, her arousal dripping down my tongue like the richest wine I'd ever tasted. She was intoxicating. Addictive. And I wanted her begging.

I slid two fingers into her tight entrance, and she gasped, her nails biting into my shoulders, her body clenching around me like she didn't want to let me go.

"Gods, you're so tight," I groaned, pumping into her gently, curling my fingers until she moaned loud enough to echo against the walls. "You think I could take you like this and not lose my mind?"

Her answer was a choked sob, her eyes rolling back as another wave crashed through her. I didn't stop—I sucked harder, stroked deeper, until her body was a trembling mess beneath me.

Her cries turned to pleas. "Please, Frederick... please... I can't..."

I pulled back just enough to look at her, my lips wet with her taste, my fingers still moving inside her. "Can't what?" I demanded darkly, my voice a growl.

She shook her head, gasping, her hair wild around her flushed face. "I can't take it anymore... I need you..."

"Need me how?" I pressed, curling my fingers deeper, making her body shudder violently. "Say it."

Her eyes flew open, glassy with desperation. "I need you inside me," she cried, her voice breaking. "I want you, Frederick—all of you!"

Her words tore the last shred of restraint from me. My cock throbbed painfully, the hunger in me snarling to be unleashed.

I withdrew my fingers slowly, making her whimper at the loss, and brought them to my mouth, sucking them clean as I held her gaze. She watched, trembling, her lips parting, her breath shallow.

"You don't know what you're asking for," I rasped, my voice hoarse with need. "Once I take you, Selene... you'll never forget me."

"I don't care," she whispered, her eyes locked on mine, fierce and desperate. "I want it to be you."

That was all it took. With a guttural growl, I rose over her, my body pressing hers into the mattress, my mouth crushing her lips as I finally positioned myself at her entrance, ready to claim what she had begged me for.

Chapter 413: Sex

Frederick's POV

I shifted above her, forcing her thighs wider, positioning myself. My hand gripped her hip, hard enough to leave marks, steadying her trembling body.

And then I pressed into her.

The instant resistance made me freeze, my breath catching. With a growl tearing from my throat, I pushed deeper, breaking through the last of her innocence. Her sharp cry filled the room; her nails dug into my shoulders, and I swallowed the sound with my mouth, kissing her hard, devouring her pain and need in one breath.

She clung to me, trembling, whimpering, but her legs locked tight around me, pulling me in, begging without words for more.

And I gave it to her. I thrust slowly at first, savoring the way she stretched around me, the way her body molded to mine, then harder, deeper, as her cries turned into moans and her resistance melted into desperate desire.

Her body opened for me with every thrust, her cries softening into moans, her moans turning into desperate pleas that only fed the fire inside me. I couldn't get enough.

Every sound she made burned into me. Every time her nails raked down my back, every time her legs tightened, I snarled with satisfaction.

"You feel that?" I growled, driving deeper, my breath hot against her neck. "That's me. Not your mate. Me."

She whimpered, but it wasn't protest. It was desire. "Yes... you," she whispered, her voice breaking, trembling with every movement I made inside her.

The admission snapped something in me. I shifted, pinning her wrists above her head with one hand, forcing her still as I thrust harder, deeper. Her body shuddered beneath me, back arching, mouth falling open in a cry she couldn't hold back.

I felt her tighten around me, the sudden, sharp clench that told me she was about to come.

But it wasn't enough. Not for me.

I released her wrists only to grab her hips, flipping her under me, forcing her onto her knees before she could catch her breath. She let out a startled gasp, looking over her shoulder at me, eyes wide, lips swollen, hair wild.

"Frederick—"

Her voice cut off into a moan as I thrust back into her from behind, harder this time, rougher, claiming her in a way no mate ever would. She collapsed forward onto her elbows, her cheek pressing into the sheets, her cries muffled into the pillows.

I leaned over her, one hand gripping her hair, pulling her head back so she had no choice but to meet my gaze when I growled into her ear, "You're mine now. Say it."

Her voice shook, breathless, but she obeyed. "I'm yours."

The words detonated inside me, and I pounded into her, unrelenting, until she screamed it again and again, until her voice was hoarse and her body gave out beneath me, trembling, spent.

And still, I wasn't finished.

I slowed, pulling out of her, my chest heaving. She was shaking under me, her body weak, but I wasn't done. Not even close.

I grabbed her waist and rolled us, dragging her on top of me. She gasped, her hands pressed against my chest, her hair falling wild around her face.

"Ride me," I growled, my voice rough.

Her eyes widened. "Frederick, I—"

"You can," I cut her off, gripping her hips, guiding her forward until I pressed against her again. "Take me inside you. Now."

She trembled, her body tight and sore from what I had already given her. I could feel her pussy pulsing against the tip of my cock, wet and needy, but her muscles clenched as if trying to resist.

"Too tight," I muttered under my breath, groaning as I pushed her down slowly. The resistance was sharp, almost unbearable, but the sight of her stretched around me, fighting to take me, drove me insane.

She whimpered, biting her lip, her nails digging into my chest as she sank onto me inch by inch. Her face twisted with pain and desire, her thighs shaking as her body struggled to open for me.

"Fuck, Selene..." I snarled, my head falling back, the tightness threatening to break me. "You're still so tight... like your body is trying to keep me out."

Her answer was a broken moan, her hips jerking as if her own need betrayed her. She tried to move, but I held her still, forcing her to feel every stretch, every inch of me inside her.

"Slow," I commanded. "Feel it. All of it. I want you to remember this."

Her legs trembled harder as she shifted, lowering herself more, until she was finally seated fully on me. Her cry split the air, half pain, half pleasure, and I gripped her hips like a vice, dragging her against me.

"That's it," I groaned, my eyes locked on her face, on the way she looked wrecked and desperate at the same time. "Now move. Show me how much you want me."

Her hands slid up my chest to my shoulders, her body shaking as she began to move, slow at first, lifting and dropping with small, broken whimpers. Each time she came down, I filled her to the very edge, her tight walls clenching so hard I could barely hold back.

I bared my teeth, my grip bruising her hips as I forced her faster, harder, until her cries grew louder, her body bouncing on mine, her tight heat gripping me like a fist.

"You're mine," I growled again, thrusting up into her, meeting her movements. "Say it."

She sobbed, her voice cracking as she clung to me. "I'm yours... only yours."

I didn't slow down. I pushed up. I drove into her with one hard motion. The room answered with a wet slap. The bed thumped under us. Her breath ripped out in broken sounds.

Then I felt it coming. Her breath hitched, her thighs clamped hard against me, and her walls seized around my length. She was close. So close.

"Come for me," I growled, my voice rough in her ear.

And she did. She shattered in my arms, screaming, her body tightening and pulsing around me. I held her through it, pushing her higher, until I couldn't hold back anymore. Release ripped through me, hard and fierce, as I spilled deep inside her, lost in the sound of her cries.

When it was over, I didn't move right away. My chest heaved, sweat dripping down my skin, and I kept myself buried in her, not ready to let go. She was trembling, clinging to me, her face buried in my neck as her breathing slowly calmed.

Finally, I pulled out of her, kissing her shoulder, her jaw, her temple. My hand rested on her back, steadying her as she sagged against me, exhausted and wrecked.

Chapter 414: A Mistake

Frederick's POV

She lay fast asleep, her breath soft and even, her body curled against me as if I were the only safe place she had in the world.

I lay there, staring at her, the weight of what I had done pressing heavily on my chest.

To be frank, I had gone too far—more than I should have. It was her first time, and though I told myself I would control it... I hadn't. The moment I tasted her, felt her body shudder beneath me, all reason snapped. My control shattered.

I should feel guilt. Maybe even shame. Instead, I felt something worse—need. She was addictive: the way she clenched around me, the way her nails dug into my skin, the way she whispered my name as if I were the only man alive. It drove me mad.

If she hadn't been so weak and trembling, I would have taken her again and again. Gods, I still wanted to.

My hand slid lazily down her back, tracing the curve of her spine, careful not to wake her. She shifted slightly in her sleep, a soft whimper escaping her lips.

I frowned. Why her? Why Selene?

I told myself it was her blood, her purity, the rare hybrid power she carried. That binding myself to her body—even for one night—would strengthen me. But that was a lie, and deep down I knew it. This hunger wasn't about power. It was about her.

Olivia was supposed to be the one. Olivia was the one I fought for, the one I chained myself to. Yet here I was, holding Selene after taking what was never supposed to be mine. And the worst part? A part of me didn't regret it.

I dragged a hand down my face, biting back a curse.

Selene shifted again, her leg sliding over mine, her warmth seeping into me. I should move. I should leave the bed and put distance between us before morning came. But I didn't. I stayed—watching her, guarding her, burning with a hunger that wouldn't die.

As I stared at her sleeping form, my chest grew unbearably heavy. What had I done?

I had never wanted anyone the way I once wanted Hailee. She was the only woman who broke me and made me feel alive at the same time. After her, I thought I would never feel like that again.

But then Olivia came. She is smart, strong, and beautiful. Yes, I felt something for her. But she does not love me. She loves her mates. Still, she is bound to me. She is supposed to be mine.

And then Selene walked into my life. From the first moment I saw her, I felt something I couldn't explain. She pulls me in. She makes me lose control. Tonight, I went too far with her. I hadn't planned it. I couldn't stop myself.

Should I let Olivia go? She doesn't love me anyway. Maybe it would be easier. Maybe I could give myself to Selene and stop fighting what I feel.

But then I remembered the prophecy.

It said the child I would have with the special one—Olivia—would be powerful, more like a god than a human. That child would rule the supernatural worlds.

I clenched my fists. No. I can't let Olivia go. Even if she hates me. Even if she loves someone else. She is the one tied to my future. She is the key.

But then what about Selene? Why do I want her so much? Why do I care for her like this?

I left the bed and walked to the window, staring out at the night sky. My mind was torn in two. One part wanted destiny with Olivia. The other part wanted the feeling Selene gave me.

But I shook my head and reminded myself of one truth: I must not lose control again. Olivia is mine. The prophecy must come true.

Still, my heart beat too fast. And I knew Selene would not leave my thoughts anytime soon.

Suddenly Selene stirred beside me, her lashes fluttering before her eyes opened.

I smiled without thinking, waiting for her to smile back. But instead, her face went pale. Her eyes darted around the room, then to me, and she whispered, almost to herself—

"Shit."

The word cut deep.

I froze. My chest tightened as I watched the look in her eyes change. It wasn't warmth. It wasn't satisfaction. It was regret.

"Selene..." I started, but she was already sitting up, pulling the sheets around her as if to hide from me.

When I reached to touch her arm, she jerked away.

"Please," she whispered sharply, her voice shaking. "Stay away."

The sting of it burned more than any blade. I sat up, fighting the urge to drag her back into my arms.

"Are you... regretting it?" I asked, my voice rough, betraying more than I wanted.

She didn't answer. Her silence was louder than any words.

I clenched my fists, feeling restless.

"Say it," I demanded, my voice low. "Do you regret it?"

Her shoulders tensed as she pulled on her dress, her back turned to me. Finally, she spoke, her tone colder than ice.

"Let's just act like this never happened."

The words cut through me like a blade.

"Never happened?" I echoed, my voice filled with disbelief and anger. "You think you can erase this?"

She finally turned, her face pale but her eyes blazing.

"Yes. Because it was a mistake. A mistake I can't afford to repeat."

Her words crashed over me, leaving me breathless, furious, and torn apart all at once.

But before I could say more, she turned to me, her eyes full of guilt and pain at the same time.

"You are about to get married, and I have a man in my life," she said, her voice trembling but firm. "This... this isn't fair."

I froze. A man? The word slammed into me like a blade.

She stood quickly, pulling her dress over her body with shaky hands. Her back was straight, but I could see the way her fingers fumbled with the fabric. She wouldn't even look at me.

"Selene..." I said, my voice low, pleading, but she shook her head hard.

"No, Frederick. We can't. We shouldn't." Her voice cracked, but she didn't stop. "Let's just end this here."

She slipped her shoes on, her hair wild around her face, and without another glance, she walked to the door.

The sound of it closing behind her echoed in the room, leaving me sitting there, my chest heavy, my heart burning with rage, hunger, and pain all at once.

Chapter 415: Pained

Olivia's POV

I teleported back into my room, my whole body heavy with anger and pain. It was one thing for others to misunderstand me, but for my own mates to think the same? That hurt deeper than anything.

I scoffed bitterly and slumped onto my bed, my silver purse slipping from my fingers to the floor. "Dicks," I spat, the word tasting sour on my tongue. My frown deepened as my chest rose and fell in sharp breaths.

I curled my knees up, hugging them close, but my wolf wouldn't stay calm. She paced inside me, restless, growling at everything—at Selene's smug face, at Frederick's rage, at the triplets' accusations.

"They should know me better," I whispered into the empty room. "They're supposed to know me."

My throat tightened, and I pressed my forehead against my knees, fighting the heat behind my eyes. I hated how alone I felt, hated how even the bond that was supposed to protect me made me feel judged instead.

A broken laugh slipped from me. "Jealous? Me? Of her?" My fists clenched the bedsheets. "They're blind. All of them."

I sat there, fists still clenched in the sheets, when the door creaked open.

"Olivia?" My mother's voice slipped inside.

My wolf stiffened instantly, ears flat, and I didn't even lift my head. "What do you want?" I muttered, my tone sharp and filled with irritation.

She stepped in a little farther, her eyes searching my face. "What's wrong with you? I could feel your emotions from downstairs."

That was it. That was enough to snap the little control I had left.

My head jerked up, and I glared at her. "Don't pretend to care. You never do."

Her lips parted, like she wanted to argue, but I didn't give her the chance. My body burned with frustration, with hurt, and before she could say another word, I teleported.

The world around me shifted, and when I blinked, I was no longer in that suffocating room.

I was in Alpha Damien's living room.

And there—across the rug—sat Sofia. Her laughter filled the air as she leaned down, lifting her son into her arms. The little boy giggled, tugging at her hair, while she smiled at him like nothing else in the world mattered.

For a moment, I froze. Watching her, so carefree, so happy, I felt the ache in my chest grow sharper. She looked happy—happy in a way I hadn't been in so long.

And all at once, I didn't know whether I wanted to scream... or cry.

Suddenly she noticed my presence and her eyes widened. "Olivia... you are here." I nodded, forcing a fake smile, but the look on Sofia's face told me she didn't believe my act.

"What is wrong?" she asked as she passed her son gently into the arms of the nanny standing nearby, then turned fully to me.

I exhaled, a shaky laugh slipping past my lips. "I need a glass of whiskey first."

Her brows rose, but she didn't argue. Instead, she gave a small nod. "Come," she said softly.

She led me upstairs, into her room. She went to a shelf, poured amber liquid into a glass, and handed it to me without a word.

I downed the first sip fast, letting the burn spread down my throat. My wolf paced inside me, restless, but the whiskey dulled her growl just a little.

Sofia sat across from me, folding her hands on her lap, her worried eyes fixed on me. "Now," she said, "tell me."

And I did.

I told her of our plan. Frederick's obsession with Selene, the slap, his rage, the way he held Selene like she was the one he wanted to protect. Then the triplets—how they looked at me like I was the problem, like I was jealous instead of warning them.

My voice cracked more than once, and I hated it, but I couldn't stop. "They don't trust me," I whispered, gripping the glass tighter. "They think I'm just jealous. But I'm not, Sofia. I'm not."

The glass shook in my hand, but I forced myself to take another sip.

Sofia's eyes softened as she leaned forward and placed a hand on my shoulder. "I know what it feels like," she said quietly.

My brow furrowed. "You don't."

Her lips curved into a sad smile. "I do. To be called jealous when you're just... scared. To have people twist your pain into something ugly you never meant. To carry the weight of everyone's judgment while no one actually listens to what you're saying."

Her words sank into me like stones, heavy and hard. My throat tightened. There was so much I still didn't know about her.

"But, Olivia, if Selene is truly dangerous, you need to outsmart her. Don't give her the satisfaction of seeing you break down, or lash out, or lose control."

I scoffed, though the sound was weaker than I wanted. "I don't even know what to do."

Sofia leaned forward, her gaze comforting. "No. You fight smarter. You keep your guard up. You watch her, learn her, and you strike when it matters. If you keep letting her push your buttons, she'll win before the real fight even begins."

I drew in a shaky breath and looked away. "Can I... stay here for a while? Back home my mother is suffocating me. I can't deal with her right now."

Sofia squeezed my hand gently, her answer simple. "Yes. Stay. Damien won't mind. You're safe here."

Relief washed over me. I managed a grateful smile and reached for another sip, but Sofia swiftly snatched the glass from my hand. "That's enough."

I frowned but didn't fight her.

"Where do I sleep?" I asked quietly.

"The room after mine. Come let me show you," she said, rising gracefully to her feet.

I followed her out of the room and that was when I got a mind link from Levi.

"Oli...."

Before he could finish I ended the mind link and blocked him.

Chapter 416: Dream

Levi's POV

The moment Olivia slammed the link shut, I felt it — an unbearable pain. I tried again, pushing gently against the bond, but nothing came back. She had blocked me — blocked us.

My chest tightened, but I forced myself to breathe. Unlike Lennox, who paced the study like a caged wolf, and Louis, whose fists were clenched so hard his knuckles had gone pale, I sat still. Calm on the outside, but inside I was worried.

"Damn it, Levi!" Lennox snapped, his voice sharp. "She cut us off again. You felt it, right? She's not listening."

I nodded once. "I felt it." My voice was even, steady, though the storm inside me threatened to spill over.

Louis slammed his fist against the table. "We shouldn't have let it get this far. She's hurting, and instead of protecting her, we made her think we were against her."

I closed my eyes briefly, fighting the sting of guilt. He was right. Olivia had looked so pained, so furious, so desperate when she spoke about Selene. And what had we done? Questioned her. Suggested she was jealous.

Maybe we hadn't meant it to sound like that, but that's what she heard. That's what she felt.

"I tried to reach her," I murmured, running a hand down my face. "She cut me off before I could even finish her name."

Lennox cursed under his breath and shoved a hand through his hair. "She's overreacting. We just need to give her a day. She'll cool down."

But I shook my head. "No. This isn't about cooling down. She's hurt. Deeply. And if we keep brushing it off, we'll lose her trust completely."

Silence fell over the room. The weight of it pressed heavy on my chest.

Louis finally broke it, his voice quieter this time. "You think she'll come back?"

I hesitated. My heart said yes — because Olivia always found her way back to us. But the doubt in me whispered another truth: this time, she might not.

I met my brothers' eyes, their looks full of worry too. "If we don't prove to her that we trust her and that we are sorry... then no. She won't."

The study was silent for another moment before I opened the mind link.

Instead of calling Olivia, I reached Selene.

She was surprised. I felt her small, sharp breath in my head.

"Why did you slap Olivia?" I shouted into the link. My voice was loud in her mind.

Selene's reaction came slow, like she was thinking of the best lie. "She was acting like a bitch," she answered coolly. "She attacked me first."

Lennox cut in unexpectedly. His voice rolled through the bond like thunder. "Get ready, Selene. The next time we meet, you'll get a slap from me too." The threat was a promise that I knew Lennox was going to fulfill.

Selene groaned. "Why don't you believe me?" she shot back. "I'm doing what you asked. I'm getting close to him."

Louis was impatient. He jabbed at the bond. "It's been three days," he said sharply. "Why hasn't he fed from you yet? Why hasn't the poison been used?"

Selene's answer came quickly, defensively. "He hasn't tried," she murmured. "If I offered him my blood when we weren't close, he'd smell something wrong. He would suspect. That's why I'm getting close first. I need him to trust me. Then I'll make him drink. That's the plan."

I felt a cold knot in my chest. Her tone sounded practiced. Too practiced. Too calm.

My frown deepened. "I'm starting to suspect you," I told her. "Don't think about betraying us. Remember what we can do. Remember who you're up against."

Silence stretched on Selene's end like a held breath. I could feel the wheels turning in her head — assessment, calculation. She knew exactly how we could deal with her.

Finally she answered, but in a calm voice. "You worry too much, Levi. I'm playing my part."

Lennox's voice snapped back into the link. "For your own good, I hope you keep doing just that." I frowned. "Listen, Selene — you have three days to get him to feed from your poison blood. If you don't, I will believe you are betraying us." With that, I ended the mind link before she could speak.

Staring at my hands, I realized Olivia was right. We shouldn't trust Selene. Not completely.

The silence in the study felt heavy, pressing down on me from all sides. I rubbed my eyes, the weight of everything sinking deep into my bones.

"I... I feel tired," I muttered finally, pushing back my chair. "I need to rest."

Lennox gave me a sharp look, but I didn't explain. I didn't have the strength to. Louis only nodded, though the worry in his eyes mirrored mine.

I left the study and walked slowly to my room. My chest ached, my thoughts were messy, but as soon as I lay down, sleep pulled me under.

I was running, barefoot, through a field soaked in the smell of blood. My wolf howled in my head, wild and broken.

And then Lennox.

He was lying on the ground, his chest torn open, blood pooling fast under him. His eyes were closed.

"No!" My scream ripped from my throat as I fell to my knees beside him. I pressed my hands to the wound, trying to stop the bleeding, but it was useless. My hands only got slick with his blood.

"Don't leave me," I begged, my voice shaking. "Please, Lennox. Please."

But he didn't move. Didn't answer. His head rolled to the side, his face pale, his lips parted like he had one last word... but no sound came out.

I shook him, cried over him, and screamed until my voice broke.

I jolted upright, gasping for air. My heart thundered against my ribs, and my cheeks were wet. I touched my face. Tears. Real tears.

"Lennox," I whispered hoarsely. My chest squeezed with fear so strong it nearly broke me.

I shoved out of bed, running barefoot through the halls. I didn't care who saw. I needed to see him. Needed to know he was alive.

At the corner of the corridor, I almost collided with Louis. His eyes went wide at the sight of me, wild and shaking.

"Levi? What—"

"Where's Lennox?" I cut him off, grabbing his arm. "Where is he?"

Louis blinked, taken aback by my panic. "He... he went out."

My stomach dropped. My dream flashed in my head again — Lennox, bleeding, lifeless.

Chapter 417: Dream 2

Olivia's POV

"Are you okay?" Calvin spoke worriedly from the mind link.

"Yes, I am fine," I responded. He sighed over the mind link, and I knew he had something in his mind to say.

"What is it, brother?" I asked, certain something was bothering him.

"Mother is worried about you, Oli... she wants you two to have a talk... please..."

"Not in the mood for that," I cut him off.

"Please..."

"No, brother... I am feeling sleepy already... talk to you later," I said quickly, not giving him a chance to respond before severing the link.

Drawing in a deep breath, I forced my eyes shut, determined to make myself sleep despite how early the night still was. But sleep wouldn't come easily. My thoughts kept spinning... from Selene to Frederick to the triplets. I knew how hard they were trying to reach me, but I had blocked them. I didn't want to hear their apologies. Actually, I had already decided they wouldn't be seeing me for a long time. That would be their punishment. Maybe next time they would think twice before speaking.

Still, I remained restless in bed until at last sleep dragged me under.

"No!" I shouted as I jumped up from the bed. My whole body shook. Sweat ran down my face, and my chest felt tight like I couldn't breathe. Even though the room was cold, I was hot inside, my heart beating too fast.

My wolf cried inside me, running back and forth, restless. She felt my fear, my panic.

I stumbled out of bed and began pacing. My hands shook as I tried to feel through the bond. If something had happened to Lennox, I should feel it. I should know. But the bond was calm. Too calm.

"Why do I still feel like this then?" I whispered, tears burning in my eyes.

I closed them tight, taking deep breaths. "It's just a dream... just a dream," I told myself. But the dream kept playing again and again in my head like a horror movie.

Lennox lying on the ground. Blood everywhere. His eyes closed... me yelling his name and no response from him. I wanted to reach for the bond. To call Lennox, to check if he was fine. But the anger inside me stopped me. They didn't trust me. They thought I was jealous. Why should I reach for them now?

I wiped my face roughly and pulled on a cloak. My feet carried me out of the room before I even thought about it. If I couldn't link them, I would find Alpha Damien.

The halls were quiet, but my wolf caught his scent. Strong. Steady. Alpha. I followed it until it led me to his office.

I lifted my hand and knocked.

"Come in," his deep voice called.

I stepped inside. Damien sat behind his desk, papers spread before him, but his sharp eyes went straight to me. He frowned. "Olivia. What is it?"

I shut the door behind me, my chest rising fast. "I... I had a dream." My voice cracked. "Lennox. He was lying in blood. Dead. I kept calling his name, but he didn't answer."

Damien studied me carefully, then leaned back in his chair. "A dream," he repeated. "But you think it's more than that."

"I don't know," I whispered. My fists curled tight. "And I can't even link them. I don't want to. I'm still angry at them."

His eyes softened, as if he understood more than I said. He nodded once. "Then let me check."

He closed his eyes for a moment as he mind linked them while I waited, my nails digging into my palms, fear and anger tangling inside me.

Finally, he opened his eyes again. "They're fine," he said firmly. "I just spoke to Lennox through the link. He is home and fine." My knees almost gave out with relief, but the heavy knot in my chest refused to leave.

Damien must have seen it in my face. He stood, walked around the desk, and without asking, pulled me into his arms. His warmth and strong scent wrapped around me, steady and comforting.

"It's going to be fine," he murmured, his hand rubbing slowly down my back. "Lennox is safe. Nothing will happen to him."

For a moment, I let myself lean into him, eyes squeezed shut. My wolf eased just a little at his touch, but my heart still thudded fast.

Then the door opened suddenly.

"Damien?" Sofia's voice floated in before she stepped inside. Her eyes landed on us—on Damien's arms still holding me—and for a second, something flickered in her gaze. But just as quickly, she smiled, calm, like nothing was wrong.

I pulled back quickly, wiping my damp face. "I... I had a bad dream," I blurted out, almost as if I needed to explain. "Damien was only comforting me. That's all."

Damien shook his head gently. "You don't have to explain, Olivia."

But when I glanced at Sofia, her smile didn't reach her eyes. She said nothing, but I felt it—the emotion she was hiding deep down.

And somehow, that made me feel even more unsettled.

Sofia finally spoke, her voice gentle. "It's just a dream, Olivia. Don't let it trouble you too much."

I managed a small nod, forcing a smile. "Thank you," I whispered, my voice hoarse.

Not wanting to linger any longer, I slipped past them and left the office.

As I walked back toward my room, my thoughts wouldn't settle. The way Sofia had looked at Damien holding me. Looking calm on the outside, but her eyes had said something else. A flicker of something she tried to hide.

I bit my lip, hugging my arms around myself. Did she misunderstand?

Maybe she thought there was something more between me and Damien. If she did, I couldn't even blame her. She had walked in on me crying in his arms. Anyone would have thought the same.

I sighed deeply as I pushed into my room and closed the door behind me. My wolf curled in tight silence inside me, still uneasy. My heart still carried the image of Lennox

lying in blood, but now something else haunted me—Sofia’s silent misunderstanding of what she saw.

Chapter 418: Angry Sex 1

Sofia’s POV

The moment Olivia slipped out of the office, silence fell. My smile dropped like it had never existed. I turned slowly to Damien, my chest burning with an emotion I didn’t want to name.

"I know my sister," I said, frowning. "Olivia has no intention of... of this. But you—" I stepped closer, glaring straight into his sharp eyes. "You are a whore, Damien. Stay away from her. She is your nephew’s mate."

His lips curled into a scoff, and the mocking glint in his eyes only stoked my anger.

"Is that jealousy I’m seeing?" His voice was low, taunting. "Yes... you’re jealous because Olivia is better than you. And you know it."

My hand itched to slap him, but before I could, he caught my wrist, yanking me closer. Heat surged between us, wild and suffocating.

"You arrogant bastard," I hissed, my nails digging into his chest. "I hate you."

"Then hate me properly," he growled, and before I could retort, his mouth crashed against mine.

The kiss was violent, a battle of anger and fire. I pushed at him; he shoved me back against the desk, papers scattering to the floor. My teeth grazed his lip hard enough to draw blood, and he cursed into my mouth.

"Whore," I spat between kisses.

"Jealous witch," he shot back, his grip tightening on my waist.

His mouth crashed against mine again, rough and hungry, and this time I didn’t fight it. My body betrayed me, leaning into him even as my mind screamed I hated him. His hands gripped my waist hard, dragging me against the sharp edge of his body until I could feel the heat of him pressing into me through our clothes.

"Damien—" I gasped against his lips, but he swallowed my protest with another kiss, deeper, harsher. His tongue forced mine into a battle I didn’t want to lose. My nails dug into his shirt, dragging down until I felt the fabric strain.

"Say you hate me again," he growled, his breath hot on my skin as his lips trailed down to my throat. His teeth scraped my pulse, making me shiver.

"I do," I whispered, but my voice shook.

He laughed darkly, one hand sliding up to cup the side of my breast through the thin fabric of my dress. My breath hitched. The ache between my thighs was humiliating, and yet I couldn't stop it. His touch burned.

"Liar," he muttered, and then his other hand yanked at the zipper on the back of my dress. The sound was loud in the silent office. My chest rose and fell as the fabric loosened, slipping down my shoulders. I should have stopped him. I should have slapped him. Instead, I let him.

The dress slid down, pooling at my feet, leaving me in nothing but thin lace. His eyes burned into me, devouring.

"Fuck," he hissed, his voice low, almost reverent.

Heat flooded my face, but my body trembled with desire. He shoved his jacket off, then tore open the buttons of his shirt, exposing hard muscle and scars. I wanted to touch him and hated myself for it, and still my hands moved, tracing his chest, my nails leaving faint red marks.

"You're insufferable," I breathed, but my fingers were already tugging his belt loose.

"And you're desperate," he shot back, lips crashing onto mine again.

His hand slid down, hooking beneath my thighs, and in one swift motion he lifted me onto the desk. Papers scattered, the wood hard beneath me, but I didn't care. My legs wrapped around him instinctively, pulling him closer.

The heat of his body pressed between my thighs, making me whimper. His mouth dragged over my collarbone, down to the swell of my breast, lips biting, sucking, teasing. I arched into him, my hands tangled in his hair, dragging him closer.

"Damien..." His name left my mouth like a curse and a plea at once.

His mouth closed over my breast, sucking hard enough to make me cry out, nails digging into his shoulders. I hated how good it felt. Every bite, every rough lick sent heat shooting down my body until I was trembling against him.

"You taste so fucking good," he growled, lifting his head, his lips glistening.

"Shut up," I gasped, yanking at his belt until it came loose. The metallic click of the buckle echoed, and I shoved his trousers down, desperate to feel more.

In return, his hand slid down between my thighs, shoving my lace aside with no patience. The first brush of his fingers against me made me jolt, a moan breaking from my lips before I could stop it.

"Already wet," he taunted, pressing harder, circling cruelly. "For someone you claim to hate."

"Bastard," I hissed, arching helplessly as his fingers moved me, stroking until my hips moved against him.

He kissed me again, swallowing my moans, and then with one swift tug, he ripped the lace from me. The sound of tearing fabric made me gasp, my chest heaving as the cool air kissed my bare skin.

I wanted to scream at him. I wanted to push him away. Instead, I dragged him closer, nails clawing down his back.

"You'll regret this," I whispered, even as I spread my thighs wider.

"Not a chance," he muttered darkly.

And then he pushed into me.

The stretch was sharp, almost brutal, and I cried out, my body clenching hard around him. He groaned, low and guttural, burying his face in my neck as he filled me inch by inch.

"Fuck, Sofia..." His voice was raw, strained.

My hands gripped the desk behind me, knuckles white, body strung tight between pain and pleasure.

"I hate you," I gasped, though it came out broken, desperate.

"Then hate me harder," he snarled, snapping his hips forward.

The desk shook beneath us, papers fluttering to the floor. Every thrust sent a shockwave through me, my back arching, breasts bouncing against his chest. His grip on my waist was bruising, his mouth devouring mine like we were at war.

Our rhythm turned wild, angry, and frantic. My moans tangled with his curses, filling the office with the sound of bodies colliding, skin against skin, breathless moans.

And still, underneath the fury, it felt too good. Too real. Each deep thrust stole another piece of my resistance until I was clawing at him, begging without words, surrendering to the desire I swore I didn't want.

"Damien—" I choked out, trembling as the pleasure coiled tight inside me.

His mouth found my ear, his voice a growl that sent shivers through my spine.

"Come for me. Hate me while you fall apart on my cock."

And gods help me—I did.

Chapter 419: Angry Sex 2

Sofia's POV

Damien's pace grew brutal; every thrust rocked me harder against the desk until my body couldn't hold itself still. His growls rumbled against my throat, his sweat slicking against my skin. My nails raked his back, but instead of pushing him away, I dragged him closer, wanting more.

Then, unexpectedly, he broke the kiss, pulled out, and spun me around. My palms slammed flat against the desk, my dress pooling uselessly at my feet. His hands clamped onto my hips, dragging me back until my body arched into his.

"Damien—" My voice cracked, half plea, half curse.

"After all these years," he rasped behind me, his breath hot on my neck, "you still feel like this."

The sound of his voice, low and rough, sent a shudder through me. His body drove into mine again, harder, deeper; the desk shuddered beneath us. I bit my lip until I tasted copper; my moans spilled anyway, raw and unwilling.

Every snap of his hips stripped another layer of defiance. I hated the way my body burned for him. I hated how good it felt.

"Say it," he growled, his grip bruising as he pulled me tighter against him, thrusting harder inside me.

"I—hate—you," I gasped, but it broke into a whimper as heat coiled sharp and unbearable in my stomach.

His laughter was a dark, wicked thing, his pace relentless until I shattered, trembling around him, my cries filling the office. He groaned, low and guttural, before pulling back sharply.

I spun halfway, breathless, just in time to see him drop to his knees behind me, his hands pushing my thigh open again, his eyes burning with a hunger that made my chest cave.

"Damien—" My voice caught.

"Don't think," he muttered, voice wrecked. "Just feel."

His breath burned hot against the inside of my thigh, every exhale searing my skin and making me tremble. His grip was strong as he pushed me wider, holding me open. My pulse hammered in my throat, every nerve alive, torn between the instinct to shove him away and the darker, hungrier urge to drag him closer.

"Damien—" My voice cracked, half a command, half a plea, betraying me.

He lifted his head just enough for his eyes to meet mine, molten with hunger, that dangerous smile curving his lips. "You used to love this," he murmured, voice low, ragged, wrecked. "Remember."

And then his mouth was on me.

The first touch of his tongue made my head snap back, a sharp, helpless cry spilling from my lips before I could stop it. Heat shot through me, fierce and consuming, my hands slamming down on the desk for balance as my knees nearly buckled.

I wanted to fight him, to cling to the anger that had fueled me for so long, but the pleasure was relentless—tearing through every wall I had built, every defense I thought I had left.

"Gods..." The word tore from me, raw and shameful, as my hips rocked against his mouth, betraying me further. His grip on my thighs tightened, bruising, daring me to try and pull away. He pinned me open with a possessiveness that sent shivers racing down my spine.

I clawed at the wood beneath me, teeth gritted, nails digging deep grooves as I fought the madness building inside me. Every stroke of his tongue, every flick, every suck was another blow to my control, a battle I was losing faster than I could catch my breath.

"Damien," I gasped, my voice breaking apart, "I—I can't—"

A growl rumbled from him, muffled against my skin; the vibration shooting straight through me. My whole body bowed forward, trembling as wave after wave of pleasure surged higher, hotter, until there was nothing left but fire and need.

And then it broke.

I released into his mouth. My scream echoed off the walls, my body convulsing, shattering against his mouth.

When it finally ended, I collapsed against the desk, chest heaving, damp hair sticking to my face, my breath ragged and broken. My hands slipped uselessly across the gouged wood, nails torn from how hard I'd clawed.

Slowly, Damien rose. His lips glistened, his jaw tense as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. His gaze stayed fixed on me—hungry, feral, and full of desire.

"This," he said hoarsely, his voice dark, "was only the beginning."

"Enough," I whispered, collapsing against the desk, every muscle trembling. "I'm tired..." The words came out weak, false, but I forced them anyway, desperate to leave.

Damien's shadow loomed closer, his breath still ragged, his chest heaving against my back. His hand curled around my hip, firm. "Tired?" His laugh was rough, low, and so fucking sexy. "Sofia... I haven't even come yet."

My heart lurched. I tried to push up, to steady myself, but his hands were already on me, dragging me higher onto the desk. The wood bit into my skin as he turned me around and spread my thighs apart again.

"Damien—" I started, voice cracking.

"Don't," he cut me off, his tone sharp, his hunger palpable. "You know I have to cum."

In one swift motion, he lifted my legs, setting them on his shoulders, forcing me open and vulnerable beneath him. My back arched off the desk, the angle brutal, leaving me no escape as his body aligned with mine.

And then he drove into me.

The sudden stretch tore a cry from my throat, sharp and broken. My nails scrabbled uselessly against the desk, my head snapping back as he filled me, hard, relentless, leaving no space between us.

"Damien!" I gasped, half anger, half shameful need.

He groaned, deep and guttural, every thrust harder than the last, shaking the desk beneath us. His grip pinned my thighs in place against his shoulders, holding me wide as he pounded into me with raw fury.

"You hate me?" he snarled, his face lowering close to mine, sweat dripping onto my skin. "Then say it. Hate me while I'm inside you. Hate me while your body begs for more."

"I... hate—" My words shattered on a moan as his hips slammed forward again, the impact tearing the air from my lungs.

His mouth crashed against mine, bruising, angry; his kiss devouring. I bit him, hard, but he only groaned, thrusting deeper, punishing, until my nails clawed bloody crescents into his back.

The rhythm was merciless, every snap of his hips a war between us. My anger burned hot, but beneath it, the pleasure was unbearable, consuming, pulling me under no matter how I fought.

"Damien—" I choked, my body breaking again, traitorous, clenching tight around him.

His growl vibrated against my mouth. "That's it. Give in. Cum for me."

And I did.

Another climax tore through me, violent, unstoppable, dragging me down into white-hot oblivion. I screamed his name, furious at myself, furious at him, but lost completely.

Damien's pace grew erratic, desperate, his groans deepening as he drove harder, faster, until at last he shuddered, releasing inside me with a guttural roar that shook through my bones.

He collapsed over me, breath harsh, chest heaving, his body still pressing me into the desk.

Chapter 420: Not Your Mate

Sofia's POV

For a moment, silence filled the office—only the sound of our ragged breathing and the creak of the desk beneath us. My body was wrecked, trembling, sweat cooling on my skin. I thought—hoped—it was over.

But then Damien didn't soften. He didn't pull out.

My eyes flew open, my heart lurching when I felt him still hard, still deep inside me. His breath came rough against my ear, his voice a gravelly growl.

"Not yet," he rasped. "I'm not finished."

My stomach dropped. "Damien—" My protest cracked into a gasp as his hips shifted, pulling back and slamming forward again with savage force.

"Thought I'd let you go that easy?" he snarled, his teeth grazing my throat. "No. I have missed this for three fucking years."

Damn it. I forgot how a beast Damien was in sex. He could go round upon round with me.

I clawed at his shoulders, half to push him away, half to anchor myself as he set a brutal pace, driving into me like he was carving his name into my body. My legs slipped from his shoulders, but he caught them, folding me in half, pinning me open beneath him.

The angle was ruthless. Every thrust struck deep, knocking the air from my lungs, making my body bow and shudder helplessly against the desk.

"Damien—stop—" I begged, but the words were breathless, broken, traitorous, drowned in the sounds spilling from my throat.

"Liar," he growled, sweat dripping onto my chest as his mouth crashed against mine, devouring me, punishing me. "You don't want me to stop. You never did."

My back arched, my nails tearing at his skin, and still he moved harder, faster, and relentlessly. His groans mingled with my cries, filling the room with the raw chaos of us—anger, lust, hate, and need colliding in every thrust.

My body betrayed me again, that unbearable heat coiling tight, too much, too fast. "Damien!" I screamed, cumming for the third time, my release ripping through me so violently I thought I'd shatter into pieces.

And finally—finally—he let go.

With a guttural roar, Damien buried himself deep, his entire body trembling as he spilled inside me, the force of his release shaking through every muscle. His grip on my thighs was bruising, his mouth against my neck hot and deep.

When it ended, he sagged against me, both of us spent, chests heaving, sweat-slick skin pressed tight.

My legs were jelly. Every muscle in my body trembled as I tried to push myself up from the desk. The wood was slick beneath my palms. I slid off the edge, my knees almost giving way beneath me.

A rough, steadying hand shot out, gripping my arm before I hit the floor.

"Careful," Damien muttered, his voice still raw, his grip tight around my waist as he steadied me.

"Let me go," I snapped, yanking at his hold. My hair clung to my damp face; my chest heaved. "Just let me go, Damien."

His brows drew together, his jaw hardening. "What the hell is wrong with you?" His voice rose, low but annoyed. "You're my mate."

The word hit me like a blow, but I forced a bitter laugh, twisting out of his hold. "I'm not officially your mate," I spat. "Not really. She might be out there somewhere, Damien. Your real mate. What happens when you find her?"

His eyes darkened, his chest rising and falling, sweat gleaming on his skin. "I've already accepted you," he said, voice rough, almost pleading under the anger. "You're the one I chose."

I scoffed, wrapping my arms around myself as if that would keep me from breaking. "I don't have your mark," I threw back at him, my voice cracking on the last word. "That's all that matters in our world, isn't it? I don't have it."

He flinched like I'd struck him, his mouth tightening. "You don't have my mark," he said slowly, "because two days before our mating ceremony... you disappeared."

The truth hung between us, heavy and jagged.

My heart lurched painfully, the old wound tearing open. He wasn't lying. I had run. I had left everything behind, including him.

Damien stepped closer, his eyes locked on mine, unreadable but burning. "You vanished, Sofia," he said, his voice low but shaking with pain. "You could have been my mate... you could have had my mark if only you didn't run away."

I saw the pain in his eyes... My disappearance must have hurt him so much... Even my wolf stirred in pain for him, and I felt the urge to cup his face and apologize. Say sorry for leaving, but then I remembered Rebecca. Her death, and he was my number one suspect, and until I know for sure he has no hand in it, he and I can never be together.

"I m... I'm sorry," I heard him whisper, his face softening. "If I hurt you or did anything wrong—" his voice —"I'm sorry."

His throat worked as he swallowed, his eyes searching mine like he was trying to claw his way back into me. "Let's just go back," he said hoarsely, his voice breaking. "Sofia, I love you so much. I've never stopped. And I can see you still love me."

That hit harder than I expected. It made something inside me want to collapse into him, to believe him, to let go of every wall I'd built. But the image of her slammed back into me—Rebecca, her death, her chopped head, the unanswered questions. The suspicion that had eaten at me every night since.

I straightened, my chin lifting even as my voice trembled. "Please don't flatter yourself," I snapped, but it came out thin, like a blade dulled by too much use. "I was just sex-

starved, Damien. That's all this was." I forced a bitter little laugh, hating how it sounded. "You're really good at fucking. We had a great fuck. That's all."

His jaw clenched, his frown deepening.

"I don't want to be with you again," I continued, my voice steadier this time, though it was a lie. "We should just co-parent our son."

The silence after was brutal. His eyes flickered, dark and unreadable, but I could see the way my words had hit him hard.

He took a slow step closer, but didn't touch me. "That's what you really want?" he asked quietly, his voice breaking.