

Fated To Not Just One, But Three #Chapter 431: No longer Easy - Read Fated To Not Just One, But Three Chapter 431: No longer Easy

Chapter 431: No longer Easy

Selene's POV

My heart jumped, but I kept my eyes shut. I pretended to be asleep. If I looked at him now, I didn't know what I would say. So I just breathed slowly and steadily, like I was dreaming. He let out a long sigh. His hand brushed my hair back, gentle in a way I never thought he could be. Another sigh came, heavier this time, like he was tired of carrying something too big.

Then he moved. His strong arms slid under me, lifting me as if I weighed nothing. I smelled him — iron, smoke, and something dark — wrapping all around me. He walked across the room and set me down on the couch in his study. The leather felt cold against my skin. My blouse was half open, my skirt still messy from before, but he didn't fix it. He just stood there, looking at me.

Another sigh. Then his fingers brushed my hair again, soft and slow. "Sleep," he whispered, like it was a prayer.

I heard his steps fade. The door opened, then closed. Silence returned. Only then did I open my eyes.

"I think I'm in love with you..."

The words stayed in my chest like a heavy stone.

I lay there on the couch, half-naked, my body weak, my blood still poisoned... and I wondered what the hell was going on. My wolf growled deep in my head, sharp and loud: "Admit it, Selene — you like him..."

I clenched my fists, ignoring her. I didn't want to hear it. I didn't want to admit she was right. Because the truth was — I hadn't stopped him. I could have. But I didn't.

I told myself it was strategy. That if I wanted him to drink from me, I had to keep him close, to let him trust me. But even now, the heat of his body, the sound of his moan, the weight of his words — "I think I'm in love with you" — they all tangled in my chest until I couldn't breathe.

I shook my head and sat on the couch, my whole body aching. Just today we had sex more than twice. My wolf scoffed, "Pretty too many for someone you claim to hate," she mocked. I rolled my eyes, ignoring her as I got to my feet and arranged myself.

My body still ached, my wolf still restless, but I forced myself back to my room. Every step was heavy. Every thought heavier. I told myself this was all part of the plan. That I was still in control. That I wasn't falling into his arms because I wanted to — but because I needed him to trust me.

And yet... my wolf wouldn't stop growling inside my head. "Admit it, Selene. You like him. You want him."

I slammed the door behind me and leaned against it, my chest rising and falling too fast. "No," I hissed back, gripping my hair. "It's the mate bond. That's all it is. I don't want him."

But even as I said it, I could still feel his touch on my skin. His voice in my ear. His words — "I think I'm in love with you" — squeezing the breath out of me.

I dropped to the edge of the bed, burying my face in my hands. For hours I kept contemplating until I began feeling suffocated, wishing there was anyone I could talk to besides my wolf, who was clearly against me killing Frederick the moment she realized we were mated to him.

I felt so tired. My body felt like jelly. I crawled into bed and pulled the blanket up to my chin. My eyes closed. My wolf quieted a little. I fell asleep.

I had a dream. In my dream, Frederick was near me. He bent down and took my hand. He leaned close, and his fangs touched my skin. I could feel his breath. I could feel everything.

Then something terrible happened. He drank from me. At first it was quiet. Then his face went pale. His eyes rolled back. He stumbled, gripped the table, and fell to the floor. He was not moving. He was not breathing.

"No!" I shouted in the dream. I rattled him, I pushed him, I shook him, but he was still. I could hear nothing but my own heart pounding. I knelt beside him and cried. He gasped once and then he was gone. He looked at me with tired eyes and whispered, "Why...?" I tried to answer, but my mouth was full of tears.

I woke up with a sob. I was crying for real. My pillow was wet. My heart felt like it was breaking. If that dream came true, I thought I had killed him. My hands shook. A cold weight sat in my chest.

I remembered why I had come here. I remembered my plan. I had wanted revenge. I had wanted to kill him for my mother. But now — now I was not sure I could do it.

What if I couldn't bring myself to finish it? What if I couldn't watch him die? The thought made my head spin and my legs feel like jelly. I imagined standing over him and not being able to move, listening to his last breath and knowing I had caused it. My hands

shook just thinking about it. I had practiced the plan a hundred times in my head, but now the idea of actually doing it felt impossible.

I lay very still and tried to breathe slowly. The house was quiet. My wolf whined softly, confused. I whispered to the empty room, "I don't know if I can do this."

For the first time since I had come, my fear was not only about being found out. It was about killing someone who deserved to be killed—or maybe someone I had started to care for. My eyes burned with more tears. What had been planned as a simple, clean task now felt messy and wrong in my chest. I had thought I could do it without mercy, but now every memory of him made my hands tremble. This was supposed to be easy, I reminded myself, but it wasn't.

Chapter 432: The punishment

Olivia's POV

"I have told you guys already... you men are not laying your eyes on me for a week. This is your punishment," I spat over the mind link the moment I decided to accept it. For two whole days, the triplets had been trying to reach me through the link, but I had ignored them every single time. Today, I finally accepted it—not to forgive them, but to deliver their punishment myself.

"Oli," Lennox pleaded desperately from the other side of the link. "We're sorry, baby... why don't you come over and let's talk?"

My heart twisted at his voice, but I forced it back into stone. I had to learn how to harden my heart against them. If I didn't, they'd keep breaking me over and over again.

"Never," I snapped. "Until the one week is over, you men aren't setting your eyes on me."

I could hear Louis take a deep breath, heavy and slow. "We're sorry... we truly are." His voice was so soft, so sincere, that for a moment my wolf stirred, reaching out to them, but once again I built my walls back up.

"I don't care about your apologies," I answered coldly. "Words don't fix what's been done."

A moment of silence stretched across the link. It felt heavy, like a storm building on the horizon. Then Levi's voice came, quiet but aching. "We miss you..."

My chest tightened, but I stayed silent, staring at the ceiling as I sat curled on my bed. My fingers trembled where they clutched the sheets. My wolf whimpered softly inside me, but I ignored her.

I missed them too.

But right now, I couldn't let their words get to me.

"No," I whispered under my breath, though the link was still open. "You don't get to miss me now. You should have thought about that before."

For a moment, I thought they would argue again, try to convince me, but the link stayed quiet. Too quiet. I almost hated it more than their begging.

Then Lennox's voice came, low and rough, like he was holding himself together with threads. "Olivia... one week without you feels like forever. Please. Don't punish us like this. Don't punish yourself."

Tears pricked my eyes, hot and unwanted. I clenched my jaw and snapped the link shut before they could feel the hurt in my heart.

Silence filled my head again, but it wasn't peace. It was suffocating.

I curled into myself on the bed, burying my face in the pillow, whispering to no one but my wolf. "I have to do this. They need to be punished." But why does it feel like I'm punishing myself instead? The more I pushed them away, the more my heart hurt.

My wolf paced restlessly inside me, whining in my head.

"You're hurting yourself," she murmured. "Go to them."

"No," I hissed out loud, gripping the edge of the bed. "They need to be punished."

Yet it still felt like I was tearing myself apart. My chest ached. My body craved them. Two days without seeing their faces, without feeling their warmth—it was agony. Torture. And I wasn't sure how I was supposed to make it through the rest of the week.

Feeling suffocated, I decided I needed to leave the room. Without thinking, I teleported. The next blink, I was standing in the middle of Frederick's living room.

My feet carried me up the staircase before my mind caught up. I had come for Selene. I needed to know if she was still following through with the plan, if she was still the ally I thought she was.

At the top of the stairs, I paused outside her door when I heard muffled, low, tense voices.

"Why are you acting this cold toward me?" I realized that was Frederick speaking.

Then Selene answered bitterly. "It's for the best."

I froze, leaning closer, but the moment my presence brushed their auras, both voices cut off. Silence dropped heavy on the other side of the door.

Damn it. They felt me.

Frowning, I pushed the door open and stepped inside.

Both heads whipped toward me.

Frederick stood by the window, his shirt half open, his hair slightly disheveled. Something about him looked different—warmer, less like the cold predator I had first met. His aura felt heavier too, as though something had shifted in him.

And Selene... her hair was mussed, her cheeks flushed. But it was her neck that made my stomach twist.

Faint, almost invisible hickeys dotted her skin.

I blinked, my heart hammering, my wolf bristling in my chest.

Hickeys? When did she get that from, and why did it look so fresh?

I furrowed my brows, my eyes darting from Frederick's half-open shirt to Selene's flushed cheeks. The hickeys on her neck glimmered faintly under the dim light, and my stomach twisted.

I wasn't a fool.

Hickeys. Fresh ones.

I looked at Frederick's hair again, slightly disheveled. His aura felt warmer, heavier, like a predator who had just fed. Then my gaze slid back to Selene's neck, to the soft pink marks dotting her skin.

Could it be?

Frederick and Selene just made out...

It was the only logical answer.

And judging by the look of them both, it hadn't happened long ago. My heart hammered as I took in the sight of them—the distance between their bodies, the tension in the air. Were they... were these two actually sleeping together?

My wolf bristled, growling low inside my chest.

Just as I opened my mouth, Frederick beat me to it.

"Finally, you are here," he said, but not sounding happy about it... rather, he sounded annoyed, like I had interrupted something

I glared at him, but his eyes never left Selene. Whatever he was about to say, it wasn't for me. It was for her.

"I've been reaching out to you for days," he said, his tone deceptively calm. But his eyes still stayed locked on Selene, hard and unreadable.

Selene stiffened, her lips parting as if to speak, but no sound came.

Then Frederick dropped the bomb. "Because we need to prepare for our wedding. It's happening next weekend."

Chapter 433: Suspicion

Olivia's POV

"What!" I spat, my voice rising before I could stop myself. Shock coursed through me, making my chest tighten. But Frederick didn't look at me. Not once. His piercing gaze stayed fixed on Selene as though his words were meant for her, not me.

"I'm no longer waiting, Olivia," he declared firmly, his tone harsh. "I want us married by next weekend."

It was like a punch to the gut.

I scoffed, folding my arms over my chest. "You must be joking."

But Frederick only shook his head, his jaw tight, his eyes still locked on Selene. The way he stared at her made my skin prickle, like I wasn't even the one he was speaking to.

My frown deepened. Anger bubbled in my chest, ready to burst. I wanted to scream at him, to spit in his face and tell him this would never happen. But I forced myself to hold back, to control my emotions.

I straightened, my voice lowered, though the sharpness couldn't be hidden. "I can't marry you now, Lord Frederick. We don't even know each other. We need time."

His answer came swiftly, leaving no room for argument.

"I don't care," he snapped. His gaze finally flicked to me. "We will get to know each other in marriage."

But the more I looked at him, the more I realized... he wasn't really saying it to me.

No. His eyes, his clenched jaw, the way his gaze slid back to Selene—it was all for her.

My stomach twisted. Was this his way of proving something to her? Of stabbing her in the chest with his decision?

I glanced at Selene. She had gone pale, her lips pressed tight together, her eyes refusing to meet his. But she couldn't hide it. The flicker of hurt that flashed in her gaze was obvious enough. It hit me then. He was using me... to wound her.

And goodness help me, it was working.

Selene shifted on her feet, her hands balling into fists at her sides. Her wolf stirred in her eyes for just a moment before she blinked it away. She looked like she wanted to shout, to curse, but instead, she stayed silent. Before I could move, Frederick came closer.

In just a few steps, he stood right in front of me. His hand grabbed my wrist—not hard, but strong enough to make me freeze—then he pulled me to himself, wrapping his arm around my waist. My wolf snarled at the impact of his touch.

"I can't wait anymore, Olivia," he said in a low, serious voice. His thumb pressed against my pulse like he wanted to remind me he was in control. "I want you as my wife. By next weekend, you will be mine."

His words weren't loud, but they hit me harder than if he had shouted.

I looked up at him, shocked, my heart racing. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Selene. She was stiff, her face pale, her eyes wide. She looked... hurt.

Frederick looked at her too, for just a second, like he wanted her to hear every word. Like he wanted the words to pierce through her.

Then he let go of me.

Without saying more, he fixed his shirt, turned, and walked to the door. "I'll make the wedding plans," he said coldly before leaving.

The door closed with a heavy thud.

The room went quiet.

I stood frozen for a moment, still staring at the door Frederick had walked out of. My wolf was howling, furious with his touch, but another part of me... was so curious.

Slowly, I turned to Selene. She sat calmly on the bed, her posture stiff, her face blank, as if none of this touched her. But I knew she was only pretending.

My eyes narrowed. "Is there something you want to say to me?" I asked.

Selene lifted her gaze briefly, her eyes flat and guarded. "No," she muttered. "Just... let me be."

I scoffed, folding my arms. Her answer only fanned the fire inside me. But before speaking again, I let my senses stretch, searching the room, the walls, the hall beyond. I wanted to be sure Frederick wasn't eavesdropping. My ears strained, my wolf perked, but there was no sign of Frederick. His aura was gone.

Good.

I stepped closer to Selene, lowering my voice. "I don't care what's going on between you and him. I don't care if he's fucking you, or if you're his whore. What matters—" I leaned forward, my eyes locking on hers, "—is the plan. You have to establish it."

Her lips curled into a bitter little smile, and she let out a humorless laugh. "The plan," she repeated. Then she shook her head. "I already tried, Olivia. I offered him the chance to feed from me."

My breath caught, my body stiffening. "You did?"

Selene's eyes glinted, almost daring me to judge her. "I told him to drink. To take from me. But he refused."

The words slammed into me like ice water. My wolf bristled, confused, restless.

He refused?

Why?

Selene's eyes darkened, and for once, she didn't try to hide the uneasiness in her. "He said if he ever fed from me, he wouldn't be able to control himself. That he'd drain me dry."

I blinked, frowning deeply. My wolf stirred uneasily inside me. Frederick... caring?

That didn't make sense. When had he ever cared whether someone lived or died? He was cold, ruthless, feared by all. Why would he worry about losing control on her? Why would he hold back... for her?

I stared at Selene more closely. Something was off. Something about her had changed. The bitterness I always saw in her eyes was softer now, buried under something else I couldn't quite name.

Different.

Dangerously different.

My brows furrowed as I studied her, my chest tightening with a strange, unwelcome thought.

"Selene," I said slowly, my mind racing, hoping what I was suspecting wasn't true. "Are you... both in love with each other?"

Chapter 434: Questioning

Olivia's POV

She didn't respond.

Not a word.

I had expected Selene to snap, to shout at me, to curse me for spouting such nonsense. But instead... she just looked away. Her lips trembled, and her silence gave me the only answer I needed.

My eyes widened, fear rushing through me like ice.

If she had truly fallen for him... if Selene was in love with Frederick... then she would never have the guts to kill him.

And the Selene sitting calmly before me was no longer the same woman I had met days ago. That Selene had been fierce, heart like stone, her eyes sharp and cold with nothing but revenge. But this one? She looked... softer. Shaken. Almost fragile.

Different. So very different.

It was strange—how quickly love, or something like it, could change a person.

"This is ridiculous!" I spat, unable to stop myself. "You were supposed to kill him, not fall in love with him!"

My voice came out too loud, echoing through the walls. I quickly clamped my mouth shut, my heart hammering, my eyes darting toward the door to make sure Frederick wasn't lurking close enough to overhear.

I drew a shaky breath, lowering my tone, but the anger in me still burned. "Do you even realize what you're doing, Selene? You're ruining everything. The plan. Our chance. Everything we've worked for."

I hated how my voice cracked.

The worst part? I understood.

Frederick was so damn handsome. His silver hair, aura, his sharp beauty, his commanding presence—it was too easy for anyone to be drawn in. Too easy to imagine yourself falling into his arms, losing yourself in him.

But Selene? The one who had sworn her only purpose in life was revenge? The one who had carried hatred for him all these years? She was supposed to be the one person immune to his charms.

And now... she looked like she was crumbling.

My frown deepened. "Speak... why aren't you speaking?" I demanded, my patience wearing thin.

Selene's lips trembled, but no words left her mouth. She just looked away, her eyes darting anywhere but mine.

That was it. I knew I would not get any answers from her.

Fine. If she wouldn't talk, then I would get my answers somewhere else. My chest burning with anger, I stormed out of the room. My steps were quick and sharp as I went down the hall and straight to Frederick's study.

Without knocking, I shoved the door open and barged in.

There he was, standing behind the open window, his back turned against me as he glanced outside.

"Are you fucking Selene?" I spat, the words flying out before I could stop them.

He didn't deny it. He didn't admit it either. He just continued staring outside the window, his back tensed. And that silence gave me the answer I needed.

Yes. They had.

I took a step forward, my voice low, trembling with both rage and fear. "Are you in love with her?"

The words hung in the air as I waited for Frederick to say something, but he just stood there with his back to me, staring out of the window as though the evening sky held more worth than my question.

My chest burned, anger twisting tighter.

I clenched my fists. "Are you in love with her?" I pressed again, my voice breaking at the edges.

Still nothing.

Finally, he turned. He walked calmly to his chair, sat down, and leaned back as if this entire conversation bored him. His fingers tapped against the armrest once before he finally spoke.

"That is none of your business," he said flatly, his eyes cold when they flicked to me. "What you should be focusing on is our marriage."

My jaw dropped. "What the hell is wrong with you?" I snapped, my anger exploding before I could hold it back. "It's obvious you love Selene! Then why won't you just let me go?"

His lips curved into a thin, sad smile. "Because you are the special one, Olivia. Not her." His tone was hard. "Whatever happened between Selene and I was nothing more than a fling. A mistake, if you will. But I will not allow a fling to stop what is meant to be—our marriage."

His words stabbed through me, but not with relief. With fire.

My frown deepened, my nails digging into my palms. "You arrogant bastard..." I hissed under my breath. But my voice cracked off, choked with rage.

I stared at him, my wolf snarling inside me, the fury boiling too hot to swallow. He had just admitted it. Whatever was between him and Selene—it existed. But he thought he could dismiss it. Sweep it aside. Bind me to him anyway.

The door burst open before either of us could speak again.

Selene stormed inside, her hair wild, her eyes blazing with raw pain. She looked drained, pale, but her anger burned so hot it filled the room.

"So that's it?" she spat, her voice shaking. Her gaze locked onto Frederick like knives. "I'm just a fling?"

My brow raised. She was eavesdropping.

Frederick stiffened, his eyes narrowing. "Selene—"

"No!" she cut him off, her voice rising, trembling with betrayal. "Don't you dare say my name like that! You think you can discard me as if I meant nothing? All you wanted was to fuck me—not once, not twice, but every chance you got—only to turn around and call it a fling... a mistake."

Her chest heaved, tears threatening in her eyes, but she held them back with rage.

"You lied," she hissed. "You told me you were falling for me. That what was happening between us was real. And like a fool, I—"

She stopped herself abruptly, her lips clamping shut, eyes darting quickly to me then back to him. For a moment, I thought she would say it. The truth. The reason she had been here in the first place.

But she bit down hard on her words, her fists trembling at her sides.

Frederick's jaw clenched, his eyes darkening as he took a step toward her. "Selene—"

"I don't want to hear it!" she snapped, her voice breaking as her wolf's growl laced through it. "You used me. And I let you. But never again."

Before either of us could react, she spun on her heel and stormed out of the room.

The silence she left behind was suffocating.

For half a second, Frederick stood frozen, his chest heaving, his eyes shadowed with something I couldn't read. Then, with a sudden movement, he shoved past me and bolted after her.

"Selene!" his voice roared down the hall, echoing through the manor.

And just like that, the door slammed shut behind them, leaving me standing there, my heart racing, my wolf restless, and my mind spinning with one truth I couldn't ignore.

Something between them was real...

Chapter 435: Taken

Lord Frederick's POV

"Selene!"

Her name ripped from my throat before I could stop myself. I shoved past Olivia, the echo of the door slamming behind me. My boots pounded against the floor, the sharp

sound chasing her retreat down the corridor. She was fast, but not fast enough to outrun me. She never could.

I caught her wrist at the top of the stairs. Her body jolted, stiffening, her breath ragged as she turned on me with eyes that were—hurt, betrayed, and so goddamn alluring.

"Let go of me!" she snapped, yanking at my grip. "I don't want to hear another word from you. Not one."

I tightened my hold instead, dragging her closer. Her scent coiled around me—sharp, wild, intoxicating. It made my chest ache, made the hunger in me roar.

"You think this is easy for me?" I bit out, my voice low and rough. "You think I used you?"

She laughed, but it was angry, bitter. "What else was I? A fling, remember? A mistake? You said it yourself!" Her chest rose and fell hard, her lips trembling. "All you wanted was to fuck me. Again and again. And like a fool, I allowed you. And when you whispered you were falling—"

Her voice cracked, and she cut herself off. But I heard it. I knew what she almost said. I had no idea she heard me saying that. I thought she had fallen asleep.

Damn her. Damn me.

I pulled her flush against me as I hugged her, my heart hammering with a rage I didn't know how to aim. At her. At myself. At the truth clawing at my insides.

"You drive me mad," I growled, my breath hot against her hair. "What do I do, Selene... I have fallen for you."

She angrily pushed me away, her eyes flickering, pain flashing in her eyes. "Then why lie? Why call me nothing? Why parade your marriage to her in front of me?"

Because I had to.

Because admitting the truth—that she was the one who set fire to my veins—would ruin everything I'd built.

I shoved the thought down, hard, forcing my voice to turn cold again as I took another step towards her. "Because you are dangerous, Selene. I can't love the way I love you... Olivia is the perfect one for me."

Her breath hitched, her body stiffening. For a second, I thought she would snap, spit on my face. But instead, she shoved me away with a strength that surprised even me.

Her frown deepened. "Then let me go."

And before I could react, she spun and bolted down the stairs, leaving me with my chest heaving, my fists clenched, and one truth I couldn't escape:

I couldn't let her go.

Not now.

Not ever.

I stumbled back into my room, slamming the door shut behind me. My hands gripped the edge of the table so tightly the wood creaked. My chest rose and fell in harsh bursts.

What was I doing?

Selene's scent still clung to me, burning in my veins, rattling my thoughts. I had wanted to push her away. I had needed to—for Olivia, for the plan, for the prophecy that promised the greatest supernatural heir if I married the "perfect one."

But the moment she looked at me with those wild, hurt eyes, everything inside me had cracked.

I dragged a hand over my face, sinking down on the chair, elbows on my knees. "Damn it," I muttered under my breath. "Do I let Olivia go? Do I give up the future I've built for a woman who..."

I swallowed hard.

A woman I had hopelessly fallen in love with.

The thought alone made my chest ache.

If I kept Olivia, I would have the power, the child, and the legacy. But with Selene, I would have the fire—the maddening, consuming fire that made me feel alive for the first time in decades.

My head pounded. The choice suffocated me, making it difficult to breathe.

And then—

A hurried, frantic knock shattered my thoughts.

"What?" I barked, fuming with rage.

"Lord Frederick—" a panicked voice came from the other side, breathless.

I shot to my feet, my anger flaring. "I said, what is it?"

The door swung open before I could cross the room. One of my guards stood there, pale, sweat beading on his brow.

"Lord—there's trouble."

My eyes narrowed, my body tensing. "Speak," I commanded.

The guard swallowed, glancing down. "Lady Selene said she was going for a walk. We... we allowed it."

Ice shot through me.

"You what?" I roared, my voice booming through the room as my claws itched to emerge. "Are you stupid? What if she leaves?" My heart hammered as I closed the distance between us. "Do you know the danger out there? Vampires are lurking around the borders—"

The guard raised his hands quickly, trembling. "That's not all, my lord!" he blurted. "I was watching the CCTV feed... and I saw it happen."

My stomach dropped. "Saw what?"

His voice cracked. "The moment Lady Selene stepped out of the gates, masked men appeared. Six of them. Before she could shift into her wolf, they sprayed something at her—she inhaled it and collapsed."

The world tilted.

For a heartbeat, everything went silent except for the rush of blood in my ears.

Then my rage hit, hot and explosive.

"No!" I yelled as I shoved past the trembling guard. My anger lashed through the hall, sending the staff scattering as I stormed toward the surveillance room. My heart was slamming in my chest so hard it almost drowned out my footsteps.

Selene was mine—whether she admitted it or not, whether I wanted it or not—and the thought of anyone laying hands on her was making me go insane.

The door to the CCTV room slammed open under my hand. The guards inside scrambled to their feet, their faces paling at the fury etched into mine.

"Pull it up," I snapped, my voice deadly calm. "Show me."

One of them hurried to rewind the footage. My claws dug into the back of his chair as the screen flickered.

And there she was.

Selene.

She stepped out of the gates, her head slightly bowed, her hair falling across her face. Then—like shadows crawling out of nowhere—six masked men closed in on her.

I leaned closer, every muscle in my body tight.

She barely had time to react. Her wolf flashed in her eyes, her body beginning to tremble with the shift—but then the spray hit her. A black mist. She inhaled, choked, and collapsed to the ground like a puppet with its strings cut.

My hands trembled as I watched them drag her body across the dirt. Rage built, but beneath it—fear. Real fear.

They shoved her into the back of a black SUV. The doors slammed shut.

I narrowed my eyes. No plates. No way to trace.

"Freeze it!" I snarled. The guard's hands shook as he obeyed, pausing the frame where Selene's limp body was being shoved into the trunk.

Her face.

Her pale lips.

Her closed eyes.

The sight tore through me like a blade.

I gripped the screen so hard the glass threatened to crack.

If they fed on her—if they dared sink their fangs into her—I would tear the entire world apart.

The footage resumed, showing the SUV speeding away.

My breath came rough, heavy, ragged.

For the first time in years... fear consumed me.

The same fear I had only felt once before.

When I almost lost Hailee to childbirth.

And now—at the thought of losing Selene.

Chapter 436: Worried

Olivia's POV

I noticed commotion everywhere. Guards were rushing down the hall, their boots pounding hard against the marble floor. Staff members whispered in panic, their faces pale. Something was wrong—terribly wrong.

I frowned, stepping out from where I stood. "What's going on?" I asked one of the maids who ran past me, but she didn't stop long enough to answer.

My wolf stirred uneasily inside me. Something's happened, she whispered. Can't you feel it?

Yes. I could. The air was thick with fear.

Then I saw one of the guards sprint past with a radio in his hand. "She's gone!" he barked into it. "I repeat—Lady Selene's been taken!"

I froze. My heart stopped for a second. "What did you just say?" I demanded, grabbing his arm.

The guard looked startled but didn't have time to respond before Lord Frederick's voice boomed across the mansion.

"Seal every exit!" he shouted from down the corridor. His tone was raw, furious, and desperate. "Find her! Now!"

Selene.

They were talking about Selene.

My mind spun. "Taken?" I whispered to myself. "By who?"

No one answered, but the fear in their eyes told me enough. Whatever had happened—it wasn't random. Someone had planned this.

My chest tightened painfully. Despite everything between us, I couldn't help the panic rising in me.

What if she was hurt? What if this was the vampires' doing?

I turned toward the stairs, hearing Frederick's sharp voice again, echoing through the halls.

"Get the cars ready! Track the SUV—now!"

He sounded shaken. Angry, yes—but also... terrified.

Before I could make sense of the chaos, I heard heavy, pounding footsteps descending the stairs.

And looked up to realize it was Frederick.

He came rushing down, his eyes wild, his chest heaving, and for the first time, I saw him not as a man... but as a monster barely holding himself together.

His fangs were out. Sharp. Gleaming. His aura burned through the hall like fire, and every guard nearby bowed their heads instantly, trembling in fear.

He looked like death itself.

I froze, unable to move as he reached the bottom of the staircase. His shirt was half-unbuttoned, his hair disheveled, his hands trembling with fury. I could see it—the darkness rising in him, the beast clawing to be set free.

"Frederick..." I whispered, but my voice came out small, lost under the echo of his growl.

His eyes snapped to me. Red, glowing with rage and something else... despair. For a brief second, his gaze locked with mine, sharp enough to make my breath catch.

Then, without a word, he looked away.

He brushed past me, the air around him cold and heavy. Every step he took reeked of control barely held in place. His jaw tightened, his knuckles white, and when he spoke to the guards, his voice was low but raging.

"Bring the car around," he ordered. "Now."

The guards rushed to obey.

He didn't look back at me again. Not once.

And as he stormed through the doors, I stood there speechless, not knowing what to say or do. Selene had been taken—but by who?

I was confused. I didn't know what to do, but I really wanted to help her. I didn't care about our dour relationship. Selene was still related to me, and if there was any way I could help, then I had to do it.

But what?

I closed my eyes, trying to think through the chaos. Every instinct in me screamed not to reach out to the triplets. I'd spent days ignoring them, punishing them, building my walls brick by brick. The idea of facing them now—swallowing my pride—annoyed me. I wanted to punish them more.

But Selene's face flashed in my mind.

I couldn't do this alone.

"I don't have a choice," I whispered to myself, my voice breaking. "They need to know."

My wolf's ears perked. Finally, she murmured. Do it before it's too late.

I straightened, my decision made. For once, my pride didn't matter. Not now.

The mansion was still chaos around me, but I tuned it out. My eyes closed, my focus narrowed, and I reached my teleporting ability.

And in the next heartbeat, the mansion vanished.

The moment I appeared in the pack house, the familiar scent of the Full Moon Pack hit me—pine, warmth, and faint traces of the triplets' scent that stirred something deep inside me.

Then I saw Lennox. Louis. Levi. Seated at the dining table. All three turned sharply at once, their eyes widening when they saw me.

Lennox was the first to react. His chair scraped loudly against the floor as he shot to his feet, his green eyes widening in disbelief.

For a heartbeat, none of us spoke.

Then all three moved at once.

"Olivia?" Lennox breathed, his voice a mixture of shock and relief.

Louis was already standing, his expression softening. "You came back..."

Levi's jaw tensed, his eyes flickering with something unreadable—but I caught the spark of relief there too.

My chest tightened. Two days without them, and suddenly their presence was too much—too familiar, too comforting. My wolf whimpered softly inside me, wanting to run straight into their arms.

But I couldn't. I wouldn't.

I straightened my back, forcing my voice into something cold. "Don't look too happy. I'm not here because I missed you."

Louis frowned, his brows knitting.

"Selene's been kidnapped."

The words dropped like a bomb.

All three froze. Lennox's face drained of color, Louis's fork clattered against his plate, and Levi's eyes darkened instantly.

"What?" Lennox's voice came out sharp, almost a growl.

I nodded, my hands trembling slightly even as I tried to hide it. "Frederick's mansion is in chaos. The guards said she was taken by masked men right outside the gate. Six of them. She didn't even have a chance to fight back."

Louis pushed his chair back hard enough that it hit the wall. "Who would take her?"

Levi clenched his fists, his voice low and raging. "The vampires."

My throat went dry. That was exactly what I'd feared.

Lennox looked at me again, his expression torn between anger and fear. "Is Frederick doing anything?"

I swallowed, nodding once. "He's already gone after her. He looked... different. Out of control."

Levi's eyes flashed. "We need to find her. If a greedy vampire gets hold of her, since he knows he can't feed from her directly, they'll extract her blood instead. They'll bottle it. Drink from it little by little. That's what they do to special hybrids—they drain them alive. Selene is in grave danger," he said, sounding worried.

A chill ran through me. I was also worried. Yes, I didn't like Selene, but I never wished this on her. Death or torture was not what I wanted for her.

"I have a plan," Lennox suddenly said.

Chapter 437: Three Hours

Selene's POV

Cold water slammed across my face and yanked me into ragged consciousness. I gasped, choking on the icy liquid as it ran down my neck. My body jerked violently, but before I could move, pain shot through me like lightning. Something was wrong.

I tried to shift—to call on my wolf—but the moment I did, fire burned around my throat. My body convulsed, and I screamed. My wolf whimpered inside me, caged.

Then I felt it. A collar. Heavy. Cold. Laced with dark energy. A magic choker.

Panic filled my chest. I reached for it, my fingers brushing the metal, but the contact alone made my skin sizzle. My breath came out ragged as laughter echoed from the corner of the room.

"Well, look who's finally awake," one of the men sneered. He stepped closer, his mask hiding most of his face, but I could still see the cruel curve of his mouth.

"Where am I?" I demanded, forcing my voice to steady even though fear gripped me. "What do you want?"

Another man laughed, circling me like a predator. "Oh, sweetheart, it's not what we want. It's what our master wants."

I glared at them. "Your master?"

They didn't answer. Instead, one of them grabbed a fistful of my hair, yanking my head back. "You'll find out soon enough, little hybrid."

I bared my teeth, my body trembling from both anger and pain. "If you think you can keep me here, you're—"

The sound of footsteps cut me off. Slow. Heavy. Confident. The men instantly straightened, their laughter dying as they turned toward the door.

A figure stepped inside. He moved with authority, dressed in simple gray pants and a black T-shirt, the air around him thick with power—and death. I couldn't see his face clearly at first, but his presence alone was enough to make my blood run cold.

"Leave us," he said quietly.

His voice was smooth, deep, and commanding—the kind that didn't need to be raised to inspire fear. The masked men hesitated for only a moment before they bowed slightly and hurried out, shutting the door behind them.

Silence filled the room.

The man finally looked at me. His eyes glowed faintly red. Vampire. But not just any vampire—an Alpha among them. I could feel it in the air, in the weight of his gaze.

A slow, cruel smile spread across his face. "Selene," he said, my name rolling off his tongue like poison wrapped in silk. "I've heard so much about you."

I glared at him, every muscle in my body tense. "Who the fuck are you?"

His grin widened, revealing sharp fangs. "Oh, patience... you will know soon."

He casually took a seat in front of me and sat down calmly. My frown deepened as I glared at him. I didn't need to be told—I knew he was one of those power-seeking vampires. They are one of the reasons I don't leave my pack; they find my blood so tasty.

He leaned forward in the chair, his red eyes glowing brighter in the dim light. "Let's skip the games, shall we?" he said smoothly, his voice calm but deadly. "I'm not here to kill you, Selene. I'm here to offer you a deal."

My jaw clenched. "A deal?"

"Yes," he said, crossing one leg over the other, his posture relaxed—too relaxed. "Either you allow me to feed from you willingly until I am satisfied..." His lips curved into a slow, cruel smile. "...or I drain your blood into a bottle and take my time savoring it later."

I froze, my stomach twisting in disgust.

I could have allowed him to feed because I could poison my blood, but with my wolf trapped, I won't be able to do that.

He tilted his head, watching my reaction like a cat watching a trapped mouse. "Your blood," he murmured, "is special. Rare. A perfect mix of wolf, human, and vampire. Do you know what that makes you, Selene? Power in liquid form."

I spat on the ground between us. "I'll never let you feed from me."

His smirk didn't fade; rather, he looked more excited than before. "Then you'll die. Slowly."

I lifted my chin, glaring at him even though my body trembled. "I know," I hissed. "If you feed from me, you'll become unstoppable. That's what you want, isn't it? Power. But I'd rather die than give it to you."

His eyes narrowed slightly, his fangs glinting as he leaned closer. "Such bravery... or stupidity. I can't decide which."

I turned my face away, my jaw tight. He is not the first vampire to want what's in my veins. He won't be the last. But then I thought of someone who once refused it—my throat tightening as Frederick flashed in my mind. I remembered when I told him to feed from me, to take what he needed. He refused. He said he wouldn't be able to stop. He said he'd kill me if he did. He cared so much. Despite being a vampire and knowing how my blood could make him more powerful, he refused simply because he cared for me..

My chest ached. Was he looking for me now? Or did he think I'd run away? The thought hurt so much. I missed him. I would do anything to see him right now.

The vampire chuckled darkly, breaking through my thoughts. "Ah... there it is," he said softly, his tone mocking. "That little flicker in your eyes. You're thinking of someone, aren't you? Someone who had the chance to taste you—and didn't."

I shot him a deadly glare, saying nothing.

He smiled wider, pleased by my silence. "Don't worry," he whispered, rising to his feet. "If he was foolish enough not to taste you, I'll be sure to make up for it."

He brushed his fingers lightly under my chin, forcing my head up. His touch was cold—unnaturally cold.

"By the time I'm done," he murmured, "he'll wish he'd drained you himself."

My heart pounded, fear twisting into anger. I wanted to kill him. But I couldn't even shift. And that helplessness hurt worse than the magic choking my neck.

He smirked at me. "You have three hours to make the decision: allow me to feed willingly on you, or I'll drain your blood into bottles."

Chapter 438: Exchange

Lord Frederick's POV

"Nothing yet?" I spat, my angry voice echoing all over the room. The investigator flinched, his head bowed, his heartbeat loud in my ears.

"We tracked the SUV to the forest's edge, my lord," he stammered, "but the signal was jammed. Whoever took her knew what they were doing. They—"

"Enough!"

My snarl echoed through the command room, rattling the monitors on the wall. I slammed my fist against the table, splitting the wood clean in half. The men around me froze. No one dared to breathe.

I paced back and forth, my claws threatening to burst through my skin. Rage burned through every inch of me. "She was right outside the gates," I hissed. "Six men. Six! And not one of you managed to stop them?"

"My lord—" one of the guards began.

"Get out!" I roared, my fangs flashing. The guard scrambled away, tripping over his own boots as he fled.

The room fell silent again, except for the furious pounding of my heart. I gripped the edge of the table, my breath heavy. My control was slipping away.

I closed my eyes, trying to focus, but all I saw was her. Selene. Her voice. Her scent. Her eyes the moment she told me to let her go.

And now she was gone. Taken. And if the vampires truly had her, then she wouldn't last long. They wouldn't just kill her. They would drain her. Slowly. Painfully.

My jaw clenched. I couldn't let that happen.

"Expand the search radius," I ordered through gritted teeth. "Double the patrols. Every vampire nest within a hundred miles—burn it to the ground if you have to."

"Yes, my lord," someone said quickly before running off.

I dragged a hand through my hair, pacing toward the window. The night outside was dark and still, but I could feel her faintly. Her scent—warm, sweet—was fading.

"No..." I whispered, my chest tightening painfully. "Don't fade. Don't you dare fade on me."

For the first time in years, I felt something I had forgotten how to feel. Fear. Real fear.

I pressed a hand to the cold glass, my reflection staring back at me: my eyes red, my fangs bared, a monster wearing a man's face.

"You can't die, Selene," I muttered under my breath. "Not before I tell you the truth."

My throat burned. I turned sharply to the guard waiting by the door. "Get the car ready. I'm going myself."

The guard hesitated. "My lord, it's too dangerous—"

"Do it!" I snapped, my voice echoing like thunder.

He bowed and ran.

I looked out again into the darkness, every nerve in my body screaming for blood. If anyone laid a hand on her—if she was hurt—I would burn their entire world to ashes.

Suddenly my phone vibrated against the desk. I almost ignored it until the display flashed. Hidden number. A cold knot tightened in my gut.

I picked up before it finished ringing. A voice came through, but it sounded altered, cartoon-like. The person must have changed the voice so I wouldn't recognize it.

"Lord Frederick," the voice said, "we have your—" it paused, and the line crackled. For a breath I thought I recognized the cadence—a ghost of a laugh, a tilt of a syllable I'd heard before—but the distortion swallowed it. "—guest."

My hand tightened on the phone until my knuckles whitened. "Who is this?" I ground out. Rage made my teeth ache. "What do you want with her?"

The voice chuckled, low and humorless. "We'll make a trade. Your woman for ours."

A laugh bubbled up in my chest, bitter and hollow. "You'll bring her back unharmed?" I asked, though I didn't want to believe the answer.

"Yes," the voice said. "Unharmed. We will return her if you hand over Olivia."

My frown deepened. "You want Olivia," I repeated slowly. "You want me to hand her over."

"Three hours," the voice said. "Decide. When the time is up, we call. If you refuse, we will send her dead body back to you."

My heart sank in fear, but I managed to keep my voice steady so I wouldn't show any sign of weakness.

"You are playing a dangerous game," I said finally. "You do know who you are up against." The voice made as if to laugh, but it was only static. "We do not bargain with bluffs, Lord Frederick. We call again in three hours."

The line went dead.

For a long moment I just held the dead phone to my ear; the silence afterward was louder than any shout. Then I slammed the receiver down so hard the desk rattled.

Three hours.

My mind split into knives. If I handed Olivia over, I would save Selene—but I would doom the pact, the prophecy, the future I had been building. And Olivia... she doesn't deserve to be a sacrificial lamb. But if I refused, Selene might die.

I dragged my hand down my face until my vision blurred. There was no clean answer. "Find her," I barked to the nearest guard, my voice setting the room into motion. "Every car. Every scout. Grid search the forest. Now."

He saluted and ran.

I paced the office, every step a drumbeat to the countdown already started on my skin. Three hours. Three hours to decide whether I would trade one life for another. Three hours to hand Olivia over or to lose someone I couldn't bear to lose.

The clock on the wall seemed to mock me, its hand moving with slow, indifferent certainty.

I picked up my phone again and stared at it as if the answer might be written there. Instead, I only heard my own breath, ragged and thin.

Suddenly Olivia appeared in my study. I was startled to see her. She raised her brow as she glanced at me. "Any news about her yet?" she asked.

I swallowed hard and looked away. I love Selene. I want to save her but I can't hand Olivia over—no one knows what they would do with her. I can't let her go through such a fate.

She stepped closer, not letting me dodge. "Frederick, tell me. Something's wrong—I can feel it." Her jaw set. "If you're keeping anything from me—"

She didn't finish the threat. She didn't have to.

She pressed, softer now, the anger replaced by raw worry. "Please. Tell me."

I let out a breath. "I... got a call," I said finally. My voice sounded small to my own ears. "A masked number. They have Selene."

Her face went cold. "What? Who—"

"They offered a trade," I cut in before she could chain a dozen questions. The words wanted to choke me. "They'll return her unharmed if I hand you over to them. Three hours. That's the deadline."

Chapter 439: The Deal

Olivia's POV

I never expected Frederick to tell me this... that whoever had Selene wanted me and that they had only given him three hours. I stared at him and saw how frustrated and miserable he looked... he was on the verge of breaking down.

"Do you have any idea who could do this?" I asked, curious.

He rubbed his face once, hard. He looked at the floor before he answered.

"Three suspects," he said finally. "A vampire nest that's been angry at me for months. A rogue hunter group that traffics hybrids. And... someone inside the city with a grudge," he spat.

Three suspects. My mind raced with different thoughts. I opened my mouth to ask more, to press him for details, but my wolf snarled in my head and shoved against my thoughts.

Don't, she warned. This is dangerous.

She wanted me to hold back, to stay away, but I couldn't.

An idea formed in my head. It was quick and dangerous and selfless and brave all at once. My hands went cold as I looked at Frederick.

I knew I could never tell the triplets. They would never agree. They would fight me, stop me. They loved me too much to accept the risk I was about to offer.

I took a breath and said it anyway. My voice felt steady even though my heart was pounding.

"Take me," I said. "Give me to them. Save Selene."

Frederick's head snapped up so fast I almost missed it. His eyes went wide, furious and stunned.

"What?" he barked.

"I'll go," I said. "If that's what it takes. I won't tell the triplets. They'll never agree. But I will go. Let Selene live."

For a long second there was only the sound of my own breathing. Frederick looked like someone punched him in the gut. I could see the war inside him—the plan, the prophecy, the future he wanted with me, and the person he was clearly falling for.

"You can't be serious," he said at last, voice low.

"I am," I answered. "But only on one condition."

His jaw worked. He looked at me as if trying to read my bones. Then, slowly, he lowered himself onto the seat behind his desk and settled his curious gaze on me.

"On what condition?" he asked, sounding like he already knew what I would be asking.

I didn't hesitate. With my gaze fixed on his, I responded.

"You will break the vow tying me to you," I said. "If I exchange myself for Selene, and she comes back safely, you will break the blood vow. I will no longer be tied to you. I will be free."

For a heartbeat, he said nothing. His eyes bored into mine, sharp, searching, as if he could see every thought, every flicker of fear running through me.

Then he leaned back slowly in his chair, his claws retracting as he steepled his fingers under his chin.

"You'd really do that?" he said at last, his voice hoarse, sounding disbelieving. "You'd walk into a den of vampires, knowing what they do to you, just to free her?"

"I'd do it," I said quietly. "But only if you free me. That's my price."

He exhaled sharply, dragging a hand over his face.

"Olivia..." he whispered, sounding frustrated. "Do you even know what you're offering? Do you have any idea what they could do to you?"

"Yes," I said. "I do. But that is for me to worry about, not you... all you should be concerned about is Selene coming back safely."

For a long moment, there was only silence. The clock on the wall ticked loudly, each sound a countdown to the three hours we'd been given.

Finally, Frederick's hands dropped to the desk. He stared at me, his eyes dark and unreadable.

"You're either the bravest woman I've ever met," he said slowly, "or the most foolish."

I lifted my chin. "Maybe both. But do you agree?"

His nostrils flared. His fangs caught the light as he gritted his teeth. Then, slowly, he nodded once. A single, hard nod.

"If she comes back alive," he said. "If she is unharmed... I will break the blood vow. You will be free."

Relief and fear crashed over me at the same time. My hands shook, but I kept my face still.

"Then we have a deal," I said.

Frederick stared at me with disbelief, but I also noticed the worry etched on his face, which wasn't just for Selene but for me.

"How are you going to save yourself?" he asked, sounding worried.

I shrugged, acting nonchalant, but deep inside I was scared. I knew I had my teleporting ability, but once they clawed the magical collar on me, I knew my ability might be depressing, so how do I save myself? Frederick was right; this was foolishness, but I would do anything to be free from being tied to him.

Frederick frowned deeply. "We have to draft out an escape plan for you."

I opened my mouth to answer, but the phone on his desk rang again, loud and sharp. The hidden number flashed across the screen.

The kidnappers were calling back.

Frederick and I locked eyes. We were both tense. He picked it up without hesitation and put it on the loudspeaker so I could hear.

"What?"

A distorted, cartoon-like voice came through, cold and mocking.

"Have you made your decision, Lord Frederick?"

His jaw tightened. "Yes," he said through gritted teeth. "We accept. How do we do this?"

A crackle of static. Then the voice again, slow and deliberate.

"Only you and the girl. No guards. No tricks."

I felt my stomach twist. The girl. They meant me.

Frederick's knuckles whitened around the phone. "Where?" he demanded.

There was a pause, and then the voice gave the answer like a sentence being passed.

"An old warehouse on the outskirts. You know the one—the abandoned freight depot by the river. She will be there. Alive. For now."

I swallowed hard. My heart pounded in my ears.

Frederick's eyes flicked to mine, full of fury and something like fear.

"We'll come," he said. "But if you harm her—"

The voice cut him off with a low laugh, harsh through the distortion.

"She has a bomb strapped to her. A single wrong move from you, a single trick, and she explodes. No games, Lord Frederick. No surprises. You bring the girl, and we give you yours."

The line went dead.

For a heartbeat, the room felt like it tilted. I could hear my wolf snarling inside me, claws raking against my chest.

A bomb. They were serious. This wasn't a bluff.

Frederick lowered the phone slowly, his face pale under the rage. He looked at me like he was already trying to memorize my face.

"They've set the location," he said, voice rough. "We have to go now. Just you and me."

I nodded once, forcing my voice to stay steady even though my hands trembled.

"Then let's go."

Inside, my wolf hissed and shoved against my ribs.

This is madness, Olivia.

Chapter 440: Meet Up

Olivia's POV

He didn't move at first. He just stared at me — as if memorizing my face — then opened a drawer and pulled out a black case. Inside were knives made of silver, small bottles of glowing blue liquid, and a gun I'd never seen before. I didn't ask questions. I didn't want to.

He took out one small blade and hid it under his coat. "If something happens," he said softly, "don't hesitate. Teleport."

I gave a weak smile. Was he genuinely concerned for me? "You know I won't."

He didn't smile back. He reached for my wrist and pressed his thumb against it, drawing a red mark with his blood. I thought vampires had no blood... but Frederick does. It burned hot for a second.

"What are you doing?" I whispered.

"Marking you," he said. "So I can find you — no matter where they take you."

I didn't answer. I just nodded. Then I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, calling on my power.

The world spun. The floor vanished.

When it stopped, I opened my eyes — and cold air hit my face. We were standing inside a dark warehouse. The air smelled of rust, old blood, and rain.

My heart began to race. Every sound echoed. A drop of water. The creak of metal. The beat of my heart.

And then... I saw Selene.

She was tied to a chair in the middle of the room. Her head hung low, her hair covering her face. A small red light blinked on her chest.

"Selene," I breathed.

Frederick froze. I could feel his anger in the air. His hands curled into fists, his fangs slightly bared.

We walked closer, slow and careful. But every step made my stomach twist. Something didn't feel right.

"Wait," I whispered. "It's too quiet."

The shadows around us moved. Six men stepped out — all in black masks, holding silver guns. My wolf growled inside me, enraged and angry.

Then a cold voice came from a speaker somewhere above. The same cartoon-like voice from the phone.

"Step forward. No tricks."

Frederick's eyes flickered red. He squeezed my hand once — strong, warm, like he was saying goodbye without words. Then he let go.

I stepped closer.

Selene's head lifted slowly. Her eyes found mine. They were wide, glassy, and terrified.

She shook her head weakly. Her lips moved. I couldn't hear her — but I could read the word.

Run.

My whole body froze. The red light on her chest started blinking faster.

"Frederick..." I whispered.

His eyes went wide. "No."

The voice from the speaker came again — calm, and cold. "Pick up the collar," it said. "Put it on. Now."

My eyes flicked down.

There, lying on the dusty floor near my feet, was a black collar. It shimmered faintly, like it had tiny sparks trapped inside. Even from here I could feel its power crawling over my skin. My wolf shrank back, growling low.

It was magic. A choker like the one on Selene. It would crush my ability, cage my wolf, make me helpless.

"Do it," the voice ordered. "One minute. If not, the bomb on her chest goes off."

The red light on Selene's chest blinked faster. Her eyes begged me not to do it.

My hands started to shake. I thought of the triplets — how they would be broken if I never came back.

But I also remembered Frederick's mark burning on my wrist. And under my thigh, hidden in my boot, the small knife. I swallowed hard. "This is crazy..." I whispered.

Frederick's eyes were on me, red and wild. He didn't say anything, but his jaw clenched hard. His hand twitched as if to stop me — then went still.

The voice came again, louder this time. "Thirty seconds."

My heart hammered.

My wolf pushed against me, snarling. Don't do it. Don't give in.

I bent down slowly. My fingers brushed the collar. Sparks jumped to my skin, stinging like tiny needles.

I closed my eyes. This is the only way, I told myself. Behind me, Frederick hissed under his breath. "Olivia..."

I looked at him once — his face torn between rage and fear — then back at the collar in my hands.

"Ten seconds," the voice said.

I lifted the collar to my throat. My wolf howled inside me.

My hands trembled as I lifted it. It felt heavier than it looked. The metal was cold, but it burned at the same time, like holding ice that was on fire.

"Five seconds," the voice warned.

My heart pounded so fast I thought it might burst. I took a deep breath and snapped the collar around my neck.

The moment it clicked shut, pain shot through me.

It was like a thousand tiny needles stabbing my skin all at once. My knees almost gave out, and I gasped, clutching my throat.

"Olivia!" Frederick's voice boomed behind me, angry and scared.

The collar glowed faint blue. My body felt weak — empty. My wolf cried inside my head, fading, fading... until I could barely hear her voice.

"Stay strong," I whispered, even though it hurt to speak.

The voice from the speaker laughed softly. "Good girl," it said. "Now step away from the vampire."

I turned my head to look at Frederick. His eyes were glowing red, full of rage and pain. He wanted to kill them all — I could see it — but he didn't move.

He couldn't. If he did, Selene would die.

I took one small step forward. Then another. My legs felt heavy, but I forced them to move.

When I was close enough, one of the masked men walked over and grabbed my arm roughly. I wanted to fight back, but my strength was gone. The collar had taken it all.

"Don't touch her!" Frederick shouted, his fangs flashing.

"Another step," the voice warned from the speaker, "and the bomb goes off."

Frederick froze, his chest rising and falling hard.

I looked at him again. His eyes met mine, and for a second, everything went quiet.

He didn't speak, but I could see the words in his gaze. Don't die.

I gave a small nod. My fingers brushed the knife hidden under my thigh strap. I had one chance — just one.

The man dragged me forward toward Selene, who was crying softly now.

The red light on her chest blinked faster... faster...

"Let her go!" I shouted.

The voice only laughed again. "You have served your purpose, Olivia Parker. But I never said I'd let either of you go."

Fated To Not Just One, But Three #Chapter 441: Hostage - Read Fated To Not Just One, But Three Chapter 441: Hostage

Chapter 441: Hostage

Olivia's POV

"You have two minutes," the voice said. "Leave now, Lord Frederick, or both women die."

Frederick did not move at first. He stood like a statue, his chest heaving. His eyes burned red. I could see the war in him—anger, fear, something like pain.

"No," he growled. "You promised to hand over Selene."

The voice laughed softly. "And you are foolish to believe that."

The red light on Selene's chest started to blink faster. I heard it—tick, tick—small and sharp in the loud room. My hands shook. My collar buzzed cold against my skin.

Frederick took one step forward. He looked like a beast about to break free. But the cartoon-like voice spoke again.

"Last warning," it said. "One minute."

Frederick's jaw clenched. He looked at me once. In his eyes I saw something soft, a word without noise. He was coming back for us.

Then, with a hard look, he turned away.

He did not walk slowly. He ran. He did not look back.

The two men grabbed my arms roughly. One of them pulled a dark cloth over my face. Cold cloth. My sight went black.

They dragged me. Hard. My feet scraped the floor. My heart pounded so loud I thought it would break my ribs.

I felt hands on my shoulders, on my arms. I felt the collar catch and tug. I felt the rope around Selene's chair being cut as she was dragged along with me. The cloth pressed harder over my eyes. I could not see. I could not move. My legs were pulled, then pushed, then hurried.

Someone shoved me into the back of a car. The floor of the car smelled like oil and metal. The world spun.

I tried to think of the triplets. I tried to think of escape. My fingers closed around the knife hidden under my thigh, but my hands were tied. My breath came fast.

From beside me I heard the ticking of the bomb.

I squeezed my eyes shut under the blindfold and prayed I could still teleport. I prayed Frederick could find a way. The triplets, even if angry, would find a way.

Soon the car began to move, and I couldn't see where they were taking me. All I could do was wait and see what plan these people had, taking me and Selene hostage.

The car stopped with a jerk. Metal screeched. My head hit the seat. My blindfold stayed on.

Two men hauled us out. They pushed us hard. I stumbled.

They shoved us into a small room. The door slammed. My blindfold was ripped off.

Light burned my eyes. I blinked. I looked around.

Selene sat beside me on the floor. Her hair hung in her face. Her eyes were dark and tired.

She glared at me. "Why did you come?" she asked, sounding pissed.

I breathed out slowly. My throat felt tight. I did not want to say it. But I had to.

"I didn't do this for you," I said. I tried to sound cold. "I made a deal with Frederick. If I go with them, he will let me go. He will break the blood vow if you come back safe."

Selene's face changed. Surprise flickered there. Then anger returned like a flame.

"You two are fools?" she hissed. "How could you believe such?" She spat and glared at me with disappointment before looking away.

I frowned but realized she was indeed right. Why did we not think this through? Damn it!

I sucked in a deep breath and relaxed against the cold wall as I closed my eyes, trying to communicate with my wolf, but unfortunately she was subdued. I tried to unleash flames from my fingers, but nothing flickered out.

Selene scoffed. "Don't bother... it won't work."

I forced my eyes open and stared at her. It hadn't been more than twenty-four hours since she was taken, but she already looked... different.

Her lips were pale, her skin had lost its glow, and the usual fire in her eyes was dim. She looked drained—weak—like someone had sucked the life out of her.

"What did they do to you?" I asked softly, even though I wasn't sure I wanted to know.

Selene gave a short, bitter laugh. "What do you think? They're vampires," she said coldly. "They didn't bite, if that's what you're wondering..."

My stomach turned. I didn't ask more. Her voice alone told me she wasn't in the mood to speak.

Silence hung between us again. I stared at the locked steel door, my wrists sore from the ropes.

"We need to get out of here," I muttered.

Selene turned her head slowly toward me. "And how exactly do you plan to do that?" she asked, sounding tired, almost mocking. "Your powers are gone. So are mine. That collar drains everything from us."

I bit the inside of my cheek, refusing to give in to the hopelessness pressing against my chest. "Frederick will come," I said. "And my mates... they will come."

She gave me a look stripped of hope, then turned away. The silence didn't last long.

The door creaked open again, slowly this time. Not like before. A man stepped in—tall, dressed in black from head to toe, his face hidden behind a metal mask. The sound of his boots echoed softly as he crossed the room. He didn't rush. He moved like he owned the place.

He dragged a chair from the corner and sat in front of us, leaning back casually, like this was a friendly meeting and not a hostage situation. The mask tilted slightly as he studied us.

"Well," he said finally, his voice deep and calm, not like the cartoon one from the speaker—this one was real. Cold and smooth. "Now that we're all settled..." He rested his gloved hands together. "Let's have a civilized discussion."

Selene scoffed weakly beside me, her head turning away. "You call this civilized?"

The man chuckled under the mask. "Considering you're both still breathing," he said, "I'd say yes. Civilized enough."

I kept quiet, watching him carefully. His scent was strange—not vampire, not wolf, not human. Something in between. My jaw tightened. "What do you want from me?"

He tilted his head, like he found my question amusing. "Actually, the question is what do I want from you both."

He leaned forward slightly. "And trust me..." His tone dropped lower. "It's not what you think."

Chapter 442: Exchange Of Life

Olivia's POV

The masked man leaned back in his chair, his gloved hands resting loosely on his knees. For a moment, he just stared at me through that faceless mask. Then his voice came, low and calm, like a blade sliding across stone.

"My son is dying," he said. "And you... you are going to heal him."

I blinked at him, confused. "Heal him?" My voice cracked. "Why would you go this far—kidnapping Selene, dragging me here—just for that? If your son is sick, I can help. I can heal him. You didn't have to do this."

He tilted his head slightly, like he pitied me. "It's not as simple as you think," he said. "His illness is not a wound. It's an exchange. A curse. His life for another's."

My stomach tightened. "What do you mean?"

The man leaned forward, elbows on his knees. "If you heal him, the curse won't just break—it will move. His heart will start beating again, and yours will stop."

I felt the blood drain from my face. My wolf growled weakly inside me, but the collar smothered her voice. "You're insane," I whispered. "You can't ask me to—"

"I'm not asking," he interrupted sharply. "I am telling you."

He sat back again, then turned his masked face toward Selene. She stiffened under his gaze, her lips pressed tight.

"And after you heal him," he continued, voice smooth, "my son will feed. From her."

Selene's eyes went wide. "No," she hissed, her voice trembling but full of rage. "You touch me and—"

"You will do nothing," he said flatly. "Neither of you will."

My breath came fast. "You don't need to do this," I said quickly, desperate now. "If your son is cursed, there must be another way..."

"No," the masked man said again. "You are the only one who carries Hailee's special abilities. You don't even know how powerful you are yet. Only you can heal him. And only she—" he glanced at Selene "—can sate his hunger without killing him."

Selene shook her head violently. "This is madness!"

He tilted his head, as if amused. "Madness or desperation? Sometimes they are the same thing."

I clenched my fists, feeling the knife under my thigh strap pressing into my skin like a reminder. My mind raced. If I healed this boy, I might die. And Selene would be fed on like livestock.

But at the same time... if I refused, would he kill us both now?

The masked man stood. "My son will be brought here in a few hours," he said calmly. "You should both get ready."

He turned toward the door, pausing for a moment. "Don't do anything foolish, Olivia. The collar will make sure of that."

Then he left.

The door slammed, the sound echoing through the small, cold room. Silence followed. My mind spun with thoughts. There had to be a way out. There had to be. Frederick would come. The triplets would come. But would they make it in time?

I pressed my back to the wall, thinking, counting the seconds, and replaying every possible way to break the collar. Selene sat still beside me, her eyes distant, lost somewhere I couldn't reach.

Just as I was thinking, I overheard footsteps—slow at first, then heavier, closer. A key scraped inside the lock.

The door burst open.

Two guards entered, their faces twisted with something ugly. My stomach dropped as I realized their intent. One reached for me, the other for Selene, their hands already pulling at their belts.

They grinned, exposing themselves as they moved closer. "You'll do as you're told," one of them hissed.

Selene's voice trembled with anger. "Stay away from me—!"

They forced their hands against our faces, trying to pry our mouths open. The stench of them made bile rise in my throat. But as one of them shoved his filthy cock toward my lips, I opened my mouth—not to obey, but to strike.

I bit down. Hard. His scream tore through the room as blood flooded my mouth, metallic and bitter. He staggered back, clutching himself, cursing and howling in pain.

Before the other could react, the door slammed open again.

The masked man strode in, his presence like a thunderclap. His voice was no longer calm—it was a roar.

"What do you think you're doing?"

Both guards froze, the one bleeding collapsing to his knees, his hands still clutching himself.

"We... we just wanted to have fun," the uninjured guard stammered, his voice breaking under the weight of that faceless gaze.

The masked man's head tilted, slowly, dangerously. "Fun?"

"Yes... sir," the other whispered hoarsely, blood dripping between his fingers. "We thought—"

"You thought?" The masked man cut him off, his voice low and angry now. "These women are not here for your amusement. They are not toys. They are not for fun."

He took one step closer, the leather of his boots whispering against the floor. "You broke my command. You shamed my house." His gloved hand twitched once at his side as if restraining himself. "You will be punished."

The guards swallowed hard, terror etched into every line of their faces.

"Get out," the masked man hissed. "Now."

They scrambled for the door, dragging the bleeding one out. The masked man slammed the door behind them, the lock clicking sharply into place. The room fell silent again except for the sound of my heartbeat thundering in my ears.

I spat the blood out onto the cold floor, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand. Selene looked at me, her eyes blazing—not with fear this time, but with something like pride.

"That was insane," she breathed, almost a whisper, but her lips curved slightly upward.

A weak chuckle escaped me before I could stop it. "Maybe it was," I smirked.

For a moment, the room fell quiet again—but then, unexpectedly, Selene laughed, and I joined. For the first time since we'd been dragged here, we both laughed. It wasn't loud. It wasn't even for long. But it was real. It was the first time we'd shared something other than fear, anger, or hate towards each other, and in that brief moment, I wondered—just for a heartbeat—what things might have been like between us if we had met under different circumstances.

Chapter 443: Something Is Wrong

Lennox's POV

"Ahhh..." I felt an unbearable pain hit my chest. The pain was so severe that it almost sent me stumbling to the ground if I hadn't grabbed the edge of the desk. I wanted to move and instantly realized something was wrong. "Olivia!" I whispered, my lips trembling, while my wolf answered with a raw, keening howl inside me, confirming every terrible suspicion.

Before I could move, the study door burst open. Louis stumbled in first, followed by Levi. Both looked pale and shaken, their eyes already wide with the same fear twisting inside me.

"You felt it too?" Louis asked, his voice trembling.

Levi didn't even wait for my answer. "Something's wrong with Olivia," he said sharply. "I can't feel her. The bond—it's weak, almost gone."

I tried to link to her, focusing on the spark that always connected us — but nothing came back. No warmth, no voice, no trace of her mind. Just silence.

"Olivia!" I called again through the link, forcing the bond to open, but it was like shouting into an empty void. Blocked.

Panic rushed through me. Just a few minutes ago, she had been here. We'd drafted a plan. She was supposed to go talk to Frederick — to make a deal. The plan was simple: she'd convince him that if we helped him find Selene, he'd let her go, break the blood vow. After that, she was supposed to return and tell us if he agreed.

That was all. A conversation. A negotiation.

So why couldn't I feel her now?

Louis slammed his fist on the desk. "She should've been back by now!" he shouted. "What if something happened—"

Levi cut him off, his voice low but trembling. "The bond wouldn't react like this unless she was in danger."

I clenched my fists. The panic turned into fury. "We have to talk to Frederick."

Levi's hands were shaking as he pulled his phone from his pocket. "I'm calling him," he muttered, already dialing Frederick's number.

We all went silent. The only sound was the ringing. Once... twice... three times. No answer.

Louis cursed under his breath. "Pick up, damn it!"

Levi tried again. Still nothing. I could feel my heartbeat pounding in my throat. My wolf paced inside me, growling low and uneasy. Every instinct screamed that Olivia was in danger.

"His mansion is at least four hours away," Louis said, his voice tight. "If something happened—"

"Don't," I cut him off sharply, clenching my fists. "Don't even say it."

The air felt heavy. I could barely breathe. I tried the bond again, pouring all my strength into it — Olivia, answer me. But it was like hitting a brick wall.

My panic turned to rage. "We're not waiting," I snapped. "We're going to Frederick."

Levi looked at me, hesitant. "Lennox, we don't even know if he is home—"

"I don't care!" I shouted. "She's in trouble. I can feel it."

Levi exhaled shakily and nodded. "Fine. Let's go."

We were already heading for the door when Levi's phone rang.

Frederick.

Levi put it on loudspeaker immediately. "Where is Olivia?" he demanded.

There was silence on the other end. No background noise, no breath — just stillness.

Then Frederick's voice came, low and strained. "You need to calm down."

Louis growled. "Don't tell us to calm down! Where the hell is she?"

Something in Frederick's tone made my chest tighten. "Something... happened," he said. "I'm on my way to you now."

"What do you mean something happened?" I roared. "What did you do to her?!"

"I said I'm coming," he snapped, his voice breaking for the first time. Then the line went dead.

Levi's hand dropped, the phone slipping from his fingers.

For a moment, no one moved. The room was silent except for the sound of our ragged breathing.

We went downstairs, but the panic followed us. None of us spoke. We didn't even know what to do — wait? Run? Fight? My wolf was restless, pacing and clawing at my insides.

Louis kept pacing in front of the window, his hands in his hair. "What if she's—"

"Don't," I snapped. My voice cracked. "Don't say it."

Levi sat on the edge of the couch, phone clutched in his fist, staring at the dead line like he could force Frederick back onto it.

Minutes crawled by, every tick of the clock like a knife in my chest. We had to know what happened before we could act. We had to.

Then I heard it — the low growl of a car engine rolling up the drive.

I was already moving before Louis could even speak. We ran outside. Gravel crunched under our boots.

Frederick's car came into view, headlights slicing through the dark. It rolled to a stop. The moment he stepped out, I was on him.

I grabbed him by the collar of his coat and slammed him back against the hood. "Where is Olivia?!" I roared, my wolf's voice blending with mine.

He didn't fight back. His face was pale, his eyes hollow. "Listen to me—"

"Tell me now!" I snarled, shaking him.

Frederick's jaw tightened. He looked at each of us once, then said quietly, "The kidnappers... they wanted Olivia in exchange for Selene. She accepted."

Louis staggered back like he'd been struck. "She what?"

"She told me she had a plan," Frederick went on, his voice low, almost shaking. "She believed she could handle it. We went to the exchange point, but when we got there..." His eyes darkened. "They refused to release Selene."

Levi's hands balled into fists. "So you just—what—let her go?!"

Frederick's lips pressed together. "They had Selene wired with a bomb. One wrong move and she would die. Olivia insisted. She—"

"Bastard!" I snarled and punched him across the jaw. He stumbled back against the car, blood blooming at the corner of his mouth.

"She is our mate!" I roared. "How dare you let her walk into that!"

Frederick wiped the blood from his lip, his eyes still burning but calm. "I'm going to get her and Selene back," he said quietly. "But you need to understand—if we rush in, they'll kill her and Selene both."

I shook my head, my whole body trembling with rage and pain. "I feel like killing you right now." I spat at Frederick as I felt the urge to hit him again, but I knew now wasn't the time for that. With a panting heart, I moved away from him. My wolf howled inside me, while I was already plotting a move.

Chapter 444: The Rescue

Levi's POV

We sat around the big table and tried to think fast.

"I marked Olivia so I could track her no matter where they took her," Frederick said. His voice was rough. "All we need is to get our men and silently attack."

I looked at him. Then I looked at my brothers.

That sounded simple. It was not.

My head was racing. My hands felt cold. I had to be calm. I breathed slowly.

"We can't just rush in," I said. My voice was quiet but filled with panic. "They have collars that stop powers. They have a bomb on Selene. If we run in angry, they will kill them both."

Lennox slammed his fist and shouted. Louis wanted to go now. I understood them. But we needed a plan that wouldn't get Olivia or Selene hurt more.

"I'll do tech," I said. "I'll jam their cameras and block their radios so we get in without them calling for more men. I can make a thirty-second blackout. That's our window."

Luckily, my skills could be put to use tonight.

Louis nodded. "I'll do the locks and the loud part. I'll blow the bolts so the doors open."

Lennox glared at me but then said, "I go for Olivia. I get her out."

Frederick sighed but agreed. "I'll lead us to them."

"We move quietly," I said. "Levi and Levi only for tech inside. Louis with explosives at the back gate. Lennox goes straight to the hostages. Frederick will be the distraction — the boss walking in. We do the blackout, we get in, we get them out."

The clock on the wall stared at us. Time was slipping. It was past midnight, and according to Frederick, they were being held hostage in a warehouse almost three hours from here — but I doubted they would still be there. They must have moved them.

"Call the scouts," Lennox ordered. "If this goes bad, we need backup ready."

I pushed a button on my phone and sent the message.

My wolf pressed at my mind, nervous and ready. I put my hand over my heart and said, "We do this clean. No mistakes."

We all stood up. The plan was set. My chest hurt, but I felt sharp, like a blade ready to work.

I packed my gear — the device, my comms jammer, and a small knife. I checked everything twice.

We left the room together. The air outside smelled of rain. The night felt cold. Outside, our head of warriors, Anthony, was already waiting by the convoy, armed and ready, eyes wide with concern.

"Alphas," he said, looking between us, "the scouts are on standby. Just give the word."

I nodded. "Follow us behind, but not too closely. Once we confirm the location, you and the men move in. No noise, no mistakes. Wait for my signal."

Anthony gave a firm nod and hurried off to brief the team.

Frederick opened his car door, his face drawn tight with exhaustion and guilt. We followed him in. Lennox sat up front, Louis beside me in the back. My gear bag sat between my feet — jammer, signal tracker, knives. My heart wouldn't stop racing.

Frederick leaned forward and spoke low to the driver.

"Head toward the southern route," he said, then closed his eyes.

At first, I thought he was praying—but no. His hands hovered slightly, his breathing evened out. His power, faint but real, filled the car.

He wasn't praying—he was tracking.

I watched in silence as the faint veins in his neck glowed red for a moment, his voice almost a whisper. "Left... then straight. They're moving north, but faintly."

The driver followed his every word without question.

For almost an hour, Frederick didn't open his eyes. He kept murmuring quiet directions, like he could see something invisible — a trail only he could follow. I had seen powerful vampires before, but this was different. Frederick was on another level.

Louis leaned forward. "Are we still headed to the warehouse?"

Frederick's brow furrowed. "No... they're not there anymore."

My stomach dropped. "Then where the hell are they?"

He didn't answer right away. The air in the car grew tense.

Finally, he exhaled—a long, shaky breath. "They're moving deeper into the valley. West of the industrial zone. There's an old rail yard there. That's where they've taken them."

Frederick's words hung in the air like frost.

An old rail yard.

The driver pressed harder on the gas, the sound of the engine cutting through the silence. My heart thudded against my ribs. I could feel Lennox's rage from the front seat—the way his knuckles tightened around the dashboard, the way his wolf's aura leaked through his skin. Louis, beside me, sat too still, his jaw clenched, eyes burning into the dark road ahead.

None of us spoke for a while. There was nothing to say. We all knew what that place meant.

The rail yard had been abandoned for years — long enough for rogues and criminals to use it as a hideout.

Frederick's hand twitched slightly. His voice came out rough. "They're cloaked. Someone strong is hiding them. But the mark I placed on Olivia still pulses faintly, but it's there. She's alive."

That was all I needed to hear.

I grabbed the map from my bag and spread it across my knees. "The rail yard's fenced off. There are four access points—the east gate, two side service doors, and the main platform entrance. We'll need to split up."

Frederick nodded once. "I'll draw their attention. They know me. They'll expect me to come."

I studied him quietly. "And if this is a trap?"

He gave a small, humorless smile. "Then it's one I'll walk into willingly."

The car fell silent again.

Rain began to fall — light at first, then harder, the drops hitting the windshield like small explosions.

The driver slowed as Frederick lifted a hand. "Stop here," he said suddenly.

We rolled to a halt beside a stretch of cracked asphalt. We were surrounded by tall grass, half-dead trees, and the faint glow of distant streetlights. Ahead, a rusted gate stood slightly open, leading into the forgotten rail yard.

Frederick's eyes opened, glowing faint red. "They're in there," he said quietly. "About five hundred meters in. Underground chamber."

Louis opened his door first. "Then let's not waste time."

Lennox stepped out next, his wolf growling low, already ready for blood. I grabbed my gear, slung my bag over my shoulder, and followed them into the wet night.

I pressed a button on my jammer. "Signal's live. In case they have CCTV cameras planted, it will go dark once we cross the perimeter."

Lennox gave a single nod. "Let's move."

We moved through the shadows, silent and cautious—three brothers and one vampire with the same goal.

And as thunder rumbled above us, I whispered to myself,

Hold on, Olivia. We're coming.

Chapter 445: The Ritual

Olivia's POV

It had been more than thirty minutes since the masked man left, and the silence in the room had grown so heavy it felt suffocating — thick enough to choke on. Selene sat a few feet away, her knees pulled tightly to her chest, her gaze fixed on the floor. Every so often, she'd glance at me, and I'd glance back, but neither of us spoke. There was nothing left to say that wouldn't sound hollow or useless.

I was lost in my thoughts.

In my guilt.

The triplets... I could almost picture their faces when they found out what I had done — the hurt, the anger, the disbelief. I'd gone behind their backs again, made another reckless choice, and this time, I wasn't sure I'd survive it.

My fingers brushed over the fabric of my pants, feeling for the small knife still tucked beneath it. That was my only backup plan — a thin, cold piece of metal.

Pathetic.

I sighed quietly and looked toward the locked steel door.

Where are they now?

Were they already on their way here?

Did Frederick tell them what happened?

The thought of it made my stomach twist. I was worried not just for myself but for their safety. The collar around my neck buzzed faintly again, sending a cold shiver down my spine. My wolf whimpered weakly, trapped and helpless.

I pressed my palms to my knees and whispered under my breath, "Please, let them find me before it's too late..."

Selene looked up, her face tired but curious. "You still think they'll come?" she asked softly.

I met her eyes. "They will," I said, though my voice shook. "They always do."

But deep down, a small, frightened part of me wondered, what if this time, they can't?

A moment of suffocating silence hung in the air until Selene suddenly spoke.

"You know..." she said, staring at the wall, "I used to hate you."

I blinked, caught off guard. "What?"

She turned her head slowly, her tired eyes locking onto mine. "I hated you before I even met you. Everyone spoke about you—the miracle, the chosen one, the girl born with power in her blood." She let out a dry laugh. "Do you know how that feels? To grow up hearing about someone who has the life you were supposed to have?"

Her words stung, but I didn't interrupt.

She continued, her tone bitter but trembling. "We're both descendants of Hailee. Same bloodline. But you... you're the one with the gift. The one the Moon seemed to favor. And me?" Her voice cracked slightly. "I got nothing. Just the shadow of a name."

I stared at her—really stared. For the first time, I didn't see the cold, proud woman Frederick had tried so hard to protect. I saw someone who was tired. Jealous. Hurt.

I swallowed, my throat tight. "I didn't ask for any of it," I said softly. "You think it's easy being special? Every time something goes wrong, it's me they come for. Me they blame. Me they want dead."

Her gaze flickered, but she didn't speak.

I looked down at my hands, whispering, "If I could, I'd give it up. I'd love to just be Olivia Parker—daughter of a former Gamma. A normal werewolf who didn't have to heal people or fight curses." I gave a weak laugh. "If I were normal, I wouldn't be sitting here right now."

For a long moment, Selene said nothing. Then, slowly, the edge in her eyes softened.

"I thought you were arrogant," she muttered. "But maybe you're just... unlucky."

That made me smile—small, tired, but real. "Maybe both."

The tension that had filled the room since we were thrown in here seemed to ease just a little. For the first time since this nightmare started, the silence between us didn't feel like a wall. It felt like a pause—a fragile peace in the middle of chaos.

Selene leaned back against the wall, her voice calmer. "If we survive this," she said, "I think I'd like to stop hating you."

I nodded quietly. "I'd like that too."

We didn't say anything else after that. We just sat there—two women bound by blood, fate, and bad luck—waiting for whatever came next.

The quiet didn't last long.

The metallic clang of a bolt unlocking echoed through the room, sharp and sudden. Selene and I both snapped our heads toward the door as it creaked open. Two guards stepped inside—tall and armed. Their presence made the air feel even colder.

"Get up," one of them barked.

Selene tensed beside me. I could feel her fear even though she tried to hide it behind her glare. I stood slowly, my legs unsteady. The knife hidden under my pants pressed against my thigh, reminding me that it was still there—my last and only chance if things went wrong.

The guards grabbed our arms roughly, forcing us out of the room. The hallway outside was narrow, lit only by flickering lights that hummed weakly above us. The air smelled of damp concrete and something metallic—blood, maybe. My heart pounded as I realized...

We were underground.

The walls were stone and cold. Water dripped from somewhere unseen, echoing faintly. I could hear distant whispers—other voices, other footsteps. This place wasn't just a hideout. It was a maze.

We were led through several turns until the corridor opened into a larger chamber. My breath caught as I saw what waited inside.

The masked man sat on a chair at the far end of the room, calm as ever. Beside him stood an old woman cloaked in black. Her skin was grayish and wrinkled, her eyes cloudy yet sharp—a witch, no doubt. The air around her felt heavy, thick with energy that made the hairs on my neck rise.

And on the floor, lying motionless on a small cot, was a little boy. He couldn't have been more than four. His skin was pale, his chest barely moving.

The masked man turned slightly toward us as the guards shoved us forward. His voice was smooth, almost kind. "You're just in time," he said. "He's fading faster than I expected."

My eyes went to the boy. His tiny hand hung limp over the edge of the cot. Something inside me twisted painfully. Whatever this curse was, it was eating him alive.

The witch stepped closer, her bony fingers twitching as she looked at me. "She has the blood," she rasped. "The power will transfer cleanly."

"Good," the masked man said simply. Then his gaze shifted to me. "We should start immediately before her mates find our hideout."

I froze. My throat tightened. He knew the triplets were coming for me.

Selene stepped forward, rage blazing in her tired eyes. "You monster," she hissed. "You'd sacrifice her just to save—"

The man raised a hand, silencing her instantly. "You will speak only when spoken to," he said coldly. "Your turn will come soon enough."

The witch's eyes glowed faintly red. "Prepare the circle," she croaked. "The ritual must begin immediately."

The guards released us, pushing us toward the center of the room where strange symbols were drawn across the floor—glowing faintly in a color I couldn't name.

My pulse raced. I looked at Selene, and she looked at me. For a brief second, the fragile peace between us earlier turned into silent understanding. We both knew this was life or death.

Chapter 446: Stopping The Ritual

Olivia's POV

The witch's voice echoed through the chamber. "Begin."

The guards pushed me down until my knees hit the glowing symbols on the floor. The markings pulsed with light, spreading heat through the stone beneath me. My heart hammered, but my body refused to move. I glanced at the boy. His small chest barely rose. His face was gray, lifeless. My throat burned. Whatever they were about to do, it wasn't just magic—it was something darker.

The witch began to chant in an unknown tongue. The words crawled into my ears like whispers of death itself. The air shifted, and the circle flared brighter.

A sharp pain shot through my chest. I gasped, clutching the collar at my neck as it burned hot against my skin. My wolf howled weakly inside me, her voice muffled, fading.

The masked man watched in silence, his arms crossed as if this were just another experiment.

I tried to move — to fight — but invisible hands slammed me down. My palms pressed against the burning symbols. My body arched, my breath caught in my throat. Every vein in me felt like it was on fire.

"Don't fight it," the witch rasped. "Let it take."

I screamed as light burst from my chest — pale, blinding energy swirling upward before pouring toward the little boy. The power ripped through me, tearing everything apart.

My vision blurred. The room spun.

Selene shouted something, but her voice was drowned out by the ringing in my ears. I could barely see her now — just the blur of her face and the glowing circle surrounding us.

The boy on the cot gasped suddenly — a small, sharp sound. His chest began to rise. Color flushed back into his cheeks.

It was working. He was healing.

But I was dying.

Every second felt like my soul was being drained through my veins. My body trembled violently. My fingers clawed at the floor, searching for something, anything to hold on to.

The witch's chant grew louder. The air whipped around us. The energy pouring out of me turned red — darker, heavier. My wolf cried inside, fading with every pulse.

"Stop!" Selene screamed. "You'll kill her!"

The masked man didn't even flinch. His cold voice cut through the chaos. "She knew the price."

My body slumped forward. My breathing slowed. I could feel the light fading from my eyes, replaced by a suffocating darkness creeping in from all sides.

Through the haze, I saw the boy breathing, his fingers moving.

And as the witch continued her incantation, I whispered weakly, "Mates... please... find me..."

The witch's chanting grew louder. The air was wild, spinning with dark magic, and my vision blurred to white. I could barely breathe. Every beat of my heart felt weaker than the last.

Then I heard footsteps. Heavy. Fast.

The doors burst open with a crash that shook the room. Through the blur of my fading sight, I saw them.

Lennox. Louis. Levi.

And behind them — Frederick.

They were here.

My mates had found me.

"Olivia!" Lennox's voice tore through the chaos, raw and full of panic. He tried to rush forward, but the glowing circle around me flared violently, throwing him back.

"Stay back!" the witch screeched. Her voice was sharp and full of warning. "If any of you cross this circle, you will die!"

Lennox ignored her. He pushed against the invisible wall, teeth bared, eyes glowing red. "I don't care!" he roared. "Olivia!"

Tears blurred my vision as I looked at him. I wanted to tell him to stop — to run — but my mouth barely worked. More power was being ripped from me. The boy on the floor was glowing brighter now, breathing stronger, while I was slipping away.

The others were fighting — I could hear it. Claws tearing flesh, metal clanging. Frederick's growl, Louis's snarl, and Levi's shout—they were battling the guards, trying to reach me. But the witch kept chanting, her voice drowning out everything else.

Lennox slammed his fist against the barrier again. "No! I won't lose her!"

He looked at me—and in his eyes, I saw it. The same wild, stubborn love that had always pulled me back.

Then, before I could even shake my head, he stepped into the circle. I didn't know how he was able to break the barrier and get in, but he did it.

A flash of red light exploded. The witch screamed. Frederick shouted something, but it was too late. Lennox's body convulsed as the magic hit him — the energy that was draining from me started pulling at him instead.

"Lennox!" I cried weakly, crawling toward him, my hands trembling.

He fell to his knees beside me, grabbing my face with shaking hands. "It's okay," he whispered, his voice fading. "I told you... I'd always protect you."

The light around us turned violent, red and white, clashing like fire and blood. I felt the pull leave me. The burning pain faded.

But now... it was him.

The witch's eyes widened. "No! How did he do it? How did he exchange it?"

With trembling lips, I stared at Lennox. "What did you do?"

Lennox flashed me a weak smile while life still drained away from him. "What a mate should do."

"No!" Louis's voice broke, raw and cracked. He slammed his fists against the shattered barrier, his wolf surfacing in his eyes. "Lennox, don't you dare—don't you dare!"

Levi stumbled forward, blood running down his arm from the earlier fight. "Stop it! Reverse it!" he shouted at the witch, his voice shaking between fury and terror. "Bring it back! Take me instead!"

I shook my head, refusing to accept it. I didn't think. I didn't care. With the last of my strength, I pulled the knife from my waistband, pushed myself to my feet, and drove the blade straight through the witch's heart.

Her scream was horrible — high and sharp. The glowing circle shattered with a thunderous crack, and the light died all at once. The room went dark.

The witch collapsed, blood spilling across the runes.

I dropped to my knees beside Lennox. His skin was pale, too pale. His lips had lost all color. He wasn't breathing.

"Lennox..." I whispered, my hands shaking as I touched his face. "No, no, no..."

Tears ran down my cheeks. My chest hurt so much I could barely breathe. "Please... wake up. You can't do this to me. You can't leave me like this."

But he didn't move.

He just lay there — silent, still, and cold.

And all I could do was scream.

Chapter 447: Not Responding

Olivia's POV

Louis caught me as I fell beside Lennox's body. His skin was so cold it didn't even feel real. His lips were pale, and his chest didn't rise.

"Lennox..." I whispered again, brushing my fingers over his cheek. "No, no, please... don't do this."

Louis's golden eyes blazed with fury and grief. "Do something!" he yelled at Frederick, his voice breaking. "You're supposed to be powerful—help him!"

Frederick knelt beside Lennox and pressed two fingers to his neck. His face darkened instantly. "He's not breathing."

Levi fell to his knees beside us, his voice shaking. "Lennox, please," he whispered. "Don't do this. Don't leave us. You hear me?"

My tears dripped onto Lennox's shirt. My whole body trembled. "Please... wake up. You can't leave me."

But there was nothing. No movement. No sound. No heartbeat.

Louis roared—a broken, animal sound that made the ground vibrate. Levi covered his face, shoulders shaking as he whispered his brother's name again and again.

I grabbed the collar at my throat. "Take it off!" I screamed. "The choker—take it off! I can heal him!"

Frederick's head snapped up. He turned toward the masked man, who was lying near the wall, barely alive. Blood poured from his side. Frederick didn't hesitate—he shoved the man onto his back and searched his coat pockets.

Finally, he pulled out a small silver key. Without a word, he rushed back and unlocked the collar around my neck.

The moment it clicked open, I felt it—a rush of energy like a thousand stars exploding through my veins. My wolf came alive with a cry of freedom, howling inside me as her power surged.

I pressed my hands over Lennox's chest. "Please," I whispered, my voice shaking. "Let this work."

Light poured from my palms, bright and wild. My healing power rushed into him—warm, glowing, and powerful. But he didn't move.

"Come on," I begged, tears streaming down my face. "Please, Lennox... come back to me!"

The light flared brighter, but his chest stayed still. My wolf whimpered inside me. I was trying everything—calling him through the bond, pouring every ounce of strength I had—but nothing was working.

Louis grabbed my wrist. "Olivia, stop. You're going to burn yourself out."

I shook my head violently. "No! I can't stop! He saved me—he traded his life for mine! I won't lose him!"

Frederick's voice was low but firm. "We can't do this here. We need to move him before it's too late."

Levi stood, eyes glassy, his voice breaking. "I'll carry him."

He lifted Lennox's limp body gently into his arms, his jaw clenched tight. "We're taking him home."

I wiped my tears roughly and nodded. "Everyone, hold hands. Now!"

We connected our hands with each other. My other hand rested on Lennox's chest.

"Hold on to me," I whispered, focusing on the image of Lennox's room. My teleporting ability surged forward.

The ground cracked beneath us. The air folded in on itself.

And then—whoosh!

The cold, bloody chamber vanished.

When I opened my eyes, we were standing in Lennox's room. The scent of home hit me instantly.

Levi laid him gently on the bed. Louis stood frozen, his fists shaking. Frederick leaned against the wall, pale and silent. Selene looked lost.

I sank beside the bed, pressing my forehead to Lennox's hand. "Please," I whispered. "Don't die on me..."

But his hand was still cold.

His chest still didn't move.

I pressed both hands against Lennox's chest again. My power burst out, glowing brighter than before. The room filled with light.

"Please," I cried. "Come back to me..."

My body shook as I poured everything I had into him—every drop of energy, every ounce of my ability, every prayer I could think of. But still nothing. His chest stayed still.

My vision blurred. The light around my hands began to flicker. I was draining too fast. My wolf was crying inside me, begging me to stop, but I couldn't. I wouldn't.

Selene moved closer, her voice low but firm. "Olivia, stop. You'll kill yourself."

"Shut up!" I snapped through tears, my voice cracking. "Don't tell me to stop! If I'm supposed to be the Moon's chosen, then why—" My throat tightened as a sob tore free. "Why can't I heal him?"

The power sparked and flared again, wild and unstable. My heart pounded painfully against my ribs. "You gave me this gift," I whispered toward the ceiling, tears burning my eyes. "So why does it fail when I need it most?"

My scream echoed through the room, shattering a glass that was placed on the desk.

"Why am I special if I can't save the one I love?"

The glow from my hands dimmed, fading into weak, dying sparks. My breath came in ragged gasps. I was trembling, shaking, almost collapsing, but I still pressed my palms to Lennox's chest, sobbing into him.

Then, I heard footsteps.

The door burst open. The pack sorcerer and two healers rushed in, their robes flying behind them. The air shifted as their magic filled the room.

"Please move aside!" the sorcerer pleaded. His voice was firm but respectful.

Louis caught me as I slumped sideways, my strength nearly gone. "Help him," Louis growled, his voice shaking. "If he dies, I swear—"

"Silence!" the sorcerer commanded. His hands were already glowing, tracing symbols in the air above Lennox's body. "There's still a thread—faint, but there."

The healers knelt beside the bed, pressing their hands to Lennox's chest and temples. Their eyes glowed soft blue as they chanted in low, rhythmic tones.

I reached weakly toward Lennox's hand, whispering through my tears. "Please... bring him back."

The sorcerer's expression was grim, sweat beading on his brow as his voice deepened. "He's between worlds," he said. "But the thread that ties his spirit here is fragile. The more energy you push into him, the more it tears."

My breath hitched. "Then what do I do?" I whispered, my voice trembling. "Tell me—what can we do to bring him back?"

The sorcerer's gaze flicked to me. "Right now, nothing more. He's fighting between life and death. You've already pulled too much energy into the living plane. If we push again, his soul might not find its way back."

His words blurred in my ears. My body swayed. "But I can't just sit here while he—"

My sentence broke halfway. The room started spinning, the edges of my vision going dark. I tried to speak, but my lips wouldn't move. My knees buckled.

"Olivia!" Louis shouted, catching me before I hit the floor.

The last thing I saw was Lennox lying motionless on the bed.

And then—nothing.

Only darkness.

Chapter 448: I didn't Kill Her

Selene's POV

The moment Olivia fainted, I couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't stand it; rather, I just ran out of the room. I was being suffocated, and if I didn't leave, I might have passed out myself too. Before anyone could stop me, I turned and ran. My footsteps echoed down the long hallway, my heart pounding loudly. I didn't know where I was going — I just

needed air, space, anything that wasn't that room. By the time I burst into the garden, the night air hit me hard. I stumbled forward, gripping a stone pillar as I tried to breathe. The moonlight bathed everything in silver, but it didn't calm me. It only made the ache sharper.

Then I heard footsteps behind me — fast, urgent.

"Selene!"

I turned, and my stomach twisted. Frederick. He looked... wrecked. His usual calm was gone. His eyes were wide with worry as he reached for me. "Selene—"

"Don't," I hissed, jerking back. "Don't touch me."

He froze, his hand halfway in the air. "I just wanted to make sure you're alright."

"Alright?" I let out a broken laugh. "You think anyone in that room is alright?"

He looked down, guilt flickering in his eyes. "I'm sorry," he said quietly. "I didn't come sooner. I didn't know—"

"Stop." My voice cracked as I cut him off. "Just stop lying."

He frowned slightly. "Selene—"

"I hate you."

He blinked, startled, his brows drawing together. "I know you're angry," he said softly, "but this isn't the time—"

"No," I interrupted, my voice sharper this time. "You don't understand."

His eyes met mine, confusion spreading across his face.

"I don't mean I hate you because of what happened," I said, shaking my head slowly. "I mean, I hate you. Truly. Deeply. And I don't want to pretend anymore."

He looked at me, completely lost. "What are you saying?"

My hands curled into fists. My chest rose and fell quickly as I took a shaky breath. "You remember a woman named Deborah?"

The name made him still. His eyes narrowed. "... Deborah?" he repeated carefully, as if the word were a ghost he hadn't expected to hear. "You mean—"

"Deborah Voss," I finished for him. "My mother."

His face went pale.

"Yes," I whispered. "I'm her daughter. The woman you killed."

His lips parted, but no sound came out.

Frederick's eyes widened slightly, his voice barely a whisper. "You're her daughter...?"

I nodded slowly, my chest rising and falling. "Yes."

For a moment, he actually looked... happy. His lips parted in disbelief, and for a split second something warm flickered in his eyes. "Selene," he said quietly, as if tasting the name. "You're that Selene? Deborah's little girl?"

My jaw clenched. "Yes."

He smiled faintly, almost in awe. "She spoke about you all the time. She—"

I cut him off coldly. "The Deborah you killed."

His face went blank. "Killed?" he repeated, his tone shifting. "Deborah is... dead?"

My blood boiled, and before I could hold back my emotions, I slapped him hard across the face. "Don't you dare pretend!" I shouted, my voice trembling with anger. "You know exactly what you did!"

He didn't even fight back. He just looked at me — stunned, confused — as if my words made no sense.

I felt my throat tighten, but I pushed through it. "Before my mother took her last breath from the poison you gave her," I said, each word shaking, "she told me everything."

Frederick's brows furrowed. "What—"

"She told me," I spat, "that you sent one of your maids to deliver a drink to her — a glass of wine, a gift from you." My voice broke. "She thought it was a peace offering, Frederick. A token of friendship. But it was poisoned."

His lips parted slightly, but no sound came.

"She barely made it home alive," I went on, tears burning my eyes. "I watched her collapse in front of me, coughing blood — and before she died, she said your name. She said you did it."

I stepped closer, my voice trembling but fierce. "You killed her, your own student. All because she made a discovery that should have been hers — a discovery you wanted credit for."

Frederick just stood there, staring at me like the world had stopped moving. His breathing slowed. His eyes darted back and forth between mine, searching for something — maybe truth, maybe denial.

"Tell me," I said, my voice breaking, "was it worth it? Taking her work, her life, her name — was it worth it just to be called a genius?"

He stared at me like I'd lost my mind. For a second he didn't say anything — just looked, like he was trying to read some secret I'd carved into my face.

"That's not true," he finally said, his voice low. "You're saying things that aren't real."

I laughed, sharp and bitter. "Not true? Don't lie to me."

He ran a hand through his hair, the motion small and restless. "Listen," he said. "Listen to me. I didn't kill Deborah. I didn't order anyone to poison her."

"You expect me to believe that?" I spat. "You expect me to just swallow that and move on?"

He swallowed. "One morning I woke up and there was a letter on my desk. Deborah's handwriting. She said she had an emergency and needed to return home. She said she would be back." His eyes were hollow now, almost pleading. "After that — I never saw her again. I asked everyone. I searched. I had people look for her. I didn't know where she was. I didn't know who to ask."

My laugh died in my chest and came out strangled. "You bloody liar."

He flinched as though the words hit him. "Why would I poison her?" he said sharply. "Why would I—"

"Because you take what you want," I snapped. "Because you steal people's work and their names. Because you couldn't bear someone else being brilliant without you stealing the glory."

He looked as if I'd shoved him. "Why would I lie about something like this?" he demanded. "If I had done it, why hide? Why pretend? I will never hurt Deborah. She was dear to me—"

"You said that already," I hissed. "You said a lot of things to get what you wanted. Charming words, promises. You were charming until you needed the knife."

His face cracked then — not with anger, but confusion. "What are you saying? Why would I lie about this?"

"You should have died that night," I said without meaning to hold back. The words came from somewhere dark. "I should have killed you when I had the chance. I came into your life to end you."

Silence slammed down between us.

He blinked. For the first time his confusion gave way to something else — a raw, stunned fear. "You... you would have done that?" he whispered.

"I almost did," I said. "You were just lucky."

He took a step back, like my words pushed him. "Selene... I—"

"Don't," I cut him off. "Don't say another lie."

He looked lost, like he'd been thrown into a room without walls. "You're telling me I killed her," he said. "Tell me exactly what you want me to say. Say it."

My hands were shaking. I didn't feel brave. I felt small and too loud. "Tell me you're sorry for what you did. Tell me you'll pay for it. Tell me anything but that it was an accident."

He closed his eyes for a breath. When he opened them, there was nothing pretty there — no charm, no calm control. Just a man who didn't know how to fix the damage between us.

"I didn't kill her," he repeated, softer this time. "I wish I had answers. I wish I could bring her back. I didn't order that. I didn't know who did."

Chapter 449: Give Him Time

Selene's POV

Frederick took a small step toward me, his voice breaking slightly. "Selene, please... listen to me. I swear on my life—I didn't poison your mother. I didn't even know she was gone until now. But I'll prove it. I'll find whoever did this. I'll prove my innocence to you." He looked so desperate it almost made me falter... almost.

"I don't believe you," I said coldly.

He shook his head, his voice trembling. "You have to. Because I love you, Selene. I love you more than I've ever loved anyone."

A bitter laugh escaped my throat. "Love?" I scoffed. "Don't insult me."

He looked stunned, but I pressed on. "You don't love me, Frederick. You're drawn to me — the same way you were drawn to her. To Hailee. Maybe that's why you think you feel this way."

He blinked, confusion twisting across his face. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm a descendant of Hailee," I said, my voice steady even though my heart was pounding. "Through my father's bloodline."

Frederick froze. "What?"

"Yes." I took a step closer, my voice cold. "I'm Hailee's great-granddaughter. Just like Olivia."

For a moment he couldn't speak. His eyes widened, disbelief and something like horror flickering in them. I tilted my head slightly. "Surprised? You shouldn't be. Maybe that's why you're so obsessed — because every time you look at me, you see her. The woman you could never have."

Frederick shook his head slowly, his expression torn between shock and pain. "Selene... no. That's not true."

My wolf whined inside me, but I pushed her down and glared at him. "Stay away from me, Lord Frederick. I don't want to see you ever again in my life," I spat, and I turned to leave, but he grabbed my wrist, stopping me. His cold fingers wrapped around my warm skin, sending an involuntary shiver down my spine. My wolf stirred restlessly. It was maddening — how just his touch could ignite something in me I didn't want to feel. Damn the mate bond.

I didn't turn to look at him because I didn't know what I would do if I did.

"Let me go," I said, my voice low, shaking more than I wanted it to.

"No," he whispered, his breath brushing against my ear. "I'm not letting you go. Not now. Not ever."

I froze.

He stepped closer, his tone breaking, soft but desperate. "You can hate me. You can curse me all you want. But I'm going to prove my innocence, Selene. I will find out what really happened to your mother — and I'll make whoever did it pay."

I tried to pull my hand free, but his grip didn't budge. "Frederick, stop—"

"I mean it," he said fiercely. "Give me a few days. Just a few. And if I can't prove myself..." His voice faltered for a second. "Then you'll never have to see me again. But until then, I'm not letting go of you."

His words hit something deep in me, something that shouldn't have existed. I didn't want to care. I didn't want to feel anything — not warmth, not hope, not love. But the way he said it... made it hard to breathe.

"Frederick..." I whispered, my heart twisting painfully.

He stared at me for a long moment, his gaze lingering like he was memorizing every detail of my back. Then, slowly, his fingers loosened around my wrist.

"I love you," he said quietly, the words almost breaking apart in the air between us. "And I'll prove it... even if it kills me."

Then he turned and walked away.

The moment Frederick's footsteps faded into the distance, my legs gave out. I fell to my knees on the cold grass, my hands sinking into the damp earth. The scent of rain and soil filled my nose, sharp and heavy. My chest ached, not just from anger, but from something far worse.

"What is wrong with me..." I whispered to myself, clutching my chest. My heart wouldn't stop racing. Every word he said kept replaying in my head: I'll prove it. I'll prove my innocence.

My wolf stirred softly inside me. What if he's telling the truth? She asked gently. What if he didn't do it, Selene? What if... we've been wrong all along?

I scoffed aloud, shaking my head. "No. Frederick is a manipulator. He'll twist anything just to get what he wants."

"But he sounded honest," my wolf murmured. "You felt it."

I clenched my fists in the grass, tears stinging my eyes. "He's good at sounding honest," I muttered bitterly. "That's what makes him dangerous."

The silence stretched, broken only by the rustle of the night breeze. My body trembled — from exhaustion, confusion, and pain. Finally, I wiped my tears roughly with the back of my hand and pushed myself to my feet. I had no right to sit out here falling apart while Olivia was still fighting for her life.

Following her scent down the hallway, I quickened my pace until the familiar smell grew stronger. When I entered the room, my breath caught.

Olivia lay motionless on the bed, pale and fragile. The healers were still working over her, their hands glowing faint blue as they chanted softly. Levi stood near the door, arms crossed, jaw tight. Louis sat at the edge of the bed, his head bowed.

The sight hit me like a punch.

For a long moment, I just stood there in silence, watching as they tried to pull her back from unconsciousness. The glow of magic flickered over her skin, but her chest barely moved.

My anger toward Frederick dimmed, replaced by worry and concern for her. I swallowed hard and moved closer to the bed. Kneeling beside her, I glanced across to where Lennox lay—his life hanging by a thread as well.

My gaze fell on Olivia again, and a tear slipped down my cheek. There was a time I might have wanted to see her like this, broken and weak. But now... now I would do anything to see her open her eyes again. To see her breathe. To see her live.

Chapter 450: Go Back

Olivia's POV

I was standing in a vast, open yard surrounded by towering trees and long, swaying grasses. The place felt unreal—like something pulled straight out of a fairy tale.

Then I saw him.

Lennox.

He stood a few feet away from me, his back turned, shoulders tense. His black hair moved slightly with the wind, but he didn't turn around. My heart leapt painfully in my chest.

"Lennox..." I called, my voice trembling.

He didn't answer.

I took a step forward, reaching out a hand toward him. "Please—turn around. It's me."

"Stop," he said quietly, his voice deep and calm but distant—like it was coming from far away.

I froze.

"You have to go back, Olivia," he said again, still not facing me. "This place... it's not for you."

My throat tightened. "Then come with me," I whispered. "Let's go back together. Please."

He shook his head slowly. "I can't."

Tears filled my eyes. "No. No, you don't get to say that! You don't get to leave me again!" I ran to him, but the closer I got, the farther away he seemed—like the ground itself was pulling us apart.

"Lennox!" I screamed, my voice breaking. "Please, don't do this!"

Finally, he turned halfway, just enough for me to see his face—soft, sad, but peaceful. "You have to live," he said quietly. "Promise me."

"I won't without you!" I sobbed. "I can't!"

He gave a small, pained smile—one that shattered me completely. "You already are," he whispered.

Then, the light began to fade.

"Lennox!" I screamed one last time, reaching for him—but he was gone. The world dissolved into darkness.

And I woke up.

I gasped, my chest heaving. The air was thick with the scent of herbs and blood. My vision swam, but I realized I was surrounded—the healers, Levi, Louis, and others watching anxiously.

I turned my head slowly—and there he was.

Lennox.

Still lying beside me. Still pale. Still motionless.

"No..." I whispered, my voice cracking. I crawled to his side, pressing my trembling hands against his chest. "No, no, please..."

I fell onto his body, sobbing so hard my entire body shook. "Please come back," I cried. "You promised you'd be with me forever..."

But the only answer was silence and the cold weight of the man I loved lying lifeless beneath my hands.

"Please..." I sobbed louder, hugging him, the image of the dream flashing in my head.

With trembling hands, I reached for Lennox's forehead. His skin was still cold, lifeless. My body ached, but I didn't care. I couldn't lose him—not after everything.

"I can still save him," I whispered desperately, my fingers glowing faintly as my healing power began to spark again. "Please, just one more time..."

"Olivia, stop!" one of the healers shouted, stepping forward quickly. "You can't! You've already drained too much—you'll kill yourself!"

"I don't care!" I screamed through tears, pushing past him. "He's my mate! If I have to die to bring him back, then I will!"

The healer caught my wrists, his voice panicked. "Listen to me—your ability won't work right now. The magic link between you two is unstable. You'll only make it worse!"

I shook my head wildly. "You're lying! I can fix him! I have to!"

Suddenly, as if receiving a silent command, Levi moved. He caught me from behind, his arms locking tightly around me as I struggled and screamed. "Olivia, stop! Please!" His voice cracked with emotion. "You're hurting yourself!"

"Let me go!" I cried, kicking and clawing at him, my whole body trembling with rage and grief. "Let me go! He needs me!"

Louis stepped in, his eyes red, jaw tight. "Olivia—please," he said softly, his voice breaking. "You've done enough. You need to rest."

I screamed until my voice failed me. Tears streamed down my face.

Between the two of them, they dragged me out of the room. My feet barely touched the ground. I could still see Lennox's pale face in my mind—the way he looked when he smiled, when he fought, when he called my name.

When the door shut behind us, something inside me shattered.

They carried me down the hall into Levi's room and set me on the bed. I pushed at them weakly, shaking my head. "No! I have to go back! He needs me!"

Levi's hands were firm on my shoulders, his voice rough. "Enough, Olivia. You can't help him like this."

I looked up at him, my tears endless. "You don't understand. I can't lose him!"

Louis turned away, his shoulders shaking. "We all lost something tonight," he muttered, his voice low.

I buried my face in my hands and screamed into them, muffling the sound. Rage and pain clawed inside me. My heart felt like it was breaking apart piece by piece.

And all I could think was, why wasn't it me instead? My body shook uncontrollably, my breaths coming in shallow, broken gasps.

Then, Levi pulled me into his arms. It wasn't gentle; it was a desperate, raw hug. His embrace was tight, grounding me in a world that suddenly felt too empty. I clutched his shirt and buried my face against his chest, sobbing until I couldn't breathe.

Louis knelt beside us, his arms wrapping around both of us from the side. The warmth of their touch hit me like a wave, and for a moment, it didn't matter that the world was falling apart. We were all broken, but broken together.

"I'm scared..." I whispered, my voice trembling. "I don't want to lose him. I want us complete... the four of us. I can't—I can't do this without him."

Louis' grip tightened around me, his forehead resting against my shoulder. I could feel his tears too—silent but real.

Levi pulled back just enough to look at me. His eyes were red, but his voice was firm, steady—the way it always was when he wanted me to believe him. "Nothing will happen to Lennox," he said, his hand cupping my face gently. "I promise you, Olivia. With my life, I promise."

My lips trembled as I met his gaze, wanting to believe his word.

Then Levi leaned in slowly and pressed a soft kiss to my forehead. His voice broke against my skin. "He'll come back to us. He has to."

And before I could say anything, his lips brushed mine—a tender, trembling kiss that tasted like salt and sorrow.

Louis' hand stayed on my back, grounding us both as if holding the pieces of our shattered hearts together.

We sat there in silence, tangled in grief and love...three souls holding on to the hope that the fourth would return.

And somewhere deep inside me, I swore I felt his heartbeat... faint, but not gone.