

# **Fated To Not Just One, But Three #Chapter 491: Birth - Read Fated To Not Just One, But Three Chapter 491: Birth**

## **Chapter 491: Birth**

Olivia's POV

The pain was sharp but brief, replaced almost instantly by a surge of warmth—power flooding through me, fierce and wild. My heartbeat suddenly synced with theirs, steady and strong. I gasped as light seemed to dance behind my eyes, spreading from my neck down to my chest.

The midwife gasped softly. "It's working," she said. "Her pulse is stabilizing."

Levi and Louis pulled back slowly, their eyes glowing. Their marks shimmered faintly against my skin—two identical crescent shapes burning with soft gold.

I had imagined having their marks again...but not this way.

I barely had time to recover before another contraction hit me, stronger than any before. I screamed, clutching Levi's hand.

"Push, dear," the midwife ordered firmly. "You're almost there!"

I bore down, teeth gritted, tears spilling freely. The pain was unbearable—pain and anguish all at once—but something inside me refused to give up. I could hear Levi's voice, low and comforting, beside me.

"Breathe, Olivia. Just breathe."

Louis brushed the sweat from my forehead, whispering encouragements. "You're almost done. You're doing so well."

One last push. One last cry. And then—

The sound.

A tiny, sharp wail pierced the room.

The midwife smiled, her hands lifting the small, crying bundle. "It's a boy!"

My chest heaved with relief. I sobbed—from exhaustion, from love, from everything I had held in for months.

But there wasn't time to rest.

"Another one's coming," the healer said quickly. "Don't stop, Lady Olivia. You can do this."

I nodded weakly, gripping Levi's hand tighter. "I can do it," I whispered, though I barely believed it.

Another contraction hit. I screamed again, my entire body shaking. Levi kissed my forehead, whispering over and over, "You've got this. You've got this."

Louis was at my other side, his hand on my shoulder, comforting me.

And then another cry filled the air—deeper, stronger.

"A boy," the midwife said with a grin.

I let out a trembling laugh through my tears. "Two boys..."

But before I could even see them, the healer's voice rose again. "There's one more."

My body felt like it was on fire, every muscle trembling with exhaustion. "I can't—"

"Yes, you can," Levi said, his voice fierce. "For him. For them. For us."

His words broke something inside me—or maybe they mended it. Either way, I found the strength to push again, one final time.

The third cry was the loudest—sharp and commanding, like it wanted the whole world to know it had arrived.

The healer's eyes widened slightly as she lifted the last baby, her voice trembling. "Another boy."

Silence filled the room—soft, heavy, full of awe.

Louis turned toward the midwife. "All boys," he said quietly.

She nodded, smiling. "Yes... and look at them."

I followed her gaze, my breath catching when I saw them laid gently in the crib beside me.

Three tiny babies.

Perfect. Beautiful. Alive.

But what struck me most wasn't just their beauty—it was how identical they were. Not similar like the brothers had been, but exactly the same. The same face, the same nose, the same soft line of their lips.

"They look..." Louis began softly.

"...like copies of each other," Levi finished in disbelief.

The healer looked up, her expression unreadable. "It's rare," she said softly. "Almost impossible for wolves. But their bond runs deeper than ordinary bloodlines. They share a soul connection—three born of one thread."

Her words made a big, bright smile spread across my face. I reached out with trembling fingers and touched their tiny hands. They were warm, their small fingers curling instinctively around mine.

My heart broke and healed all at once.

Tears filled my eyes as I whispered, "Welcome home, my little miracles."

For a long moment, no one spoke.

The only sound in the room was the gentle whimpering of the newborns, their tiny breaths mingling with mine.

Levi stood frozen beside me, his eyes wide—a mixture of shock and awe. Louis was the first to move. He leaned closer to the crib, his fingers trembling slightly as he brushed one baby's cheek.

"They... they look like you," he whispered.

My heart skipped. "Like me?"

Louis nodded slowly. "Every feature. The same eyes, the same mouth... even their aura feels familiar."

Levi's gaze flicked to him sharply, but he didn't argue. He just looked down at the three little lives lying side by side—identical, breathing softly in unison, like they were bound by something beyond blood.

I could feel it too—a hum in the air, like a faint vibration connecting the four of us. The babies. Me. The bond between us glowed faintly beneath my skin, warm and pure.

The healer's voice broke the silence. "You must rest," she said softly. "A lot of rest. You should all rest. They'll need your warmth for the next few hours."

I nodded weakly, my entire body aching but my heart full. Levi and Louis helped me sit up a little, placing the babies against my chest.

The warmth that filled me was indescribable. Their tiny bodies pressed close, their hearts beating softly against my skin—three tiny pulses, steady and alive.

Levi sank into the chair beside the bed, rubbing a hand over his face. I could see the tears he was trying to hide. Louis stood behind him, one hand on his brother's shoulder.

For the first time in months, the weight that had been pressing on all of us seemed to lift—even just a little.

"Look at them," I whispered, tears spilling freely. "They're... perfect."

"They are," Levi said quietly. His voice cracked, just barely.

Louis smiled faintly. "Three boys," he murmured. "Just like us."

The midwife chuckled softly from across the room. "History repeats itself, it seems."

I smiled tiredly and looked down at my sons. "Welcome, angels," I whispered.

Levi's eyes met mine, and for a moment, the world stilled. The pain, the guilt, the loss—it all faded under the weight of that moment. We had life again. Hope again.

"We are now a complete family." Louis whispered. But deep down I knew he was wrong.

## **Chapter 492: Four years**

Olivia's POV

Four years later

The sound of giggles filled the living room, followed by the unmistakable crash of something breaking. I didn't even bother turning right away—I'd gotten used to it by now. Life with three boys meant chaos came with the sunrise.

"Alright," I called from the kitchen, setting down the towel. "Who did it this time?"

Silence.

Three identical faces turned toward me—wide-eyed, innocent, and equally suspicious.

I crossed my arms, trying not to laugh. "Don't all stare at me like that. One of you broke something."

The three of them stood in a perfect line, same height, same messy dark hair, same mischievous smile that could melt stone. Even after four years, I still struggled to tell them apart unless I looked closely.

Liam. Leon. Leo.

My little miracles. My little troublemakers.

Sometimes I still couldn't believe how much they looked alike—not just similar, but exactly the same. Even their voices carried the same rhythm, the same teasing lilt when they tried to talk their way out of trouble.

"Wasn't me," Liam said first, blinking those big sea-blue eyes that looked exactly like mine.

Leon immediately pointed at his brother. "He's lying!"

Leo frowned and crossed his arms. "You're both lying!"

I sighed, pinching the bridge of my nose. "You three are going to drive me mad one of these days."

The broken vase on the floor didn't help their case. I crouched to pick it up, muttering to myself, "Your fathers are going to kill me when they find out..."

The boys exchanged glances—the silent kind that always meant they were about to bolt.

"Don't even think about it," I said without looking up.

Tiny feet shuffled in place. Then stillness.

Good. They knew better than to run.

I straightened and turned toward them, one brow raised. "So, are we going to tell the truth, or do I have to call your fathers?"

Instant panic.

Levi's and Louis' names still worked like a spell.

Before they could answer, his deep voice echoed from the hallway. "What's going on here?"

The boys froze. I hid a smile. Perfect timing.

Levi stepped into the room, tall and composed, though I caught the faintest twitch at the corner of his mouth when he saw the scene—the three identical boys lined up like soldiers, the shattered vase behind them, and me trying to look stern.

He folded his arms. "Alright, which one of you did it?"

Again—silence.

Three identical mouths pressed shut.

Levi arched an eyebrow. "I'm waiting."

Liam shifted first, glancing at his brothers as if silently negotiating who'd take the blame. No one moved.

Finally, Levi sighed and walked closer. "You do realize I can tell when one of you lies, right?"

Three pairs of sea-blue eyes blinked up at him, unconvinced.

He crouched down to their level, his voice calm but firm. "Tell me what happened."

Leo, the youngest by only a few minutes, cracked first. "We were playing ball inside... and the ball hit the table."

Levi nodded slowly. "So it was an accident."

All three nodded—too quickly.

"And who kicked the ball?" he pressed.

Dead silence again.

I bit back a laugh, pretending to look busy wiping the counter.

After a long pause, Leon raised his hand halfway, mumbling, "It was me... but Liam told me to."

"Did not!" Liam protested immediately.

"Did too!"

"Boys," Levi warned.

They both went silent instantly, but Leo—oh, little Leo—couldn't resist whispering under his breath, "It was Liam."

Levi pinched the bridge of his nose, muttering, "Moon Goddess, give me strength."

I chuckled softly. "Now you know how I feel every morning."

He shot me a look that said not helping.

The boys looked between us, their identical faces twisting into the same sheepish grin.

Levi finally stood, sighing. "Alright. No one's in trouble this time. But next time, play outside."

"Yes, Daddy," they chorused in perfect unison.

I swore even their voices carried the same rhythm—it was eerie sometimes, but also... beautiful.

When they ran off toward the garden, laughing again, I turned to Levi. "You went easy on them."

He shrugged, faint amusement flickering in his eyes. "They're just kids."

I smiled, shaking my head. "Kids who know exactly how to work you."

He walked closer, slipping an arm around my waist. "Maybe. But at least they got your stubbornness instead of mine."

"Levi," I said, trying not to laugh, "they got both."

He chuckled quietly, his gaze softening as he looked out the window toward where the boys were chasing each other in the yard. "They're growing fast."

I nodded, my heart swelling as I watched them. "Too fast."

The setting sun bathed the room in gold, and for a brief, perfect moment, everything felt right again—laughter, warmth, life.

Then, softly, Levi said something that made my breath hitch.

"They remind me of him."

I looked at him, and I knew he meant Lennox.

I smiled faintly, my voice barely above a whisper. "I know. Sometimes... I see him when they smile."

Levi's hand tightened around mine, his expression unreadable. "Maybe that's his way of staying with us."

I nodded, blinking back tears as the boys' laughter echoed through the window.

I swallowed hard, the ache returning to my chest—the one that never really went away.

It had been four years. Four long years since the day I gave birth to our sons. Four years since I last saw Lennox. Four years since I'd promised to visit him once I was strong enough.

And yet... we never went.

Not because I didn't want to. Goddess knows, I did. There were days I woke up reaching for him, half expecting to feel his warmth beside me. Nights when I'd stare at the moon, whispering his name, praying he'd somehow hear me.

But every time I brought it up, Levi and Louis found another reason to delay it.

At first, it was simple—they said I needed time to recover. The birth had taken too much from me. My body was weak, the marks still new, and the babies needed me more than anyone else. I believed them. I wanted to.

Then came the warnings.

The healers said Lennox's condition hadn't changed, that his mind remained trapped somewhere between this world and the next. They said disturbing his rest could make things worse—that his wolf was unstable, his spirit fragile.

"Just a little longer," Levi always said. "Until the boys are older. Until it's safe."

And I waited. I waited while the boys learned to walk, while they learned to speak.

The truth was—I didn't know if Lennox was still in there.

Sometimes I asked Levi directly, but he'd always give me the same answer. "He's alive, Olivia. That's all that matters."

But it wasn't enough anymore.

Alive wasn't living.

And every year that passed without seeing him felt like losing him all over again.

I looked out the window again. The boys were chasing butterflies now, their laughter pure and bright. For a moment, I envied them—their innocence, their joy.

Levi's arm was still around me, his warmth steady and grounding. "You're thinking about him again," he said quietly.

I didn't deny it. "Every day," I admitted softly. "I thought I could move on, but... how can I, when I don't even know if he's still—"

"Don't," Levi interrupted, his tone low but firm. "Don't finish that sentence."

I turned to look at him, tears brimming in my eyes. "Then let me see him, Levi. Please. I need to. I can't keep pretending he's just... gone somewhere waiting."

He looked away, jaw tightening. "It's not that simple."

"It never is with you," I whispered bitterly.

His gaze softened, but the guilt behind it was unmistakable. "You don't understand what you're asking, Olivia. He's not the same anymore. The healers said his wolf reacts violently when anyone from the bond gets too close. Even his heartbeat spikes at your name."

I froze, my breath catching. "My name?"

Levi nodded slowly. "They think... deep down, he still feels you. That's why we keep our distance—for his sake, and yours."

My hand trembled as I gripped the counter. "So he's suffering, and I'm supposed to sit here pretending that's mercy?"

"Would you rather watch him in pain?" Levi shot back, his voice low but sharp. "Would you rather see him struggle to breathe every time he hears your voice? I can't let that happen again, Olivia. Not to him. Not to you."

I stared at him, anger and heartbreak twisting together inside me.

He meant well—I knew he did—but part of me still hated him for it. Because no matter what he said, it felt like he was keeping me from the one piece of my soul that was still missing.

Louis had tried to reason with me once, months ago. He said Levi was just afraid. Afraid of losing control, afraid of facing what might happen if we saw Lennox and nothing changed.

Maybe they were both right. Maybe I wasn't ready either.

But as I stood there watching my sons play—the same mischievous light in their eyes that Lennox once had—I couldn't shake the feeling that the waiting was over. I will find Lennox's location myself.

## **Chapter 493: Awake**

Lennox's POV

The air was warm, sweet with the scent of moonflowers. I blinked, and there she was.

A woman in white stood before me, tall, stunning, her hair like liquid starlight. Her eyes glowed like the full moon itself. She smiled softly, and the world around us shimmered in response.

"Lennox," she said, her voice both calm and commanding. "You have slept long."

My throat ached when I spoke. "Who are you?"

She tilted her head slightly. "The one who watched over you from your first howl beneath my light. The one you swore to when you became Alpha."

Realization hit me like thunder. "The Moon Goddess..."

She nodded gently. "Yes."

My pulse quickened. "Where am I? Did I—" My voice faltered. "Did I die?"

Her eyes dimmed, sadness flickering within their silver glow. "You were meant to."

The words froze me. "Meant to?"

"You gave your life for hers," she said softly. "The moment you shielded her, your soul broke its tether to the living. By all laws of nature, you should not exist now."

I swallowed hard. "Then... why am I here?"

Her smile faded into something unreadable. "Because love is stubborn. Her cries reached me, even when her faith faltered. She begged for your return, not once, not twice, but every full moon for years."

"Olivia..." I whispered, my chest tightening.

The Moon Goddess said nothing. "Her heart refused to let you go. And so, I am giving you a chance to live again."

My head snapped up. "A chance?"

"Yes." Her expression darkened. "But it comes with a price."

I frowned. "What price?"

"You will learn soon enough," she said simply. "For every life reborn, something of equal value is taken. That is the balance of fate."

"I don't care," I said instantly. "If I can see her again, if she's alive, I'll pay whatever it takes."

A flicker of sorrow crossed her face. "You may regret those words, Alpha Lennox."

The silver light around her began to fade. Her voice echoed one last time as darkness swallowed everything again.

"Wake. Your story is not yet over, but the world you left behind is no longer the same."

A sharp gasp tore from my throat as I jolted awake.

My lungs burned, my vision swam, and every bone in my body felt like it had been crushed and reassembled. The ceiling above me was white, unfamiliar. Tubes and glowing runes surrounded the bed, pulsing with faint blue light.

I tried to sit up, but pain shot through my skull like fire. My head throbbed, memories flashing in fragments—Olivia's scream, blood, the ritual, the explosion of power, and then, nothing.

"Where..." My voice came out rough, almost broken. "...where am I?"

The door burst open. A young woman in healer's robes stumbled inside, her eyes wide as they met mine. Her face was pale with shock.

"You're, you're awake," she stammered. "You're finally awake!"

Her voice was so loud it made my head spin. I groaned and pressed a hand to my temple. "How long..."

"Four years," she said breathlessly. "You've been unconscious for four years."

The words hit me like a punch. Four years?

I forced myself upright despite the pain, gripping the edge of the bed. "Where's Olivia?"

The healer froze. "What?"

"Olivia," I said louder, desperation breaking through my voice. "How is she? Is she safe?"

The woman blinked, hesitating, then spoke cautiously. "You... remember her?"

"How could I forget?" I rasped. "She, I saved her. Is she okay? Where is she? Where are my brothers?"

The woman's lips twitched, her smile suddenly replaced by a frown. "You seem awfully concerned for a family who hasn't visited you once in four years."

I froze, my blood running cold. "What did you say?"

She folded her arms. "No one came. Not your brothers. Not your mate. Not anyone. You've been lying here alone, kept alive by magic, and that of my mother's."

My chest tightened painfully. "You're lying."

Her frown deepened. "Am I? If they cared, Alpha Lennox, where were they all this time?"

My head pounded, my breathing uneven. I wanted to shout, to demand answers, but my body wouldn't move the way it should.

She turned toward the door.

"Rest while you can. You'll need your strength when you find out what they've built without you."

The door closed behind her, leaving me dumbfounded. I frowned.

Four years.

The words echoed in my head, sharp and hollow. Four years... I've been lying here, lifeless? My heart thudded painfully against my chest. How could that be possible?

I tried to make sense of it, but the room around me only made things worse. This wasn't the mansion, not even close. The air smelled faintly of dust and herbs, the walls plain and narrow. The bed beneath me was too small, the ceiling too low.

This looked like one of the servants' quarters back at the estate.

Why would I, Alpha Lennox, be here?

Something wasn't right.

I gripped the sheets tightly and tried to move, pushing my weight forward, but the moment I did, fire shot through my legs. Pain. Numbness. Then nothing.

I froze.

My hands trembled as I reached for my thighs, my knees, anything to feel movement. But they wouldn't respond.

No... no, no.

I tried again, harder this time, using my arms to shift my body. My legs stayed stiff. Dead weight.

Panic rose like a storm inside me. "Move!" I growled under my breath, trying again and again. "Move, damn it!"

Nothing.

My breathing quickened, my chest heaving as I slammed a fist against the mattress. "What did they do to me?"

I closed my eyes and reached inward, trying to connect with the familiar presence, my wolf. My other half. My strength.

But all I found was silence.

No growl. No voice. No warmth. Just an empty void. It felt like my wolf never existed. Like he was never there.

My body went cold. "No..." I whispered. "No, this can't be."

## **Chapter 494: The Price**

Lennox POV

For years, I'd shared my mind with him, my wolf, my partner, my rage, and balance. Without him, I was half alive. Less than that. I forced myself to focus, straining harder, calling out through the link. Come on... answer me. Please. Still nothing. I opened my eyes again, sweat breaking across my forehead. My pulse thundered in my ears. My hands were shaking, my breath coming too fast. The silence in my head was louder than any scream.

I glanced around the room, at the small window covered with a thin curtain, at the old wooden desk pushed against the wall, at the single lantern flickering weakly beside my bed. This wasn't a room. This was exile.

"Four years..." I murmured, my voice hoarse. "And they left me here like this?"

My jaw clenched, rage slowly overtaking fear. If what that woman said was true, if Olivia, Levi, and Louis hadn't come, then what had become of them? What did she mean by what they built without you?

The door opened suddenly, and the young woman from earlier entered, escorted by an older lady. From their resemblance, I could tell this was her mother. The elderly woman immediately bowed her head in deep respect.

"Welcome back, Alpha Lennox," she greeted softly. Her tone was respectful, but I didn't feel like an Alpha anymore. I felt like a vegetable.

"How are you feeling?" she asked, concerned, as she slowly and respectfully approached me.

I frowned. "Why can't I move my legs? Why is my wolf silent? Where is this place? Where is my family? What the hell is going on?" I didn't even realize I was shouting until my voice echoed back at me from the walls.

The elderly woman, who was old enough to be my mother, had a calm look on her face, and it annoyed me even more.

"Please, Alpha," she said gently. "Calm yourself. I will answer all your questions, but first, allow me to examine you."

I glared at her. "And who the hell are you?"

She didn't look offended. Instead, she pulled up a wooden chair and sat beside me. "My name is Martha," she said calmly. "And this is my daughter, Annabel. We are healers and diviners. This is our home. Four years ago, you were brought here by your brother, Alpha Levi. Since then, we've been the ones caring for you."

Her voice was respectful, but her eyes held pity, and that made my blood boil. I hated pity. I hated sympathy.

I clenched my jaw. "So Levi brought me here and just left me?"

Martha sighed quietly. "Your case was delicate. Many thought there was no hope. Your body was broken beyond natural healing. Even your wolf had gone silent. The healers of your pack tried everything, but your condition worsened. Everyone believed you would never wake again."

I stared at her, my mind spinning. "Everyone... lost hope," I repeated hollowly.

She nodded slowly. "Yes."

"Please, let me examine you," Annabel urged softly, and this time I didn't argue.

Annabel stepped closer, her hands glowing faintly with soft golden light as she checked the markings on my arms and chest. The gentle warmth of her healing energy spread through me, but it felt muted, disconnected.

"What's wrong with me?" I asked again, my voice cracking this time. "Why can't I move my legs? Why can't I feel my wolf?"

Martha's calm expression faltered slightly. She exchanged a look with her daughter, who stopped her examination midway. Something in their silence made my stomach twist. Something was very wrong.

"Tell me," I demanded, my tone rude and panicked. "Tell me what's wrong!"

Martha drew in a long, slow breath. "Alpha Lennox..." She hesitated, her voice dropping lower. "I'm afraid the Moon Goddess' second chance came with a heavy cost."

My heart pounded. "What are you talking about?"

She met my gaze, her eyes filled with sorrow and pity. "Your wolf, he's gone. You're wolfless. The bond between you and him was severed when you were brought back."

For a moment, I couldn't breathe. "No," I whispered.

Martha's voice wavered as she continued, "And your legs, the lower part of your body sustained damage beyond what healing can restore. You've been paralyzed too... but it might be temporary."

"No." My voice rose, trembling. "You're wrong."

Annabel stepped back, her expression full of pity. "We've checked, Alpha. Many times. You were given another chance at life, but it came with a price."

I shook my head violently. "No! That's impossible! You're lying!"

Martha reached for my arm, but I jerked away. "No! You don't understand!" My voice broke, echoing through the small room. "I'm an Alpha! I can't be wolfless! And crippled!"

The walls seemed to close in. I slammed my fists against the bed, the pain barely registering. "I should've died then! Not this... not like this!"

Martha's calm voice broke through my panic. "The Moon Goddess chose to spare your life, Alpha Lennox. But she never promised it would be easy."

Her words burned.

I could feel my heartbeat pounding in my temples, tears stinging my eyes even as I fought them back. My wolf, gone. My legs, useless. My rank, my strength, my identity, shattered.

All that remained was me. A shell of a man.

Why would the Moon Goddess bring me back just to take everything away?

I clenched my fists. My throat burned, but I forced myself to speak through it. "There has to be something you can do," I rasped. "You're healers, aren't you? Fix it. Fix me."

Martha exchanged a heavy look with her daughter, then placed a gentle hand on my arm. "We will try, Alpha Lennox," she said quietly. "But your condition is not one that herbs or spells alone can mend. The damage is spiritual, part of your very essence."

"Then find a way," I snapped. "I don't care what it takes. Just fix it."

Martha's eyes softened, not with pity this time, but sympathy, like she already knew there was no cure. "We'll see what we can do. For now, you need to rest. I'll contact Alpha Levi and inform him that you're awake."

Levi.

The name alone made my stomach twist.

As she stood to leave, I stopped her. "Wait."

She turned slowly.

"Tell me the truth." My voice was low, strained. "Has anyone, any member of my family, been here? My brothers. Olivia. Anyone."

The room fell silent.

Martha didn't answer right away. Her hesitation was all the confirmation I needed, but I needed to hear it.

"Answer me," I demanded, my tone breaking.

She sighed, a sound that carried both weariness and guilt. "No, Alpha Lennox. None of your family has visited."

My chest caved in. "What?"

She continued softly, almost as if afraid to speak. "Alpha Levi often calls to check on your condition. He makes sure you have everything you need: the best potions, care,

and protection. But..." She trailed off, lowering her gaze. "...no one has come in person. Not once."

The words hit me harder than any blade ever could.

For a second, I couldn't breathe. The world blurred around me.

Four years.

And they never visited?

"No..." I whispered, shaking my head. "You're lying. You have to be lying."

"Alpha Lennox—"

"Don't call me that!" I shouted, my voice raw and trembling. "Don't you dare call me that when I'm nothing but a cripple lying in a stranger's house!"

The fury in me built until it broke, replaced by something far worse: grief. My vision clouded, and before I could stop it, a tear slipped down my cheek.

"They left me..." I muttered, my voice barely audible. "My family, my mate..."

Annabel stepped forward as if to comfort me, but I turned away, clenching the sheets in my fists until they nearly tore.

Martha sighed softly, her voice full of regret. "Perhaps it was guilt. Or fear. Sometimes people stay away because they cannot bear the sight of what's been lost."

Her words only twisted the knife deeper. It made me angrier. That was a pathetic excuse.

Martha turned toward her daughter. "Send a message to Alpha Levi. Tell him he's awake."

I frowned. "Don't!"

## **Chapter 495: The Mate He Is Refusing**

Calvin's POV

FOUR YEARS BACK

The morning had been peaceful until I looked up from my plate.

Nora was standing across the table, holding a tray, serving breakfast like a maid. The sight made something inside me snap. My wolf growled low in my head, his anger rising just as sharply as mine. She was more like a friend to Olivia, so why was she serving us breakfast?

My chair scraped the floor as I stood. "Who asked you to serve breakfast?"

Every eye at the table turned toward me. Nora froze mid-motion, her hands trembling slightly as she held the jug of milk.

"I—"

"You are not a maid," I cut her off sharply, my voice dropping low, commanding. "You're a guest in this house. Know your place. Get out."

The silence that followed was heavy. Even Mother paused mid-bite, her eyes flicking from me to Nora with quiet suspicion.

Nora looked at me—no, through me—with those soft hazel eyes that had haunted my dreams for months. I could see the flicker of hurt behind her calm expression, but she bowed slightly and turned to leave without a word.

The moment she disappeared through the door, I realized my hands were shaking.

Mother's tone was gentle but probing. "Calvin," she said, her brow arching slightly. "That was rather harsh. What exactly did that girl do to make you so angry?"

I clenched my jaw. I didn't answer. How could I tell her that every time I saw Nora, my pulse quickened—that every night, I dreamt of touching her, kissing her, claiming her? That the reason I was angry wasn't because she was serving us but because her presence rattled me.

My wolf scoffed inside me. "All this is on you. You're the one refusing the bond."

"Shut up," I muttered under my breath.

He growled back. "You think ignoring it will make it go away? She's your mate, Calvin. You can smell her in your soul."

I shut my eyes, forcing a deep breath, trying to drown the voice. But even then, her scent lingered—sweet jasmine with a hint of rain. It pulled at something primal inside me.

Mother was still watching. "You seem... unsettled," she observed softly. "Is there something I should know about this girl?"

I shook my head quickly. "No, Mother. Nothing."

But she didn't look convinced. Her lips curved slightly, the way they always did when she sensed I was hiding something.

I grabbed my cup, downed the rest of my drink, and rose from the table. "If you'll excuse me, I have things to attend to."

As I left the dining room, my wolf continued. "You can lie to her, to yourself, to everyone... but you can't lie to me."

I stopped in the hallway, hands clenched. "I don't want her," I hissed under my breath.

My wolf's low laugh echoed inside my mind. "Then why does her name make your heart race?"

I didn't answer. I just kept walking, but deep down, I knew the truth I didn't want to face.

I managed to keep my distance from Nora for the rest of the morning, though every time I caught even a whiff of her scent, my wolf stirred restlessly inside me. I told myself it was better this way. It was better I kept my distance so I wouldn't get my heart broken for the second time. I may have survived the first heartbreak, but this? I couldn't.

But that peace didn't last.

Just after midday, Lolita came running into my office, her face bright and a little too cheerful for my liking. "Alpha Calvin," she said, breathless but smiling. "Olivia sent word. She wants me and Nora to return to the Full Moon Pack immediately. We'll be leaving tomorrow."

The words hit me like a blow to the chest.

Leaving.

Tomorrow.

Nora... gone.

I blinked slowly, forcing my voice to stay even. "Olivia wants you both back?"

Lolita nodded eagerly. "Yes. She said she's pregnant! She needs us."

I was shocked about Olivia being pregnant. In fact, that didn't bother me. What bothered me was this news.

For a moment, I couldn't speak. My chest felt too tight. It shouldn't have mattered. If anything, this should have been good news. Out of sight meant out of mind. That was what I told myself every time I caught my thoughts wandering toward her.

But the truth? The thought of her leaving made something ugly twist inside me.

I turned back to my desk, pretending to shuffle through some papers. "When exactly did she say you'd leave?"

"Tomorrow morning," Lolita repeated. "After breakfast."

Tomorrow. That soon.

My wolf's voice slithered through my head, amused and taunting. "So she's really going. You should be happy."

But I wasn't.

"Tell her you guys can't leave yet," I said suddenly.

Lolita blinked. "What?"

I looked up at her, keeping my tone sharp and authoritative. "It's not safe."

Her brows furrowed. "Not safe?"

"Yes," I said quickly, thinking fast. "My trackers reported rogue activity near the borders two nights ago. They're still investigating. Until they confirm it's clear, no one leaves the territory."

Those were lies.

Lolita frowned. "But... the message said—"

"I don't care what the message said," I cut in, my voice firm enough to make her flinch. "You'll both stay a few more days. Three at least. If the borders are secure by then, you can leave."

Lolita hesitated, clearly unsure whether to argue or obey. "Should I... tell Nora?"

I nodded once, curtly. "Yes. Tell her it's my order."

She nodded quickly, bowing before hurrying out.

The moment the door shut, I exhaled slowly and leaned back in my chair, dragging a hand down my face.

I leaned back in my chair, staring blankly at the papers scattered across my desk. The words blurred together. My mind wasn't on pack business. It was on the sound of her laugh, the way she tucked her hair behind her ear when she was nervous, the calm in her voice that somehow always managed to ground everyone—except me.

"What the hell is wrong with me..." I muttered, dragging a hand through my hair.

My wolf chuckled low. "You already know what's wrong. You're fighting what's yours."

I ignored him. But as the hours passed, that restlessness didn't fade. I went over patrol reports, met with warriors, even sparred in the training yard, but nothing helped. Every time the wind shifted, I swore I could catch her scent—jasmine and rain. It haunted me like a curse.

By evening, I couldn't sit still any longer. I needed air.

I stepped outside, letting the cool twilight breeze hit my face. The compound was quiet, the last rays of sunlight bleeding into the horizon. I took the path that led past the garden, hoping the walk would clear my head.

That's when I saw Lolita.

She was sitting under the maple tree near the fountain, a book in her hands, her legs folded neatly beneath her. She looked relaxed, completely at peace. That wasn't what caught my attention.

What caught my attention was who wasn't there.

Lolita and Nora were always together—inseparable. If you saw one, you'd see the other. But right now, the space beside her was empty.

My brow furrowed.

"Lolita," I called, walking toward her.

She looked up immediately, startled. "Alpha Calvin."

"Where's Nora?" I asked, trying to sound casual but hearing the edge in my voice anyway.

She blinked. "Nora? Oh... she went out."

"Out?" My jaw tightened. "Where?"

Lolita hesitated, clearly unsure if she should answer. "Um... a birthday party."

"A what?"

"A birthday party," she repeated.

I frowned. "Whose party?"

Lolita's fingers tightened around the edge of her book, her eyes flicking away nervously before she finally answered. "Gamma Austin's," she said softly. "It's his birthday. He... invited her personally."

Her words hit me like a blade to the gut.

Austin. One of my Gammas.

He personally invited Nora?

My jaw clenched. Austin was good-looking. Too good-looking. He was charming too, the kind who smiled easily and made everyone feel comfortable. Including, apparently, her.

I forced my expression to stay neutral. "I see," I said quietly.

Lolita looked uncertain, like she was about to say more, but I turned on my heel before she could.

The moment my back was to her, my wolf's growl vibrated through my chest.

"Austin invited her? Personally?" he snarled. "You're going to let that slide?"

I didn't reply. My vision had already started to blur at the edges, fury clouding everything else.

The thought of Nora at a party—dressed up, smiling, maybe laughing with him—was enough to make my heart hammer violently against my ribs.

Austin's hand on her waist. Her smiling up at him. Her scent mixing with his.

The images struck me like lightning.

My wolf growled again, louder this time, his tone dark and possessive. "He might be touching what's ours."

"Shut up," I hissed, though I didn't mean it.

I didn't head toward my quarters. I didn't even think. My body moved on its own, fueled by possession I'd been trying to bury for weeks.

By the time I reached the garage, my breathing was uneven, my control dangerously thin. I yanked the keys from the hook, slid into the driver's seat, and drove toward Austin's home.

## **Chapter 496: The Party**

Calvin's POV

The drive felt longer than it should have. My grip on the steering wheel was tight, my jaw locked as the engine roared through the night. When I finally reached Austin's estate, the place was booming. Music thumped from inside, and laughter spilled out from the open doors. Warriors, pack members, omegas—everyone was here.

I stepped out of the car, the hum of chatter dying down almost immediately. Heads turned. Whispers followed.

"Alpha Calvin?" someone murmured. "He actually came?"

Their surprise was understood. I never showed up for gatherings like this. Never. I hated social gatherings ever since I was little.

I pushed through the crowd, ignoring the murmurs and curious glances. The air was thick with the scent of food, wine, and too many bodies, but beneath all that chaos, I caught it.

Jasmine.

Rain.

Her.

My wolf stirred instantly, his growl vibrating through my bones. "She's close."

I followed the scent across the hall and out to the courtyard. The night air was cooler there, and the music softer. That's when I saw her.

Nora.

She was standing near the fountain, her back half turned to me, laughing lightly at something Austin said. My Gamma stood close—too close—his posture relaxed, his smile easy.

Something inside me snapped.

I walked toward them, my jaw clenched. Austin noticed me first, his words dying mid-sentence. His eyes widened. "Alpha Calvin... you're here?"

The air shifted immediately with tension.

"Yes," I said evenly.

Austin hesitated. "I didn't send you an invitation. I just assumed—you don't usually attend gatherings."

"I know," I replied, my voice cold. "But it seems I was missing quite the event."

Austin shifted uncomfortably, sensing the anger beneath my calm. Nora finally turned fully toward me, her smile fading the instant our eyes met.

Her dress was simple, elegant, and far too beautiful for my peace of mind.

"Let's go," I said flatly.

Her brows furrowed. "Excuse me?"

I stepped closer. "We're leaving. Now."

Nora blinked, disbelief flashing in her eyes. "I beg your pardon?"

"You heard me," I said, my voice low, clipped with restraint. "I'm taking you back with me."

Her lips parted in shock before she scoffed softly. "Hell no. You don't get to order me around like one of your warriors, Alpha. I'm not a child, and I'm certainly not your servant."

Her defiance hit me harder than any physical blow. My wolf bristled, growling inside me. "You're Olivia's friend," I said quickly, masking my true motive. "If anything happens to you, she'll have my head. I'm responsible for your safety. You shouldn't be here."

That was a lie—and I knew it. This wasn't about Olivia. It was about me. About the jealousy clawing at my chest, the possessiveness I couldn't explain or suppress.

Nora crossed her arms, her eyes narrowing. "Responsible for my safety?" she repeated, her tone laced with disbelief. "Or just trying to control me?"

I said nothing.

Because the truth? She was right.

Austin stepped forward slightly, his voice cautious. "Alpha, if this is about—"

"Stay out of this, Austin," I cut him off sharply, my voice dropping into a tone that warned him not to test me.

He froze.

For a moment, the only sound was the trickling of the fountain beside us.

Nora's chest rose and fell rapidly, her jaw tight. "You don't get to show up out of nowhere and drag me away like this," she said quietly but firmly. "I'm not yours to command."

I met her gaze. "Maybe not. But as long as you're under my roof, you'll do as I say."

Her eyes flashed with anger. "Then maybe I shouldn't be under your roof at all."

The words hit like a punch to the gut.

Austin's hand twitched at his side, like he was ready to step in, and that alone made my vision blur with rage.

I took a breath, one I didn't really feel, and forced myself to step back before I said or did something I couldn't take back.

"Get your things," I said through clenched teeth. "Meet me at the car in two minutes."

I didn't wait for her answer. I turned and walked away.

At the car I sat and leaned back, letting my fingers drum restlessly on my thigh. Every second that passed felt like an eternity.

I exhaled roughly, rubbing the back of my neck. I'd lost control back there. Again. Every time it came to Nora, logic evaporated. I'd faced wars, bloodshed, betrayal, but nothing rattled me like her defiance did.

Two minutes passed. Then three. Then five.

Still no sign of her.

I clenched my jaw, the muscles ticking. My wolf paced restlessly inside me. "She's still with him."

"Shut up," I hissed, though the words lacked conviction.

Before I could stop myself, I was out of the car.

I could hear the faint music still echoing from the house, the laughter of guests fading as I neared the courtyard again.

And then, through the crowd, I saw her.

She wasn't with Austin anymore. She was by the gate, speaking to someone—a maid, maybe—her expression unreadable. She was beautiful. Too beautiful.

And that scared me more than anything.

I walked up to her, my boots crunching against the gravel. She looked up instantly, her eyes narrowing when she saw me.

"You're still here?" she asked coolly.

"You're late," I said, keeping my tone even.

"I never agreed to go with you."

I inhaled sharply through my nose, my patience hanging by a thread. "You will," I said quietly. "One way or another."

Her chin lifted defiantly. "If you think you can force me—"

"I don't want to force you, Nora." I took a step closer, lowering my voice. "But if you don't willingly come with me, then I will have to carry you myself... so choose the best option."

Her eyes widened. "You are not—"

"I am serious." I cut her off. "Use your legs and follow me to the car, or I'll sling you over my shoulder and you'll be the topic for the week. the ball is in your court."

## **Chapter 497: Why?**

Calvin's POV

For a moment, we just stared at each other, neither of us willing to back down. Her eyes were blazing, daring me to try it, but I could see the flicker of hesitation beneath her glare.

"Quite a bold threat, Alpha," she muttered, crossing her arms. "You wouldn't dare."

I leaned in slightly, my voice low. "Try me."

Her nostrils flared. For a second, I thought she'd slap me or worse, walk away again. But instead, she huffed, rolled her eyes, and turned sharply on her heel. "Fine. Whatever. I'll go."

I didn't move until she brushed past me, the faint scent of jasmine and rain clinging to the air between us. My wolf purred with satisfaction. She walked ahead, muttering something under her breath about arrogant Alphas, and I followed behind, silent.

When we reached the car, she yanked the door open and slid into the passenger seat without looking at me. I got in a moment later, started the engine, and drove off. The silence was thick. Only the hum of the tires on the road filled the space between us.

After a few minutes, she finally spoke. "Why don't we just reject each other?"

My hands tightened on the wheel, but I didn't answer.

Her voice was low but sharp. "You don't like me. I can tell. And I definitely don't like you. So why keep pretending this thing doesn't bother you?"

I stared straight ahead but didn't say a word.

She let out a bitter laugh. "You hate that I exist. You hate that your wolf reacts to me. You hate that you are mated to me, an already girl."

My jaw flexed, but I said nothing.

"So, what's the point?" she continued. "Why not just end it? Reject me, Calvin. Set yourself free."

I pressed harder on the accelerator, the engine roaring as I fought the emotions building in my chest.

"Say something," she snapped. "Anything."

Still, I said nothing.

She scoffed, shaking her head. "You're impossible. One minute you act like I'm the problem, the next you show up and drag me out of a party like some jealous lover, and now you can't even look at me. You know what? Maybe the Moon Goddess made a mistake. Because I refuse to believe I was meant to be tied to someone who treats me like this."

Her words cut deep, but I refused to show it.

We drove in silence after that, heavy, angry, suffocating silence, until the familiar gates of the packhouse came into view.

The moment I parked, Nora unbuckled her seatbelt, flung the door open, and stormed out without another word. I sat there gripping the steering wheel, my gaze fixed on her retreating figure.

My wolf's voice rumbled low in my head. "You could've said something. Anything."

"I couldn't," I muttered. "Not without making things worse."

I sighed and got out of the car, making my way straight to my room. I paced my room for what felt like hours, but the anger wouldn't fade. Not at her. At myself. At the way her words echoed in my head.

"Reject me, Calvin. Set yourself free."

She had no idea how badly I wanted to—not because I didn't want her, but because I did. Too much.

My wolf wouldn't stop pacing either. "You should've told her. You should've said the truth."

"No," I muttered, dragging a hand through my hair. "She doesn't need to know."

But even as I said it, I could still see her face—the hurt in her eyes, the anger, the disbelief.

I tried to lie down, tried to sleep, but the silence was unbearable. Every sound in the house seemed louder. Every second without her scent burned.

Finally, I snapped.

I stormed out of my room and down the hall. My footsteps were heavy, my pulse wild. By the time I reached her door, my chest felt like it was about to split open.

I didn't knock softly. I banged.

A few seconds later, the door flew open, and there she was, standing there in her nightgown, hair loose, eyes tired and furious all at once.

"What now?" she snapped. "Did I break another one of your stupid Alpha rules?"

Her tone was sharp, but her voice trembled slightly. That small crack undid me.

"I'm not here to argue," I said through gritted teeth.

She scoffed. "You could've fooled me. You've been doing nothing but arguing since I got here."

"I'm trying to talk to you."

"Then talk!" she shouted, stepping closer. "Say what's on your mind, Calvin! Why do you hate me so much? Because I'm not some high-born she-wolf? Because I wasn't born with a silver title or a pack crest?!"

Her words hit me hard. I froze.

"That's what this is, isn't it?" she went on, her voice rising. "You can't stand being mated to someone beneath you. You think I'm not worthy of your perfect Alpha name!"

I clenched my jaw. "You're wrong."

"Then what is it?!" she yelled. "Tell me what I did wrong! Tell me why you look at me like I'm some kind of mistake!"

"Because I can't—" I stopped myself, my throat tight.

"Can't what?" she demanded.

I looked away. "I can't do this."

Her expression faltered. "Do what?"

"Feel," I said quietly, the word scraping from my chest like broken glass. "I can't afford to feel anything for you."

She blinked, confused, angry. "You're afraid of feeling?"

I didn't answer.

She laughed bitterly, shaking her head. "You're unbelievable. That's pathetic, Calvin."

Something in me snapped.

Before I knew it, I'd stepped forward, closing the distance between us until I could feel her breath on my skin.

"Watch your tone," I warned, my voice low.

"No," she shot back, standing her ground. "I'm done watching anything. You can't keep pushing me away just because you're too much of a coward to—"

I didn't let her finish.

My hand shot out, gripping her wrist. "You have no idea what you're talking about," I growled.

Her eyes flashed. "Then enlighten me."

Our faces were inches apart now, our breaths mixing, hot and uneven.

"I told you, Nora," I whispered, my voice hoarse. "I can't."

But she didn't back away. "Then why are you here?" she asked softly, her voice trembling now. "If you don't want me, why are you standing in my doorway at midnight?"

I didn't have an answer—at least, not one I could say.

The next thing I knew, her palm pressed against my chest, right over my heart. "Tell me," she said again, quieter this time. "Tell me why you don't want me."

My control broke.

I grabbed her waist, pulling her flush against me. "Who says I don't want you?" I hissed. "I can't stop thinking about you. Every time you look at me, I feel like I'm losing my mind."

Her breath hitched. "Then why won't you accept this bond?"

I couldn't respond. Instead, I kissed her.

It wasn't gentle. It was rough, hungry, desperate—the kind of kiss born from too much restraint and too many lies.

She stiffened for a moment, then melted against me, her hands gripping my shirt as if she hated and needed me all at once.

When we finally pulled apart, both of us were breathing hard, staring at each other like the world had tilted off its axis.

Her voice came out as a whisper. "What are we doing?"

I swallowed hard, my thumb brushing against her cheek. "I have no idea."

And before I could change my mind, I turned and walked away.

## **Chapter 498: Let Her Go**

Calvin's POV

"What the hell are you doing, Calvin!" Olivia yelled through the mind link, and I only rolled my eyes.

"Stop shouting, sis. You're carrying my nephews or niece in there," I teased, hearing her sharp scoff echo through the link.

"Calvin, I'm not joking. Release Lolita and Nora to me," she demanded.

"Lolita can come over, but Nora is a no," I said firmly. This time, I wasn't joking.

"Seriously?" Olivia spat. "And why is Nora a no? You clearly don't want to accept your bond, so free her."

"Never," I said firmly, cutting the link before she could say another word.

I exhaled, pacing across my office, fingers raking through my hair. My wolf growled deep in my chest.

"You know why you don't want her gone."

"Shut up," I muttered.

But I couldn't shake it. The thought of Nora leaving made my stomach twist. The thought of her stepping out of my territory, out of my reach, with anyone else's protection but mine, made my blood boil. I wasn't ready to admit it, not to Olivia, not to anyone, least of all to myself.

I dropped heavily into my chair, gripping the armrest. Why the hell did this girl have such a hold on me? I'd convinced myself that keeping her here was about safety, about protecting Olivia's friend, but deep down, I knew it was more. It was the same reason I'd driven to that damned party last night, the same reason her scent made my wolf lose control. I didn't want her gone because I couldn't stand the thought of someone else having her.

The memory of the kiss hit me again: the warmth of her mouth, the tremble in her breath, the way she'd looked at me afterward, equal parts anger and confusion. My chest tightened painfully.

"You're scared," my wolf said again, his tone calm now, almost knowing. "You're scared of what you already feel."

I clenched my jaw. "I'm scared... I don't want my heart broken for the second time."

My wolf stirred. He knew what I meant. If no one understood what I felt when my heart was broken by my first mate, he did. I was a shadow of myself. I almost committed suicide.

The memories slammed into me: that same hollow feeling, the constant ache in my chest, the scent of betrayal that lingered for years. The nightmares, the sleepless nights, the weight of pretending I was fine when I wasn't.

My wolf's voice softened, almost mournful. "She wasn't your mate, Calvin. She was your mistake. You know this."

"I know," I whispered. "But it doesn't change what it did to me."

Silence filled the room again. I leaned forward, elbows resting on my knees, staring blankly at the floor.

"I can't go through that again," I said finally. "I can't love someone and watch it destroy me twice."

"This is different," my wolf argued quietly. "Nora isn't her. You know it."

"She's worse," I said bitterly. "Because she's mine."

My wolf growled faintly in disapproval, but I ignored him. The truth was simple, terrifyingly simple. I wasn't angry at Nora because I hated her. I was angry because every time she looked at me, she made me feel alive again. Because she could hurt me in ways no one else could.

I slammed my fist against the table, the sound echoing through the office. My breathing grew uneven, my chest tight. I'd built walls around my heart for years, thick, cold, and unbreakable, and somehow, in a matter of weeks, she was breaking through them without even trying.

"I can't fall for her," I muttered to myself. "I won't."

But even as I said it, her face appeared in my mind: those eyes, the stubborn tilt of her chin, the faint curve of her lips when she smiled. The same lips I'd kissed.

My wolf rumbled softly. "Then why does her name still make your heart race?"

I stood abruptly, pacing again, frustration clawing at my chest.

"Because I'm a fool. Because I can't stop thinking about her even when I try."

The door creaked slightly, and I turned sharply, but no one was there. Still, the faint scent of jasmine drifted from the hallway.

Nora.

My pulse spiked. I swallowed hard, trying to regain composure, but the ache in my chest only deepened.

"She'll be the end of me," I whispered.

And deep down, I knew my wolf was right. I wasn't keeping her here because I was confused. I was keeping her here because I was terrified that if she left, she'd take the last piece of me that still felt anything.

Suddenly, the faint scent of jasmine grew stronger, and before I could even steady my heartbeat, the door opened.

Nora stepped in, her chin raised, her eyes sharp and full of annoyance. She looked determined. That alone set every nerve in my body on edge.

"What do you want?" I asked, forcing my voice to stay calm.

She closed the door quietly behind her, then turned to face me. "We need to talk."

I didn't respond. I just leaned back in my chair, pretending to be uninterested, even though my pulse was hammering.

Her next words sliced through the silence.

"We have to reject each other."

My grip on the armrest tightened. "What?"

"You heard me," she said firmly. "This... whatever this is, it's not working. You don't want me, and I don't want to keep being treated like a burden."

I stared at her, unmoving. When I didn't answer, she stepped closer, her frown deepening.

"I came here to make it official. You can reject me now, or I'll do it myself."

I ignored her, turning my gaze to the window, but she didn't stop.

"Fine," she snapped. "Then maybe this will make it easier for you."

When I looked back at her, she lifted her hand, and my world froze. A silver ring glinted on her finger.

"What the hell is that?" I asked, my voice dangerously low.

Her lips curved into something that wasn't quite a smile. "An engagement ring."

I shot up from my seat, disbelief flashing through me like lightning. "You're joking."

"No," she said, her tone calm deliberate. "I'm engaged, Calvin. I have a boyfriend back in Full Moon Pack. His name is Daniel. He's here now, actually. He asked me to marry him, and I said yes."

My heart slammed against my ribs. "You're lying."

"I'm not," she said quietly. "I came to tell you goodbye. We're leaving tonight to start preparing for the ceremony."

I laughed bitterly, but there was no humor in it. "You expect me to believe that? That you got engaged out of nowhere?"

She met my gaze steadily. "Believe whatever you want. But if you think I'm staying here just because you decided to keep me trapped, you're wrong. I've already sent word to the council. If you try to stop me, they'll consider it unlawful holding."

Her words hit me like a strike to the chest.

"Unlawful..." I repeated, my jaw clenching. "You reported me?"

She didn't flinch. "I did what I had to. You can't keep me here forever."

For a moment, I couldn't move. Couldn't speak. My wolf was growling so loud in my head it felt like thunder.

"She's lying," he snarled. "She's trying to make you let go."

But her eyes, damn her eyes, they didn't look like they were lying. The rage inside me tangled with something else, pain, raw and deep.

"So that's it?" I said, my voice low. "You walk in here, show me a ring, and expect me to believe you're happy with someone else?"

Nora took a step back, her breath uneven, but she kept her tone steady. "Yes. I'll be with someone who isn't bothered about my class."

That did it.

Before she could say another word, I closed the distance between us. My hand gripped her jaw, tilting her face up roughly, and without a thought, I crushed my lips against hers.

It wasn't soft.

It wasn't gentle.

It was desperate, angry, every ounce of frustration and longing I'd buried spilling out at once.

Her eyes widened in shock, her hands pushing hard against my chest, but I didn't stop. I couldn't. My wolf roared in approval, his growl vibrating through me. The feel of her, the taste of her breath, it was too much. Too real.

Then she shoved me back with all her strength and slapped me hard across the cheek.

## **Chapter 499: Let Go**

Nora's POV

I couldn't believe I slapped him.

My hand was still trembling, the sting of impact echoing through my palm. My heart pounded so hard it hurt, and for a second, I couldn't even look at him.

Calvin just stood there, tall, frozen, unreadable, the side of his face slightly red where I'd hit him. His eyes... those dark, stormy eyes... they weren't angry. They were wild. Pained. And that somehow made it worse.

What had I done?

My breath came out shaky, uneven. I wasn't supposed to react like that. I wasn't supposed to feel anything. But the moment his lips touched mine, that rough, burning kiss I never saw coming, everything inside me had twisted.

Anger. Fear. Want. All at once.

I hated it. I hated him. I hated that a single touch from him could tear down every wall I'd built.

I took a step back, desperate to breathe. "You—" My voice cracked. I swallowed and tried again. "You can't just do that. You can't keep crossing the line every time you feel like it."

He didn't answer. He just stood there, his chest rising and falling heavily, his fists clenched at his sides like he was fighting himself.

I turned, forcing myself toward the door. My legs felt heavy, my pulse loud in my ears.

Why did it feel like walking away was harder than it should be?

I reached the door, gripping the handle tightly, and whispered, "We should never see each other again."

Then I left before I could break down in front of him.

Out in the hallway, I stopped and pressed my shaking hand to my lips. I could still taste him, and that realization made a tear slip down my cheek.

I wiped it away quickly.

No. I wasn't going to cry over him. Not again. Not ever.

When I reached the room I shared with Lolita, she raised a brow at me. "What did he say..."

I sighed. "I don't care what he says or what he thinks. I'm leaving, and I'm marrying Daniel," I spat as I moved to the wardrobe to start packing.

"Are you sure he will let you leave?" Lolita sounded worried.

"Are you sure he'll let you leave?" Lolita asked again, worry written all over her face.

I didn't answer right away. My hands kept moving, folding clothes that didn't even need folding, just so I wouldn't have to meet her eyes.

"I don't care," I muttered finally. "He can't control me forever."

Lolita sat on the edge of the bed, watching me closely. "You didn't answer my question."

I stopped what I was doing and turned to her. "Yes. I'm sure."

Her brow furrowed, doubt heavy in her gaze. "And you're really going to marry Daniel?"

"Yes." The word came out sharper than I meant it to. I took a breath and tried again.

"Yes, I am. He's kind. He listens. He treats me like I matter."

Lolita hesitated. "But he's not your mate."

The room went still. The air itself felt heavier.

I forced a small, tired smile. "Maybe that's the point. Maybe it's better this way. I don't need a bond to make someone love me."

She frowned. "Nora—"

"Calvin wants someone different," I cut her off, my voice soft but steady. "Someone powerful. Someone with a title. I'm not that. I never was."

I tried to sound strong, but the words came out cracked and uneven. My throat burned. "He wants someone who can walk beside him as an Alpha's equal. I can barely walk beside him without feeling like I don't belong."

Lolita stood and walked over, gently touching my arm. "Do you love Daniel?"

I froze. My throat felt tight. "I... care about him."

"That's not the same thing," she said quietly.

I looked away. "It's enough."

But it wasn't. And we both knew it.

Lolita didn't push further. She only sighed and helped me fold another dress, the silence between us louder than any argument. The rustle of fabric filled the air. Outside, I could hear birds, the faint sound of pack warriors training, life going on as if nothing inside me was breaking.

I packed the last of my things in silence, my hands trembling. The entire time, my heart thudded painfully in my chest, whispering a truth I refused to admit.

I wanted him to stop me.

I wanted him to say, Stay.

When we finally went downstairs, the house was quiet. Too quiet. No footsteps in the hallway. No lingering presence waiting to argue.

No Calvin.

The silence made my stomach twist. My palms grew cold as I gripped my bag tighter.

Lolita glanced around nervously. "Something doesn't feel right."

"It feels perfect," I said quickly, but my voice betrayed me.

At the door, a driver was already waiting beside the car. He bowed politely. "Miss Nora, Miss Lolita," he greeted. "Alpha Calvin instructed me to take you back to the Full Moon Pack."

My heart dropped straight to my stomach.

He'd agreed?

He really told them to drive us away?

"Oh," Lolita said, her voice unsure. "Alright then."

I nodded stiffly and forced a smile. "Thank you."

The driver opened the back door. The motion felt final, like a gate closing behind me, like a Chapter sealing shut before I was ready.

I climbed into the car, my fingers clutching the small ring in my pocket, the one Daniel had given me weeks ago. I stared at it blankly. It wasn't on my finger yet, but somehow, it already felt like a promise I didn't know if I could keep.

As the door shut, I glanced back at the mansion, the tall windows glowing faintly under the morning sun. The same windows I had looked out of every evening, wondering if he ever thought about me as much as I thought about him.

But no one came out.

No one stopped me.

I bit the inside of my cheek to keep from crying.

He let me go.

He actually let me go.

And for reasons I couldn't explain, that hurt more than anything else.

The car began to move, wheels crunching softly over the gravel path. My chest tightened with each turn, each meter that pulled me farther from him.

Lolita sat quietly beside me, sneaking a glance in my direction but saying nothing. Maybe she knew that if she spoke, I'd fall apart.

I pressed my forehead against the cool window, watching the packhouse grow smaller in the distance. My reflection in the glass looked calm, almost indifferent. But inside, I was unraveling.

I'd told myself I was ready to leave, that I wanted this.

But as the road stretched ahead and his scent faded from the air, the truth hit me like a knife.

I didn't want to go.

I wanted him to stop me.

To fight for me.

To tell me not to marry Daniel.

But he didn't.

And maybe that was my answer.

## **Chapter 500: In Two Days**

Nora's POV

Finally, we arrived at the Full Moon Pack. The familiar scent of pine and damp earth filled the air as the car rolled to a stop in front of the packhouse. For a moment, I couldn't move. My chest felt hollow, my hands gripping my bag like it was the only thing keeping me upright. When I finally stepped out, the cool breeze brushed against my face, but it didn't calm me. I watched as the car drove off, the tires crunching over gravel until it disappeared from sight.

"Are you okay?" Lolita's voice broke through the silence.

"Yeah," I lied, forcing a weak smile that didn't reach my eyes. "I'm fine."

But I wasn't fine. Not even close. My wolf whimpered inside me, restless and hurt, and it took everything in me not to cry right there. Every inch of my body ached for something I couldn't name, or maybe I could, and I just didn't want to admit it.

"Let's go in. Olivia should be waiting," I said quickly, turning away before Lolita could read the pain written all over my face.

We started walking toward the house. The pack grounds were buzzing with activity, familiar faces and familiar smiles, but everything felt distant. People greeted us warmly, surprised to see us back after so long.

"Welcome home!" someone said.

"Good to have you back!" another called out.

I smiled faintly, returning their greetings, but my heart wasn't in it. Their voices sounded far away, like echoes underwater. All I could think about was that I had left a part of myself behind, and he hadn't even tried to stop me.

When we stepped into the main house, the warmth of the place hit me. The polished wood floors, the scent of baked bread, the faint hum of chatter from the kitchen. Everything looked the same, yet nothing felt the same.

I took a deep breath and squared my shoulders. "Come on," I told Lolita. "We should find Olivia before she starts worrying."

But even as I said it, my chest tightened. Because deep down, I knew that no matter how far I ran, my heart was still somewhere back in his pack, with him.

The moment we stepped into the packhouse, I spotted Olivia coming down the staircase. She looked radiant, glowing actually, her hand resting gently on her stomach. The joy on her face was undeniable, and when her eyes landed on us, they lit up completely.

"Nora! Lolita!" she exclaimed, her voice full of excitement as she hurried down the steps. "You're finally back!"

Before I could even respond, she wrapped her arms around me, hugging me tightly. I froze for a second, startled by the warmth, then slowly hugged her back.

"Oh, you have no idea how much I missed you both," she said, pulling back just enough to look at me. Her gaze softened. "You look tired. Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," I lied, forcing a small smile. "Just the trip. It was long."

Her eyes narrowed slightly, but she didn't push. "Well, you're home now," she said warmly. "Come, sit. You both must be starving. I'll have something brought for you."

Lolita smiled politely, but I could feel her sneaking glances at me, worried I wasn't okay. As we followed Olivia into the sitting room, she kept talking about the pregnancy. I nodded and smiled where I needed to, pretending to listen, pretending to be okay. But inside, I was miles away.

Back in his office.

Back in that moment, his hands on my face, his lips on mine.

The slap.

The silence.

The way he'd just let me go.

Olivia's laughter faded when she noticed my blank stare.

"Are you even listening?" she asked gently, her voice pulling me back from my thoughts.

I blinked, forcing a smile. "Sorry, I just... I was thinking."

Her brow furrowed, concern replacing her cheerfulness. "About what?"

"Nothing important," I lied quickly, looking down at my hands.

Olivia didn't buy it. She sat forward slightly, her tone soft but probing. "Nora, are you sure you want to go on with this marriage? You're marrying Daniel in two days. If you're not sure about it, you can still pause things. No one will blame you."

I let out a small, humorless laugh. "Pause it for who, Olivia?" I asked, my voice trembling despite my attempt to sound strong. "For a man who doesn't want me?"

She frowned. "Nora—"

"No," I cut her off quietly but firmly. "Daniel may not be my mate, but he loves me. He's kind, patient... he actually looks at me like I matter."

Olivia studied me carefully, her gaze softening. "But do you love him?"

The question hit me like a weight to the chest. I opened my mouth to answer, but nothing came out. My throat tightened, words stuck somewhere between truth and denial. After a moment of silence, I forced a smile that didn't reach my eyes.

"I'll learn to love him," I said finally, my voice barely above a whisper. "That's enough."

Olivia sighed, leaning back against the couch, her expression heavy with sadness. "Nora, learning to love someone and actually loving them are two very different things. Don't force yourself to heal in a way that hurts you more."

"There's nothing to think about," I said quickly, standing before she could continue. "I've made my choice. I'm moving on."

Her lips pressed into a thin line. "Alright," she said softly. "Then go rest. You need it."

I nodded, grateful for the escape. "Thank you."

As I turned to leave, Olivia's voice followed me, gentle but filled with something that sounded almost like pity. "Nora, make sure you think this through."

I froze for a second, then continued walking.

When I reached my room, I shut the door and leaned against it, exhaling shakily. My reflection in the mirror looked calm, collected, but my heart was anything but. I sat on the edge of the bed, staring at my hands. They were still trembling faintly, just like they had when I'd slapped him. Just like they had when I'd watched the car drive away.

I thought I'd feel free once I left him. But instead, I felt empty.

I curled my fingers into fists, trying to steady the ache in my chest. "He let me go," I whispered. "So I have to let him go too."

But deep down, I already knew that was the hardest lie of all.