

# **Fated To Not Just One, But Three #Chapter 581: Familiar - Read Fated To Not Just One, But Three Chapter 581: Familiar**

## **Chapter 581: Familiar**

Olivia's POV

It was seven in the morning.

The boys were finally sleeping.

Liam had burned with fever all night. I barely slept at all. I stayed beside him, my hand on his forehead, my body curled protectively around all three of them. Even though they were so little... they understood what death was.

Too well.

Last night, Liam had looked at me with red, swollen eyes and whispered,

"Mommy... does that mean I will never see Daddy Lennox ever again?"

I couldn't answer him.

My throat closed. My voice disappeared. But the way he nodded slowly afterward told me everything.

He understood.

And that understanding was breaking him.

I inhaled deeply and carefully slipped out of bed, making sure not to wake them. Liam shifted a little, his brows pulling together even in sleep, and my heart clenched painfully.

I stood there for a long moment, just staring at them.

"You are not okay," my wolf whispered softly inside me.

A tear slid down my cheek.

"How can I be okay?" I whispered back bitterly. "How can anyone expect me to be okay?"

Lennox was gone.

My children were broken.

My heart felt like it had been ripped out and crushed.

I wiped my face quickly before more tears could fall. I couldn't cry here. Not in front of them. They needed me strong... even if I didn't know how to be.

I walked quietly to the door and stepped into the hallway.

The mansion was still. Too still. Just silence... heavy and suffocating.

As I walked down the corridor, my chest ached with every step. My body felt weak, but my mind wouldn't rest. It replayed everything over and over. Lennox bleeding. Lennox falling. Lennox dying in my arms.

I walked slowly down the corridor toward my room.

Each step felt heavy, like my body was moving through water. The walls felt too close. The silence pressed against my chest until breathing hurt.

As I turned the corner that led to my door...

I stopped.

Someone was standing there.

A man.

A guard.

He stood straight, his back to the wall beside my door, dressed in the dark uniform of the front warriors. His posture was perfect. Too perfect. Head lowered. Hands clasped behind his back.

My first thought was irritation.

I didn't ask for a guard.

My second thought made my heart stutter.

The air around him felt... wrong.

No.

Not wrong.

Familiar.

My steps slowed without me meaning to. My wolf stirred uneasily inside me, lifting her head like she had caught a scent she couldn't place.

As I drew closer, it hit me.

His scent.

My breath caught.

It wasn't exactly Lennox's... but it brushed against something deep in my chest. Close enough to smell like him. Close enough to make my hands tremble.

My eyes traveled over him without permission.

Tall.

Broad shoulders.

Strong arms beneath the uniform.

That body.

That build.

My stomach twisted painfully.

It was his build.

Lennox's.

My pulse started to race.

"What is this?" my wolf whispered, confused. "Why does he feel like—"

I stopped a few steps in front of him.

The closer I got, the stronger the strange feeling became. A sharp tingle ran through my chest, spreading down my spine. My fingers curled slightly at my sides.

Something was very wrong.

Very wrong.

He didn't move.

Didn't look at me.

Didn't speak.

My grief twisted suddenly into anger.

I hated that he was here.

I hated that he stood in front of my door.

I hated that his presence stirred things that should have stayed buried with Lennox.

"Lift your head," I said sharply.

My voice echoed down the empty hall.

For a second, he didn't move.

Then slowly... carefully... he obeyed.

He raised his face.

And my world tilted.

Not Lennox.

Not his face.

But for a heartbeat—just one—it felt like Lennox was staring back at me.

The air left my lungs.

My heart slammed violently against my ribs.

Brown hair instead of black.

Sharper jaw.

Different eyes.

Different face.

But that moment—

That flash—

I saw him.

I actually saw Lennox.

My vision blurred, and I staggered back half a step, my hand flying to my chest.

What the hell—

My wolf cried out softly in confusion.

The man's eyes widened slightly, like he noticed my reaction, but he stayed still. Disciplined. Controlled.

I stared at him, breathing hard.

"Who the hell are you?" I spat, my voice shaking despite my effort to sound firm.

He immediately lowered his head again, respectful.

"My name is Kaine," he said. His voice was deep. Calm. Respectful. "I was assigned this morning as your personal guard, Luna."

The sound of his voice made my stomach twist again.

Not Lennox's voice.

But close enough to hurt.

Personal guard?

I laughed bitterly. That was so ridiculous. "I don't need a guard."

"I was ordered to protect," he replied simply. "By Alpha Levi."

I frowned. Of course. Typical Levi, making decisions without consulting me.

I studied him again, slower this time. More carefully.

A stranger's face.

But my eyes kept betraying me, tracing familiar lines that shouldn't be there. His shoulders. His stance. The way he held himself like he was always ready to step in front of danger.

Just like—

No.

I swallowed hard and forced my thoughts away.

"This is a mistake," I said coldly. "You can leave."

"I cannot," he answered quietly. "I was told to remain at your door until further notice."

My jaw clenched.

I stepped closer again.

The scent hit me stronger this time.

My breath hitched.

My wolf growled softly inside me, confused and unsettled.

"What are you?" she whispered. "Why does he feel like—"

I shook my head sharply, cutting her off.

"No," I muttered under my breath. "Absolutely not."

I looked up at him again, anger flaring to cover the fear and confusion.

"Do not stand so close to me," I snapped. "And do not look at me like that."

His eyes flickered—just slightly.

"I apologize, Luna," he said, and took one controlled step back.

My chest was still tight as I turned toward my door. My hand rested on the handle for a moment longer than necessary.

Without looking back, I said quietly, "Stay out here. And do not speak to me unless it is necessary."

"Yes, Luna," he replied.

I opened the door and stepped inside, shutting it firmly behind me.

The moment the door closed, my legs gave way.

I leaned against it, breathing hard, my heart racing like I had just escaped something dangerous.

"What was that?" my wolf whispered shakily.

I slid down slowly until I was sitting on the floor.

"I don't know," I whispered back, pressing my palm to my chest. "But something is very, very wrong."

## **Chapter 582: Trick**

Olivia's POV

It was ten in the morning.

And I still hadn't left my room.

After seeing that stranger outside my door earlier, my mind refused to settle. No matter how much I tried to push it away, his presence clung to me. His scent. His build. The way my heart reacted when it had no right to.

It made no sense.

I sat on the edge of the bed, staring at nothing, my fingers digging into the fabric. I did not want to see him again. I did not want to feel that strange pull. I did not want questions I couldn't answer.

So I made a decision.

I stood up and teleported.

The world shifted, and a second later, I was inside Levi's room. Levi stood inside, pulling on his jacket, clearly getting ready to leave. He froze when he saw me.

"Olivia?" he said. "What's wrong?"

Anger rushed up so fast it shocked even me.

"What is wrong?" I snapped, walking in. "You tell me, Levi. Since when do I need a guard?"

He frowned. "You do need one."

"I don't," I shot back. "I have never needed one."

Levi turned fully to face me. "You are not okay."

That hurt more than I expected.

"I lost a man I love," I said sharply. "Of course I'm not okay. But that doesn't mean you get to make decisions about my life without telling me."

He crossed his arms. "You barely leave your room. You don't eat properly. You don't sleep. And you are the Luna. You are vulnerable."

I laughed bitterly. "Vulnerable? I could burn this entire mansion to ash if I wanted to."

"That's exactly my point," he replied calmly. "You are unstable right now."

The word hit me like a slap.

"You think I don't notice?" he continued. "You teleport without warning. You disappear. If something happens to you—"

"Then what?" I cut in. "Then what, Levi? Another funeral?"

His jaw tightened.

I stepped closer. "And if I want to teleport, what then? Will your guard stop me?"

He hesitated. "You will teleport with him."

My eyes widened. "No."

"That's how it will be," he said. "For now."

"No," I repeated, louder. "I don't want him near me."

Levi sighed, rubbing his face. "Olivia—"

"I don't like this," I said, my voice shaking now. "You keep making decisions without telling me. Without involving Louis. We are all in this together. Lennox would never—"

"Don't," Levi snapped.

Silence crashed between us.

I swallowed hard. "Lennox would never treat me like I'm some fragile thing that needs to be watched."

Levi's eyes flashed. "Lennox is dead. Maybe you should go dig him out of the grave and frame his dead body."

The moment the words left his mouth, he knew he had crossed a line.

Levi went still.

His face drained of color.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly.

Pain surged up my throat, hot and choking.

"I didn't mean—" he started, but it was too late.

I teleported before either of us could say anything else.

The world spun.

I landed back in front of my room, shaking.

I pushed the door open hard.

And there he was.

The guard.

Standing just inside the room, straight-backed, calm, dressed in a black guard uniform. Tall. Broad shoulders. That familiar build that made my chest ache.

"Get out!" I shouted the moment I saw him. "Get out of my room right now!"

He didn't move.

He didn't flinch.

Instead, he lifted his hands slightly.

"Luna," he said gently. "Please breathe."

The sound of his voice sent a strange shiver through me.

"I said get out!" I yelled again.

He took one slow step back, giving me space, his voice still calm. "I will leave if you want. But you are shaking. You are not breathing properly."

"Don't tell me what I am," I snapped.

He nodded once. "Alright."

Then, quietly, "Just... sit down. You don't have to talk. You don't even have to look at me."

Something about the way he said it broke through my anger.

My legs felt weak all of a sudden.

I hated it.

I hated him.

I hated that my body reacted to him at all.

He stayed where he was, not coming closer, not forcing anything.

My chest tightened painfully.

I turned away from him, tears burning my eyes.

"Just... don't follow me," I whispered.

"I won't," he replied immediately. "Unless you ask."

That calm voice.

That familiar steadiness.

It made no sense.

And it scared me more than my anger ever had.

I looked away from him, my hands shaking at my sides.

Then I heard soft footsteps.

When I turned slightly, I saw him holding a glass of water.

He stopped a few steps away.

"For you," he said quietly. "You should drink something."

I hesitated.

I didn't want to take it.

I didn't want to need anything from him.

But my throat was dry. My head hurt.

I reached out.

The moment my fingers touched the glass, his hand brushed mine.

Just barely.

Electric.

A sharp, strange tingle shot up my arm and settled deep in my chest.

I sucked in a breath.

My wolf stirred.

Not loudly. Not fully.

But enough.

I pulled my hand back quickly, my heart pounding. I stared at him, confused, unsettled.

"What..." I whispered, then cleared my throat. "What is wrong with you?"

He frowned slightly. "Wrong, Luna?"

I swallowed. "Why can't I feel your wolf?"

The question hung between us.

His eyes darkened for a moment.

"I lost my mate," he said quietly.

My breath caught.

"How?" I asked before I could stop myself.

"An accident," he replied. "Pain. Loss. My wolf went silent. He is still there... just mourning."

Something inside me softened.

I understood that kind of pain.

Too well.

"I'm sorry," I said quietly.

He nodded once. "Thank you."

I took the glass properly this time and drank. The cool water helped a little. My hands still trembled.

I realized he was looking at me.

Not rudely. Not boldly.

Just... steadily.

Like he was memorizing something.

I cleared my throat and straightened up. "I have a meeting," I said quickly. "We're leaving."

He dipped his head. "As you wish, Luna."

I moved toward the door, my steps quick. I didn't teleport. I needed the walk.

He followed behind me, keeping a respectful distance.

The hallway was quiet. Too quiet.

As we turned a corner, my foot caught on the edge of a rug.

"Watch out," he said sharply.

Too late.

I lost my balance.

The world tilted.

Strong arms caught me, but the momentum carried us both down.

We hit the floor hard.

I landed on top of him.

My hands pressed against his chest.

His breath left him in a soft grunt.

And then—

Our lips touched.

Not deep.

Not planned.

Just a soft, stunned brush.

For one frozen second, everything stopped.

The hallway.

The grief.

The world.

My wolf surged.

His scent flooded my senses.

My heart slammed so hard it hurt.

I pulled back instantly, scrambling to my feet, my face burning.

"I— I'm sorry," I breathed, shaken.

He sat up slowly, eyes wide, breathing just as hard.

"It was my fault," he said quickly. "I should have—"

We both stopped speaking.

Because the air between us felt wrong.

I didn't say another word.

I straightened my dress, lifted my chin, and walked forward like nothing had happened. Like my lips were not still tingling. Like my heart was not racing in my chest.

I did not look back at him.

I could feel him fall into step behind me, silent, respectful, giving me space. That made it worse somehow. If he had spoken, if he had tried to explain, I could have snapped at him. I could have pushed the feeling away.

But he didn't.

And my mind betrayed me.

For one terrible, confusing second, the thought crossed my mind.

It felt like Lennox.

Not his face.

Not his eyes.

But the way my body reacted.

The way my wolf stirred.

The way my chest tightened like it used to when Lennox stood too close.

I shook my head sharply as I walked.

No.

That was impossible.

I watched Lennox die.

I watched them lower his coffin into the ground.

I buried him.

This was grief. Nothing more. My heart reaching for something familiar because it was broken and desperate.

I clenched my fists at my sides.

Get yourself together, Olivia.

I missed him. That was all. I missed him so much it was twisting my mind.

We reached the meeting hall. The large doors were already open, voices drifting out. Elders, warriors, council members. All waiting.

I walked in first.

The room fell quiet immediately.

I took my seat at the head of the table, my posture straight, my face calm. Luna first. Grief second. Always.

Kaine stopped near the wall, taking his place in the shadows like a proper guard.

I told myself not to look at him.

But I failed.

As the meeting began, voices blended together. Reports about borders. Rogue activity. Repairs needed after the fight. Supplies. Patrol rotations.

I nodded at the right times. Spoke when necessary. Asked the right questions.

But my eyes kept drifting.

To the corner.

To him.

He stood still, hands clasped behind his back, gaze lowered but alert. Every so often, his eyes lifted briefly, scanning the room, assessing threats. But I—my eyes were fucking drifting toward him.

Moon Goddess, what is wrong with me?

I forced my attention back to the table.

An elder was speaking about security changes. Another about alliances. I heard the words, but they slid off me like water.

My lips still tingled.

I pressed them together slightly, annoyed at myself.

It meant nothing.

It was an accident. A fall. A moment.

Still... my wolf was not silent anymore.

She wasn't loud. She wasn't speaking.

But she was awake.

That scared me.

I glanced at Kaine again despite how hard I tried not to.

He wasn't staring at me. Not openly. But I could feel his awareness, like a quiet presence always tuned in to my movements.

I shifted in my seat.

Gods... Olivia. Stop.

I looked down at the table, my fingers tightening around the armrest.

I missed Lennox.

That was the truth of it.

I missed his presence behind me in meetings.

I missed knowing he was there without looking.

I missed the way my body always knew where he was.

And my grief was playing tricks on me.

That was all.

It had to be.

### **Chapter 583: Problem With Me**

Lennox's POV

I knew Olivia felt it.

I could see it in the way her eyes kept drifting toward me during the meeting. She tried to focus on the elders speaking. She tried to listen to the reports and disputes brought before her. But every few minutes, her gaze returned to the corner where I stood.

To me.

She felt it.

And that scared me.

Olivia was smart. Too smart. She always noticed things others missed. I just hoped—Moon Goddess help me—that she wouldn't connect the dots yet. Not now.

Throughout the meeting, I watched her closely.

She listened carefully. She asked the right questions. She gave calm, firm answers.

Even with grief sitting heavy on her shoulders, she did not let it control her.

I admired her more than I ever had.

Despite my death. Despite losing me. Despite the pain eating her alive from the inside out...

She was still standing. Still leading. Still trying to protect everyone.

Including my brothers.

It made my chest ache.

When the meeting finally ended, Olivia stood up first. Her movements were controlled, but I could see how tired she was. The elders bowed as she walked past them, murmuring respectful words.

She didn't respond.

She walked straight toward the exit.

I followed behind her, keeping my distance just like I was trained to do. Just like a guard should.

Her steps echoed softly in the hall.

Halfway down the corridor, she slowed.

Not stopped. Just slowed.

Like she was thinking.

Like she was fighting something inside her.

I stayed silent.

Then, without turning around, she spoke.

"Stop following so close."

Her voice was calm but tight.

I slowed immediately, increasing the distance between us. "Yes, Luna."

She nodded slightly and continued walking.

But her shoulders were tense.

We reached a quiet stretch of hallway. Sunlight poured in through the tall windows, casting long shadows across the floor. The mansion felt too quiet again. Too empty.

She stopped suddenly.

I stopped too, instantly alert.

She turned halfway toward me, not fully facing me.

"For the rest of the day," she said, "you keep your distance. I don't need you hovering."

My jaw tightened, but I kept my tone respectful. "As you wish."

She hesitated.

Just for a second.

Then she added, softer, "And... don't speak unless I speak to you."

That hurt more than it should have.

"Yes, Luna," I said quietly.

She turned away and continued walking.

I followed—farther back now—watching her back, her posture, the way grief weighed on her even when she tried to hide it.

Her lips still tingled from earlier.

I knew it.

Because mine did too.

And that terrified me.

This was not part of the plan.

I was supposed to be invisible. A shadow. A guard.

Not this.

I clenched my fists at my sides as we walked.

You cannot slip, Lennox. Not now. It's too early.

We reached the end of the corridor near the stairs that led to the inner wing of the mansion. Olivia slowed again, then finally stopped.

"You should rest," she said without looking at me. "I don't need you following me everywhere."

I frowned slightly. "Luna, my duty—"

She cut me off.

"I'm going somewhere," she said. Her voice was firm now. Authoritative. "Alone."

Before I could say another word, the air around her shimmered.

And she was gone.

Just like that.

Teleportation.

I stood there, staring at the empty space where she had been, my chest tight.

I let out a slow breath and rubbed my jaw.

Great.

I was supposed to guard her, and she vanished before I could even argue.

I looked around the quiet hallway. No elders. No servants. Just the echo of my own breathing.

"Well done, Kaine," I muttered under my breath.

With nothing else to do, I decided to move around the mansion. Carefully. Quietly. I needed to learn the place again, not as its Alpha, but as a stranger.

I walked through the lower halls, memorizing routes, exits, blind spots. Old habits died hard.

That was when I heard voices.

I turned a corner and saw Louis standing near one of the pillars, speaking sharply to a guard. The guard nodded quickly, looking nervous.

Then Louis saw me.

His eyes narrowed instantly.

"Leave," he told the guard.

The man bowed and hurried away.

Louis's gaze stayed locked on me as he motioned with his head. "You. Come here."

For a second, my body reacted on instinct.

I wanted to disobey.

But I stopped myself.

I walked over and bowed slightly. "Alpha."

The word tasted strange in my mouth.

Louis studied me closely, his eyes sharp and suspicious. Standing this close to him again felt wrong. Too risky. I didn't want any of them to get a clue.

"You're the new guard," he said. "Kaine."

"Yes, Alpha."

"You were assigned to the Luna," he continued. "So tell me—where is she?"

My jaw tightened. "She left. She said she needed space."

His eyes flashed.

"You let her leave alone?" he snapped.

"I tried to speak," I said carefully. "She teleported before I could stop her."

Louis took a step closer, his voice rising. "Then what good are you?"

I stiffened.

"With respect, Alpha," I replied, keeping my tone controlled, "I cannot stop the Luna from teleporting."

"That sounds like an excuse," he shot back.

Heat rose in my chest.

"I am doing my duty," I said. "She ordered me to stay back."

Louis laughed sharply. "Duty? You think you understand duty?"

He stepped even closer now, invading my space.

"My brother is dead," he said, his voice shaking with anger. "My Luna is breaking. And they assign a wolfless stranger to guard her?"

I understood he wasn't in a good mood.

"I didn't ask for this assignment," I said quietly.

That seemed to push him over the edge.

"You don't see a need for yourself either?" he snapped. "Because I don't see a need for you at all."

I frowned. "Do you have a problem with me, Alpha?"

The moment the words left my mouth, I knew I had crossed into dangerous ground.

Louis's face changed.

His hand shot out before I could react.

He grabbed my collar and slammed me back hard against the stone pillar. The impact knocked the breath out of me, but I didn't move. I didn't fight back. I couldn't.

Warriors nearby froze.

A few took hesitant steps forward, then stopped when Louis snarled, "STAY BACK."

He scoffed in anger. "Do I have a fucking problem with you? Yes," he snapped, his voice breaking through clenched teeth. "Yes, I do."

## **Chapter 584: Act Fast**

Lennox's POV

He leaned in close, his face barely inches from mine.

"You make it feel like he's here," he hissed. "That's the problem."

My heart slammed violently against my ribs.

"What?" I asked quietly.

"You walk like him," Louis continued, his voice trembling with rage and anger. "You stand like him. You watch everything like him. And when you fought... Moon above—you fought like him."

His eyes burned into mine.

"And your aura," he went on, anger mixing with pain. "It's wrong. Too strong for a guard. Too familiar. Every time you're near, it feels like my brother is standing right behind me."

His grip trembled.

"You're not supposed to feel like that," he said. "You're not supposed to feel like family."

The word hit me harder than the wall.

Family.

My chest tightened painfully.

Louis swallowed hard, his jaw working like he was trying not to lose control.

"So tell me," he demanded, "why does being near you make it feel like Lennox never left?"

Everything inside me went still.

And in that moment—

I understood.

It wasn't my face.

It wasn't my voice.

It wasn't my fighting style.

It was my aura.

Zira had warned me.

My scent would be intact.

My aura would be intact.

I had underestimated what that meant.

A wolf's aura wasn't just power.

It was presence.

It was memory.

It was identity.

Even without my wolf... even with a different face... my aura was still Alpha Lennox.

And Louis—who had shared blood, childhood, bond, and battles with me—felt it on an instinctive level.

My hands curled slowly at my sides.

Careful. One wrong word and this ends badly.

"Alpha," I said calmly, evenly, "grief can make the mind see things that aren't there."

Louis's eyes flickered.

"Don't," he growled. "Don't patronize me."

I met his gaze steadily, forcing myself to soften my aura, to pull it inward the way I used to during stealth missions.

"I am not your brother," I said quietly. "If I were... would I be standing here letting you grab me like this?"

That made him hesitate.

Just a fraction.

His grip loosened slightly.

Pain flashed across his face—real pain.

"You don't understand," he whispered. "I watched him die. I buried him. I felt the bond snap. I know he's gone."

Then his voice rose again, angrier now. "So why does every instinct in my body scream that something is wrong when you're near?"

Because I'm not gone.

Because death didn't keep me.

Because the Moon Goddess wasn't finished with me.

But I couldn't say that.

I lifted my hands slowly.

"I don't know what you're feeling," I said. "But I swear on the moon, I am not here to replace anyone. I am just a guard doing his duty."

Louis searched my face, his breathing uneven.

For a long moment, I thought he might hit me.

Instead, he shoved me back once more and released my collar.

"Stay away from me," he said harshly. "And stay away from Olivia unless she calls for you."

He turned away sharply.

Then paused.

Without looking back, he added in a low, warning voice, "My eyes are on you."

And then he walked away.

The corridor stayed silent long after he was gone.

I leaned back against the pillar slowly, my pulse racing.

So that was it.

That was the flaw in my plan.

I had hidden my face.

I had hidden my name.

But I hadn't hidden who I was.

And if Louis felt it...

Then Levi would too.

I closed my eyes briefly and exhaled.

"This is going to be harder than I thought."

I pushed myself off the pillar slowly, my brow furrowed.

My time was limited. If I stayed like this too long, if I kept walking these halls with my aura exposed, one of them would put the pieces together. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But soon.

I couldn't let that happen.

I didn't come back from the grave just to be discovered before I found the truth.

Someone wanted me dead.

Someone close enough to order a maid to poison my food and a warrior to stab me in my sleep.

That meant influence. Power. Access.

And I needed a name.

I straightened my uniform, forced my breathing to steady, and moved away from the corridor.

As soon as I reached an empty stairwell, I pulled out the phone Golden had given me.

I dialed.

It rang once. Twice.

He picked up immediately.

"Kaine," Golden said quietly. "Is everything alright?"

"No," I answered honestly. "But that can wait. I need information."

There was a pause. "Go on."

"The maid and the warrior you overheard at the funeral," I said. "I need their names. Where they work. Their schedules."

Golden didn't hesitate. That told me everything.

"The maid is called Elizabeth," he said. "Kitchen staff. Lower level. She handles night meals and sometimes breakfast trays for the upper floors. Quiet girl. Keeps to herself."

Of course she did.

"And the warrior?"

"Jodan," Golden replied. "Pack house guard. Loyal on paper. No record of misconduct."

I clenched my jaw.

"No one ever suspects the clean ones," I murmured.

Golden's voice sharpened. "Alpha... what are you planning?"

"I'm planning to move fast on my plan," I said. "And to find the snake before it strikes again."

A beat of silence.

Then Golden said carefully, "Be cautious. If you move too fast—"

"I won't," I interrupted. "I'll move smart."

I ended the call before he could argue.

I leaned against the wall and closed my eyes for a moment.

Elizabeth.

A maid. Lower rank. Easy to overlook. Easy to pressure. Even easier to manipulate.

She wouldn't have ordered anything herself. She was a tool. Someone had used her fear. Or her loyalty. Or her desperation.

And people like that always cracked.

Especially when they thought someone cared.

I opened my eyes.

The plan formed quickly in my head.

I wouldn't threaten her. I wouldn't scare her.

I would listen.

I would be kind. Attentive. Loving toward her.

I would act like a lonely, wolfless guard trying to find comfort in someone. All I had to do was act like I liked her, and everything would fall into place. I could easily manipulate her into talking. I was good at that.

Just then, I heard footsteps and a loud voice.

"Liam... you can't go there."

My heart skipped.

I spun around just in time to see Liam running toward me, a maid chasing after him. My heart began to pound as he reached me, grabbing my wrist suddenly and looking up at me with wide, pleading eyes.

"Please help me."

## **Chapter 585: The Grave**

Lennox's POV

My instincts almost snapped.

For a split second, the Alpha in me wanted to bark an order. I almost ordered the maid to stay away from him—how dare she make him this terrified—but I stopped myself.

I wasn't Alpha Lennox.

Not here.

Not now.

I was Kaine.

Just a guard.

I drew in a slow breath and forced my shoulders to relax before lowering myself down to Liam's level.

"What is wrong?" I asked gently.

My voice sounded steady, but my heart was breaking.

Up close, the truth hurt more than I expected.

In just three days...

Liam looked smaller.

His cheeks were thinner.

His clothes hung looser on his little body.

His eyes were too big for his face now, dull where they used to shine.

Grief had stolen weight from him.

My death had taken something from my son that no child should ever lose.

He didn't answer.

He just stared at me.

Not the way children stare at strangers.

Not curious.

Not shy.

It was... searching.

Like he was looking for something he had lost.

The silence stretched.

My skin prickled.

There was something unsettling about the way his gaze stayed locked on mine. Too focused. Too aware. Like he was trying to place me.

I swallowed.

"Are you feeling sick?" I asked softly. "Does your head hurt?"

Still nothing.

His brows continued to furrow more.

Then, slowly, his brows pulled together.

"You..." he whispered.

My breath caught.

"Yes?" I replied carefully.

He tilted his head, never breaking eye contact.

"You feel... funny."

My chest clenched painfully.

Funny.

I forced a small smile. "Funny how?"

He hesitated, then shrugged weakly. "Like... familiar."

I had to look away for half a second.

"Do I scare you?" I asked, my voice barely above a whisper.

He shook his head.

"No."

He leaned forward slightly, squinting at me.

"You're not Daddy," he said slowly.

His lower lip trembled.

"But you feel like him."

The words hit me straight in the chest.

I forced my expression to remain natural so he wouldn't see how hard his words had hit me.

"I'm sorry," I said quietly. "I didn't mean to make you sad."

His eyes filled with tears.

"I miss him," he whispered.

I nodded again, because if I tried to speak, my voice would break.

The maid stepped forward and gave me a quizzical look before turning back to Liam. "You have to go back to your room. Father Levi or Louis won't like what you are doing."

Liam frowned and folded his arms. "I said I want to go pay a visit to Father Lennox," Liam said stubbornly.

My heart stopped.

"What do you mean?" I asked slowly, keeping my voice steady even as something inside me cracked. "What visit?"

Liam lifted his chin stubbornly. "Daddy Lennox," he said. "I want to go see him."

The maid stiffened immediately. "No," she said quickly. "You can't. Father Levi and Alpha Louis won't allow it."

Liam's little fists clenched at his sides. "I don't have to ask them," he snapped, his small voice shaking with emotion. "I just want to see him."

I felt it then.

That sharp, unbearable pain slicing straight through my chest.

His grave.

My grave.

He wanted to visit the cold stone that marked the place they believed I was lying in the ground.

A tear slipped down my cheek before I could stop it.

I turned my face slightly, but it was too late.

The maid noticed.

She looked at me strangely, suspicion flickering in her eyes. "You—why are you crying?" she asked.

I swallowed hard and wiped my face quickly. "Because... he's a child," I said quietly. "And he's grieving."

Liam looked up at me again, those same searching eyes locking onto mine.

"I just want to talk to him," he whispered. "Just a little."

The maid shook her head. "He's been sick. He shouldn't be outside. And the Alphas were clear—"

"If he wants to go," I cut in softly, "you should let him."

She frowned at me. "You don't get to decide that."

I clenched my jaw.

Easy, Lennox. Easy.

"I'm not deciding," I said calmly. "I'm asking. For him."

Liam's eyes filled with tears. "Please," he whispered.

The maid hesitated.

I could see the battle on her face—duty versus compassion.

She crossed her arms. "No. It's too dangerous. He's weak."

Anger flared hot in my chest.

For a split second, I almost let it loose.

Almost reminded her who I was.

But I didn't.

I forced myself to breathe.

Then I said quietly, "Then let us escort him."

She blinked. "What?"

"I'll come," I said. "I'll make sure he doesn't overexert himself. We won't stay long."

She studied me for a long moment.

Too long.

Finally, she sighed. "Fine. But if anything happens, it's on you."

"I understand," I said immediately.

Liam's face lit up just a little.

"Really?" he asked.

I nodded, lowering myself slightly so we were eye level again. "Really."

He reached out without thinking and grabbed my hand.

The contact nearly shattered me.

I closed my eyes for half a second and prayed I wouldn't break in front of him.

"Let's go see Daddy," he said softly.

I swallowed the lump in my throat.

"Yes," I whispered. "Let's go."

We walked slowly.

Too slowly for my heart.

Liam's small hand stayed wrapped around mine as we moved through the quiet paths that led away from the mansion and toward the back of the grounds.

The graveyard was silent.

Cold.

Rows of stone markers stood like watchers, names carved into them—names of warriors who had given everything to this pack.

And then we stopped.

My grave.

The stone was still new. The earth beneath it not fully settled yet.

Alpha Lennox.

Beloved leader. Fallen protector.

I couldn't look at it for long.

Liam let go of my hand and slowly lowered himself to the ground in front of the stone. He sat cross-legged, small fingers tracing the edge of the carved letters like he was afraid they would disappear.

"Daddy," he whispered.

My knees almost gave out.

"I came to see you," he continued softly. "Mommy cries a lot. She tries not to... but I hear her at night."

My vision blurred.

"I've been sick," he said, voice small. "But I'm trying to be strong. Like you told me."

Tears spilled down my face before I could stop them.

"I miss you," he whispered. "Leo misses you too. And... I don't like it when they say you're gone. You're not gone. You're just... quiet."

The maid shifted beside me, her eyes flicking toward my face again. Suspicion crept in this time.

I turned my head slightly and wiped my tears quickly with the back of my hand, forcing my breathing to steady.

Liam leaned forward and rested his forehead against the stone.

"I'll come again," he promised. "I won't forget you."

That was when I felt it.

The air changed.

Heavy. Sharp. Furious.

I froze.

Footsteps echoed behind us.

I turned just as Olivia stormed into the graveyard.

Her eyes were wild with panic and anger. Her hair was loose, her face pale, and her breath uneven, like she had been running.

The maid stiffened instantly, fear flashing across her face.

"Liam!" Olivia cried.

He looked up, startled. "Mommy?"

She rushed forward and dropped to her knees in front of him, cupping his face in both hands. "What are you doing here?" she demanded, her voice shaking. "You're sick. You're not supposed to be outside."

"I came to see Daddy," Liam said simply.

Her breath hitched.

"Oh, baby..." she whispered, pulling him into her chest. "You shouldn't be here. Not like this."

Then her head snapped up.

She turned slowly toward the maid.

"Why did you let him come here?" Olivia asked, her voice full of rage.

The maid trembled. "I—I tried to stop him, Luna. It was—" She lifted a shaking finger and pointed straight at me. "He insisted."

Olivia's gaze slammed into me.

Pure fury.

"You," she said coldly.

I didn't move. Didn't speak.

She turned back to Liam, forcing softness into her voice. "Go inside, sweetheart. I'll come soon, okay?"

Liam nodded, then looked at me.

He smiled.

A small, tired smile.

"Thank you," he whispered.

Then he stood and walked away with the maid, leaving us alone among the graves.

The moment they were gone—Pain cracked through my face because The slap from Olivia came hard and sharp.

My head snapped to the side.

The sound echoed through the graveyard.

I tasted blood.

For a second, everything went quiet.

Then Olivia spoke, her voice shaking with rage and grief.

"How dare you," she whispered. "How dare you bring my son here."

I slowly turned my face back to her.

Her eyes were red. Her hands were trembling.

"You had no right," she continued, tears spilling freely now. "No right to let him see this. No right to make him relive it."

She shoved my chest.

"He is unwell. And you bring him to his father's grave?"

Every word cut deeper than the slap.

I bowed my head.

"I'm sorry," I said quietly.

She laughed bitterly. "Sorry?" She wiped her face angrily. "Get out of my sight."

I didn't argue.

I didn't defend myself.

I turned and walked away, my chest burning, my vision blurred.

## **Chapter 586: Feeling Guilty**

Olivia's POV

He didn't say a word.

He just turned and walked away.

I stood there, breathing hard, my chest tight with anger. My hand still burned from the slap. For a few seconds, all I felt was a burning rage.

Then something else crept in.

I didn't know what to call it.

Guilt? Concern? Regret?

It sat in my chest like a stone.

"You took it too far," my wolf whispered.

I swallowed.

She was right.

I had taken it too far.

And what scared me most was not that I knew it but that I felt it. Deeply. Like slapping him had been a mistake I should never have made.

Why did it matter?

He was just a guard.

So why did it feel like I had hurt something fragile... something important?

I shook my head, annoyed at myself.

Get it together, Olivia.

I turned and went inside.

The children's room was quiet when I entered. Liam was sitting up in bed, Leon and Leo beside him. They looked small. Too small for this much pain.

Liam looked up immediately.

"Mommy," he said softly.

I walked to the bed and sat beside them. Liam's eyes dropped to his fingers twisting together.

"I'm sorry," he said. "For going to Daddy Lennox's grave."

My heart clenched.

"I just wanted to see him," he added quickly. "Please don't be hard on the guard. He was nice."

I smiled weakly, brushing his hair back. "I'm not angry with you, baby."

He looked at me carefully.

"I'm not stopping you from visiting Daddy," I said gently. "Never. But right now, you're sick. When you're better... we'll go together. Okay?"

He nodded slowly. "Okay."

I kissed his forehead, then Leon's, then Leo's. They tried to smile.

It didn't reach their eyes.

At four years old, they were already learning how to fake happiness.

That broke me more than anything else.

After settling them back down, I left the room quietly and returned to my own.

The door closed behind me.

Silence filled the space.

And against my will... my thoughts drifted back to him.

The way he had looked at Liam. The way his eyes had filled with tears at the grave. The way he had walked away without defending himself.

Why did it bother me?

I pressed a hand to my chest, confused and unsettled.

"Get a grip," I whispered to myself.

But my heart didn't listen. It kept drifting to that guard...

I sat on the edge of the bed, my feet tapping restlessly against the floor.

I couldn't relax.

No matter how much I tried to reason with myself, the feeling wouldn't go away—this tight, restless pull in my chest, like something unfinished.

Like something I needed to fix.

"Maybe I should just say sorry," I whispered to the empty room.

Maybe I shouldn't have hit him.

Maybe it was just my conscience.

Nothing more.

Yes. That had to be it.

I stood up before I could overthink it.

I left my room and walked down the corridor. A guard stood near the stairs.

"Where is Kaine's room?" I asked.

The guard hesitated, then answered, "Second floor. East wing. Last door on the right, Luna."

"Thank you."

I turned and walked away before doubt could stop me.

I stopped in front of the door.

This is ridiculous, Olivia.

I raised my hand and knocked.

No response.

I frowned.

I knew he was inside.

I could feel him.

That presence again—strange and familiar in a way that made my chest ache.

"Kaine?" I called softly.

Nothing.

After a brief pause, I pushed the door open and stepped inside.

The room was empty.

Neat. Simple. Too clean. It made me remember Lennox—he was so obsessed with cleanliness and orderliness.

I sucked in a deep breath in pain and pushed the thought aside.

"Kaine?" I said again.

Then—

The bathroom door opened.

Steam drifted out first.

Then he stepped out.

Wrapped only in a towel.

Water still clung to his skin, running down his arms, his chest, and his shoulders. His hair was damp, darker than before, curling slightly at the ends. He froze the moment he saw me.

So did I.

The air between us shifted. It became tense and awkward... like even the universe knew I shouldn't have seen him this way. But damn—he had a hot body. No... let me put it this way—he had Lennox's body. Broad shoulders. Hairless chest. Six-pack abs. Well-trained, strong muscles. If I didn't know better, I would have concluded this was Lennox's body with another person's face. But I shook my head, because yet again, I was just imagining things.

"I—" he started, then stopped, clearly caught off guard. "Luna—"

The towel slipped slightly as he moved.

Not enough to expose anything—but enough to make my breath hitch.

I looked away instantly, heat rushing to my face.

"I—I didn't know you were—" I stammered, furious with myself. "I should go."

He reached for the towel quickly, securing it again around his waist.

"No," he said, firm but not harsh. "It's my fault. I should have locked the door."

Silence fell. Awkward. Thick silence.

I turned back to face him, keeping my eyes firmly on his face.

"I came to... apologize," I said quietly. "For earlier."

He stared at me like he hadn't expected that.

"You didn't deserve that," I added. "What I did. I was angry—but that's not an excuse."

For a moment, he didn't speak.

Then he nodded once.

"Thank you," he said simply. "But you don't owe me anything, Luna."

That word again.

Luna.

It sounded wrong coming from him. I can't just explain it.

"I shouldn't have hit you," I said. "You were trying to help."

His jaw tightened slightly.

"I understand grief," he replied softly. "You don't need to explain."

That was the problem.

He understood too well.

"You understand grief?" I asked quietly, lifting a brow.

He nodded once. "I lost someone important. My mate."

Something about the way he said it—low, controlled, like the pain was carefully locked away—made my chest tighten.

"I'm sorry," I said again, softer this time. I felt genuinely sorry for him. Maybe it was because I could understand the pain of losing someone dear to you.

"I should go," I murmured finally.

He stepped back instinctively, giving me space.

"Yes," he said. "You should."

I turned toward the door but paused.

My heart was racing. I just couldn't... He was just a guard... so why was I feeling this way...

"Can I ask you something?" Kaine suddenly spoke, forcing me to turn around from the door.

Our eyes made contact, and I could swear I felt that strange tingle.

Fuck—what the hell is happening?

"Yes," I said, while trying to control my emotions.

He hesitated, like he was choosing his words with great care.

"I heard about what happened to your mate," he said softly. "Your... other mate."

My breath caught.

Lennox.

He didn't say the name, but it echoed loudly in my head anyway.

"I heard how he died," Kaine continued, his voice low and cautious, like he didn't want to step over boundaries. "I know you must be going through a lot... believe me, I understand your pain."

My vision blurred.

"I heard," he went on, "that he loved you deeply. That losing him didn't just break the pack... it broke you."

That was it.

My control shattered.

Tears spilled over before I could stop them. My chest heaved as years—no, lifetimes—of pain crashed down on me all at once.

"The Moon Goddess is cruel," I sobbed. "After four years of being away from him, and just when I had him back, she took him away forever." I sobbed, my emotions spilling. "I was supposed to have healed him... I had the gift of healing, and yet she thought that was the best time to stop my abilities from working. I could have fucking saved him... he

could have been alive... if only I had tried harder... maybe... maybe done something differently." I choked out in pain, tears already forcing their way out.

Kaine stiffened.

"I'm sorry," he said quickly, like he'd realized too late what he'd stirred. "I shouldn't have—"

But I couldn't stop.

"I watched him die," I cried. "I held him while his blood soaked my hands. I begged him to stay. I begged the Moon Goddess. And she still took him from me."

My knees weakened.

I swayed slightly.

Kaine moved—fast.

Then he stopped himself.

I saw it—the way his hands clenched at his sides, the way his jaw tightened like he was fighting a battle inside himself.

He wasn't supposed to touch me.

I wasn't supposed to need him.

But grief doesn't care about rules.

"I'm sorry," he said again, his voice rough now. "I didn't mean to trigger this."

"I miss him," I whispered, my voice breaking completely. "I miss him so much."

That was when he gave up fighting himself.

In two long strides, he closed the distance between us and pulled me into his arms.

The moment his arms wrapped around me, something inside me cracked wide open. I buried my face against his chest and cried—deep, ugly sobs I'd been holding back for days.

His body went rigid for half a second.

Then his arms tightened.

Just a little.

Like he was afraid I might fall apart if he didn't hold me together.

He didn't speak.

He didn't tell me to be strong.

He didn't tell me it would be okay.

He just held me.

And somehow... that made it worse.

And better.

His scent surrounded me—warm, familiar in a way that made my heart ache. My wolf stirred restlessly, confused, reaching for something she couldn't name.

Kaine's chin rested lightly against the top of my head. I felt his breath shudder.

He was hurting too.

I didn't know why—but I felt it.

### **Chapter 587: his touch**

Olivia's POV

The moment his arms closed around me, everything I had been holding back shattered.

Not quiet tears.

Not controlled ones.

Ugly, shaking sobs ripped out of my chest, raw and loud and uncontrollable. My hands fisted into the fabric of the towel at his back as if I needed something—anything—to keep me upright. My knees felt weak. My chest burned. My throat hurt from all the grief I had swallowed for days.

I cried like someone who had lost everything.

Because I had.

His body went still at first.

Just for a heartbeat.

Then his arms tightened around me—too fast, too instinctive—before he seemed to realize what he was doing. His chest was warm. Solid. Familiar in a way that made my breath hitch painfully.

That was when it hit me.

His scent.

Not the soap. Not the steam from the bathroom.

Him.

Something deep and comforting wrapped around me, sinking into my lungs, calming the storm in my chest far too quickly. My wolf stirred sharply, lifting her head inside me, alert in a way she hadn't been since—

Since Lennox.

That scared me.

My sobs slowed against my will, even though my heart was still breaking. My body reacted before my mind could catch up. The shaking eased just a little. My breathing steadied.

Too fast.

This wasn't normal.

I pulled in a shaky breath, my forehead pressed against his chest, and suddenly I became aware of something else.

His heartbeat.

Strong. Steady.

Familiar.

The realization sent a cold shiver through me.

I knew that rhythm.

I had fallen asleep to it.

Listened to it in the dark.

Felt it beneath my ear when the world felt too heavy.

My fingers twitched.

No.

Stop it.

Grief does this, I told myself. Grief makes you imagine things. Grief makes you cling to shadows and echoes and ghosts.

But even as I told myself that, his embrace felt—

Right.

Exactly right.

And that was the problem.

His arms tightened again, just slightly, like he was fighting himself. I felt the tension coil through his body, sharp and controlled. Then, abruptly, he pulled back.

Not gently.

Not roughly.

Decisively.

Like someone who had just caught himself crossing a line he couldn't afford to cross.

"I—" he started, then stopped.

He took a step back, putting space between us, his jaw tight, his hands clenched at his sides.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly. "I shouldn't have—"

The sudden absence of his warmth made my chest ache.

I wrapped my arms around myself, blinking hard, embarrassed by how exposed I felt. My face burned. My eyes were swollen. I hated that he had seen me like that.

Weak. Broken.

"I'm sorry," I said at the same time, my voice hoarse. "I didn't mean to—I shouldn't have—"

We stopped.

Silence filled the room again, thick and uncomfortable.

He turned his face slightly away from me, as if even looking at me was dangerous. "You didn't do anything wrong, Luna."

That word again.

Luna.

It should have felt respectful. Professional.

Instead, it made something twist in my chest.

I wiped my cheeks quickly, angry at myself for falling apart in front of him. Angry for needing him. Angry for how easily my body had responded to his presence.

"This won't happen again," I said, forcing my voice to steady. "I shouldn't have broken down like that."

He shook his head once. "You're grieving."

The way he said it—soft, certain—made my throat tighten again.

He inhaled slowly. I noticed the way his shoulders rose, then fell, like he was bracing himself.

"He wouldn't want you breaking like this," Kaine said quietly.

My head snapped up.

The words landed too close. Too sharp.

"What?" I whispered.

He met my eyes again, something raw flickering there before he masked it. "From what I've heard," he added quickly. "From the warriors. From the pack."

I didn't respond.

My vision blurred.

Those were Lennox's words.

Almost exactly.

My heart began to race again, this time not from grief—but from something colder. Something uneasy.

Why does he sound like he personally knows Lennox?

I took a step back, creating distance this time. My arms folded tightly across my chest.

"This isn't normal," I said, more to myself than to him.

His brow furrowed. "What isn't?"

"This," I gestured vaguely between us. "The way I feel when you're near. The way my wolf reacts. The way you—"

I stopped myself.

I sounded ridiculous.

Unhinged.

He stayed very still, watching me carefully. "Grief does strange things," he said gently. "It makes the mind reach for comfort wherever it can find it."

That was exactly what I had been telling myself.

And I hated that he said it.

Because it made sense.

Too much sense.

I let out a shaky laugh. "So I'm imagining things."

"I think," he said slowly, choosing his words with care, "that you're hurting. And pain looks for familiar shapes."

My chest ached again.

I nodded once. "Yes. That must be it."

Silence stretched.

I became painfully aware that he was still wearing only a towel. That I was standing in his room. That I had crossed a line.

I straightened my shoulders. "I shouldn't be here."

"No," he agreed. "You shouldn't."

That stung more than I expected.

I turned toward the door, then stopped. My hand hovered over the handle.

"This was a mistake," I admitted quietly.

He didn't respond right away.

When he did, his voice was lower. Controlled. "No one will know."

I nodded, even though I wasn't sure I believed him.

"I won't let it happen again," I said. "I shouldn't have come here."

He inclined his head. "As you wish."

I opened the door, then paused one last time without looking back.

"Kaine."

"Yes, Luna?"

"Thank you," I said. "For... earlier. With Liam."

His breath caught. I heard it.

"You're welcome," he replied quietly.

I stepped into the hallway and closed the door behind me.

The moment it shut, my legs felt weak.

I leaned against the wall, pressing a hand to my chest, my heart still racing.

What just happened?

I wiped my eyes angrily, forcing myself to breathe.

This was grief.

This was exhaustion.

This was my mind clinging to something it had lost.

That was all.

It had to be.

And yet—

His heartbeat.

His scent.

The way his arms had felt around me.

Exactly like Lennox.

I squeezed my eyes shut.

"No," I whispered.

The word barely left my lips when footsteps echoed down the corridor.

I stiffened.

Before I could straighten fully, Levi stepped into view.

He stopped short when he saw me pressed against the wall outside a guard's room.

His eyes narrowed instantly.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

Not confused.

Not curious.

Angry.

I pushed myself upright, lifting my chin even though my heart was still pounding. "That's not your concern."

Levi's gaze flicked to the door behind me.

Then back to my face.

"You're outside a guard's quarters," he said slowly. "Do you have any idea how that looks?"

I laughed sharply. "Do you always interrogate me in hallways now?"

"This isn't a joke, Olivia," he snapped. "You just lost Lennox. You're vulnerable. And now I find you coming out of a guard's room?"

My chest tightened.

"Lower your voice," I said coldly. "This is not a spectacle."

He took a step closer. "Then explain."

I exhaled hard, forcing myself to stay calm. "I came to get the guard. That's all."

Levi stared at me like he didn't believe a word.

"You came alone," he said. "To a male guard's room."

"I am not a child," I shot back. "And I don't need permission to speak to someone assigned to me."

His jaw clenched. "You're grieving. That makes you reckless."

"Enough," I said sharply. "Do not speak to me like that."

The air between us crackled.

For a second, neither of us spoke.

Then Levi rubbed a hand down his face, clearly struggling to keep control. "This is exactly why I said you needed supervision."

"And this," I said bitterly, "is exactly why I don't tell you anything anymore."

His eyes flashed. "You don't get to shut me out. Not when you're making decisions like this."

"I wasn't making any decision," I said. "I was apologizing."

That gave him pause.

"Apologizing?" he repeated.

"Yes," I said firmly. "To the guard. For earlier."

Levi raised a brow, clearly confused. He stared at Kaine's door, then back at me, but before he could respond—

The door behind me opened.

I felt it before I saw it.

That presence again.

Kaine stepped out.

Fully dressed this time. Black guard uniform. Shirt buttoned to the collar. Hair still slightly damp, but neat. Composed. Controlled.

If I hadn't seen him moments earlier, no one would have guessed anything had happened.

Levi turned sharply. "You."

Kaine bowed immediately. "Alpha."

Levi's eyes dragged over him, assessing. Cold. Sharp. "Why was the Luna in your room?"

Kaine didn't hesitate. Not even for a heartbeat.

## **Chapter 588: Something's Strange**

Olivia's POV

Kaine didn't hesitate.

Not even for a heartbeat.

"The Luna wanted me to run an errand for her," he said calmly.

His voice was steady. Calm. Respectful. Not panicked like he was lying.

Levi's gaze snapped from me to him, sharp and furious. The corridor seemed to tighten around us, the air thick with tension. His jaw clenched slowly, muscles working beneath his skin as his Alpha instincts flared.

"What errand?" Levi asked coldly, though his eyes never left Kaine.

I lifted my chin before Kaine could speak again. "I asked him to retrieve something for me," I said flatly. "I changed my mind."

Levi's eyes flicked back to me.

For a moment, I saw doubt there.

Then suspicion.

Then something darker.

"Inside his room?" he asked.

I didn't blink. "Yes."

Silence stretched between the three of us.

Then Levi exhaled sharply through his nose—and released it.

His Alpha aura rolled out like a living thing.

Heavy. Commanding. Oppressive.

The corridor seemed to bow under it. Any other guard would have dropped instantly. Knees bent. Head lowered. Submission forced by instinct alone.

I felt it too, pressing against my chest, demanding acknowledgment.

But Kaine—

Kaine didn't move.

He didn't bow. He didn't drop his gaze. He didn't even tense.

He stood there, calm as stone, eyes steady, posture relaxed but respectful.

My breath caught.

That wasn't possible.

Levi narrowed his eyes.

"Why," he said, his voice edged with power, "was the Luna in your room?"

The command was clear now.

Answer truthfully. Submit. Obey.

Kaine inclined his head slightly—not in submission, but in acknowledgment.

"I just told you," he said calmly. "She needed me for an errand. Alpha Levi... don't you trust your Luna?"

The words were respectful.

But the tone—

Too steady.

Too confident.

Too unafraid.

Levi's aura spiked.

"Watch your mouth," he snapped, stepping forward.

"Enough," I said sharply.

Both of them stopped.

I turned fully toward Levi now, anger burning hot beneath my skin. "Do not use your Alpha command on my guard in a public corridor."

His eyes widened slightly. "Olivia—"

"No," I cut in. "You don't get to do that. Not here. Not over this."

Something ugly flickered in his expression.

Something protective. Something controlling.

Something I didn't like.

But something else was clawing at me now.

A thought I didn't want.

Why didn't Kaine submit?

That question lodged itself deep in my mind.

I shook it off immediately.

No.

That was ridiculous.

Lennox was dead.

I watched him die. I buried him. I cried over his decaying body until my voice broke and my heart nearly followed.

Kaine wasn't Lennox.

He couldn't be.

I stepped closer to Levi and grabbed his arm before he could say another word.

"We're done here," I said tightly.

Then I teleported.

The world shifted violently.

Air ripped away.

And suddenly we were inside my room.

I released Levi's arm and turned on him the moment my feet hit the floor.

"What was that?" I demanded.

He ran a hand through his hair, pacing once like a caged animal. "I made a mistake."

My chest tightened. "Explain."

"I shouldn't have assigned him to you," Levi said bluntly. "I'm withdrawing the order."

I stared at him.

"What?"

"Kaine will be reassigned," he continued. "Border patrol. Outer watch. Far from the mansion."

Something sharp twisted inside me.

Sadness.

Sudden. Unwanted. Unreasonable.

I buried it instantly.

"You don't get to do that without telling me," I said coldly.

Levi stopped pacing and turned to face me. "Olivia, you're not thinking clearly."

My anger flared. "And there it is."

He exhaled harshly. "You are vulnerable."

I laughed once, humorless. "Don't."

"You just lost Lennox," he pressed on. "You're grieving. You're isolated. And Kaine—"

"Kaine what?" I snapped.

Levi hesitated.

Then he said it.

"He looks like Lennox."

The room went very still.

My blood turned cold.

"Excuse me?"

"He does," Levi said, frustration bleeding through his voice now. "Not the face. But the build. The height. The way he carries himself. His presence. Olivia, I don't want you—"

I didn't let him finish.

My hand moved on instinct.

The slap echoed loudly in the room.

Levi froze.

I was shaking.

"Do you take me for a slut?" I demanded, my voice breaking with fury. "A whore? Something that will jump into another man's arms because he looks like my dead mate?"

"That's not what I meant—"

"Then listen," I snapped. "Listen carefully."

I stepped closer, pointing a finger at his chest.

"First—Kaine remains my guard."

But why does it feel like I was lying?

Levi opened his mouth.

"Second," I continued, "I am your Luna. Not your concubine. Not your child. Not something you get to police because you're uncomfortable."

His jaw tightened. "Olivia—"

"You don't get to decide what I can handle," I said, my voice low and shaking. "And you don't get to insult me under the excuse of concern."

He looked genuinely shaken now.

"I was trying to protect you."

"Then protect me by trusting me," I said. "Or get out."

Silence stretched.

Finally, Levi bowed his head stiffly. "As you wish."

He turned and left without another word.

The door closed behind him.

And the room felt empty again.

I sank onto the edge of the bed, my heart racing, chest tight.

Why did the thought of Kaine being reassigned feel like a loss?

Why did the idea of him leaving twist something painful inside me?

I pressed my hands over my face.

"This is grief," I whispered.

It had to be.

But deep down, a seed had already been planted.

Kaine hadn't submitted.

His presence felt too familiar.

His words sounded like Lennox's.

And no matter how much I told myself it was impossible—

Something wasn't right.

And for the first time since Lennox died...

I was afraid of what I might discover next.

Throughout the day, I stayed in my room. I only left to check on the boys, who apparently were still trying to move on with life. Especially Liam, who, in just a few days of meeting Lennox, was already so attached to him, and it felt unreal... like there was a special connection between them that I just couldn't explain.

After checking on the boys, I went back to my room and sat back on the bed.

I didn't know how long I sat there—staring at nothing, listening to the silence press in from every corner. The mansion felt too big again. Too empty. Like it was holding its breath, waiting for something I couldn't name.

My argument with Levi replayed over and over in my mind.

The slap.

The words.

The way Kaine's name had settled in my chest like a weight.

I hated that.

I hated that even now, when I should have been angry—when I was angry—part of my thoughts kept drifting back to him.

His calm voice.

His steady eyes.

The way he hadn't bowed when Levi released his Alpha command.

I squeezed my eyes shut.

No.

Enough.

This was grief. This was exhaustion. This was my mind looking for something solid to lean on when everything else had collapsed.

I lay back on the bed and stared at the ceiling, my arms wrapped around myself like that might hold me together.

I don't know when night fell.

I only realized it when a soft knock sounded at my door.

I stiffened.

Another knock followed. Gentle. Controlled.

"Luna," a familiar voice said quietly.

My chest tightened.

Kaine.

I pushed myself upright, irritation flaring instantly. "What is it?"

The door opened just enough for him to step inside. He was fully dressed, dark uniform neat, posture respectful. He stopped a few steps in, head slightly bowed.

"I came to say goodnight," he said.

The words hit wrong.

My temper snapped.

"I didn't ask you to come," I said sharply. "You shouldn't be here."

He didn't argue. He didn't bristle.

"I know," he replied calmly. "But after what happened today... I wanted to make sure you were alright."

That only made it worse.

Why was he not acting the way every guard should? Why did my heart—my whole being—feel this unusual way?

I frowned. "I don't need you checking on me," I snapped. "That is not your place."

His jaw tightened—just slightly—but his voice remained steady. "It is my duty."

"No," I shot back. "Your duty is to stand where I tell you to stand. Not to decide when you get to step into my room."

Silence fell between us.

I could feel my pulse pounding in my ears. The anger was sharp, but underneath it was something else—something messy and uncomfortable.

Shame.

For breaking down earlier.

For needing him.

For letting him see me like that.

"You shouldn't have come," I said again, more tightly. "Get out."

He hesitated.

Just for a second.

Then he nodded. "As you wish, Luna."

He turned toward the door.

Relief should have followed.

It didn't.

The space he left behind felt too large. Too cold.

The words slipped out before I could stop them.

"Stop."

## **Chapter 589: Drunk**

Lennox's POV

When she told me to stop, I froze.

Not because I wanted to, but because my body obeyed before my mind could catch up.

I turned slowly, my hand still on the door. The corridor light spilled into the room behind me, casting her in shadow and gold. She stood there rigid, chin lifted, eyes suddenly filled with pain.

"Come back," she said.

Not an order.

Not a command.

A request.

That was worse.

I stepped back inside and closed the door quietly behind me.

She didn't speak right away. She walked past me instead, moving toward the small table by the window where a half-finished bottle of amber liquor sat untouched. She poured two glasses with an unsteady hand and pushed one toward me without looking.

"Drink," she said.

I should have refused.

I knew that.

Every instinct screamed that this was a line I couldn't afford to cross.

But I took the glass. I missed her... missed being this close to her.

The liquor burned going down. She drank hers faster. Too fast.

She leaned back against the table, staring at the floor like it might give her answers.

"I failed him," she said suddenly.

The words hit like a blade.

My chest locked.

"Lennox," she went on, her voice rough. "I failed him."

I didn't speak.

I couldn't.

"He died thinking I stopped loving him," she said, laughing bitterly. "Isn't that cruel? Of all the things he survived... that's what he died believing."

She swallowed and drank again.

"We fought so much near the end," she continued. "Misunderstandings. Pride. Silence. And I kept telling myself I'd fix it later. When things were calmer. When there was time."

Her voice broke.

"There was no later."

I set my glass down before it shattered in my grip.

She turned to face me then, eyes glassy, cheeks flushed. Drunk—not falling-down drunk, but loosened. Unguarded.

Again, she filled her cup and drank it all in one go.

"I loved him," she said fiercely. "I still love him. It was always him."

Every word was a wound to my already shattered heart.

"I wish he were here," she whispered. "Just for a moment. Just so I could tell him."

I'm here, I whispered only to myself.

She laughed again, but this time she was drunk. I knew Olivia's alcohol tolerance was low—just a sip and she was gone. That was why, when we were younger, we never let her take even a sip. We made sure no one in the pack offered her that.

Olivia scoffed drunkenly. "God, listen to me. Talking to a guard like he's—"

She stopped.

Her gaze sharpened.

Focused.

"Why do you feel like him?" she asked quietly.

My breath caught.

"I don't," I said carefully.

She stepped closer.

"You do," she insisted. "Your voice. The way you stand. The way you look at me like you already know what I'm going to say."

She shook her head. "I know it's stupid. I saw his body. I touched him. I watched him decay."

Each word gutted me.

"So why," she whispered, "does it feel like he's standing right in front of me?"

My heart hammered violently.

"Why do you think I'm Lennox?" I asked, forcing my composure to remain intact.

She reached up suddenly, cupping my face with both hands.

I froze.

Her palms were warm. Familiar. A touch I missed so much.

"Because you feel like him," she said softly. "Because when you hold me, my wolf goes quiet. Because your heartbeat matches the one I memorized."

Her thumbs brushed my cheekbones.

"I would have thought you changed your face," she murmured, almost laughing, "but that's impossible. Why would you do that? Why would you come back as a common guard?"

Her voice cracked.

"You died," she said firmly. "I saw you die."

I couldn't breathe.

She leaned closer, her forehead resting against mine.

"I miss you," she whispered.

That was it.

The last thread snapped.

I lifted my hands and held her wrists gently, grounding her—and myself.

"Olivia," I said hoarsely. "You're drunk."

She laughed weakly. "And grieving. Don't ruin the moment."

Her lips brushed mine accidentally.

Or fate.

I should have pulled away.

But I didn't.

She kissed me again, this time deliberate—soft at first, testing, like she was afraid I'd disappear. When I didn't, her fingers slid into my hair and she kissed me harder, desperately, like she was trying to pour years of loss into a single breath.

I kissed her back.

Moon, forgive me—I kissed her back.

Not rushed. Not hungry.

Deep.

Familiar.

Her breath hitched against my mouth, a broken sound she used to make when she was overwhelmed. My body remembered her before my mind could stop it. I pulled her closer, anchoring her against me, every sense screaming that this was wrong and right all at once.

Her hands trembled on my chest.

"Lennox," she whispered against my lips.

That was when I broke.

I pulled back just enough to press my forehead to hers, breathing hard.

"Olivia," I said. "If I were him—"

She kissed me again, silencing the words.

This kiss was different.

Slower.

Devastating.

It tasted like grief and love and things left unsaid.

When we finally parted, her eyes were full of tears.

"I know it's not you," she whispered. "I know I'm imagining things."

I said nothing.

Because if I spoke, I would confess everything.

She rested her head against my chest, exhausted.

I closed my eyes.

This was dangerous.

I pulled back.

Not because I wanted to.

Because if I didn't, I wouldn't stop, and I would reveal myself.

"I have to go, Luna," I said hoarsely, my hands still resting on her arms like that was the only thing keeping me anchored to the ground. "This—this is wrong."

The word tasted bitter.

Wrong.

After years of not touching her. After years of dying with her name in my mouth.

I stepped back, forcing space between us, even though every instinct screamed against it. My chest felt tight. My lungs burned like I'd been holding my breath for far too long.

She shook her head slowly, eyes glossy, unfocused, shining with too much pain and too much drink.

"Don't," she whispered.

I turned toward the door.

That was my mistake.

Her hand caught my sleeve.

Then she was there—so fast, so desperate—pressing herself against me again, her lips crashing into mine like she was afraid I'd disappear if she let go.

I froze.

Then I broke.

I kissed her back.

Harder this time. Deeper. Like a man who had starved and finally tasted something real. My hands slid to her waist before I could stop them, muscle memory taking over, pulling her close like I had done a thousand times before.

God.

I had missed this.

Missed her.

Her mouth moved against mine, familiar and frantic, her breath shaky, her body warm and real in my arms. She kissed me like she used to when she was scared of losing me. Like she used to when words weren't enough.

"This is wrong," I murmured against her lips, my voice breaking. "Olivia—"

"Then why does it feel right?" she whispered back, her forehead pressed to mine, her breath uneven. "Why does it feel like coming home?"

Because it was.

Because she was my home.

I pulled back just enough to look at her, really look at her. Her cheeks were flushed. Her lashes wet. Her eyes filled with love that had never gone anywhere—just buried under grief and regret. But then again, she was drunk.

"I shouldn't," I said again, weaker now. "You're hurting and drunk. You don't know what you're saying."

She cupped my face with both hands, thumbs brushing my jaw the way she used to when she wanted me to listen.

"I know exactly what I'm saying," she whispered. "I miss you."

My heart shattered all over again.

"Lennox," she said softly, like a prayer. "I miss you so much."

I closed my eyes.

Moon Goddess, forgive me.

"I am not Lennox," I whispered, hating myself for lying.

Her breath hitched. I thought she might have realized her mistake... but she didn't. Instead, she kissed me again—slower now, trembling, pouring years of longing into that single touch. I felt it everywhere. In my chest. In my bones. In the wolf that stirred even though it was supposed to be gone.

I kissed her like I might never get the chance again.

Because maybe I wouldn't—for now.

She clung to me, fingers curling into my shirt, her body fitting against mine like it always had. Like it was made for this. Like it remembered me even when her mind couldn't allow it.

"I waited," she whispered against my mouth. "I waited for you to come back. Even when everyone said you were gone."

I swallowed hard, pressing my forehead to hers.

"I never stopped loving you," she said. "Not for one second. He died thinking I did, and that's what kills me."

I held her tighter, my jaw clenched so hard it hurt.

"Olivia," I whispered again, so quietly it barely existed. "Lennox is not here... I am Kaine."

She kissed me like she didn't hear it anyway.

Her hands slid up my chest, familiar paths, familiar touch, and I had to stop myself—had to grip her waist and still her before this went somewhere I couldn't undo.

I rested my forehead against hers, breathing hard.

"Olivia," I said, forcing the words out. "If I stay... I won't be able to control myself."

She smiled sadly, her eyes full of tears.

"Then don't."

God help me.

I knew she was drunk, and right now she wasn't herself... I had to do something.

I pulled back again—this time with everything I had—and she made a small sound of protest, her hands tightening on me like she didn't want to let go.

"I have to go," I said firmly now, even though it felt like tearing my own heart out. "If I don't... we will both regret it."

She stared at me for a long moment, then wrapped her arms around my neck.

"I want you."

### **Chapter 590: In Her Arms**

Lennox's POV

I stared at her, lost.

Truly lost.

For a second, I didn't understand what she meant when she said she wanted me—but then there was no time to think at all because she surged forward and slammed her lips against mine.

It was so hard and desperate.

The kind of kiss that didn't ask permission, didn't hesitate, and didn't care about consequences.

Goddess.

My hands reacted before my mind could stop them, gripping her waist, pulling her closer, my body remembering her far too well. The feel of her mouth, the way she fit against me—it all came rushing back like I had never left.

Like I had never died.

And that was exactly why this couldn't happen.

This would end in tragedy.

Because right now, I wasn't Lennox.

I was Kaine.

And when the alcohol faded—when the fog lifted—she would wake up with this moment burned into her memory and hate herself for it. Hate me. Hate the weakness grief had dragged out of her. She would fall into a great pain and regret.

I couldn't do that to her.

No matter how much I wanted her. No matter how much I wanted to pin her to the bed and worship her.

"Luna... Olivia," I murmured against her mouth, forcing space between us even as it felt like tearing myself in half. "You have to stop."

I pushed her back gently but firmly.

God, I fucking hated this. This was one of the hardest decisions of my life.

She stumbled a step, staring at me with glassy eyes filled with tears that destroyed me all over again.

"Lennox," she whispered brokenly. "Why are you pushing me away?"

My chest caved in.

She truly believed it.

Right now, in this moment, she saw me—not Kaine, not a guard—but the man she buried.

I dragged a hand through my hair and turned my face away for half a second, just to breathe, just to keep myself from breaking completely. Just to keep myself from exposing who I cruelly was.

"You're drunk," I said hoarsely. "And you're hurting."

She shook her head violently and stepped toward me again, her hands gripping my shirt like she was afraid I would disappear. "I don't care," she whispered. "I miss you. I've missed you every second. Don't do this. Don't leave me again."

Again.

That word nearly brought me to my knees.

She kissed me once more—slower this time, pleading, her lips trembling against mine. "I missed your mouth," she whispered between kisses. "I missed you." She kissed me harder. "I miss the feeling of your hand on me... your mouth worshiping my body."

I closed my eyes.

Years.

It had been years since I touched her like this. Years since I held her, smelled her, felt her breathe against me. Every instinct screamed to take her back into my arms and never let go.

I kissed her—briefly, aching—then pulled away again, resting my forehead against hers.

"This is wrong," I whispered. "Even if it feels right."

Her hands slid up my chest, clinging. "It never felt wrong with you," she said softly. "It still doesn't."

I swallowed hard, my voice barely holding. "That's exactly why I have to stop. You are Kaine and I am... just a guard."

She pulled back just enough to look at me, her eyes glossy, unfocused, searching my face like the answer to everything she'd lost was written there. Like she was trying to read through me.

"So..." she said softly, bitterness threading through the word, "you don't want me."

The question wasn't really a question.

It was a wound.

I didn't answer.

Because the truth would destroy us both.

I wanted her. Moon help me—I wanted her so badly it hurt. There were a thousand memories crashing through me, a thousand instincts screaming, Mine!. But I wasn't allowed to want her like this. Not as Kaine. Not when she was drowning in grief and alcohol and seeing me as Lennox.

My silence was answer enough.

Her lips trembled, then curved into a reckless, drunk smile. "Fine," she said, swaying slightly. "Then I'll just... find someone else."

My blood went cold.

She turned away from me, wobbling toward the door. "Someone won't mind," she added carelessly. "The butler. A guard. Someone."

Each word was a knife to my chest.

"I'm sure one of them would be happy to—" She waved a hand vaguely, laughing under her breath. "To keep me company."

That was it.

Something dark and primal snapped inside me.

I crossed the space between us in two strides and caught her by the waist, pulling her back against my chest before I even realized I'd moved.

She gasped, then laughed—softly, breathlessly, teasingly.

"There you are," she murmured, leaning into me like she'd always belonged there. "I knew that would work."

I froze.

She turned in my arms, her fingers sliding up my chest, cupping my face with careless intimacy. "You were always like this," she whispered, her eyes half-lidded. "So jealous. So bad at hiding it."

My jaw clenched. Fuck. I couldn't control my emotion.

"Olivia," I warned quietly.

She smiled up at me, drunk and devastating. "See?" she said softly. "That look. That's you... that's my Lennox, who is so possessive of me."

Then she rose onto her toes and kissed me again.

Not desperate this time, but passionate and loving.

I kissed her back before I could stop myself.

She tugged at me suddenly, unsteady but determined, pulling me backward until the edge of the bed pressed into the backs of my knees.

I didn't resist fast enough.

She climbed onto the mattress first, then reached for me again, fingers curling into my shirt. Her weight shifted, her knees brushing my thighs, her breath warm and uneven as she pulled me down with her.

"I missed you," she whispered, over and over, like a confession. "I missed you so much."

Her lips found mine again.

I kissed her back.

I shouldn't have.

But I did.

The bed dipped beneath us, the familiar give of it sending a sharp ache straight through my chest. My hands framed her face, thumbs brushing away tears I hadn't realized were still falling. She tasted like grief and liquor and everything I'd lost.

"Olivia..." I breathed into her mouth, trying—failing—to slow her.

She shook her head, fingers sliding into my hair, holding me there. "Don't," she whispered. "Don't say my name like that. Just—just stay."

I rolled with her instinctively, my body remembering the motion before my mind could stop it. I caught myself at the last second, bracing my weight on my arms so I wasn't crushing her, hovering over her instead.

Moon above.

She looked up at me like I was salvation. Like she wanted me more than anything in this world.

Her hands traced my arms, my shoulders, reverent and familiar. "I missed this," she said softly. "I missed you."

My chest burned.

I lowered my forehead to hers, breathing her in, fighting the way every instinct screamed to claim, to protect, to never let go again.

"I can't," I whispered, the words tearing out of me. "Not like this."

She frowned, confusion flickering through the haze. "Why?" she asked softly. "You're here. I'm here."

Because you're drunk.

Because you're grieving.

Because you think I'm someone I'm not supposed to be.

Because I am him—and I'm lying to you.

I closed my eyes, then slowly—so slowly—pulled back, sitting up and creating space between us even though every part of me rebelled against it.

She reached for me immediately.

"Don't go," she whispered.

"I'm not leaving," I said hoarsely. "I'm just... stopping us."

She stared at me, hurt and confused.

"You always did this," she murmured. "You always tried to be strong for both of us."

That almost broke me.

I stood before I could change my mind, turning away so she wouldn't see my face, so she wouldn't see how close I was to falling apart completely.

"Lie down," I said gently. "You've had too much to drink."

She hesitated, then slowly obeyed, curling on her side like she used to after nightmares. My chest tightened painfully.

I grabbed a blanket and draped it over her, my fingers lingering for half a second too long at her shoulder before I forced myself to step back.

She was already drifting, exhaustion pulling her under now that the storm had passed.

Just before sleep took her, she whispered softly, "Don't disappear again."

I stood there long after her breathing evened out, fists clenched, my heart in ruins.

"I won't," I whispered back.

I didn't leave.

I should have.

Every instinct told me to put distance between us—to step out, close the door, disappear back into the role I was supposed to be playing. But my feet wouldn't move.

So I stayed.

I sat in the corner of the room, half in shadow, watching the steady rise and fall of her chest as sleep finally claimed her. The storm inside her had quieted. Her breathing evened out, soft and familiar, the way it always did when she finally let go.

She looked peaceful now.

Too peaceful.

A lock of hair had fallen across her cheek. I resisted the urge to brush it back. I didn't touch her again. I couldn't. I had crossed enough lines already.

The blanket was pulled up to her shoulders, one hand curled beneath her chin like she used to do when she was exhausted. Seeing that small, unguarded habit nearly crushed me.

I leaned my elbows on my knees and bowed my head.

Moon above... what have I done?

We had kissed.

Not just brushed lips. Not a mistake that could be explained away.

We had kissed.

Long enough. Deep enough. Close enough that my wolf—silent, buried, grieving—had stirred for the first time in years.

Suddenly my spine went rigid.

Levi.

Louis.

They would have felt it.

I am no longer Olivia's mate, which meant...

Shit.