

Chapter 26

Silver

My cheeks burned as Leo explained the event.

A pack gathering? The night of the full moon?

This couldn't be happening right now. I couldn't attend a pack gathering during the full moon. I couldn't attend any gatherings during the full moon.

That was the one night of the month that I transformed into the monster I am. Nobody can know about this secret I harvest deep inside. They wouldn't want me as their Luna if they found out the truth. They would probably hunt me down and kill me... or banish me. Elliot would never look at me the same.

Panic started to consume me, and I bit my lower lip to keep from going into a full panic attack. Noticing my displeased face, Leo cocked his head to the side.

"I'm just not into large gatherings," I told him, which wasn't a lie, but not the full truth either. "Maybe we could do this another time? Or maybe I don't have to attend...?"

"The gathering is for you, Luna," Leo reminded me, his brows knitting together. "Elliot had been preparing for this all month."

"Right," I said, chewing on my bottom lip. "I just don't think a big gathering is necessary."

"This would be your first event as the pack's Luna. You must be there."

I nodded, forcing a smile on my lips.

Later that evening, I tried to have the same conversation with Elliot during dinner. When I brought up having the gathering on a different night, he looked at me like I had gone crazy.

"What's wrong with the full moon? That's when we are at our strongest. It's most appropriate to have the gathering during that time. Besides, the preparations have already been made and the pack is alerted of the gathering."

How could I tell him that I couldn't go to an event on the full moon? How he looked at me right now left me no room for debates. I decided to drop the subject for the time being and hide away in my art studio for the next couple of days.

Elliot was so busy with the gathering preparations and his duties as the Alpha that he didn't even notice that I've been absent and quiet lately.

However, Rebecca noticed.

She barged right into my art studio with her hands on her hips and her lips pressed in a thin line.

"You haven't returned any of my calls," she said, her brows furrowed together. "What's going on with you?"

I explained to her a little about the gathering. Rebecca doesn't know about my full moon transformation, and I wasn't going to tell her about it. The last thing I needed was for my best friend to start looking at me like the monster I was. However, I did express my apprehension about the event and how I was trying to get out of it.

"Why would you want to get out of it?" She asked, sitting on one of the nearby chairs. "You should be happy that your husband wants to show you off to the pack."

"I am," I confessed. It was truly an honor that Elliot wanted to introduce me to the pack as their Luna. But if they found out the truth, I would be done for. "I just don't like crowds."

"Since when had crowds scared you?" Rebecca asked, raising her brows. "You've never been stage fright before."

"I've never been in front of a crowd of people I hardly know," I told her. "With the responsibility of being their Luna. I'll probably have a target on my back. I'm sure Elliot has plenty of suitors that are after the Luna title."

Rebecca nodded.

"Well, when you put it that way. I get why you are nervous," she said, watching me carefully. "You could always pretend you are sick."

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The thought occurred to me, but I'm not sure how well I could pull it off.

I suppose it couldn't hurt to try.

The following day, I remained in bed for most of the morning. Normally, I would be awake early so I could work on some paintings in my studio. But today, I was pretending to be incredibly sick so that Elliot would let me miss the gathering happening in a couple of days.

I placed a hot cloth over my face and when I heard the bathroom door opening, I quickly took the cloth off my face and shoved it under my pillow.

When Elliot saw me still in bed, he frowned.

"Why haven't you gotten up yet?" He asked as he finished getting dressed for the day.

"I don't feel so good," I told him, making myself sound sick and pathetic. His brows furrowed together.

"You were fine yesterday."

I swallowed the lump in my throat.

"I was feeling off yesterday too. But it really got bad today. I think it's getting worse, and I'll probably be sick for at least a week," I told him, moaning in pain.

"Is that so?" He asked, not sounding very convinced.

"Feel my head; it's very warm," I told him.

He stepped toward me and placed his hand on my forehead, a frown marring his lips. Then he cocked his head to the side.

"And what might this be?" He asked, reaching around me and grabbing the cloth that I stuck under my pillow.

I silently cursed myself for not making sure it was completely hidden. He pulled the cloth out and his eyes narrowed at it.

"A hot cloth?" He asked. "Is this the reason you feel warm? Do you take me as a fool?"

I bit my lower lip and sat up.

"No," I murmured. "I'm really not feeling well. I put a warm cloth on my head because I have a headache."

"Then I'll get you some medicine. I'm sure once you get up and shower, you'll feel better," he told me.

He turned and left the room. A few minutes later, I heard a knock on the door. I sighed and slid out of bed to open it. One of the maids stood on the other side with a glass of water and a medicine bottle. "The Alpha told me to give this to you, Luna," she said, handing me the medicine and water.

I thanked her and closed the door, bummed that my plan didn't work.

Later, I knocked on Elliot's office door.

"Come in," he said.

I opened the door and stepped inside. He glanced up at me.

"Did you need something? Or are you going to stand there all night?"

I flinched at his cruel words before mustering enough confidence to say, "I have a work commitment on the full moon, so I don't think I'll be able to attend the event."

He narrowed his eyes at me.

"Do you forget that I'm the owner of the gallery?" He asked. "You have no other commitments other than the one to this pack. You will be at the ceremony, Silver. That's final." My cheeks flushed and I lowered my gaze.

There was no way I could get out of this event. What was I going to do?

Noticing the sorrowful look on my face, Elliot sighed.

"Look, I get that you are nervous. But there's nothing to be afraid of. The pack will be accepting of you and treat you with respect. It's just a gathering, Silver."

I nodded, keeping my eyes fixed on the ground.

Little did he know that it wasn't the gathering I was afraid of.

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Silver

The night of the full moon had finally arrived; I knew by midnight tonight my secret would be revealed to the entire pack.

No.

I couldn't let that happen.

I had to think quickly and escape just before all was revealed. They couldn't see my transformation.

I rummaged through my closet, trying to find an appropriate outfit to wear for the event. A maid brought me an evening gown for the event per orders of Elliot, but I wouldn't be able to escape in that kind of attire. I wanted to wear something that I could move easily.

I settled on a pair of designer jeans and a nice blouse. The event was going to be at the packhouse, so I wasn't sure why I would have to dress fancy anyway.

However, as soon as Elliot saw me, his lips thinned, and he folded his arms across his chest like he was getting ready to scold me.

"That's not the outfit I had picked out for you," he said, meeting my eyes. "Didn't the maid bring you the dress?"

I swallowed and glanced at the bed where the dress remained in its casing.

"Well, yeah. But I wanted to wear something more casual. Isn't that dress a little too much for the gathering?" I asked him, trying to sound innocent.

"It's not just a gathering. You are being introduced as the Luna of the Crown pack. The largest and most famous pack in the world. This isn't a

small event," he reminded me. "Where is the dress? Don't make things more difficult."

Without another word, he left the room, leaving me feeling more defeated than ever.

I had to admit though, the dress was gorgeous. It was silver with sparkles that ran along the silky seams. It wasn't too exposing, but it showed off all my curves and angles perfectly.

It came with matching heels that were going to make my plans for an escape tonight nearly impossible. But I was still going to try.

Taking a deep breath, I dressed in the gown and put on the heels. Once I finished, I joined Elliot in the front parlor.

When he saw me, he smiled.

"You look beautiful," he told me.

I blushed at the compliment.

"Thank you," I said, sounding a bit breathy.

A nervous pit remained in my stomach though; how was I going to get through this evening?

Noticing the concerned look on my face, Elliot slowly approached me, running his fingers up and down my arms and causing goosebumps to form along my flesh from his touch. I lifted my gaze to meet his and I saw that he was looking at me compassionately, like he could hear the anxieties going on in my mind.

"It's okay to be nervous," he told me, his tone soft and filled with sincerity.

"I'll stay by your side the entire time. Nobody will disrespect you."

I knew he meant those words to be reassuring, but they weren't. In fact, they made me even more nervous. If he stayed by my side all night that meant my wiggle room for escape was even thinner.

I forced a smile and nodded, not wanting to lead him on to that something was seriously wrong.

I went with Elliot to the packhouse, and I was shocked by how many people were already there. The banquet for the gathering took place on the back patio. Light streamers were placed around the patio, canoping over us and lighting up our pathway more than the moon could. There was live classical music playing softly in the corner and everybody was dressed in elegant dresses and suits. Waiters were serving champagne flutes and hors-d'oeuvres.

Tables wrapped in white clothes and decorated with beautiful roses and candles were set up for dining.

As we entered, eyes were turned in our direction and whispers started to erupt around us. Everybody was talking about the new Luna and the wife of their fierce Alpha. Wondering how someone like me could snag someone as powerful and important as Alpha Elliot.

Elliot didn't mind the looks we were getting though; instead, he linked his arm with mine and kept me close to his side as he walked around the banquet, greeting his pack mates by name.

Elliot introduced me to most of those we encountered, and I kept a plastered smile on my lips, trying to pay attention to what he was saying, but my mind kept traveling around to possible escape routes. The event was held outside, so that made things a little easier. Though the backyard was fenced in, there had to be doors leading out of there.

Most of the inside of the packhouse was empty besides a few workers, I could probably sneak in and leave through the front door without anyone noticing. However, it was going to be difficult leaving when Elliot wouldn't let me out of his sight. He seemed reluctant to let my arm go as if he was afraid, I would disappear at any moment.

Little did he know, that was exactly what I wanted to do.

I could always tell him that I have to run to the restroom. I would take the heat later because there was no doubt in my mind that he would be angry with me once he realized I was gone.

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Midnight was only a couple of hours away; I didn't have long before I needed to make my escape.

"Champagne, Luna?" The server broke through my thoughts.

I turned to see a man standing nearby with a tray of champagne. Elliot was already sipping on his and he was watching me, waiting for me to answer.

I smiled and took a glass off the tray.

"Thank you," I said in response.

He nodded and turned away.

Just as I took my first sip, I felt a strange disturbance; like someone was watching me. Feeling a slight chill run up my spine, I turned, and I froze when I saw Gavin on the other side of the gathering, staring at me.

His face shined with indifference and my heart felt heavy in my chest. I shouldn't have been surprised to see him here; I mean, he was a part of the pack after all. But with all my worries about this evening, Gavin's attendance was not a thought that occurred to me.

Just then, Beta Leo approached us. His lips were pressed in a thin line, and I could see a dark cloud forming on his expression as he whispered something into Elliot's ear. If I had wolf hearing, I might have been able to hear what they were saying. But I was wolfless and didn't have that ability.

Elliot visibly tensed and he nodded at Leo before turning his attention to me.

"I'm afraid I have a matter to take care of and must leave for a short while," he told me. "Get to know some of the packmates and make sure to eat something. I'll return to you once I can."

He released his hold on my arm, leaving me feeling cold and alone. I thought that was what I wanted, for Elliot to leave me so I could escape. But once he let me go and stepped away, I found myself wishing he could stay by my side.

I watched his retreating form as he disappeared into the crowd with Leo.

I turned away, thinking now was a good time to plan my escape and get out of there before it was too late. But before I could take a step, Gavin approached me, causing my entire body to still.

"You seemed surprised to see me. Did you forget I was part of this pack as well?" He asked mockingly.

"You haven't been a thought to me in a while, Gavin. I simply forgot about you," I told him, trying to sound calm and collected.

Humor danced in his eyes as he stepped closer to me; his close proximity made me uncomfortable.

"Is that so?" He asked. "So, I suppose you aren't angry with me for giving your paintings away to your sister?"

I pressed my lips together as I glared at him.

"Not at all," I lied. "I painted something much better anyway. If anything, it was a blessing that you gave her my paintings."

His eyes darkened.

"Oh yes, I saw your painting. It was a portrait of my uncle, right?" He asked. "I hope you don't think that the fact he allowed you to use him as a model means anything. He only married you to get under my skin. His heart will always belong to one woman, and she isn't you."

My heart felt heavy in my chest from his words. I stared at him, unsure of what to say.

"If you're lucky, maybe you will meet her tonight. Did I mention she was here?" He asked, a smirk playing on his lips.

What was he saying? I didn't understand his meaning.

He was staring off in a specific direction and I followed his gaze. I realized there was a small crowd gathering and when I took a better look, I saw a gorgeous woman, wearing an elegant red dress with shimmering, silky, auburn hair and emerald, green eyes that shined under the illuminating lights.

Though everyone's attention was focused on her, her attention was focused on the person beside her.

My heart fell into my stomach when I saw that it was Elliot.

"Who is that?" I found myself asking, my voice set in a hard whisper.

"You're married to my uncle, and you have no idea who Shirley is?" Gavin asked, pretending to be shocked.

"Don't be a jerk, Gavin. Just tell me who she is," I demanded, completely forgetting about my plans of escape.

"That's Shirly Darknight. She's the Alpha of the Darknight pack," Gavin explained.

Recognition slammed into me; I had heard about Shirly Darknight. She was the only female Alpha in the world and extremely powerful. She was also incredibly famous in the werewolf community. "She's Elliot's childhood friend," Gavin continued. "Everybody knows she's been pursuing him for years. Rumor has it, she killed her own fated mate so she could be with Elliot."

My heart fell deep into my stomach.

But Gavin's next words left me feeling paralyzed.

"Shirly was the one who was supposed to marry my uncle. She was supposed to be my aunt."

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I stared at Shirly as she continued to dazzle the room. Everybody practically fell to her feet from her charm, and I felt physically ill. Her eyes found Gavin's and she smiled adoringly as she made her way over to us, Elliot on her heel.

"Gavin, it's lovely to see you again," Shirly said, kissing each of his cheeks before her eyes found mine. "Is this your girlfriend?"

Elliot's features darkened at her question, and I couldn't bring myself to look away from him. Shirley was standing so close to him like they were one unit. My heart was thrumming violently in my chest. My eyes burned with unshed tears.

Gavin laughed.

"No, Shirley. You have the wrong idea," he said, waving his hands dismissively. "Do you really think I would end up with someone like her?"

Shirley examined me carefully and I finally pulled my eyes away from Elliot to look at her. She was stunning up close and my heart ached with each passing moment.

"Oh, I see," Shirley said, her eyes narrowing. "You are wolfless. I shouldn't have thought so much. It's impossible for someone like you to be part of the Alpha's family. My apologies, Gavin."

I pressed my lips in a thin line as I glared at Elliot who remained by Shirley's side as if she didn't just insult me.

"It seems your habits need reshaping, Alpha," I spat the word 'Alpha' like it was a bad taste on my tongue.

My blatant disrespect caused Shirley and some others around us to gasp.

"Such a rude mouth you have, girl," Shirley said, her eyes shining as her inner wolf came to the surface. I knew that her wolf was strong enough to tear me apart in a heartbeat and speaking anymore would sentence my death. "Do you have any idea who I am? How dare you speak to me like that."

"Shirley, I apologize on her behalf. This is my wife Silver," Elliot quickly stated, motioning his hands toward me.

Shirley's eyes grew large as she snapped a look at Elliot.

"You got married?!" She gasped. "To a wolfless girl? Have you lost your mind??"

Whispers erupted around us, and my face grew hot with embarrassment. It felt like I was standing on pins and needles.

"An Alpha of your status has no business with someone like her. Do you honestly think she would make a proper Luna to your pack?"

Her voice was loud enough for everyone to hear and now I was noticing everyone's eyes fixed on me, judging every move I made.

Elliot took hold of Shirley's arm, which was like a punch in the gut.

"This isn't the time or place to discuss this," Elliot said, trying to keep his voice under control. He looked at me and something unfamiliar flashed through his eyes. I couldn't tell what it was, but my stomach twisted in a knot. I wanted the ground to open and swallow me whole. "We have other business matters to discuss. If you'll excuse us," he continued before he pulled Shirley away from the growing crowd. Everyone was still silent; their scrutiny still fixed on me.

"Well, that went better than I expected," Gavin chuckled before he wandered away.

I swallowed the lump in my throat, feeling the tears burning in my eyes. I wasn't going to allow myself to cry here though; I wouldn't let the pack see me like this.

I didn't stick around much longer; I turned on my heel and quickly rushed inside. Only then, did I allow the tears that desperately wanted to escape to be released from my eyes. I wiped my eyes, hoping my makeup wasn't ruined by the time I got into the bathroom.

The packhouse had bathrooms with multiple stalls, so I closed myself in one of them and let myself cry. I felt betrayed by my own husband; how dare he flaunt Shirley in front of me like that. How dare he invite her to an event meant to introduce me.

I knew she was an Alpha, but what gave her the right to speak to me in that way? I might be wolfless, but I was still Elliot's wife, regardless of the circumstances.

My heart ached at the memory of them standing close to one another as if they were one unit. Then when Elliot grabbed her arm and pulled her away, it felt like he took a piece of my heart with him.

What was wrong with me? I shouldn't be feeling this upset. I knew what this marriage was from the beginning. Nothing in the contract stated that he needed to remain faithful to me. But I assumed he would.