

Claimed By The Rival Alpha c 21-30

The gym smelled sharp with iron, leather, and the faint tang of sweat.

Draven's knuckles collided again with the punching bag, reverberating across the room. Each strike precise, brutal, controlled, but his eyes betrayed a storm beneath the surface.

Ryker stepped in, boots silent on polished hardwood. "There are more," he said, voice low, cautious, weighed with dread.

Draven paused mid-strike, letting the bag swing back. His jaw tightened, dark eyes narrowing. "How many?" His tone was measured, but the tension curled like a whip in the air.

"Eight this time," Ryker answered, steady but heavy. "A mix of women and younglings."

Draven's fist slammed the wall. Wood cracked slightly beneath his power. Silence stretched, charged and deep. He didn't speak.

"They've been taking them for a while," Ryker continued, careful. "I don't know why, but—"

Whoever is behind this, it's not just holding them hostage. I have a bad feeling—"

"Not a bad feeling," Draven interrupted, stepping closer. His presence filled the gym, shadowing Ryker. "A fact. They are being slaughtered. Hidden species are involved, but which one? That I do not yet know."

"They want to shorten the breed," Draven said finally, voice low, sharp. "Extinction is the goal. Not ransom. Not bargaining. Wolves are being targeted."

Ryker pursed his lips. "Old records? History books? Maybe we can find patterns—"

"No time," Draven snapped. "Call Soren. Now. We need a meeting. You, me, and her. Immediately."

Ryker hesitated, knowing Soren's manipulative streak, but Draven's glare was enough to halt all questions. "Understood," he said, voice low. "She doesn't like me."

"I don't care," Draven replied, fists unclenching but tension still coiling like a predator ready to strike. "Empire waits for no one. Neither do enemies. Move."

Ryker bowed slightly and left, every step echoing ominously. Draven turned back to the bag, hitting it again, each strike punctuating the storm brewing inside him.

Later, the balcony of Kaelen's room glimmered under the soft moonlight. Four figures lounged casually, laughter spilling into the night, drinks in hand.

Ravik leaned forward, smirking. "I saw Loki all over that new boy yesterday. Seriously, right in front of everyone."

Veyron raised an eyebrow, arms crossed. "That's her job, isn't it? Principal literally told her to show him around. She was doing her duty."

Eryndra tilted her head, lips pursed. "Duty? That was flirting. Don't even try to defend her, Veyron."

Veyron shrugged, eyes flicking between the two. "I'm just stating facts. Not defending. Observing."

Ravik snorted. "Always defending her, huh, Veyron? Admit it—you like her. You're soft."

Veyron's lips twisted into a half-smile. "Soft? Ha. You're imagining things, Ravik."

Ravik grinned, nudging Eryndra. "See? He's soft. Deny it all you want."

Kaelen stayed silent, gaze fixed on the stars, jaw tight. His friends noticed, exchanging quick glances.

"Hey, Kaelen," Ravik said finally, leaning back. "Why are you staring at the sky? There's no full moon tonight. None. So... what's up?"

Kaelen's shoulders tensed. "Something feels off." he murmured, voice barely audible. "Something is weird."

Veyron waved him off. "Too much wine, man. That's your problem."

Eryndra giggled. "Stop being dramatic. You're staring at clouds like a romance novel hero."

Kaelen said nothing, letting the words pass. His dark gaze remained locked on the stars.

Ravik nudged him again. "Seriously, Kaelen, something's going on. You're too quiet. Too tense. It's freaking me out a little."

Kaelen finally turned his head, eyes cold, controlled. "I don't know yet. But I will know soon enough."

he loosened up and joined them

The teasing started again, the way it always did.

"I still can't believe Loki does this," Ravik said, taking a sip of his drink. "She knows exactly what she's doing. The way she talks to him—he's practically melting in her presence."

Veyron snorted. "You mean the new boy? He's lucky she even bothers to glance at him."

Eryndra laughed, swiping hair from her face. "Oh, come on! You two are such nerds sometimes. She's popular. It's her job to drive everyone insane."

Ravik smirked. "Veyron, admit it. You're jealous."

Veyron crossed his arms again, mock scowl. "Jealous? Hardly. I just... appreciate balance. That's all."

Eryndra elbowed Veyron playfully. "Yeah, right. You're totally soft for her."

Kaelen leaned forward, finally joining the conversation. "Loki is beautiful. She has attitude. Fire. That's what I like. Someone with character. Not... predictable, obedient."

Veyron's eyes flicked to him. "Ah. So you finally talk. About her?"

Kaelen nodded. "Exactly. She has personality, presence. Melakini... she does what she's told, exactly. Submissive. Obedient. Always following."

Eryndra smirked. "So she's your little puppy?"

Kaelen's lips curved faintly. "A little too eager. Always wants to learn tricks. Never has her own ideas. Unlike Loki, she's... pliable."

Ravik laughed, leaning back. "Sounds like a golden retriever. Adorable, but not interesting in battle."

Veyron snorted. "Battle? Kaelen, it's not war. It's high school... well, college. Social war, maybe."

Eryndra leaned in, whispering with a smirk. "So he likes fire, personality, and sass. Got it. Melakini is out of the game."

Kaelen's gaze stayed on the horizon, dark and distant. "Exactly. Obedience isn't attractive. Not to me. Fire is what matters. Life. Attitude."

The conversation shifted to gossip, teasing, laughs spilling over, until a soft step interrupted them.

"Master Kaelen," the servant said, voice firm but respectful. "You are requested in the council room. Your parents... it's urgent."

Kaelen's brow furrowed. "I'll be there shortly." His voice was calm, but deliberate, edged with the tension that had been coiling inside him all night.

"You all should head home," he added, voice low, controlled.

The friends exchanged quick glances, curiosity and unease dancing in their eyes.

Kaelen descended the stairs, each step deliberate, silent except for the faint scrape of polished floors. The air felt heavier. Charged. Something lurked, subtle but undeniable.

His pulse ticked faster as he approached the council room. Questions rippled in his mind—what did they need him for? Had he done something wrong? Or was it something else entirely?

He pushed the thought aside as he reached the hall, noting the shift in air, the subtle, almost imperceptible chill. Something was coming. And this time, it wasn't just intuition.

Every instinct in his body screamed at him—tonight, nothing would remain the same.

Kaelen paused at the council room door, hand hovering over the handle. The quiet was oppressive.

Even the stars seemed dim... He knew, without seeing, that every eye that mattered would be watching him, every decision scrutinized.

The first knock came from within, soft but deliberate.

"Enter," a voice called. Calm, controlled, yet edged with authority.

Kaelen's hand tightened around the doorframe. He stepped in, fully aware that tonight, the world as he knew it was about to shift.

And somewhere, unseen, eight figures waited in shadow, women and younglings taken, vanished from the world. A predator unseen, manipulating, eliminating, setting the stage for the storm that was coming.

Kaelen's pulse quickened. The wind outside howled, the night deepened, and the moonlight fell unevenly across the marble floors. Something was very wrong. Something unavoidable.

He took a deep breath, and stepped fully inside.

Malekini dipped her brush into the worn, fading paint, her fingers trembling slightly as she tried to bring the image of the palace to life on the canvas. The strokes felt heavy, her hand unsteady, and she muttered under her breath. "This brush is ruined. I'll never finish it like this."

From the doorway, her younger sister leaned lazily against the frame, smirking. "Oh, come on, Malekini. Your brush looks ancient. You're running out of paint anyway. Why not just admit it? The kingdom would look better in real life than on your silly canvas."

"It's not about making i look perfect," Malekini said sharply, trying to keep her voice steady. "It's about capturing something real. Something... meaningful."

Her sister rolled her eyes. "Meaningful? Please.

Malekini's chest tightened, and she sighed, grabbing her bag. "I just... I need more paint. That's all."

"It's not too late," her sister called cheerfully, her voice teasing. "Go get what you need. Just... be careful."

Malekini nodded, ignoring the underlying mischief in her sister's tone, and slipped out of the house.

She passed the bushy, overgrown paths leading from their home, the tall shadows of trees and thick foliage creating narrow corridors of dark green.

Every crunch of a leaf beneath her foot made her heart pound a little faster. There was a feeling, a prickling at the back of her neck, that she was being watched. Someone was following her.

She couldn't see anyone, but the hairs on her arms rose anyway.

She quickened her pace, painting supplies clutched tightly to her chest. The forest seemed to lean closer around her, swallowing the path behind and ahead alike.

Then, suddenly, a figure darted out from the shadows, and she stumbled, tripping over a protruding root.

She gasped, her art supplies clattering across the ground. Pain shot through her ankle and her palms scraped against the rough bark.

Draven felt it immediately. A sharp tug of fear, unease, and pain—not his own, but hers. Wolves in love, the old legends said, could sense such things, could feel the trembling of their soon to be mate's soul, the prickling of dread. He recognized it, felt it, and his chest tightened with protective instinct.

"Ryken! Kaelen!" he called, his voice low and commanding. "Something's wrong! someone's in danger!"

The two wolves transformed instantly, Ryken leaping through the underbrush in his wolf form, Kaelen following close behind.

Draven pushed forward with a grace and speed that seemed almost unnatural, his eyes fixed on where her aura was emanating from. Her wondering mind, terrified heart, the way she was gasping for air—it all drove him forward like an unrelenting force.

He reached her just as the stranger lunged a projectile attack, a blur moving with impossible speed. Malekini let out a startled scream, and Draven swept her into his arms, taking the hit but holding her close.

His warmth, the steady beat of his chest, the intensity of his gaze—it enveloped her, calmed her, made her feel safe for the first time in those terrifying moments.

She noticed the scratches forming on his back from the arrows and shivered. "Are you—are you okay?" she asked, panic lacing her voice.

"I'm fine," Draven said, though his teeth gritted. "But you—stay close. You're not leaving my side." His hands caressed her back, checking her over for injuries, brushing stray strands of hair from her face, his touch gentle but possessive.

"Go! Hide!" he snapped suddenly, when eight more figures emerged turning toward the group of attackers.

The Eight figures, moving with blinding speed, their motions graceful, almost inhuman. Malekini hid behind a thick trunk, peeking out as Draven intercepted the first assailant, blocking a projectile arrow with his own body. A sharp pain blossomed in his back, but he barely flinched.

The battle surged around them. Ryken and Kaelen were dealing with the others, but Draven focused on protecting her, each movement fluid, precise, lethal.

Two projectiles remained, casting dangerous spells from afar, arrows whistling toward Malekini's hiding spot.

Draven turned, his back taking the brunt of a shot meant for her, blood seeping through the fabric he had tied around his torso. He didn't flinch, didn't falter, only pressed closer to her, whispering, "You're safe ok?, breathe."

Malekini's hands trembled as she touched his shoulder. "Draven! You're bleeding so much!"

He smiled, faintly, brushing her fingers away gently. " Stop worrying. Just... get behind me!." He turned back to the attackers, anger flaring as his wolf instincts and love for her combined into a storm of power.

He took down the remaining assailants with brutal efficiency. Finally, the last two, realizing they were outmatched, retreated, disappearing into the shadows.

Panting, Draven held her close again, brushing back her hair, his forehead resting against hers. "I won't let anything happen to you," he murmured, voice husky. "Ever."

Malekini buried her face against his chest, feeling his warmth, the steady strength of him. "I... I thought I hurt you," she whispered.

"You'll never hurt me," he said firmly. "I trust you"

"No, I should have stayed in, I caused this" she said sobbing.

"You shouldn't have gone out tonight," he said to her, voice low and urgent, as he tore a piece of his clothing to press against the wound.

"This rule... it's meant to protect you. You could have been—" He stopped, swallowing the fear and anger he felt. He couldn't let her see how much it hurt him that she was in danger.

"I had to," Malekini said, her voice soft but stubborn. "I needed the paint. You think I care about rules when it's about my art? About—my work?"

Draven's eyes softened, and his hands lingered a little longer on her arms. "I just... I hate seeing you hurt. You're more important to me than any rule, as my subject"

She swallowed hard, heart hammering as he leaned closer, brushing a lock of hair behind her ear. "You're reckless," she whispered.

"And you're... stubborn," he countered, his gaze locking with hers, full of raw emotion. "But it suits you."

When Ryken arrived, Draven handed her over. "Take her to my private mansion," he ordered. "Keep her safe. I'll be there shortly."

Inside the mansion, Malekini was guided to a room where she could rest. Meanwhile, was redirecting guards to new posts and setting up new defences.

While speaking with Ryken about securing the North entrance he said "I need our best out here, we can't afford anymore talking"

"Yes yes I'll handle it" Ryken replied urgently.

"your badly injured you should fo home I'll take it from here" he added

Draven wanted to see Malekinis so he reluctantly agreed

Draven went straight to the healing pool, after making sure she was asleep.

Removing his soaked, bloodied clothing and slipping into the warm, restorative water. The wounds on his back burned, but the water's magic began knitting the flesh slowly.

Malekini, unable to stay asleep, quietly entered, hesitating as she saw him. "Let me help," she said softly. He didn't avert his eyes, only gave a small nod, allowing her to approach.

Dipping her hands into the water and gently cleaning the wounds.

Draven closed his eyes, letting her touch soothe him, even as the burn of his injuries reminded him of the fight. "You shouldn't have come," he murmured.

"I had to," she whispered. "I couldn't just leave things unfinished."

His hands moved to cup her face, thumb brushing her cheek softly. "You're not intelligent," he said simply.

"I don't care about laws, rules, or anyone else. You're my subject. And I will protect you. Always." he said trying to be formal

Malekini's breath hitched as her lips met his, soft at first, then insistent.

Her arms went around his neck, drawing him closer, pressing against him, her heartbeat hammering in time with his. Every worry, every fear, every tension melted away in that moment.

They stayed like that, wrapped in each other's arms in the warm, healing water. His fingers traced the lines of her shoulders, her back, holding her with a tenderness that belied his strength. She whispered, "You're so gentle..."

Draven smiled against her lips. "Gentle?, I prefer careful."

They talked softly for hours, voices barely above whispers, sharing fragments of feelings, unspoken thoughts, and confessions.

She told him about her art, about her frustrations, about her desire to be free.

He listened, holding her, caressing her feeding his long awaited desires, letting her words sink in, promising silently to shield her from the world's cruelty.

The night stretched on, heavy with unspoken emotion, adrenaline from the fight still lingering.

And as dawn crept near, Malekini finally rested against him, warm and safe, the first hints of trust and something deeper blossoming between them.

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Kael

The four assassins knelt in a row before me as chains bound their wrists behind their backs.

Their ankles were shackled to iron rings bolted into the dungeon floor as blood stained their clothes, bruises covered their faces and yet none of them looked broken.

That irritated me even more.

The dungeon was silent except for the occasional crackle of torches mounted along the walls.

I stood before them with my hands behind my back while Beta Bastien remained beside me.

The Captain of the Guards stood a few steps away as all three of us stared at the prisoners while the prisoners stared right back in defiance, looking unafraid or pretending to be.

I tilted my head. "One last chance." I sighed. "You know, I always find this part disappointing."

One assassin spat blood onto the floor as another smirked while the third simply stared and the fourth kept his eyes shut.

Beta Bastien folded his arms. "They've been like this since capture."

"I noticed." I walked slowly before them as my boots echoed through the dungeon. "You infiltrated Blackbourne Castle, you crossed my borders, you attacked my people."

I stopped directly before the nearest man. "You entered my home."

The assassin smiled as the smile alone made me want to break his jaw but instead, I smiled back a much colder smile.

"Captain." The guard captain immediately stepped forward.

"Alpha."

"Begin." I said and the captain nodded. Almost immediately, several guards entered carrying equipment. Some carried metal hooks, chains, wolfsbane whips and knives.

Tools designed specifically to make people regret their life choices.

The guards got to work as the first scream came less than five minutes later. Then another and another.

Hours passed and the dungeon became filled with the scent of blood, sweat and pain but yet none of them spoke a word.

Not even when wolfsbane touched their skin, not even when their flesh blistered and I found that impressive, annoying yet still impressive.

Beta Bastien looked increasingly frustrated while The captain looked exhausted.

I simply observed and kept studying the Assassins. Eventually I crouched before the oldest-looking assassin as his face was covered in bruises.

One eye had swollen shut still he grinned making me chuckle. "You know what fascinates me?" His grin widened. "You."

I pointed at his brown hair then his eyes were brown as well which wasn't uncommon but combined with his features?

"You're not from Vargwyn." His grin faltered. "There it is." I smirked as Beta Bastien glanced toward me.

I continued. "Your accent is faint." I tapped the side of my head. "But it's there."

The assassin's jaw tightened while I smiled. "You assassins are definitely from Ravenspire." His eyes flickered while I proceeded. "Or perhaps Velmora Region."

This time all four assassins reacted only slightly but it was enough for me.

My smile widened as Beta Bastien noticed immediately and asked. "So that's it."

I rose to my feet. "Both regions share bloodlines." I began pacing. "They've got similar features, similar accents and similar customs."

I stopped before them again. "But the Velmora region has something Ravenspire lacks." I chuckled before saying. "Reputation."

I nodded slowly with a slight confirmation. "They are definitely from one pack in the Velmora region."

The captain looked impressed as Beta Bastien looked thoughtful while the assassins looked irritated.

I enjoyed that a lot.

"You've already lost." One of them laughed.

I actually laughed as the sound echoed through the dungeon. I stared at him. "You think so?"

The assassin nodded with his lips bleeding. "You know nothing."

I leaned closer. "No." My voice dropped. "I know enough."

The laughter stopped as I continued. "I know where you're from, I know your training, I know your methods, I know how you entered, I know how you tracked your target."

The man's eyes narrowed then I delivered the final blow. "And I know you're terrible assassins."

That got a reaction as All four of them glared at me.

I smiled and continued. "You were tracked, you were trapped and you failed as an assassin."

One assassin growled as I added. "If you wanted to kill someone, perhaps try succeeding next time."

The chains rattled violently while Beta Bastien coughed to hide a laugh and the captain outright smirked.

The assassin looked ready to bite someone. Angry people made mistakes.

I folded my arms and questioned. "Who sent you? Alpha William?"

I got no answer but still, I already suspected Alpha William. Unfortunately, suspicion wasn't proof and I wanted proof.

I looked toward Beta Bastien. "Beta Bastien." I called and he immediately understood that tone.

The dangerous one, the one that usually preceded regrettable decisions.

Beta Bastien's eyes narrowed as he asked. "What are you thinking?"

"The Pit." The dungeon suddenly became silent as even the guards froze and the captain looked alarmed.

Beta Bastien sighed. "Alpha Kael, they might not survive."

I shrugged my shoulders, "Then they should talk."

Beta Bastien rubbed his forehead as I could almost hear him questioning why fate had cursed him with me.

Unfortunately for him, I remained unmoved. "Take them to the pit."

The captain swallowed, then nodded. "I'll prepare it."

Within minutes the dungeon became a flurry of activity as the assassins were dragged to another deeper and darker chamber.

A place most prisoners never forgot or survived. At the center stood a massive iron structure large enough to resemble a bathing tub.

Only nobody bathed in it because instead of water... It held fire.

Guards began dumping bundles of wolfsbane into the structure. The pungent scent immediately filled the room and I felt it immediately.

More wolfsbane followed as the fire ignited and green flames burst upward as several guards instinctively stepped backward.

The heat alone was intense and the smell was worse.

Beta Bastien stopped beside me. "This is excessive."

"That's why it works." I said with a nonchalant smile.

The captain approached. "Alpha." I glanced at him. "Only a handful have survived this and they could die."

I met his gaze. "I know."

The captain looked uncomfortable but finally kept his mouth shut.

The first prisoner was dragged forward as an idea occurred to me. A much better one and I quickly raised my hand. "Wait."

Everyone stopped as the guards looked confused.

Beta Bastien looked suspicious. "What now?"

I smiled. "Put all four in at once." The entire room fell silent.

One finally shouted. "You can't do that!" I smiled wider without saying a word.

The guards stripped them of their outer clothing as the men struggled, cursed, threatened and promised revenge.

Moments later all four stood beside the Pit as the wolfsbane flames crackled hungrily and the heat distorted the air itself.

I inhaled once then stepped back. "Do it." And the guards obeyed immediately.

The four assassins struggled the moment they realized what was about to happen. For the first time since their capture, genuine fear appeared on their faces.

One of them pulled violently against his restraints. "You can't do this!"

I smiled. "I already am."

Another spat in my direction. "You bastard!"

"That isn't new information." I grinned at him as the guards dragged them closer to the Pit and the green wolfsbane flames crackled hungrily, while the heat rolled through the chamber in suffocating waves.

The smell alone was enough to weaken most werewolves. Even standing several feet away, I could feel its effects trying to crawl beneath my skin.

Beta Bastien stepped back immediately as the Captain followed. Neither of them looked eager to remain inside.

Unfortunately, I needed answers and answers often required discomfort.

I watched all of them without sympathy because they had entered my home, attacked my people, and attempted to take Selena and mercy was not high on my list of priorities.

"Put them in." The guards obeyed and one by one, the assassins were lowered into the Pit.

The moment their skin came close to the burning wolfsbane, screams erupted throughout the dungeon.

The sound was horrific, raw and animalistic. The type of scream that clawed at a person's nerves.

I remained where I was as the heat blasted against my face, the wolfsbane fumes filled my lungs, pain prickled beneath my skin and still, I didn't move.

I simply held my breath and watched as the assassins thrashed violently, their chains rattled while their skin reddened almost instantly.

One of them screamed so loudly that several guards looked away. Another vomited from the pain yet none of them was ready to speak.

I stepped closer as the first assassin lifted his head with his face drenched in sweat, his eyes were bloodshot and I crouched beside the Pit. "What rank are you?"

His response was another scream but I waited and asked again. "What rank?"

There was no answer. Only screams of agony.

I moved to the second man. "What rank are you?" I still got nothing. The third and the fourth still gave me nothing.

I was beginning to think they truly intended to die. Then suddenly, one of them threw his head back as a roar exploded from his throat.

The sound slammed into the dungeon walls as Dust fell from the ceiling and Several guards staggered backward.

I froze as my wolf immediately reacted with recognition.

The roaring continued as the dungeon shook then understanding struck me. The realization settled heavily inside my mind as I turned and walked away from the Pit.

Beta Bastien frowned the moment he saw me outside. "What is it?" He asked.

I looked at him and said, "They're Alphas."

The Captain blinked in surprise while Beta Bastien stared in shock. "What?"

"They're Alphas!" His eyebrows nearly disappeared into his hairline.

"That's impossible."

I shrugged. "Apparently not."

Beta Bastien glanced toward the burning men inside. "Why would Alphas become assassins?"

That was an excellent question. One I didn't have the answer to yet.

I folded my arms as the implications alone were disturbing. Alpha bloodlines, Alpha heirs risking their lives on a mission that should have been beneath them.

Nothing about this made sense.

The roaring assassin finally collapsed back into the Pit as his strength seemed spent. The others looked close to death as well.

I have learned enough for now. "Put the flames out." I ordered and the guards hurried to obey but before they could put off the fire, one of the assassins screamed that he was ready to speak the truth.

I walked back inside, the assassin was pulled out of the pit and he collapsed against the metal sides barely conscious and barely breathing.

The assassin struggled to lift his head as his lips trembled and his entire body shook. "I'll... speak..."

I crouched before him. "Go ahead."

His burned fingers clawed weakly against the stone then he finally spoke. "I'm... from Redgrave Pack in the Velmora region."

Just as I'd suspected.

The assassin continued as his voice sounded broken. "I am... the Alpha's son..."

The assassin pointed weakly toward the others. "They are too..." He swallowed painfully. "The sons... of neighboring Alphas..."

Silence swept through the dungeon as even the guards stopped moving. For a moment, nobody spoke because the revelation made absolutely no sense.

Alpha heirs, future rulers acting as assassins and risking death inside enemy territory.

Beta Bastien slowly turned toward me and I looked back at him as neither of us had an explanation.

We shared a perturbed look.

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Selena

The moment I stepped back into our chamber, both Marquee and Sally shot to their feet. They looked like they had been waiting for me for hours.

Marquee reached me first. "Oh, thank the Moon Goddess!"

She threw her arms around me so suddenly that I almost stumbled backward.

"Do you know how worried I was?" she demanded, pulling away to inspect my face. "What happened? Where did they take you? Are you hurt?"

Before I could answer, Sally's sharp voice cut through the room. "She's lying."

The room fell silent then Marquee frowned and asked, "What do you mean by that?"

Sally folded her arms as her eyes were fixed on me suspiciously.

"She's not who she claims to be." Sally said and I stiffened in shock.

Marquee blinked in surprise. "What are you talking about?"

Sally ignored her as her gaze remained on me. "No ordinary servant gets this much attention from Alpha Kael."

My heart skipped as I forced myself to remain calm then muttered. "You're imagining things."

"No." Sally shook her head. "I'm not imagining anything."

She stepped closer then continued, "When Grengy attacked you, the entire castle practically turned upside down."

I said nothing as I just watched her. "When the assassins arrived, you practically disappeared."

Still I remained silent.

"And somehow," Sally continued, narrowing her eyes, "the Alpha himself became involved."

Marquee looked between us. "Sally..."

"No, think about it." Sally pointed at me. "Who is she really? Something just doesn't seem right."

I laughed lightly before speaking. "I think you've been listening to gossip."

Sally wasn't convinced. Not even slightly as her frown only deepened.

Fortunately, Marquee grabbed my wrist. "I don't care who she is." She looked at me anxiously. "I just want to know if she's okay."

The sincerity in her voice softened something inside me. After everything, Marquee remained exactly the same.

She was still kind, loyal and concerned about me.

I smiled and I told her, "I'm okay."

"What happened?" She asked.

I carefully chose my words. "I escaped from Grengy." That part was true.

"Then while everything was happening, the assassins attacked the castle."

Marquee gasped. "And then?"

"I hid somewhere." I lied smoothly.

Sally snorted conveniently but I ignored her.

Marquee sat beside me on the bed asking, "But why would Grengy target you in the first place?"

I sighed. "I really don't know." That was partially true because I still didn't understand how the servant's hatred had become murderous.

Marquee shook her head. "You were already punished by the headmistress."

"Exactly."

"So why wasn't he satisfied?" She asked but I had no answer.

Slowly, I reached into my belongings and pulled out my father's cloak.

The familiar material slid through my fingers and immediately memories flooded back.

The training grounds, castle gardens, the long rides through Nightbane territory, the evenings spent discussing pack history, the lessons about leadership, the lessons about strength and the lessons about sacrifice.

A painful ache settled in my chest. What did Father think now? Did he believe his assassins had found me? Did he think they were already taking me home?

The word home no longer felt simple because Nightbane was still my home yet I couldn't return there. At least not while he intended to hand me over to the vampires.

No matter how much I missed him, no matter how much I missed the father who taught me how to ride, how to hunt and how to lead, I still couldn't go back anymore.

That night, sleep came slowly as my thoughts kept returning to Alpha Kael and to the moment he suddenly appeared.

I rolled onto my side with different thoughts. How had he known? How had he known someone was breaking into the armory?

The answer came almost immediately. 'The mate bond.'

The realization made my stomach twist and I buried my face into the pillow.

About the mate bond, I still wasn't sure how I felt about it and eventually exhaustion won.

The next morning passed in a blur. I didn't get the opportunity to confront Alpha Kael.

Instead, every available servant was ordered to assist with repairs because the guest wing had suffered significant damage during the attack.

By noon, I was exhausted, covered in dust, hungry, sweaty and increasingly irritated. I was helping move a pile of stones when Beta Bastien appeared.

Immediately several servants straightened and I noticed Sally watching me suspiciously

Beta Bastien approached me before saying in a low voice, "The Alpha wants you informed about the findings concerning the assassins."

My heart immediately quickened. "What did they say?"

"You'll find out." He said and I quickly handed over the stone I was carrying to someone else.

I saw Sally's eyes narrowed but I pretended not to notice. Together, Beta Bastien and I headed toward the dungeons.

The deeper we went underground, the colder the air became. Then I saw Grengy occupying one of the cells. He was bruised, looking dirty and miserable.

For once, he wasn't smirking as his eyes followed me silently as we eventually continued onward.

A few corridors later, I saw the assassins and I stopped to stare at them on seeing they were extremely young.

They were far younger than I expected and were roughly my age or maybe a few years older. Certainly not hardened killers in their forties.

My surprise must have shown because Beta Bastien smirked. "Are you surprised?"

"A little." I couldn't deny it.

One of the assassins glared at me, another looked away while the remaining two simply watched.

Beta Bastien folded his arms. "They're from the Velmora Region."

I stared in surprise, "What?"

His expression remained serious. "Specifically Redgrave, Blackridge, and Ashmount."

I blinked as those names were powerful. The realization left me speechless.

Beta Bastien studied me carefully. "Does your father have any special alliances with those packs?"

I frowned. "Everyone knows my Father has influence."

"Influence is one thing." Beta Bastien shook his head. "This is another."

I remained silent as Beta Bastien continued. "Sending warriors is normal."

He pointed toward the prisoners. "But sending Alpha sons across the realm for an assassination mission is not."

That made sense as even I knew it.

I glanced at the captives. "What if my Father forced them somehow?"

Beta Bastien laughed. "Alpha William is influential." His expression hardened. "But these Alphas are powerful in their own right."

I slowly nodded as the logic was difficult to ignore.

Beta Bastien looked thoughtful. "Our best theory is that their fathers have their own agenda."

My stomach tightened at the thought of it. "Concerning me?" I asked.

"Possibly." The uncomfortable shifting among the prisoners at Beta Bastien words answered the question better than words ever could.

I felt very cold. What could they possibly want from me?

Beta Bastien dismissed the guards and eventually led me away.

As we walked back through the corridors, another thought occurred to me. "What about Grengy?"

Beta Bastien looked over. "What about him?"

"What will happen to him?"

He shrugged. "That depends on Alpha Kael."

I hesitated then quietly said, "Can you ask him to let Grengy live?"

Beta Bastien stopped walking as surprise crossed his face. "After everything he did to you?"

I nodded before saying. "I don't want anyone executed because of me."

For a moment he simply stared then he chuckled. "You're either very kind or very naïve."

"Maybe both." I said and his smile widened.

Before he could answer, his eyes suddenly glazed over and I immediately knew he was mindlinking someone.

A few seconds later, he blinked and said, "The Alpha wants to see you at the rooftop."

The rooftop? Wonderful!

The climb felt endless as the stairs were narrow, steep and dangerously slanted. By the time I reached the top, I was convinced whoever designed them hated visitors.

Then I stepped onto the rooftop and immediately forgot my irritation as the sky stretched endlessly overhead.

It was blue, bright and beautiful. The wind danced across the castle rooftops while the distant mountains stood proudly along the horizon and standing near the edge was Alpha Kael.

His back faced me looking strong and intimidating. For a long moment neither of us spoke and strangely, the silence wasn't uncomfortable.

I simply stood there beside him, taking in the view. Eventually I smiled before saying. "It's beautiful."

"It is." His voice came quietly before the silence returned long enough for my curiosity to awaken.

My eyes drifted toward him then I remembered something. I remembered the painting in his room.

The middle-aged man who looked so much like him. "I saw the painting." I quietly said but he didn't react so I continued carefully. "The man in it, is he your father?"

A long pause followed but I smiled faintly and said again. "You must have loved him very much."

His entire body stiffened. The change was immediate and noticeable.

For several moments he said nothing then finally he spoke. "No."

The answer surprised me. "What?"

His jaw tightened. "I didn't love him."

I stared at him as he looked away. "He hated me." His voice remained flat, cold and detached.

As though discussing someone else's life he continued. "He often beats me like I am his punching bag."

I struggled to imagine it yet the look in his eyes told me he wasn't lying. "Why?" I couldn't help but ask.

His expression darkened but he didn't answer.

I waited and when he still said nothing, I eventually asked another question. "If he hated you... Then why keep his painting in your room?"

For a moment I thought he wouldn't answer as the wind howled around us while his shoulders became rigid.

The silence stretched then suddenly, he faced me, gripped my arms tightly as he bared his teeth at me with his eyes shining bright red.

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Selena

For one terrifying moment, I forgot how to breathe as Alpha Kael's hands were still gripping my arms.

His fingers dug into my skin just enough for me to feel the strength behind them. His eyes glowed an intense crimson, his wolf surfacing dangerously close to the surface and mine answered.

A sharp, unfamiliar sensation rushed through me as my wolf, who had remained mostly quiet ever since I'd discovered Alpha Kael was my mate, suddenly surged awake.

It was not anger or fear... instead, It was something else. It was something primal and possessive.

My pulse thundered as my entire body heated. Then a shocking urge slammed into me to mark him.

The thought came from nowhere or perhaps not nowhere. Perhaps from the wolf hidden deep inside me.

'Mark him! Claim him and make him yours.' The urge was so sudden and powerful that my knees almost buckled beneath me.

Alpha Kael's eyes widened slightly as apparently he must have felt it too.

For one brief moment, neither of us moved, then the feeling vanished as abruptly as it had arrived.

Alpha Kael immediately released me and stepped backward as though I'd caught fire.

I stumbled too as both of us were breathing heavily. Neither of us said anything.

The wind swept across the rooftop, carrying silence between us and finally, I swallowed and asked. "What was that?"

Alpha Kael rubbed a hand across his face. "Our wolves."

"My wolf has never done that before."

His jaw tightened. "Mine has."

That made me blink. "What do you mean?"

He exhaled slowly. "Because we've both refused to complete the mate bond."

I stared at him. "And?"

"And our wolves aren't happy about it."

I folded my arms. "That's ridiculous."

"It isn't." His expression remained serious. "When mates reject the instinct to claim one another, sometimes the wolves become impatient."

I frowned. "Impatient?"

"Yes and they try to force what they want."

My cheeks immediately warmed. "So my wolf wanted to..." I couldn't even finish the sentence.

Alpha Kael's lips twitched. "Yes."

"Oh." I said as awkward silence followed. I suddenly became fascinated with a random chimney on the far side of the rooftop.

Alpha Kael seemed equally interested in the clouds as several seconds passed then we both spoke simultaneously.

"You—"

"You—"

We stopped and I sighed before saying. "You go first."

"No." He said firmly, making me roll my eyes.

"You are impossible." I said with a scoff.

"So I've been told." He said and a laugh escaped me before I could stop it.

To my surprise, a small smile appeared on his face then it disappeared quickly but I'd seen it and somehow that made me smile even more.

Alpha Kael cleared his throat. "I'll make this simple... I won't claim you."

The words surprised me as he looked directly at me and continued. "Not if you don't want it."

For a second, I wasn't sure what to say then I nodded. "Good."

One of his brows lifted. "Good?"

"Yes."

His eyes narrowed suspiciously. "You're agreeing too quickly."

I shrugged before saying. "It would complicate things."

"It would." He agreed.

"I have enough problems already."

"So do I." He said and we stared at each other without saying anything else.

The tension eased slightly enough for me to breathe again. Enough for me to remember the far more important problem.

"I still don't understand." I started,

Alpha Kael leaned against the stone railing. "Understand what?"

"Why those men came for me." His expression darkened immediately as I continued. "They weren't ordinary assassins. They were Alpha sons!"

"Yes."

I shook my head. "That makes no sense."

Alpha Kael folded his arms. "People do strange things when there's something valuable to gain."

"Valuable? What do you mean?" I wanted to know more.

His gaze settled on me. "You are valuable."

I snorted. "I'm not valuable."

"You are currently the most talked about missing person in the realm."

That wasn't exactly comforting as Alpha Kael continued. "Your disappearance has become a political crisis."

I groaned. "I hate politics."

"Unfortunately politics seems to like you." I glared at him but he looked entirely unbothered.

Then he said, "Think about it, If gold was discovered tomorrow in Thornveil Region, what would happen?"

I blinked. "What?"

"Just answer." He groaned.

"People would rush there." I managed to voice out.

"Why?" He asked again.

"Because gold is valuable." I said and he nodded. "Exactly!"

Then he gestured toward the distant mountains. "Our region produces more wolfsbane than anywhere else."

I frowned. "So?"

"So people want what benefits them." Understanding slowly dawned as my stomach twisted.

"You think they wanted to ransom me."

"It's the most likely explanation." He said and I hated how reasonable that sounded.

I moved toward the edge of the rooftop and the beautiful scenery no longer helped.

Instead, anxiety crept back into my chest. "If my father finds me..." My voice trailed off. "If those Alphas capture me..."

The words began tumbling out before I could stop them. "If my father gets me back, he'll send me to the vampires."

I swallowed. "If the Velmorian Alphas capture me, they'll probably sell me back to him."

My breathing quickened. "Then he'll send me to the vampires anyway."

The memories returned, the horrors I'd heard growing up about the vampires.

"The creatures of the dark don't just kill people." I wrapped my arms around myself. "They take them."

My voice shook. "They keep them." I stared at the ground. "I heard they drink blood until their victims beg for death."

The words poured out faster. "I heard they lock people underground and I also heard they—"

"Selena." Alpha Kael called out, making me stop. His hand settled firmly on my shoulder.

I looked up and saw his expression had changed.

The teasing was gone, the irritation was gone and only seriousness remained. "You are spiraling."

I blinked then realized he was right. I'd been rambling as fear had completely taken over.

Embarrassment flushed through me. "I—"

"You don't need to worry." He said and a humorless laugh escaped me.

"That's easy for you to say." I said.

"It isn't." Something in his tone made me pause as Alpha Kael stepped closer to me.

"I gave you my word." I stared at him as his eyes never left mine. "I will protect you." The words were simple.

There was no grand speech, and no dramatic declaration. It was just certainty and somehow that affected me more than any promise ever had because I believed him completely.

The realization startled me.

Alpha Kael must have noticed because a faint smirk suddenly appeared on his face. "There." He said.

"What?" I asked, taken aback.

"You're thinking again."

I rolled my eyes. "You're unbearable."

"So I've heard." He bragged and that earned another reluctant laugh from me.

For a few moments we simply stood there beneath the sky then Alpha Kael glanced toward the horizon. "When's your next break from your duties?"

"Oh." I thought for a moment. "By dusk."

He nodded. "Good. Meet me at the underground armory."

My brows furrowed. "Why?"

His expression instantly became suspicious. "Do you question everything?"

"Yes."

A slow smile appeared on his face. "I want to show you something."

"What?" I still ask again.

"You'll see."

I narrowed my eyes. "Very helpful."

"I know." He smirked.

"What about the guards?" I asked as I didn't want to be sent away rudely.

"They'll let you through."

"Just like that?" I asked with a creased brow.

"They'll obey my orders." He said and I couldn't help laughing as the confidence in his voice was ridiculous.

Alpha Kael merely smirked, then without another word, he turned and walked away, leaving me standing there smiling like an idiot.

The realization made me groan then I returned to work.

The next few hours passed surprisingly quickly that even the endless cleaning felt lighter.

I worked tirelessly and somehow smiled through all of it.

Marqee eventually noticed as she stopped carrying a basket and stared at me. "What's wrong with you today?"

I blinked in surprise, "What do you mean?"

"You're smiling."

"So?"

"You never smile this much." She said and I immediately stopped smiling.

Marqee snorted. "You are acting suspicious." I ignored her but the truth remained that I was excited.

When the sun finally began sinking below the horizon, I slipped away from the gathering servants quietly.

I followed the same underground route Beta Bastien had used the previous night.

The corridors were dim, cold and silent. The deeper I went, the quieter everything became and ancient paintings of warriors, battles and long forgotten victories covered portions of the stone walls.

The armory guard saw me approaching and without hesitation, he stepped aside.

"Miss." He said and I blinked, then nodded awkwardly. This was definitely Alpha Kael's orders.

The massive doors remained shut as I approached cautiously. The underground passage felt eerie and almost haunted.

Suddenly— A figure appeared from the darkness and I nearly jumped out of my skin.

Alpha Kael's lips twitched. "You scare easily."

"You practically appeared from nowhere." I snapped at him as I rolled my eyes.

Alpha Kael moved toward the armory doors and with a heavy groan, they opened.

My eyes widened on seeing hundreds of weapons, swords, axes, spears, shields... rows upon rows.

Dust covered everything yet surprisingly, none of the weapons were rusted. I stepped inside and was left speechless.

Then Alpha Kael crossed toward a shelf and he pulled out something hidden behind it.

A second door appeared and I froze. "What is that?"

"Come." He said instead and I hesitated as the passage beyond looked suspiciously dark.

Alpha Kael expression softened slightly. "Just trust me."

I stared at him then sighed. "Fine."

The hidden passage eventually opened into a large clearing and my eyes widened again. It felt as though we'd somehow stepped outside the castle walls.

The training ground stretched before us as moonlight flooded the area while the air felt fresh, peaceful and beautiful.

I slowly turned toward him. "What exactly did you want to show me?"

Alpha Kael reached for the edge of his shirt then pulled it off. My brain immediately stopped working as his bare chest gleamed beneath the moonlight.

Heat rushed straight into my face as I quickly looked away. Then I immediately looked back again, unfortunately.

"What are you showing me?" I asked, thanking the moon goddess that I didn't stutter.

His grin widened. "It isn't something I want to show you."

I frowned. "Then what?"

His eyes sparkled with challenge. "It's something I want to see."

I blinked trying to understand what he meant. "I still don't get..."

He folded his shirt aside then looked directly at me. "I want to see the combat skills you claimed to have learned from your pack."

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Selena

I was still staring intently and openly at him without any autumn of shame.

The moonlight poured over Alpha Kael's body as he rolled his shoulders and stretched his arms, completely unaware of the effect he was having on me.

Every movement looked effortless, powerful and dangerous at the same time. It was unfairly attractive.

The bright silver glow from above highlighted every line of muscle across his chest and arms. It made him look almost unreal, like one of those ancient warriors from the stories my father used to tell me when I was younger.

My wolf stirred happily knowing fully well that this handsome looking man was my Mate.

I had the urge to go closer to him and rub my palm all over his chest to feel his abs against my skin, send kisses all over his chest and many hug him so tightly.

I repulse my thoughts almost immediately after snapping from the trance.

'What nonsense was I thinking?' I mumbled to my own hearing and quickly looked away before I did something crazy.

The problem was that looking away didn't help. I could still feel his presence, I could still feel the pull between us.

"Are you planning to stand there all night?" His voice jolted me from my thoughts.

I blinked, taken aback as I asked. "What?"

Alpha Kael raised an eyebrow. "I asked if you're ready."

For some reason, panic seized me and the first thing that came out of my mouth was, "I'm not taking my clothes off."

The silence between us was suddenly more awkward as Alpha Kael stared at me and I stared right back.

Then one corner of his mouth twitched in a mocking way. "I didn't ask you to take off your clothes."

My face immediately heated in embarrassment. "Oh."

"You seem disappointed." He teased and that made me frown.

"I am not!" I immediately became defensive.

His eyebrow rose higher as I groaned internally. 'Why did I always embarrass myself around him?'

Alpha Kael folded his arms. "Can we continue?"

I cleared my throat. "Yes."

"Good." Then he pointed at himself. "Hit me."

I blinked. "That's it?"

"Yeah, That's it."

I narrowed my eyes. "You must be a terrible teacher."

"I'm not your teacher."

That annoyed me for reasons I couldn't explain. "Fine." I snapped and stepped forward then I threw my first punch.

Alpha Kael moved his head slightly and the punch missed the target.

I threw another and still ended up missing. A third, a fourth, a fifth and every single one cut through empty air.

The annoying man wasn't even trying as he barely moved. It was just a slight lean, a small step and a tiny shift of his shoulders he needed to get away from my punches.

That was all it took him and this made my frustration grow with every failed strike.

Finally, Alpha Kael chuckled and the sound immediately irritated me.

"Is that what the warriors captain of your pack taught you?" He mocked me and I stopped.

A slow smile spread across my face before saying, "I was just warming up."

His expression practically screamed disbelief. "Of course you are."

"Oh, you'll see." Without warning, I attacked again with two quick jabs... one aimed high and one aimed low then I jumped as my body twisted in midair as I launched a kick toward his side.

This time it connected and the impact wasn't powerful enough to hurt him but it landed and that was what mattered.

I immediately grinned. For the briefest moment, surprise flashed across Alpha Kael's face but it disappeared almost instantly.

Still, I saw it. "You didn't expect that, right?" I asked with a smirk plastered on my face.

"I did." I tried to lie.

"You absolutely didn't because you practically looked shocked."

"I wasn't shocked."

I laughed. "You were."

Alpha Kael sighed. "I regret bringing you here."

"No, you don't." He looked away and that alone was enough to make me laugh harder.

Unfortunately, my victory didn't last as the moment we resumed, everything changed.

Alpha Kael became serious as his movements sharpened, his attention narrowed and suddenly, nothing worked.

Not my punches, not my kicks, and definitely not my feints. Every attack was blocked or avoided with ridiculous ease.

I attacked from every angle I could think of and he countered all of them.

Minutes passed and my breathing became heavier. Alpha Kael still looked perfectly relaxed and I hated that.

Eventually, he raised a hand. "Enough."

I stopped mostly because I was tired and partly because I knew continuing wouldn't help.

Alpha Kael studied me carefully for several moments, but wasn't saying anything.

Then he nodded once and finally said. "You actually have skill."

My eyes widened as a grin immediately followed. "Was that a compliment?"

"It wasn't." He smoothly lied but I wasn't having it.

"It sounded like one."

"No."

I pointed at him. "You definitely just complimented me."

"I assessed you."

"No, You complimented me."

"I didn't."

"You did." I still argued and his jaw tightened making me laugh and the sound echoed across the training grounds.

Then his expression changed as his eyes narrowed thoughtfully. "Why don't you use your wolf when you fight?"

I frowned slightly before asking. "What do you mean? I do use my wolf."

"No you don't."

Confusion spread through me immediately. "What are you talking about?"

Alpha Kael gestured toward me. "You fight ordinarily like a human."

I blinked, still confused. "I am not human." I folded my arms and asked again. "Do you mean partial shifting of my claws and my fangs coming out?"

"Not that."

I stared at him. "Then what?"

Alpha Kael looked genuinely surprised then he muttered something under his breath.

My eyes narrowed. "Just tell me what that means."

He sighed. "It means you don't know how to do it."

Immediately, irritation flared inside of me. There he went again, looking down on me and mocking me.

Before I could stop myself, I lunged at him but Alpha Kael easily caught my wrist. "Stop."

"I won't!" I snapped at him.

"Listen!" He said and I rolled my eyes still not letting go.

His mouth twitched then he pushed me backwards before saying. "What I'm saying isn't an insult."

Alpha Kael looked toward the sky before speaking again. "It actually makes sense. The fact that nobody taught you."

I hated how confused I felt. "Taught me what?"

"How to fight alongside your wolf." I stared at him and Alpha Kael continued.

"If your father intended to send you away from the beginning, why would he teach you something that would make you harder to control?"

The words hit me like a punch and I froze. This was about my father again? Everything always came back to him.

Alpha Kael's voice softened slightly. "The vampires don't want females who are more wolf than human."

Pain twisted inside my chest and I swallowed hard before saying. "Teach me."

The answer came almost instantly. "No."

I stared at him in shock. "Why won't you?"

"Because I don't want to." He said with a shrug of his shoulders.

"That's your answer?" I asked.

"Yes."

Anger immediately returned. "You just spent the last several minutes telling me everything I don't know."

"Correct."

"Then teach me how to do it." I snapped at him in anger.

"I don't have the time to teach you. I'm a busy person." He said.

I clenched my fists. "You could make time."

"No." He said again and my frustration exploded making me attack him again.

This time with everything I had but still, Alpha Kael blocked every strike.

"Selena, stop." I yelled but I swung again and still got blocked. "You're being stubborn."

"You're being annoying." I retorted and sent another punch, another kick and all was blocked but I kept going as my emotions had completely taken over.

I wasn't even sure why I was angry anymore.

The fact that everyone constantly treated me like I needed protection, everything crashed together.

Alpha Kael caught both my wrists. "Enough."

I twisted free and attacked again then suddenly, the world tilted. One moment I was standing and the next I was on the ground as pain shot through my waist.

Alpha Kael had purposely sent me to the ground.

I sucked in a sharp breath as Alpha Kael immediately stepped forward with his hand extended toward me to help me up. "Get up."

I stared at it and Something bitter rose inside me. "I don't need your help."

His brow furrowed. "Selena..."

I pushed myself up alone as pain flared again at my waist but I ignored it. "I'm tired of this. I'm Tired of everyone treating me like I'm a child."

For once, Alpha Kael looked speechless. I didn't stay long enough to hear his response as I turned and walked away back into the castle.

By the time I reached my chamber, my irritation hadn't faded.

Marquee immediately looked up. "Selena?What happened?"

I said nothing and quietly climbed into bed and pulled the blanket over myself.

My thoughts refused to settle but eventually, my anger cooled.

Maybe Alpha Kael only wanted me protected, maybe that was all this was and maybe he wasn't trying to insult me.

Maybe he genuinely didn't have time. I sighed heavily as my thoughts drifted elsewhere.

The Velmorian Alpha sons... Why had they come for me? What could they possibly want?

The more I thought about it, the more unsettled I became. Eventually, I sat upright.

I want to stop wondering. If nobody would tell me the truth, I would find it myself. The assassins were still alive so I could ask them directly.

Quietly, I slipped out of bed and prepared to leave. Just as I reached the door, someone stepped into my path.

Sally folded her arms and looked straight at me. "I want to join your revolution group."

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Serene

I pace around the hallway, anger twisting me on the insides. I stayed at the front of her room all through the night and I heard everything that was going on.

I wanted to mock her, tease her, make her see reasons why I am the queen of this pack but Lucian lost control.

Ever since I was here, this has never happened. I couldn't explain exactly why it happened. My mind links it to the mysterious curse I've always been hearing was inflicted on him but he has never tried to leave the palace.

I tried to ask Damien, Rowan and Kai. They all turned me down telling me that Lucian was going to be fine and needed rest. I stood in front of the door to assess him myself.

Whenever they decide to open this door and come out, I will scan him with my eyes. Only then would I be able to put my heart at peace.

And as for that stupid omega wolf that cannot even transfer, today is the day I end her. I have had more than enough of her interceding in my plans.

They were all supposed to go smoothly, they were all going smoothly, not until she came along. I have to end her. She is not important. They can always buy any other breeder in any other place.

"Serene." Kai calls out my name. Locking the door immediately he steps out. He locks the door so fast, I can't even peek at what's happening.

"Kai, what's going on? That scream was really eerie. Is he going to be alright? What's going on with him?" I soften my gaze so I can deceive him.

"He's fine and he's going to be alright. Nothing is going on with him. You can go to bed and have a good rest. You've been up all night. He asked me to come and pass this message to you." He shields the bolt of the door with his shoulders almost like he's aware of what I'm trying to do.

"Ok. Just in case you guys are having trouble with finding a doctor. I have one I can let you guys use." Since they were not going to let me find out through them what exactly is going on. I am going to find out through someone else.

"He's fine." His jaw tightens and his eyes become even darker.

I know this is a sign not to push my luck and I simply leave. Now that they were all gathered in one room and that Mira of a girl has no guards. This would be the best time to end her. Before she begins her Luna training and succeeds in my place.

I stroll gently to her place, the desire for revenge heavy on my heart. I really wanted to give her a gruesome painful torturous death but the brothers were around. I need to end her before they raise an alarm or something.

I twist her doorknob and for some reason, it's shut. That is so unlike her. I release my hands from the doorknob. I lift my legs to smash the door when I remember this should be as quiet as possible.

"Knock. Knock." I knock on her door gently like any of the brothers would.

"Who?" Her voice is cracked like she has been crying all night. It serves her right. If I was not about to kill her, I would have reminded her to stay in her place with this lesson.

I grit my teeth in silence. There's no way I would take my sweet angelic voice to reply to that omega wolf.

"Knock. Knock." I knock again after I stand there in silence.

"Lucian, Rowan, Kai and Damien. I don't know if it's one of you or all of you but since the training has been canceled for today, just let me stay here and wallow in silence please."

I dig my feet into the ground. I have to kill her before the training. After all, what if she succeeds in enchanting the rest of the members of the pack. Then I will have no place in this clan again. I can't let it happen. I have to end it now.

"Please open the door. I want to have a woman-to -woman talk with you." After racking my brain on how to get her to open this door. This is the only thing I can come up with.

"Serene?"

"Yes Mira, it's me. Can we talk please?" My insides twist in agony when I say please to her, such a worthless wolf.

"Uhm okay."

I hear her feet shuffle and she finally clicks the door open.

"Can I?" I try to step in.

"What do you want, Serene?" She stands between the doors just like Kai did earlier.

"I just want to have a heartfelt conversation. You do not have to be guarded around me. I know I have wronged you severally, I have harassed beyond words can ever mention but I have given this a deep thought and I am here to talk to you." I stare at my feet so she does not notice the hatred in my eyes.

"Sorry, why exactly are you giving it a deep thought now of the times you have known me, Serene. Shouldn't it have been the first thing you did? Why now?" She tries to stare behind me to see if anyone is at my back.

"The brothers did not send me to come talk to you Mira. I know you will find it hard to believe but that's really the truth. Can I come in now?"

"No Serene. Since it's just a conversation, we can have it anywhere including the place you are standing right now. You don't have to come into my room."

"I have given you too much respect for one day alone. You now seem to have forgotten your place." I push her and I get inside. I lock the door immediately because I am going to end it today.

Mira's POV

"Did you think for any reason that at any day in time, I will stoop so low to your level that I, Queen Serene with the capacity to balance the four Alphas would condescend down to the level of a human like me. Today is the day you die, even your useless mates would not be able to save you from me and my plans today." She bolts the door and she turns back.

"I, I; I didn't do anything to you Serene. Let me go." I move backward fully aware there is no escape at all in this room.

"Oh, you didn't? Who has me fighting for attention with the same men that you used to love and dote on me? You! Who has all of my plans changing and crashing every fucking time? You! Who took away the men that warmed my bed and hugged me in their arms? You, this bloody weak pathetic omega! You! You took everything, every fucking thing, I will not keep allowing you to ruin my agenda. You have to die, I'm sorry, ha! I'm not." She throws her hands and her claws extend.

"I know you have never had the beauty of seeing a woman's claws. All thanks to your late mom. I'm sure she killed herself because she could not stand a daughter like you. If I had a child like you, I would not just commit suicide. I will make sure to sell my intestines to the rogue wolves!" She drags her claws on the wall, staining my room.

"Do not involve my late mother into this Serene. This is all your fault! If you had given them pups, I would not be here with the same set of people I should be plotting to kill. I wouldn't have lost my first night to four men in one day! You blame me like I am the only mistake. You gave me this space. If you didn't, I wouldn't be here! Accept responsibility and let things be." I am seething with rage.

Never for once, have I despised not being able to transform, gradually but slowly, I got accustomed to it but today, I wished I could transform, I would plunge my claws deep into her throat.

"You dare! To refute my words, petty omega." She stares at her claws and walks to me.

"Maybe, just maybe I should keep you alive but with a little scar, one big enough for the brothers to question if they still love you. What do you think?" My heart beats faster in my chest. What is she up to? The devilish look in my eyes tells me she is not up to any good.

"I'm giving you the chance to talk bastard!" She grabs me with her hands. I struggle to breathe, I slap her hand severely trying to get a hold of myself. I close my eyes, fold my feet and I kick her with everything in me.

"You dare to rebel, little pup? It seems you do not understand. Your Alphas are not coming to save you, they will never be. By the time they are here, you would have long been dead. That I would make sure of and do not even dare to exclaim. If you try to do anything funny, I will end your life in one swift go." She slashed her claws against my clothes. They rip apart in one wipe.

"Amazed, aren't you? You should be. That is why I am the queen and you are nothing but just a breeder. They can always get another breeder after I kill you. Thousands of female werewolves would be willing to throw themselves at them in your replacement, don't you think?" She pokes me with her claws.

"Let me go." Tears mixed with snot flow into my mouth. I should never have never been pulled into this.

"I will only let you go on one condition. Weak human. I will let you live if you promise to evacuate this clan, this kingdom. I have no idea how you intend to leave and how you are going to cope. To be sincere, it's really not my problem. The only thing is you have to leave." She sits on my bed and she rips it apart.

"I, I have nowhere to go." I lower my head in shame. If my mother was alive, I would have definitely known people in the human world. But I never got to see her.

"Is that so? I have a place to send you then? It's quite accommodating. It has housed countless numbers of souls from time and its memorial." She stands up from my ripped bed. Hatred evident in her eyes.

"Since you have decided not to leave me alone. There is only one option, I have to send you to a place where your activities and pictures would only remain." She pulls me by my hair, pain shoots up to my brain.

"Serene!" Hot tears stings my eyes and they roll down. If only my father did not sell me to this horrible family, I would never be a part of this.

"Are you ready to leave now Mira or are you going to wait till I send you to the land of no return. I do not mind accomplishing that for you as well." She pulls my hair even tighter.

"I already told you before, I have nowhere else to go. Not even my clan would accept me themselves. Please just let me be."

"You are really unfortunate and pathetic. Not to worry, I will send you to your mother and put an end to your misery." She finally lets go of my hair.

"It's time you die!" She grabs my neck and lifts me up, this time with even more force than before. I do not bother struggling trying to breathe. She overpowers me, there's no use. That kick won't work again. I visualize my clan and father.

"I'm sorry."

I close my eyes and I resign to my fate.

"Serene!"

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Selena

For a moment, I simply stared at Sally as the confidence in her eyes made it clear that she wasn't joking.

Still, I couldn't immediately believe her... not because I didn't want her to join but because Sally had spent days watching me with suspicion.

She had questioned who I really was, noticed every strange privilege I received, and now suddenly she wanted to become part of the very thing I was secretly building.

Something about it felt wrong.

I grabbed her wrist gently and pulled her away from the doorway before anyone could overhear us.
"What did you just say?"

Sally looked around before meeting my eyes again. "I said I want to join your revolution group."

I lowered my voice so that only she could hear me. "Are you being serious right now?"

"Yes I am, Selena." The answer came so quickly that I had to study her face.

There was determination there, I could also see anger there too but there was something else...
Something she wasn't saying.

"Why are you doing this?" I asked with a creased brow and my arms crossed around my chest.

Her expression shifted slightly as she asked, "What do you mean why? Don't I have the right?"

"I mean exactly what I asked. Why do you want to join? I mean, there must be a reason for this sudden change of heart that you are having."

She quickly looked away, making me doubt her even more.

For someone who had been so bold moments ago, her sudden hesitation was suspicious.

"Sally." I called out wanting her to spill it out so I could head straight to the assassins. I didn't have much time to waste on unimportant things at this moment.

She sighed loudly before finally saying, "I just want justice."

"That's not an answer, Sally."

Her jaw tightened as she started speaking through gritted teeth. "My sister was sold to the vampires." The words came out quietly.

My expression softened as Sally continued. "Everyone acted like it was normal. Like it was just another duty. Like her life meant nothing because she was born into the wrong place."

Her hands curled into fists. "I watched my family lose her. I watched everyone pretend there was nothing they could do."

The pain in her voice was real but something still bothered me. "Sally..." I waited until she looked at me before I continued. "This isn't just about having revenge! There are other things to it."

Her brows furrowed. "What do you mean?"

"The revolution." I took a breath. "It isn't about one person. It isn't about hurting the vampires because they hurt us. If that was all it was, it would only create another cycle of hatred."

Sally remained silent as I continued to explain how it works to her. "This is about changing everything for good." My voice became firmer.

"The way things have been for centuries. The way people are treated. The way powerful creatures decide that the lives of others are worth less."

I looked at her intently. "It's about rewriting the foundation itself and making a solid change."

For the first time, Sally looked surprised. "The foundation?"

"Yes." I nodded. "Ending the oppression. Ending the idea that people can be owned and traded because they are weaker."

I stepped closer to her. "If your only reason is revenge, then you can't join this revolution because it isn't all about revenge."

The words were harsh but somehow, I knew I was saying them for her and not just for the group because revenge alone would destroy her.

Sally looked at me for a long moment then she nodded slowly. "Then I want justice! I want to be part of it."

Her voice became stronger. "I want to end what has been happening."

I studied her intently before asking. "You're sure?"

"Yes." She swiftly said and a small smile formed on my face.

"Then I'll accept you to join us in this," I said with a small smile.

For a moment, happiness flashed across her face. "I won't disappoint you."

"I'll tell you later when our meetings will be starting." She nodded and I turned to leave.

But before I could take another step, Sally grabbed my arm then suddenly, she pushed me against the wall making my eyes widened.

"Sally?" I had almost stuttered as I wasn't expecting her reaction.

Her expression was way more serious now. "I need you to understand something." The playfulness disappeared from her voice. "I still don't believe you are who you say you are."

My heart kept beating fast but I forced my expression to remain calm as Sally continued. "There's something different about you."

She leaned closer that I could practically feel her breath against my face. "The Alpha protects you. The guards listen to you. You walk around this place like you belong here."

I stayed silent while she proceeded. "Part of the reason I want to join your group is because I want to know the truth."

My stomach tightened as she said that. "I want to investigate you myself."

For a moment, neither of us spoke, then I slowly smiled to calm my nerves. "Are you threatening me?"

"No." She released me. "I'm just giving you a warning."

Interesting! Sally wasn't foolish and that made her more dangerous.

I walked away without responding but inside, my thoughts were racing. I needed to be much more careful because Sally was right.

If Alpha Kael continued treating me differently, it wouldn't only be her who started questioning me... Everyone would!

—

The next problem was spreading the word as a revolution couldn't exist with only three people.

But I couldn't exactly stand in the middle of the servants' quarters and announce that I wanted to overthrow centuries of tradition.

That would probably end badly so I needed to find another way sooner than later.

When I arrived at the dungeon, the guard immediately stepped forward with a frown plastered at his face. "Stop right there."

I looked at him. "I need to go inside."

He shook his head. "Servants are not allowed in the dungeon."

I opened my mouth to argue then he suddenly paused as His eyes widened. "Wait." He looked at me carefully then his expression changed. "You're the girl."

I frowned as I didn't understand what he meant. "What girl?"

He immediately straightened. "Forgive me." He immediately opened the gate. "You may enter."

I hesitated as something about it made me uncomfortable. Sally's words returned to my mind.

The special treatment and the privileges... She was right! I was receiving things servants normally never received and I didn't even know how much attention it was attracting.

I walked inside and the dungeon was colder than I expected. The stone walls seemed to absorb every sound.

As I moved deeper, I passed several cells then I saw Grengy. He looked completely different from the man who had attacked me.

The confident servant was gone as he looked exhausted, weak, his clothes were dirty, and his face was thinner.

The moment he saw me, his expression hardened. "You." He snapped.

I stopped and asked. "What happened to me?."

His eyes filled with anger. "You're happy now, right? Because of you, I'm here!"

His expression twisted. "Don't you dare pretend."

"You put yourself here." I snapped back at him.

He laughed bitterly before saying. "Servants fight all the time." His voice became louder. "People argue. People hurt each other. But nobody gets locked away like this."

He stepped closer to the bars. "So tell me something." His eyes narrowed. "What is so special about you that the Alpha punished me like this?"

I didn't answer immediately because the question bothered me too so I looked away. "That isn't the point."

Grenzy scoffed with a sneer. "Of course."

I continued walking and leaving him behind to avoid more sinister words from him.

When I finally reached the assassins' cell, I expected to see broken men. Instead, I found something completely different.

They were sitting calmly, they didn't look like prisoners and their bodies were so fine.

I stepped closer to the iron bar. "I need to ask you something."

Before I could introduce myself to them, a hand grabbed me so hard that I was pulled backward roughly. "What are you doing?"

I turned as my eyes widened on seeing Beta Bastien. His face was filled with shock. "What are you doing here?"

I opened my mouth to say something or anything, "I was just—"

"No." His voice was serious. "You cannot be here."

I frowned. "Why can't I be?"

He looked toward the assassins then back at me. "Because they cannot know who you are... else, hiding you all these while would be for nothing!"

The realization hit me and I lowered my gaze. "I made a mistake."

Beta Bastien sighed. "Yes, you did."

I looked at him. "I'm sorry."

His expression softened slightly. "I know you want answers."

"I do." I quickly said.

"And I understand why." He glanced toward the cell. "But those men cannot discover your identity."

I looked back and something about them still bothered me. "There is something wrong with them."

Beta Bastien studied me. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know." I shook my head. "But I know there is more to them than they are showing."

And I knew I had just lost my chance to find the answers myself.

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Selena

It turned out Marquee was right. A no-wage punishment was not some simple warning given by the headmistress to scare servants into obedience. It was a punishment that reminded you exactly where you stood in the hierarchy and I hated it.

I discovered it this very morning when I walked into the dining area, confidently reaching into the small pouch I had always kept hidden beneath my clothes.

Only to find almost nothing inside. I frowned as I counted the few coins left.

Just two remaining and that was all. I stared at them for several seconds like they had personally betrayed me.

"How much did you think you had left?" Marquee asked from beside me, already laughing.

I looked at her. "This is not funny."

"It is a little funny," she admitted, covering her mouth as she tried not to laugh harder. "You walked in here like an Alpha's daughter ready to buy whatever you wanted."

I rolled my eyes. "I'm very hungry."

"You are always hungry."

"Because the food here is terrible." She laughed again, shaking her head.

I hated admitting it, but she was right. Before, I never thought twice about food. I had always had meals prepared for me. I had never needed to worry about whether I had enough coins to buy something extra.

But now? I was just another servant without the Alpha title to my name.

There's no privilege, no name and no power.

I sighed as I looked at her plate and Marqee immediately noticed. "Selena..."

"What?"

"You are not about to steal my breakfast are you?" She asked, obviously making fun of my hunger.

"I am not stealing."

"You are staring at it like you are planning an attack." I gave her a look before taking a piece of bread from her plate.

She laughed. "You are unbelievable."

"I am just hungry."

"You know, most people would be embarrassed to eat from mine." Marqee said, still laughing.

"I am not most people." I shamelessly said with a roll of my eyes.

"That much is obvious." She said, I ignored her teasing and ate quietly for a while.

My mind, however, was already somewhere else. I was already thinking about the revolution.

The idea had not left my mind since everything happened. Since I discovered how many people lived in fear of the vampires.

Since I realized even powerful Alphas were willing to sacrifice their own children just to keep peace with creatures that treated us like livestock.

I couldn't let it continue anymore. "I want to start the revolution again."

Marquee stopped eating as her expression changed immediately.

"Selena..." She tried saying but I cut her off immediately.

"I mean it."

She looked around before lowering her voice. "You still want to do this after everything that happened?"

I looked at her. "Whatever happened changed nothing."

"It changed everything," she argued. "You were almost killed by Grengy for whatever reason he had. Do you really think you can secretly create some rebellion under the Alpha's roof without getting caught?"

"I am not trying to go against the Alpha."

"That does not mean the Alpha will see it that way. I don't want you beheaded!"

I stayed silent because a part of me knew she was right. But that did not mean I could ignore what was happening outside those castle walls.

"I don't need you to join me fully," I finally said.

Marquee looked surprised. "What?"

"I know you are afraid. I understand. But I just need small things from you."

"Like what?"

"Keeping watch. Helping me send messages. Covering for me when I need to leave and also helping me do some of my chores."

Her expression became uncomfortable. "Selena..."

"I am not asking you to stand in front of a vampire army."

"That is not the point."

"Then what is?"

She sighed. "The point is that eventually someone will notice. Maybe not the headmistress. Maybe not today. But someone will."

I looked away as Marquee continued softly. "The Alpha will find out eventually."

Those words bothered me more than I wanted to admit because unlike everyone else, I knew exactly what kind of person Alpha Kael was.

But I pushed the thought away. "I will handle it."

Marquee studied me for a moment then she sighed. "You really are stubborn."

"I know."

"And impossible as well."

"I know that too." She shook her head, but she stopped arguing.

That alone told me she had accepted that I would continue whether she agreed or not.

Later that day, Sally approached me. I immediately noticed the way she looked around before speaking.

"What?" I asked her.

She crossed her arms before saying, "I have been thinking."

"That sounds dangerous."

She ignored my comment and continued. "If you actually manage to create this group... What is your first move?"

I paused as that was a question I had not truly answered. "I want people to understand."

"Understand what?"

"That this is wrong. The vampires controlling us are very wrong. Sacrificing our people to the vampires is wrong! We need to end the fear."

Sally stared at me long before saying, "That is not a plan."

"It is the beginning of one." I said with a shrug of my shoulders.

She sighed. "Selena, if you want people to follow you, you need more than words."

"I know." I quickly said.

"You need a place where people can meet and it must be somewhere safe."

She was right. I had been so focused on gathering people that I had not considered where everything would happen. That store room before had been a bad idea and it can't be used again for the revolution.

"We need to secure somewhere safe," I said.

She raised a brow and asked. "Do you have any idea of a good place?"

I hesitated because immediately, my mind went to the hidden training area Alpha Kael had shown me.

The underground armory, the secret place beyond the castle and it was perfect but I did not know if I could use it without his permission.

"I might have a place in mind." I said hesitantly, knowing it might be a bad idea.

Sally studied my face. "You are hiding something."

"I am just thinking... Sally!"

"You are usually good at hiding things." She said with a roll of her eyes.

I ignored her but she suddenly brought a suggestion. "What about outside the castle? I know someone who might help us find a cottage."

"No." I immediately went against it as it wasn't a good idea.

She frowned. "Why reject it that way?"

"Because it's too obvious. A cottage would sell us out."

"Really?" She asked, still not getting it.

"Yes. People will notice strangers coming and going."

She considered that before asking, "So what do you suggest we do?"

"We need somewhere ordinary." I said. "Somewhere people would never think to look."

We ended up not coming to a conclusion as instead, I focused on the first step of finding people, convincing them and making them see what I saw.

Marquee noticed my closeness with Sally and I could tell she was uncomfortable, but my attention was somewhere else.

Especially when I saw a certain couple leaving the storage room. The same couple I and Marquee had accidentally walked in on weeks ago having sex at the storage room.

I watched them leave together then I followed and saw them enter a small abandoned room.

I pushed the door open and both of them immediately looked shocked. "You again?" the male servant asked.

"Yes, it's me."

The female servant sighed. "Please tell me you are not here to talk about your rebellion again."

"I am."

They exchanged a look. "We already told you we are not interested."

I leaned against the wall. "You know Alpha William's daughter disappeared, right?"

Their expressions changed because everyone had already heard the rumors.

"She was supposed to be given to the vampires," I continued. "Just imagine that. Imagine being born into power, being the daughter of one of the strongest Alphas in the realm and having everything."

I looked between them. "And still being so afraid of the vampires that you run away from home."

Their faces slowly changed as I continued. "That is the kind of fear we live with."

I stepped closer. "If someone like her can be trapped by them, what chance do ordinary people have?"

Neither spoke. "I am not asking you to fight today. I am asking you to think and make the right decision." With that, I left them to continue.

For the next two days, I continued speaking to servants... Some listened, some laughed, some walked away and even some of Grengy's friends ignored me.

But I refused to stop because change did not happen because everyone agreed immediately... It happened because someone refused to remain silent.

On the night of the second day, I made my way toward the underground armory.

I wanted to see the hidden training area again. I needed to know if it could work for us.

The stairs were dark and narrow. I was halfway down when I suddenly collided with someone and I lost my balance.

A hand suddenly grabbed me by the waist before I fell and the moment I had an intent look, I discovered it's Alpha Kael.

My body pressed against his as he held me steady. For a moment, neither of us moved as we continued staring into each other's faces.

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Selena

For a moment, neither of us moved. I could feel the warmth of his hand around my waist, steadying me, keeping me from falling down the narrow staircase and I hated how easily my body reacted to him.

How easily my heartbeat changed whenever he was close.

The silence between us stretched, and for one dangerous second, I thought Alpha Kael was going to lean closer. I thought he was going to kiss me and run his hands all over my body while I moaned out his name.

My breath caught slightly as I looked at him, unable to stop myself from wondering what would happen if he did but then he pulled back and the moment disappeared.

His expression returned to that calm, unreadable one he always wore. "Where are you going?"

His question immediately brought me back to reality. A reality I don't want.

I blinked, trying to get myself together. "Going?" I asked, trying to think of a perfect lie.

Alpha Kael looked at me. "Yes, Selena. Where were you heading?"

I opened my mouth but no words came out immediately because telling him the truth would mean admitting I was trying to sneak into the training yard he had specifically told me I could only enter with him.

And somehow, I did not think he would appreciate that so I thought of something else. "I was just..." I started.

His eyes narrowed slightly waiting for me to finish my words.

"I was just going to practice."

"Practice?" He asked with a creased brow.

I nodded quickly. "I needed to practice some combat moves."

He stared at me, I hated how he could look at me like that and somehow make me feel like he already knew I was lying.

"Why the training yard?"

I stayed silent and that was enough to answer his question because I had nothing else to say.

Alpha Kael sighed. "You cannot go there."

My brows pulled together. "Why can't I? I just want to practice."

"Because it is not a place you can access whenever you want." He said and I almost rolled my eyes.

"I thought it was just an abandoned training area." I pressed on, not ready to drop it unless I knew the reason.

"It is."

"Then why can't I use it?"

His expression remained firm. "Because I decide who enters."

I crossed my arms. "That sounds unnecessarily controlling." I said with a loud scoff.

"I can't let you or anyone go in there."

"I am not a prisoner! Plus you showed that place to me."

"You're not a prisoner." His voice softened slightly. "But you are someone people are trying to kill."

That immediately silenced me. I hated that he had a point, I refused to give in easily. "I can take care of myself."

"I know you can." The answer surprised me. Alpha Kael looked at me for a moment and added. "That is not the issue."

"Then what is?" I pushed again.

"You do not know this place. You do not know what paths are safe, what areas are protected, or what could happen if someone follows you there."

I frowned. "I can learn every path... It's not that hard."

"You will." His words caught me off guard. "You will learn. But not by sneaking around."

My lips parted, that I almost stuttered. "I was not sneaking."

His brow lifted. "You were walking down a hidden staircase alone at night."

I looked away. "Fine. Maybe a little because I didn't want to be stopped."

A faint amusement crossed his face, but it disappeared quickly. "You are not going there alone. If you're ever going there, I'll have to be there too."

I wanted to argue. I really did but the certainty in his voice made me realize there was no point.

Alpha Kael was not asking, he was telling me and somehow, that annoyed me even more.

"Fine." I stepped away from him. "I will leave."

His eyes stayed on me as I walked back down the stairs and I refused to look back mostly because I knew if I did, I would see him watching me.

And I was tired of how easily he affected me. When I stepped into the hallway, I immediately noticed how busy it was.

Servants moved around carrying baskets, cleaning supplies, and different items needed around the castle.

The noise filled the once quiet corridor. I had barely taken a few steps when Alpha Kael appeared behind me and immediately, every head turned.

The servants stopped whatever they were doing, Some bowed in greetings, others quickly looked away but I noticed something else.

They were looking between us because they must have noticed how Alpha Kael had followed behind me into the hall.

I tried ignoring them but then I felt Alpha Kael's eyes on me, I looked back for a brief second, our eyes met and that was when I noticed Sally.

She was standing among the servants while watching and studying. Her expression told me she had noticed everything so I quickly looked away.

Later, when Marquee and I were in our chamber, we sat on the floor playing a simple board game.

For once, I was trying to enjoy a peaceful moment but Sally ruined that as she walked in and asked, "What did you find?"

I looked up. "What?" I asked.

She leaned against the wall. "I thought you went scouting?"

I immediately knew what she meant. "Oh, the training yard?"

"Yes."

I moved my piece on the board. "I couldn't reach it."

Her expression changed. "What do you mean?"

"I was stopped." I said, a strange silence filled the room then Sally laughed.

Not because something was funny but because she obviously does not believe me.

"You expect me to believe that?"

I looked at her. "What exactly are you implying?"

She pushed away from the wall. "You have been pretending to build this group with us, but maybe your real plan was just finding excuses to meet with the Alpha."

My face hardened. "What are you saying?"

"You heard me, Selena."

"Sally..."

"No, because think about it. It's obvious the Alpha gives you special treatments."

Marquee stood up. "That is enough." She snapped at Sally.

I quickly stopped her. "No Marquee." I looked at Sally before saying, "Let her speak."

Sally crossed her arms. "If you are just playing with us and giving us fake promises, Selena, it will not end well."

Something about her words bothered me not because they hurt because they showed how little she understood.

I took a breath and stated the fact. "I am not promising you anything. I am not promising you that this revolution will succeed."

The room became quiet. "I am not promising you that everything will change."

I looked at both of them. "Do you think I don't know that people must have tried before?"

My voice lowered. "Do you think I don't know there have been rebellions before? People who wanted freedom? People who wanted justice?"

I shook my head. "Many have tried and many have failed."

Sally said nothing as I continued. "I am not here because I think I am some hero who will fix everything."

I paused. "I am here because people need hope."

My voice became firmer. "They need to believe they are not powerless."

I looked directly at Sally. "That is all I am trying to give them and I only want people beside me who believe that too."

"As for whatever you think about me and the Alpha..." I shook my head. "Forget all about it."

She looked away as I added. "Because whatever you are imagining is not true."

For a moment, nobody spoke then Sally quietly turned and walked away.

Marquee looked at me. "That was actually inspiring."

I sighed. "It was not meant to be."

"It sounded like it."

I smiled slightly then her expression became serious. "But Selena..."

I looked at her. "You are still taking a huge risk." She said and I knew she was right but I also knew I could not stop.

That night, the castle became completely silent. The kind of silence that felt unnatural like the entire building was holding its breath.

I eventually fell asleep but my mind did not give me peace.

I was running... My feet moved across a dark, unfamiliar hill covered with thick bushes as something was chasing me.

I could hear the growls, the heavy footsteps, the sound of something hunting me as I ran faster and my breath became harder as my chest burned.

I looked back and saw too many dark figures following behind me.

I tried moving faster but my foot caught something and I fell. The world spun as I rolled down the hill and pain exploded through my body when I hit the ground.

I tried standing, I tried running but my body refused and the creatures surrounded me.

Their eyes glowed in the darkness, their teeth snapped as they came closer and closer until one opened its jaws straight toward my neck.

I gasped awake but before I could even breathe properly, a hand wrapped tightly around my throat.

My eyes widened as horror filled me because standing above me was one of the Alpha princes.

One of the assassins who had tried to kill me before.

Claimed By The Rival Alpha

Kael

I sat behind my desk, staring at the countless reports scattered across the wooden surface in front of me.

None of them made sense as every piece of information I gathered only created more questions about the Velmorian Alphas who were the assassins.

My fingers tightened around the edge of the table because I hated uncertainty.

An Alpha could not afford to hesitate. A moment of hesitation could cost lives and now, that uncertainty surrounded the one person I was supposed to protect.

My mate! The thought alone irritated me.

Not because she was my weakness but because she had become someone I could not ignore. Someone I could not simply see as a responsibility.

Selena had a way of making herself impossible to overlook. Her stubbornness, her reckless courage and the way she challenged every order I gave her.

It should have annoyed me more than it did. Instead, it made me want to protect her even more.

A knock sounded on my door and before I could answer, Beta Bastien's voice entered my mind.

'Alpha.'

I immediately straightened. 'Speak.'

'The spy you sent to scout the Nightbane markets has arrived at the pack gates.'

Finally a better Information has arrived. 'Good.' I simply said and cut the connection.

Sleep has become impossible for some days now.

Not after learning there were people willing to infiltrate my castle for Selena and also not after seeing what those assassins were capable of.

There were still too many unanswered questions concerning why the Velmorian Alpha's wanted her.

The first thought had been simple. "A ransom?"

Selena was the daughter of one of the most powerful Alphas in the realm. Any group holding her could demand a fortune.

But the more I thought about it, the less it made sense. The Velmorian Alphas were not desperate people because they had wealth, power and influence.

They had no reason to risk everything for simple gold and this meant there was something else. Something bigger and I needed to know what it is.

I pushed away from my desk with the thought of paying the assassins a visit. If anyone knew the truth, it would be them. I had already been patient enough.

I walked out of my office and moved through the castle corridors. The guards immediately straightened when they saw me.

I ignored them as my destination was clear... I'm heading to the dungeon.

But the moment I reached the lower level, something felt wrong. The castle dungeon was never this silent.

There were always footsteps, different voices of the prisoners and Guards moving around.

I slowed as my instincts immediately became alert of my surroundings.

I walked deeper into the dungeon and then I saw two guards lying on the ground.

My expression darkened as I rushed forward to them and discovered they were both unconscious or rather not unconscious but dead.

My jaw clenched as I looked toward the cells to discover the assassin's cell was destroyed with the metal bars very damaged and the locks were broken with all of them gone.

Someone must have helped in releasing them or they had possibly escaped on their own. Either option was unacceptable.

I immediately connected with the captain through mindlink. 'Seal the castle gates.'

His response came instantly. 'Alpha?'

'Now! No one leaves this castle.' I did not wait for more questions as I disconnected the mindlink.

Then suddenly, one thought entered my mind. "Selena!!!"

I turned and ran. I couldn't bring myself to walk to the servants quarters.

On getting there, the servants' quarters were already filled with chaos. People crowded the halls as different whispers filled the air.

The moment they saw me, they immediately moved aside and that was when I knew something was wrong.

Something must have happened here. My eyes searched for Selena then I saw where everyone was gathered and discovered it's Selena's chamber.

My heart stopped for one terrifying second, I could not breathe and the moment I saw the blood, a dark stain on the floor... My entire body went cold.

'No.' I moved forward to know if it's Selena but the body lying there was not her.

I found out it's one of her roommates instead and relief washed all over me.

She was barely breathing. A servant was beside her, desperately trying to keep pressure on her wound.

I knelt down beside the wounded servant before asking, "What happened?"

The maid looked up at me, terrified. "Alpha..."

"Tell me what happened." I demanded.

Her hands shook as she said. "A man attacked us."

My eyes darkened immediately. "Who?"

"I don't know. He came into the room and... and he took her."

"Who did he take?"

The maid swallowed. "He took Selena."

The world seemed to become silent as I forced myself to remain calm. "And the others?"

She looked down. "My roommate here tried to stop him from taking her."

My gaze moved as I looked at the wounded girl then back at the maid. "Keep pressure here."

She nodded quickly as I pointed towards a part of her body that wasn't wounded. "Not there. Higher. If you keep pressure there, she will lose more blood."

The maid immediately adjusted, then I connected with the headmistress through mindlink. 'Get to the servants' quarters immediately and get this maid treated.'

She answered with confusion. 'What's going on Alpha?'

I did not explain as I could not waste more time. I quickly stood as I needed to find Selena.

I needed her scent so I walked deeper into the chamber after the unwound maid pointed where Selena's clothes were kept to me.

Everything was untouched except she was gone. I quickly grabbed one of her clothes from the bed and began inhaling her scent.

For a moment, her scent filled my senses. It was stronger than it should have been as my wolf reacted instantly.

I forced the thought away as now was not the time.

I closed my eyes trying to focus. Then I stood up and began following her scent as It led me through the castle, down the halls, and then to my courtroom.

I stopped as I could hear the captain through the mindlink. 'Alpha, what is happening?'

I ignored his question and sent orders instead. 'Send warriors to surround the courtroom.'

I disconnected and entered the courtroom but what I saw made something inside me break.

Three of the young Alpha assassins sat comfortably on the seats belonging to pack officials like they owned the place, like this was their castle and their territory.

But the last one... The last one sat on my throne. My throne!!! And Selena was on the ground beside him .

She was bound. Her arms, her legs, her entire body was practically restrained.

My wolf exploded as a growl escaped my throat.

The young Alpha looked at me. "Careful." His hand moved closer to Selena. "Attack me, and she dies."

I stared at him as every instinct screamed at me to tear him apart but I remained still. "You have no idea what you have done." I said through gritted teeth.

He laughed. "You think you scare us?"

I stepped forward slightly. "You are in my castle."

Another laugh. "You think that matters?"

My eyes darkened. "Yes." My voice became colder. "Because you are standing in front of the Alpha who owns it."

They looked amused. "You are threatening us?"

I tilted my head. "No." I looked at every one of them. "I am informing you."

My wolf pushed forward. "You will leave this room alive only if I allow it."

They laughed again then the one on my throne smiled. "You wolves always think power belongs to you."

I stared at him, then I asked calmly. "Is that the brains you all planned to use to rule your packs?"

Their expressions changed but I continued anyway. "Is this the intelligence you planned to use when you inherit your fathers' titles?"

For a moment, they had no answer and that moment was enough for me.

I moved quickly. The ink barrel beside me was the first thing I grabbed and threw it then It crashed into one of them before he could react.

I was already moving as my blade flashed and one fell. Another barely had time to turn before I grabbed him and slammed his head against the hardwood table.

The sound echoed but I did not stop as the last one was my target. The one holding Selena.

I reached him but he moved faster than expected and then his blade went down into Selena.

My entire world stopped as I screamed. "No!!!" The sound came from somewhere deeper than my throat.

My wolf angrily took control and I grabbed the young Alpha with his eyes widened but it was too late.

My hands tightened around him then my teeth sank into his neck and I disconnected his neck from his shoulder with one bite.

The fight ended instantly as I ripped him away and his body collapsed. I stepped down on him as the rage inside me refused to calm.

Then the doors burst open as Guards flooded the courtroom. The captain stopped as his face changed at the sight before him.

But I ignored everyone as I dropped beside Selena. "Selena." I called but there was no response because she's unconscious.

My hands shook slightly as I touched her face and then the dangerous smell of wolfsbane hit me hard.