

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 111

I wring out the cloth and press it gently to Jasmine's forehead, the steam curling upward like tiny ghosts in the dim light. Her skin burns beneath my touch, damp from the heat. She's curled up on the bed, her breaths uneven, strands of hair plastered to her face. She looks so small-too small for someone who once had the strength of a wolf in her veins.

Losing her wolf... It's been destroying her piece by piece. I can see it-the weakness, the way her bones seem sharper under her skin. And every time I look at her, I remember what black magic stole from her, all because she was desperate to free herself from a toxic mate forever.

Maybe I'd hoped-selfishly-that Fury might return her feelings too.

That maybe, just maybe, his love would be enough to bring her wolf back, but fate doesn't care about hope. And now he's wrapped around his second-chance mate, Nora-a breathtaking beauty, the kind that draws stares without effort. She's nothing like Lady Celestia, his disastrous first mate. Nora is warm and soft-spoken, and she treated his father like her own family.

Even I can't deny she's perfect for him. His father practically glows whenever he looks at her, calling their bond "a match made in heaven by the Moon Goddess herself." The perfect daughter-in-law. And seeing the old man so happy... I can't even resent it.

I was the one who carried her here after she collapsed-Fury never loosened his hold on his mate long enough to notice. And even though he eventually tried to carry her himself, I know Jasmine would be grateful it was me, not him, who brought her to this guest room.

She stirs, a soft whimper escaping her lips. Slowly, her eyes flutter open. When her gaze meets mine, color rushes into her cheeks, and her eyes widen in horror as the memory floods back."Don't tell me..." she whispers, her voice hoarse and heavy with dread "I fainted. Right there. In front of everyone... in front of him-and his father?"

I nod slowly, hesitating, biting back a sigh.

She groans and yanks the blanket over her face. "Oh, kill me now. I wish the ground would just swallow me whole."

"Jas," I murmur, prying the blanket from her face, "it's not that bad They understand. You're human now-you're not as strong as you used to be. Your heart can't take the same strain, and your body can't keep up like before."

Her gaze drops, lashes lowering as though she's hesitant to speak.

Then, softly, she finally says, "You knew I liked him, didn't you?"

pause. There's no point in lying. "I did. From the moment Fury almost

• died and you ran into his clinic room-like the world would end if you didn't hold him. You told him you couldn't live without him... it was written all over your face. I'm just surprised he didn't see it, and instead put you in the sister zone."

Her lips tremble with a faint, sad smile, though her eyes are glassy." It's for the best, I guess," she murmurs, as if trying to convince herself." This way, it won't make things awkward between us."

I study her face-the way she's still trying to stay strong even now.

And it breaks something in me, seeing her protect his feelings while hers are lying in pieces.

I smooth the blanket over her and meet her damp eyes. "Okay... so what now? You can't hide in here forever, Jasmine. You need to come out, eat something at least. Be around people. You can't just stay here."

She shakes her head, her voice trembling but firm. "No. 'Il leave. I don't want to see his face-I'm too embarrassed. But more than that... I really do have feelings for him, Kali. Seeing him with his mate will...it'll break me. I can't sit here and watch them be happy. I have to move on, wish him the best, and go. I can't stay here making things awkward

—for him or for me."I take her hand and give it a gentle squeeze. "Jasmine... don't be too hard on yourself. You can't choose who you fall in love with. Your heart couldn't help falling for Fury. He's a good man, after all. And deep down, you just want to be loved-truly, passionately. You want that bond back so badly, so you can have your wolf again."

Her eyes close for a moment, tears slipping free. "That's right... maybe what I feel for Fury isn't real love. Maybe I'm just... desperate.

Desperate to find someone who'll love me so I can have my wolf back.

I'm tired, Kali. I'm tired of being weak and vulnerable. I hate being this ... human. It's disgusting. I miss my strength, my power. But—" she swallows hard—"I still don't regret the decision that cost me my wolf."

I nod, understanding perfectly. "I want you to have your wolf back too, Jasmine. But you can't force love. Remember the clause in the black magic ritual—you have to fall in love naturally, and be loved back equally. You can choose someone, but it won't be real if it's forced.

True love finds you when you least expect it."

" know," she whispers. "And that's why I need to leave. I can't see Fury again. If I stay in this pack, Ill have no choice. And I... I can't live like a fragile doll anymore. You'll be queen soon. Jack will be king. Fury has his mate. Everyone's finding their path... and I have none. I can't keep living in everyone's shadow, being a burden. I want to find my own path

-far away. And now is my only chance, because once Jack comes back, he'll never let me go."

Her words twist something deep in my chest. I study her determined expression, then say quietly, "I might know the perfect place.

Somewhere safe... but free.”

Her brows lift slightly.

“My old pack-the Red Night Pack-is no longer the cruel place it was under Diana’s rule. It’s now led by my former best friend. He’s... not askind and gentle toward me as he once was, but I know he’s forever grateful to Jack for saving his life-just as Jack saved Fury’s. I’m certain he wouldn’t refuse you a place there. You could even stay with my adoptive mother. She’s lonely without me and would welcome you with open arms.

“What’s your former best friend’s name?”

“Caspian...”

“she repeats slowly, as if tasting the name.

I smirk faintly. “So... are you leaving immediately, or do you want to say goodbye to everyone first?”

She shakes her head. “No goodbyes. I want to leave quietly. No fuss.”

“Alright. We’ll go through the back door,” I say. “But first, we’ll return to the palace so I can arrange for the best royal guards to escort you to the Red Night Pack. Jack’s uncle is still out there, and I won’t risk you- traveling unprotected. We can’t take chances.”

Her lips twitch into a sad smile. “Deal.”

I pull her into a hug, holding her tightly. “I’m really going to miss you.”

She squeezes me back and chuckles faintly against my shoulder. “Then make sure Jack doesn’t come looking for me. I’m not ready for his overprotective big brother act.”

I laugh softly, though my throat feels tight. “I’IL.. try.”

But we both know Jack will be furious when he finds out.

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By the time I return from the palace, the sun is already sliding lower in the sky, spilling gold across the place. Jasmine is likely far away by now-surrounded by the king’s most trusted guards, the ones my mother personally handpicked.

She hadn’t just arranged the escort; she had given Jasmine a velvet pouch so heavy with gold coins it made her arm sag. “No one leaves the royal palace without proof they’ve been here,” my mother had said with that regal smile. “And I’m thanking her for being your friend when you needed one most. May the Moon Goddess guide her to the love she deserves.”

Jasmine's eyes had shimmered with gratitude, but she didn't cry. She simply hugged me once more, whispered a quiet goodbye, and walked away-straight out of the palace and into the carriage-without

Hooking back.

I hurry to Fury's father's house now, choosing the front door instead of slipping quietly through the back like we had earlier. I don't want it to seem like we both disappeared, even though that's exactly what happened

I'm halfway through the doorway when I freeze-heat rushing to my face.

Fury.

His hands are clamped firmly around his new mate's waist. Nora sits perched on his lap as though she belongs there, her cheeks flushed pink as if he's whispered something only she's allowed to hear. He's looking at her like she's the only thing in the world worth breathing for.

My jaw tightens until my teeth ache.

Jasmine left-heart aching, dreams crushed and here he is acting like the mate bond is the only thing that matters. His thumb strokes lazycircles against Nora's hip, and she leans into him with a shy smile. I've never seen Fury like this. Never.

A dark, sharp pang twists in my chest. I glare at Nora without even meaning to. If it were Jasmine in her place-his true mate-she wouldn't be running away from everything, from him. She wouldn't be hurting alone somewhere.

Nora shifts, as if feeling the heat of my stare, She glances my way and bows her head slightly, but I look past her before I do something petty.

I know it isn't her fault... but I can't help but hate her in this moment.

Fury's father rolls into the room from the hallway, the squeak of his wheelchair cutting through the moment. He's coming from the direction of the guest bedroom-the one Jasmine had been resting in earlier.

'Princess Kali,' he greets warmly. 'Is Jasmine alright? Has she woken yet? Poor thing... so fragile, so weak-like a human.' His expression softens before he lifts a neatly folded stack of towels from his lap. 'I brought these for you, but after knocking for several minutes, I found the room empty. I grew worried when I didn't see either of you. Did you go for a walk? A bit of fresh air might help her heal naturally.'

I take the towels from him, my fingers curling around the fabric. 'No,' I say quietly. 'She's gone. Thank you for the towels.'

His brows knit together. 'What do you mean... gone?'

Before I can answer, Fury's voice cuts in, sharp and surprised. 'What?'

I turn to see him staring at me now, though his hands are still clamped around Nora's waist. She tries to rise, but he pulls her back down without even looking at her, his grip tightening possessively.

"Where did Jasmine go? Back to the palace without telling me? When did she leave?" His voice is laced with irritation, not concern. "Not long ago," I reply, my voice edged with steel I don't bother to hide.

My glare meets his, but it slides right past him—he doesn't see it, or he doesn't want to.

He shakes his head, muttering. "Why didn't she tell me? I would have seen her back safely to the palace." His tone sharpens, self-righteous. "Once I return, I'll scold her for this."

I can't help it—the scoff rips from my throat before I can swallow it down. The nerve.

He hadn't noticed when she fainted. He hadn't bothered to help her or even check on her when she was lying pale as death in that bed. But now—now—he wants to act like he cares?

Maybe he did once. Maybe before he found his mate—before Nora. But not anymore.

"You won't be seeing Jasmine again," I say flatly. "Even if you return to the palace, she's gone. Far away—very far. And she asked me not to tell you where. Said you shouldn't bother looking for her." I keep my face blank, my lie buried deep under steady eyes.

"Wait—what?" Fury's voice rises into a shout. "How could she just leave without saying goodbye? What's really going on? Why is Jasmine acting so strangely?"

It takes every shred of restraint not to walk over and knock some sense into him.

"It's my fault, Princess Kali... and I think I know why."

The voice comes from Nora. She shifts on his lap, her fingers trembling slightly as she presses against his chest with nothing but her omega strength, managing to stand on her own.

"She's gone because of me, isn't she?" she says softly, guilt bleeding into her tone.

Fury frowns, confused. "Baby, why are you blaming yourself? How could Jasmine leaving have anything to do with you—"

He doesn't get to finish as Nora's voice cuts in, sharper now, frustration spilling out in a whisper that's almost a shout.

"She's in love with you. How can you not see that?"

Fury stares at her, blinking like she's just told him the moon fell out of the sky. His mouth parts slightly. "What—? Impossible. I.. no. You're mistaken. I've never seen her as anything more than a sister—"

“Even Nora can see she liked you,” | cut in, frustration burning hot in my chest as my patience wears dangerously thin. “Yet somehow, you can’t. I’m not asking you to love her back, but stop being so-“I bite off the rest before I say something I can’t take back.

“She doesn’t see you as a brother,” Nora adds quietly. There’s no jealousy or possessiveness in her tone-only sadness. “You must have treated her well enough for her to fall in love with you. And now... she’s hurt enough to leave because of it.”

Fury’s mouth opens, then shuts again. He sits there in silence, the gears in his mind finally beginning to turn. His eyes drop, his jaw tightening as though he’s trying to push the thought away, but it’s already there, worming its way in. The silence stretches until Fury’s father clears his throat, his voice cutting through the tension. “Let’s eat dinner,” he says warmly, as though nothing just happened. “It’s your mother’s favourite-when she was alive.” His gaze softens as it turns to me. “Princess Kali, I’m sure you’ll love it. Nora cooked it earlier.”

I manage a small nod, the awkwardness heavy on my shoulders.

Without another word, we move toward the dining room, unspoken thoughts trailing after us like shadows.

We take our seats around the dining table, the clink of cutlery and scrape of chairs the only sound. Fury hasn’t said a word since the conversation about Jasmine-his face is unreadable, eyes fixed on his plate as if it holds all the answers.

Nora reaches for the serving spoon, tilting her head toward me.” Princess, let me dish for you-”

I lift a hand, stopping her mid-motion. “Fury now carries alpha blood, which means you’ll be a future Luna once you mate with him-not an omega who serves. Start learning to act like one.” My voice is calm, not unkind, but edged with enough firmness to make her pause. I take the spoon from her and serve myself.

Before I can put any on my plate, Fury’s father nudges his already served dish toward me. “Here. Take mine. No arguing-it’d be rude to refuse an old man.”

I manage a small smile and accept it. “Thank you.”

He beams like I’ve just given him a gift. “Nora cooks exactly like my mate used to. You should try it-you’ll love it.”

I lift the spoon to my mouth, but the moment the food’s scent hits me, my stomach twists violently. Heat rushes to my face, bile rising so fast I barely have time to set the spoon down.”Princess, do you not like it?” Nora’s voice is soft but laced with worry.” Was the ingredient too much?”

I wave my hand quickly, shaking my head, but can’t speak. I push back my chair and rush down the hall toward the guest bedroom, barely making it before I’m bent over, emptying my stomach into the basin.

By the time I rinse my mouth and return, the room has gone strangely quiet. Everyone's watching me-except Fury, who's still staring at his untouched food. But Nora... Nora's eyes are locked on me in a way that makes my skin prickle.

"You're pregnant," she blurts, her tone flat, certain.

The words hit me like a slap. My brows shoot up. "Now you're spitting rubbish."

Her gaze doesn't waver. "I don't know if I've offended you, Princess, but I can't lie-not after living my whole life as an omega helping mothers through childbirth. And I worked in a pack clinic when I was young. I could put my life on the line to prove it to you-you're pregnant, Princess Kali."

I open my mouth to shut her down again, but she steps closer. Too close.

"Can you hear it?" she asks quietly.

Before I can react, her warm hand presses against my stomach. "The heartbeat."

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Eight hours. My paws pound the forest floor like drums of war, but the bastard is nowhere. Every trail I follow twists, bends, and scatters like smoke in the wind. My wolf's breath fogs the air, rage simmering beneath my skin.

I halt, nostrils flaring. Corrupted energy burns faintly in the air, black and sour. My uncle's stench. But it slips away mockingly, splitting into three separate paths as if the land itself is laughing at me.

"Fan out," I snarl, my command ripping into the bones of the trackers and warriors around me. They lower their heads and scatter, paws shredding the undergrowth as they obey. Even the trees seem to bow beneath my power, yet the trail remains elusive.

bare my teeth. You crippled bastard. There's no way you outran me.

Leaping over a fallen trunk, my wolf's massive frame soars, towering over the warriors who look like pups beside me. But the deeper we press into the woods, the more wrong it feels. Dead animals lie twisted on the forest floor-birds with hollow eyes and a fox with blackened veins across its throat. A growl rips from me, lips peeled back in fury.

Dark magic. Not the cheap, pathetic witchcraft that leaves behind sloppy residue. No-this is stronger, older. Ancient. My uncle has help.

The sound in my chest deepens, a lethal rumble. Of course he planned this. Old and crippled, yes, but never stupid.

I drive forward again, forcing the trackers to keep up, but every step, every scent, leads to nothing but illusions-false trails, lures meant to pull me deeper into his trap.

This is pointless. He's not running... he's playing me.

I skid to a halt in the mud, chest heaving, claws digging trenches into the earth. The others stumble to a stop around me, panting, their

wolves' eyes glassy with exhaustion. Eight hours without rest-my command has pushed them to the edge.

I shift back, bones snapping into place, skin replacing fur. My breath clouds the air as I straighten to my full height. My warriors lower their heads, their wolves circling nervously before shifting back too, their bodies trembling from the strain.

I let my aura roil over them. "Enough," I command. "He's not running.

He's hiding, weaving shadows to waste our time." I sweep my gaze over them, my jaw tight. "If he thinks I'll burn my warriors out chasing ghosts, he's a bigger fool than I thought."

The men exchange weary looks, relief flashing in their eyes, though no one dares to speak.

"We return. Rest. Regroup. Stay alert. The man we're hunting isn't an ordinary wolf-you can see it for yourselves. He's tapping into the

'darkest kind of magic, power that takes more than a simple witch's charm to wield. I don't know what price he paid to obtain it, but we will find out." My teeth bare, fury burning in my chest. "And when we do, I'll rip it from him myself."

The command is final. No one questions it.

They bow low, then shift back, their wolves streaking into the underbrush. I shift too, my wolf exploding forward-massive, relentless -and together we race toward the palace.

This isn't over, uncle. You've bought yourself time, nothing more.

I push harder, the forest blurring around me as my thoughts sharpen on Fury. He's the only one who came close to my uncle, the only one who nearly died at his hands. If he's awake now, he may hold the answers no one else can give-answers about the power my uncle has drawn upon to strengthen himself.

My uncle may hide in shadows, but I'll drag him into the light.

One way or another.

By the time the palace walls rise in the distance, another piece of the puzzle forces itself into my mind: Khaos-Jasmine's ex-mate. He swore he knew nothing, yet it was clear my uncle had used him to get to me and to Kali. During our last interrogation, he let one word slip-master.

He claimed the man was faceless, someone he had never truly seen.

But I can't shake the suspicion that the shadow behind that word... is my uncle.

A dark smile twists across my lips. Perhaps I should return to the Blood Fang dungeons, drag Khaos from his cell, chain him upside down, and strip away what's left of his dignity-tongue, eyes, limbs.

Pain has a way of unlocking memory, forcing the mind to recall what it tried to forget, even things buried deep in sleep or unconsciousness.

One way or another, I will make him talk.

But my wolf growls inside me, pacing, restless. His voice slices through my thoughts. "No more chasing shadows. No more leaving, mate. We stay close to her.?"

I clench my jaw. He's right. He's been restless ever since we left her, snapping at my control. I can feel Kali-safe, unhurt-but she's shutting me out, muting the bond so all that get are faint flickers. It gnaws at me like a blade in my ribs.

By the time I shift back and stride into the palace halls, my decision is already made: I'll see Kali first. Thankfully, she should still be at the clinic where I left her by Fury's side-it's like killing two birds with one stone.

The clinic doors slam open under my hand. Empty bed. Empty room.

Fury's scent lingers, faint, already fading, the same as Kali's.

"Kali," I murmur through the bond, pushing harder. Where are you, love? Answer me.

Nothing. Just silence.

The doctor bustles in, nearly colliding with me. He blinks, startled, then bows. "Alpha King, the warrior you gave your blood to has awakened. He left hours ago-stronger than ever."

I nod sharply, already moving past him. "And the Princess Kali? She was with him."

He hesitates, but I don't wait for his answer. Kali's scent clings faint and fading along the corridors. Not here. Not in the palace. My wolf claws at me, restless, demanding we go after her.

A voice cuts through my thoughts. "Your Majesty."

A guard bows low before me. "The Queen requests your presence. She awaits you in her office."

I grind my teeth, torn between finding Kali and obeying. But when the Queen summons, you don't delay. Not when she's both my mate's mother and the King's consort.

I follow the guard through the winding halls until I reach her chamber.

He opens the door and steps aside.

The sight inside stops me.

• Papers litter the floor and desk in a storm of chaos, maps pinned to walls, lines of ink crisscrossing like spiderwebs. At the center stands the Queen, white hair gleaming under the lamplight, hand moving swiftly across a board as if she's piecing together a crime. She looks less like royalty, more like a hunter unraveling her prey.

clear my throat. "My Queen."

Her head lifts. For a heartbeat, it's like looking at Kali's face in another lifetime-same bone structure, same fierce line of the mouth. The only difference lies in her pale hair and eyes that burn with a different fire.

My lips twitch before I can stop them. A smile. Gods, Kali... when you age, you'll still be beautiful. Mine. And if I have my way, we'll fill this palace with children. Lots of them. And even more, I'll enjoy the process of making them-

"What has you grinning like a fool?" the Queen's voice cuts through my thoughts, sharp with amusement.

Heat floods my face. I force my mouth into a thin line, teeth grinding." Nothing," I mutter.

Her eyes gleam knowingly, but she lets it slide.

I step closer. "I came from the clinic. Fury's bed was empty. I assume he's been discharged?" She nods. "Yes. Your blood helped. Kali escorted him back to reunite with his family."

I let out a slow breath, relief tempered by unease.

But then her expression hardens. The air shifts.

"That is not why I called you," she says, her voice low, heavy. "I heard from my husband that you've gone in desperate search of your uncle."

"Yes," I answer, wary now.

"I need a favor, Alpha King."

I blink, caught off guard. "A favor?"

Her gaze pins me, sharp as a blade.

When you find Malik.. " her lips curl with venom,"...leave him to me. I must be the one to claw his heart out."

Her words slam into me. I frown, my wolf bristling inside. Leave him?

I've dreamed of that kill for years-of ripping my uncle apart with my own hands, of watching his blood soak the ground. That right is mine.

"Why?" I demand, my voice edged with a growl.

And then I see it-the darkness that flickers in her eyes. Not just anger. Pain. Rage that's old, festering, deeper than mine. It chills me to the bone.

Her voice drops into something dangerous, almost unrecognizable.

"Because Malik was the one responsible for Maya and Tom's kidnapping all those years ago. He was responsible for my pain."

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The silence that follows is suffocating and heavy, choking the very air from my lungs.

For the first time, I wonder if my thirst for vengeance is nothing compared to hers. My uncle may have destroyed my father, may have tried to break me... but he shattered her entire life if he was truly the one who stole Kali from her as a child: The way the Queen poured out her heart during her birthday celebration showed how Kali's absence nearly killed her. Grief consumed her so completely that she could no longer fulfill her duties as Queen.

I drag in a breath, my chest tightening. Still, a part of me struggles to believe it.

"How.." My voice cracks, low and rough. "How is this possible? My uncle is a bastard, yes-but to break into the royal palace and kidnap the Princess? That doesn't add up. Back then he wasn't even a royal messenger. There's no way he had access to the palace. Either there's a mistake... or he wasn't working alone."

"Exactly," she spits. "He didn't do it alone. At that time, Malik was nothing but a puppet, serving another master before he clawed his way into becoming one himself."

Her voice lowers. "Do you remember when your father died?"

I swallow hard, pulse spiking at her question.

"Malik thought he could exploit your father's weakness, seize the title, and crown himself Alpha. But you-" her gaze cuts into me, unflinching, "you already had your wolf. You were strong enough to fight him off. You broke him. Crippled him. Made him crawl."

Shock tears through me. "Yes... but-" I shake my head, disbelief clawing at me. "How do you know my story in such detail?" Her lips press into a thin line. "Because I had to. I contacted your mother

during my investigation. She told me everything. Forgive me, but I had no choice. I needed to understand the boy who once stood against Malik..., even as a child.”

I stare at her; the weight of her knowledge presses into me, unsettling.

She exhales, steadying herself. “After you defeated your uncle, he grew desperate. Humiliated, vengeful, hungry for power. He wanted your head for such shame, but the only way he could achieve that was with power equal to that of a king. He couldn’t gain it on his own, and he couldn’t approach the king directly for aid. That was when he met Elder Varkos.”

The name sends a chill crawling up my spine.

The Queen’s gaze drifts past me, as though she’s looking back through years of rot and betrayal. “Varkos was the High Priest then. Skin like cracked bark, eyes like cold stone. He stood in the royal court and declared my daughter-my Maya—a curse. He claimed that if she was not sacrificed before the next Red Moon, the kingdom would fall into ruin: plagues, famine, death.”

Her voice wavers, but only for a moment before it hardens into steel.” My husband, the King, stood against him. He swore that if any man so much as whispered about harming our daughter again, their heads would be in the dirt before sundown. Varkos knew then that his position as High Priest was in jeopardy. He needed proof-evidence to make his lies about my daughter’s so-called curse undeniable or his word would forever mean nothing.”

Her fists clench, fury trembling through her. “That was when he turned to Malik. Desperate Malik. Broken Malik. Hungry Malik. Varkos used him-manipulated him. Promised him power strong enough to destroy you, Jack, in exchange for my daughter. He ordered him to steal Maya, along with Tom, her sworn protector, and deliver them to the witches hut for sacrifice.” My chest constricts. The image sears into my mind-tiny hands bound. frightened cries swallowed by the night.

Her voice sharpens, growing louder, anger bleeding through. “But Varkos lied. The sacrifice was never for the kingdom-it was for him.

He wanted my daughter’s blood to strengthen himself, to cling to life as age withered him away. And Malik-pathetic, power-starved Malik-obeyed. He didn’t even search for Tom when the boy managed to somehow escape. Tom didn’t matter much, only Maya with royal blood.”

Her words shake now, but the fury in her eyes could burn down the palace walls.

“But the Moon Goddess intervened,” she whispers, her breath catching.

“She sent an angel, a woman who became Maya’s adoptive mother.

That is how my daughter was saved-and how Varkos’s ritual failed.”

‘How do you know all of this? In such detail?’

The Queen exhales slowly, Lowering herself back into her chair, as though the weight of it all is crushing her. Disgust twists her features.

“Because he told me,” she spits. “Elder Varkos himself. He’s dying, rotting in his own decay. He came to me secretly last night, begging for a deal. He confessed everything-how he used Malik, how he needed royal blood to survive then and now. He wanted a drop of mine this time. Just one drop, to keep living.”Chapter 176

Her eyes blaze with revulsion. “I almost cut his tongue out for daring to ask, but I didn’t in order to get to the bottom of the truth, so I accepted the deal.”

The silence that follows is deafening, broken only by the rasp of my own breath. Elder Varkos wasn’t just a traitor. He was a parasite. A vulture feeding on the scraps of darker men. And my uncle was no different-perhaps worse. Yet he still haunts the shadows, free, plotting.

“If Elder Varkos confessed, then he’s the true mastermind-not Malik.

Instead of offering him your blood, you should’ve slit his throat. He was the one who ordered the kidnapping. My uncle..” My jaw tightens, fury boiling inside me. “His soul was mine to claim. His body was mine to kill. I hope you understand that, my Queen.”

But the Queen shakes her head, her voice trembling yet firm. “No, Jack.

You don’t understand. According to Elder Varkos, Malik is wielding a higher form of dark magic-the same kind Varkos himself once tried to harness as High Priest, but failed because he lacked royal blood as the key ingredient. For Malik, however, it is stronger. Far worse. That magic is being fueled by something other than royal blood... something powerful enough to shatter the world itself.”

Her eyes darken, heavy with a fear she cannot entirely conceal.

“And even an Alpha King wolf cannot stop him.”

Her words strike me like a blade to the chest. My muscles lock, and the memory of those endless, wasted hours chasing Malik through the cursed woods claws at my mind.

“That’s right, my Queen. I spent eight fucking hours running through those woods after him. Eight hours, and still I couldn’t track him. He cloaked himself in a magic so vile it drained the very life from everycreature around him. He was untouchable-untraceable. And that’s why I came back here. To find Fury. He’s the only one who’s ever managed to come close to him, though it nearly cost him his life. Fury must know what Malik is feeding off-because whatever it is, it’s beyond anything I’ve ever seen.”

The Queen lowers her face into her hands, rubbing her temples as though her skull is splitting from the weight of it all. When she lifts her gaze to mine, her eyes glimmer with something raw-fear, anger, desperation. “My necklace..” Her voice cracks, and my heart turches. “I fear it’s my necklace Malik is using. He must have deceived Celestia, given her a false one after she stole it from my daughter, while keeping the real one for himself to fuel his magic.”

I stare at her, stunned. “Your necklace?”

She nods. “It’s not just a jewel, Jack. Half of my soul is inside it. I feel it

-Like my blood is being drained drop by drop. Dizzy spells. Weakness.” She presses a hand to her chest as though steadying herself. “The necklace is bound to me. If Malik has it... then he has a part of me. I don’t know how he holds it without being burned alive, but if he’s using it..” Her voice sharpens, fierce despite the pain etched across her face.

“Whatever he’s planning, I swear, it will become his downfall.”

A chill races down my spine, my mouth going dry. If it’s true-if Malik is using the Queen’s necklace-then she’s already standing in the shadow of death.

“My Queen..” I swallow hard, forcing my voice steady. “If that’s the case, then your life is already in danger. I’ll summon Fury at once. He must return immediately.”

But before I can move, her hand shoots up, commanding me to stop.

Her eyes flash with authority. “No. Not here. We’ll go to him. At his father’s house.”

I blink, caught off guard. “Why? We can send word-“”Because,” she cuts in sharply, rising from her chair with the grace of a warrior queen despite the weariness dragging at her body, “I suspect Malik still has eyes and ears in this palace. Don’t forget—he once walked these halls as a messenger. He knows every crack, every whisper.”

The thought makes my stomach twist. She’s right.

“I won’t give him the satisfaction of knowing our plans. We move in Silence, that’s the only way to defeat him. Besides”—a ghost of a smile crosses her lips—“it will give me the chance to face Tom’s father again.

He was once my most loyal bodyguard, and I owe him that much.”

I bow my head slightly, though my jaw remains tight. “As you command, my Queen. But if he has your necklace...” My voice drops, low and dangerous. “Then I will not rest until I carve it out of his cursed hands myself.”

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 115

The carriage sways gently as we leave the palace behind. My hand never leaves the Queen’s elbow as I guide her inside and help her to her seat. She doesn’t need the assistance-her bearing is as regal as ever-but something in me refuses to let go. Whether out of respect, instinct, or the gnawing fear that my uncle truly draws his dark magic from her necklace, I cling to her as though my grip alone could shield her life.

For the sake of my mate, they cannot be torn from each other so soon.

When we arrive, a small house sits tucked among wildflowers, their colors glowing even in the pale moonlight. I stare at it longer than I should, the simplicity of it pulling at me.

My chest warms at the thought of living in a place like this one day-with Kali by my side, gray-haired and still bickering with me like she does now. Jasmine too—if she never finds love, she'll need somewhere safe. Somewhere where I can protect her. But the thought twists inside me, because without her wolf, she'll age like a human, fragile and short-lived. And I-

"This would be a place to retire with your loved one, wouldn't it?" the queen's voice cuts through my thoughts. She's watching me closely, her lips curved in something that isn't quite a smile.

I clear my throat, forcing my jaw to relax. "You can retire in a place like this with the King-after everything," I tell her.

She sighs softly. "Only time will tell... if I make it."

Her words hang heavy in the air, pressing down on me. I know exactly what she means, but before I can say anything more, the door to the house creaks open. A man in a wheelchair appears in the doorway, his face breaking into stunned joy.

"Your Highness," he breathes. "I can't believe you're here. You should have sent word—I would have come to you myself."

The Queen bends down, wrapping her arms around him with genuine affection. "And how could I ask that of you when you're in a wheelchair? Would you fly?" she teases gently, her voice carrying both fondness and sorrow. "But tell me... now that you've found your son, shouldn't you be walking already? The hole in your heart is being filled, is it not?"

His eyes shine with something unspoken as he leans closer to her ear, voice low. "I can walk," he admits. "But I don't want Tom to know. If he believes I'm helpless, he'll stay longer and take care of me. I can't risk losing him again."

The queen chuckles softly, though I see the shadow of understanding in her eyes. She straightens and guides him inside.

I follow, though my attention shifts the moment Kali's scent hits me-thick, sharp, enchanting. My pulse quickens. She's here. I can feel it, but as my gaze scours the room, she's nowhere in sight. Then another detail makes my chest tighten: Jasmine's scent. It's faint, barely there at all, like smoke slipping through my fingers. Where the hell-

Fury strides in from the hallway, his arm wrapped protectively-no, possessively-around a woman. She's tucked against him like she's his entire world. For one wild, sickening second, I think it's Jasmine, and my fists clench so hard my knuckles ache. How dare he hold my sister like that.

But as they step into the light, I see her face-and it isn't Jasmine.

Relief crashes into me, tangled with confusion and a sharp bite of anger.

"Fury," I snap and he blinks at me, startled. "Where's Jasmine? I can't find her. And her scent-" My nostrils flare, panic threading every word. "It's almost gone."

Fury scratches the back of his head, his eyes flicking away. He only ever does that when he's nervous.

“About that... please know I’m as surprised as you are.”

“What the hell do you mean? What are you saying?” My voice drops into a snarl, all restraint gone, not caring that he only just clawed his way back from death hours ago. “When you woke up—thanks to my blood—don’t tell me you didn’t see Jasmine. Don’t tell me she didn’t follow you here to see your father, because that’s a damn lie. Her scent was here. I can still smell it.”

Fury’s throat bobs, his eyes betraying him. “That’s right, Alpha Jack... we all came here together. But Jasmine left without telling me, and there was nothing I could do to stop her.”

The sound that tears out of me is half-growl, half-snarl, shaking the room. The woman clinging to Fury gasps, stumbling back in fear. In a heartbeat, I’ve got Fury pinned to the wall, my hand crushing his throat, the wood groaning beneath the pressure of his back. His face burns red as he chokes for air.

“What do you mean she left without telling you and there was nothing you could do?” I roar. “You know she’s weak-human-weak. How the fuck couldn’t you protect her, like you promised? Why didn’t you go after her?”

My fingers dig deeper. Fury claws at my wrist, the alpha wolf in him straining to fight back, his aura prickling sharp, but he doesn’t let it surface. He holds it in, and the woman sobbing at his side pleads through her tears, but her voice is just noise to me.

Kali’s scent hits me before her voice does—sweet, grounding, dangerous in the way only she can be. Her footsteps reach my heart, then her hand presses against my arm.

“Jack,” she whispers. “Let him go. You’re about to kill him... in front of his mate.”

I freeze. Fury... found his mate? My eyes flick to the trembling woman reaching desperately for him. The sight only sharpens my anger, but then Kali’s palm slides higher up my arm, her voice wrapping around my fury like chains.

“It’s not Fury’s fault Jasmine left,” she says softly. “This is what she wanted—her own path. And it’s my fault... for letting her.”

I whip my head toward her. “Your fault? What do you mean your fault?” My voice cracks, raw with desperation. “Don’t you dare blame yourself.”

Fury didn’t protect her—

“No,” Kali cuts me off, her eyes fierce. “This is what Jasmine desperately wanted. She didn’t want to live in anyone’s shadow—not yours, not mine. This was her choice.”

My hand slackens against Fury’s throat. He drops to the ground, gasping for air, clutching at his neck while his mate crouches beside him, sobbing into his shoulder. My chest feels like it’s been hollowed out with a dull blade. I can’t breathe. My twin... out there, alone.

Fragile. And I can’t protect her.

“For Jasmine’s sake, we can’t go after her. If you want her to heal, to come back stronger to us... you have to let her go.” I close my eyes, but it does nothing to dull the ache. It doesn’t stop the image of Jasmine breaking apart without me. My fists tremble uselessly at my sides. I failed her as a brother again.

“You haven’t failed her,” Kali whispers, as though she can hear my thoughts. “You have nothing to worry about, love. Jasmine is safe. I made sure she has the strongest, most trustworthy warriors protecting her. And my mother helped choose them. Isn’t that right, Mother?”

“Yes,” the Queen’s voice answers from behind me, calm and assured.” In fact, before you even arrived, Jack, I received a letter confirming her safety in the place she’s gone. You needn’t worry.”

I spin on her, chest heaving. “Then why the hell didn’t you tell me? You nearly made me kill Fury.”

The Queen only laughs, her eyes glinting with mischief. “I wanted Tom

” to feel a fraction of the pain Jasmine felt when she left. He is, after all, the main reason her heart was broken. Let him carry some of that weight.”

I blow out a shaky breath, forcing myself to let it go. The rage seeps out, leaving nothing but exhaustion. I turn back to Kali, pulling her into my arms. Holding her feels like breathing again. But then... I notice something strange.

Her heartbeat. It’s too fast. Her breath, shallow against my chest. I pull back, frowning down at her. “Kali... why are you breathing so hard?

Your heartbeat-”

She smirks up at me, her lips curling like she’s been keeping a secret.” Even you couldn’t tell? I’m with a baby, Jack.” Her hand slides to her stomach. “Our baby.”

For a moment, I swear the ground disappears beneath me. My eyes nearly fall out of their sockets. “You’re-” My voice stammers uselessly. “You’re pregnant?” And then I see it-the tiredness etched into her face, the subtle learnof her body into mine, like she’s been carrying this weight in silence all along.

Before I can speak again, the queen gasps and pushes me aside, tears streaming down her face as she clasps Kali in her arms. “I’m going to be a grandmother. This is a dream come true.”

Kali laughs softly, hugging her back, then returns to me. I sweep her off her feet, spinning her in the air, laughter and relief bursting out of me. “I’m going to be a father,” I say, voice cracking with joy. “This is the happiest day of my life. I just know it-it’ll be a boy. Our little prince.”

The queen snorts, an amused smirk on her lips. “Weren’t you just crying about your sister? And now it’s the happiest day of your life?

What a brother you are.” She shakes her head. “And it’s not a boy. It’s a girl.”

Kali giggles, still in my arms. “How do you know that, Mother?”

The Queen's smile softens, though something heavier lingers beneath her tone. "I just know. A gut feeling. A very strong and powerful girl, just like you, my lovely Maya."

But as she says it, I swear the flicker of her smile never reaches her eyes.

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 116

I can't believe it. There's a baby inside me.

A real, living, breathing piece of life growing in my womb.

The words keep circling in my head like vultures, making my chest tighten until it feels like I can't breathe. How did I not know? How did my wolf not sense it? She's supposed to be bound to every shift in my body, every ripple in my soul-yet she was silent. We were blind.

– And the shame cuts me deeper than anything.

What kind of mother doesn't even realize she's carrying her child?

I bite down on my lip, hard enough that the metallic tang of blood spreads across my tongue. My hands tremble where they rest against my knees, and no matter how I try to steady them, the panic keeps bubbling. It had to be her-Nora, Fury's mate, someone I barely knew and had even almost despised-who broke the news to me. Now I'm not only drowning in guilt but also bound by this invisible thread of debt to her.

A warm hand slips around my waist, firm and grounding. Jack. Oh, how I missed him. It's like he can feel the storm inside me; he pulls me close until my side rests against his chest. His scent-cedarwood and earth after rain-calms the tremors in my bones. I glance up, and his expression is reassuring, his dark eyes glowing faintly with the softness only he ever shows me. Without a word, his palm moves to my belly. The moment he touches me there, his thumb circling slow and reverent, my heart skips.

I already know-he'll be the best father, everything I could never be.

He'll never let me drown.

Silently, I make a promise to myself: once we're back at the palace, 'll demand answers from a doctor. How long has this little life been growing inside me without my knowing?

But before the guilt can consume me again, Jack presses a gentle kiss. to my temple and whispers, low enough for only me to hear:

"We'll figure this out together. You're not alone, baby."

His words soothe me in a way nothing else ever could.

We're all gathered now in the living room, the air heavy with everything unspoken. My mother-the queen-sits at the centre, regal and unreadable, her gaze sweeping the room like she's weighing every soul here. Beside her, Fury's father sits in a wheelchair. His once-commanding presence may be dimmed, but not lost; his sharp eyes still hold authority, even if his body has betrayed him—or so it seems.

Something in my gut whispers that man could stand if he wished.

Across from me, Fury shifts uncomfortably, his jaw still tight from

* being held at the throat by Jack earlier yet, there's no bitterness left in his expression, only a kind of weary acceptance.

Jack clears his throat, finally voicing the words he's been holding back.

"Fury... about earlier," he begins carefully, his arm still protectively around me. "I owe you an apology. I didn't mean—"

Fury raises a hand, cutting him off. "Don't apologise, Alpha." His voice is rough but not hostile. His gaze drops, as though the weight of his own confession presses him down. "It wasn't your fault. It was mine.

The moment I found my mate, Jasmine... she just vanished from my mind. It wasn't intentional. It was the mate bond."

Jack nods slowly, understanding in his eyes. "I get it. The bond changes everything. It makes you see nothing else. Believe me, I know."

He turns his head toward me, and the corner of his lips curves into a smile that makes my cheeks heat, and the way he looks at me—it's like I'm the only one alive in this room. Fury huffs out a breath, shaking his head as if still wrestling with his own truth. Then Nora shifts on his lap, her hands curting into his shirt as if anchoring him. Her face flushes under everyone's eyes, but Fury doesn't care as he holds her without hesitation, like she belongs nowhere else.

The Queen clears her throat but doesn't speak. Still, I catch the faint twitch of her jaw, the way her shoulders never fully relax, and the shadows beneath her eyes that no amount of makeup can disguise. My mother looks like a queen to everyone else, but to me... she looks tired.

Too tired. Something is wrong, and the realisation twists uneasily in my chest.

"Let's cut to the chase and not waste the Queen's time. She needs her rest," Jack says, sparing her a quick glance before turning to Fury." About your unfortunate encounter with my uncle—you must have realized by now that he feeds on darkness. The darkest kind. That's how he's become strong enough to defeat a warrior like you, and why he remains so untraceable, no matter how hard I try to find him."

Fury's eyes glint with memory. "He's using the Queen's reat necklace. It doesn't burn him—it fuels him. That's how he beat me. He wasn't just strong—he was fast, relentless. He crushed my legs

with a spell before I could even fight back. And he said it himself: he's wielding a form of dark magic this world has never seen." His voice drops, rough. "Even if the princess reassured me you'll face him and make him pay, I need you to understand-what I saw in him defies words."

The Queen finally speaks. "Just as I feared. He's feeding on my necklace

—on my power, my strength." Her gaze flickers briefly toward me, unreadable, before returning to Jack. "You wonder how he can hold it without burning alive? He traded his soul and body for it."

Jack's nostrils flare. "What do you mean?"

My mother's eyes darken, the weight of her words pressing down on us. "The magic he bound himself to is called Veydris. It is forbidden-older than wolves, older than kingdoms, older than memory itself.

Veydris does not grant power, It consumes. It strips away the soul, devours the body, and leaves nothing but a vessel of rot and hunger.

He may seem unstoppable now, but his life is burning away like a candle thrown into fire. A year, perhaps two-and when that flame dies, there will be nothing left of him but ash."

Her voice sharpens, cracking through the silence like a whip. "And until that day comes, every moment he breathes, he will drag as many souls as he can into the abyss with him. He does not simply want to kill us.

He wants to damn us. To pull this entire kingdom into hell at his side." A year or two. That's all he has left. But long enough to tear our world apart. Long enough to destroy everything. Jack's uncle has always been cruel-but now he is desperate. And desperation is far more dangerous than cruelty.

Jack's chest heaves, his jaw locked like stone. "Then I'll fight him. I'll find him and end this. I don't care what it takes. I will keep searching, keep hunting—" His eyes burn with the kind of stubborn rage I've seen before-the kind that refuses to bend, no matter how impossible the odds.

The Queen's gaze snaps to him. "No. I told you- not even an Alpha King's wolf can take him down."

The words slice through the room, cold and final. Jack defiance falters for the briefest second before he bares his teeth. "Then who? Who else can take him down if not me? I defeated him when I was only sixteen. I can do it again—ten times, a thousand times! I will beat that bastard no matter how strong he—"

"You cannot destroy him that way!" she cuts in, her voice thundering with a power that makes the walls seem to tremble. For the first time, I see her façade slip, her pain surfacing in the glimmer of her tired eyes. "You think brute strength will defeat Veydris? No. You'll only throw yourself into the fire he has become. And I will not bury another soul because of his madness."

Jack's fists shake at his sides, Fury looks stricken, and .. I can't stop staring at my mother. At the quiet cracks in her armor.

Then she exhales slowly, almost as if forcing herself to steady. Her gaze sweeps over us, hard. “There is only one way to end this.”

My breath catches. “What way?”

Her lips curve into something that’s not quite a smile, not quite a grimace-just the look of someone who’s already chosen a path far darker than she wants to admit. “I have a plan,” she says softly. “But my husband-your king-can never know. This will end, once and for all.”

My heart pounds like a drum of warning in my chest. Because the way she said it... it didn’t sound like a promise.

It sounded like a sacrifice.

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 117

“No!” The word rips from my throat before I even realize I’ve leapt to my feet. The chair scrapes harshly against the floor as my glare locks on my mother. I know that look in her eyes-the one that tells me whatever she’s planning, it isn’t good.

Her brows arch, feigning surprise. “No? No what, child?”

“No, Mother.” My voice trembles with irritation. “You are not doing whatever it is that’s brewing in your head.”

She exhales, the faintest sigh, as if already weary of me. “But I haven’t even-”

“I don’t want to hear it!” I snapped, cutting her off. “You weren’t going to tell Father because you know he would never approve of whatever reckless idea you’ve concocted. And you think telling me will make it better? That I’ll somehow agree?” My chest heaved, rage scorching through my veins. “I am your daughter, for heaven’s sake.”

Jack’s hand slides over mine, firm and grounding, but | yank away, refusing to soften. My glare doesn’t leave her. “I won’t-”

“Calm down, Maya,” she says firmly, though her voice quivers at the edges. “Getting worked up isn’t good for the baby. Sit. Listen to what I have to say before you disagree.”

Around me, everyone murmurs in agreement, their eyes urging me to breathe, to let her speak. Even Jack’s gaze pleads with me. My chest rises and falls rapidly, but eventually I exhale through my teeth and drop back into my seat, my body taut and unyielding.

The Queen lifts her chin, her mask of strength settling back in place. “I am going to fight Malik.”

I jolt forward, ready to shout again, but she raises her hand quickly, words spilling out in a rush. “Even though I will win, I am not fighting him physically. You don’t need to fear that.”

“Oh? Then tell me, Your Highness...” Jack drawls, sarcasm sharp in his tone. “How exactly do you defeat a man without fighting him? Because last I checked, Malik doesn’t surrender to words.”

Her lips twitch, not quite a smite. “You think Malik cannot be beaten without steel or blood? You are wrong. The very power that sustains him will betray him. The necklace is bound to me—my life, my soul, my command. He may wield it now, but he is nothing more than a thief clutching stolen fire. And thieves always pay.”

My heart stutters painfully as Mother’s gaze hardens, her voice carrying the kind of finality that makes the room colder. “When the time comes, I will speak the words of binding. The necklace will turn on him, drink deep of his soul—thread by thread—until every ounce of his power is torn away. Inside its prison, he will be stripped bare, helpless, forced to face me without the shadows he hides behind.”

Her eyes glitter coldly. “And then, within that void, I will unravel him piece by piece until there is nothing left but silence. His name, his face, his cruelty—erased.”

The words steal the air from my lungs. Fury stares wide-eyed, Nora pale at his side.

“Wait...” Nora’s soft voice cuts in hesitantly. Her fingers twist in her lap as she swallows. “Does that mean... Your soul will be drawn into the necklace as well, to defeat him?”

Mother’s nod is small, but it detonates like thunder in my chest.

“No,” I whisper, then louder as I spring back up, fire returning to my voice. “No! I don’t know how or why, but I feel it—this is dangerous.” My hands tremble as I clutch my stomach, protectively, instinctively.”

You’re not telling us everything.”

Her eyes soften slightly, her mask slipping enough for me to see the fatigue etched deep into her bones. “Maya, this is the only way. I have thought of every other path. This is the one that will end Malik once and for all without anyone else getting hurt. Everything will work out.”

The words taste like ash in my mouth. “Let’s say, Mother, your plan is perfect. Then how, exactly, are we supposed to draw out his soul?”

Her answer comes too easily, too rehearsed. “That will be simple. We use bait—something Malik cannot resist. Once he appears before me, I recite the ritual. His soul and mine will be drawn into the necklace.

Inside, I will finish him. And when I do—Jack, thank the Moon Goddess you are royal blood now and not you, Kali, who carry life inside you—you will take the necklace and destroy it immediately. That will be the end of Malik, once and for all.” Jack straightens, determination blazing in his eyes. Fury lowers his head in grim acceptance. But all I can think is that something is wrong.

Horribly, horribly wrong:

Because my mother is too calm. Too certain. And my heart whispers the truth can't bear to say aloud-if the necklace is destroyed with both souls trapped inside, then Mother will die alongside Malik. Right...

Right?

"Everyone, please leave. I need to speak with Kali alone," Mother says.

It's the first time she's ever called me Kali instead of Maya and the sound of it only makes the knot in my stomach twist tighter.

Jaçk lingers, his eyes full of worry, before he bends to press a soft kiss against my lips. It's brief, but it steadies me. Fury and Nora wheel his father out, whispering quietly as the heavy door closes with a dull thud that echoes far too loudly in my ears.

And then it's just us.

Mother rises with slow grace, though I notice the tremor in her hand as she straightens her gown. She crosses the room and sits beside me, Lowering herself carefully, as though even the weight of her own body is too much. My heart squeezes at how tired she looks. She pulls me gently until my head rests against her chest. I hear her heartbeat-steady, warm, but not as strong as it should be.

"I understand your fears," she says softly, stroking my hair.

I jolt up, meeting her eyes, and shake my head hard enough that strands whip across my face. "No, you don't, Mother. You don't understand my fears, because if you did-you wouldn't take this risk." My voice cracks, breaking under the storm inside me. "For heaven's sake, we just found each other again, and now we're about to be separated for life if things don't go according to plan." Her lips tremble, but she doesn't look away. "That's exactly why we should make the most of the time now. You think I want to do this because I don't value my life?" She cups my cheek, her palm cool against my flushed skin. "I'm doing this for you-for Maya. What if Malik comes again to harm you or my grandchild? How could I live with myself if I didn't act?"

At the mention of Malik harming my baby, a shiver runs down my spine. I picture his cruel smile, his hand tightening on the necklace that drains her life bit by bit, and bile rises in my throat.

"You don't understand how dangerous he is," she continues, her voice a mix of steel and sorrow. "I know you're worried I might die in the process. But Kali... I am Queen for a reason."

Her attempt at firmness only rips me apart further. "You're not invincible!" I snap, my fists clenching in my lap. "He's already drawing power from your necklace—I can see it in your face. You're weaker than you were yesterday. Every time he uses it, it's like he's stealing pieces of you!"

She sighs, long and tired, then-out of nowhere-smiles. "Well, at least he hasn't stolen my good looks yet. Imagine me wrinkled and gray overnight." She chuckles lightly, like she's trying to pull me into her joke.

I glare at her, my throat burning. "That's not funny."

“Maybe not,” she admits, her hand slipping over mine, “but laughter makes the fear smaller. And I don’t want you to look back and only remember me as someone who made you cry.”

My eyes blur with tears I refuse to let fall. I can’t let them-because if they start, they won’t stop. “You’re impossible,” | whisper, shaking my head, but my lips twitch despite myself.

“That’s my girl,” she says, pressing a kiss to the top of my hair. “Now... let’s make the most of our time. I want to show you everything I’veplanned for us once we reach the palace. You’ll love it, I promise.”

I swallow the lump in my throat and nod, even though my chest feels like it’s splintering apart. “Then let’s make the most of it, Mum. Every second.”

Her smile softens, but her eyes flicker with something I can’t quite place-fear, maybe. Or resignation.

“Yes,” she says, squeezing my hand. “Every second. Because once we get there... things may never be the same again.”

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 118

We don’t waste another heartbeat-Mother and I both know every moment counts now. Hand in hand, we leave Fury’s father’s house before the sun even begins to rise, with Jack at our side, protective as ever. Fury and Nora decide to stay behind.

“I want to take care of him for a while,” Fury says, his hand resting firmly on his father’s wheelchair. “He needs me.”

Jack clasps his shoulder. “Do what feels right. But Fury... remember, the Alpha position in Blood Fang is still open. Alphas from other packs are already competing for it. But you-” he pauses, weighing his words carefully, “you’re no ordinary wolf anymore. You’ve got Alpha King blood running through your veins. That makes you stronger than any of them. Strong enough to win. And the Blood Fang deserves a leader who’s loyal, not greedy for power. Someone who truly loves the pack.

You were their warrior, their shield. That means something.”

Fury’s eyes glisten for a second before he looks away. “I’ll think about it,”he mutters, though the way Nora squeezes his hand tells me she already knows what choice he’s leaning toward.

We leave them there, and the journey back to the palace is quiet-too quiet. Jack and Mother whisper about Malik, about strategies, weaving plans to bait him out of hiding. But my thoughts drift far from war and revenge.

They circle instead around something smaller, softer... and infinitely scarier.

The tiny spark of life inside me.

I press a palm against my belly, still flat, still impossible to imagine.

How can something so little hold so much weight? My baby. My miracle. My heart hammers at the thought-part fear, part awe. Am I ready for this? Will I even know what to do?The carriage halts and before anyone can say a word, I bolt out. Jack calls my name, but I don't stop. My feet carry me down the familiar halls, past bowing servants, straight to the healer's wing.

The doctor blinks up at me, startled, as I slam the door shut behind me.

"Princess Kali? What-"

"I need to know. Right now." My voice is trembling, and I don't care. "

How long have I been pregnant?"

He frowns, clearly baffled, but begins his examination. Moments later, his brows shoot up. "Extraordinary. You're only a day pregnant."

My heart skips. "A day?"

"Yes," he says slowly, as though he hardly believes it himself. "And the fact that you could sense it so soon... Princess, it's nearly impossible to detect naturally at this stage. Even with our wolves, even with our equipment, life usually isn't confirmed until a week or two in."

I breathe out, shaky and relieved. "It wasn't me," I whisper. "It was... someone else. Someone who grew up in a pack clinic, helping mothers through childbirth. She told me."

The doctor leans back, eyes wide. "Then she is gifted indeed. To know something so delicate, so soon-that's beyond ordinary skill."

His words untangle the knot of guilt that has been choking me. I'm not failing already. I'm not a bad mother for not knowing. My hand presses against my belly again, and this time, it doesn't scare me. It feels... right. A laugh slips from my lips, light and free.

And then the door bursts open. Jack storms in, eyes blazing, chest heaving like he's been running through fire. "Kali!" He scans the room until his gaze lands on me. "Why the hell did you disappear like that?"

Before the poor doctor can even breathe, Jack's hand is around his throat, slamming him against the wall. "What happened? Is my matenever had. She pulls me into her chambers, where silks and jewels glitter in warm lamplight, insisting | try them all. We laugh until our stomachs hurt as I tripp over gowns too long for me, until she finally declares lam the worst model in the kingdom.

She paints my lips in her shade of dark red, the one that always made her look fierce and regal. On me, it makes me look less like a queen and more like her daughter. Sometimes she pauses, staring at me too long, her fingers brushing my cheek as if she's trying to memorize me.

I want to reassure her-that everything will be fine, that she will defeat Malik because she's a queen, because she's unstoppable. But the words tangle in my throat, heavy with doubt. For the first time, I don't believe them. And it makes me want to beg her to abandon her plan, to think of another way. But deep down, I know there isn't one.

At night, we curl up together in her bed as though I were a child again, blankets tucked to our chins. She strokes my hair until my eyes grow heavy, then turns her attention to my belly, speaking to my baby as though it isn't still just a seed-tiny, barely a week old, not yet fully formed.

"She's going to be so strong," Mother says, grinning ear to ear.

"She," I echo, smirking. "Jack insists it's a boy."

Her expression hardens, not unkindly but with the weight of certainty. "It's a girl. I know it. And when she comes, you'll give her my name."

I blink at her. "So demanding. What if I want to name her after myself?"

Mother laughs, brushing her thumb across my brow. "You'll see. She's mine as much as she's yours. I'll hold her first and even if I don't she must be named after me."

Her voice drops soft but fierce, like an oath carved into stone.

Something prickles at the back of my neck. As the days pass, I see it more clearly-the fear in her eyes, the way her laughter never quite hides it. I know the time is near. The moment she must face Malik. never bring him up again. I don't want to shatter our little moments, not when we've had almost a week of stolen joy-of braiding, giggling, and stories I thought I'd never hear.

"Fine," I whisper at last, leaning my head on her shoulder. "If it's a girl, she'll have your name."

Satisfied, she smiles, and begins reading to me. Her voice is the same one that used to soothe me when nightmares clawed at my sleep. I close my eyes, lulled by the rhythm, by the warmth of her beside me, by the steady touch of her hand on mine.

When I open them again...

She's gone.

The bed is cold. The place where she had been lying feels hollow,

- drained of everything. My chest tightens as I sit up, glancing around wildly. The air has changed-sharp, biting, the kind of cold that creeps into your bones.

"Mother?" My voice cracks.

Nothing answers.

The connection between us is gone, severed so suddenly it feels like the air has been ripped from my lungs. Terror claws at me, icy and suffocating, as my worst fear fills me.

She's gone to confront Malik.

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 119

No. No, no.

I throw the covers aside and stumble to my feet, ignoring the sharp, tearing ache in my chest, that raw emptiness where our bond should be.

“Mother?” My voice trembles even as I call out, though I already know she won't answer.

I race through the palace halls, the marble floors cold beneath my feet as I desperately search, sniffing the air for even the faintest trace of her scent. Nothing.

Panic surges higher, choking me as I search harder-rooms, corridors, gardens—each one empty, each one echoing the same truth. She's gone.

And worse-Jack's scent is gone too.

He left with her to bait Malik since he's the one who has to break that damn necklace once Malik's soul is trapped.

Why? Why would they leave without telling me? As though I'm some fragile child, too weak to face the truth.

Anger surges, hot and bitter, burning through the panic. At my mother

—for slipping away without even saying goodbye, without trusting me enough to tell me. At myself—for not seeing it coming.

But most of all, at Jack.

I reach for him through our bond, my mate, my supposed other half-and slam into nothing. He's blocked me. Cut me out completely. I can't feel his fear, his rage, his love. Just silence.

“Fuck!” The word rips from me, echoing down the hall, sharp enough to make two passing omegas flinch.

I grab one by the arm, my eyes blazing. “The Queen. Alpha Jack. Did you see where they went?”

The girl shakes her head-frantically, eyes wide. “N-no, my lady. No one saw them leave.”

With a scoff, I shove her aside and whirl on the guard stationed at the entrance. “You-speak. Did you see the queen?”

The warrior bows stiffly. “No, Princess.”

I press my trembling hands to my stomach, forcing deep breaths. Calm down. For the baby. If I lose control, I risk losing the tiny spark of life inside me.

But the anger refuses to settle. My nails dig into my palms. How do I find them? How do I find Mother?

Then my father comes to mind-the only one who could possibly know where she is. Mother's warning not to involve him flickers in my thoughts, her voice reminding me to keep him in the dark. But right now? I don't care. She's gone, and he has to know something.

It's the first time I've ever sought him out here. His office is on the far wing, but his scent guides me easily-it's powerful, like smoke and iron, threaded with something warmer. Fatherly.

Guilt gnaws at me with every step. It drags me forward like gravity until I'm standing before a door I've never dared approach. I've kept my distance for days, even when he tried to bridge the gap. I told myself it was because of Celestia. Because I wasn't the daughter he loved.

Because he chose her to pour himself into. Maybe that was true. Or maybe I was just punishing him.

But I don't have the luxury of bitterness anymore. Not if it means saving her. I knock once. Silence.

My heart slams against my ribs. I push the door open.

"Father?"

The sight inside makes my blood run cold.

The mighty Alpha King-my father-clutches his skull in both hands, his body hunched and trembling violently. His skin flickers with fur, claws ripping through his fingers as his frame bulks and shrinks, caught between man and wolf. A guttural growl shakes the room, laced with agony so raw it makes my stomach turn.

"Father!" I cry, rushing to his side.

His head jerks up at the sound of my voice, eyes wild and glowing-half man, half beast. Even through the torment, surprise flashes in them.

"Father, what's wrong?" I grip his shoulders, desperate to steady him, but his whole body quakes like he's barely tethered to himself. His eyes flicker from wolf to man, his teeth snapping as if fighting some unseen force, and for one terrifying moment, I think his wolf will rip free entirely. His claws scrape across the desk, gouging deep lines in the wood.

"It's... the Queen." The words rasp from his throat like burning coals.

His chest heaves with ragged breaths. "I can't-" His claws clutch at his chest, half-shifted hands trembling. "I can't feel her, Kali. Our bond... it's-" He shakes his head violently, sweat dripping from his temple. "It's blocked. It feels like it's breaking." "Breaking? That's impossible. You and Mother-your bond is eternal."

His lips curls back over sharp fangs. “The only way it could break is if she’s rejecting me... or dying.” His voice cracks, raw with disbelief.” Neither should be possible. Unless...” His golden eyes blaze with tortured light. “Unless the Moon Goddess herself has intervened.”

“No—no,” I stammer, breath hitching. My stomach twists, and my hand flies instinctively to my belly, as if I could shield the fragile life growing inside me from this horror. “I don’t think it’s the Moon Goddess doing this... I think it’s because-”

His growl cuts me off. “Because of what?”

And then it all pours out-everything I swore I would never reveal. The truth tears past my lips before I can stop it. “She’s gone to fight Malik.”

His head snaps toward me, eyes blazing gold.

“Mother didn’t want you to know,” I rush out, panicked. “Malik was the one who kidnapped me and Tom, who caused all of her suffering-and he stole her necklace from me using Celestia. He’s been using it to fuel his dark magic. Father... he’s bound to Veydris. That forbidden power is consuming him. She believes the only way to end it is through her necklace-to trap his soul inside. Jack went with her to destroy it once Malik is sealed.”

For a heartbeat, silence. Then his face goes deathly pale.

“Veydris?” His voice breaks into a snarl of disbelief. His hands slam against the desk so hard the wood cracks beneath his claws. His whole body trembles with fury and horror. “No... no, no! How the hell did Malik get his hands on such darkness? That magic was banished centuries ago-it was never meant for mortal hands!”

He roars, the sound shaking the room. “Veydris demands a balance! A life for a life! Do you understand what that means? For your mother to face it... it will cost her everything.”

My throat goes dry. “W-what do you mean?”

“If Malik is bound to Veydris, then to fight him... your mother must give her life. Her soul will be pulled into that necklace with his. And when Jack destroys it—” He pounds a fist against his chest, his snarl breaking with pain. “She will perish alongside him!”

“No!” My scream rips out of me, tearing through the walls. “I thought-she must have a way out, she’s the owner of the necklace-”

“There is no way out!” he bellows, his voice shattering like thunder. His claws dig deep gouges into the wood of his chair.

“Veydris devours everything. The only escape is death. Yes, she will reincarnate-but as a child, stripped of all memory. Maya, your mother must die before she can be reborn.”

That’s why she smiled so fiercely. Why she spoke with such certainty.

Why she swore my baby would be a girl.

She knew.

She knew she would die... only to return as my daughter.

“Fuck,” I whisper, tears burning down my cheeks. “She already decided.

She’s going to die. That’s why... that’s why she was so sure.”

The King growls, Low and agonized, clutching his chest again as if the mate bond itself is tearing him apart. “Foolish woman,” he spits through his pain. “To do this without me. To do this alone.” His roar shakes the air, primal and broken.

“Dad, we have to hurry!” I grab his arm, desperate, my own chest splitting with panic. “Please, you’re the Alpha King, her mate. You can track her—find her!” His eyes snap up to mine, filled with anguish and rage, but also something worse—defeat.

“Even if I do, maya..” His voice is a growl pushed through gritted teeth.

His breath comes ragged, his body shuddering. “It will already be too late once the necklace is destroyed. Her soul dies. Nothing can stop it.”

“No...” I whisper, shaking my head furiously, clutching his arm tighter.”

No. There has to be another way.”

But the haunted look in his eyes tells me everything.

My mother is walking straight into death.

And we’re too late to stop her.

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 120

The night air is sharp, heavy with the tang of ash and something darker

—corruption that clings to the earth itself. The Queen stands cloaked in shadows, her breathing steady though her pulse races. Her fingers curl against the hollow of her throat where her necklace should rest—but it lies in the wrong hands, Malik’s. She can feel him feeding from it, leeching her strength, making every heartbeat slower, heavier. Still, she steels herself. Tonight, it ends.

Jack steps into the clearing, tall and proud, standing in the very place where he had once found Fury’s body broken and bleeding, after Malik nearly killed him. Because Malik wields darkness-magic that stains every place it touches—the residue lingers here, a foul mark on the earth. That stain is a door, a tether, a point of return. Jack knows Malik can appear anywhere his magic has left its trace. And here, of all places, the pull will be strongest.

Moonlight glints in Jack's eyes, catching the steel within them, the hardness carved by years of grief and fury. His jaw is clenched, fists balled tight, his every movement a storm barely contained. He knows his role: draw his uncle out, enrage him, force him into the open.

But he hates it-that Kali isn't here, that she doesn't know he and her mother have already gone to face the darkness. If she had known, she would have fought to come, and her fear would have been a weapon Malik would use against them. Worse still, her presence would have.

Jack tells himself it was necessary to keep her in the dark, but bitterness burns all the same. He hadn't even said goodbye.

"Uncle!" Jack's voice rips through the night. His words aren't bait-they're truth sharpened into a weapon. "I know you're watching.

Crawling in the dark like the rat you are. Come out and face me. Or are you still limping from the day I broke you?"

The Queen closes her eyes briefly, praying his words are enough. She knows Malik's pride, his hunger for vengeance. He won't resist. Silence falls, so deep it presses against their skin. Then-laughter.

Twisted, hoarse, like metal scraping against bone.

The shadows stir. The earth cracks. And Malik steps out.

Jack stiffens, and though he had prepared himself, the sight still strikes him like a blow. Fury's words hadn't been exaggerations-they had been warnings. Malik's body is almost unrecognizable. His once-proud frame is gaunt, twisted, veins blackened and crawling up his skin like serpents. His eyes are pits of void, glowing faintly red at the edges, hollow and yet burning with unholy fire. His gait is uneven, one leg dragging, but it does not speak of weakness. Instead, it radiates menace, as though every step spills poison into the ground.

"Alpha Jack.." Malik's voice drips with mockery, stretched thin and hollow, warped by Veydris itself. "The little pup who thought himself a wolf. You broke my legs, yes..." His cracked lips split into a ghastly grin.

But you didn't finish the job. That was your father's mistake, too. And look how he ended."

Jack's muscles ripple with restrained violence. A growl rumbles deep in his chest as he takes a step forward. "You're not even a wolf anymore. Just a parasite. A disgrace to our bloodline."

Malik tilts his head. For a fleeting moment, his face flickers-remnants of the man he once was surfacing before dissolving back into corruption. "Our bloodline made me," he rasps. "And it will end with me."

Still hidden in the shadows, the Queen's hand trembles as her gaze locks onto the necklace wrapped around Malik's neck. The time is near.

Her breath hitches, knees weakening beneath the pult of it-Malik is draining her even now. But she does not step out. Not until his guard is fully down. That is the plan.

Jack narrows his eyes, voice cutting through the tension. “Then finish what you started, Uncle. Face me like a wolf-if there’s anything left of you at all.

Malik’s laughter splits the night again, his body twitching in unnatural spasms, veins glowing faintly with the sickly power of Veydris.

And then-he lunges. Darkness pours off him like smoke.

Jack wastes no time. Bones snap and stretch, fur bursts across his skin, and in a flash his Alpha King wolf towers in the clearing. His massive frame gleams faintly beneath the moonlight, golden eyes blazing like molten fire. A snarl tears from his throat, deep and earth-shaking, a warning reverberating through the forest.

But Malik shows no fear. The shadows cling to him, coiling around his body like a second skin, a living armor of darkness. When Jack charges, claws slashing, Malik meets him with a hand engulfed in black fire.

The collision shatters the ground beneath them.

Jack pushes, his teeth snapping inches from Malik’s throat, but the Veydris pulses-sickly, vile-and with a surge of impossible strength no mortal wolf should possess, Malik shoves him back. Jack slams into the earth, the impact exploding dust and stone into the air.

The Queen clenches her fists, her throat tightening with panic. She had known it would be like this-but seeing it, watching her son-in-law fight darkness incarnate—it is worse than any nightmare.

Jack claws himself free from the crater, lips curling back in a snarl. He leaps again, but Malik is faster. A whip of shadow cracks across Jack’s arm, slicing deep. His wolf howls, staggering, blood splattering across the dirt.

Malik chuckles, low and poisonous, his cracked lips curling into a smirk. “Even with Alpha King blood, you’re still nothing, boy. Nothing against Veydris. Nothing against me. Now submit, you fool.”

Jack growls, dragging himself upright, refusing to bow. His massive frame trembles, but his eyes burn with defiance.

Malik circles him, dragging his crippled leg yet radiating power with every step. “You don’t know how long I’ve waited for this. How much I’ve sacrificed. My blood, my flesh, my soul-all for this day, when I make you watch everything you love burn.”

Jack lunges again, fury fueling him, but Malik twists, shadows snaking around his throat, slamming him into the dirt. Jack claws at the darkness choking him, his body buckling under the force.

Malik leans close, his hollow eyes gleaming with madness. “After I kill you, nephew, I’ll start with your mate. I’ll tear her apart, piece by piece, for daring to defy me. And before I let her die, I’ll sell her to beasts who’ll do unspeakable things to her. You’ll watch from the afterlife, powerless, as her screams echo forever.”

A guttural snarl tears from Jack's chest, rage and fear warring in his blazing eyes. He thrashes, claws digging trenches into the dirt, but Malik's hold doesn't break. The shadows choke tighter.

Malik grins, lips peeling back from broken teeth. "Big, bad Alpha King...

Look at you now. Crawling like a dog. Worthless."

He raises his other hand, the shadow twisting into a spear of black fire, aiming for Jack's heart.

And then —

"Enough."

The voice is calm, regal, cutting through the night like a blade of light.

Malik freezes, the smirk lingering as he turns slowly. The Queen steps from the shroud of shadows she has concealed herself within through an ancient spell, her presence like a storm contained within fragile flesh. Her gown ripples in the night wind, her face calm, though her eyes are hard as steel. "Your Highness." Malik bows with mocking grace, shadows hissing around him like serpents. His lips curl into a wicked grin. "You should have sent me a personal invitation if you wished to see me—instead of using my pathetic nephew as bait."

Jack gasps for breath, forcing himself up on shaky legs, golden eyes snapping to the queen. His chest heaves, fury and terror mixing in his expression.

The Queen's face betrays no fear as she meets Malik's gaze, every inch the sovereign, though her heart pounds and her knees tremble beneath the relentless pull of his magic.

Tonight, it ends—for good.