

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 51

I'm not just pissed-I'm furious. So angry I can barely think straight.

How dare he?

Jack with his obsessive, possessive behaviour. He had the audacity to question my loyalty, to accuse Fury of being in love with me, as if I'm some prize they can toss back and forth. I've always seen Fury like a brother. No, scratch that-he's more like a shield I never asked for but somehow always had at my side. Loyal. Protective.

But Jack didn't see any of that.

He stood there, all Alpha pride and sharp accusations, speaking down to me like I was his possession. He saw red, snarling like a territorial beast, claiming no one else had the right to even look at me.

I didn't mean the things I said. I know my words came out like knives, but I couldn't stop myself. He pushed me too far. And when I snapped, I saw the way his eyes flinched-like I'd hurt him worse than he expected. Maybe that's what's clawing at my conscience now.

But he struck a nerve-and bled rage.

And now, all I feel is regret. Regret for wasting even a second on that fight. Because while we were busy tearing each other apart over egos and feelings, my mother is still suffering in that goddamned hellhole.

I shake my head, forcing the anger and guilt to the back of my mind. I need to focus.

There's only one thing that matters now-getting my mother out of Red Night Pack.

And I don't have time to waste.

I shift. Bones crack, fur explodes across my skin, and my body elongates into the sleek, towering form of my wolf. The wind rushes past me as I take off like a bullet, the world blurring beneath my paws.

I run harder than I ever have.

By the time I reach the Blood Fang Pack's border, the warriors stationed there freeze in place.

Their eyes widen, jaws slack. I see the awe in their faces as they instinctively step back at the sight of me. I'm massive-sleek, deadly, unforgettable. No one dares stand in my way. If they tried, they'd be nothing but dust.

Hours pass in what feels like minutes.

My, muscles scream, my breath is ragged, but I don't stop for water or to breathe. I only stop when I'm close-close enough to smell the stench of the Red Night Pack.

I skid to a halt behind a thick tree line and shift back into my human form. Sweat clings to my skin, my hair is tangled, and my body trembles from the exertion. I square my shoulders, draw in a deep breath, and march forward-barefoot and burning with rage.

There are five guards lazily manning the border, leaning on spears like they've never taken a threat seriously in their lives. Typical Red Night trash.

"Well, well, well," one of them smirks, nudging the other with a laugh. "Look who crawled back home. Did ya miss us, sweetheart?"

Another snorts. "Maybe she missed my bed. Bet she's been dreaming about it since she left."

I clench my fists and force myself to keep walking. Don't lose control or shift."I'm here for my mother," I say through gritted teeth. "Where is she?"

"In my bed, sweetheart," the first one chuckles, licking his lips. "She's right where you'll be if you beg pretty enough."

That's it.

I don't think. I launch.

My fist slams into his jaw, and I hear the crunch of bone before he hits the dirt. The others scramble, surprised. I dodge one's spear, grab it, and snap it in half across my knee before jamming the broken end into his gut. He crumples with a scream.

The next three don't fare better.

It's chaos. Rage. Claws.

I don't even bother fully shifting-just enough to let my claws rip through them like paper. Blood sprays, screams echo, and when the last one goes down, I stand over them panting, wild-eyed, covered in bruises and blood that isn't mine.

I waste no time as I march straight toward the Alpha's house, my legs aching.

My wolf paces inside me, restless.

"This is why we should have asked mate for help," she growls. "If you had just asked nicely, he would've burned this entire pack down for us."

"Shut up," I hiss aloud. "I don't need him."

The mansion looms ahead. I barely stop at the foot of the stairs before I throw my head back and yell:

“DIANA! GET YOUR FUCKING ASS OUT HERE!”

No Luna title. No respect. No fear. I hear it immediately—footsteps. Heavy. More than one set. Dozens.

I glance around, and sure enough, I’m surrounded. Maybe twenty warriors, maybe more. Closing in like wolves circling prey. But I stand my ground. I bare my teeth.

“Release my mother!” I scream again. “Right this fucking minute! Or I swear to the moon, I’ll burn this pack to the fucking ground!”

The mansion doors finally open.

And out walks Diana.

Majestic and smug, her dress flowing like she thinks she’s royalty. And behind her, Travis—ugh. His smirk is as punchable as ever. Funny how he looks like he aged backwards... probably because Grace is draining his soul every day. She’s clinging to his arm like he’s some golden prize. I roll my eyes. Must be exhausting being glued to a leech.

But I only have eyes for Diana.

“I knew you’d come crawling back,” she purrs.

“Release. My. Mother.” My voice shakes with fury.

Diana lifts her chin. “Or what?”

I growl, low and dangerous then she raises her hand, and the warriors move.

They rush me all at once.

I fight.

God, I fight. My claws are out, slashing, blood flying. I don’t stop moving, even as bruises bloom across my body. I’m faster, sharper. But they just keep coming. Blow after blow, numbers piling, weight dragging me down.

My vision blurs, the world spinning as my knees crash against the ground. Dirt and blood stain my tongue. Everything aches. But above it all, I hear her.

That laugh.

Diana’s laugh Triumphant. Cruel. Wicked.

The sound cuts through the fog in my mind, dragging me back to consciousness. I grit my teeth and force my eyes open, every nerve in my body screaming in protest.

I can’t pass out, not until my mother is safe.

“R-Release... my mother...” I whisper, barely audible, but I know she hears me. My voice may be faint, but the fire behind it isn’t. “Fine. I’ll release her.” She steps closer, leaning down, eyes glinting with poison. “But you’ll pay for it... with your life.”

I exhale shakily, lifting my chin just a fraction.

“Deal.”

I was never afraid of death.

Never.

She signals to one of the warriors with a flick of her perfectly manicured hand. A moment later, I hear it-her scream.

“Mama...” My heart clenches painfully.

“KALI!” she cries. “Why did you come back?! I told you to run. To forget about me. To never look back!”

I cough, blood spilling from the corner of my mouth, and I let out a half-broken laugh. “I could never leave you... You’re my mother.”

Her voice cracks like a whip. “No, I’m not! That’s why I wanted you to find your real family! I’ve lived my life. Let me die so I can curse the Moon Goddess herself for giving me the most useless, heartless mate!”

Pain sears deeper than any wound. My chest tightens with grief I don’t have time to process.

“Take her away,” Grace snaps coldly, stepping down from Travis’s side like she’s the goddess of this cursed palace. “She’s said enough.”

“No-wait,” I rasp, my voice barely holding together. I reach out with a trembling hand toward Diana. “Let her go. You have me. That was the deal-”

Grace strides up to me slowly, like a predator savoring her kill.

“You made a huge mistake coming back,” she sneers, crouching in front of me. Her breath is saccharine, her smile venomous. “And now... you’re on your knees. Just like I promised you’d be.”

And just like that her, her hand smashes across my face. White-hot pain explodes behind my eyes. Stars burst in my vision. The taste of blood floods my mouth.

“I told you,” she hisses, grabbing a fistful of my hair and yanking my head back. “You’d regret ever disrespecting me. And now, I am your Luna.”

My wolf snarls in my head, pacing wildly.

“Let me out. Let me tear them apart. Let them see what we are.”

“No, I whisper inside, my lips barely moving.

“Then tell them who our mate is. Tell them Jack is ours. They’ll stop if they know-”

I shake my head slightly, blood dripping from my split lip. “We don’t bear his mark. They won’t believe me.”

My wolf growls in frustration, but before I can say another word-

A roar splits the air. A sound so deep, so primal, it shakes the earth beneath me. The sky itself seems to still.

I know that growl. Even half-dead, bruised and bleeding, I know that growl.

Jack.

The one man who made my heart race even when I wanted to hate him.

The Alpha who calls me his.

Then, like a storm crashing into a battlefield, Jack appears beside me in a blur of fury. His eyes glow like burning coals, teeth bared, and power rolls off him in waves that make the warriors hesitate.

Grace raises her hand again, but it never connects. Jack grabs her wrist mid-air, his grip like iron.

“You dare lay a finger on-my mate?” His voice is calm-but deadly. “TIL make sure you never lift another finger in your life.”

Then his other hand moves-lightning-fast. He seizes her by the throat and, with a single brutal motion, lifts her off the ground.

Grace’s eyes bulge. She kicks. Chokes. Her nails scratch down his arm, desperate but Jack doesn’t budge

SNAP.

The sound of her neck breaking is soft... but final. Her body collapses like a broken doll at his feet.

Silence falls- deafening.

I stare, stunned, barely breathing. Did that really just happen?

Somewhere in the crowd, a horrified voice shouts, “You... you killed our future Luna!”

Jack turns slowly, his expression dark and feral. His lips curl into a cold, wicked smirk. “Oops,”

Then his gaze sweeps the crowd, daring.

“Now...” His voice dropping to a growl.

“Who wants to die next?”

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Jack’s voice echoes like thunder, and suddenly-silence.

Everything stops. No one breathes. Not a single soul dares to move. My eyes are still glued to the ground—on Grace’s lifeless body. Her long blonde hair fans out beneath her like a twisted golden halo. Her eyes are wide open. Her neck bent at an unnatural angle.

She’s dead.

Truly, finally dead.

And for a moment, I can’t believe it.

The crazy bitch is gone.

Grace-the Gamma’s precious daughter. The spoiled monster who made my life in this pack a daily hell. She humiliated me, tried to break me, made me feel small, powerless-and smiled while doing it. She laughed when I cried.

Sure, I fought back.

But Grace had power. Protection. She used it like a blade, cutting me down every chance she got.

Now she’s nothing but silence.

And maybe that should scare me. Maybe I should feel something like guilt or fear but all I feel is a cold, bitter satisfaction spreading through my chest.

Death was the best thing that ever happened to her.

And Luna Diana?

She’s next.

Her-and that useless excuse of a father. The Beta of this pathetic excuse for a pack. The coward who let my mother and me suffer for years. Unsurprisingly, he’s nowhere to be found. Probably hiding, just like always-behind the same walls he always used to protect himself.

But he won’t hide forever. Every last one of them will pay.

And I’ll use Jack’s strength-his authority-to get the revenge I’ve dreamed of.

A sudden heat spreads across my skin, a familiar spark racing up my arm and settling deep in my chest.

Jack.

I don't need to look to know it's him. His touch is unmistakable.

Strong. Fierce. Safe.

He lifts me into his arms like I weigh nothing, holding me carefully, mindful of my bruises. His scent-wild and earthy-fills my lungs, grounding me. For a moment, the blood, the pain, the fear... all of it fades.

Our eyes meet.

He says nothing.

But his gaze asks me a million questions. Are you okay? Did they hurt you? Do you still hate me?

I give him a weak smile, just a flicker of my lips.

And guilt hits me hard.

Because I had spoken to him like he was the enemy. Like he didn't care.

Like he was just another power-hungry alpha.

But standing here now, wrapped in his arms-after hearing his growl shake the trees and watching him tear through bodies just to reach me

—I finally understand the truth.

Jack isn't my enemy.

He's my protector.

My mate.

And maybe... just maybe... It's time I stop running-from him, from this bond, from us.

From the side, whispers rise like the rustling of dry leaves in the wind.

"I can't believe it... the infamous Alpha Jack is actually here."

"The Blood Fang Alpha?"

*The one they call the monster... they say he feeds on the hearts of his enemies."

"Yes, that's him. Only he could kill like that. He snapped Grace's neck without even blinking."

“Does that mean we’re all going to die?”

“He’s ruthless-shows no mercy. He’ll tear us apart and enjoy every second of it.”

Then, their murmurs shift to me.

“But how is she mated to him? Kali? She’s the most stubborn she-wolf this pack’s ever known,” a woman whispers. “She’s no Luna. Kali’s a mutt who never bowed to anyone-that’s why her life was hell here.

He’ll never control her.”

“Maybe he tamed her. That’s the only explanation. No Alpha like him would tolerate a disrespectful brat.” I grit my teeth.

Let them talk. They’ve always talked but their voices fall silent the moment I lift my head-and see her.

Luna Diana.

Frozen, like a coward.

Her face is pale as death, eyes wide in panic. She’s hiding behind Travis now, clutching the back of his shirt like a frightened pup. The woman who once strutted through the pack like royalty now cowers, her regal mask shattered into trembling fear.

Travis stands still, arms crossed, trying to maintain that tough Alpha façade. His face is unreadable-but I see it.

The fear.

And something else. Something darker.

Jealousy.

It’s faint, but there. His jaw clenches, his hands twitch as he stares at Jack holding me like I’m something precious-something worth razing kingdoms for. And Travis hates it. He always wanted power. But he never knew how to have it. Or me.

Yet now, he doesn’t move or say a damn word because he knows better.

More of Jack’s warriors begin to pour in, surrounding the Red Night wolves like a rising tide of vengeance. A few idiots try to fight back-only to be slammed into the dirt within seconds. Jack’s pack moves like shadows-fast and ruthless. The Blood Fang wolves are not here to play.

Then Jack speaks again, his voice booming while still holding me in his arms.”Honestly,” he says, sweeping his gaze over the pack like he already owns it,”I want to kill every single one of you for daring to hurt my mate.”

Gasps ripple through the crowd.

My heart stutters.

And silence falls again.

“But,” he continues, tone dark and amused, “I’m feeling generous today.”

He steps forward, his grip still strong around me as I steady my footing beside him.

“You have two choices,” he says, his eyes locking on Travis.

“Surrender

now-gracefully-while I’m still in a good mood.”

A beat of stillness.

“Or...” he continues, a dangerous smirk curling his lips, “you can challenge me. Win, and I’ll walk away with my warriors. No bloodshed.”

His voice drops to a growl.

“But if you lose... well, you won’t live long enough to regret it.”

I feel the tension in the air crackle like lightning.

And then-

“Kali,” Diana calls, her voice soft, fake kindness dripping from every syllable. “Please, speak to your mate. Talk to Alpha Jack. Tell him to put an end to this madness.”

I blink at her. Is she serious?

She steps out from behind Travis, hands raised as though she’s the noble one here—the savior.

“He’s already killed Grace. Isn’t that punishment enough? Don’t let this go on any further.”

She actually dares to smile at me like we’re old friends and she hasn’t spent years making my life miserable.

“This pack took care of you,” she continues, her lips trembling as though she’s truly heartbroken. “We fed you. Clothed you. We picked you up from the dirt, Kali. You were nothing more than a stray dog when we found you.”

My hands clench into fists.

She did not just say that.

“You can’t let your mate destroy everything,” she pleads, eyes now glistening with tears as if she’s the victim. “Think of your mother. Your father. This is their pack-this is their legacy.”

For a moment, all I can do is stare at her.

Then I laugh. A cold, bitter laugh that burns like fire and tastes of blood on my tongue.”You vile bitch,” I hiss. “You made my life a living hell. You humiliated me. You tried to force your pathetic excuse for a son on me.”

Her eyes widen in shock, as if she’s suddenly remembered what she did

—how she stripped me of my clothes and threw me into the mating room for Travis to use me like some toy.

“And now you have the audacity to beg for mercy?” I shake my head, a bitter smile curving on my lips. “You leeked my mother away. You broke me in every way you could.”

Her smile falters, finally.

I turn to Jack-proud, furious, standing tall beside him, blood still drying on my face.

“Well, guess what?” I whisper coldly. “Now it’s your turn to suffer.”

I look back at her, eyes blazing.

“My mate is going to make your lives miserable-just like you did to me.”

Jack wraps his arm around my waist, pulling me closer, and I let him. I want them to see.

The blood on my face.

The power standing at my side.

The fury burning in my soul.

No one notices how my wounds are healing faster than they should.

How my wolf has already begun to stir with a power I don’t quite understand.

I may not yet know who I truly am—but today, I am no longer the mutt you picked up from the dirt. I am the mate of the most feared Alpha alive.

And I’m ready to watch this pack burn to ashes.

“Kali...”

The voice makes me freeze.

Travis.

My head snaps in his direction. For the first time since all hell broke loose, he speaks. His voice is low, cautious-like he's trying not to set off a bomb. But it's too late for that.

"It doesn't have to be this way," he says, almost pleading, stepping forward slightly-ignoring the growls of the warriors who instantly react to his movement. "Take your mother and go. Leave this all behind. This pack isn't worth the blood."

I raise a brow, silent but he dares to keep going.

"Please," he adds softly, eyes searching mine with something that looks dangerously close to regret. "I was your mate before him. We had a bond, Kali. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

I scoff but Jack-Jack erupts.

Shit.

A savage growl tears from his chest, so deep and violent it shakes the damn trees again. His grip on my waist tightens, so fiercely I'm sure it'll leave marks.

"How dare you," he snarls, voice guttural, dark, and deadly. "How fucking dare you claim to have been mate to what's mine-and say it to my face like it means something?"

"You must not value your life, boy." I blink, startled for a split second.

Of course, he's jealous.

And honestly?

It's stupid, and petty, and possessive as hell. Even in the middle of a power shift, Jack is acting like a possessive man-child-and somehow, it makes my heart flutter.

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Despite the chaos and the blood and the burning ache in my body...I smile.

Because this is real. Jack isn't pretending. He doesn't just want to protect me-he wants me. Every broken, battered, messed-up part of me.,

The same jealous fire that once caused half our fights now burns in his eyes-and for once, I like it.

He lifts a hand, and without a word, Fury- surprisingly is who steps forward-silent and dangerous, like a storm on the edge of breaking.

Jack points at Travis, not sparing him another glance. "Take him away. I don't want to hear another damn word from his mouth."

Fury grins like he's just been handed dessert."No problem, Alpha."

Travis stiffens as Fury approaches. For a heartbeat, panic flashes in his eyes. But he doesn't fight. Not when Fury grabs him by the shoulder and yanks him back like a rag doll.

"No-wait-" Diana screams, lunging forward in desperation, arms outstretched. "That's my son! Please, Jack-Alpha Jack, have mercy-"

Fury yanks Travis back just as Diana falls to her knees with a sob, clawing at the dirt.

"I beg you, please, he's all I have left!"

Her screams pierce the air like knives – so satisfying – and I throw my head back and laugh. A full, wild, unhinged laugh that bubbles up from somewhere deep inside me. It tastes like revenge. Like finally breathing after drowning for years.

I enjoy the sight of her broken.

I savor every second.

Until-

"Kali.."

A soft voice behind me. Fragile. Familiar. My laughter dies mid-breath.

I turn slowly, my chest suddenly tight.

There-just behind me-stands her.

My mother.

Tears spring to my eyes as I take in the sight of her. Her wrists are bruised, her clothes torn and stained, and her hair a tangled mess. But her eyes-they're still kind. Still hers.

"Mom," I whisper, and then I'm moving-running-throwing myself into her arms so hard we almost topple over. I hold her like she might vanish again if I let go. She clutches me like I'm still her little girl.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt? Please tell me you're not hurt-please-" I sob into her shoulder, frantically checking her face, her hands, and her arms. My tears won't stop. "Did they touch you? Did they-"

"I'm okay, baby," she murmurs, gently brushing my hair back. "I'm okay now."

I nod, choking on tears, my fingers squeezing hers like they're the only thing keeping me anchored.

"You're safe now," I whisper. "You're safe."

Behind us, Jack's voice thunders again.

"Lock Diana up. Put her in the cells next to her son. I want them both to feel what helplessness tastes like."

"No!" Diana shrieks. "Please, no, not me! I'm the Luna-you can't do this

To me!

Jack doesn't even glance at her. His eyes are locked on mine. I straighten, releasing my mother gently, wiping the tears from my face.

Then I turn to Diana with a wicked smile.

"No," I say calmly. "A cell is too kind."

Jack raises a brow, intrigued.

Diana is still on the ground, shattered, shaking like the world just ended

"I need a maid while I'm here," I say sweetly. "And you, Luna Diana, look just desperate enough for the job."

Her head snaps up. "What?"

I step toward her slowly, watching as her face drains of color and her eyes fill with horror.

"You'll clean. Cook. Scrub the floors. Serve me and my mate like the little servant you always thought I was. Consider it.. repayment."

"No—no, please," she begs, crawling backward on her knees. "You can't

—Kali, please—"

As I pass, I kick her aside and step over her like the garbage she is.

"You'll address me properly," I murmur without looking back. "Alpha Female."

Her scream echoes behind me, raw and broken.

To me?

It's music.

Jack reaches for my hand, and I intertwine my fingers with his as we walk toward the Alpha house—our house now.

The same house I once scrubbed clean as punishment.

The same one used to stare at and dream.

Now?

I'll rule from it.

And Diana?

She'll mop its floors.

As we walk deeper into the Alpha house, I nearly gag.

Ugh.

The place reeks of them-Diana's cloying scent still clings to the walls like decay. Grace's scent-bitter and spoiled, just like her-lingers in the air, mixing with the faint musk of Travis,

It's nauseating. Overpowering. Suffocating.

Instinctively, I move closer to Jack, pressing against his side like I want to crawl under his skin. And gods, I really do. He doesn't say a word, just lets me cling to him.

Thank the Goddess for his scent-clean, woodsy, and darkly intoxicating. It slices through the stench like a blade, grounding me, keeping the bile from rising in my throat.

"I swear," I mutter, half-laughing. "If I breathe this in for one more minute, I might start throwing up Grace's name."

Jack chuckles, deep and amused, then leads me toward the glass doors that open into a wide garden. It overlooks the entire pack territory, bathed in silver moonlight. The view is stunning-if you can ignore the underlying rot.

He holds the door open for me with a mock bow, and I grin as I step outside, breathing in the fresh air like salvation.

"So.." I ask, glancing up at him as we walk. "Are you really planning to run this place yourself now? The big, bad Alpha of two packs?"

Jack scoffs, letting out a dry laugh. "Hell no."

I raise an eyebrow. He leans against the stone railing, arms crossed over his broad chest, looking out at the land like it's just another burden to carry. "Handling Blood Fang is already a pain in the ass. I became Alpha too young-thrown into the fire after my uncle betrayed us. I've been cleaning up his messes ever since."

I reach out, my fingers brushing against his arm. His voice sounds... tired. And that's rare. Jack doesn't do tired.

He glances at me, a half-smile tugging at his lips. “So no, I’m not taking over Red Night. I’ll observe while I’m here. See if anyone’s worthy..

Someone strong enough to lead without needing to grovel. When we have a son, I’ll step down from Blood Fang and let him carry the legacy.”

A son?

My face instantly heats up. I bite my lower lip, trying to hide the smile threatening to break through the blush. Jack notices, of course, and smirks.

“Thinking about it already?” he teases.

I roll my eyes. “I’m not giving you pups until you prove you can handle me first.”

He laughs-loud, genuine, and free.

But then, without warning, my thoughts drift to someone I haven’t seen since the moment I returned to this pack. Caspian.

My best friend. The only one who ever treated me as more than the pack’s leftover scraps. Strong, level-headed, fiercely loyal. If anyone deserves to lead this place, it’s him.

I smile slowly, turning to Jack with a flirtatious flutter of my lashes. “I have someone in mind.”

Jack lifts a brow. “Do you now?”

I nod, leaning my elbows on the balcony railing and giving my hips a subtle sway-just enough to catch his attention. “Someone I trust.”

“Who?” he asks, already eyeing me suspiciously.

“Caspian.”

The name leaves my lips a little too quickly, a little too eagerly, and Jack’s expression shifts instantly.

He scowls. “Let me guess-one of your exes?”

I burst out laughing, nearly doubling over. “Oh, please. He’s just a friend.”

Jack narrows his eyes. “A friend who’s clearly in love with you, I bet.”

I shrug, struggling not to smile again. “Okay, maybe he had a huge crush. But that’s not the point.”

He grumbles something under his breath that sounds a lot like, “Why is every damn man in love with her?”

“Because I’m irresistible,” I say with a wink, poking his side.

Before he can fire back, the door behind us creaks open. A warrior steps out and bows his head respectfully.

“Alpha,” the man says, his eyes flicking briefly to me before returning to Jack. “We’ve confirmed it. The Alpha of Red Night is out on a business trip.”

Jack straightens immediately, his face hardening.

“Then make sure he doesn’t find out his pack is under siege,” he says coldly. “If he returns with reinforcements or calls for allies, we’ll have a full-scale war on our hands. I want no one escaping this pack. Silence every route.

“Yes, Alpha.”

I watch Jack in profile, the last light of the setting sun casting shadows across his face. And in that moment, I understand just how dangerous he truly is. He’s not just a possessive, jealous Alpha with a sharp temper and a mouth I constantly want to shut with a kiss.

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He’s a strategist. A ruler. A weapon.

And he’s mine.

Jack turns to me, sensing my gaze. He brushes a knuckle softly along my cheek. “I’ll be right back. I need to handle this personally.”

I nod, reluctantly letting go of his hand. “Go. I understand.”

He brushes his lips lightly over my forehead and disappears through the door with that predator’s grace he always carries.

I remain there, standing in the moonlight, gazing out over the pack that once treated me like nothing. The cool night air brushes against my skin as I lean on the balcony, inhaling deeply. It’s the only thing tonight that doesn’t reek of rot or betrayal—just clean, crisp air, faintly laced with pine and moonlight. I close my eyes and let it settle over me.

But then... footsteps.

I don’t need to turn around to know who it is. know that scent—warm, lavender, and a little like old books. My mother.

I turn slowly, and there she is, arms folded, a gentle smile tugging at her lips.

“I didn’t want to interrupt the moment you were having with your mate,” she teases. “You two looked... very much in love.”

My cheeks instantly flush, and I fidget, looking away with a huff of a laugh. "Mum..."

"What?" she says, stepping closer, nudging my shoulder. "I'm just calling it like I see it."

I roll my eyes, but I can't stop smiling. "Where have you been, anyway? I didn't see you after the whole... Diana situation."

"Oh, someone had to make sure that woman was actually doing her job," she says, brushing invisible dust off her dress with a smug look. "It's almost dinner time, so I had her cook us a feast."

I blink, a snort escaping me. "Wait-Diana? You made her cook?"

"Of course, she's now our slave." My mother raises an eyebrow like it's the most obvious thing in the world.

"Mum," I say, chuckling, "what if she poisons it?"

"She's tasting it before we eat," she says dryly, waving a hand. "And besides, I had one of Alpha Jack's warriors from Blood Fang watching her every move. She sneezes wrong, and she's done for."

That does it. I laugh. Really laugh. That kind of laugh that makes your eyes sting and your chest light.

My mum laughs with me, and for a second, just a second, it feels like everything is okay.

I pull her into a hug without even thinking, wrapping my arms around her tightly, pressing my face into her shoulder. She's smaller than I remember-maybe because life has weighed her down-but she's warm. and real.

"I missed you," I whisper.

"I missed you more than you'll ever know."

I don't want to let go, but eventually I pull back and look at her face.

There's peace there now. A quiet strength that makes me feel both proud and a little sad.

She studies me like she's seeing me for the first time. Then she tilts her head and says, "Kali... how on earth did you bag such a man?" I blink. "Huh?"

"Alpha Jack," she says, still sounding a bit incredulous. "Of all people, he is your mate? I don't mean it in a bad way, but... I can't believe it."

The one person warned you never to cross paths with. And yet here you are. Still breathing."

I laugh under my breath, glancing back out at the garden. "Yeah... it's a long story, Mum. And trust me, he's not as bad as everyone says."

She arches a brow, waiting for more.

I sigh, shaking my head. "It's unfortunate I'm only just starting to see that."

She hums. "I can tell. I saw how he looked at you... like the stars don't shine without your permission. And the way he holds you. Possessive.

Protective. Are you in love with him?"

I go quiet. My lips part, but I can't speak. Not immediately.

"To be honest, Mum..." I say finally, "I don't know. I feel something, something I've never felt before. But love? I... I'm still figuring that out."

She nods, understanding in her eyes. "You will. In time."

Then I smirk, switching the topic. "Enough about me. What about Beta Logan? Where's that bastard hiding?"

I still need my revenge on him.

My mother's expression changes instantly. Her smile fades, and her eyes lose their sparkle.

"Your father... is in the hospital."

I blink. "What?"

"He's bedridden."

"But... werewolves don't fall sick like that."

She gives a bitter chuckle, one that doesn't reach her eyes. "No. They don't."

I wait, heart pounding.

She looks away, speaking slowly. "After you escaped, Diana planned to torture me as punishment—to lure you back. Logan tried to reject me.

He wanted to sever the bond so he wouldn't have to feel the pain I was about to endure."

I stare at her, horrified.

"But I didn't accept it," she continues, her voice now hard. "If I had, he would've been free. So I refused. I made sure he felt everything."

My mouth parts in shock.

"He begged Diana to stop, said he'd feel it worse than me. She laughed in his face and reminded him of his punishment for not taming"

you. And then.." She shrugs. "He collapsed from the pain. Passed out cold. His body couldn't handle it."

She laughs. A cold, heartless laugh that surprises even me.

I look at her—really look—and for the first time, I see it: the strength, the quiet vengeance, the hard-earned wisdom.

"You're... kind of terrifying," I whisper.

She smirks. "Now you know where you get it from."

I take her hands in mine, holding them tightly. "Mum... it's time to accept the rejection."

She stiffens. "You've made your point. He's suffered. But you deserve peace now."

You don't need to carry him with you anymore. Let him go."

She slowly pulls her hands back, eyes dropping to the floor. "It's not that easy, Kali... I've been mated to that man for years. A woman like me doesn't get to start over—we don't get second chances. There's no one out there waiting to love me. I'm too old to come out of this."

I shake my head fiercely. "Ne. You are not too old. You don't need anyone waiting for you. You don't need a man to validate your existence."

She stares at me, eyes brimming.

"You're doing this for yourself, Mum. Not for some fairytale ending."

Beta Logan gave up on you for his own selfish comfort. It's time you give up on him—for you. Accept the rejection and finally be free."

Silence hangs between us.

Then, after what feels like forever, she lifts her chin and nods. "You're right."

"Do you want me to go with you?"

She shakes her head. "No. I'll do it alone. It's my burden to release. I'm disgusted with myself for even hesitating."

I wrap my arms around her again and whisper into her hair, "You've got this. You're stronger than he ever deserved."

And this time, she holds me even tighter.

It's dinnertime—but still no sign of Mum. Or Jack.

I pace by the window for what feels like the tenth time, chewing the inside of my cheek. My mind keeps circling back to her—Did she do it?

Did she finally reject that man?

I need her to have done it.

Because if she didn't, I can't hurt him. I can't do a damn thing to that man without dragging her down with him—she'll feel every ounce of pain I inflict. And that's the only reason he's still breathing.

But if she did...

Then it's finally my turn.

And I want revenge. I need it. I need him to suffer—but not at the cost of my mother's peace.

The scent of roasted meat and herbs fills the hallway as I step into the dining room. My eyebrows lift at the sight before me.

Diana-Luna Diana is hunched over the table, working. Sweat glistens on her forehead, and her hands tremble slightly as she arranges the silverware alongside a few other omegas. Her once-pristine hair is tied back in a limp bun, and there are dark shadows under her eyes. It's been barely a day since we took over, and already she looks... aged. Worn. Pathetic.

I smirk as I glide into the room like a queen on her throne, sliding into my seat at the head of the table.

"Well, well," I purr, crossing my legs. "What a sight. Diana, Luna of the Red Night Pack, reduced to setting my table. If only the Moon Goddess could see you now."

Diana doesn't respond. She just lowers her head. The silver streaks in her hair look like they've doubled since yesterday.

"Let's not forget your most important task," I add sweetly. "Taste it." She glances up in panic. "What?"

I lean forward, resting my chin on my hand. "You heard me. Take the first bite. You didn't think you'd escape tasting the food, did you?"

Her jaw tightens, but she gives a small nod. Her hands tremble as she lifts a spoon to her lips. It's piping hot—| know it is because the steam curls up from the bowl like smoke.

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I wait.

One second. Two.

The moment the stew touches her tongue, she jerks back with a shriek, clutching her mouth. “It’s—ah! It’s hot!” she cries, frantically fanning her face.

“Oh no, poor thing.” I pick up a glass of water and smile. “Here, let me help.”

And with a casual flick, I toss the water in her face.

The cold shock hits her, and she gasps, sputtering.

Haugh. Loudly. Shamelessly. “That helped, didn’t it?”

The other omegas freeze, unsure whether to laugh or cry, but no one dares move.

I chuckle darkly, reclining in my seat, fully satisfied. Just then, the sound of approaching footsteps reaches my ears, and my head turns instinctively.

Jack walks in-tall, imposing-and the tight set of his jaw instantly kills my laughter.

He strides over and sits beside me, and now I can see it clearly-exhaustion, tension burning just beneath the surface. He looks like he’s been through hell and is barely holding it together: his hair tousled, shirt slightly unbuttoned. His eyes lock on mine, and I try to smile, but something twists painfully in my chest.

“You okay?” I whisper.

He doesn’t answer. His gaze flickers to Diana, still dripping and humiliated, and his lips curl with disgust.

Then Fury walks in, giving us both a nod as he takes the seat across from us. The room-is silent as the omegas begin to serve the food.

“Travis has escaped,” he says through gritted teeth, slamming his palm against the table-hard.

The crack of wood echoes through the room. Everyone jumps. The plates rattle, and the room goes dead silent.

My hand flies to my chest as I stare at him, wide-eyed. I’m amazed the table didn’t split in two.

“What?” I whisper. “How-how did that happen?”

Jack’s jaw ticks as he glares at Diana, who is now trembling in the corner.

“Pray to the Moon Goddess I don’t find your son first,” Jack says, his voice like ice. “Because I’ll kill him on the spot. And you.” His voice lowers to a dangerous whisper, “

“..you’ll never find his body.”

Diana's knees nearly give out. Her head drops even lower. Her lips part as if she wants to speak-but she doesn't. She knows better. Her shoulders shake, and fear radiates off her in waves.

Fury clears his throat. "He used the escape tunnels beneath the prison," he says grimly. "His father built them, and as the next Alpha, he knew the route. A warrior tried to stop him-fought him off."

I lean forward. "And?"

"He got stabbed," Fury continues. "Travis clawed him right across the chest. He's at the hospital now, fighting for his life."

My throat goes dry. "Who was it?" Jack drags a hand down his face. "You won't believe it. He's a warrior from the Red Night Pack... but he still tried to stop Travis."

I blink. "From Travis's own pack? That's... impossible."

Jack nods. "That kind of loyalty-risking his life to stop his own Alpha?"

He doesn't belong under a coward like Travis. So I'm giving him something else."

"What?"

He turns to me, eyes burning with conviction.

"I'm naming him Alpha of the Red Night Pack," Jack says. "With Alpha blood running through his veins, he'll survive. I'll make sure of it. He's earned it."

I nod softly, not bothering to hide my displeasure. I had told Jack earlier about testing Caspian. I wanted to see if he had the strength to lead-mostly because I hoped to secretly reward him. Caspian wasn't just a warrior; he was my best friend.

But now... whoever this warrior is, Jack's right. Loyalty like that deserves to be recognised.

Even if it breaks my heart just a little.

Suddenly, my mother rushes in, panting, her eyes wide with fear. "Kali!" I'm on my feet instantly. "Mum, what?"

"I was coming back from the hospital," she says, voice shaking, "after seeing your father"

"How did it go?" I blurt out.

"I rejected him, Kali," she says quickly. "It's over."

My breath catches. My eyes immediately drop to her neck.

The mark-it's fading. The once-pulsing bond that tied her to Beta Logan is now just a dull shadow.

My knees nearly give out from relief.

“Anyway, I saw Caspian,” she continues, her voice cracking. “He was being rushed into the hospital. He was stabbed by Travis. Oh, Goddess, Kali—he was covered in so much blood.”

My hands fly to my mouth.

Caspian.

I knew he was brave. But this? He risked everything... against his own alpha.

He didn’t lose his chance at becoming alpha.

He earned it.

A wave of emotion crashes over me—relief, pride, terror. I blink hard, and my gaze lands back on my mother.

“I’m proud of him,” I whisper, then I step closer and gently touch the side of her neck.

“You’re free now.” I barely touch the damn food.

Every muscle in my body is wound tight with rage—rage I’ve been nursing since the moment I stepped foot into Red Night Pack territory.

My hands twitch at the memory, and my jaw is clenched so tightly it’s a miracle my teeth haven’t shattered. My mate—Kali—was on her knees, being screamed at and shoved around like a worthless mutt by some pathetic excuse for a woman.

She slapped Kali and before I even registered my own movement, she was dead.

I snapped her neck so fast she didn’t even get the chance to scream.

No warning, no second chances. Her body hit the ground with a dull thud, and the silence that followed was... satisfying. The crowd gasped, mouths hanging open in shock, but all I saw was Kali—frozen, trembling, trying to stand tall despite everything.

The screaming didn’t start until the shock wore off—wails about how I had just killed their “future Luna.”

I didn’t give a damn. If anything, I smiled because there is no future for anyone who raises a hand to my mate.

And now, as I sit here at the dining table, watching Kali with her mother, her words echo in my head like a drumbeat.

“You’re free now.”

She whispered it so softly. But I felt the weight of it.

I know what she meant. The mark is fading-her mother finally rejected that bastard. That waste of a man who dared to call himself her father. My spies had filled me in on how he used her like a punching bag. Beat her bloody. Humiliated her. I close my eyes for a moment, my jaw tightening again. I want to bury the Red Night Pack to the ground.

And yet, she survived it all.

She walked into my pack broken, banished, and I—I was just another monster waiting to tear her down.

The thought makes me sick. I didn't know what she had been through.

And still, I tried to force her into submission, like she hadn't already fought a thousand silent wars.

But she didn't bend or submit. Not then. Not now.

Not even after what that wretched excuse of a Luna did to her. Diana—who treated Kali like she wasn't even human. And her precious son

Travis-gods, if I get my hands on him. She refused him. Rejected him.

Stood her ground like a damn queen.

And now the bastard ran. Escaped. But he can run all he wants.

I'll find him. And when I do, he'll beg for a quick death.

I scrape back my chair and rise silently, ignoring the curious looks from the omegas. I need to see the warrior in the hospital—the one who risked everything to stop Travis.

Caspian.

The name clicks into place in my mind. Kali's best friend. The man she wanted me to test—to make alpha. I hadn't known it was him. When I said I'd give the alpha title to the warrior, I saw the flicker of pain in her eyes. She thought Caspian lost his chance.

But now I know the truth—he is the one who stood against Travis.

It wasn't favoritism. It was loyalty. It was strength, and he's earned the title more than anyone. I don't care if he's in a hospital bed—I'll crown him there if I have to.

As I reach the door, I hear soft footsteps behind me. A gentle voice calls out.

“Alpha Jack?”

I pause and turn.

Kali's mother stands just a few steps away, her hands clasped nervously in front of her. She walks toward me, slowly, like she's approaching a wild beast she's not sure won't bite.

She looks nothing like Kali. Smells nothing like her either. My spy told me Kali was adopted-and I believe it. But the woman in front of me... she loved Kali. Even when the rest of this damned pack turned their backs, she stood by her.

I see the fear in her eyes. And I hate it.

She's afraid of me not because of what I've done, but because of what I am.

The monster from Blood Fang.

So I lower my head slightly. Just enough – a gesture of respect.

She blinks in surprise, then smiles softly and bows back.

We walk side by side, saying nothing, until we reach the balcony. The night air is cool, brushing against our faces as we step into the quiet space overlooking the garden.

"I wanted to thank you," she begins, her voice gentle. "For taking care of my daughter."

I stiffen. A bitter taste rises in my mouth. I didn't take care of her. Not at first.

I hurt her. Made her feel like she had no choice. I pushed when I should've protected. And maybe that's why she rejected me-again and again.

But I won't interrupt her. I let her speak.

"I never imagined Kali would be mated to you," she says with a soft laugh. "To Alpha Jack. When she was banished, I warned her. Told her not to go near Blood Fang territory. Told her to stay far away from your kind. I'd heard the stories-about you. What you do to rogues and woman. How dangerous you are."

"I still am," I say quietly, eyes fixed on the garden below.

She chuckles. "Maybe. But she needs someone dangerous. Someone who would set the world on fire for her. I see how you look at her.

You'd burn kingdoms."

I glance away, my jaw tightening. "She probably hates me."

"No," she whispers. "She's just scared."

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"She rejected me. Twice."

She lets out a soft, bittersweet laugh. “That girl has always been stubborn. But it’s not hate. She’s just... guarded.”

A quiet moment passes between us.

“So thank you. For loving her.”

Love? Kali?

“I’m grateful to fate,” she adds. “That it was you who became her second chance mate. She’s strong, but she’s tired. And I know you’ll protect her now.”

Hurn slightly, just enough to see her face. She’s smiling-gently, hopefully.

I nod once, slowly.

I’ll protect her with my life,” I say, and I mean every word.

Then I step away-before she can see the guilt in my eyes.

I walk—off the balcony, down the hallway, out of the Alpha house, and straight to the hospital. The place reeks of burnt flesh, blood. I push open the door to the intensive care unit, and the healer on duty, an older man with weary eyes and trembling hands, looks up and immediately bows.

“Alpha,” he says softly. “I’m sorry, but... he won’t make it.”

I look past him.

Caspian.

He’s lying on the bed, barely recognizable beneath blood-soaked bandages, connected to machines that beep and blink like they’re counting down his final seconds. His chest rises and falls with effort, each breath a battle he’s losing. His face is deathly pale, lips tinged with blue. One arm is completely still, twisted at an unnatural angle.

Travis didn’t hold back. His claws tore through Caspian like paper.

“Leave us,” I say coldly, my voice leaving no room for argument.

The doctor bows again and scurries out, closing the door softly behind him.

I walk to Caspian’s bedside. For a moment, I just... stare at him. His body is broken, but his spirit isn’t. I can feel it. It’s hanging on, barely, Like a flickering flame in a storm.

He deserves a chance to rise.

I reach for the dagger on my belt, slice a clean line across my palm.

Blood wells instantly, warm and red, dripping slowly.

“Time to wake up, warrior,” I murmur.

With my uninjured hand, I part his cracked, cold lips. Then I press my bleeding palm to his mouth, letting my blood slip in, drop by drop. As I do, I begin to whisper the ancient words of the ritual-low, guttural phrases passed down through Alpha bloodlines, as old as the moon itself.

My blood is ancient. Powerful. It can shift fate.

“By the will of the Moon and the blood of the First,” I whisper, “I gift you strength. I gift you fire. I gift you reign. By the old blood and the oath of fire... I give you my blood. My strength. My Alpha.”

The moment the final word leaves my lips, Caspian’s body jolts violently-like something reached inside and yanked his soul back from the brink. His chest arches off the bed as a loud gasp tears from his throat. His hands claw at the sheets, and his legs tremble uncontrollably. I step back, watching as his body convulse. A loud snap echoes through the room-like bones breaking and rebuilding themselves.

Then... silence.

He lies completely still.

No beeping. No movement. Nothing.

My heart stops. Did I?

Suddenly, he gasps-loud and ragged-like he’s drowning in air, choking on the first breath of a new life. His eyes fly open.

Gold

Gold like the sun rising over war-torn lands.

Alpha eyes.

He blinks, chest heaving, hands gripping the sheets like he’s just been dragged back from the edge of death. For a moment, he stares at the ceiling, dazed. Then his gaze shifts to me. Recognition flickers-slowly-followed by confusion, awe... and fear.

He pushes himself up on shaky arms, swings his legs over the bed, and bows low.

“Alpha..”

I smirk, shaking my head. “You don’t have to do that. We’re equals now.”

His brows furrow, sweat glistening on his forehead. “W-What... what did you do to me?”

“You feel different now,” I say, crossing my arms as I watch him with quiet pride. “Like your body isn’t yours. Like something bigger is moving under your skin. That’s because you’ve got Alpha blood in your veins now.”

He stares down at his hands like they're foreign, like they might suddenly explode.

"I-I don't deserve this," he stammers. "I'm just a warrior. A nobody."

"No," I cut him off. "You're Caspian-the warrior who stood up to his Alpha. You risked everything to protect Kali. No one deserves this more than you."

He blinks rapidly, still visibly overwhelmed. His throat moves as he swallows hard, then he looks up at me, curiosity flickering in the golden hue of his newly awakened eyes.

"You..." he starts hesitantly. "You're Kali's second chance mate, aren't You?"

I nod slowly.

He exhales and smiles. "I'm glad. She always said she'd reject her second chance if she got one, but... I'm glad she didn't. You're a good man."

I chuckle at that, unable to stop the grin that spreads across my face. "Good? That's a stretch."

If only he knew how many times she rejected me.

He laughs a little too, the tension easing slightly.

"Can I know your name?" he asks, tilting his head.

I raise a brow. "I'm Alpha Jack. Blood Fang Pack."

Dead silent.

I can see the gears turning. The reputation. The fear. The rumors. The name that's whispered to pups to make them behave.

"Blood... Fang....?"

"Yeah," I say casually, then narrow my eyes and lean in slightly. "And stay the hell away from my mate."

His face goes pale.

"I wasn't going to! I mean, I would never!"

I burst out laughing, giving him a light slap on the shoulder. "Relax, I'm joking. Sort of."

He lets out a nervous chuckle, still unsure whether I'll bite his head off if he so much as blinks wrong. He was clearly in love with my mate and it's obvious he isn't over it yet.

I step back, nodding.

"You've got a lot to take in. But you're not alone anymore, Caspian."

You're the Alpha now. Of this pack. Of your pack. I'll make the announcement soon. But for now... rest. Heal. And prepare."

He nods slowly, still stunned-but there's something new in his eyes.

Purpose.

He might not believe it yet, but I see it.He was born to lead and now... he finally can.

The hospital air feels different when you've just changed someone's life.

I step out of Caspian's room, my palm still throbbing from the blood ritual. The hallway is quiet, still, and cold. Just ahead, the old doctor stands with his hands clasped in front of him like he's silently praying! don't notice him.

But I do.

His back straightens the second our eyes meet.

"Alpha," he says, lowering his gaze. "Is he...?"

I stop in front of him, arms crossed over my chest.

"He'll live," I reply "More than that-he'll lead."

His eyes widen slightly, but he's smart enough not to ask further questions. I start to walk past him, then pause a few steps later.

"I heard the Beta of the Red Night Pack was admitted here," I say casually. "Where is he?"

The doctor hesitates, then gives a solemn nod. "Yes, Alpha. He collapsed about a week ago. Said he could feel his mate's pain... from the torture."

My jaw ticks.

"Is that so..."

The doctor's gaze drops to the floor. "Yes. He tried to reject her-said he couldn't handle the pain of the bond," he mutters, his voice tinged with disgust. "Thought that if he severed it, she'd suffer alone.

Fortunately, she didn't accept the rejection. So when the bond stayed intact, he passed out."

Coward.

"Take me to him."

The doctor nods quickly, wisely choosing not to speak again. He turns and leads the way, his footsteps brisk and tense. I follow in silence, the sound of my boots echoing. He's nervous-I can smell it on him. Maybe it's my aura, or maybe he simply knows that whatever's coming won't be pleasant.

We stop at a closed door at the end of the hall. glance at it, then turn back to him."Don't follow me in."

He blinks, confused. "Alpha?"

"If you hear screaming" I add, slowly, "mind your business. Continue your duties."

His eyes widen slightly but he bows. "Yes, Alpha."

Without another word, he turns and quickly disappears down the corridor like a man running from a ghost.

Smart man.

I push the door open and step inside.

The sharp scent of antiseptic hits me instantly-cold and suffocating.

The room is dimly lit, a single lamp glowing weakly in the corner. On the bed lies an older man I recognize from the pack files-Kali's adoptive father. Her mother's mate.

The one who stood by while she was tortured.

He's lying flat on his back, breathing deep. Too deep. I know the sound of a fake sleep when I hear one.

I shut the door behind me. Loudly.

"I know you're awake," I say, voice sharp enough to slice through the silence.

A beat passes.

Then his eyes snap open. His gaze lands on me-and instantly, the color drains from his face. He pushes himself up with shaking hands, eyes wide with barely-contained fear.

"W-Who are you?" he croaks.I smile-slow, cruel.

"I'm your worst nightmare."

He freezes. The way his fingers twitch against the sheets tells me everything-he knows exactly what I mean.

"I'm here to make you pay," I continue, taking a few slow steps forward,

“for all your sins. For what you did to your mate. And for what you did to mine.”

His head tilts slightly, confused

Mine? You mean-?”

“Kali,” I say, watching his soul leave his fucking body.

“Kali is your mate?” he whispers, horror dawning.

“Bingo.”

He flinches. “W-Who exactly are you?

“I already told you,” I say, my voice dark with amusement. “I’m your worst nightmare, Logan.”

Then I lean in, letting my power wash over him.

“I’m Alpha Jack. Alpha of the Blood Fang Pack.”

He chokes.

Literally chokes on air as he scrambles to get out of the bed, his hands slipping over the blanket. He tumbles to the floor, landing with a loud, graceless thud, and begins crawling toward the door like a damned cockroach.

Pathetic. I stalk toward him slowly, not rushing, not bothering to hide the predator in my steps. When I reach him, I grab his leg and yank him back in one swift move.

CRACK.

He screams.

His leg bends the wrong way under my grip, and he howls, clutching at the shattered bone. “Please-Alpha! I’ve changed! I swear—!”

I crouch beside him, eyes hard, unmoving.

“You’re a coward,” I hiss. “You beat your mate. Beat her daughter. You stood by while they were hurt. All to keep your precious Beta title.”

Tears stream down his face now. “I didn’t know—I didn’t!”

CRUNCH.

I slam my boot down on his hand, snapping the fingers like dry twigs.

His scream echoes through the room.

“That hand won’t be hurting anyone ever again,” I growl.

He sobs. Tries to beg. But I’m not finished.

“You were supposed to protect them. To protect your mate. But instead, you turned your back on her. Rejected her so you wouldn’t feel her pain. You let Diana torture her. You let it happen.” My voice cracks with fury.

I draw my dagger, the silver gleaming under the pale light.

He sees it.

He shakes his head, bloodied lips trembling. “Please-no-please, I’ll do better—I’ll—” “You don’t get to speak to her,” I say softly.

Then I shove the blade into his mouth.

He gags.

And with one clean slice, I take his tongue. The scream that follows is wet and gurgling. He thrashes, body twitching, blood pouring from his mouth like a fountain of guilt.

I wipe the blade on the sheet beside him. His sobs rattle in the silence, but I don’t care.

I stand looking down at the broken man on the floor, wishing I had done worse to my uncle than merely crippling one of his legs.

Now, this one will never walk again. Never hit again. Never speak to Kali. Never lay a finger on her mother.

Justice.

I let out a breath and roll my neck. Then I smirk-just a little-and step out, leaving behind nothing but blood and ruin.

There’s no guilt.

Only the quiet satisfaction of a promise kept.

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Kali’s going to be pissed when she finds out I took revenge on her behalf-but I don’t care.

I made a promise to her mother, and I intend to keep it: protect Kali with my life. That includes eliminating any threat-past or present.

Besides, her mother was right. Kali's tired She's carried enough pain for too long. Fought too many battles. She deserves peace now. have to be the monster to give her that, so be it.

As I step out of the hospital, the fresh air hits me like a slap, but it does nothing to clear the rage burning in my chest.

Because I didn't kill Logan.

I'm halfway to shifting, ready to run and burn off some of this heat clawing under my skin, when a sharp pulse of energy jolts through my head—a mind-link.

Fury.

“Alpha. You’ve received a letter... from the Alpha King.”

I stop dead in my tracks.

What the hell?

“Why would a letter from him be sent here? This isn't even our territory.” I grit out through the link, already moving faster, boots striking hard against the gravel. I ignore the curious glances from passing warriors and pack members.

Fury's already waiting when I reach the Alpha House, standing by the entrance like a statue, one hand tucked into his jacket. His expression is unreadable, but I catch the flicker of concern in his eyes before he hides it. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a sealed envelope-thick, heavy parchment, sealed with wax.

Royal.

I snatch it from his hand and flip it over. The King's crest stares back at me. Fuck.

Fury folds his arms. “Looks like the Alpha King knows you’ve taken over the Red Night Pack. The letter says you’ve violated the peace treaty between packs. You’re being fined.”

My eyes snap up to his.

“Fined?” I scoff, ripping the seal and scanning the contents. “For what-protecting what was mine? Taking down a corrupt Luna and saving a pack member she tortured unjustly?”

“Travis must’ve met with his father,” Fury says, his voice hard. “They probably ran straight to the King for help. Or maybe someone else reached him first.” His eyes narrow. “But that’s what’s strange. Why didn’t they reach out to their allied packs nearby? That’s what any Alpha would do-to rally support, fight back, try to reclaim the land.

Instead, they went straight to the King?”

My jaw tightens as I crumple the edge of the letter in my fist. “Because this wasn’t Travis’s idea. Or his father’s.”

Fury watches me closely. “Then whose?”

I drag a hand through my hair, the answer leaving a bitter sting on my tongue. “..My uncle,” I spit, eyes darkening. “It has to be him. He’s the King’s messenger. He’s the only one who can get close to the throne that fast.”

Fury nods slowly. “Your uncle doesn’t get involved in your business-unless he has a reason. Unless he suddenly gives a damn about something... or someone.”

Exactly

This isn’t about some treaty violation.

It’s a warning.

I exhale sharply, trying to force down the rage clawing its way up my throat. “I’ll go to the Alpha King. Set things straight.” I pause, then growl, “But we need to figure out what my uncle’s really doing. Why use Red Night as a pawn? And if he’s backing them now, it’s not out of concern. He’s using them to come after me.”

“The Alpha King usually doesn’t get involved in things like this,” Fury says. “He’s turned a blind eye to far worse.”

“Exactly,” I grit out.

“Maybe he’s trying to spite you,” Fury says carefully. “Or make an example out of you-for rejecting his precious daughter.”

His words leave a bitter taste in my mouth, but I don’t respond.

Because he might be right.

My thoughts spiral, tension tightening in my chest-until another question slams into me.

“Where the hell is Khaos?”

Fury frowns. “I was about to ask you the same. I haven’t seen him since before we left Blood Fang to come here.”

That doesn’t sit right.

“It’s been about two days since I last saw him,” I mutter, gritting my teeth. “He better have a damn good reason. Or he can forget about being my Beta when I get back.” If Khaos thinks being my sister’s mate gives him immunity from consequences-he’s dead wrong.

I step forward, hand closing around the Alpha House’s front door handle.

“Alpha,” Fury calls behind me, “the letter sounded urgent. You need to get to the King before sunrise.”

I stop, glancing over my shoulder.

“There’s no way I’m leaving without saying goodbye to my mate.”

His shoulders drop slightly as he bows his head. “Understood.”

“While I’m gone,” I continue, “take Kali and her mother back to Blood Fang. Take a few warriors with you. She’ll be safer there, not here. This place could be attacked at any moment.”

“And you’ll meet us back there?”

I nod once. “After I deal with the King.”

Fury gives a short bow and steps back.

I push the door open and step into the Alpha House. The place is quiet ... but Kali’s scent hits me instantly. Sweet. Addictive. Mine.

It floods my senses like a drug.

I close my eyes, letting it wrap around me, guide me-like a man possessed. My feet move on their own, carrying me down the hall toward the largest room at the end: the Alpha’s quarters.

My hand tightens around the knob.

I push the door open and my breath catches.

She’s there. Laid across the massive bed like a vision-hair spilling over silk pillows, skin glowing in the candlelight. Lips slightly parted. Eyes gleaming gold with heat. A thin sheet barely covers her, clinging to every curve, slipping dangerously low over her hip.

Her gaze locks with mine. Hunger. Fire.

“‘ve been waiting for you,” she purrs, her voice like velvet dipped in sin. “It’s time we complete our mate bond...don’t you think?”

My mouth goes dry.

Fuck.

If this is a dream, I never want to wake up.

Seeing me rooted to the spot, Kali rises, the thin silk sheet sliding down her body, pooling at her waist—and I draw in a sharp breath. The sheer nightgown she wears leaves little to the imagination, draping delicately over the soft, feminine curves of her hips that sway as she moves toward me.

It's like I'm under a damn spell one I-have no desire to break.

She stops just inches away, her glowing ember eyes laced with gold, brimming with desire. Her lips part slightly, lush and pink, begging to be kissed—no, ravished.

“What did you just say?” I breathe as I fight to rein in the animalistic instincts of my wolf to take her right here and now.

Her lips tug up slightly, her dark lashes fluttering softly to meet my gaze that is riveted solely on her.

I swallow thickly when she closes the minuscule distance left between us. Her addicting scent floods my senses and derails my thoughts.

“You heard me,” she purrs, biting down on her lower lip-and gods help me, I follow the movement like I'm in a trance.

Her body melts into mine, and I can feel everything-every curve, every inch of her pressing into me like she belongs there. But something about it doesn't sit right.

It's not her body-it's her intent. The way she looks at me... there's hesitation beneath the hunger. A flicker of doubt behind her eyes, like she's doing this because she thinks she has to, not because she wants to.

And I hate that.

I hate that she might believe this is the only way to show gratitude for me rescuing her and her mother. That this is what I've been waiting for. That giving herself to me will somehow repay a debt she thinks she owes.

Her hands glide up my chest, hooking behind my neck. Her soft body moulds perfectly against the hard planes of mine, and her breath brushes along my jawline-hot and tantalising.

My control slips further. I snake an arm around her waist, gripping her tighter, pulling her flush against me.

A soft gasp leaves her lips-and then she kisses me. Open-mouthed and slow, starting at my jawline, trailing slowly toward my lips. It takes every ounce of restraint not to pin her down and dominate her until the only name she remembers is mine-moaned over and over again as I fill her tight little cunt with my seeds.

Her lips hover over mine-barely a breath away-and when she leans in to close the distance, I do the unthinkable. I turn my head, fighting against the mate bond and my wolf all at once to take what's mine and mine alone.

“No,” I mutter, a low growl rumbling in my chest.

Her body stiffens instantly against mine at my sudden rejection. She pulls back slowly, her eyes meeting mine. I can see the hurt and confusion swimming in her eyes, and just the thought that I caused that feels like a sucker punch in the gut.

I know I am stupid for missing this chance, but it just doesn't feel right.

"I've dreamed about this," I admit softly. "I've imagined completing the mate bond with you more times than I can count... from the moment I first laid eyes on you."

I reach up, brushing a knuckle along her cheek. "But nothing could have prepared me for the real thing. For you." She says nothing, watching me.

"I want this-gods, you have no idea how much I want this. But not here. Not in that bed." My jaw clenches as I glance at it with disgust. "Not in a place that once belonged to Diana. Not in a pack that once hurt you."

I take a deep breath, grounding myself in the truth.

"When we do this... when I make you mine completely, it will be in our home. In the house I built for you, where you feel safe. Where every moment will be ours to remember."

Her eyes soften, the tension in her shoulders fading slightly.

"But more than anything," I continue, "I need to know this is what you truly want. Not because you think you owe me for saving you. Not because you think this is what I've been waiting for. You don't owe me anything, Kali."

Her gaze drops, flickering downward-and in that moment, I know.

I was right.

And it breaks my heart-because this is all my fault. It must've taken so much from her-so much courage, so much second-guessing-just to stand here like this. And I ruined it. We should've had this moment long ago if I hadn't been such a selfish, stubborn mate-obsessed with control, with her submission-pushing her to the point where she felt defiled instead of desired.

Trying to ease the tension crackling in the air between us, I lift two fingers and gently tilt her chin until her eyes meet mine again. My nostrils flare as the scent of her arousal hits me full force-sweet and heady and soaked in want-and my little control shatters; my hands move to wrap around the delicate skin of her throat.

"You smell so good," my voice is raspy, guttural sound as it leaves my lips. I lean down slightly, skimming my nose across the spot beneath her ear and then her cheek, where I leave soft kisses.

She responds with a soft sigh, and I can feel the shift in her body as she presses closer, as if drawn by something neither of us can fight.

My hands around her waist skim down her hips like they have a mind of their own, trailing lower until I grip the soft flesh of her ass.

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“You say no... Yet you want me so bad,” she teases, her voice breathy but laced with heat, and she bites down on her lips as if to suppress a devious little smile..

To prove her point, the heat of her hand moves-and 1 groan as her palm cups the hard line of my erection, stroking me slowly through the fabric of my pants.

“Kali,” 1 moan, her name falling from my mouth like a curse and a prayer all at once when she begins dragging her hand painfully slowly up and down my throbbing length.

“So what if I do?” I growl through gritted teeth so hard as my hand around her throat tightens, bringing her face closer to mine; I can feel her breath fan my chin as her sultry gaze clashes against mine. “Is it not obvious, love?” I rasp.

Her response is an innocent flutter of her lashes, but nothing about my little temptress of a mate is innocent, not when her hands find my belt buckle and begin to unclasp.

That is when I snap.

In one swift moment, she’s in my arms, and in the next, she’s on the vanity by the corner of the room, my hand gripping her thigh as I pry her legs open and stand between them.

With a groan I drop my head to the crook of her neck, my fingers skimming her sides until I stop just below the soft mound of her breast.

I begin to place slow kisses in the valley of her neck, nipping at the skin with my teeth until she gasps and soothing it with my tongue.

Slowly I cup her breast in, her nipple hardening into tight peaks at the attention. She gasps, throwing her head back as I play with her sensitive peaks over the sheer material of her nightgown.

“A quick taste won’t hurt, right?” I murmur, pushing the hem of her nightgown higher, past her thighs, until my fingers brush the delicate lace of her thong-barely covering anything.

Her lips part in a soft moan as I trail my thumb along the damp covered pussy that’s already leaking.-

“So wet for me already,” I whisper, grinning as she whimpers in response. One of the thin straps of her nightgown slips down her shoulder, exposing the untouched skin of her neck-right where I want to claim her.

Suddenly my instincts flare. I want to mark her. To make sure the world knows she’s mine to fuck, to ruin, to worship.

– I push the material of her thong aside and inhale sharply at the sight of her dripping pussy, beautiful and so fucking wet for me.

She drips onto my fingers; I swirl them between her legs, watching her eyes roll to the back of her head when I pinch her clit. In a matter of seconds, she's at my mercy, her cheeks flush, her dark hair falling over the glistening skin of her bare shoulder that is covered in my mark.

Her hand finds my wrist, gasping as I push a finger into her tight, aching pussy.

"Fuck," she moans, her eyes wounded shut as the words fall from her luscious lips, and I nip at the corner of her lips, dangerously close to devouring them, but I hold back, fearing I wouldn't be able to hold back from taking her right here.

"Open your eyes," I murmur against her lips. "Tell me what you want, baby."

Her lashes flutter open, revealing emerald eyes glazed with lust. They lock with mine as her lips part.

"-I want," she breathes. "you jack."

I add the second finger, and she cries out as I pump even faster than before, hooking my finger into her tight heat and hitting her sensitive spot over and over again until she's trembling beneath me, unable to form a coherent sentence.

"Please... fuck... Jack," she begs, her voice wrecked. I grim against her lips, my thrust slowing down in the slightest, causing her to whine, but that quickly morphs into a scream when I add the third finger.

She's so fucking needy-for me. Only for me.

Her walls clench around my fingers, and I let out a guttural curse.

"I can't fucking wait to finally be buried inside you-so deep." I growl into her ear, flicking her clit just right, which pushes her over the edge.

"J-Jack!" she cries out, her head falling back. Her body convulses beneath mine as she cums all over my hands.

My thrusts don't stop, though; I fuck her through her orgasm until she is a writhing, trembling mess.

A sigh escapes her lips as I slowly pull out, bringing my fingers that are glistening with her juices to my mouth, holding her smouldering gaze as I lick them clean.

"Good girl," I murmur as her eyes flutter shut, exhaustion softening every line of her face.

I cradle the back of her head, pressing a lingering kiss to her lips before pulling away and resting my forehead against hers.

'love you', The words slip out before I can stop them-but I don't regret saying them. Not when the mere thought of her being hurt makes my chest feel like it's being torn in two.

I hold onto the moment a little longer, silently wishing she could love me too. Maybe one day, she will.

But until then, I have to meet with the Alpha King—take care of what needs to be done—so I can return to her, to our bed, and finally complete our bond in the home we share.

The dream returns—again.

But this time, it's exactly like the first—when Jack's lips touched mine for the very first time.

The little girl sits on the edge of a bed far too large for her small frame, her tiny fingers curled tightly around a familiar blue necklace that pulses faintly with light.

But she's not in an ordinary room this time. It's a hut. Dimly lit, thick with incense and smoke. Cracked shelves line the walls, crammed with dusty jars and dried herbs. Pots bubble with glowing liquids, and hanging talismans twist eerily in the low light. The air hums with energy—old magic, ancient... dangerous.

And then I hear it—chanting.

A low, rhythmic whisper, in a language I don't understand but feel in my bones. It's coming from behind me. From all around me. The girl clutches the necklace tighter, and just before she turns around—

I jolt awake, breath caught in my throat.

"Damn it." I exhale sharply, rubbing a hand over my face.

Fuck, another incomplete dream.

I fling the covers back, frustrated. "It's all Jack's fault," I mutter to myself.

If he'd just taken me last night—fully—I know I would've remembered.

Everything. All of it. Who I am, what I was, and where I come from. The pieces of me are there, waiting, just out of reach. And all it would take is completing the bond.

And he said no. I swallow hard, heart twisting at the memory.

I understand his reasons—gods, I do. The Red Night Pack is full of ghosts from my past, and the idea of mating in Diana's bed makes me want to gag too. But still... I can't pretend it didn't hurt.

When he turned his face away, when I leaned in, ready to give him everything... the sting of that rejection sliced deeper than I expected. And for the first time, I understood. Really understood what I'd put him through before—every time I pushed him away, rejected his touch, his claim, his love.

And yet, even knowing it all, he still looked at me like I was the center of his universe.

The truth is—I didn’t offer myself to Jack last night because was grateful: Not just because he saved me. I did it because I was ready.

Ready to love him. Ready to stop running from what we are. Ready to be his.

And he... he didn’t see that.

I bite down on my bottom lip, the burn behind my eyes threatening to spill. But just as my emotions begin to spiral, a sharp knock at the door jerks me out of my thoughts.

I shoot upright in bed just as the door creaks open.

“Kali?”

My mother steps into the room, and I freeze. My eyes dart down to the scandalous slip of a nightgown clinging to my body-barely covering anything-and I let out a horrified squeak as I yank the covers tightly around myself.

Too late.

Her eyes drop to the floor beside the bed where my nightgown straplies limply... and then she smirks.

“Well, well..

...” she drawls with amusement. “I see why you didn’t come down for breakfast. Should I expect grandbabies soon?”

My mouth drops open. “M-Mum!” I hiss, mortified. “We didn’t-Jack and I haven’t-”

“Mated?” she supplies with a wink.

“Yes!” I snap, my face flaming as I bury myself deeper into the sheets.

She hums thoughtfully, her gaze scanning me. “Strange,” she says, lips twitching with another grin. “Because your arousal is all over this room, sweetheart. Smells like a damn bakery in here.”

“Oh my goddess!” I groan, burying my face into the pillow, wishing the ground would open up and swallow me whole.

She laughs-warm, teasing, but not unkind. “Relax, Kali. You’re not the first girl to fall for her mate and forget the rest of the world exists.

And knowing Jack, it probably took all his strength not to pounce on you last night.”

I peek up at her, cheeks still burning, but manage a small, embarrassed smile.

Her expression softens as her eyes settle on my neck. There's no mark yet. She sees it. I see her see it. And for once, she spares me the teasing.

"Alright, alright," she says, waving a hand and straightening her posture. "I didn't come here to embarrass you that much."

I blink. "Then why-?"

"Caspian," she says simply. My heart stops.

"Caspian?" I echo, guilt crashing into me like a freight train. "I-oh gods, I forgot-how is he? Is he awake?"

"He's stable," she says quickly, but her tone is serious now.

"I should've gone to him sooner."

"He understands," she says gently. "You've had a lot going on. I thought... we should be there when he wakes up."

I don't even hesitate. I'm already scrambling out of bed, clutching the sheets around me as I rush toward the bathroom.

"Give me five minutes!" I call out behind me, my voice shaking with urgency.

"Take your time!" she calls back, chuckling under her breath. "And maybe wear something that covers your thighs this time!"

I slam the bathroom door with a groan and lean back against it. By the time I'm dressed and step out of the room, my mother is already waiting by the front door. We walk in silence, the sun high above us as we make our way to the hospital. I can feel her tension as clearly as my own-she's nervous to see Caspian again after everything.

When we push open the double doors of the hospital and head down the hallway, something feels... off. I expected quiet. Cold. Maybe the steady beep of machines.

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Instead, I hear-

Grunting. Movement. Power.

Mom opens the door to Caspian's room first, and I step in behind her-and freeze.

He's not lying on the bed.

He's not weak. He's not frail.

He's doing push-ups—one-handed-with a damn resistance band slung around his back like it's made of paper. The floor beneath him shakes slightly with every motion, his shirtless body glistening with sweat, muscles rippling like he was sculpted by war gods. But that's not what makes me stop breathing.

It's his eyes.

Golden-radiant, dangerous.

Alpha.

My breath catches. Jack... he kept his word. He gave Caspian the Alpha title. He saved him.

"Caspian?" My voice comes out small, uncertain but he doesn't even glance at me.

He straightens, running a towel across the back of his neck as he looks directly at my mother. His face breaks into a warm smile.

"It's so good to see you," he says, voice rich, deep-commanding. "You look well. How are you feeling?"

My mom chuckles, eyes crinkling with joy. "Better now, Caspian. You look like a whole new man." "I feel like one," he replies, grinning. "Stronger. It's like I've been reborn. Jack-Alpha Jack—he did all this. Gave me his blood and told me I was born to lead. He handed me the title and said I deserve it, even though I don't. And now.." He glances at his reflection in the mirror, eyes narrowing slightly. "Now I'm going to change everything."

I can't speak. I just stand there, clutching my hands together as my heart sinks further into my chest.

He doesn't look at me. Doesn't acknowledge me. Not a hug. Not a smile. Not even a hey, how are you after all this time.

"The old ways are done," Caspian continues. "No more oppression. No more silence. I'll burn Luna Diana's reign to the ground and make her family beg for mercy. She'll pay for everything she's done."

Mom beams at him, proud and glowing. "I believe in you, Caspian. This pack needs change."

I can't take it anymore.

"Really?" I blurt, louder than I intend. Caspian's smile falters slightly, but still, he doesn't meet my eyes.

My fists clench, heat rising up my neck. I whirl around and kick the door open, stomping out of the room before either of them can say another word.

This wasn't how I imagined seeing him again. Not like this. Not so cold.

Caspian was my best friend. He would have died for me. He loved me.

And now he looks at me like I'm nothing but a shadow in the corner.

I storm down the hallway, barely feeling my legs move. My chest is tight, my eyes burning with something I don't want to name. Rage.

Sadness. Confusion.

Suddenly, a thought strikes me-him. My bastard father.

A cruel, wicked smile curves my lips before I even realize it's there.

"Kali."

My mom's voice floats behind me softly. I pause near the hospital entrance, turning to find her a few steps behind, her brows pinched.

She already knows.

"You're going to see him, aren't you?" she asks quietly.

I tilt my head, studying her. There's pity in her eyes. Pity. Even after everything that bastard did to her.

"You feel sorry for him?" I ask coldly.

She swallows and looks away. "He's still my mate, Kali."

"Not anymore. You have no idea how long I've waited for this," I snap, my voice laced with years of suppressed rage. "It's why I wanted you to reject him—I needed you to. Because now, there's nothing standing in the way of me getting the closure I deserve."

She doesn't follow and just nods. "Be careful, baby."

I don't respond. I just turn, close my eyes, and follow the wretched, bitter scent I know too well. A scent that once haunted my nightmares.

It leads me down a hallway toward the private wing. I slow down as I reach a closed door, heart thumping. My fingers twitch on the handle.

I push it open.

My breath catches in my throat.

He's sitting in a wheelchair. His back is to me, facing the window. Sunlight streams through the glass, bathing him in a golden halo that makes him look almost peaceful. Almost... human.

But as I step closer, something shifts. Something's wrong.

His arms-gone.

His legs-gone.

Only stumps remain, bound in thick white gauze. And when I circle slowly to face him-

His face.

Sunken. Pale. Hollow.

A ghost.

Not the Beta Logan I remember-the man who used to tower over me, voice full of thunder and fists full of punishment.

He looks at me.

Or rather, he tries to.

And then-

He starts crying.

Muffled, strangled sobs that shake his frail body.

He opens his mouth, but no sound comes.

Because his tongue... is gone.

I stagger back, one hand over my mouth, nausea and shock crashing into me like a wave. My thoughts scream only one name:Jack.

My mate did this.

He took his revenge-for me. For my mom.

It's too much.

Too perfect.

Too brutal.

I don't know what I feel.

Horrified. Relieved. Vengeful. Grateful.

I fall to my knees beside the chair, shaking, and whisper, "You don't get to hurt us anymore."

He sobs harder, wheezing as if the guilt is eating him from the inside.

And I...

I feel free.

I stand slowly, my legs wobbling beneath me as I grip the side of the wheelchair for support. The leather is warm from his body, sticky beneath my palm. I brace myself, steadying my breath as I lean down-face to face with the monster who once haunted my every waking moment.

A wicked smile pulls at my lips.

"I'm finally free of you, bastard," I whisper coldly. "And the best part? I didn't even have to lift a damn finger to make you pay."

His eyes glisten-wide, sunken, filled with raw, unfiltered fear. His face trembles like that of a coward who's run out of places to hide.

"almost felt guilty, you know?" I scoff, blinking back the tears threatening to fall. "Because of Mom. Every time I looked at her and saw how she still pitied you, even after everything you did to us... after every scar, every scream —every time you made me wish I didn't exist."

My jaw tightens, fury burning anew in my chest. Then, I laugh-loud, wild and uncontrollable, letting it all out, spit flying from my mouth and landing squarely on his pale, pathetic face. I don't even care. I laugh harder seeing how he flinches, but he can't wipe it off. He can't even raise a hand to defend himself. Pathetic.

"But now?" I grin cruelly. "Now, I don't feel guilty. I don't feel unsatisfied."

I tilt my head, gaze sharp as shattered glass. "Thanks to my mate. Jack did what I never could. He gave you exactly what you deserve."

I lean in closer, lowering my voice until it's nothing but a hiss against his ear. "I never plotted revenge. Never had some grand plan to bring you down. But I won't lie-there were days I dreamed about burying your body where no one would ever find it." I snort. "A sweet little fantasy." I grab a pillow from the hospital bed, clutching it tightly in both hands, holding it mid-air like a weapon-tempted to choke the life out of him.

My arms shake with tension as I stare down at him, teeth bared in a twisted, euphoric smile.

"But this?" I mutter. "This is so much better. Watching you like this-miserable, helpless, broken. Unable to talk back, to beg, or even stand? This is better. Oh gods, it's satisfying."

Laughter rips from my throat again-louder, rawer. I throw my head back, consumed by it.

This-this is the happiest damn day of my life!"

whirl around with the pillow raised, ready to fling it at his face-but I freeze mid-motion.

The door creaks open.

Mom.

She steps inside slowly, like she's sleepwalking into a nightmare. Her eyes scan the room, taking in the destruction, the chaos... until they land on him-on what's left of him. For a moment, I see that same pity flicker there again.

And then it dies.

The pillow slips from my hands and hits the floor with a dull thud. I hold my breath, waiting for her to speak. Her voice comes out in a low, almost whisper.

"Leave us," she says, eyes fixed on the man in the chair. "Return to the Blood Fang pack. Immediately. Without me."

I blink, stunned. "Mom, what?"

"Now, Kali." Her voice is harder now.

I nod slowly, backing toward the door like I'm obeying-but I don't leave

I slip around the corner and press my back against the wall, just outside the room. At first, there's silence... and then I hear it.

Sobbing.

Her sobbing

And suddenly, my heart starts to race.

"Logan," she says softly, like she's speaking to a ghost. "I loved you once. I gave you everything. And you turned me into someone I didn't recognize."

She's crying again, but this time it's different-raw, painful, real.

"You made me doubt myself. Over and over again. You made me believe I was weak. That I was worthless. That we deserved the pain."

I peek inside just as she lifts her hand... and wipes her tears away.

She takes a step closer. Then another. Her expression hardens into something I've never seen before.

Furious.

"You beast," she spits. "You got what you deserved."

Her voice rises. "It's a shame it wasn't me who got to do this to you. You heartless bastard."

She grabs the sides of his wheelchair and leans in, nose to nose.

“Kali found a real man. One who protects her. One who made sure you’ll never hurt us again. And me? I feel ashamed that I couldn’t protect her from you. That I still-” her voice breaks, just for a moment,

“-that I still pitied you.”

She steps back, her chest heaving.

“I’m done feeling sorry for monsters.”

Then-

Spat!

Her spit lands squarely on his face. He flinches, and before I can even react-CRASH!-she kicks the wheelchair over.

He crashes to the floor like a sack of meat, groaning and writhing like a worm on the tile.

She stands over him.

“You’ll suffer every day,” she says coldly. “And I’ll be here. Watching.”

I can’t stop the proud smile that spreads across my face as I turn away, heels clicking against the hospital floor.

His screams follow me down the hall.

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And gods, do they sound sweet.

The cold night air greets me as I step out of the hospital. Fury stands by the entrance, tall and silent like a shadow. His arms are crossed, eyes flickering when he sees me.

“There you are,” he says, almost hesitant. “Alpha Jack says we need to leave for Blood Fang as soon as possible.”

I nod once. “Good. I was just about to come find you.”

His brow raises slightly. “You’re ready to leave?”

“Yeah.” I nod, brushing a few strands of hair out of my face. “I’ve got no reason to stay in Red Night anymore.”

Fury tilts his head. "What about your mother? Isn't she coming with us?"

I hesitate, a lump rising in my throat for a brief moment-but I swallow it down. "She has unfinished business here," I murmur, my gaze fixed on the dark treeline ahead. "Besides... she's in good hands now that Caspian is Alpha." The name tastes bitter on my tongue. I can still feel the sting of his cold silence, the way his eyes passed over me like I was nothing.

Fury notices, but he doesn't push and nod. "Very well. Let's go. We'll make it to Blood Fang before dawn if we leave now."

A smirk curves my lips. "You'll make it before dawn," I say, tilting my head playfully. "I'll be there long before that."

He frowns, confused. "What are you talking about? Aren't you going to climb on my back like last time?"

I almost laugh. My smirk stretches wider, pulling at the corners of my mouth. He still doesn't know.

The last time, I'd lied-told him I was sick when truly I was terrified.

Terrified of what he'd think of me if he saw what I really was. If he saw her.

But not anymore, I'm done hiding.

So I don't say anything. I just walk-past him, past the trees, disappearing into the shadows of the woods.

I hear him fall in step behind me, his pace matching mine. Then there are more footsteps. I glance back and see several warriors joining us, their eyes alert, protective.

"Alpha said a few extra warriors should escort us back. Just in case."

Fury gives me a small grin and shrugs off his jacket. "Now be reasonable and climb on"

He stops when I don't move. I just stand there watching him as he shifts. Bones crack, limbs stretch, and within seconds, Fury's wolf stands before me-thick, dark grey fur, almost black, with kind, familiar eyes.

He wiggles his tail slightly, motioning me forward.

But I just breathe.

And let her out.

The shift is seamless. No tearing, no pain. Just a surge of power rolling down my spine. My bones stretch and twist-and then my wolf bursts forth with a fierce growl. My fur is dark as obsidian, streaked with glowing silver along my back, like lightning carved into flesh.

The forest goes silent.

Even the wind stills. And even in wolf form, I don't miss it-the way Fury takes a startled step back. His wolf lowers his head slightly, his tail tucking. The other warriors, mid shift, halt, stunned

Then, one by one, they lower their heads.

They bare their necks.

And they cower.

I tower over them, easily twice-maybe three times-their size. A walking nightmare. A legend.

And just like I feared... they're terrified.

Maybe this was a mistake.

But I don't back down but i take off-racing through the trees like wind and shadow combined. My paws barely kiss the earth as if I'm practicing flying.

They can't keep up. I know it. And I don't care but I want them to see I'm not a threat. Just... me.

Within two hours, the familiar scent of Blood Fang hits my nose. I cross the borders, and the warriors stationed at the edge freeze once again.

One even stumbles back as my massive frame emerges from the trees.

I slow down just enough for them to see and then shift back.

I land barefoot on the forest ground, my clothes returning instantly thanks to the enchantment woven into them. My body buzzes with power, but my mind is strangely calm.

I'm home or something like it.

I walk the rest of the way to mine and Jack's house, my heartbeat steady-until I open the door. Chapter 98

A scent hits me first.

Not Jack.

Her.

Jasmine.

I step inside slowly, the door creaking shut behind me. The lights are low, but I see her-curled in the corner of the living room like a frightened animal. Her eyes snap up to mine, wide and panicked. Her hands clutch the hem of her sweater like it's the only thing holding her together.

And then-

I see it.

The mark.

Burned into the side of her neck, glowing faintly in the dim light.

“No,” I whisper and Jasmine flinches.

I take a step forward, voice tighter now. “Tell me that’s not who I think it is.”

She doesn’t answer.

She can’t.

The fear in her eyes says everything.

I stare at her, my breath caught between a scream and a sob.

Khoas marked her.

Khaos didn’t just mark her-he forced it.

I see the deep red scratches trailing down her arms, the bruising fingerprints around her swollen wrists. A small tear splits her lower lip.

I bite back a curse, but it slips out anyway. “Son of a bitch. That bastard didn’t learn his lesson, did he? Not even after I clawed up his face as a warning.”

Jasmine’s eyes fill with tears, but I don’t soften.

“Did you go back to him?”

Her mouth opens, then closes. Shame bleeds across her face before she even speaks. Her fingers twist in the hem of her sweater but I don’t bother masking the disappointment in my voice. I can’t.

“Because how the hell did he find you, Jasmine? You were supposed to be hiding at the treehouse. That was your secret place-where he couldn’t find you, remember?”

A broken sound escapes her lips-something between a sob and a sigh. “... I thought after what you did to him-after you clawed his face

-it would scare him off for good.”

My chest burns as her eyes meet mine for a moment.

“Besides, I couldn’t stay hiding forever, Kali. I just—I needed to live again. So I tried going back to my routine... and I didn’t think he’d been watching me.”

She glances down at the bruises on her arms. Her voice trembles like it's trying to hold together what's already broken. "I forgot... we were once together. He knows all my patterns. Everything. Except the treehouse. But he waited... hiding in the shadows, knowing I would come by, and when I did, he grabbed me out of nowhere. And he—he forced it, Kali."

My heart breaks as I watch her crumble. Her hands tremble as she wraps her arms tightly around herself.

"I tried to fight, I swear, but... my fear made me weak. I froze. He was stronger. And his eyes—his eyes weren't even his. He doesn't even look human anymore."

I mutter through clenched teeth, "When the hell was he ever human?"

She keeps going, like if she stops, she'll fall apart.

"I came here because I couldn't go back to the treehouse. I didn't want him to follow me there too."

I nod, lips pressed into a thin, tight line. Every inch of me is vibrating with fury, with helplessness, with guilt. I should have ended him. When I had the chance. But I hesitated—because of her.

And now... now it's too late.

He marked her.

On purpose.

The bastard knew exactly what he was doing. By marking Jasmine, he's shielded himself. He knows what that bond means. If I try to kill him now... she'll feel it. It could destroy her.

He made himself untouchable.

Smart.

Dirty.

But smart.

I bite back another curse as the rage inside me builds like wildfire-hot, relentless, merciless. Jack's not here. And I don't even know what he'll do when he finds out but I know what I'm going to do.

I've seen enough monsters for one lifetime.

And I'm done letting them win.

Jasmine's voice cracks through my thoughts, barely a whisper. "Are you going to tell my brother?"

I snap my head toward her. I stare. Really stare. Her eyes are glassy, pleading. Scared.

I don't hide my frustration this time. "Is that even a question?"

She shrinks back, lips trembling. I shake my head and start pacing, needing to move before I explode.

“If we’d told Jack sooner, this could’ve been dealt with. It never should’ve gotten this far.”

She looks down, ashamed. “I know,” she whispers. “I just... I thought I could handle it.”

“Well now I’ll handle it,” I snap. “Since Jack’s not here, I’m taking matters into my own hands.”

Her posture stiffens, panic rising. “Kali, don’t-he’s dangerous.”

I level her with a cold glare. “So am I.”

She opens her mouth again, probably to beg me not to go, but I cut her off.

“Lock the door. Open it only for Fury when he arrives. No one else. Got it?”

She hesitates, then nods slowly. Just as I reach the door, her voice stops me. “He’s at the same house you came to last time,” she says quietly. “I know because of the bond... I can feel him there.”

I turn to her, hold her gaze, and nod once.

“Good. Then I won’t have to waste time tracking him down.”

With that, I throw the door open and march straight toward that goddamn house-the one isolated so far out no one can hear her scream when he hurts her.

The wind howls around me as I storm forward, rage pulsing in every step. When I reach the front door, it swings open without resistance-unlocked. Like a silent invitation. I should be afraid as my instincts scream at me to turn back. But I don’t slow down and ignore them.

Because there he is.

Sitting on the couch like a damn king on a throne-legs spread, arms draped casually across the backrest, that same smug smile twisting his lips.

“I’ve been expecting you,” Khoas says, his voice slick like oil.

It’s almost laughable, considering the last time he saw my beast, he nearly pissed himself. But now?

Now he’s bold.

Now he’s brave.

Because he thinks I can’t touch him.

Because he marked Jasmine.

Because he knows the bond will protect him—at her expense.