

Submission is Not My Style – Chapter 8

I slip through the back door of the house like a shadow, moving carefully to avoid making any noise. The house is silent, but that doesn't mean I'm alone. My beta father, Logan, is unpredictable, and if he catches me sneaking in, there'll be hell to pay.

The air inside is heavy with the scent of my mum's old wood and herbs, a familiar comfort that I refuse to dwell on. I can't afford to let myself feel anything right now.

My room is just as I left it. Small, bare, almost empty. I pull out my worn-out bag from under the bed and start stuffing in the few clothes I own. Not that I had much to begin with—Logan never allowed my mother to buy me more than the bare minimum, claiming I didn't deserve it. He made sure I never looked like I belonged, and for the longest time, I let him believe I didn't.

Beneath a loose floorboard under my bed, I pull out a small, heavy box. The weight of it is reassuring. Inside, gold pieces glimmer faintly in the dim light. My secret.

No one in the pack knows how I got this—not even Caspian or mum. Letting anyone know would've meant death. I had taken jobs as a bounty hunter, tracking supernatural fugitives and collecting rewards under the cover of darkness. It's a work that kept me alive, made me stronger, and gave me something of my own in a world that wanted to keep me powerless.

My massive wolf, a creature no one had ever seen, had given me the edge. It was the reason I never let anyone witness my shift. A wolf like mine? It was dangerous. A threat.

I tuck the gold carefully between my clothes and zip the bag shut. Before leaving, there's one more thing I need to do.

I grab a piece of paper and a pen, my hands trembling slightly as I scribble a quick note for my mother. The words don't come easily.

Mama,

Don't cry for me. This is not the end. Keep your head up and stay strong. One day, I will come back, and when I do, things will be different.

Take this gold and use it well. Please, survive until I return.

I love you.

I fold the note and slip a piece of gold inside. Now, where to hide it?

Not in her room—Logan would find it. No, somewhere he'd never look.

I move to the kitchen, my fingers grazing over the counters as I think. Then my eyes land on the rice cooker. Perfect.

Logan never steps foot in the kitchen. He believes it's beneath him—a woman's duty. For my mother, though, the kitchen has become a place of quiet safety, the only space where she isn't under his watchful eye. She'll find it.

I lift the lid and slide the note and gold inside before closing it again.

A deep breath steadies me as I adjust the strap of my bag. This is it. My fingers tighten around it as I cast one last glance around the house. I won't say goodbye. Saying goodbye means I won't be back, and I will be back. For her. For revenge.

I turn toward the door, reaching for the handle, but before I can pull it open, it moves from the other side.

I freeze.

The door cracks open, and my mother's face appears, eyes already rimmed with red, as if she somehow knew. Her gaze drops to the bag in my hands, and her breath catches in her throat.

"Kali," she whispers.

I swallow hard, forcing myself to stay strong, to not let the sight of her break me. "Mum—"

Her hands tremble as she lifts them, covering her mouth as a choked sob escapes. "Don't tell me..." She shakes her head, blinking rapidly. "Don't tell me you were about to leave without saying goodbye."

I tighten my grip on my bag's strap, my knuckles aching. "I didn't want to say goodbye, Mum," I admit. "Because I know I'll see you again. But I needed to leave without giving this pack or Luna Diana the satisfaction of watching me go, thinking they broke me. That they threw me out like some worthless criminal."

Her eyes fill with understanding as she nods slowly. "Before you go, there's something I need to give you." She takes my hands firmly, pulling me inside and shutting the door behind us.

"Mum, if it's money, forget it. I'll be fine," I argue, shaking my head.

She lets out a soft laugh, the sound warm but laced with sadness. "It's not money," she says. "I know you'd never take it. But there is something I took from you the day I found you. And I think it will help if you ever decide to search for your family."

"What?" I frown. "Mum, I told you—you are my only family. I'm not searching for them."

"You will," she insists, leading me to the kitchen. She opens a drawer and pulls out a small pouch, carefully removing a blue necklace. The moment my eyes land on it, a sharp pain pierces my skull.

I stumble, clutching my head. "Ah—!"

Mum grips my arms. "Kali? Are you okay?"

I squeeze my eyes shut, willing the pain away. It's like something buried deep in my memory is trying to claw its way back. "Yeah... but I feel dizzy."

She studies me carefully. "Do you remember anything?"

I shake my head. "No, but looking at that necklace makes my chest hurt. It feels... wrong."

She hesitates before placing the necklace in my palm. The moment it touches my skin, a searing burn shoots through me. I cry out and drop it.

Mum picks it up quickly, concern deepening in her features. "You need to find out why this burns you, Kali. And to do that, you need to find your past. Do whatever you can. And see this banishment as a vacation, okay?"

Before I can protest, she tucks the necklace back into its pouch and slips it into my bag.

Panic flares in my chest. "Mum!" But then I freeze. She just saw the gold inside.

To my shock, she chuckles. "You really think I didn't know my only daughter worked as a part time bounty hunter?"

My mouth falls open. "How do you—?"

She waves a hand dismissively. "That's a story for another day. We don't have time." Her expression turns serious again. "If you want answers, go back to the witch's hut where I found you. They're the only ones who can tell you more.

"Kalia, to reach the witch's hut, head east from here and follow the stream that runs through the forest. Be careful not to drink from it—it's enchanted. After about twenty miles, you'll come to a clearing. From there, follow the path leading northeast for another ten miles. The witch hut should be visible from there.

I nod, shifting my bag over my shoulder. But before I can take another step, she grabs my arm, fear flashing in her eyes. "Kali, whatever you do, never set foot in the Bloodfang Pack's territory. They patrol the forest, especially near the trade route. If you're caught, they'll take you straight to their Alpha."

I frown. "Mum, I'm not afraid of anyone. You know that."

Her grip tightens on my wrist. "This isn't a joke," she scowls. "That pack... they take women like you and break them. If you ever— even by mistake— step into their territory, you keep your head down. Bare your neck. Never, ever look them in the eyes. Or you won't make it out alive."

I roll my eyes. "Mum, stop exaggerating."

Her voice drops to a trembling whisper, her fear now chillingly real.

"Their Alpha... he feeds on the hearts of his enemies, Kali. His name is Alpha Jack."

The moment she says it, an icy shiver races down my spine. The name triggers a memory—those haunting words from the strange man in the shadows. And what unsettles me most is my wolf—howling restlessly inside me, wild and agitated.

Her voice cracks, raw and pleading. “You have to promise me, Kalia. Promise me you’ll never set foot in his territory. He’ll destroy you, baby. He’ll rip you apart and enjoy every minute of it.” She swallows hard, her eyes burning into mine. “If you think Luna Diana is evil, then you don’t know true darkness. Alpha Jack and his pack—they are the real predators. The most dangerous of them all.”

Before I can retort, a voice booms from the living room. “Where’s that bitch?! A disgrace of a daughter!” Logan’s voice drips with cruelty. “The Alpha and the Luna are waiting to banish her. I want to see the fear on her face when she’s kicked out like the filth she is!”

Mum spins toward me, eyes wild with fear. She pushes me toward the window. “Jump out and run. Now! I’ll take care of this. Just go!”

Tears blur my vision. “Mum—”

“Go, Kali!”

I suck in a sharp breath, nodding once. Then, without another word, I shift. My massive wolf bursts forth, dark obsidian fur streaked with glowing silver patterns across my back, almost celestial under the dim light. A fierce wind whips through the room as I lunge through the window, landing gracefully outside.

I don’t look back. I can’t. My paws hit the earth, and I disappear into the forest, my speed unmatched, knowing that even if they tried to track me—

They would never catch me.

What’s strange, though—what truly unnerves me—is how thrilled my wolf is to be banished.

Because a wolf should never feel excitement at losing her pack.