

The Princess's Revenge Chapter 9 Read Online

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Logan's POV

The silence in that stone chamber was absolute. Not even breathing. My eyes moved from the bleeding girl on the floor to the two men standing over her. One was large with a scarred face—I'd seen him in the room earlier. The other I didn't recognize, but his scent told me everything I needed to know. He reeked of Elton's territory.

Knox was screaming in my head. KILL THEM. TEAR THEM APART. THEY HURT OUR MATE.

SHUT UP! She's not— I started to argue, but the words died before I could finish them.

Because she was. Whether I accepted it or not, whether I understood it or not, the mate bond thrummed between us. And every bruise on her body made rage rise in my chest.

This wasn't love. This wasn't even affection.

This was biology. Pure biology hijacking my rational mind.

And I fucking hated it.

"Alpha Logan," the scarred one stammered, his voice cracking. "I can explain—"

"Shut your fucking mouth!" I fought to control my anger. "I told you to stay in the room." The Alpha pressure radiating from me intensified until I could see both men struggling to breathe.

I looked at her. Her left eye was swollen shut. Blood ran from her nose and mouth. She was trembling, her arms wrapped around herself in a futile attempt at modesty.

Her head dropped. Tears still wet on her cheeks. "I... I was going to, but... they brought me here..."

"Brought you?" My gaze snapped to Elijah.

"She's lying!" Elijah's voice cracked with desperation. He raised his hands higher, as if surrender might save him. "We found her trying to escape through—"

My sword was out before he finished. The blade sang as it left the scabbard, and before Elijah could draw another breath, it was buried in his throat.

His eyes went wide. Blood bubbled from his lips. He made a wet, gurgling sound and collapsed sideways, his hands scrabbling uselessly at the wound.

The second man was already shifting, smart enough to know talking wouldn't save him. His body erupted into a brown wolf that launched itself at my throat.

I sidestepped. My sword came up in a smooth arc, catching him mid-leap. The blade pierced through his chest, through his heart, pinning him against the stone wall.

Then I pulled the sword free, and he fell.

Silence again. Absolute and suffocating.

I should have felt something. Regret, maybe. Concern about the political ramifications. But all I felt was cold satisfaction that the men who'd hurt her were dead.

I crouched beside Elton's man and searched his clothing. There—a torn piece of fabric caught on his belt buckle. I pulled it free and held it up to the torchlight.

The insignia was unmistakable. Emerald Grove Pack's inner guard. "Fuck Elton," I muttered.

Knox snarled his agreement. He sent them to hurt our mate. To test us.

I know. I stood, tucking the fabric into my shirt. And now I have proof.

I turned back to Valencia.

She hadn't moved from where she'd pressed herself against the wall, the torn dress clutched to her chest. Her purple eyes were huge in her battered face, tracking my every movement.

She flinched when I started toward her.

That small movement—did something I didn't expect. It cut through the haze of protective rage and made me actually see her—a terrified girl.

Gently, Knox warned. *She's hurt. She's afraid.*

I know, I shot back.

But knowing and acting on it were two different things. I wasn't gentle. I didn't do gentle. I did efficient and controlled.

"Alpha, I can walk, I don't need—" she started to protest, her voice hoarse.

"Be quiet."

The command came out harsher than I intended, but I didn't soften it. I bent and slid one arm under her knees, the other behind her back, lifting her against my chest.

She made a small sound—half gasp, half whimper. Her body went rigid, every muscle locked with pain and fear.

Careful, Knox growled. Don't hurt her more.

I adjusted my grip, trying to avoid the worst of her injuries. Her body pressed against mine in a way that made me uncomfortably aware of every point of contact.

Heat pooled low in my belly, an unwelcome but undeniable response.

Just bond. It didn't mean anything beyond base animal attraction.

She stayed silent the entire time I carried her. Her face pressed against my shoulder, her breathing gradually slowing from its panicked rhythm.

Mark her, Knox demanded suddenly. If she bears our mark, no one will dare touch her.

No.

Why not? His confusion bled into frustration. She's ours. She needs our protection. The mark would—

I said no. I cut him off sharply. I don't understand this bond. I don't understand why the Moon Goddess would pair me with a wolfless girl. Until I do, I'm not binding her to me permanently.

Knox growled but fell silent. He knew when I'd made a final decision.

But the urge was there. I pushed the thought aside.

When I reached my room, I kicked the door open and carried her inside. The fire had burned down to embers, but enough light remained for me to see by.

I laid her on the bed as carefully as I could. In the firelight, her injuries looked even worse than in the dungeon. Purple bruises bloomed across her ribs. Her face was a mess of blood and swelling. Her knuckles were scraped raw.

The anger flared hotter. My hands clenched into fists at my sides.

I moved to the washbasin. Found clean cloths. Bandages. Salves. Arranged everything methodically on the table beside the bed.

Valencia's good eye had opened again. She watched me approach with that same mixture of fear and exhaustion.

"I'm going to clean your wounds," I said, my voice flat and emotionless. "This will hurt."

She didn't respond. Just kept staring at me with that haunted look.

I dipped the cloth in clean water and began gently wiping the blood from her face. She flinched at the first touch but didn't pull away.

I forced myself to focus on the task. Clean the wounds. Apply the salve. Bandage what needed bandaging. Don't think about the mate bond that shouldn't exist. Just take care of her injuries and figure out the rest later.

Valencia's POV

The cloth touched my face, and I flinched violently before I could stop myself.

Alpha Logan's hand froze mid-motion. For a terrifying second, I thought I'd angered him—that my instinctive recoil would be seen as rejection, as disrespect.

But he didn't strike me. He just waited, his gray eyes unreadable in the firelight, until my breathing steadied.

Then he continued cleaning the blood from my face.

I couldn't reconcile what I was seeing with what I knew. This was the same man who'd just killed two people with cold efficiency. The same Alpha who'd stood in that doorway radiating death.

Now his hands moved across my battered skin with... not gentleness, exactly. More like careful precision. Like I was a broken object he was evaluating for damage.

My body couldn't decide how to respond. Every muscle stayed locked tight. My heart hammered against my ribs. My hands trembled where they clutched the torn dress to my chest.

He could kill you right now, the rational part of my brain whispered. He's killed for less. You've seen it.

But he wasn't killing me. He was... helping me?

I didn't understand. Didn't understand any of this.

The cloth moved across my cheek, and pain flared sharp and bright. I bit down on my lip to keep from crying out.

"Does it hurt much?"

The question came out of nowhere. My eyes flew to his face, searching for the trap—because there had to be a trap. Masters didn't ask slaves about pain. They caused it or ignored it.

But his expression remained carefully neutral. Not warm. Not cold. Just... waiting for an answer.

"I've had worse," I said before I could think better of it.

His eyes snapped to mine, and something dark flickered across his face. The air seemed to thicken with sudden tension. "That's not what I asked."

There was an edge to his voice now. Not quite anger, but something close to it.

My throat went dry. "Yes," I whispered, dropping my gaze to the floor. "It hurts."

The silence stretched on, broken only by the soft sound of cloth on skin and the crackling of the fire. I kept my eyes down, my body rigid, waiting for whatever came next.

"What's your name?"

The question hit me like a physical blow. I actually jerked back, staring at him in shock.

He wanted to know my *name*?

Alpha Marcus had never asked. Luna Kestrel had never cared. I'd been "slave" or "girl" or "you" for so long that hearing someone ask for my actual name felt surreal. Wrong, somehow.

Heat flooded my face—embarrassment at my own reaction. "Valencia," I managed, my voice barely above a whisper.

"Valencia." He repeated it slowly, like testing the weight of it.