

Chapter 14

One of the girls nodded quickly, murmuring apologies as she moved to the next case. But the handle slipped from her grip, and it thudded against the floor.

Elara's expression curdled. "Are you idiotic? That bag has my perfumes. One crack, and it's worth more than your entire year's wage."

The omega scrambled upright, stammering out another apology, her head bowed so low her hair hid her face. "I—I'm sorry, my lady. Would you like your things arranged in the wardrobe?"

Her fingers flicked in dismissal. "Arrange it however you like. This room is only for show. I'll be sleeping in the Alpha's bed."

Her tone dripped arrogance, the words ringing in the chamber like a slap. The omegas exchanged a quick glance before bowing their heads lower, hiding their expressions.

Elara turned toward the mirror, smoothing her hair as if nothing had happened, her reflection smiling back at her with smug satisfaction.

By nightfall, the packhouse had transformed. Long tables stretched the length of the great hall, polished silver and crystal gleaming under the warm glow of chandeliers. Platters of roasted meats, fresh breads, and spiced vegetables lined the tables, filling the air with a feast-worthy aroma.

Julian took his seat at the head table, his parents already in place. His mother wore her usual calm poise, his father exuding authority even in silence. Elara settled gracefully beside him, an extravagant gown pooling



around her, her smile warm enough to draw the attention of every nearby table.

"I think the ceremony should be held in the courtyard," Elara said brightly, her words tumbling out before anyone else could set the tone. "The archway could be draped in white roses, perhaps lilies woven through. And I'll need the seamstress to begin my fittings immediately. A Luna's gown must be perfect."

His mother's brow lifted, just faintly. "Tradition has always kept the ceremony in the great hall," she said evenly.

Elara waved her hand with a light laugh. "Tradition is lovely, but times are changing. The courtyard will show the pack—and our allies—that this union is not just duty, but celebration."

Julian's jaw flexed, his gaze fixed on the wine in his glass. He let her words wash over him, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, his silence as deliberate as it was cold.

Then her hand slid beneath the table. Resting first on his thigh, soft pressure through the fabric of his trousers. She leaned closer, her laughter chiming as she spoke to his father about guest lists. But her hand moved higher, bolder, until it brushed over the hard line of his cock.

A jolt tore through him, unbidden, unwelcome. His wolf snarled, vehemently objecting, and for the briefest second his body flinched.

Elara's lips curved, satisfied, as though his reaction was the proof she was searching for. She didn't stop.



Julian's hand closed around the stem of his glass, the crystal threatening to crack. He didn't look at her. Didn't move. Only the steel in his posture betrayed the storm beneath his skin.

Elara rubbed harder, tracing the shape of him, certain of the reaction she always drew.

But nothing came.

Julian's body remained stone-still, his jaw locked, eyes fixed ahead as though her touch didn't exist. His wolf growled inside him—not in lust, but in refusal—and the tension in his shoulders revealed it.

Elara's brows knit the faintest degree as she tilted her head up at him, smile still painted on for the table. Confusion flickered in her eyes. Julian had never been difficult to stir. He was a man, an Alpha—his body had always answered her. Yet now... nothing.

Her fingers pressed firmer, insistent, as though she could force a reaction.

Julian shifted at last, not with desire but with finality. He caught her wrist beneath the table, pried her hand away, and set it back in her lap. His gaze never turned her way.

The confusion in her eyes deepened, but she smoothed her smile quickly, laughing at something his mother said, pretending nothing had happened.

Julian lifted his glass to his lips, the motion precise, disciplined. But inside, his wolf still bristled, rejecting the soon-to-be Luna's touch as though it burned.