

Chapter 15

The rest of the meal dragged, filled with Elara's endless chatter about florists and ceremonial colors, her voice rising above the hum of conversation. Julian offered little more than nods or clipped replies, his gaze wandering as if he had no interest in the current setting.

When at last the final course was cleared and the table began to disperse, Julian rose. His chair scraped softly against the polished floor.

"You go on up to your room," he told Elara, his tone low. "I have business calls to make."

Her smile faltered for half a breath before she forced it back into place, eyes searching his face for something—anything. But Julian gave her nothing.

She leaned close enough for her perfume to sting his nose. "Don't be long," she whispered, trying for sultry.

Julian didn't answer. He only turned, striding from the hall without looking back.

Outside, the night air hit cool against his skin. The gardens stretched quiet and endless, moonlight cutting silver lines across the paths. His wolf paced, agitated, disgruntled, rejecting what had once been easy.

Julian exhaled hard, running a hand down his jaw. "Get your shit together," he told the beast within. But the wolf only snarled in reply, prowling, refusing to be soothed.

The garden paths were quiet as Julian made his way back through the packhouse, moonlight slipping in through tall windows and casting pale bands across the floor.

By the time he reached his chambers, the corridors were empty, the weight of silence pressing heavier than before. He pushed the door open, shutting it behind him with conscious care. At last—solitude.

He stripped off his jacket, laying it neatly across the chair by the wall, then unfastened his cuffs one by one. The ritual steadied him—order, precision, control.

But when he turned, he froze.

Elara sat perched on the edge of his bed, silk robe tied in a careless knot at her waist. When his eyes landed on her, she loosened the belt with familiar confidence, letting the fabric slip down her shoulders. Then, with a practiced flick, she shrugged it off entirely.

"I've been waiting for you," she purred, her bare skin catching the light. She leaned back on her hands, legs parting in invitation, a smile curving her lips. "I need you inside of me, Julian," she pleaded. "It's been far too long."

She was beautiful. She knew it. She presented herself like a painting designed to be admired, and in the past, Julian's body would have answered on instinct.

But nothing stirred. Not in him and certainly not in his wolf. In fact, his wolf continued to snarl in her presence, making its disgust clear.



He moved anyway, crossing the room with measured strides, hands settling on her thighs. She shivered under his touch, eager, pulling him closer as if his silence only heightened the game. He bent to her throat, mouth brushing her skin, willing desire to spark where none existed.

Still nothing.

Elara's hand slid down, bold and searching, closing around him with expert handling. She paused. Her brows flickered as she gave a testing stroke, then another. Confusion darkened her features when he didn't respond as he should have.

Her eyes darted up to his, questioning. "Julian..." She pressed against him harder, almost coaxing. "What's wrong?"

He didn't flinch. Didn't let the hesitation show. His lips brushed hers once, then he pulled back, his tone flat, "It's nothing. Stress. Pack matters—you wouldn't understand."

Her eyes narrowed, doubt creeping in, but he gave her no room to press further. For a moment, silence hung between them. Her lips parted like she might argue, but no words came. She shifted back on the bed, robe pooled uselessly around her, frustration evident in her eyes.

"Get some rest," he said, his voice final. "You've got a ceremony to plan. Tomorrow will be a long day."

Just like every night in the last couple of weeks, Julian's sleep was restless. The weight of Elara's perfume clung faintly in his chamber, sharp and cloying, and yet it wasn't her face he saw when sleep finally came to claim

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 +60 Coins

him.



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