

Chapter 16

It was hers.

The dream pulled him without warning, dropping him into the cool hush of night. Moonlight pooled across grass, shimmering the edges of a small, familiar garden enclosed by weathered fences. And there—in a short, thin nighty, long dark hair tumbling loose over her shoulders—the woman. The one who lingered in his thoughts no matter how violently he tried to excise her.

She froze when she saw him, her eyes wide, as though she hadn't expected him either.

For a moment neither of them moved, silence stretching taut between them.

Julian's breath rumbled low in his chest, his wolf pacing just beneath the surface. His hand flexed at his side, aching to touch, to prove she was more than a dream.

"What are you doing here?" She whispered.

Her voice cut straight through him, too soft, too knowing. He prowled forward, closing the space, and she backed away until her spine met the fence.

Her chest rose and fell in sharp little breaths as he braced an arm above her head, caging her in. Her hands lifted against his chest as if to stop him—but they lingered, trembling, not pushing him away.

In a single motion, he hauled her up, her legs locking around his waist instinctively. "Julian—no." Her words broke on a gasp.

The sound of his name on her tongue slammed through him like lightning. Heat knifed down his spine, his wolf howling in raw hunger. He hadn't realized how much he craved hearing it, how deeply it struck when she said it—even like that.

Julian's lips brushed the curve of her jaw, his control fraying with every heartbeat. "I can't fight it."

He thrust into her, the sensation so intoxicating, so perfect, it stole the breath from his lungs. Her body arched against him as he plunged deep, the feel of her heat, her tightness. Real. It felt real—so real his teeth clenched and his vision blurred.

His hips drove harder, his pace ruthless, unrestrained. Here, there was no need for control, no need for masks. Here, in this dream, he was not the reserved Alpha. He was only a man undone by the woman in his arms.

Her voice broke around his name again—half protest, half something else—as he drilled her over and over. The sound tore through him, shattering the last of his composure.

"Say it again," he growled against her skin, his thrusts slamming home with merciless rhythm. "Say my name."

Her nails sank into his shoulders, her pussy spasming around his cock. Her head tipped back, mouth open on a broken cry that sent fire ripping through his blood. Julian's grip tightened, holding her through it as he

thrust deeper, harder, desperate to follow her over the edge.

But then the world around him fractured.

Heat still clenched around him, a body still moving above him. But when his eyes blinked open, it wasn't her.

It was Elara.

She rode him, robe long gone, hair tumbling wild, her moans pitched just so. "Yes, Julian... come inside me."

For a split second, half-anchored in the dream, his body decided to obey, release coiling sharp in his gut. His head tipped back, a guttural groan ripping loose as he teetered on the brink.

But the scent was wrong. The rhythm was wrong. The grip was wrong.

And the wolf knew.

A savage growl tore through him as his wolf surged, seizing control. In a violent burst, Julian's hands shot to Elara's waist. Just as his climax threatened to break, the wolf wrenched her off him, hurling her aside.

The very second they separated, his body convulsed, spilling hot release across his stomach and thighs, each pulse more explosive than the last.

Across the bed, Elara stared at him, wide-eyed and breathless, the satin sheets clutched to her chest. Her expression shifted—shock giving way to indignation, her lips parting like she might demand an explanation.

Julian didn't give her the chance. He swung his legs off the bed, muscles

taut, and stormed across the room. The bathroom door slammed shut behind him, the echo cracking through the chamber like a final word.



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