

Unbonding the Ruthless Alpha – Mindlinks 5 |

Chapter 5

Damon's POV

Two **years** ago.

That room had been just as silent. Moonlight cut through the windowpanes, painting prison bars on the floor.

Aria Grayson.

No-

Aria Hawthorne now. My mate. My sentence.

She sat quietly, a silhouette against the room, wearing a white silk nightgown that followed the curves of a body I had no right to want and every reason to hate.

She looked up as I entered.

I saw her eyes.

Light brown. Soft amber. In the dim light, they looked warm.

And innocent. Too innocent.

That was the problem.

As if nothing bad had ever touched her in her life.

But how could that be?

She was a murderer's daughter.

I remembered Liam's tragic death. Rage, hot and unchecked, boiled in my blood. I reached out, my hand closing around her jaw. My claws pricked her skin.

"Damon... please..."

She whimpered my name, so fragile, so helpless..., I knew that with a little more pressure, I could break her

I was going to.

But she bled

A small wound But the moment the blood welled up—sweet, coppery, hot – it was like breaking a seal 4 **thin** red line traced down her skin, **past** the blush of her peach soft curves, and disappeared into the shadow where moonlight pooled between her breasts

My gaze locked on it

Beneath my palm, her pulse beat frantically against my skin Each throb felt like a gasp

Again. And again.

+25 Points

Soft, but relentless—each one **a** small, wet **sound** teasing the edges of my control.

Damn, the sweet torture.

Then her scent hit me

A strange, aggressively **sweet** fragrance forced its way into my senses.

Dangerous. Luscious. Hot... so potent it made my blood stall.-

It was unlike anything I'd ever known. It felt like poison wrapped in sugar, *designed* specifically for me.

Her head was forced back, her neck a fragile, arched line. A silent invitation.

Bite it.

A primal, bone-deep snarl erupted in my skull.

My canines ached with a sharp, maddening itch. A violent cocktail of bloodlust and raw possession burned up my spine.

Mark her! Now!

Rhein roared in the depths of my consciousness, completely captivated by her scent.

He wanted her.

Or—we wanted her.

The *deep*-seated, ancient drive for a fated mate was awake, and it was fire.

My instincts pulled hard—urging me closer, to breathe her in deeper, to claim her, to cover everything with my mark.

“Damon...” Her voice trembled. Her skin was flushed from near-asphyxiation.

I jerked back as if burned, releasing her.

She slumped, clutching her throat, gasping for air.

On the white silk of her gown, blood was spreading fast. A vicious poppy blooming in snow.

The crimson seared my eyes.

The next second, the red twisted, swam, and suddenly I wasn't seeing her dress—I was seeing Liam's blood—dark, cold—pooling beneath him.

The same color

But Liam was dead And his killer's daughter was in my bed—our wedding bed

I felt my blood cool and congeal in my veins All I felt in my fingertips was cold numbness

To hell with fate To hell with the Moon Goddess

Standing before her, breathing in that cursed, irresistible scent that made my instincts scream, I felt lost

+23 Ports

for the first time in my life.

A prisoner of destiny.

I thought back to what Grandfather told me before the wedding, his voice old but calm:
“Damon, blood debts must be paid in blood. The Elder Council has confirmed it—Aria Grayson is your fated mate. The Moon Goddess has shown her sign. This marriage will let *us* swallow the Grayson family whole. They’ll repay their debt with their daughter.”

“What about Liam?” I’d asked. “Does his death just get erased?”

And Claudia. My love.

Even thinking of her name made my jaw clench.

“Liam’s death was a tragedy,” he’d replied. “But the Graysons will pay: Binding them through marriage is control—it’s restitution. As for that girl, Claudia—she has no future as a Luna. The Council will not allow it. If you choose her, you know what will happen.”

I knew.

They would erase her.

I understood then.

This wasn’t a wedding.

It was a sacrifice.

And I was the one being led to the altar.

Aria must have sensed the shift.

Her lashes fluttered. Her fingers curled slightly in her lap. Something flashed in her eyes.

Pain?

Fear?

Another performance.

The Graysons were good at that.

“I know she began, her eyes still red-rimmed. “This marriage isn’t what you wanted. If you want to end it

“We can break the bond”

Break the bond?

Such a light way to put it

Her fake, modest act disgusted me even more

“You think I believe you?” I grabbed her wrist and pulled her close

25 Paints

“From the moment you made your father kneel before the Council and beg for our marriage, from the moment you hid behind fate, you made your choice.”

I leaned in closer.

“You got everything you wanted by stepping over Liam’s body.”

“Please,” she said, eyes wide. “You’re hurting me.”

Rhein snarled inside me, pacing, furious and confused, torn between hatred *and* that

damned, undeniable pull I couldn't switch off.

"You'll beg," I told her. "Not just tonight. Every day. I'll make sure you remember exactly how much I hate you."

I pushed her down onto the bed.

She flinched, hands flying to her mouth. Tears fell freely now.

"Go on," I sneered. "Cry. Makes the act more convincing."

I tore the silk.

She trembled beneath me.

My wolf went wild, feral, out of control.

"I'll claim you," I growled. "Since you wanted it so badly."

I claimed her. Hard. Without mercy.

Her body shuddered. Her cries hit me like live wires/sharp and involuntary. My wolf reveled in the dominance, the possession.

"Remember this," I said into her ear, my voice shaking with fury.

"You are my mate, but I will never accept you. You're nothing to me."

Then it was over.

I got up, dressed, grabbed my jacket—and left.

From that day, I vowed she'd get nothing from me.

No respect. No tenderness

Not even the basic courtesy a husband should give

She wanted power The Luna's throne

Fine

I'd let her sit on it—alone

I'd make sure she watched me give all my warmth, all my love, to another woman

I'd **let** her rot in jealousy and regret **every** single day.

+25 Points

I snapped back to my senses:

I told myself not to think of Aria. told myself it didn't matter. I told myself she's got Grayson blood—she

deserved worse.

I quickly stepped on the gas.

The car shot forward.

But then—

The second we hit 120 mph, Rhein went dead silent. And that silence unnerved me more than any of his snarling ever had.

Then it hit.

Something pulled taut, thinner and thinner, like a thread stretched to its last fiber-
And then, it snapped.

Pain detonated behind my ribs—white, blinding, wrong. A choked, guttural sound I'd never made in my life tearing out of my throat.

Rhein also screamed—the sound of a dying beast.

My hands were shaking. I couldn't make them stop.