

Wild Jasmine Waits for No Full Moon

Chapter 1

A month before I was set to become Vincent Moretti's Luna, he told me he was going to have a child with another she-wolf.

I refused, but he brought it up constantly for an entire month.

Two weeks before the mating ceremony, I received a photo.

In the photo, Seraphina Rossi rested her hand on her abdomen. Beneath her skin, a faint golden glow shimmered—the unmistakable mark of an Alpha heir taking root.

Her caption read: "Three weeks. Your Alpha chose me."

It was then I realized that when Vincent first "asked" for my consent, Seraphina had already been pregnant.

My inner wolf howled in agony.

He had never planned to ask me at all.

I did three things: I canceled the mating ceremony, cleared out our love nest, and accepted the Elder Council's secret project.

On the day I was supposed to stand beneath the moonlight and be marked as his mate, I walked into the Nevada Desert's hidden laboratory.

From that day forward, Vincent Moretti and I had nothing to do with each other.

"I've explained this to you countless times, Eleanor," Vincent said, his deep voice measured, restrained. It was his Alpha tone, the one he used to make weaker wolves submit. "Seraphina was poisoned by silver. The curse is killing her wolf. She has only a year left. I owe her my life. Six years ago, during the silver bullet attack, she shielded me. Her dying wish now is to leave a Moretti heir for her family. I have to repay that debt."

I had heard this speech at least a thousand times in the past month.

When Vincent first proposed this insane idea, I refused without hesitation. But like a wolf that had bitten into its prey, he refused to let go, relentless, unyielding.

His requests had escalated from tentative pleas to outright declarations, as though my refusal itself was a betrayal of the pack's laws.

My wolf whimpered in the recesses of my mind. He didn't see us. He had never seen us.

"Even if she did save your life," I said, my voice trembling despite my efforts to stay composed, "there are a hundred ways to repay her. Why does it have to be this? Why does it have to be a child?"

For the first time, Vincent saw me visibly shaken. His expression softened, but only slightly—and even then, it was the kind of calculated softness he wore during business negotiations.

"Ellie," he said. I hated how my wolf's ears perked up at that nickname, how it still clung to hope. "I know this is hard to accept. But this is about family honor. About the alliance between the Moretti and Rossi bloodlines. Only I can give Seraphina what she needs. I can't stand by and watch her fade away, knowing I could save her."

He stepped closer. My wolf wanted to lean into him, to feel his warmth, even as his words cut through me like cold steel.

"And," he continued, "this is only artificial insemination. I won't touch her. My wolf won't bond with hers."

He spoke with absolute conviction, as though it were a foregone conclusion. "You love me, so you'll understand. Right?"

My heart sank, plummeting into an endless abyss.

I finally understood. Vincent had already made his decision. Every word he had spoken this past month wasn't a discussion—it was a notification. My feelings were nothing more than insignificant dust in the grand machine of his empire.

He opened his mouth to say something else, but his phone rang. Glancing at the screen, his entire demeanor shifted. He grabbed the phone and strode into his soundproof study without another word.

I watched his back disappear behind the door, a bitter smile tugging at my lips.

Vincent and I had grown up in the same pack on Chicago's South Side. From grade school to college, our lives were intertwined. From the moment I understood what love was, I knew I loved him—the dazzling, dangerous Alpha heir who could ignite any room he entered.

I had stood by his side for twenty years, waiting, hoping, believing that one day he would truly see me.

The night we graduated college, he finally noticed me. He agreed to let me stand beside him, to be his chosen future mate.

We had known each other for over two decades, and we were supposed to be the closest of partners.

Yet in these five years, I had never touched Vincent's phone. He always answered calls out of earshot, even mine.

Once, when he was delirious with a fever from a silver poisoning wound, his phone kept buzzing with encrypted messages. Worried it would disturb him, I reached out to silence it.

The moment my fingers brushed the phone, his eyes snapped open. Those gray eyes, usually so calm, were filled with suspicion, like he was staring at an intruder in his territory. Without hesitation, he demanded, "What are you doing?"

No matter how much I explained, he didn't believe me.

That night, I curled up alone on the couch, listening to my wolf whimper in confusion.

I told myself it was just his nature as an Alpha heir. I believed that one day, I would finally break through the walls around his heart.

Five years passed. Nothing changed.

And now, he was going to let another she-wolf carry his child, without a thought for how his future Luna—his supposed partner—might feel.

When Vincent emerged from the study, his face was lit with barely concealed joy. He grabbed his coat from the couch and headed for the door.

"I have something to take care of," he said without looking back. "Think about what I said."

I listened to his hurried footsteps fade away, feeling nothing but emptiness.

There was only one person who could make him this eager.

Seraphina.

Sure enough, a few minutes later, her Instagram story updated.

I opened the photo and nearly collapsed when I saw it.