

Chapter 3 - Wild Jasmine Waits for No Full Moon

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That night, Vincent didn't come home. I didn't call to ask where he was.

I didn't need to. The answer was on Seraphina's Instagram.

The photos showed that after leaving the private clinic that afternoon, they went straight to the Rossi family estate in Forest Lake to formally announce the pregnancy to her pack.

In one picture, the Alpha of the Rossi Pack—a man feared across Chicago's underground werewolf circles—held Vincent's hand with a warm, grandfatherly smile. Vincent's other hand rested gently on Seraphina's still-flat stomach, his expression soft and protective, unlike anything I'd ever seen from him before.

In the five years we'd been together, Vincent had only visited my family once. Even though our homes were less than thirty minutes apart, he never made the effort to go back.

He once told me he didn't like spending time with "ordinary pack families." It made him uncomfortable, as if he were pretending to be someone he wasn't.

Even during that lone visit, his attitude was polite but distant, more like a king inspecting his lands than a man meeting his partner's family. The way he blended in so warmly with the Rossi family in those photos was like a completely different person.

Closing my phone, I swallowed the bitterness rising in my throat. Inside me, my wolf had stopped howling. In its place was a chilling calm.

Enough, she whispered in the depths of my mind. Let's leave. Let's be free.

The next day, I met with a few university friends at a café in Willow Park to tell them I was canceling the mating ceremony.

At first, Vincent hadn't even wanted a public ceremony. He thought it was a meaningless performance, an invasion of privacy to expose the marking process to so many eyes. I had insisted on a traditional ceremony in Moonlight Woods, inviting everyone "who needed to be invited."

My friends were all aware of my feelings for Vincent. When they heard the news, they were stunned.

“Are you insane, Eleanor?” Chloe, my closest friend, gripped my hand in disbelief. “You’ve been chasing Vincent Moretti for twenty years! You’re finally about to become the Luna of the Moretti family, and now you’re giving up?”

A wave of bitterness washed over me.

Did I want to give up? Of course, I did not.

I had spent twenty years chasing after Vincent, waiting for him to finally let me stand by his side. Letting go of a love that had defined my entire life was far from easy.

But the truth was, our relationship had never been equal. From the beginning, I had always been the one chasing him. He had never stopped for me, never looked back.

I used to think it didn’t matter. I believed that since I could wait twenty years for him to agree to mark me, I could spend the rest of my life making him truly love me. We would have endless time together once we became mates. I could wait.

But Seraphina changed everything.

I realized that Vincent wasn’t an unfeeling block of ice. He was only cold to me.

In front of Seraphina, his eyes softened, and his smiles were real. He visited her willingly, remembered what she didn’t eat, and dropped everything to be by her side.

At first, I had consoled myself with the thought that this was just his way of honoring her as his savior. His kindness was nothing more than a debt repaid in line with werewolf honor.

Then I saw the photo.

He had given her a child—a Moretti heir. And I, the supposed future Luna, was the last to know.

That was the moment I woke up. There was no future for me and Vincent.

I didn’t tell my friends the real reason for canceling the ceremony. I only said I was joining a confidential project that would keep me out of contact for a long time. To make up for the sudden news, I stayed with them late into the night, chatting until it was time to go home.

When I returned to the penthouse apartment at the top of Hancock Center, Vincent had just arrived as well.

The moment he caught the scent of alcohol on me, his expression darkened. He took a step back, instinctively widening the distance between us, one hand raised as if to ward me off. His voice carried a note of undisguised disgust.

“Stay away from me. Don’t get that smell on me.”

I let out a bitter laugh.

He was worried about the alcohol affecting Seraphina, wasn’t he? After all, she was pregnant now, the Rossi family’s treasured jewel. He had probably just come back from seeing her tonight.

He didn’t even bother to hide it anymore.

I didn’t say a word, just walked straight into the bathroom and took a shower. The hot water washed the scent of alcohol from my skin, but it couldn’t cleanse the coldness in my heart.

When I emerged, Vincent was on the couch, engrossed in his tablet. His face was lit with a rare smile. I only needed one glance to know what he was looking at—Seraphina.

I planned to go straight to bed, but he suddenly called out to me.

“Eleanor.” His voice was calm and commanding, the tone of an Alpha accustomed to being obeyed. “We need to talk.”

I froze in my tracks.

The last time I heard those words was a month ago, when he first brought up the idea of having a child with Seraphina. We had argued about it for an entire month after that.

Now that she was pregnant, what else was there to discuss?