

Chapter 8 - Wild Jasmine Waits for No Full Moon

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I couldn't help but chuckle in disbelief when he accused me without a second thought.

"Apologize?" I pointed to the security camera above us. "Go ahead and check the footage yourself. Then tell me if I owe anyone an apology."

I never imagined that Vincent would jump to conclusions without the bare minimum of investigation, assuming I had tried to push Seraphina.

"Seraphina is so weak, Eleanor. She's pregnant. Why would she risk harming herself and the baby? You're jealous, and that's why—"

"Enough." I cut him off, feeling a deep, bone-weary exhaustion.

My wolf had gone completely silent. In that moment, the last thread of our bond severed entirely with his words.

A sharp pain radiated through my chest—not heartbreak, but a release. It was as if I had finally shed a twenty-year burden I never should have carried.

Seraphina, sensing that Vincent had taken her side without question, looked momentarily panicked. She knew if he checked the footage, her lies would unravel.

"Let it go, Vincent," she murmured weakly, leaning against the wall, one hand on her stomach. "Eleanor's just upset. It's understandable. Let's go... I'm not feeling well."

The moment Vincent heard the words "not feeling well," all his anger evaporated, replaced by worry. He scooped her into his arms and hurried toward the emergency room without sparing me a glance.

I stood there, watching them disappear down the hallway.

Twenty years of companionship and five years of living together had earned me nothing—not even a shred of trust. In his eyes, I could never compare to his so-called "savior."

But maybe that was for the best.

It made leaving all the easier, with nothing to hold me back.

That night, Vincent didn't come home.

I assumed he was at the human hospital, looking after the "unwell" Seraphina.

The next day, on the eve of my departure, I sent off my last packed suitcase to the secure address in Nevada. All I kept with me was a small carry-on bag.

Vincent finally returned that evening. His face was still tight with lingering anger and exhaustion, likely from spending the entire day and night in the hospital.

Seeing me sitting on the couch, he spoke coldly. "Seraphina is still in the hospital. She's fragile, the baby's health is unstable. Even if you didn't mean to, can't you just be a bit more mature and apologize? Do you have to be so petty?"

A bit more mature.

The words felt like a cruel joke.

I had already been too mature—over and over again. I had let go of the honeymoon that should have been mine. I had accepted my Alpha impregnating another she-wolf. I had watched them flaunt their affection in front of me without losing my temper.

What more did he want? Should I kneel and thank Seraphina for taking everything I had?

His gaze shifted to the calendar on the wall. Tomorrow's date—circled heavily in red ink—caught his attention. The full moon. The marking ceremony at Moonlight Woods.

His expression softened slightly.

"Forget it. The ceremony is tomorrow. I don't want to argue anymore," he said with an air of condescending forgiveness. "Once it's all over, you can apologize to Seraphina. Then we'll leave for our honeymoon in Greece and put all this behind us."

"You've planned everything for Santorini, haven't you?"

I did not answer his question.

If he ever paid any attention to this so called ceremony, he would have noticed the lack of decorations in the apartment—no silver ribbons symbolizing the Luna's ascension, no white flowers for the Moon Goddess's offering, none of the joy or excitement a marking ceremony should bring.

I had even donated the white dress I was supposed to wear for the ceremony.

"I—" I started to explain, but his phone rang, cutting me off.

Seraphina's soft, delicate voice came through the speaker. Vincent's face immediately changed, his eyes filled with concern.

"Wait for me. I'm on my way."

He hung up, grabbing his coat and heading for the door.

"Seraphina isn't feeling well again. I need to check on her," he said without looking back. "I'll be back before the ceremony. Make sure you're at Moonlight Woods on time tomorrow. Don't be late."

The door slammed shut behind him, leaving the apartment eerily quiet.

Finally, the words I had been holding back all day escaped my lips:

"It's over, Vincent. The ceremony is canceled."

My voice dissolved into the cold air, the only sound left was the ticking of the clock on the wall.

I stayed on the couch until the early hours of the morning, watching Chicago transform from the dark silence of night to the pale light of dawn. The city's skyline sharpened in the morning glow, just as my heart did—emerging from the darkest night into clarity.

My phone buzzed—a flight reminder.

Two hours until departure.

I stood, walked to the bedroom, and picked up my carry-on bag. Grabbing a pen, I returned to the calendar and drew a bold X over the circled date.

Beneath it, I wrote in steady, deliberate handwriting:

"Vincent, we're done. I wish you and Seraphina all the best. —Eleanor"

I placed the calendar prominently on the coffee table in the center of the living room. Then I looked around, taking in the space where I had spent five years of my life.

Every piece of furniture had been chosen by me. Every corner bore the marks of my attempts to make it a home.

But this was never our home. It was always just Vincent's space.

Taking a deep breath, I wheeled my suitcase to the door. I paused for one last glance at the prison that had held me captive for five long years.

“Goodbye, Vincent Moretti.”

I turned, closed the door behind me, and walked toward freedom.