

## Not Buying It

\*\*Daxon POV\*\*

I pulled up to that too-perfect little house with Talon already pacing inside me. The porch light was still on, a soft yellow glow flickering like some kind of fake ass welcome sign. I wasn't buying it. Not anymore.

I slammed the truck door shut harder than necessary and stalked up the steps, not bothering to knock. The second I stepped inside, Maria was already hovering like some anxious little bird, and Eron stood stiff in the doorway to the living room.

"Where's Elowen?" Maria asked, her voice too sweet, and too tight. Her smile didn't touch her eyes. "She didn't come home last night. We were worried." Eron snapped, "We're worried. Her hair. Now another mate!"

Bull. Shit.

"She's with me," I said flatly, already moving toward the stairs. "She's safe. Which is more than I can say about this damn house."

Eron's jaw clenched. "Now wait a minute, son. What's that supposed to mean?"

I stopped halfway up the stairs and turned slowly, letting my alpha aura bleed into the room like smoke from a fire.

"I mean," I growled, "that you two have been acting off as hell since the

second she turned eighteen. I mean she nearly got killed today. I mean our wards failed and somehow the Aegis Protocol knew exactly where she'd be."

Maria's face went pale. "We..we'd never.."

"Cut the shit," I snapped. "You were her guardians. You were supposed to protect her. Instead, you've kept secrets, downplayed everything, and now you're suddenly really curious about her hair, her bond marks, and her new mate?"

Eron stepped forward. "We just want to understand what's happening to her!"

"You don't need to understand a damn thing," I snarled. "Because she's not your concern anymore. She's mine now. And if I find out either of you had anything to do with the breach, or if you so much as breathe her name around the wrong people..."

I let the threat hang there, thick and heavy. My eyes shifted, just a flicker of gold, and both of them flinched.

Then I turned on my heel, stomped up to her room, and grabbed everything she owned. Clothes. Photos. That damn chest with her parents' letters. Every scrap of her scent, every trace of her life here, I packed it with ruthless efficiency and shoved it into the truck.

When I came back down, Maria had tears in her eyes. I didn't care. Eron

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looked like he wanted to throw a punch. I dared him to.

"Goodbye," I said, my voice deadly calm. And then I was gone.

The truck was gunning down the road, Elowen's scent in the passenger seat. My jaw was tight.

And a single promise was burning in my chest like wildfire.

"No one touches what's mine."

**\*\*Elowen POV\*\***

I was still breathless.

Ashrian, Ash for short, was sprawled behind me in the oversized bed, his fingers tangled lazily in my hair, his other hand tracing slow circles across my belly. My skin still tingled from where his fangs had pierced it, from where our bond had locked in tight, a silver fire pulsing beneath my ribs.

Lyssira was practically humming in my mind, her tail wagging like some smug little omega who just found the world's juiciest steak. "Told you he was ours," she whispered.

We dragged ourselves into the ridiculously huge shower for a quick rinse, soft moans and gentle kisses stealing the time. He was different from Daxon. Sweet torture and reverence to Daxon's feral heat..but gods, I craved them both in ways I didn't know were possible.

I was just wrapping myself in a towel when I heard the front door open

and slam shut. My heart stuttered.

Daxon.

"Baby, I'll meet you in the room," I whispered, stealing a quick kiss from Ash's lips.

I rushed out just in time to see him walk in, his arms full of my bags. His sharp gaze landed on me..and immediately dropped to the fading bite marks on my neck. His entire body went rigid.

"Hey," I said, trying to sound calm and soft.

He didn't answer. He just dropped my stuff with a grunt and stormed across the room, grabbing me by the waist and burying his face in my neck. I gasped as he inhaled deeply, then growled..growled..deep in his chest.

"You smell like him," he rasped, his voice raw. "Like blood and magic and.. fuck."

"Daxon," I started, placing my hands on his chest.

"No," he snapped gently, lifting his head, golden eyes flaring. "Mine. You're mine too."

And just like that, he bit me. Right over the other mark. No hesitation. No apology. It was savage and dominant and so damn him, I nearly came again.

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Ashrian was suddenly in the doorway, arms crossed, fangs peeking slightly through his smirk. "Easy there, Alpha. I left you some room."

Daxon snarled, still licking over the mark like he was sealing it into the stars. "Yeah? Try leaving her scent alone next time."

Ash raised a single brow. "Can't help it if she tastes like destiny."

I groaned, smacking both of them lightly. "Enough. You two can have a dick measuring contest later. I'm starving."

Daxon pulled me closer. "After I finish making sure every vampire and wolf in a hundred mile radius knows she's claimed."

Ashrian chuckled darkly behind me. "We'll see how long that mark stays on top."

Oh Moon Goddess, I sighed internally, this is my life now. And Lyssira? She was delighted.

Ash looked at me with a smirk and said calmly, "So, I need to make a stop at my home and grab a few things."

"No. No way. You can't go alone." I whimpered. "They're looking for you!"

Ashrian gave me that infuriatingly calm vampire look, all stormy eyes and ancient patience as he adjusted the dark cloak over his shoulders. "I must. There are relics, records, blood seals, things I can't risk falling into Aegis

hands. They know I turned. They'll purge my sanctum the second they trace my scent."

"But what if they're already there?" I stepped forward, gripping the edge of his cloak like that would anchor him here. "What if this is a trap?"

Ash leaned down and kissed my forehead, hands cupping my cheeks like I was made of starlight and glass. "Then I'll make them regret it."

"Fuck," I whispered, blinking fast. "I just found you. I can't lose you already."

A growl rumbled behind me, low and steady.

"I'll go with him," Daxon said, his arms crossed, his eyes blazing with Alpha protectiveness. "He's not going through that portal without backup."

Ash didn't argue. Just nodded once in gratitude, the unspoken agreement between warriors passing in a heartbeat. Daxon turned to me, pulling me against his chest. "We'll be back before sunset, baby. Stay with Aelira. Don't shift, don't leave the castle walls."

"You make it sound like I'm a fragile porcelain doll," I muttered into his shirt. He tipped my chin up with a crooked grin. "You're not. But you're mine. Ours. So yeah... I'm gonna act like a territorial psycho until I know you're safe."

I should've rolled my eyes. Instead, I kissed him hard and fast before I lost my nerve, then watched like my soul was being ripped in two as the portal

flared and swallowed both of them whole.

The moment the room stilled, I felt... hollow.

"Come," Queen Aelira's voice drifted in like moonlight. "Let's eat. You need strength, and distraction."

I followed her into the castle's sunlit dining room where a massive spread had been laid out. Fresh berries, warm bread, spiced meats, roasted veggies drizzled in some kind of honeyed glaze. My stomach growled like it had a demon of its own.

"Goddess, this looks incredible," I breathed, sitting beside her as she handed me a goblet of something fruity and laced with sparkle.

"It's enchanted peach wine. Only lightly intoxicating," she winked, sipping hers like a goddess on vacation.

We ate in peace for a few minutes before she broke the silence. "You care deeply for them both already," she said softly. Not a question.

"Yeah," I sighed. "And it's a mess. I didn't ask for any of this, you know? The prophecy, the mates, the vampire, the fangs and growls, and the shirtless pissing contests... It's a lot."

Aelira chuckled. "Sounds like every Luna's courtship story ever."

I laughed with her, feeling the edge of panic ease off just a little. "What do you know about Scotland?" I asked, nibbling on a honey-dripped fig.

She raised a brow. "You mean besides the fact that it rains every five seconds and the witches there are all batshit and powerful as hell?"

"Exactly that."

"Well," she leaned in conspiratorially. "You're going to need charm, courage, and some kind of gift. The Crone you're going to see, Morrigan Lairch, is ancient. She doesn't help anyone unless she sees the worth in their soul."

"Cool, cool," I said dryly. "No pressure. I'll just have to be impressive to a potentially immortal swamp witch."

"You'll do fine," Aelira smiled. "She'll sense what I sense. You're more than a hybrid, Elowen. You were made for something bigger than this world."

I blinked, caught between the warm buzz of wine and the weight of her words. "Thanks," I said, my voice barely above a whisper. "That means more than you know."

"Don't thank me yet," she said with a sly grin. "You've got more mates out there. And you know I'll be watching how they behave."

### Error correction of this chapter

