

Chapter 12

Caleb POV:

Time didn't heal wounds. That was a lie humans told themselves to sleep at night. For a wolf who had lost his Fated Mate, time was just a magnifying glass, making the absence clearer with every passing day.

Six months had passed since Elena died.

The Black Moon Pack was dying with her. It wasn't an invasion or a disease. It was a slow, gray decay. The crops on our territory lands withered. The hunts yielded less game. The morale of the warriors plummeted. A pack needs a Luna to balance the Alpha's aggression with compassion, to bless the land with fertility and peace.

Without a True Luna, the pack's soul was rotting. And because I had rejected the True Luna given to me by the Goddess, the land itself was rejecting us.

I stood in the pack cemetery. It was raining, a cold, miserable drizzle.

In front of me was a massive mausoleum of white marble, surrounded by jasmine bushes I had paid a fortune to import and keep alive in this climate.

Elena.

I touched the cold stone. I spent more time here than in my office.

"Alpha," a guard approached cautiously. "The prisoner... Lydia. She tried to bite her tongue off again."

I didn't look away from the grave. "Heal her. Restrain her mouth if you have to."

"Alpha," the guard hesitated. "She is... her wolf is going mad. The silver madness. She is just howling non-stop. The other guards... it's affecting them."

I sighed. It was time to end the noise. Not out of mercy, but because she didn't deserve to have a wolf anymore. A wolf was a gift from the Goddess, a noble spirit. Lydia had corrupted hers.

"Bring her to the execution grounds," I ordered.

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An hour later, Lydia was dragged into the muddy clearing. She was unrecognizable. Her hair had fallen out in clumps. Her neck was a mass of scar tissue around the silver collar. She was skeletal, shaking violently.

When she saw me, she didn't beg. Her eyes were glazed over, lost in madness.

I stepped forward. I didn't need a weapon. I was an Alpha. My authority extended to the spiritual connection between wolf and human.

I placed my hand on her forehead. I pushed my Alpha command not into her mind, but into her soul.

Sever, I commanded silently.

It required immense power. I felt resistance-her inner wolf, a twisted, spiteful thing, tried to bite back. But I crushed it. I visualized the thread connecting Lydia's humanity to her wolf spirit, and I tore it apart.

Lydia arched her back, her mouth opening in a silent scream. A shadow seemed to rip itself out of her body, dissipating into the rain with a final, pathetic whimper.

She collapsed into the mud. She was no longer a werewolf. She was just a broken, empty human.

"Take the collar off," I told the guards. "Silver won't hurt her anymore. Throw her out of the territory. If she survives the rogues, fine. If not... nature will decide."

I watched them drag her limp body away. I felt nothing.

I looked up at the gray sky. "Are you happy?" I asked the Moon Goddess. "I have punished the guilty. I have suffered every day. Is it enough?"

The sky didn't answer. The rain just kept falling, washing away the scent of the pack I had failed.