

Chapter 7

Caleb POV:

The Council Room was dead silent. The only sound was the digital voice recording playing from the speakers on the conference table.

"Because as long as you breathe, his wolf knows... It is you. It was always you."

Lydia's voice. Clear. Arrogant. Evil.

"I put wolfsbane in your tea every morning for ten years. Ten years! And you just kept surviving."

Sarah, Elena's mother, let out a strangled wail. She collapsed onto the floor, her hands covering her ears. "No! Not my Lydia! She's a sweet girl! She's a Warrior!"

"Die quietly. I have a wedding to plan."

The recording ended.

I sat at the head of the table. *I wasn't surprised. Deep down, in the part of my brain I had been ignoring for years, I knew. The way Lydia smiled when Elena was in pain. The way Elena never healed. I had chosen to be blind because it was easier.*

The Pack Doctor, a man I had trusted, was trembling as he looked at the attached medical files on the screen. *He looked at me, saw the murder in my eyes, and decided to save his own skin.*

"Alpha," he stammered. "... I didn't know... well, I suspected. The toxicology report attached here... these levels of wolfsbane... a normal wolf would have died in weeks. She survived for a decade because her bloodline was incredibly potent..."

"Potent?" I asked. My voice sounded like grinding gravel. "You told me she was a weak, wolfless Omega."

"The poison suppressed her wolf," the Doctor admitted, sweat dripping down his nose. "It didn't kill the wolf; it put it in a coma. If she hadn't been poisoned, she likely would have been a high-ranking female. Perhaps even..."

"A True Luna," the High Elder finished grimly. He looked at me with disappointment that cut deeper than any knife. "You rejected a True Luna, Caleb. And you let a viper into your bed."

I stood up. The chair flew backward and shattered against the wall.

"Where is she?" I growled.

"Lydia is at the bridal shop," John whispered, his face grey. "She's fitting her dress."

"Not Lydia," I roared, my Inner Wolf surfacing, turning my eyes glowing gold. "Elena! Where is my mate?"

"The signal from the email came from the edge of the territory," the tech specialist said quickly. "Near the old motel."

I didn't wait for another word.

I ran.

I burst through the double doors of the Pack House, leaping off the porch. Mid-air, my bones cracked and shifted. Fur sprouted, dark as midnight. I landed on four paws, a massive black wolf, and tore into the earth.

Find her, my wolf screamed in my head. *Find her now!*

I ran faster than I had ever run in my life. The wind whipped past my ears, but it carried no scent of jasmine. It carried nothing but the smell of damp earth and my own fear.

Behind me, I heard the howls of my warriors joining the hunt. But this wasn't a hunt for prey. It was a hunt for redemption.

And I knew, with a sickening certainty, that I was too late.