



# Bound by the Cartel (Nightshade Wolves #4)

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Norri's last night alone is on the horizon.

He doesn't know it, but this is his final time drowning himself in illegal substances. The gang that's been enabling him has triggered the Nightshade Wolves' wrath, and they never look away. Caught in the crossfire, he meets Gali — a bombshell of an alpha, as sexy as he is dangerous. Things would be simpler if the wolf treated him like any other, but Gali has taken a liking to him — or more likely, something much more intense.

Gali isn't the same man anymore.

Not after meeting Norri, that introverted and awkward omega. His protective instincts kicked in the moment their eyes met, and he's been dreaming about him ever since. He'd brushed aside the notion of fated mates long ago, but it's impossible to ignore his body's calling. It feels crazy — because it is — but he sees himself betraying the Nightshade Wolves for that stranger.

Join Norri and Gali in this emotional MPreg Omegaverse story. Age gap and fated mates dynamics are just some of the themes woven into the narrative. If you like your omegas flawed and your alphas tenacious, you're going to love this one!

**Total Pages (Source):** 23

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Norri

In the grimy, rain-soaked streets of New Haven, I shuffled along the cracked sidewalk, my threadbare coat doing little to keep out the chill that seemed to seep into my very bones. The neon signs above flickered weakly, casting eerie shadows on the damp pavement as I made my way home, or what passed for it.

Home was a cramped, mold-stained room in a boarding house run by Mrs. Hargrove, a woman whose face bore more lines than a well-worn map. The place was a dump, but it was all I could afford with my meager earnings from the factory. My life was about as exciting as watching paint dry - if the paint was gray and the wall was already covered in peeling, chipped paint.

Every morning, I'd wake up to the sound of Mrs. Hargrove banging pots downstairs, the smell of burnt toast wafting through the thin walls. I'd stumble out of bed, my body aching from another night spent tossing and turning on the lumpy mattress, and start getting ready for another thrilling day at the mill.

The factory was a monstrous beast of steel and smoke, its chimney spewing black clouds into the sky like some sort of industrial dragon. Inside, it was always hot and loud, the clatter of machinery drowning out even the loudest thoughts. I worked the graveyard shift, which meant I spent my nights surrounded by the constant hum of machines and the dull glow of harsh fluorescent lights.

My days off were no better. They consisted mainly of wandering the streets, trying to find something - anything - to fill the endless hours until I had to report back to the mill. I'd window shop, staring at things I couldn't afford, or sit in the park feeding

breadcrumbs to the pigeons. Anything to avoid going back to that dismal room.

Food was whatever I could scrape together from the market. Most days, it was a hunk of hard cheese and a stale roll from the bakery. Sometimes, if I was feeling flush, I'd treat myself to a bowl of stew from the soup kitchen down on Third Street. It wasn't much, but it filled the hole in my stomach and gave me enough energy to trudge through another day.

Alone. Always alone. No family, no friends. Just me and this godforsaken city, stuck in this never-ending cycle of work and sleep and work again.

And then there were the dreams. Or rather, the lack thereof. Every time I closed my eyes, all I saw were shadows dancing on the backs of my eyelids. No vibrant colors, no exciting adventures. Just... nothing. A vast expanse of emptiness where dreams should have been.

But hey, at least I had my pride, right? Not much else, but I still had that. And sometimes, late at night when the city was quiet and still, I'd let myself dream just a little bit. Dream of a world where I didn't live paycheck to paycheck. Where I didn't spend every waking moment exhausted and hungry. Where maybe, just maybe, someone would look at me and see not just another faceless cog in the machine, but a person worth knowing.

But those were just pipe dreams. This was reality. And reality sucked.

As I lay awake in my cold, creaky bed, staring up at the water-stained ceiling, my mind wandered back to a time that felt like a lifetime ago. Ten long years had passed since I'd stood on the cobbled streets of Boston, fresh-faced and eager, ready to embark on my year abroad at Harvard University.

I'd been selected as part of an exchange program between our small island nation and

the United States, a rare opportunity given only to a handful of students each year. My parents had been overjoyed; they'd scraped together every penny to send me across the ocean, their only child, their hope for a brighter future.

The campus had been a world away from the grimy streets of New Haven I now called home. Lush green lawns stretched out beneath towering brick buildings adorned with ivy, while students clad in sweatshirts bearing proud emblems hurried between classes. It was a far cry from the dilapidated factories and crumbling tenements of my everyday life.

My roommate had been a lanky kid named Tom from some small town in Kansas. He was outgoing, friendly, with a laugh that could fill a room. We'd bonded over shared meals in the dining hall, late-night study sessions fueled by pizza and caffeine, and weekend trips exploring the city together. For the first time in my life, I'd felt like I belonged somewhere.

Academically, it had been challenging but exhilarating. My classes were taught by renowned professors who pushed us to think critically, to question everything we thought we knew. I devoured books like they were oxygen, staying up until the wee hours engrossed in works by authors I'd only ever read about before. It was invigorating, intellectually stimulating, and utterly exhausting.

But perhaps what I missed most about that time was the sense of possibility it offered. In America, anything seemed possible. People talked openly about their dreams, about changing the world, about making a difference. Back home, such talk was often met with scorn or derision.

One evening, towards the end of my stay, Tom invited me along to a party hosted by some of his friends from our dormitory. The house was packed wall-to-wall with people laughing, dancing, and drinking. As I looked around at all those faces - so young, so full of life - I couldn't help but feel a pang of envy.

Then I saw him. Across the room, leaning against the mantelpiece talking animatedly to a group of people clustered around him. His name was Jamie. He had shaggy blond hair falling into his eyes, laughter lines etched into the corners of his mouth, and a smile that could light up a room.

We locked eyes briefly before he turned back to his conversation, but that fleeting moment sent a jolt through me unlike anything I'd ever experienced. From then on, I found excuses to linger near him, hoping to catch another glimpse of his smile, another snippet of his laugh.

Over the next few weeks, we grew closer. We'd meet up after class, grab coffee together, and take long walks along the Charles River. He listened intently when I spoke about my passions, challenged my thoughts respectfully, and made me feel seen in a way nobody ever had before.

And then came the night under the stars. We'd been studying together in his dorm room when suddenly, inexplicably, we were kissing. Soft lips pressed against mine, tentative at first before deepening into something more urgent, more passionate. When we finally pulled apart, breathless and grinning foolishly at each other, I knew without a doubt that I loved him.

But fate is cruel sometimes. Just days later, I received news that my mother had taken ill back home. With heavy hearts, Jamie and I said our goodbyes amidst promises to keep in touch, to write letters, to make plans for when he came to visit me next summer...

But life intervened. My mother recovered slowly but surely, though she never regained her former vigor. Upon returning to New Haven, I found work at the factory to help support our family. Days blurred into months which blurred into years. Letters stopped being replied to, phone calls went unanswered. Eventually, Jamie stopped trying altogether.

Now here I am, ten years later, stuck in this cycle of monotony and despair. A shell of the hopeful young man I once was. Sometimes I wonder if that boy still exists somewhere inside me, waiting for a chance to break free again.

But then I remember the harsh reality of my situation, and I know that dream is dead and buried. Just like my dreams of a better life with Jamie. All that remains are echoes of what might have been, haunting me like ghosts in the night.

So yes, things used to be different. Better even. But those days are gone now, lost forever in the mists of time. And all I'm left with is this...this empty shell of a life I lead today.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Gali

I stood there, arms crossed over my chest, watching as our boss, El Lobo Negro — The Black Wolf himself — paced back and forth behind his desk. Something was wrong. I could smell it.

His face was thunderous, dark eyes stormy with barely contained rage. I'd seen him like this countless times before; hell, I'd helped fuel many of those tempers myself. But today was different. Today, he was pissed off enough to make even my hackles rise.

"Those damn Bloodletters," he growled, pausing mid-stride to slam his fist down onto the polished wood surface. It damaged it slightly. What a pity. "They think they can just waltz into our territory and start peddling their poison? Not on my watch."

I stayed silent, letting him get it all out. That was what being his right-hand man meant — knowing when to speak and when to let him weather the storm. Besides, I agreed. The Bloodletters were a blight on this city, exploiting the weak with their cheap knock-offs and undercutting everyone else. It was time they got knocked down a peg, and I was going to make sure of it.

As if sensing my agreement, El Lobo turned to me suddenly, his piercing gaze locking onto mine. "Gali," he snapped, "I want you to gather a team tonight. Hit their main distribution point hard and send a message loud and clear: the Nightshade Wolves do not tolerate interlopers."

A grim smile tugged at the corners of my mouth. I was waiting for him to say those

words. This was what I lived for — taking out trash like the Bloodletters and protecting our territory from encroaching threats. "Consider it done," I replied, turning towards the door.

"Wait." His voice halted me in my tracks. What did he want now? I pivoted back around to face him, eyebrow raised questioningly. "Be subtle about it," he added gruffly. "No unnecessary casualties unless absolutely necessary. We don't need the heat of the Five-0s on us right now."

I nodded curtly, understanding his meaning. Still, I wished he was more unhinged. While we weren't exactly choirboys ourselves, drawing too much attention from the law enforcement could spell trouble for our operations. Discretion was key in maintaining control over our empire. I knew that better than anyone else.

"Understood," I confirmed before exiting his office, leaving him to stew over whatever else was eating at him today. Usually, there was always something else that pissed him off.

Out in the hallway, several of our men fell into step beside me as I strode with purpose toward our war room. They looked up at me with expectation shining in their eyes — eager for battle, hungry for action. I couldn't blame them; we were predators after all, and every predator needs prey to hunt.

Once assembled around the table strewn with maps and blueprints, I laid out our plan for the evening's festivities. We'd strike fast and hard, catching them unaware while they thought themselves safe within their so-called 'fortress'. By the time they realized what hit them, it would already be too late. I had done this before, so I knew what I was doing.

As I spoke, I felt a familiar thrill coursing through my veins — an adrenaline rush born of anticipation and danger. There was nothing quite like facing off against



enemies who dared challenge our dominance, proving once again why we were the most feared gang in these parts. That was how it had to be. I wouldn't have it any other way.

And yet, beneath that exhilaration lurked something else: a cold calculation born of years spent clawing my way up through the ranks until finally reaching this position of power alongside El Lobo. This wasn't just about satisfying some innate urge anymore; it was also about sending a very public reminder to anyone else thinking about stepping onto our turf.

Because that was what we did best: protect what was ours by any means necessary. And woe betide anyone foolish enough to stand in our way.

Later, I leaned back in my leather armchair, swirling the amber liquid in my glass as I stared blankly at the flames dancing in the fireplace across from me. Moments like these were when I found myself thinking about my life, and I hated that. I would rather be doing something else, but I couldn't. It wasn't yet the time to hurt the Bloodletters.

The warmth of the drink should've been comforting, but tonight it only served to highlight the emptiness gnawing at me.

My mind wandered back to a time when things seemed simpler — when all I cared about was climbing the ranks of the Nightshade Wolves and carving out a name for myself in this brutal world. I only used to think about that. At the time, I never thought I would ever be so worried about something else. Back then, love or mating bonds were luxuries I couldn't afford, distractions I didn't need.

Even now, I couldn't help but think that they were only getting in my way. I should be focused on the task I would have to finish later. Striking against the Bloodletters wasn't going to be easy, after all.

As I grew older and secured my place at El Lobo's side, I began to yearn for something more... something deeper. An omega of my own, someone to share my life with, to build a future with. Someone who understood this world but wasn't tainted by it.

I figured I'd eventually have to face this moment and think about those things, but part of me just wasn't ready to go there yet.

I'd had offers over the years — omegas throwing themselves at me, hoping to snag a high-ranking alpha like myself. But none of them felt right. None of them sparked that primal recognition deep within me, that instinctual pull towards my fated mate.

Fated mates — it sounded cheesy even thinking about it, but I believed in it nonetheless. In our world, alphas and omegas were drawn together by forces beyond our control, bound together by destiny itself. When an alpha met his true mate, he would feel an overwhelming surge of protectiveness and possessiveness unlike anything else. His instincts would scream at him to claim that omega, to mark him as taken, to ensure no other alpha came near him ever again.

It was over-the-top, but I didn't care. I just wanted to feel that way about someone someday. I wasn't sure if I'd get that lucky, though — maybe I never would.

An omega would respond in kind, of course, feeling a sense of safety and belonging they'd never experienced before. Their bodies would crave their alpha's touch, their scent, their presence. It was a connection forged in heaven and tempered in hell, designed to withstand even the harshest trials life threw at us.

Some might call it superstition, but I'd seen it happen enough times among our pack members to know there was truth to it. Besides, why settle for anything less than perfection when fate owed us something far greater?

So, for now, I was waiting, biding my time until fate deemed me worthy of its gift. In the meantime, I kept my distance from potential suitors, not wanting to lead anyone on or give false hope. Most of all, I just didn't want to disappoint myself. My heart belonged to someone else — someone I hadn't even met yet.

It wasn't easy, though. On nights like tonight, when the weight of solitude pressed down upon me like a physical force, doubt crept in like a poisonous vine. What if, despite the positive proof I knew existed, there was no such thing as fated mates? What if I was destined to spend my life alone, surrounded by wealth and power but devoid of genuine affection?

Shaking off those morose thoughts, I drained my glass and set it aside. No use dwelling on maybes and what-ifs. If fate intended for me to find my omega, then it would happen when the time was right. Until then, I had a job to do, a role to play in maintaining order within our territory.

Rising from my chair, I crossed the room to stare out at the city lights twinkling below. Somewhere out there, perhaps even now, my omega was waiting for me. Waiting for me to come along and sweep him off his feet, claim him as mine, and make him whole.

Until then, patience was key.

Later, the night air felt difficult to breathe as we approached the Bloodletters' main distribution point — an abandoned warehouse nestled between two crumbling tenements. Our team moved silently through the shadows, weapons drawn, eyes scanning every dark corner for signs of danger.

When I said we had planned every little detail, I meant it. I stood by every word. We'd planned meticulously for this raid; every entrance covered, every escape route accounted for. The element of surprise was ours, and we meant to use it without

holding anything back. Why would we even consider doing that? We weren't going to.

I signaled for two of our men to take up positions at either end of the building while the rest of us prepared to breach the main entrance. As we moved into position, I could feel the familiar thrill of battle coursing through my veins, adrenaline pumping hard and fast. I loved every single second of that.

With a swift nod, I counted down from three on my fingers, then slammed my boot into the door. Wood splintered under the force of impact, sending us spilling into the dimly lit interior.

I chose not to say anything. There was no point, and anything I could've said would've sounded cheesy anyway.

Chaos erupted instantly. Bloodletters scattered like roaches caught in sudden light, grabbing for weapons and screaming obscenities. They hadn't expected us to strike against them like this. We cut them down mercilessly, our training and discipline turning the tide in an instant.

Amidst the chaos, something seemed to be going wrong, and it worried me. A young omega — barely more than a kid — caught my eye as he cowered behind a makeshift barricade of crates. He looked terrified, wide-eyed, and shaking, clutching a small bag filled with some illicit substance.

Given the chaos around him, his reaction was normal. I wished he didn't have to be experiencing this.

For a moment, everything seemed to slow down around me. This wasn't supposed to happen; omegas weren't usually involved in these kinds of operations. They were protected, cherished even among criminals like us.

Yet here he was, right in the middle of it all. Bloodletters didn't have any sense of morality or what was appropriate. They only cared about themselves. Fuck them.

Before I could react, one of our men lunged forward, intent on taking out the boy along with his captors. Time seemed to stretch out as I realized what was about to happen.

"Stop!" I roared, but it was too late. The alpha's gun spat fire, the bullet striking home just inches from where the omega huddled. My heart skipped a beat.

A pained cry echoed through the warehouse as the boy clutched his arm, blood seeping between his fingers. He stumbled back against the wall, eyes wide with fear and pain. Jesus. I didn't think I could forgive the shooter.

Everything inside me screamed at me to rush towards him, to protect him from further harm. But doing so would leave my back exposed, vulnerable to attack from any number of Bloodletters still lurking nearby. A lot of them were in strategic positions.

I gritted my teeth against the agony of indecision tearing through me. Then, making a choice that felt like ripping out my own heart, I turned away from the injured omega and focused instead on clearing the remaining threats. I had to do something, even though it wasn't what I wanted to do.

One by one, we picked off the last of the Bloodletters until only silence remained save for the ragged breathing of my team and the soft whimpers of the wounded boy.

As soon as the coast was clear, I rushed towards him without thinking about anything else. Kneeling beside him, I gently pried his hand away from the wound to assess the damage. It was bad — deep and bleeding freely — but it didn't look fatal. Relief washed over me. I could take comfort in that.

Still, rage boiled inside me over what had happened. That fucking idiot should've known better than to put a civilian in harm's way! What was he thinking? He wasn't paying attention to what he was doing and what was happening around him? It was unforgivable!

"We need medical help," I growled at one of my men before stripping off my jacket and pressing it firmly against the wound to staunch the flow of blood.

The omega flinched away slightly at first but then leaned into my touch as if seeking comfort. His scent hit me then — sweet and innocent beneath the tang of blood and fear — and something strong stirred within me.

No... Not now. Not here. Not like this. It couldn't be him. It just didn't make any sense. I thought that, when it happened, it would be different.

I pushed those thoughts aside harshly, focusing instead on keeping him calm and conscious until help arrived. "You're gonna be okay," I murmured softly, brushing sweat-dampened hair away from his forehead. He flinched slightly. He was even afraid of me.

A few seconds later, though, he looked up at me with tear-filled eyes full of trust and gratitude. It seemed he was beginning to feel better — especially about me, which was the most important thing.

In that moment, despite everything, I felt something shift inside me. Something profound and undeniable.

Fuck. Could this be...

But no — not here, not now. There were more important things demanding my attention.

Like making sure none of my men ever did something so reckless again. And figuring out why an omega like him was mixed up with scum like the Bloodletters in the first place.

Those questions would have to wait though because right now, all that mattered was getting him patched up and safe.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Norri

Pain shot through my arm as I huddled against the cold brick wall, watching in horror as chaos erupted around me. When had it all started? One moment, everything was fine; the next, it was as if a portal to hell had opened, unleashing demons into the world.

Gunshots rang out like thunderclaps, echoing off the high ceilings of the abandoned warehouse. Men shouted orders, cursed each other out, and fell screaming to the ground. Blood sprayed across crates and splattered onto rusted metal shelves. I couldn't keep track of everything that was happening — it was impossible.

I'd never seen anything like it outside of movies — hell, I'd never even been in a fight before. But here I was, caught in the crossfire of some gang war I knew nothing about.

I came here for something I desperately needed. My life was a mess, and I needed something to make it better, even if just for a little while. I knew it wasn't a solution, but it was the only thing I had.

And then there was him — tall, broad-shouldered, with dark hair cropped close to his head and piercing eyes that seemed to glow with intensity even in the dim light. He moved like a predator among lesser creatures, graceful yet brutal as he took down anyone who got in his way. He was the one that most instilled fear in me. My heart hammered faster at the mere sight of him.

He wore black tactical gear that hugged every muscled inch of him like a second skin,



accentuating powerful thighs and lean hips. I wasn't sure if he was military or cartel, but my gut told me it was the latter.

A holster slung low across his chest held several weapons, but none of them compared to the sheer raw power emanating from him. It was something else.

Even amidst all the violence and fear, I couldn't help but notice how incredibly sexy he was. His jaw was set firm, lips pressed into a thin line as he barked orders at his men. Each movement spoke of confidence bordering on arrogance, yet somehow made him seem even more appealing rather than less.

When he spotted me cowering behind the makeshift barrier, time seemed to slow down. Our eyes met briefly before he turned away, focusing on eliminating more of our attackers. Still, that single glance sent shivers down my spine, leaving me feeling both exhilarated and terrified.

At the same time, I had no idea what he'd do after dealing with his enemies. Would he kill me too? Somehow, my gut told me he wouldn't.

Then someone shot to kill me — or tried to; thankfully, they missed. But the sudden pain in my arm brought me crashing back down to reality. Fear gripped me tighter than ever before as I clutched my bleeding limb, trying desperately not to pass out from shock.

I didn't want to be brought back to reality. I was so happy fantasizing about that mysterious stranger.

Then, everything became a blur. The next thing I knew, the handsome alpha was kneeling beside me, pressing something against my wound while issuing commands over his shoulder. His voice was deep and authoritative, sending another shiver through me despite myself.

Up close, he looked even more imposing - and even sexier. Dark stubble shadowed his jawline, giving him an air of danger that should've scared me off completely. Yet all I wanted was to reach out and touch it, run my fingers along its rough texture...

What was wrong with me? Here we were in the middle of a goddamn gunfight, and all I could think about was how attractive he was? What? I couldn't even begin to try to make sense of what my mind was thinking about.

But then again, maybe it wasn't such a surprise. After all, hadn't I always craved excitement and adventure? Maybe this was just my subconscious mind trying to find some silver lining in this nightmare scenario.

Ever since returning from America, I'd wanted something like this. Maybe it was destiny's twisted way of giving it to me.

Either way, I couldn't deny the strange pull I felt towards him. Even with blood soaking through his jacket where he pressed it against my injury, he managed to exude an aura of control and dominance that made me want to submit entirely.

I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like if he had all of me.

As if sensing my gaze on him, he glanced up at me suddenly. Those intense eyes locked onto mine once more, holding me captive for what felt like an eternity. In their depths, I saw concern mingling with something else — something hotter, more intense. I didn't even want to think about what that meant.

It lasted only a moment before he looked away again, breaking whatever spell had held us both entranced. But in that brief instant, I swore I felt something pass between us — a spark of recognition or connection that defied explanation.

"You're going to be okay," he whispered, his voice like velvet in my ears.

I hadn't expected him to say anything. In fact, I thought I didn't want him to. But what was I thinking? Of course I wanted him to talk to me.

By now, everything had calmed down. The initial conflict was over, and his men were just checking the blaze, making sure nobody had escaped. I was certain no one had.

The alpha helped me up from the cold concrete floor and led me to sit on a nearby crate, his grip surprisingly gentle given the circumstances. I didn't think he was going to be gentle with me — at least, not any more than he was already being. As he examined my wound more closely, his brow furrowed in concentration and I took a moment to study him openly.

His dark hair was slightly disheveled now, falling across his forehead in tousled waves that begged to be smoothed back. I wished I could do that, but of course, wasn't even going to try.

A thin sheen of sweat coated his skin, emphasizing the sharp angles of his cheekbones and the strong line of his jaw. Gosh, he just couldn't get any more masculine than he already was.

Up close, I could see flecks of gold in his otherwise stormy eyes — eyes that seemed to hold entire galaxies within their depths. I couldn't help but wonder what he was thinking. Still, it was pointless to be thinking about that. It wasn't like he would ever tell me.

"Name's Gali," he said gruffly without looking up from his task, as if reading my thoughts. "And you are?"

"Norri," I replied softly, wincing as he probed the edge of the bullet graze. "Norri Kael."

He paused mid-motion, glancing up at me sharply before continuing his movements. "Kael... That name rings a bell." He muttered under his breath, more to himself than to me.

I swallowed hard, trying to ignore the knot forming in my stomach. This wasn't good. If he recognized my last name... There would be trouble, to say the least.

"What are you doing here, Norri?" Gali asked without hinting he was going to do that, his tone shifting from casual to accusatory in an instant. His gaze bored into me, demanding an answer.

"I-I..." My mouth felt dry, my tongue thick and awkward. Why did he have to ask such a question? Did he really want to know so much about me? I thought he would have left me alone by now.

Gali raised an eyebrow expectantly, waiting for my response. When I hesitated too long, he leaned in closer, his voice dropping low and threatening. "You better start talking fast, pretty boy. Before I lose patience altogether."

Fear spiked through me like lightning at the implied threat behind those words. Pretty boy? Was that really how he saw me? Or was it just another way of calling me weak?

"I'm sorry," I blurted out finally, cringing internally at how pathetic I sounded. "I didn't want to do anything wrong. I swear!"

Gali scoffed, rolling his eyes heavenward as if seeking divine intervention. "Kid, you're lucky you're still alive after pulling a stunt like this. You really shouldn't be in this place."

My heart pounded wildly in my chest as realization dawned on me: He thought I was working with the Bloodletters! Panic surged through my veins, making it difficult to

think straight let alone form coherent sentences.

"No!" I cried out desperately, shaking my head despite the pain shooting through my arm. "No, please don't think that! I'm not one of them!"

Gali's expression hardened further if that was even possible. "Then why were you here?" He demanded, his voice making me jolt. "What business do you have with scum like that?"

I opened my mouth to respond but faltered under his piercing glare. How could I explain myself without sounding ridiculous? Without revealing just how desperate my situation truly was?

Gali grew impatient with my silence, snapping harshly, "Spit it out already! You've got five seconds before I decide your time's run out, boy."

Four... Three... Two...

"Please!" I begged, tears pricking at the corners of my eyes. "I can explain!"

One...

"I needed something!" I blurted out, hands trembling where they clutched my injured arm. "Something to help me feel better! Just for a little while, I swear!"

Gali stared at me blankly for a moment before comprehension dawned in his eyes. Disgust followed, twisting his features into a sneer.

"You came here for drugs?" He spat, his eyes judging me. "You're just another junkie looking for a fix, is that it?"

Heat flooded my cheeks as shame washed over me like a tidal wave. Hearing it put so bluntly made it sound even worse than it already was. However, I couldn't deny he was right. I was a junkie.

"No!" I protested, knowing full well how lame it sounded. "Not like that... Not exactly..."

Gali threw up his hands in exasperation, turning away from me abruptly. "Unbelievable," he muttered under his breath. "Just what we need - some naive little omega thinking he can play with fire without getting burned."

Tears spilled down my face unbidden, fueled by humiliation and fear. This couldn't be happening; none of this could be real!

"But I'm not like that!" I insisted, hating how plaintive my voice sounded. I also hated I was lying to him. "I just wanted something to take the edge off! To help me forget for a little while..."

Gali whirled back around to face me, anger etching deep lines into his face. "Forget what?" He growled, looming before me. "Your sad excuse for a life? Your dead-end job? The shitty place where you live, wherever it is?"

Each word hit me like a physical blow, driving the air from my lungs until I felt lightheaded. How dare he judge me like that? How dare he act like he knew anything about my struggles?

But given what he said, maybe he knew more about me than I thought.

"Yes!" I shouted back, surprising us both with the sudden burst of courage. "Yes, okay? Yes, all of that! It's not easy being broke and alone in this godforsaken city! Sometimes I just want something — anything — to make it all go away!"

Silence hung heavy between us for several heartbeats before Gali sighed, the sound almost palpable, running a hand roughly through his hair.

"Fine," he said, though it clearly cost him dearly to admit defeat. "I get it. Life sucks sometimes. But coming here? Doing this?" He gestured vaguely towards the carnage surrounding us. "This isn't the answer."

I nodded miserably, unable to meet his gaze. Maybe he was right; maybe there were other ways to cope besides throwing myself into danger and desperation.

If only I had already found my destined alpha mate, everything might be different. But I was just dreaming. It wasn't likely to happen — I had no real chance of finding that person.

With that thought crossing my mind, part of me wondered if I'd ever find those other ways. Or if I even deserved to try.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Gali

After bandaging Norri's wound as best I could with what we had on hand, I left him sitting on the crate, looking small and scared amidst the chaos of our cleanup operation.

I realized I had crossed a line when talking to him. I shouldn't have said the things I did. He didn't deserve it. I overreacted.

My men moved efficiently around us, gathering weapons and rounding up any surviving Bloodletters for interrogation later. There weren't many. Only a few.

To be honest, I was actually surprised. I thought that we had killed all of them.

As soon as we had a moment alone, my second-in-command, Raze, approached me with a grim expression etched onto his weather-beaten face.

I sighed. Whatever he wanted to talk to me about, I didn't want to hear it. I had something much more important to deal with — or maybe I should say, someone rather than something.

"What are we going to do with the kid?" He jerked his chin towards Norri, who sat huddled with his arms wrapped around himself, staring blankly at nothing.

He looked so innocent. I mean, he wasn't. Not fully, but compared to us, he was nothing. He was just a civilian. And, much younger than me, too. For some reason, I couldn't stop thinking about that.



I hesitated before answering, considering my words carefully. Raze was, well, the kind of person he was. Even though he was my second-in-command, it was difficult to deal with him. Suffice it to say that him being my second-in-command hadn't entirely been my choice.

"We'll take him back with us," I finally said, keeping my tone neutral despite the surge of protectiveness coursing through me at the mere thought of leaving Norri behind.

I realized, that, without my support, he would be as good as dead. I didn't even want to think about that. My heart hurt at the mere notion of him dying.

Raze raised an eyebrow. "And risk him talking? You know we can't afford loose ends like that."

My jaw tightened at the implication behind his words. Leave it to Raze to suggest eliminating a potential threat rather than finding a better solution.

In other circumstances, if Norri were anyone else, he'd already be dead. But he wasn't. I felt a strong connection to him and wanted to explore what that meant.

"He's not a loose end," I snapped sharper than intended. It was a mistake. I couldn't let Raze know my true feelings for Norri. "He's a witness, yes, but one who didn't ask to be caught up in this mess. We owe him protection."

Raze scoffed openly now, folding his arms across his chest. "Protection? Since when did you start caring about witnesses, Gali? Last time I checked, we didn't have time for sentimentality, and you know I'm right about that."

I glared at him, aware of several nearby ears pricking up at the exchange. "Watch yourself, Raze," I growled low enough that only he could hear. "That omega is off-

limits unless I say otherwise."

Something flashed in Raze's eyes then - surprise mixed with understanding perhaps - but he wisely kept whatever thoughts he had to himself. For now. He remembered he was my second-in-command and couldn't challenge me any more than he already was.

"Fine," he conceded. "But what happens next? We can't keep him locked up forever."

"We won't," I assured him firmly, though to be honest, I hadn't thought that far ahead yet. All I knew was that we couldn't just kill Norri.

Besides, there was something else tugging at me whenever I looked at him — a primal instinct demanding I keep him close, safe from harm. It was unlike anything I'd ever experienced before, and it scared the hell out of me. It kept making me wonder if, perhaps, he wasn't my fated mate.

"Then what's your plan?" Raze pressed, clearly unsatisfied with my vague reassurances. I couldn't blame him.

"I don't know yet," I admitted honestly, rubbing the back of my neck. "But I'll figure something out. Just give me some space to think."

Raze opened his mouth as if to argue further but seemed to reconsider upon catching sight of my expression. Instead, he merely shook his head before walking away without another word.

Good riddance. The last thing I needed right now was someone questioning every decision I made regarding Norri.

Turning my attention back to the young omega still seated on the crate, I couldn't

shake the feeling that things were about to become significantly more complicated than they already were.

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Back at our compound later that night, I led Norri down the dimly lit hallway toward one of our guest rooms. He followed silently behind me, casting nervous glances at the heavily armed guards stationed along the way.

When we reached the door, I pushed it open and stepped aside to allow him entrance first. He hesitated briefly before stepping past me, eyes darting around the sparsely furnished room.

"It's not much," I commented dryly, closing the door behind us both. "But it should suffice for tonight."

Norri nodded without saying anything, wrapping his arms around himself again as if seeking comfort from the simple gesture. There was something so vulnerable about him standing there like that, and it stirred protective instincts within me once more.

"You hungry?" I asked gruffly, attempting to break through the tension hanging heavy between us. "We can have something brought up if you want."

His stomach chose that moment to rumble loudly, eliciting a faint blush from Norri as he ducked his head. "No, thank you," he murmured. "I'm fine."

Liar. But I didn't press the issue; instead, I gestured towards the bed tucked into one corner of the room.

"Why don't you get some rest? Tomorrow will be a long day."

Norri glanced towards the bed uncertainly before turning back to me. "What's going to happen tomorrow?" He asked, worry creasing his brow.

I sighed at the question; truthfully, I wasn't sure yet. Still, there was no use worrying him further by admitting that aloud.

"That depends," I hedged. "For now, just focus on getting some sleep. Okay?"

He nodded, though skepticism lingered in those wide blue eyes. Without another word, he crossed over to the bed and climbed beneath the covers, pulling them up high under his chin.

Watching him settle down, I felt an inexplicable urge to stay by his side until he fell asleep. But knowing how ridiculous that sounded even in my own head, I forced myself to turn away instead.

At the door, I paused with my hand on the knob, glancing back over my shoulder one last time. Norri lay curled up on his side, facing away from me now, his breath already evening out into the soft rhythm of slumber.

Despite everything, a small smile tugged at the corners of my mouth. At least someone would be getting some rest tonight.

With a quiet sigh, I slipped out into the hall and pulled the door closed softly behind me. Leaning against it for a moment, I took a deep breath before heading downstairs. There was a lot for me to do.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Gali

As I stepped out into the hallway, leaving Norri alone in the guest room, I couldn't help but feel a pang of unease at the prospect of leaving him there unattended. After all, I was the only one who wanted to keep him safe. Everybody else wanted to hurt him.

But duty called, and I had matters to attend to elsewhere in the compound.

Still, I found myself hesitating outside his door a few moments later as if I had been drawn back to the place, listening intently for any sign of distress or movement from within. After a few seconds passed without incident, I finally tore myself away, striding purposefully down the corridor towards the 'war room' where my team waited for debriefing.

Halfway there, however, I heard the door creak open behind me, followed by soft footsteps padding across the hardwood floor. I turned around sharply to find Norri standing in the doorway, watching me with a mixture of curiosity and trepidation etched onto his youthful features.

I didn't think he was going to do that. I thought that he wouldn't even try to get out of the room he was in. Plus, I should have locked it. I didn't know why I hadn't. Must have forgotten.

"Something wrong?" I asked, arching an eyebrow as I walked back towards him.  
"Couldn't sleep?"

My tone was way too casual with someone who was supposed to be our captive. Once the boss learned about this, he wouldn't be pleased. Raze was already breathing down my neck, after all.

Norri, not caring, shrugged noncommittally, hugging his arms around himself. "Just wondered what happens now," he said quietly. "Where am I supposed to go from here?"

It was a valid question given his current situation, yet one I hadn't yet fully figured out how to answer. Not satisfactorily anyway.

"We'll discuss that tomorrow," I told him firmly, trying to keep any hint of uncertainty from my voice, even though it was difficult to do it. "Tonight, you need rest. Come on." I reached out to usher him back inside, but Norri remained rooted in place, staring up at me with those big blue eyes coated with questions he wanted to ask me.

"But why are you doing this?" He blurted all of a sudden, surprising me enough that I paused mid-motion, caught off guard. I hadn't expected him to be so bold. "Why are you protecting me after everything that happened earlier? Why do you care what happens to me? I'm just a nobody, after all. Nobody cares about me."

His words hit me harder than any physical blow ever could. They struck a chord within me, resonating deeply with emotions I barely understood myself let alone knew how to express. The truth was, sometimes, I felt the same way.

I couldn't tell him the truth — that somehow, against all odds and logic, I'd recognized him as mine from the moment our eyes met amidst the chaos of that warehouse. So, I did the only thing I could think of: I lied.

"You remind me of someone," I said gruffly, averting my gaze lest he see too much

reflected therein. He might figure out what I was thinking. "Someone I used to know a long time ago."

It was true enough, albeit not in the way I truly meant it. The boy who haunted my memories did bear a passing resemblance to Norri, yes, but their similarities ended there. Whereas that boy had been brash, bold even, Norri seemed almost timid by comparison, as if life had beaten the spirit right out of him. That might actually be the case, which made me feel worried about him.

Yet despite their differences, seeing Norri huddled and frightened reminded me vividly of the young man I once considered my closest friend. A friend whose loss still weighed heavily upon my soul.

If only I had been stronger, maybe he would still be alive. I couldn't stop thinking about it, couldn't stop believing I should have done more.

And maybe, just maybe, caring for Norri could serve as penance for failing to protect him all those years ago...

Norri's expression softened slightly at my words, some of the tension draining from his shoulders. "Oh," he said softly, nodding slowly. "That makes sense, I guess."

Before I could respond, he surprised me again by stepping closer, reaching up to press his hand lightly against my cheek. I didn't think he was going to do that. Did he care about me? He was too sweet for me.

His fingers were cool, his touch tentative yet surprisingly comforting. My heart pounded in my chest, caught between wanting to lean into that contact and pulling away before things got too complicated. It would be a mistake to give in to my feelings.

"I'm sorry about your friend," Norri murmured sincerely, his voice barely above a whisper. "Maybe one day you'll tell me about him."

I opened my mouth to say something — anything — but found no words forthcoming. Instead, I stood frozen beneath his gentle movements, struggling to maintain control over the swirling emotions threatening to consume me.

After a moment, Norri withdrew his hand, looking slightly embarrassed by his boldness. Clearing his throat, he shuffled backward into the room, leaving me standing there like an idiot, unable to move or speak. His ability to make me feel uncomfortable was astounding.

"Goodnight, Gali," he said quietly, turning away from me to climb back into bed.

As the door clicked shut behind him, sealing me off from the warmth of his presence, I realized too late that I should've gone after him. Should've stayed by his side until he drifted off to sleep rather than leaving him alone with thoughts best left undisturbed.

As long as I was with him, I felt I didn't have to think about much. He made me feel at peace. More and more, I grew certain he was my destined mate.

It was too late now. All I could do was stand there, leaning against the doorframe, listening as silence reclaimed the hallway once more.

Fuck. What was happening to me?

With a heavy sigh, I pushed away from the door and continued on my way towards the meeting room. I had a job to do, and dwelling on impossible dreams wouldn't get it done.



Did I really think Norri and I could end up together? That was a ridiculous notion. There was no way we could have a relationship, not with me living in this place.

Tomorrow would be soon enough to deal with the mess my feelings were fast becoming. For now, though, duty came first.

Besides, there was always a chance that whatever madness had taken hold of me tonight would pass by morning light. A slim chance perhaps, but a chance nonetheless. And clinging to hope was better than giving in to despair, right?

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When I finally returned to check on Norri later that night, long after my duties were completed and the compound lay quiet save for the hum of the machinery, I found him still awake, propped up on pillows, gazing out the window at the starless sky beyond. He was most likely wondering what was going to happen to him and I couldn't blame him for behaving that way.

At the sound of my entrance, he turned towards me, surprise flickering across his face briefly before settling into a more guarded expression. Maybe he thought I wouldn't be back. Not even I was certain I would be back here.

"What are you still doing up?" I asked gruffly, crossing the room to sit on the edge of the mattress beside him. Again, my friendliness was showing. It was a good thing that the boss was occupied with something and couldn't come back for now.

Norri shrugged, tucking his hands under the covers as if seeking shelter from something unseen. "Just thinking," he admitted softly. "Too many thoughts racing through my mind to sleep."

I could relate all too well to that particular problem. Leaning back against the

headboard, I stretched out my legs alongside his, feeling the slight pressure of his foot brushing against mine.

"How's the wound?" I inquired instead of commenting on the obvious. Better to focus on practical matters rather than delve deeper into whatever turmoil kept us both awake tonight. I couldn't fuck this up.

Norri glanced down at the bandaged wound peeking out from beneath the sleeve of his shirt. "Hurts less now," he replied after a moment's hesitation. "Not as bad as I thought it would be. Thanks for bandaging it up."

A faint smile tugged at the corners of my mouth at his attempt at nonchalance. He was trying to lie to me, which wasn't working.

"Glad to hear it," I told him sincerely, letting my own hand rest atop his where it gripped the covers, the knuckles white. "You were lucky; it wasn't nearly as bad as it looked."

At the same time, I couldn't stop blaming the idiot who had shot him. But there wasn't much I could do about it. I couldn't punish someone for being cautious. Besides, the boss wouldn't be happy if I did.

Norri nodded slowly, still staring intently at the spot where our hands touched as if mesmerized by the simple contact.

"Do you... Do you have someone waiting for you out there?" He asked suddenly, breaking the silence between us once more. "Someone who cares about what happens to you?"

The question took me aback, catching me off guard. Did I have someone? Not anymore. Not since... Well, not for a very long time.

"Not really," I answered honestly, keeping my tone deliberately neutral lest he sense the wealth of emotion lurking just beneath the surface. "My life isn't exactly conducive to relationships if you know what I mean."

He didn't respond right away, instead digesting this new piece of information silently before speaking again. "So why stay then? Why keep doing this if it only brings you loneliness and pain?"

His words hit too close to home, striking a chord deep within me. It was as though he could read my mind. They echoed thoughts I'd had myself countless times before, usually during moments of weakness when the weight of responsibility threatened to crush me entirely.

But unlike those dark nights filled with self-doubt, tonight I found myself responding without hesitation, "Because I want to be doing this. I fought hard to be where I am right now."

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Norri

The room was still pitch black when I woke up, my heart pounding wildly in my chest like a trapped animal desperate for release. It reflected what I was feeling.

Disoriented, I lay there for a moment, straining my eyes against the darkness, trying to remember where I was. For a moment, I almost thought I was back home. Then it all came rushing back — the warehouse raid, Gali, the gunshot wound, and waking up in this strange bed in this godforsaken place. I hated everything about this.

As quietly as possible, I threw back the covers and swung my legs over the side of the bed, wincing slightly at the pull of stitches in my arm. I'd need to change the dressing soon, but first things first — getting the hell out of here while I still could.

Even though Gali was good to me, there was no telling what the other cartel members would try to do to me, and I didn't want to stick around to find out.

I moved carefully across the room, my bare feet silent on the cold wooden floorboards. Reaching the door, I tried the handle, expecting to find it locked. To my surprise, it turned easily in my grasp, swinging open soundlessly on well-oiled hinges.

Gali must have forgotten about locking it. Lucky me.

A quick glance into the hallway revealed no one stationed outside guarding my door — or so it seemed. Not enough time must have passed for them to remember I was here.

Closing the door softly behind me, I crept along the wall, keeping to the shadows as best I could, my pulse thrumming loudly in my ears. I was on high-alert.

Each step felt like a mile as I edged closer to what I hoped was freedom. I hadn't seen enough of the compound to know for sure where I was going, but I figured any direction was better than sticking around to face the consequences of being caught trying to run. These people already hated me. They would hate me more after finding that out.

Rounding a corner, I came face-to-face with a towering figure looming out of the darkness ahead. We stared at each other for a heartbeat, surprise mirrored on both our faces before I whirled around to flee, only to collide with another equally imposing presence coming up behind me.

I fucked it up.

Strong arms wrapped around my waist, pinning my arms tightly to my sides as I struggled to break free. Panic surged through me, fueling my desperate, futile attempts to escape, even though I knew it was hopeless.

"Let me go!" I cried out, desperation lending strength to my voice. I knew nobody was going to come to my rescue, but it was still the only thing I could do. "Please, don't hurt me!"

My pleas fell on deaf ears however, as my attacker merely tightened his grip, lifting me off the ground before carting me unceremoniously back down the hall towards my prison.

"No! Please!" I begged again, tears stinging my eyes as reality sank in — I was trapped, truly trapped this time. The mistakes that Gali made wouldn't happen again.

My plea must have reached its intended target though, because seconds later, my captor released me abruptly, dumping me onto the bed where I'd woken just seconds ago. Gasping for breath, I huddled against the headboard, watching warily as two figures entered the room, their features obscured by the dim light spilling in from the hallway behind them. At least there was some light coming from somewhere.

One was tall and broad-shouldered, his muscles clearly defined even beneath the loose fabric of his shirt. The other stood slightly shorter, but no less intimidating thanks to the sheer malice radiating off him like heat shimmering off asphalt on a summer's day.

I knew instinctively which one held the power here, and it wasn't the one glaring at me with murder in his eyes. No, that one only took orders and obeyed them without question.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" The taller man growled menacingly, stalking closer to the edge of the bed. "Didn't we tell you to stay put? Do you think that we are not thinking about killing you? Because that's exactly what I'm thinking right now. I'm thinking how much I want to see you dead."

"I-I'm sorry," I stammered, shrinking back from his wrath. "I didn't mean... I just wanted..."

"Shut your mouth!" He snarled, slamming his fist onto the mattress mere inches from my thigh, making me jump violently. I really thought he was going to hurt me. "You've already caused enough trouble. Now answer the question: What were you thinking, running around like that?"

Tears pricked at the corners of my eyes once more, fear coiling tightly around my throat, choking off any coherent response. All I could manage was a weak shake of my head, hoping it would somehow appease his anger.

It did not.

Without warning, he lunged forward, grabbing hold of my injured arm and twisting painfully until I screamed out loud, unable to contain my agony any longer. Hot tears streamed down my cheeks as waves of nausea rolled through me, threatening to send me spiraling into unconsciousness.

"Stop!" Another voice interjected suddenly, sharp and commanding. The grip on my arm eased slightly, allowing me to draw ragged breaths through gritted teeth. Looking up, I found Gali standing in the doorway, his expression thunderous as he glared at the two men now facing off against each other.

"You okay?" He asked, turning towards me briefly before addressing the other alpha once more. "What's going on here?" He's off limits, I could imagine him saying again.

The smaller alpha sneered, gesturing towards me with disdain. "Found this little worm sneaking out like the rat he is. Tried to make a run for it, didn't ya?" He spat the words venomously, making it clear he had no qualms about causing me harm if given half the chance.

Gali's jaw clenched, but otherwise, he showed no outward reaction to the accusations leveled against me. Instead, he stepped further into the room, positioning himself between us almost protectively.

"That may be true," he conceded, his gaze never leaving the other alpha's face. "But you can't hurt him. I'm not allowing it."

His tone implied a subtle threat, one that sent a chill down my spine despite the warmth emanating from him. It was clear these men shared some form of history together; hopefully, Gali's influence would be enough to keep me safe from further

harm.

The smaller alpha scoffed, crossing his arms over his chest belligerently. "And who made you boss here? Last I checked, you weren't calling the shots around here." His eyes flicked dismissively over Gali before settling back onto mine, filled with derision. "He's just another prisoner, same as all the others. Treat him like one too."

I shrank back at those cruel words, wrapping my arms around myself as if they could shield me from the verbal blow. I knew it was pointless, but it was the only thing that could make me feel somewhat better.

Yet even as I cowered, Gali remained unmoved, his stance unwavering despite the clear challenge posed to him.

"Maybe so," he agreed mildly, surprising me with his calm demeanor amidst such obvious hostility. "But maybe you need to remember that you do what I want and not the other way around."

A muscle ticked in the smaller alpha's jaw, his eyes narrowing. Whatever silent exchange passed between them then, it seemed to have an effect; after a moment, he turned away, muttering something under his breath about needing a drink before stomping out of the room without another word.

Once the door slammed shut behind him and his silent colleague — who I had almost forgotten had been there with us — Gali let out a sigh, running a hand roughly through his hair before turning back towards me. "You okay?" He repeated, his expression softening ever so slightly.

I nodded weakly, brushing away the lingering tears still damp on my cheeks. "Yes," I whispered. "Thank you for stopping him."



He offered me a small, tight smile before sitting down beside me on the bed, his body language gentle given our surroundings. "Don't mention it," he said, his gaze locked onto mine as if searching for something hidden deep within. "Just promise me you won't try pulling anything like that again. I'm already doing more than I should be to keep you safe."

I swallowed hard, considering his request. On one hand, staying here meant certain imprisonment — possibly even worse depending on what fate awaited those who crossed the cartel. On the other, attempting to escape again might very well get me killed, especially with Gali unable to protect me every second of the day. After all, he was someone important and always had other things to do.

Yet even as I weighed my options, part of me couldn't help but wonder if there was more to Gali than met the eye. After all, he'd gone out of his way to intervene on my behalf twice now, putting himself squarely in harm's way to do so. Why?

I had asked him about that before but felt that there was still more — something that he hadn't told me yet.

"Why are you being so nice to me?" I blurted out, the words tumbling forth before I could stop them. "Why go against your gang just to save someone like me?"

Gali hesitated briefly before speaking, as if choosing his words carefully. "It's easier to just kill you." He glanced down at where his hand rested lightly atop mine on the comforter, his thumb tracing idle patterns over my skin. "But that doesn't mean it's the wisest thing to do."

My heart skipped a beat at his touch, warmth spreading through me like wildfire. I never imagined he would say something like that. I knew he liked me, but for him to go out of his way to say it? I had thought that was impossible.

"But why?" I pressed, leaning into his touch almost involuntarily. "What makes me different from anyone else who's ever been here?"

This time, Gali sighed deeply, his shoulders slumping slightly as if burdened by unseen weight. When he looked back up at me, his expression was starkly serious, almost vulnerable somehow.

"Because sometimes," he murmured softly, "life gives us a chance to make things right. And I intend to take it this time."

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Gali

The sun hung low in the sky as I pushed open the door to Norri's temporary quarters, the dim light casting long shadows across the bare walls. I used the term 'temporary' because I knew he would eventually have to leave, one way or another, no matter how much I wished otherwise.

He sat huddled on the edge of the bed, knees drawn up to his chest, looking small and fragile in the oversized shirt and sweatpants we'd loaned him. He needed new clothes after what happened to him.

Our conversation yesterday had left me with a lot to think about. Not just about his near escape attempt or the ensuing confrontation with those two cartel members, but also about the undeniable connection I felt pulling me towards Norri.

I knew it was foolish to entertain thoughts of a future together when our worlds were so far apart, yet I found myself helpless against the tide of emotion crashing through me whenever I saw him. It made no sense, but then again, love often didn't follow logic or reason.

As I stepped inside, Norri glanced up warily, his eyes widening slightly in surprise at seeing me. I offered him a reassuring smile, hoping to ease some of the tension radiating off him.

"How's the arm feeling today?" I asked, crossing the room to sit down beside him on the narrow mattress.

Norri uncurled slightly, allowing his injured limb to rest gingerly in his lap as he shrugged. "Better," he admitted after a moment's hesitation. "Still sore, but manageable."

"That's good," I replied, nodding approvingly. "Make sure to keep it clean and remind me to change the dressing. I'll see if I can find some proper medication later."

His face lit up briefly at that news before falling flat once more. "Thanks," he muttered, picking at the loose threads on the hem of his borrowed shirt. "For everything."

The gratitude in his voice warmed me more than any amount of alcohol could. Yet it also stirred something else within me - guilt. Here I sat, enjoying the simple pleasure of his company while knowing full well how precarious his position truly was. If El Lobo Negro ever caught wind of the growing attachment between us...

But I shook off those dark thoughts, determined not to let them intrude upon this precious moment. Instead, I turned my attention back to Norri, studying the lines etched into his young face, the shadows lurking in his eyes. He had been through so much already; I wanted nothing more than to spare him further pain and suffering.

"You want to talk about it?" I ventured, not wanting to push too hard too fast. "About... before all this happened?"

Norri's gaze flickered up to meet mine briefly before skittering away again, uncertainty written plainly across his features. For a moment, I thought he might refuse, retreat back into silence as he seemed to do whenever confronted with anything remotely personal. But then he took a deep breath, steeling himself.

"There's not really much to tell," he began hesitantly, hugging his arms around himself again. "My life wasn't exactly exciting before. Just working at the factory,

trying to scrape together enough money to survive."

"And your family?" I prodded gently, sensing there was more to his story than he let on.

A shadow crossed his face at the mention of loved ones, his mouth pressing into a thin line as if bracing himself against an onslaught of painful memories. "They're gone," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "I don't know what has happened to them."

My heart ached for him, imagining the loneliness he must've endured growing up without the guidance and support a family should provide. Yet even as I empathized with his plight, part of me marveled at his resilience — how he'd managed to maintain such an optimistic outlook despite being dealt such a shitty hand in life.

"It couldn't have been easy," I murmured, showing empathy and reaching out to squeeze his shoulder. "Especially considering you never asked for any of this."

He leaned into my touch briefly before straightening once more, as if reminding himself not to get too comfortable with my affection. As much as it pained me to witness, I couldn't blame him. Trust was earned over time, not bestowed freely based solely on desire.

"I guess not," he agreed, his voice soft and his gaze fixed firmly on the floor between his feet. "But I've learned to accept what I can't change and focus on making things better for myself instead."

I admired his determination, even as it underscored the vast chasm separating our realities. While I had spent years clawing my way up through the ranks of the Nightshade Wolves, Norri had been forced to fight tooth and nail simply to maintain his basic needs. It only served to highlight the stark contrast between our lives, and

the daunting challenges that lay ahead if we ever hoped to build something lasting together.

"Speaking of which," he continued after a brief pause, glancing up at me sideways with a faint smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "What about you? How did you end up... here?"

His tone implied he knew more about my world than he let on, but I couldn't fault him for asking. After all, anyone paying attention would've picked up on the underlying dynamics at play among the Nightshade Wolves.

"Not quite the rags-to-riches tale like yours," I admitted wryly, leaning back against the wall behind us as I stretched out my legs along the length of the bed. "Growing up, my dad was high-ranking within the cartel. When he passed away unexpectedly, it left me in charge of managing our territory."

Norri nodded slowly, digesting this new information silently before speaking again. "And your mom? Do you have any siblings?"

"No mom," I replied gruffly, memories of her distant and vague now. "She left when I was just a kid. Never looked back either. As for siblings..." I paused, remembering old memories. "Well, I had a younger brother once. But he's gone now."

The words tasted bitter on my tongue, each syllable laced with the poisonous venom of regret. Even after all these years, the memory of that tragic day still haunted me, gnawing at my soul like a relentless cancer.

Norri reached out, placing his small hand atop mine where it rested on the mattress between us. His fingers were cool, his touch surprisingly comforting despite the weighty subject matter we discussed.

"I'm sorry," he said sincerely, his thumb brushing gentle circles against my skin. "Losing someone you care about is never easy."

"True," I acknowledged quietly, appreciating his empathy more than words could express. Yet even as gratitude swelled within me, so too did another emotion — one far stronger and more potent: love.

In that moment, looking down at our intertwined hands, feeling the soft pressure of his palm pressed against mine, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt: Norri was mine. My destined mate. The other half of my soul.

No matter how impossible the odds stacked against us, no matter the obstacles threatening to tear us apart, I wouldn't let him go. Not again. Not after finding him, after finally seeing a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness that had consumed my life for so long.

But telling him that now, when he was already grappling with enough uncertainty and fear, would be selfish. Instead, I chose to keep those thoughts locked tightly within my chest, vowing to find a way to make them a reality somehow.

For now, though, I contented myself with enjoying his company. We still had time to figure everything else out; for now, this was enough.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Norri

I didn't see El Lobo Negro coming until he was standing right there beside us, his dark eyes blazing with anger as he took in the scene unfolding before him. My hand still resting atop Gali's, our faces inches apart, breaths mingling. We hadn't noticed him enter, hadn't heard his footsteps approach over the pounding of blood in our ears.

Time seemed to freeze, every muscle in my body tensing as realization dawned — we'd been caught. Caught red-handed when we were about to kiss, our growing bond laid bare for him to see.

El Lobo's gaze flicked between us, taking in the intimate tableau we presented. I saw the understanding click into place, saw the rage boil up within him like lava ready to erupt. He knew, and he wasn't happy about it.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" He snarled, grabbing me by the scruff of the neck and yanking me roughly away from Gali. I stumbled, catching myself against the edge of the bed as I struggled to regain my footing.

Gali surged to his feet, stepping forward aggressively, hands clenched into fists at his sides. "Back off, El Lobo," he growled low in his throat, eyes flashing with his threat. "You're making a mistake."

El Lobo barked out a harsh laugh, releasing his hold on me only to advance on Gali instead. "Mistake? You're the one making mistakes, Gali! You're putting everything at risk because of this little omega worm!" He gestured towards me derisively, spittle flying from his lips in his agitation.



My stomach twisted into knots at the insult, but before I could respond, Gali interjected. "He's not just some 'omega worm'!" He spat, advancing on El Lobo with a ferocity that made even me take a step back. "He matters to me."

El Lobo reared back as if slapped, shock flickering briefly across his face before morphing back into pure, unadulterated fury. "Matters to you?" He roared, slamming his fist onto the dresser beside him, sending a vase crashing to the floor. "Since when does anyone or anything matter more to you than the Nightshade Wolves and me?"

Gali's jaw clenched, muscles flexing beneath his shirt as he clearly fought to maintain control. When he spoke again, his voice was steady, calm almost, yet filled with a quiet menace that sent shivers down my spine.

"You know I've always been loyal, El Lobo. Always put the gang first." He took a deliberate step closer, their noses almost touching now. "But this isn't just about loyalty anymore. It's personal."

El Lobo sneered, pushing hard against Gali's chest, sending him stumbling backward slightly. "Personal?" He mocked cruelly. "You think this little piece of ass is worth throwing away everything you've built here? Everything we've built together?"

Before I could react, Gali lunged forward, grabbing El Lobo by the collar and slamming him against the wall behind him. "Don't talk about him like that!" He snarled, teeth bared like a wild beast ready to strike.

I cringed inwardly, knowing full well what was coming next. This confrontation had been brewing for days now, simmering just beneath the surface, waiting for something — anything — to tip the scales. And now, here it was, playing out before my very eyes in all its brutal glory.

El Lobo shoved Gali off him, sending him sprawling to the floor before launching

himself at my alpha. They traded blows, each determined to land the upper hand, neither willing to give an inch despite the clear disparity in their ages and experience.

I watched in horror as they rolled around, grunts and curses filling the air along with the sickening crunch of bone on flesh. Neither seemed able to gain the advantage, each too evenly matched, too unwilling to back down.

Then, suddenly, Gali managed to pin El Lobo down beneath him, his arm pressed firmly across the older alpha's throat. Panting heavily, sweat dripping from his brow, he glared down at his boss with murder in his eyes.

"I won't let you hurt him," he ground out through gritted teeth, voice shaking. "Not ever again."

For a moment, El Lobo seemed taken aback by the sheer determination burning in Gali's gaze. Then, just as suddenly, his expression hardened once more, a cold, calculating gleam entering his eyes.

"Kill me if you want," he challenged, barely above a whisper. "But know this: If you walk away now, there'll be nowhere left for you to hide. The Nightshade Wolves will hunt you down like the traitor you are."

Gali faltered slightly at those words, uncertainty flickering briefly across his features before disappearing just as quickly. He glanced back over his shoulder at me, our gazes locking, and I knew then what he would do.

Without hesitation, he released his grip on El Lobo, standing up straight and tall as if daring the other alpha to try something now. "We'll see about that," he said coolly, holding out his hand to me, palm up, fingers splayed wide.

I hesitated only briefly before placing my own hand in his, feeling the warmth and

strength emanating from him as our fingers intertwined. Together, we turned towards the door, prepared to face whatever lay ahead.

But before we could take so much as a single step, chaos erupted outside the room. Shouts echoed down the hallways, followed by the unmistakable crack of gunfire.

Instinct took over, driving us both to dive for cover even as bullets tore through the flimsy walls surrounding us. I hit the floor hard, rolling under the bed just as another volley shattered the windowpane, raining glass down upon us like deadly confetti.

Gali cursed under his breath, crawling alongside me, using the narrow space between the bed frame and the floorboards to shield ourselves from further injury. His eyes met mine briefly, fierce resolve shining brightly within them.

"We have to go," he mouthed, pointing towards the door where shadows danced eerily amidst the flashes of gunfire beyond.

I nodded my understanding, my heart pounding wildly in my chest as adrenaline coursed through my veins. There was no going back now; we had to fight our way out of here or die trying.

With one last glance back towards the destruction wrought upon the room, we sprang into action simultaneously, darting out from beneath the bed and sprinting for the door side-by-side. Bullets whizzed past us like angry bees, kicking up chunks of plaster and wood from the floorboards beneath our feet.

Somehow, we made it through without sustaining any major injuries, bursting forth into the hallway amidst a hail of gunfire and shouting voices.

A quick glance revealed several cartel members rounding the corner up ahead, weapons raised and trained on us. But before they could get off another shot, Gali

fired off two quick rounds, dropping them both where they stood.

More footsteps sounded nearby, echoing ominously off the bare walls as more of El Lobo's men closed in on our position. We were running out of time and options.

"There!" Gali yelled all of a sudden, gesturing towards a narrow staircase leading downwards into darkness. "That way!"

Hand in hand, we dashed towards the stairs, taking them two at a time in our haste to escape. The sounds of pursuit echoed after us, growing fainter as we descended deeper into the bowels of the compound.

Eventually, we emerged into a damp, musty corridor lit only by faint shafts of light filtering through grimy windows set high up near the ceiling. Gali pulled me roughly to a halt, pressing me flat against the wall as he listened intently for signs of our pursuers.

For a long moment, nothing but silence greeted us. Then, distant shouts echoed through the darkness, growing louder with every passing second.

"We need to keep moving," Gali muttered, taking my hand once more and pulling me along beside him. "Can't stop now, not until we're safe."

Together, we raced down the hallway, turning this way and that, following twists and turns that seemed designed to confuse rather than guide. Yet still, the sounds of pursuit dogged our heels, growing ever closer, ever more insistent.

Finally, we burst forth into the open, stumbling onto a small dock overlooking a vast expanse of water. The moon hung low in the sky overhead, casting an eerie glow upon the waves below, reflecting the desperate struggle playing out around us.

To our right stood a battered old rowboat, its weather-beaten hull swaying gently with the tide. Beside it, a lone figure hunched over the engine of a speedboat, clearly working to repair some damage inflicted during our hasty departure.

As we approached, the figure straightened up, spinning around with a snarl ready on their lips. Recognition flashed in their eyes as they caught sight of Gali however, their expression softening somewhat.

"Of course it's you, Raze," Gali called out gruffly, slowing our pace as we neared the boat.

As we drew near, Raze's eyes flicked from Gali to me and back again, comprehension dawning in their depths like a storm gathering on the horizon. I saw the hatred boiling there, raw and primal, most likely fueled by years of jealousy and resentment.

I didn't know much about their past, but it was obvious he was jealous of Gali.

"You fucking traitor!" He roared, lunging forward, hands grasping for Gali's throat. My alpha managed to dodge just in time, narrowly avoiding the brutal grip aimed at crushing his windpipe. Instead, Raze's momentum sent him crashing into the side of the speedboat, denting the metal hull with a resounding clang.

Gali wasted no time capitalizing on his opponent's loss of balance, launching himself at Raze and tackling him to the ground. They grappled, each fighting to gain the upper hand, fingers clawing at flesh, teeth bared in snarls. The air filled with grunts and curses, punctuated by the sickening crunch of bone on bone.

"Always knew you were weak," Raze spat, landing a solid punch to Gali's jaw. My alpha staggered back slightly, blood trickling from his split lip, but he recovered quickly, delivering a sharp elbow strike to Raze's temple. "But I never thought you'd stoop so low as to betray your own people."

"And I never thought you were capable of such pathetic jealousy," Gali retorted, driving his fist into Raze's stomach. Air whooshed from his lungs in a pained hiss, yet he refused to yield, counterattacking viciously even as Gali rained blow after punishing blow down upon him.

Back and forth they went, each driven by an almost feral intensity, fueled by decades' worth of pent-up aggression and bitterness. It was clear now that this wasn't merely about me or our attempted escape; this was a battle long in the making, a clash of titans playing out under the watchful eye of fate itself.

Raze landed a solid kick to Gali's knee, sending him sprawling to the ground with a cry of pain. Seizing his opportunity, Raze leaped atop him, pinning his arms above his head, raining blows down upon my helpless alpha's face. Each strike left me wincing internally, my heart aching for the man I cared about.

"You're finished, Gali!" Raze howled triumphantly, blood spraying from his mouth as he spoke. "Your life ends here!"

I couldn't let him do this, couldn't stand idly by while the one person who meant something to me was beaten within an inch of his life. Driven by desperation, I lunged forward, grabbing hold of Raze's arm mid-strike, digging my nails into his flesh hard enough to draw blood.

He reeled back in surprise, turning on me with murder in his eyes. But before he could lash out, Gali recovered, throwing all his weight into rolling them both over, sending Raze crashing to the ground beneath him.

"I'm done being nice," Gali growled menacingly, straddling Raze's chest, raining blows upon him with renewed vigor. His voice dripped with venom, his body shook with rage. "You've pushed too far this time."

I watched in horror as they fought, knowing full well that only one would emerge victorious from this brutal display of male dominance. And God help me, I wanted it to be Gali. No matter the cost.

With a final, ferocious roar, Gali landed a devastating punch squarely against Raze's jaw, snapping his head sideways with a sickening crack. The other alpha went limp in the same moment, eyes glazing over as consciousness slipped away, leaving him slumped unconscious underneath Gali.

Panting heavily, my alpha rose slowly, favoring his left leg. Blood trickled from numerous cuts and bruises marring his handsome face, matting his hair, and staining his shirt crimson. Yet despite the injuries, his stance remained proud, dominant, every inch the alpha he truly was.

Turning towards me, concern etched deep into the lines around his eyes, he reached out cautiously, as if afraid I might recoil from his touch. "Norri, are you okay?" He asked softly, his voice barely above a whisper. "Did he hurt you?"

I nodded numbly, still stunned by the brutal spectacle. "No... I'm fine," I managed to reply, finding my voice once more. "Thanks to you."

A faint smile tugged at the corners of his mouth, though it faded quickly, replaced by the harsh reality of our situation. "We need to go," he said gruffly, gesturing towards the speedboat bobbing gently beside us. "Now."

Together, we moved towards the vessel, Gali helping me aboard before casting off the ropes securing it to the dock. As we pulled away, I cast a worried glance back towards the compound looming large behind us, half-expecting to see a horde of angry cartel members pouring out onto the shore, guns raised.

But none came. Either they hadn't realized their precious prize had slipped through

their fingers or, more likely, El Lobo had ordered everyone to stay put until he arrived to assess the damage personally. Either way, it bought us some much-needed breathing room.

Once clear of the immediate danger zone, Gali took control of the wheel, steering us expertly through the choppy waters surrounding the island. I huddled near him, shivering despite the relative warmth of the night air.

"Here," Gali murmured, draping his leather jacket around my shoulders, its worn leather scent enveloping me like a shield against the chaos around us. "That should help."



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Gali

The night air hung heavy around us as we sped across the water, the wind whipping my hair back and stinging my eyes. Beside me, Norri huddled closer, his small frame trembling against the chill or perhaps the lingering shock of our narrow escape. I couldn't blame him; even I felt the weight of what had happened pressing down on my shoulders like an iron yoke.

As we neared the distant shoreline, a small cove nestled among towering cliffs caught my eye — secluded, hidden from prying eyes. Perfect for laying low until we figured out our next move. With a slight adjustment of the throttle, I steered us towards it, relief washing over me as we slid smoothly into the calm waters within.

Once anchored safely amidst the shadows cast by the overhanging rocks, I killed the engine, letting silence descend around us like a cloak. For a moment, neither of us moved, simply sitting there, basking in the aftermath of our ordeal. Then, as if drawn by some invisible force, Norri turned to look at me, those big blue eyes reflecting the moonlight dancing on the waves nearby. He looked even more beautiful now, and I couldn't stop thinking that we were meant to be together. I was sure we were just like I was sure about my decision to betray the Nightshade Wolves.

"You okay?" I asked quietly, reaching out to tuck a stray lock of hair behind his ear. His skin felt soft beneath my calloused fingertips, so different from the rough, weathered texture of mine. He was so different from me, and I saw that as a positive thing.

He nodded, swallowing hard. "Yeah, just... just tired." A small smile tugged at his

lips, but it didn't quite reach his eyes. "It's been a long day."

I knew what he meant. Running for our lives, fighting for our freedom — it wasn't easy on anyone, especially not someone like Norri, so innocent and vulnerable. Maybe not that innocent, given that he was doing drugs, but still nothing like me.

Leaning forward, I pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead, feeling him melt into my touch. When I pulled back, his eyes fluttered open, pupils dilated with desire. My heart skipped a beat, my body reacting instinctively to that raw, flaming need shining plainly in his gaze. He wanted me as much as I wanted him, if not more.

Without thinking, I crushed my mouth to his, claiming it fiercely as days worth of pent-up longing poured forth like a dam bursting under pressure. He responded eagerly, lips parting, tongue darting out to meet mine. I groaned, tangling my hand in his hair, holding him captive as I ravaged his mouth, drinking deeply from the well of passion he offered.

When I finally tore myself away, we were both panting, chests heaving with exertion. I had so much to say, as did he.

Norri's cheeks glowed red-hot, lips swollen and parted invitingly. I could've easily taken him right then and there, fucked him senseless against the side of the boat, lost in the heat of the moment. But I wanted more than that — I wanted him to remember tonight, remember me, always.

"Come," I rasped, grabbing his wrist and hauling him to his feet. He stumbled after me as I led him towards the shore, where a narrow path wound up between the cliffs leading to who-knows-what above. Didn't care; anywhere was better than here, exposed and vulnerable on the water.

After working for the Nightshade Wolves for so long, I became the kind of man who

was always on high alert. Moments of relaxation were few and far between.

The climb was steep, treacherous in places, but eventually, we emerged atop the bluffs overlooking the sea below. There, nestled amidst scrubby bushes and weathered rocks, stood an old, abandoned shack — probably once used by fisherfolk decades ago. Now, it would serve as our sanctuary, however temporary.

I'd thought before about staying in that small cove, but now was decided that the shack was better, especially for Norri.

Inside, the single room was spare but dry, lit by the faint glow of moonlight streaming through cracks in the wooden walls. A rickety bed pushed against one wall, a small table, and a chair tucked into another corner. Not much, but enough for now.

Turning to face Norri, I found him watching me with wide-eyed anticipation, chewing nervously on his lower lip. That small gesture sent a jolt straight to my groin, hardening me further. Fuck, I needed him. And not just that, but I needed to knot him and stay inside of him. Nothing else would be sufficient.

In two long strides, I closed the distance between us, backing him up against the door. Our mouths clashed again, hungry, desperate, teeth clashing as we devoured each other. His hands clawed at my shirt, pushing it off my shoulders, baring my chest to the cool air around me. I growled, tearing at his clothes in turn, impatient to feel his skin against mine.

Soon enough, we stood bare before each other, chests heaving, cocks straining towards each other like magnets. I took him in greedily, drinking in every line, every curve, every inch of his smooth, pale flesh. He was perfection embodied, made for me.

Grabbing his hips, I spun him around, pinning him roughly against the door. He

gasped, fingers scrabbling for purchase on the rough wood as I ground my erection against his ass, leaving no doubt about my intentions.

"Are you ready for this?" I growled low in his ear, nipping sharply at the tender lobe. "Ready to be fucked like the good little omega you are?"

His breath hitched, pupils dilating further, but he didn't hesitate. At the same time, he hadn't thought that I was going to say those filthy words.

"Yes," he moaned, pushing back against me wantonly. "Please..."

Fuck, that sound almost undid me. With trembling hands, I reached down, grasping both our cocks together, stroking them roughly in tandem. His moans filled the small space, echoing off the walls, driving me wild. Pre-come slicked our shafts, making it easier for me to slide our lengths at the same time, faster, harder.

"Not yet," I grunted, releasing him suddenly. He cried out, whimpering at the loss of contact. But I had plans, plans that involved exploring every inch of him before filling him.

Pushing him down onto all fours, I knelt behind him, spreading his legs wide with my knees. His hole winked at me, pink and puckered, begging for my touch. I leaned in, swiping my tongue along the seam of his ass, tasting salt and sweat and something uniquely Norri. It reaffirmed that we were meant to be together.

He bucked wildly, crying out at the unexpected contact. But I held him firm, gripping his hips tightly as I delved deeper, lapping at his entrance like a starving man given his first meal in weeks. He squirmed, mewled, and begged me for mercy, for release. Yet I only laughed darkly, continuing my assault until his cries turned hoarse, until his thighs trembled with exhaustion.

Only then did I rise, lining myself up with his dripping hole. I coated my shaft generously with spit, rubbing the head against his slick opening. Nothing wrong with making it easier to penetrate him.

He shuddered, looking back at me over his shoulder, eyes wide with fear and anticipation.

"Do it," he whispered, voice ragged. "Fill me, Gali. Please."

With one brutal thrust, I buried myself balls-deep inside him, feeling him stretch around me, accommodate me. He screamed, nails raking across the floorboards beneath us. I froze, letting him adjust to my size, letting him get used to being filled so thoroughly.

For a moment, I even forgot that we were still here and running from the cartel. After all, El Lobo would come after us. He wouldn't give up on me and getting his revenge.

When he relaxed slightly, I began to move, pulling out slowly before slamming back home, setting a punishing pace that left him gasping for air, pleading incoherently. Each stroke brought me closer to the edge, each cry from his lips drove me wilder, more possessive.

Reaching around, I grabbed his cock, pumping it in time with my thrusts. He groaned loudly, bucking against me as sensation overload threatened to consume him. I could feel his muscles tightening around me, could sense him teetering on the precipice of ecstasy.

"Not... Not without me," I gritted out, gritting my teeth against the urge to come too soon. This moment was ours, and I wouldn't rush it.

"Can't... can't hold back..." He stammered, fingers scrambling against the floor.

"Come," I commanded, squeezing his cock firmly. And he did, convulsing beneath me as hot streams of semen pulsed forth, painting the floor below.

And then, I felt it — the irresistible pull drawing my knot forward, locking me inside him. It swelled, stretching him wider, binding us together as one.

His orgasm triggered mine, my body tensing as I released deep inside him, filling him with jet after jet of cum. I kept pumping, kept moving even as my vision blurred, stars exploding behind my eyelids.

He whimpered, collapsing fully onto the floor, taking me down with him. We lay there, panting, sweaty, sticky, limbs tangled and hearts racing. But the most important thing was that we were both smiling and couldn't contain our happiness. My cock still pulsed rhythmically within him, milking every last drop of pleasure from this turning point in our lives.

I rolled onto my side, bringing him with me, keeping him close as we drifted in the aftermath. His eyes fluttered open, meeting mine, reflecting a softness that stole my breath away.

"I love you," he revealed, fingers tracing idle patterns on my chest. My heart skipped a beat, warmth spreading through me like wildfire. I'd been waiting to hear those words for what felt like forever, even though it hadn't been more than a few days.

"I've loved you since the moment I saw you," I confessed, pressing a kiss to his forehead. "You're mine now, Norri. Forever."

Norri

As I stirred awake, the sun streamed in through cracks in the walls, casting warm, dappled shadows across the rough-hewn floorboards beneath me. I'd forgotten I was in this place. Still, it wasn't much better than my apartment.

The shack creaked softly around us, settling into its ancient bones after another night of weathering storms. Beside me, Gali slept peacefully, his chest rising and falling steadily, his arm draped protectively over my waist.

Last night had been...intense. Incredible. Life-changing. I'd never experienced anything remotely similar before. The way he'd taken me, possessed me, claimed me — it was unlike anything I'd ever imagined.

But even as I relived those passionate moments, a niggling thought tugged at the corners of my mind, demanding attention: Could I be pregnant? Was it even possible after just one time? And then a voice deep in my head told me that, yes, it was very much possible.

Gali stirred beside me, his arm tightening reflexively around my middle before he opened his eyes, focusing on me with an intensity that made me blush. "Morning," he murmured, his voice still heavy with sleep. Or maybe it was something else.

"Hi," I replied, keeping my voice low and shifting slightly to face him. Our noses almost touched, our breaths mingling. I could've stayed like that forever, lost in those stormy gray depths, but reality intruded, forcing me to speak up. "Gali, about last night..."

A faint smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. "Yes?" He prompted, brushing a strand of hair away from my eyes gently.

Swallowing hard, I forged ahead, pushing past the nervous butterflies fluttering in my stomach. If I didn't say what I was thinking right now, I would never try again. "Do you think I could be...pregnant?"

His expression softened immediately, eyes crinkling at the edges as he cupped my cheek, the touch soft and comforting. "It's possible," he said quietly, thumb tracing my bottom lip. "Especially given how strong our connection is."

My heart fluttered at his words, at the implication that this might not just be some fleeting infatuation but something deeper, something real. Something fated — and something I had been thinking about.

"But what if I am?" I persisted, needing to know what he truly thought, truly wanted. "What happens then?"

Gali paused, considering me solemnly before speaking again. "Then we'll deal with it," he vowed, his gaze unwavering. "We'll figure it out, whatever comes our way."

Relief flooded through me, washing away fears and doubts I hadn't even known I held. I leaned into his touch, closing my eyes for a brief moment and basking in the warmth of his reassurance.

"And what about the cartel?" I asked finally, voicing the question that had haunted my thoughts ever since we'd fled their compound. I just couldn't stop thinking about them. "What do we do now?"

His jaw tightened, a hint of the formidable alpha I knew lurking just beneath the surface. "We run," he answered simply. "For as long as it takes until El Lobo loses



interest or gives up altogether. Or, I find a way to kill him."

My stomach churned at the thought of living on the run indefinitely, always looking over our shoulders, never able to settle anywhere. How could we even for a family living like that?

Yet even as dread filled me, so too did determination. I would face whatever came next alongside Gali, no matter how daunting the challenges ahead.

Besides, maybe there was more to consider now...

"What about naming our child?" I ventured hesitantly, testing the waters. Was he ready to talk about something like that? I didn't know, but wanted to find out anyway. "If we do end up having one, I mean."

Gali's eyes shone with unshed tears, his grip on my cheek tightening slightly. "I've always liked the name Orion," he admitted softly. "Strong, resilient, a leader among stars."

Orion. A name fit for a warrior, for someone destined for greatness. It suited Gali perfectly, and maybe someday, our son would too.

"I like it," I agreed, smiling back at him. "And if it's a girl?"

He thought for a moment before answering, his expression thoughtful. "Luna," he decided at last. "Because she'll be the moon to your sun, lighting up your life when you need her most."

The tenderness in his voice brought fresh tears to my eyes, overwhelming me with emotion. How had I ever doubted that he was my mate? That we were meant to be together?

"We'll make it work," I whispered, wrapping my arms around him, holding him close. "No matter what obstacles we face, we'll find a way."

Gali pulled me tighter against him, burying his face in my neck, inhaling deeply. "Of course," he agreed, voice muffled against my skin. "As long as I am with you, I feel I can do anything."

In that moment, surrounded by nothing but the rustic shack and the vast wilderness beyond, I felt invincible. Unstoppable.

Yet even amidst the heady haze of love and optimism, doubts lingered. What if El Lobo found us? What if we couldn't escape his reach? What if I wasn't really carrying Gali's child after all?

But I pushed them aside, refusing to let fear taint this precious moment between us.

"You know," Gali murmured suddenly, pulling back slightly to look at me once more. "I think I saw a small town not far from here a few days ago. Maybe we could stop there, stock up on supplies, and gather information."

I nodded right away, eager to embrace any distraction, any excuse to prolong this interlude. Besides, it sounded like a good idea. We needed food, water, medicine — things we couldn't exactly grow wild on the island.

"Maybe they'll have a place where we can stay for a few days," I suggested, my voice carrying my hope. "Somewhere quiet, out of sight."

Gali nodded, fingers trailing down my arm idly, drawing goosebumps in their wake. "Perhaps," he mused, lips quirking upward at one corner. "Or maybe they won't."

I raised an eyebrow questioningly, leaning into his touch despite myself. "What does

that mean?"

He chuckled low in his throat, the sound sending shivers down my spine. "It means," he began, rolling onto his back, taking me with him so I lay sprawled atop him now, "that sometimes, the best-laid plans go awry in the most unexpected ways."

Before I could respond, his hands gripped my hips, lifting me slightly before lowering me back down onto his already-hardening cock. My breath hitched, eyes widening as I felt him slide inside me, filling me completely.

"That sounds... interesting," I gasped, bracing my hands against his chest as he began to move beneath me, guiding my movements with practiced ease. I could tell he had been planning this since waking up.

Gali grinned wickedly, thrusting upward sharply, making me cry out at the sudden sensation. "Indeed," he purred, eyes gleaming with mischief. "Very interesting indeed."

As Gali surged up within me, our bodies slapping together in a rhythm as old as time itself, I clung to him with all my desperation, nails raking across his muscular chest. Each thrust drove me closer to the edge, each withdrawal left me craving more. I'd never experienced anything like this before, this raw, needy passion that consumed us both entirely. I'd never had sex twice in such a short time.

His fingers dug into my hips, holding me in place as he pounded into me, his gaze locked onto mine with an intensity that stole my breath away. There was something almost feral in his expression, a wildness that made me shiver in anticipation.

"Do something for me," he growled suddenly, voice hoarse with desire. "Show me how much you want this."

Heat flooded my cheeks at the command, but I didn't hesitate. Reaching down between us, I grasped my cock tightly, stroking it in time with Gali's punishing pace. Pleasure spiraled through me, coiling tight at the base of my spine, threatening to consume me whole.

"Yes!" Gali cried out, slamming into me one final time before freezing, body tensing as he released deep inside me. Warmth filled me, marked me as his, as I milked every last drop from him. His knot had swelled rapidly before that, locking us together, ensuring no semen escaped our joining.

For several long moments, neither of us moved, simply basking in the aftermath. Our breaths came in ragged gasps, mingling with the faint scent of sweat and sex lingering in the air around us. It was perfect.

Finally, as our heartbeats slowed and our bodies cooled, Gali rolled us over so that I lay beneath him, his weight pressing down upon me. He looked down at me, eyes soft and tender, a small smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"I did that on purpose," he whispered, brushing a strand of hair away from my forehead gently.

My brow furrowed in confusion, my mind still fuzzy from our passionate interlude. What was he talking about? I wondered.

"Did what?" I asked, tracing idle patterns on his chest with the tips of my fingers.

Gali's smile widened, transforming his face into something almost boyish. "Cummed inside you," he clarified, his thumb tracing the seam of my lips lightly. "Again."

Realization dawned slowly, spreading warmth through me like sunlight breaking through clouds. "Oh," I breathed, my hand pausing mid-caress. "You mean..."

He nodded solemnly, leaning in to press a gentle kiss to the tip of my nose. "Yes," he murmured, voice barely above a whisper. "To make absolutely certain you carry our child."

Our child. The words sent a thrill of joy coursing through me, chasing away the remnants of doubt and uncertainty that still lingered. We were creating life together, building a future we could call our own. No matter what obstacles lay ahead, we would face them together.

I still couldn't believe that I went from a time when I hated my life most of all to finding my mate.

"But what if it doesn't work?" I ventured hesitantly, voicing the fears I knew haunted the backs of both our minds. "What if I don't get pregnant?"

Gali sighed deeply, pulling back slightly to look at me fully once more. His expression turned serious, resolve shining brightly in those stormy gray depths. To him, that happening was impossible. He was absolutely certain that I was going to get pregnant.

"Then we try again," he said firmly, as if there was never any other option to consider. "And again. And again until it happens."

My heart swelled at the conviction behind his words, at the sheer determination etched into every line of his handsome face. This was the alpha who had stolen my heart, the man who would stop at nothing to claim me as his own — and I couldn't help but love him even more for it.

"We'll figure it out," he continued, leaning in to nuzzle my neck, inhaling deeply as if memorizing my scent. "No matter what it takes, no matter how long it takes. We will be parents someday."

Someday. The word hung heavy in the air between us, laden with promise and hope. Someday soon, maybe even tomorrow or the next day or the day after that. Someday very soon.

I wrapped my arms around him, pulling him close, feeling the solid strength of his muscles pressed against my own. In that moment, I felt invincible, untouchable. Nothing could harm us, nothing could come between us.

But reality intruded swiftly, forcing me to face the harsh truth: We were running from danger, hunted by men who wouldn't rest until they'd claimed their pound of flesh. Our lives hung precariously in the balance, teetering on the precipice of chaos.

Yet amidst the uncertainty and fear, there was also love. Deep, abiding love that transcended mere attraction or lust. A love that promised to stand by me, protect me, cherish me forever.

And so, as we lay entwined in each other's embrace, I whispered my vow softly against his ear. "I love you, Gali."

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Gali

The sun hung low in the sky, casting long shadows across the rocky path leading towards the distant town nestled along the coast. Beside me, Norri trudged along wearily, his arm linked with mine for support. Despite our best efforts to conserve energy, exhaustion gnawed at the edges of my consciousness, threatening to drag me under its seductive embrace.

I was especially more tired now after fucking him twice, but still wouldn't have it any other way.

We'd been walking for hours, ever since leaving our makeshift shelter atop the cliffs. Each step took us further away from the relative safety of the abandoned shack and closer to...what? A new beginning perhaps? Or another dead end? I didn't know, but we couldn't stay in the same place for long.

As we approached the outskirts of the town, I scanned the streets warily, taking note of every potential threat lurking in the shadows. Here, tucked away from the mainland, it appeared to be little more than a glorified fishing village, reeking of poverty and desperation. Still, beggars can't be choosers, and we needed supplies if we were going to survive on the run much longer. We were trapped here for now.

Norri glanced up at me, eyes coated with concern as he sensed my unease. "What is it?" He asked quietly, voice barely audible over the distant cry of seagulls wheeling overhead.

I shook my head, offering him a reassuring smile that I hoped didn't look as forced as

it felt. "Nothing," I replied gruffly. "Just...keeping an eye out." For now, I couldn't say exactly what I was thinking. Just didn't to worry him any more than he already was.

His gaze darted nervously towards the ramshackle buildings lining the street, fingers tightening around mine reflexively. He understood; we both did. Even here, surrounded by strangers in this godforsaken place, we weren't safe. Not truly. Not until El Lobo was dealt with permanently. I should have killed him when I had the chance.

Together, we ventured deeper into the heart of the town, weaving our way through narrow alleyways choked with refuse and past dilapidated dwellings teeming with humanity's cast-offs. Everywhere we looked, signs of decay and despair loomed large, yet there was something undeniably resilient about these people too. Something that spoke of survival, of perseverance in the face of adversity. It was somewhat inspiring.

Still, I couldn't shake the feeling that something wasn't quite right. An itch prickled at the back of my neck, urging me to be wary, to stay alert. But of what, I couldn't say. Just a gut feeling, honed sharp by years spent navigating the treacherous waters of cartel politics.

A sudden commotion up ahead drew our attention, a group of rough-looking individuals spilling out onto the street ahead of us, brandishing weapons and shouting threats. My hand went instantly to the gun tucked discreetly at my side, ready to draw should the situation escalate.

"What do we do?" Norri asked, his voice barely a whisper now, eyes wide with fear. "Are they...?"

"Not yet," I murmured, pushing him slightly behind me protectively. "Stay close,



okay?"

He nodded, pressing himself against my back, trusting me completely. That faith weighed heavily upon my shoulders, driving me forward even as doubts gnawed at the corners of my mind. What if I led us straight into danger? What if my instincts failed us when we needed them most?

As we neared the confrontation, it became clear that these men weren't part of the Nightshade Wolves — thankfully. No, they were just your average thugs looking for easy prey to rob. Easy pickings, really. And we fit the bill perfectly.

"Hey there!" One of them called out, stepping into our path with a sneer. "Got any money on ya? Maybe some fancy trinkets for sale?"

I could practically hear Norri's heart pounding behind me, his breath coming fast and shallow. But I remained calm, steady, letting my size and presence intimidate rather than resorting to violence unless absolutely necessary. Not here, not now. Norri was safe as long as he was with me.

"Afraid not," I replied coolly, meeting the man's gaze unflinchingly. "We're just passing through."

The thug scoffed and spat on the ground at our feet. "Passing through, huh? Well, ain't nobody just passes through without paying their respects first."

I bristled internally at the implied threat, but before I could respond, Norri stepped forward, his small frame trembling slightly beneath the scrutiny of our would-be assailants. To my shock and dismay, he reached into his pocket, pulling out a few crumpled bills. It was money we couldn't waste on scum like them.

"We don't want any trouble," he said softly, holding the money out towards the man.

"Please, just let us go."

The thief snatched the proffered bills greedily, counting them quickly before tucking them away with a satisfied nod. Yet still, he didn't move aside, blocking our path like an immovable obstacle.

"And what about him?" He demanded suddenly, eyes gleaming with renewed interest as they raked over Norri's slight form. My stomach turned, nausea rising at the implication behind those words.

Before I could intervene, Norri reacted swiftly, lashing out with a swift kick aimed squarely at the man's groin. The force behind it caught him off guard, sending him collapsing to the ground with a pained howl. His friends rushed forward then, enraged by their leader's humiliation, but I was already moving, drawing my weapon and firing two quick shots into the air above their heads.

They froze mid-stride, startled by the unexpected display of aggression, giving me the opening I needed to grab Norri's arm and drag him past their fallen comrade. We sprinted down the nearest alleyway, hearts pounding wildly, and breaths ragged from exertion and fear.

Once safely hidden within the labyrinthine maze of streets beyond, I pulled us both up short, leaning against the wall beside a rotting doorway while I scanned the area for signs of pursuit. Nothing yet, but that didn't mean they wouldn't follow soon enough.

"We need to keep moving," I muttered, pushing off from the wall and setting a brisk pace once more. "Fast as possible."

Norri nodded mutely, falling into step beside me, though his face had paled significantly following our brush with danger. I felt a swell of pride knowing he

hadn't cowered or faltered under pressure — not much more than he did when giving those assholes our money. My omega was strong — stronger than perhaps even he realized.

After what felt like hours of wandering aimlessly, we finally stumbled upon a small market tucked away behind a weathered stone church. Here, amidst the stalls overflowing with produce and knickknacks alike, hope stirred within me. Hope that maybe, just maybe, we could find what we needed without attracting further unwanted attention.

As we navigated the crowded aisles, I kept one eye trained warily on our surroundings, ever-vigilant for signs of danger lurking nearby. Meanwhile, Norri set about gathering whatever supplies he could lay his hands on — food, water, medical necessities — stacking them precariously in his arms as he went.

Once we'd acquired everything we deemed necessary, I steered us towards a quieter corner of the marketplace, where a lone woman sat selling homemade candles and trinkets alongside a handful of worn books. She looked up as we approached, her gaze flicking between us with curiosity.

"What can I do you fine young gentlemen for today?" She asked, smiling warmly despite the obvious hardship etched onto her weathered features.

I glanced around quickly, ensuring no one else was within earshot before speaking quietly. "We need information," I said, keeping my voice low. "About the Nightshade Wolves. Do you know anything about them?" I just wanted to know if she knew where they were.

Her expression changed instantly, eyes widening slightly as she took in my appearance more closely. I knew I ran the risk of revealing too much by asking outright, but desperate times called for desperate measures. Besides, we couldn't keep

running forever; eventually, we'd have to face the music.

"I...I've heard rumors," she hedged cautiously, glancing around herself now. "But nothing concrete. Why do you ask?"

Norri shifted uncomfortably beside me, sensing the growing tension. He didn't want to know if the Nightshade Wolves were close or not.

"My business is my own," I snapped sharply, my patience wearing thin. Time was ticking, and we didn't have all day to waste playing cat-and-mouse games. "What I need from you is answers. Can you provide them?"

She hesitated briefly before sighing deeply, resignation filling her eyes. "Very well," she conceded, lowering her voice even further. "There are rumors among the locals about a powerful gang operating somewhere close by. Some say they deal in drugs, others weapons. All agree they aren't to be trifled with."

"Where are they right now?" I pressed, needing more than vague hints and innuendo.

Again, she hesitated, chewing her lip thoughtfully before finally relenting. "Rumor has it, there's an old building across the river. That's where they must be." Her gaze darted nervously towards something — someone — over my shoulder, eyes widening in alarm. "You should leave now," she urged. "T-They're coming."

My blood ran cold at the warning, instincts screaming at me to run, to get out while we still could. Spinning around, I spotted several heavily armed men approaching rapidly, led by none other than El Lobo himself. How he'd tracked us here, I didn't know, but it hardly mattered anymore. All that mattered was escape.

Grabbing Norri's hand, I dragged him away from the stall, breaking into a run as shouts rang out behind us. They'd seen us, recognized us. Our brief respite was over.

With every stride, we raced against time, dodging through crowded streets and alleys alike, hearts hammering wildly in our chests. Each step brought us closer to safety, closer to freedom. Yet each moment also carried with it the very real possibility of capture, of failure.

Suddenly, a shot rang out, echoing loudly through the narrow confines of the street, kicking up dirt mere inches from our heels. We ducked instinctively, nearly colliding with a passing pedestrian before righting ourselves and redoubling our efforts.

"Keep going!" I yelled over my shoulder, urging Norri on even as my heart shattered seeing the fear in his eyes. But there was no choice; we had to push forward, no matter the cost.

Another shot fired, striking true this time — not at us, thankfully, but at something else. Something metallic clattered loudly against the cobblestones ahead, skidding towards us ominously. A grenade. Fuck!

"Get down!" I screamed, throwing myself atop Norri just as the explosive device detonated, sending shrapnel flying in all directions. Debris pelted us mercilessly, cutting and burning as we huddled together beneath its deadly rain.

When the dust settled enough for me to peek out again, I found our pursuers closing fast, weapons drawn, faces twisted with rage. They weren't giving up anytime soon, that was clear. We needed a plan B, fast.

"We need to lose them," I growled, pulling Norri up roughly, and scanning frantically for some means of escape. Then, spotting an opening between two crumbling buildings up ahead, inspiration struck.

"Come on," I commanded, dragging him along after me once more. "Now!"

Darting down the alleyway, we burst forth onto another street, only to find ourselves staring straight down the barrels of yet more guns wielded by yet more enemies. Dammit! It seemed everywhere we turned, there they were, ready and waiting.

Except...there was something different this time. The men blocking our path wore uniforms unlike any we'd seen before. Coast Guard? Army maybe? Whoever they were, their presence threw a wrench into the works, forcing both sides to reevaluate their strategies. The Nightshade Wolves weren't alone.

As if on cue, a loudspeaker blared suddenly, ordering everyone present to stand down immediately or face severe consequences. Confusion reigned supreme as both parties exchanged wary glances, trying to decipher the sudden change in dynamics.

Seizing the opportunity presented, I grabbed hold of Norri, tugging him close as I slipped silently behind one of the uniformed men now standing between us and certain capture. He never saw it coming.

Inch by inch, we edged past unnoticed, using the chaos around us as cover. It was risky, reckless even, but desperation breeds courage.

Finally, after what felt like hours, we appeared to have gotten out of the danger, stumbling out onto the beach beyond where a small fishing boat bobbed gently on the waves. No one followed us, too preoccupied with their newfound adversaries.

Collapsing onto the sand, I pulled Norri close, wrapping him tightly in my arms as relief flooded through me like a tidal wave. We'd made it. For now, anyway.

But even as I held him close, I knew this reprieve wouldn't last forever. Eventually, El Lobo would catch wind of our daring escape, rally his forces, and come after us again with renewed vigor. Until then, however, we'd rest, gather our strength, prepare for whatever lay ahead.

For now, we had food, water, and each other. That would be enough. It had to be.

Norri

Months later, my pregnancy was showing more than ever before. When I found out that I was carrying his child, we were both overjoyed. Each step was a labor, my body aching from the weight and the constant tension that had taken up residence in my muscles. Still, it was worth it.

Our tiny apartment above Mrs. Hargrove's boarding house was barely large enough for the two of us, let alone the life growing inside me. But it was ours, a sanctuary amidst the chaos that had become our lives. We'd been here for months, hiding from El Lobo Negro and his relentless pursuit, trying to build some semblance of a normal life. It was working, but only barely.

Gali was already home, his tall form hunched over the small table, poring over a crumpled map. His dark hair fell across his forehead, and his jaw was shadowed with stubble. He looked up as I entered, his eyes softening when they landed on my belly. A small smile played at the corners of his mouth, but it didn't reach his eyes. Those remained haunted, always watchful, always ready for the next threat. We never felt safe.

"Hey," I said softly, setting the bags down on the counter. "I got some canned beans and tomatoes. And look, they had apples."

Gali stood and crossed the room to me, wrapping his arms around me carefully. He pressed a kiss to the top of my head, his voice a low rumble against my ear. "That's good, little omega. You're doing well."



I leaned into him, letting his strength support me for a moment. Then I pulled back, my hands going to my belly instinctively. "How was your day?"

Gali's expression darkened. "Same as always. Watching, waiting. Trying to figure out where he might strike next." He sighed, running a hand through his hair. "But we won't think about that now. Let's eat."

I was thankful we didn't have to think about that right then. I just didn't want to deal with something that stressed me out immediately.

We sat down at the table, our knees brushing under its narrow surface. Gali helped me open the cans, his big hands gentle as he worked. We ate in silence for a while, the only sounds the scrape of forks against plates and the distant hum of traffic outside.

After dinner, Gali cleared the dishes while I settled onto the couch, my feet propped up on a stack of books. I rubbed my belly absently, feeling the baby kick beneath my touch. Gali joined me a moment later, sitting close and pulling my feet into his lap. He began to massage them, his strong fingers working out the knots and kinks. He was so good at that.

"You know," I said, closing my eyes and sighing contentedly, "sometimes I forget. Sometimes I look at you, at this place, and I forget that we're running. That there are people out there who want to hurt us. It's always so good when I don't have to think about that."

Gali's hands stilled for a moment before resuming their rhythm. "It's okay to forget, Norri. It's okay to find moments of peace, even if they're just fleeting."

I opened my eyes and looked at him. "Do you ever wish... Do you ever wish we could go back? To before all this? Before the cartel, before Harvard, even. Just... back to

simple."

Gali's gaze was steady, unreadable. "There's no going back, Norri. Only forward. But I don't regret any of it. Because it led me to you."

My heart swelled, and I reached out, taking his hand in mine. "Me too," I whispered. "No matter what happens, I'm glad I found you."

Gali brought my hand to his lips, pressing a soft kiss to my knuckles. Then he set my feet gently aside and stood, holding out a hand to me. "Come on. Let's get you to bed."

In our bedroom, Gali undressed me slowly, his touch reverent. He helped me into one of his old shirts, the fabric soft and worn, smelling like him. I climbed into bed, watching as he stripped down to his boxers and crawled in beside me.

He spooned behind me, his arm wrapping around my waist, his hand splaying possessively over my belly. I covered his hand with mine, linking our fingers together. We lay like that for a while, just breathing, just being.

"I love you, Gali," I murmured, my eyelids growing heavy.

His voice was a low growl in my ear. "I love you too, Norri. More than anything."

As sleep claimed me, I felt safe and protected. In that moment, nothing else mattered. Not the cartel, not El Lobo Negro, not the future. There was only Gali, only us, only this love that had grown stronger than fear or danger.

But as the days turned into weeks, and the weeks into months, the reality of our situation became harder to ignore. My belly grew larger, heavier, and my body ached constantly. Gali was always there, always helping, always supporting. But I could see

the strain on his face, the worry in his eyes. He couldn't stop thinking about the difficulties we were facing.

We were running out of money. Our savings were dwindling, and Gali's occasional jobs weren't bringing in enough to keep us afloat. The baby would be here soon, and we needed more space, more supplies, more everything.

One evening, as I sat on the couch, rubbing my aching back, Gali paced the room, his phone pressed to his ear. He was speaking in hushed tones, his brow furrowed in concentration. When he hung up, he turned to me, his expression grave.

"What is it?" I asked, my heart pounding in my chest.

"That was an old contact," he said, shoving a hand through his hair. "He has a job for me. A big one. It could set us up for a while. Give us some breathing room."

Relief flooded through me, followed by a wave of fear. "What kind of job?"

He hesitated, then sighed. "The kind that could get me killed, Norri. The kind that could leave you alone, pregnant, and vulnerable."

I stood, waddling across the room to him. I took his hands in mine, squeezing tightly. "Then don't do it. We'll find another way. We can't risk losing you, Gali. Not now. Not ever."

Gali looked down at me, his eyes shimmering with determination. "This isn't just about money, little omega. This is about ending this once and for all. If I take this job, I can hit El Lobo where it hurts most. I can dismantle his operations and weaken him. It's risky, yes. But it's worth it. For you, for our child, and our future."

Tears pricked at the corners of my eyes. "And what if something goes wrong? What

if you don't come back?"

Gali cupped my cheek, his thumb brushing away a tear. "Nothing will go wrong. I promise you, Norri. I'll come back. I always come back to you."

I wanted to believe him. I wanted to trust in his strength, in his skill, in his promise. But fear gnawed at me, a constant, insidious presence. I was terrified of losing him. Terrified of being left alone, pregnant, and scared, with no one to protect me, no one to help me raise our child. I couldn't let that happen.

But I also knew that Gali was right. This wasn't just about money. This was about our future, about our freedom. And if Gali thought this was the way to achieve it, then I had to trust him. I had to have faith in him.

So, I nodded, swallowing back my fears. "Okay," I said, my voice barely above a whisper. "Okay, Gali. Do what you need to do. But please, please be careful."

Gali pulled me into a tight embrace, his arms wrapping around me and our baby. "I will, little omega," he murmured against my hair. "I will."

Over the next few days, Gali prepared for the job. He spent hours poring over maps and files, talking in low voices on the phone, packing weapons and gear. I tried to stay busy, cleaning the apartment, cooking meals, trying to keep my mind off the impending danger, but it wasn't easy.

On the day before Gali was due to leave, I woke up feeling strange. My stomach was cramping and my back aching worse than usual. I groaned as I rolled out of bed, clutching my belly.

Gali was instantly awake, sitting up and reaching for me. "Norri? What's wrong?"

"I don't know," I gasped, doubling over. "It hurts, Gali. Something's wrong."

Panic flashed across Gali's face, but he quickly masked it, taking control. "Okay, okay. Let's get you to the hospital."

He helped me dress, grabbed our things, and rushed me downstairs and into a cab. The ride to the hospital was a blur of pain and fear. Gali held my hand, his grip tight, his jaw clenched.

At the hospital, they wheeled me straight into a delivery room. Doctors and nurses bustled around me, their faces serious. Gali stayed by my side, his hand never leaving mine.

"Is it too early?" I cried, tears streaming down my face. "Is something wrong with the baby?"

A nurse smiled reassuringly at me. "You're only thirty-six weeks, dear. That's not too early. And your baby looks strong. Now let's focus on getting you through this, okay?"

I nodded, clinging to Gali's hand as another contraction hit. The pain was intense, unlike anything I'd ever experienced. It felt like my body was tearing itself apart from the inside.

Hours passed in a haze of agony and exhaustion. Gali never left my side, coaching me through each contraction, wiping the sweat from my forehead, reminding me to breathe. His voice was steady, calm, unwavering. It was the only thing keeping me grounded and sane.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the doctor announced that it was time to push. With a last, herculean effort, I bore down, pushing with everything I had. And then,

suddenly, it was over. The pain subsided, replaced by a strange, euphoric relief.

I collapsed back against the pillows, panting, as the sound of a baby crying filled the room. Gali leaned over me, his face pale but smiling, his eyes shining with unshed tears.

"It's him, Norri," he whispered, pressing a kiss to my forehead. "We have our son."

They placed our baby on my chest, swaddled in a soft blanket. He was perfect, his tiny features scrunched up, his fists waving in the air. I looked up at Gali, my heart overflowing with love and gratitude.

"He's beautiful," I murmured, tears spilling down my cheeks. "Thank you, Gali. Thank you for bringing him into the world safely."

Gali's gaze was fierce, protective. "Always, little omega. Always."

Gali

The room was small, the air thick with tension and the lingering scent of antiseptic. Norri sat on the edge of the bed, his face pale, dark circles etched beneath his eyes. Our son lay sleeping in the bassinet beside him, his tiny chest rising and falling with each breath. The sight of them, so fragile, so vulnerable, tore at my heart.

But so did the thought of leaving them. Of abandoning them when they needed me most.

I stood by the window, my hands clenched into fists at my sides, staring out at the rain-soaked streets below. I just wished we didn't have to do this. I thought he'd understand me better.

Behind me, Norri shifted, drawing my attention. His eyes were coated with a mix of fear, desperation, and something else. Something that made my chest ache. I didn't even like thinking about it.

"You can't go, Gali," he said, his voice low. "Not now. Not when we finally have something worth fighting for."

I knew why he was saying that, but it wasn't so easy. We wouldn't be safe until I did what I had to do.

I turned to face him, my expression hard. "This isn't about what I want, Norri. This is about survival. About ensuring that you and our son are safe, no matter what happens. You have to understand that."

Norri shook his head, his fingers twisting in the blankets. "And who will keep us safe if you're gone? Who will protect us if something goes wrong? Who, then?"

I crossed the room, crouching down in front of him. I took his hands in mine, squeezing them tightly. He was going to understand me this time. I was going to make sure of it.

"Nothing will go wrong. I promise you that. But I have to do this, Norri. I have to finish this once and for all. You can't seriously think we can just run away from El Lobo and live happily ever after."

Tears welled up in his eyes, spilling over onto his cheeks. "Please, Gali. Please don't leave us. We need you here. I need you here."

His plea gutted me, slicing through me like a knife. I wanted nothing more than to stay, to be there for him, for our son. Did he really think I wanted to go? That was ridiculous. Of course I wanted to stay right here with him.

This job was our best chance at a future. A future free from fear, from running, from looking over our shoulders. That was what mattered most.

"I can't stay, Norri," I said, my voice rough and showing how difficult this was for me too. "You know that. I have to end this. For us. For our family."

Norri pulled his hands away, his expression turning angry. "Our family needs you here! You can't just leave us, Gali. Not after everything we've been through."

I stood with my body tense and jaw clenched. Did he really think that was what this was about?

"I'm not leaving you, Norri. As I said, I'm doing this for you. For us."



He laughed, a harsh, bitter sound that cut through me. "For us? Or for you? You can't let this go, can you? You can't walk away from your past. Well, I won't let you walk away from us!"

I ran a hand through my hair, frustration boiling over. I thought he was going to understand me, but he wasn't. "Damn it, Norri! This isn't about me. It's about keeping you safe. Keeping our son safe. Don't you understand something as simple as that?"

He stood, his body shaking with anger and fear. "Safe? How can we be safe when you're not here? When you're off risking your life for some misguided sense of honor or duty or whatever the hell this is!"

I stepped back, taken aback by the venom in his voice. I knew that he hated this situation, but it was beginning to feel as though he despised me. "Misguided? Is that what you think this is? After everything I've done to keep you safe, to give us a chance at a normal life?"

Norri's eyes flashed with hurt and betrayal. "Normal? There's nothing normal about this, Gali! We're hiding, we're running, we're constantly looking over our shoulders. And now you want to leave us, to put yourself in danger, to... to..." He broke off, choking back a sob.

I reached for him, but he stepped back, out of reach. He didn't even want me to touch him.

"Don't touch me," he whispered. "Just... just go. If you're going to leave, then just go. Don't keep wasting your time here."

I hesitated, torn between staying and going. Between my duty and my heart. But in the end, duty won out. I had to finish this. For them. Otherwise, I wouldn't forgive myself.

"Fine," I growled, grabbing my bag from the floor. "I'm going. But know this, Norri — I'm doing this for us. For our future. And I will come back. I always come back to you."

With that, I walked out, leaving Norri standing alone in the room, his face streaked with tears, his body wracked with sobs. The sound of his grief echoed in my ears as I strode down the hallway, my heart heavy with guilt and regret.

I was also thinking about our son. Even though he was only a baby, it was likely that he could feel what was happening between his parents.

Despite knowing that, I couldn't turn back. I couldn't stay. Not when there was still a threat hanging over our heads. Not when I could still make things right.

As I pushed through the door and stepped out into the cold, I told myself that I was doing the right thing. That this was the only way to ensure our safety, our happiness, and our future.

But deep down, I knew the truth. I was walking away from the person I loved most in this world. I was choosing duty over love. And I didn't know if I would ever forgive myself for that. I had to because I would be back.

The rain soaked through my clothes almost immediately, but I barely noticed. My mind was already shifting gears, focusing on the mission ahead. I had a job to do, a dangerous and vital task that could mean the difference between life and death for countless people.

Including my family.

As I walked, I made a promise to myself, to Norri, to our son. I would finish this job. I would end the threat that hung over our heads once and for all. And then I would

come back to them, and spend the rest of my life making up for this moment of abandonment.

It was a promise I intended to keep, no matter the cost.

The choice had been made. The die had been cast. And now, all any of us could do was hope that it had been the right one. It had to be.

Later, the rain hammered against the pavement as I trudged through the grimy alleyways of the city's underbelly. My old contact, Marcus, was the one who had called me for a job that could set things right for Norri and me. I couldn't afford to mess this up.

I pulled my coat tighter around me against the biting cold as I approached the rundown bar Marcus had specified. It was a seedy joint, the kind of place where trouble went to die. The kind of place where the kind of work Marcus had lined up was commonplace. It was perfect for our purpose.

As I entered, my eyes adjusted to the smoky gloom. The place reeked of stale beer and desperation. I spotted Marcus in a back booth, hunched over a mug of something amber and strong-looking. He glanced up as I slid in across from him, his grizzled face splitting into a grin.

"Well, well, well. Look what the cat dragged in," he rasped, his gravelly voice roughened by years of chain-smoking and cheap liquor. Given the life he lived, I couldn't blame him for his vices. "Sit down, man. I got a job for ya."

I slid into the booth, feeling the cracked vinyl against my back. "So, what do you have for me exactly?" I asked bluntly, getting straight to the point.

Marcus chuckled, a rasping sound that turned into a chesty cough. "Right to business,

eh? I like that in a man." He leaned forward, his weathered face serious. "I need you to hit an arms deal. Some hotheaded young buck thinks he can muscle in on my territory. You gotta stop him."

I arched an eyebrow. "What's in it for me?"

Marcus grinned wolfishly. "Fifty grand. Half now, half on delivery. And a promise from me that El Lobo and his goons won't bother you and your family again."

I did the math in my head. That kind of money would give Norri and our son a fresh start somewhere safe. It would be enough to run and never look back. And the most important thing was that Marcus could indeed keep El Lobo away from me, even though, to be 100% safe, he would have to die.

My jaw clenched as I thought, again, about leaving Norri and our son alone, but I still needed to finish this. There was no way around it.

I met Marcus' gaze steadily. "I want it in writing. Contract. The full amount upfront."

Marcus threw back his head and laughed, a raucous sound that drew stares from the other patrons. "Always the cautious one, aren't you, Gali? That's why I like you." He reached into his jacket, pulling out an envelope and a crumpled piece of paper. "Contract and terms, just like you want. And half the cash. I'll deliver the rest when the job's done."

I took the envelope, riffling through the papers to confirm everything was in order. When I looked back up, Marcus was eyeing me shrewdly.

"I know you got a kid now. A mate. That's what this is about, Gali?"

I met his eyes, my jaw hardening. "None of your damn business, Marcus."

He held up his hands, placating. "Hey, I get it. You want to make things right. I respect that. That's partially why I'm doing this for you."

I nodded curtly. I didn't want to discuss my personal life with him, especially not my family. "When do I start?"

Marcus stood, reaching for his coat. "As soon as you're ready. I'll get the details to you."

I stood as well, sighing. I needed to get back to Norri. Even though he hated me for leaving, I knew he needed to know that this was the only way to secure his future.

As I stepped out into the rainy night, I pulled out my phone. I had to text Norri, even though it hadn't been more than two hours since I left.

Me: Little omega, it's me. Don't give up on us. I'll be home soon.

I waited for his reply, hoping against hope that he'd understand, that he'd forgive me for putting duty over his needs and our baby's.

But he didn't answer. I shoved the phone in my pocket with a sigh. I didn't have time to dwell on it now. I had a job to do. For him, for our son, for our future.

As I walked through the rain-soaked streets, my mind kept drifting to El Lobo Negro. I couldn't help but think of how satisfying it would be to see that bastard suffer, to see him brought to his knees after all the pain and suffering he's caused.

I imagined him, stripped of his power and his men, left alone and helpless. Maybe I'd shove him in the same cell he threw Norri in and let him rot in there. Maybe I'd take everything from him like he's done to me and Norri.

The thought of him suffering, of seeing the fear and desperation in his eyes as he realized he had no one to help him... It brought a fierce kind of satisfaction. He deserved to know how it felt to be powerless, to have everything stripped away until all that was left was despair.

Maybe I'd make him watch as I took everything he held dear, the way he did to Norri and me. I'd make sure he knew that the omega he took everything from was now stronger than him, able to protect what was his.

A cruel smile tugged at the corner of my mouth as I pictured El Lobo's humiliation and anguish. He'd get what was coming to him. He had to suffer for all the agony he caused me and Norri. I would make him pay for everything he did. It was only a matter of time before I would have my revenge.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Norri

The apartment felt empty and cold without Gali's presence, as I knew it was going to feel. The rain pattered against the windows, the sound a constant reminder of his absence. I sat on the couch, cradling our son in my arms, rocking him gently as he fussed and cried. It was as though he knew that his father wasn't living with us anymore. The baby's tiny face was scrunched up in distress, his wails piercing the air.

"Shh, baby. Shh," I cooed, bouncing him softly, trying to soothe him. But I didn't have much experience and didn't know what else I could do. "It's okay. I've got you."

But nothing seemed to comfort him. He was hungry, I knew, but feeding him only temporarily eased his cries. I walked with him, swaying and bouncing, humming a soothing lullaby I'd heard Gali sing to him once. It had always calmed him before, even when I was the one singing. But now, it seemed, nothing worked.

Tears of frustration welled up in my eyes as I paced the small living room. Gali had been gone for three months now, and each day without him felt harder than the last. I thought that he'd be back by now.

The loneliness, the fear, the constant worry about his safety, it all weighed on me, pressing down like a suffocating fog. I didn't know if he would be back and would still be the same person.

I missed him with a physical ache, a void in my chest that never seemed to fade. At night, I would reach for him in the bed beside me, only to grasp at empty sheets and cold blankets. In the mornings, I'd wake to the sound of our son crying, and the

realization that Gali wasn't there to help ease my exhaustion would crash over me anew. It was difficult to get out of bed in those mornings.

Now, as I walked and bounced our fussing baby, I couldn't help but rage at Gali for leaving us like this. Did he not understand how hard this was, how lost and frightened I felt without him here? Did he not care that his son needed his father, that I needed the strength and comfort only he could provide?

The truth was, he knew, and that was one of the reasons why he was doing what he was doing. He just wanted to live in peace with me.

I held our son a little closer, pressing a kiss to his downy head. "Don't worry, little one," I whispered. "He'll come back to us. He has to."

But even as I said the words, doubt crept in, a cold tendril winding through my gut. What if something happened to Gali out there? What if he didn't come back? What would I do then? How would I keep us both safe without him?

The thought made my knees buckle, and I sank down onto the couch with our son still in my arms. Tears spilled over, running down my cheeks as I rocked him. "Please come back," I whispered brokenly to the empty room. "I need you, Gali. We need you. Don't die."

Our son's cries began to quiet, his small body going slack in my arms as exhaustion overtook him. I stared down at his angelic face, still streaked with tears, and felt my heart swell with love. He was so small, so helpless, depending on me for everything. It was terrifying, the responsibility, the weight of keeping him safe and cared for. I didn't know for how much longer I could handle this.

I shifted him to my shoulder, rubbing his back gently. "We'll be okay," I murmured, more for my own sake than his. "You and me, we'll get through this. Gali will come



back, and we'll be a family. I promise."

I knew I was making a promise I couldn't guarantee. I had no idea if Gali would return safely, if we would have a future together at all. But I had to believe it, had to hold onto the hope that we would be together again.

I couldn't give up. I couldn't let fear and despair take root in my heart. I had our son to think about now, to build a life for, to give a future to.

With a deep breath, I stood, shifting our son carefully into my arms. "Come on, little one. Let's get you fed and settled."

The kitchen was cold and dark as I sat in the armchair with my son, Orion, cradled in my arms. He was crying, his little face red and scrunched up in frustration. I could see the hunger in his eyes, the desperation in the way he opened and closed his mouth, searching for something to fill his empty belly.

"Shh, it's okay, little man," I cooed, trying to soothe his cries as I fumbled with the bottle of formula. "Daddy's got you. We're going to get some food in you, don't worry."

But as I brought the bottle to Orion's lips, he turned his head away, his tiny fists flailing in protest. Tears pricked at the corners of my eyes as I tried again, and again, but each time, he refused the bottle, his cries growing louder and more desperate.

"Please, baby, just a little," I begged, my voice cracking with exhaustion and frustration. "I know you're hungry. Just take a little."

But Orion was having none of it. He continued to scream, his tiny body writhing in my arms, his little fists beating against my chest. I felt like a failure, like I was letting him down, like I couldn't even provide the most basic of needs for my own son.

Tears spilled down my cheeks as I held Orion close, rocking him and shushing him, trying to calm him down. "I'm sorry," I whispered, my voice breaking. "I'm so sorry, my little Orion. I don't know what to do."

I knew Gali was out there somewhere, trying to make things better for us. But in that moment, I couldn't see how anything could ever be better. I was alone, struggling to care for a baby I barely knew how to handle. I missed Gali so much it hurt. I needed him here, needed his strength and guidance and support.

But he wasn't here, and I had to be strong for both of us. I had to figure out how to do this, how to be a good father to our son.

I took a deep breath, wiping my tears away with the back of my hand. Orion was still crying, still fighting against the bottle, but I refused to give up. "Okay, buddy, let's try something else," I said, my voice steady despite the tremor in it.

I stood up, shifting Orion to my shoulder and patting his back gently as I paced the room. I sang to him, humming the lullabies Gali used to sing to him when he was fussy. Orion seemed to settle a little, his cries quieting to small whimpers as he listened to my voice.

"That's it, my little man," I murmured, continuing to pace and pat his back. "You just listen to Daddy's voice. Everything's going to be okay."

As I paced and sang, Orion's whimpers gradually subsided, his little body going limp and heavy against my shoulder. I smiled through my tears as I felt him relax, his tiny fists unclenching and falling to his sides.

I knew this was only a temporary fix, that he would likely be hungry again in a few hours, but for now, I was grateful for the moment of peace. I continued to sing and pace, enjoying the feel of Orion's weight against my shoulder, the sound of his soft

breathing in the quiet of the apartment.

I couldn't help but think about Gali, wonder what he was doing, if he was safe. I hoped he was okay, that he wasn't suffering or in danger. I hated that he had to go away, hated that I couldn't be there to support him.

But I knew this was something he had to do, something he needed to do to keep us safe, to give us a better life.

As Orion drifted off to sleep in my arms, I carried him to his crib, gently laying him down and tucking the blanket around him. I stood there for a moment, watching him sleep, marveling at his tiny features, the way his little chest rose and fell with each breath.

"You're going to grow up to be a strong, brave man," I whispered, brushing a lock of dark hair off his forehead. "Just like your daddy."

A few seconds later, I heard a knock at the door, followed by Mrs. Hargrove's muffled voice calling out, "Norri? Is everything alright in there?" This couldn't be happening. Not now and again.

I sighed, running a hand over my tired face as I walked to the door. I opened it to find Mrs. Hargrove standing there, her weathered face etched with concern. The good thing about this was that she cared about me, but it was the only one.

"Oh Norri," she exclaimed, pushing past me to enter the apartment. She didn't even ask for permission. It was her place, after all. "I heard the baby crying from all the way down the hall. What's going on?"

Before I could respond, Mrs. Hargrove was already making her way to the baby's room. She peered down at him, her expression softening.

"He looks peaceful now," she murmured. Then, turning back to me, her brows furrowed. "But why was he crying so much? Is he not feeling well?"

I closed the door behind her, leaning against it with a weary sigh. "He's fine, Mrs. Hargrove. Just... fussy, I guess you could say."

She looked at me skeptically, crossing her arms over her ample bosom. "Fussy for three months straight? That doesn't seem right, Norri. Babies usually outgrow the colic by now."

I rubbed the back of my neck, suddenly feeling very defensive. Mrs. Hargrove was right about that, but I also didn't want to talk about it.

"Well, maybe he's just a particularly fussy baby. Some are, aren't they?"

Mrs. Hargrove studied me, her gaze sharpening. "And where's Gali in all this? Shouldn't he be helping you with the baby?"

My stomach twisted at the mention of Gali's name. I looked away, focusing on the worn carpet beneath my feet. "Gali... He's away on business. It's just me and Orion right now."

I couldn't tell her the truth. I wasn't crazy enough to do something like that. She couldn't know what happened. I didn't want her to call the police.

There was a long pause, and then Mrs. Hargrove sighed heavily. "Business, huh? Well, that explains some things."

When I glanced up, I saw her looking around the apartment, taking in the empty beer bottles on the coffee table, the piles of dirty laundry in the corners. Her eyes landed on the stack of bills on the counter, the red 'Final Notice' stamped across them.

"Norri," she said softly, her tone gentling. "You can't handle this alone. You need help with the baby, and you need money. Let me lend you some until Gali gets back."

I bristled, my pride rearing its head even as I wanted to accept her offer. "No, I can't take your money, Mrs. Hargrove," I said, my tone firm. "We'll be fine once Gali returns. The work he has this time will set us up for a while."

Mrs. Hargrove shook her head, tutting softly. "A new job, huh? And what kind of job would that be? Is it really worth it when it keeps him away from his family for months on end?"

I clenched my jaw, hating the way she was questioning Gali's absence, implying that he didn't care about us. I was the only one allowed to think that.

"It's important work, okay? Something he needs to do to ensure we are going to be okay."

Mrs. Hargrove looked skeptical, but she let it drop for now. Instead, she turned her attention back to the baby, bending over his crib to run a gnarled finger over his cheek. "Look at him, so small and helpless," she cooed. "He needs his father, Norri. Needs a stable home and two parents to raise him right."

Tears pricked at my eyes, and I blinked, refusing to let them fall. "I know that," I whispered. "Believe me, I know. But Gali will be back soon. Things will get better then."

Mrs. Hargrove straightened up, giving me a long look. "Better for who, Norri? Better for you and Orion? Or only better for Gali?"

I stared at her, shocked by her bluntness. "What's that supposed to mean?"

She sighed, rubbing her temples. "I've seen men like Gali before, Norri. Men who think their mission, whatever it may be, is more important than their family. More important than the people who love them."

My heart clenched at her words, fear twisting in my gut. Was that true for Gali? Did his work really matter more than us?

"No," I replied, shaking my head. "That's not true. Gali loves us. He wouldn't leave if he didn't have to."

Mrs. Hargrove reached out, placing a comforting hand on my shoulder. "I hope you're right, dear. For both your sakes."

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:21 am*

Gali

The night air was cool and damp against my skin as I crept through the shadows, my breath fogging up in front of my face. I kept low, sticking close to the brick walls of the alleyway as I made my way toward my target's location. The job was simple enough — take out a rival gang member who had been muscling in on Marcus's territory.

I wished I didn't have to do this. It meant helping the Nightshade Wolves too, even though they were still hunting me and Norri. But it was the best option I had at the moment.

Marcus had given me the details earlier, along with a map and a photo of the guy. His name was Diego Ruiz, leader of the Vipers gang. Apparently, he'd been making waves lately, selling drugs and running girls in areas controlled by Marcus and his boss, El Lobo Negro.

It was a risky move, challenging El Lobo's authority like that. I knew that better than anyone else. It was up to me to make sure it stopped.

As I rounded the corner, I spotted my target leaning against a graffiti-covered wall, surrounded by a group of his lackeys. They were laughing and smoking, oblivious to the danger lurking nearby. Perfect.

I pulled my gun from its holster, checking the chamber as I approached. These guys were armed too, no doubt packing heat beneath their jackets. I had to move fast.

All of a sudden, a door swung open behind me, and a figure emerged from the building. I whirled around, my gun trained on the newcomer, ready to fire. If he was stupid enough, he would die.

"Whoa, easy there, friend!" The man called out, raising his hands in surrender. He was older, with a graying beard and kind eyes that crinkled at the corners. "Didn't expect company tonight."

I lowered my weapon slightly, studying the man. He wasn't one of Ruiz's crew — that much was clear. But who was he? He better have answers to all my questions.

"I'm looking for Diego Ruiz," I said evenly. "Where is he?"

The man glanced past me, spotting Ruiz and his gang down the alley. He shrugged. "Afraid he's occupied at the moment. But I can send word that you want to talk to him, if you like." He had no idea the kind of man I was.

I narrowed my eyes, suspicion rising. This was too convenient — the way he'd appeared just as I was closing in on my target. Was he stalling for time? It was possible. I had to stay on my toes.

"No need," I replied coldly. "I'll handle it myself."

With that, I turned and strode towards Ruiz and his crew, leaving the stranger behind. As I drew closer, Ruiz caught sight of me, his eyes widening in surprise and then narrowing in anger. Maybe he already knew who I was and had just recognized me.

"What the hell?" He spat, straightening up and reaching for something beneath his jacket. "You got some nerve coming here alone, amigo!"

His goons shifted around him, hands disappearing beneath their own coats. I could



see the bulges of weapons beneath the fabric.

I raised my gun, leveling it at Ruiz's chest. "Stay where you are," I warned. "Unless you want a hole in you."

Ruiz froze, his hand hovering over his concealed weapon. He looked around at his men, silently commanding them to stand down.

"Alright, let's talk," he said slowly, holding his hands up in a gesture of compliance. "But make it quick. I don't have all night."

I kept my gun trained on him as I closed the distance between us. Up close, I could see the fear flickering in his eyes, despite his bravado.

"You're stepping on toes, Ruiz," I warned. "Territory that doesn't belong to you."

He scowled, but there was an underlying tension in his shoulders. "And who says so? Last I checked, this is a free city."

I shook my head. "Not when it comes to El Lobo Negro. You know how he runs things around here. You're playing a dangerous game, challenging his authority."

I hated that I was acting like I was protecting El Lobo, but there was nothing I could do about it. It had to happen this way.

Ruiz laughed bitterly. "El Lobo is weak. Old and soft. His time is coming to an end. Soon, everyone will answer to me."

"He won't let that happen," I growled. "Neither will I. So, here's what's going to happen — you're going to pack up your operation and leave this part of the city. Permanently. Or else."

Ruiz's eyes flashed with rage, his hands clenching into fists at his sides. "Or else what? You'll shoot me right here? Where everybody can see?"

I smiled coldly, knowing I held all the power in this moment. "If I have to. But I'd rather not make a mess. It would be easier for both of us if you just agreed to back off."

Ruiz glared at me, his jaw working as he ground his teeth together. I could see the wheels turning in his head, calculating his chances.

A few seconds later, he sighed heavily, defeat etched across his features. "Fine," he spat. "You win this round, amigo. But mark my words — the Vipers will be back. And next time, it won't end well for the Nightshade Wolves."

I nodded, satisfied that I'd gotten through to him. For now, at least.

"See that you don't," I warned, backing away slowly. "And tell your boys to keep their noses clean. The next time we meet, I might not be so generous."

With that, I turned on my heel and strode away, leaving Ruiz fuming behind me. He could shoot me in the back and kill me, but I knew he wasn't going to. He was crazy, but not that crazy.

What I got wasn't a permanent solution, but it would hold them off for a while. Give Marcus time to regroup and come up with a new plan. Plus, it was enough so he paid me and convinced El Lobo to stop trying to kill me.

Later, I stood in Marcus's office, the dim light casting long shadows across the worn carpet and peeling paint. The room was filled with the lingering scent of aged whiskey and stale cigarette smoke. I watched as Marcus counted out the money I had earned for dealing with Ruiz, each crisp note meticulously placed on the table

between us.

As he finished, he leaned back in his creaky chair, his gaze appraising. "You did good work, Gali. Real good work. Just like old times, and just like I thought you were going to."

I didn't respond, my eyes fixed on the stack of bills. It was a lot of money, enough to give Norri and our son some much-needed stability. But it still felt wrong, like I had sold a piece of my soul for it. I never wanted to work for the Nightshade Wolves again.

Marcus continued, his voice dropping to a more serious tone. "You know, I'll tell El Lobo about Ruiz. He might get suspicious. Might even try to connect the dots. He's smarter than we both think."

I tore my gaze from the money, my eyes narrowing. "And?"

Marcus sighed, running a hand through his graying hair. "I've thought about that. I'll tell him... I'll tell him that Ruiz was trying to cut a deal with another cartel, someone bigger than us. That I stepped in and handled it. You know, as a favor."

I studied Marcus for a moment, searching for any sign of deceit. But his face was open, his eyes steady. He seemed to truly believe he could pull this off. Still, lying to the boss wasn't going to be easy.

"But what if El Lobo doesn't buy it?" I pressed, my jaw clenching. "What if you can't convince him to leave me alone?"

Marcus hesitated, then reached for the bottle of whiskey on his desk, pouring himself a generous glass. "I won't let that happen, Gali," he said firmly, swirling the amber liquid in his glass. "I give you my word. I'll protect you and your family from all of

this."

I let out a sharp laugh, shaking my head. "Protect us? By making deals behind El Lobo's back? You're playing with fire, Marcus."

He leaned forward, his eyes burning with intensity. "This isn't some cheap parlor trick, Gali. I've worked with El Lobo for years. I know how to handle him. I can convince him to back off. Just give me some time."

I considered him, my doubts warring with the desperation for this to be true. Finally, I nodded. "Alright. But if something happens to Norri or our son... I'll kill you."

He raised his hands in a conciliatory gesture. "Understood, my friend. Now, let's get down to the details. El Lobo expects me to report back to him about Ruiz. I've already told you what I'm considering saying to him, but what about you? What do you think I should tell him?"

I paused, thinking. "Tell him Ruiz was trying to deal with the Cartel del Diablo. Make him believe that you acted in the best interest of the Nightshade Wolves, to keep El Lobo's operation clean and profitable."

Marcus nodded, making notes on a pad of paper. "I can do that. Now, about the money..."

As Marcus started to talk about splitting the cash and arranging payment, I found my mind drifting back to Norri. I imagined his face lighting up when I told him we could finally move, that we were safe. That we could be a real family. Our dream day was coming sooner than he expected.

At the same time, a nagging doubt gnawed at me one more time. I had just helped the enemy, again. I had acted against my morals and principles, all for money. Even if it

was to keep Norri and our son safe.

I couldn't help but feel a profound sense of disgust. I hated the Nightshade Wolves and their struggles. It was all so... pointless. For what? For some pathetic sense of dominance? To prove that one was stronger or smarter than the other?

As if sensing my turmoil, Marcus paused, looking up at me with a knowing expression. "Still think this life's a bunch of shit, don't you?"

I met his gaze steadily. "Isn't it, though?"

He leaned back in his chair, his face turning pensive. "Sometimes, yeah. But it's the hand we're dealt, isn't it? We make do with what we've got, and we hope for the best."

I nodded, unable to argue with that. "Guess you're right."

Marcus stood, holding out a hand to me. "Now, let's shake on it. Let me take care of things from here. You focus on your family. That's an order."

I took his hand, his grip firm and reassuring. "Deal. But, Marcus, if El Lobo continues to come after me and my family..."

He released my hand, clapping me on the shoulder. "Don't worry about it, Gali. I'll handle El Lobo. You just go and be with your family. And for fuck's sake, Gali, enjoy being a father for a while. I think you deserve that."

As I left Marcus's office, I felt a strange sense of calm. Maybe Marcus could pull it off. Maybe, finally, this could all be over. Or, at least, put it on pause for a while.

The weight of the money in my pocket felt like a chain around my ankle, dragging me down. But at the same time, it was a lifeline, a chance for me and Norri to start

over, to have a shot at a normal life.

Now, all that was left was to convince Norri to give me another chance. To trust me again, to believe that I could keep us safe, that I wasn't just running off and leaving him with our son.

I had a lot of explaining to do. But for now, all I wanted was to get back home. Back to Norri. Back to my family.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:22 am*

Norri

The soft knock on the door jolted me awake, my heart pounding in my chest. I blinked away the remnants of sleep, my eyes adjusting to the dim light of the apartment. Orion was fussing softly in his crib, but the sound was muted, distant.

I swung my legs off the couch, the cold floorboards greeting my bare feet. I wrapped a blanket around my shoulders and made my way to the door, my heart fluttering with an unsettling mix of anticipation and trepidation.

I didn't like unexpected visits, much less without Gali around.

As I reached for the doorknob, I paused, my breath hitching in my throat. Could it be Gali? Or was it Mrs. Hargrove, checking in on me once again? Either way, I didn't know how to react.

The knock came again, this time a little louder. I took a deep breath, steeling myself for whatever was on the other side. As I pulled the door open, I braced myself, my grip tightening on the doorknob.

Gali stood on the other side, the faint glow of the hallway light casting shadows across his face. I should have checked through the peep-hole before opening the door, but it was too late for that now.

His hair was disheveled, and there were dark circles under his eyes, but there was no mistaking the familiar, beloved lines of his face. I would have recognized him even if we were worlds apart.

I stared at him for a moment, shock rooting me to the spot. Then, anger and relief surged through me in equal measure, and I found my voice. "Gali," I breathed, finding it difficult to speak. "You're back."

He opened his mouth to speak, but I cut him off, my voice growing stronger. "No, wait. Don't. Just... come inside." I stepped back, my body stiff as I allowed him to enter.

As Gali crossed the threshold, the apartment seemed to shrink, his presence filling every corner. He was so tall, so broad-shouldered, so... him. It felt surreal, seeing him here after so many months apart.

He stood there, his eyes darting around the room, taking in the piles of laundry, the stacks of dishes in the sink, the general air of disarray. He would scold me right now if he didn't feel guilty for having left.

Then his gaze landed on me, lingering, before flicking to the crib where Orion lay sleeping.

Gali took a step towards me, his hands reaching out, but I recoiled, my body language clear. I wasn't ready to be touched, not after everything.

He stopped, his hands dropping to his sides, his expression guarded. "Norri, I... I have so much to tell you."

I crossed my arms over my chest, my expression hard. "You do, don't you? Like, for starters, where the hell have you been exactly? What took you so long? You didn't tell me you were going to be away for so long."

Gali's gaze fell to the floor, his shoulders slumping. "It was... complicated. I didn't have a choice, Norri. I had to go. I had to make things right."



I scoffed, my voice trembling with barely suppressed emotion. "Make what right, Gali? Tell me, how was leaving your mate and newborn son making anything right?"

Gali looked up, pain etched into the lines of his face. "I never meant for that to happen, Norri. You have to believe me."

I stared at him, my eyes searching his face for any sign of deceit. But all I saw was sincerity, desperation even. "I don't know what to believe, Gali," I admitted softly. "But I'm not going to stand here and pretend everything's fine. I can't just forgive and forget."

Gali took a step closer, his voice pleading. "I'm not asking you to, Norri. But I need you to understand. I never wanted to leave you. I never wanted any of this."

I wanted to believe him. I really did. But there was a part of me that was still angry, still hurt, and still scared. I didn't know how I could heal it.

"And what about the money, Gali?" I said, gesturing to the backpack he had set down by the door. "Is that the money you were talking about?"

He hesitated, then reached into the backpack, pulling out a wad of cash. "This is the payment. The job was... risky, but it was worth it. This is enough to start over, Norri. To finally get away from all this. From El Lobo. From all of it."

I took the money, my fingers brushing against his, and counted it. There was a lot. More than enough to start a new life. "So, what now?" I asked, looking up at him.

Gali's expression softened, his gaze filling with something I hadn't seen in him for so long. Hope. "Now," he said, "we leave. We pack our bags, take Orion, and we leave."

I stuffed some of the cash into my pocket — just for safekeeping and nothing else —

my heart pounding with a mixture of relief and lingering anger. I looked up at Gali, my expression guarded."And what about El Lobo? Is he still...?"

Gali shook his head, his expression resolute."You don't need to worry about El Lobo anymore. I made sure of it."

I raised an eyebrow, skepticism coloring my tone.Did he kill him? No, I didn't think that was the case.

"How? Just like that, he's going to leave us alone?"

Gali sighed, running a hand through his hair."It wasn't easy, and I didn't want to do it, but I made a deal. With Marcus."

I froze, my breath hitching.I remembered the name. I never thought I would hear it again.

"Marcus? You made a deal with him?"

I didn't know much about that. Gali hadn't told me, probably thinking it was the best way to keep me safe.

He nodded after processing my question, his eyes steady on mine."I know it's dangerous, but he promised me that he'd convince El Lobo to back off. He swore he'd make sure we were safe."

I shook my head, disbelief washing over me."Safe? Gali, this is El Lobo we're talking about. He's not the kind of man you just convince to change his mind. He's ruthless."

Gali closed the distance between us, taking my hands in his."Norri, please. You have to trust me on this. I know what I'm doing. I didn't do this lightly. Marcus has been

working for El Lobo for years. He knows how to handle him. And he owes me. He'll keep his word."

I looked down at our hands, at the contrast of our skin tones, at how small mine looked in his. I wanted to believe him, to trust that he had a plan, that he knew what he was doing. But the fear gnawing at me was difficult to ignore. It was almost consuming me from the inside out.

"But what about the cartel itself, Gali? They're still looking for us. Even if El Lobo stops, they won't just forget about us."

Gali's thumbs traced circles on the back of my hands, a gesture of comfort. "We'll deal with that if it happens. Right now, we need to focus on what Marcus is doing for us. It's the best chance we have of a normal life. Don't you want that?"

I looked up into his eyes, seeing the desperation there, the hope. And I felt a pang of guilt. I should be supporting him, believing in him. After all, he was trying to keep us safe, to give us a future.

"Yes," I said finally, sighing. "Of course, I do. I just... I just want us to be safe. I want you to be safe."

Gali smiled, squeezing my hands. "We will be. I promise you. We'll be okay."

I looked down, a thought occurring to me. "And what if Marcus can't convince El Lobo? Or what if he decides to double-cross you? What then?"

Gali's expression darkened. "If Marcus betrays me, I'll deal with him. I won't let anyone threaten us again, Norri. I won't let anyone take us away from each other."

I believed him. I truly did. The conviction in his voice was impossible to ignore. And

I realized that this was our only hope. We had to trust that Marcus would keep his promise. That he would protect us from the cartel and from El Lobo.

I took a deep breath, steadying myself. "Okay. I'll trust you. I believe that Marcus will protect us."

Relief washed over Gali's face, and he leaned in to press a soft kiss on my forehead. "Thank you, Norri," he murmured. "For trusting me, for giving me another chance."

Our faces inches apart, our breaths mingling, we held each other's gazes for a moment longer before the tension became too much to bear. My heart pounded in my chest as Gali slowly leaned in, giving me ample time to pull away if I wanted.

But I didn't want to.

As our lips met, it was like coming home after a long journey. His mouth was warm and soft against mine, moving with a familiarity that belied our time apart. A soft moan escaped me as he deepened the kiss, his tongue sweeping against the seam of my lips, seeking entry.

I opened for him right away, our tongues tangling. The kiss was passionate, hungry, filled with all the pent-up longing and desire we had both been holding back for so long. It spoke of promises whispered in the darkest nights and dreams too beautiful to be real.

His hands cupped my face, tilting my head back as he plundered my mouth, his kisses filled with promises of forever and always. I clung to him, my fingers digging into his shoulders, my body pressing against his, feeling the hard planes of muscle beneath his shirt.

With every swipe of his tongue against mine, every nip of his teeth on my lower lip, he whispered vows of love and protection, of a future together free from fear and danger. Each kiss mirrored his unwavering commitment to keeping us safe, to building a life with me.

Our hearts beat in sync, our bodies pressed together from chest to thigh, as we lost ourselves in the kiss. It wasn't just a kiss; it was a promise of a new beginning, of a love that would see us through anything life threw our way.

When we finally pulled away, our breaths ragged and chests heaving, we stared into each other's eyes, our souls laid bare by the intensity of our connection.

"I love you," Gali whispered, his thumb brushing away a tear that had escaped without my knowledge.

"And I love you," I replied, smiling. "More than anything."

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Gali

The sun was warm on my back as I sat on the porch steps of our new home, Orion giggling and kicking his chubby legs in front of me. I tickled his tummy, making him laugh even harder, his little face scrunched up in joy. This was what life should be like — simple moments of happiness with the people we loved.

Most people thought that I couldn't enjoy having a simple life. They didn't understand me. This was what I'd always wanted.

All of a sudden, the sound of tires crunching on gravel reached my ears, pulling my attention away from my son. A sleek black car rolled up the driveway, coming to a halt beside the mailbox. My muscles tensed instantly, my hand going automatically to the gun tucked at my waistband under my shirt.

I thought that this moment would never come. I thought that I'd taken all the necessary precautions and that they were enough. But, they weren't.

The driver's door swung open and out stepped none other than El Lobo Negro himself. He was flanked by two of his men, their hands resting on the weapons holstered at their hips. My heart raced as I quickly scooped Orion up into my arms, turning my back to them to shield him from view.

I didn't want him to see them, or the other way around. I had to protect him, no matter what.

"Well, well, well," El Lobo drawled, sauntering towards me with that infuriating

smirk on his face."Look who decided to play house in the suburbs. Who would have thought?"

I stood up, my body rigid as I faced him, my son clutched tightly in my arms."What are you doing here?"I growled low in my throat."This isn't your territory."

El Lobo laughed, throwing back his head."You think you know everything, don't you? You think you can run off and hide from me, make deals behind my back, and I won't find out? You underestimated me."

My grip tightened around Orion, who whimpered softly at the sudden tension. I bounced him gently, trying to soothe him while keeping my eyes fixed on El Lobo. But, it wasn't enough.

"You're wrong,"I said coldly."I haven't made any deals behind your back. And this is not your territory. Not anymore."

El Lobo's smile faded, replaced by a dangerous glint in his eye."You're playing a dangerous game, Gali. You think you can just leave the Nightshade Wolves and start a new life? With my money?"

Marcus' money was actually his. Fuck.

I bristled at the accusation."Your money? That's rich coming from you. Besides, I earned every cent of that money. I did a job for Marcus, not for you."

I knew that was a lie, but it was all I had at the moment.

El Lobo took another step closer, his voice dropping to a low rumble."Marcus works for me. Everything he does is for me. And so do you."

I shook my head firmly. "No. I'm done with all that. I have a family now. They're all that matters to me."

El Lobo sneered, leaning in close enough that I could smell the stale coffee on his breath. "Family? Is that what you call it? Or is it more like a weakness? Something to use against you?"

I didn't take the bait, refusing to rise to his provocation. "It doesn't matter what you call it. All that matters is that they're mine. And no one threatens my family. No one."

El Lobo chuckled darkly. "Threaten? Oh, Gali, I'm not here to threaten your precious little family." He paused, letting the words sink in before continuing with relish. "I'm here to destroy it."

Ice ran through my veins at the threat, but I kept my expression neutral, refusing to show him how much his words affected me. "You'll never get near them," I promised through gritted teeth.

El Lobo shrugged nonchalantly. "We'll see about that. But first..." He leaned in closer, lowering his voice to a whisper. "Let's talk about loyalty, sí? About what it really means to be part of the Nightshade Wolves."

I remained silent, waiting for him to continue.

He paced in front of me, his hands clasped behind his back like some sort of twisted tour guide. "Loyalty means putting the pack above all else. It means being willing to make sacrifices for the good of the group. It means trusting those who lead you, following their orders without question."

I scoffed internally at that. Trust? After all the things El Lobo had done?



"Is that why you're here?" I asked bitterly. "To lecture me on loyalty? To remind me of all the times I've been faithful to the Nightshade Wolves and it was all for nothing?"

El Lobo stopped pacing, turning to face me again. His expression turned serious, almost sad. "No, Gali. I'm here because you betrayed us. Because you broke that sacred bond of trust between brothers in arms."

I opened my mouth to protest, but he cut me off with a sharp gesture.

"No," he snapped. "Don't bother denying it. I know what you did after escaping. You made a deal behind my back, with someone who has always been loyal to me. Someone who has bled for me, fought for me — just like you." He shook his head sadly. "And then, when I needed you most, when our family needed you... you abandoned us for an omega worm."

His words hit home, striking something deep inside me. Guilt washed over me as I thought about all the times I had put myself before the cartel, before El Lobo. But I couldn't regret it — not when it meant keeping Norri and Orion safe.

"I did what I had to do," I said finally, my voice steady despite the turmoil within me. "I did what was necessary to protect my family."

El Lobo nodded slowly, as if expecting my response. "Sí, yes, you did. But at what cost? You threw away your brotherhood, your heritage, all for some omega and his brat."

I bristled at his words, but before I could respond, he held up a hand, silencing me. I hated that.

"But let me tell you something, Gali," he continued, his voice turning cold once more. "Loyalty is a two-way street. It goes both ways. You might have broken yours,

but so have I."

Confusion clouded my mind as I tried to decipher his meaning. What was he talking about?

"You see,"he explained, a cruel smile twisting his lips."When one breaks the bond of loyalty, it gives the other the right to do the same."

Realization dawned on me slowly, like a poison spreading through my veins. He was talking about Marcus. About the deal we had made.

"You hurt Marcus,"I whispered, anger boiling up inside me.

El Lobo laughed, clapping his hands together in mock applause."Bravo! You're catching on quickly today."

My hands clenched into fists, rage coursing through me. I wanted nothing more than to wrap my hands around his throat and squeeze until the life drained from his eyes.

But I couldn't. Not with Orion in my arms, not with El Lobo's men standing mere feet away, ready to intervene if necessary.

"So, you see,"El Lobo continued, his voice laced with malice."I can play this game too. I can break bonds just as easily as you can."

I struggled to maintain my composure, fighting to keep my emotions in check. If I lost control now, it would only make things worse.

"What do you want?"I growled low in my throat.

El Lobo smiled widely, like a predator scenting blood in the water."What do I want?

Well, Gali, after everything you've put me through, I think it's only fair that I get something in return."

He reached out, placing a hand on my shoulder, squeezing hard enough to hurt. I stood frozen, unable to move with Orion in my arms.

"I want you to suffer,"he whispered, leaning in close."I want you to watch as everything you love is taken away from you. Just like you took everything from me."

Fear gripped my heart as I realized the true extent of his hatred towards me. This wasn't just about power or territory anymore — this was personal.

"And how exactly do you plan on doing that?"I challenged, my voice steadier than I felt.

El Lobo released his grip on my shoulder and stepped back, his gaze locked onto mine."Oh, Gali,"he said softly, almost sadly."You worked under me for a long time. You know what I'm capable of."

With that, he turned and strode back towards his car, his men falling into step beside him. As they climbed into the vehicle and drove away, I stood there, rooted to the spot, my heart pounding wildly in my chest.

This was far from over. El Lobo would stop at nothing to make me pay for my perceived betrayal. And now, with Marcus out of the picture, there was no one left to protect us. It fell to me to keep my family safe.

After El Lobo's car disappeared down the driveway, I let out a shaky breath, relief washing over me. That had been too close. Too fucking close.

Orion stirred in my arms, whimpering softly as if sensing my tension. I bounced him

with gentleness, cooing soft nonsense words to calm him down.

"Shh, little man," I murmured against his temple. "It's okay. Daddy's got you."

Just as I was starting to relax, the sound of another car approaching caught my attention. My muscles tensed again, my hand instinctively reaching for my gun. But it was too late — the car was already pulling up the driveway.

The door swung open, and out stepped Norri, his face pale and drawn as he took in the scene before him. His eyes darted from me to the empty space where El Lobo's car had been parked moments ago.

"Gali?" He asked tentatively, uncertainty lacing his voice. "Is... Is everything okay?"

I forced a reassuring smile onto my face, tucking my gun away behind my back so he wouldn't see it. "Everything's fine," I lied. "Just an old friend stopping by."

Norri raised an eyebrow but didn't press the issue. Instead, he walked over to us, reaching out to take Orion from my arms. "Here, let me take him," he whispered.

As our son passed from my arms to his other father's, I watched their faces intently. The love between them was palpable, a tangible thing that warmed my heart despite the chill of fear still lingering within me.

"Are you sure you're alright?" Norri asked again, concern etched into the lines of his face as he studied me.

I nodded firmly. "Positive," I replied, forcing conviction into my voice. "Nothing for you to worry about."

Norri hesitated for a moment before speaking again. "Okay," he said. "If you say

so."But his tone suggested that he wasn't entirely convinced.

I knew I had some explaining to do later. But for now, all I wanted was to forget about El Lobo, about Marcus' possible death, and about the looming threat hanging over our heads.

All I wanted was to be here with my family, safe and happy.

Norri

The moonlight streamed in through the window, casting long shadows across the bedroom floor, painting the walls with bars of silver light and darkness. I lay awake beside Gali, my mind racing, my thoughts swirling around the mysterious visitor from earlier. I hadn't seen his face, but couldn't shake his sudden visit. It was like my body was telling me I was missing something about it.

Gali slept peacefully next to me, his breaths even and steady. I envied his ability to find rest without much difficulty. Not that sleep had ever come easy for me. Especially not since Gali returned and I knew that El Lobo was still out there. Not with the constant worry gnawing at the back of my mind, the unanswered questions that refused to leave me alone.

That 'friend' of Gali's hadn't seemed like any friend I'd ever met. There had been an air of menace about him, from the silhouette I'd seen through the vehicle's windows, a coldness in his eyes that spoke of violence and danger. I could practically feel it radiating off him. Whatever business Gali had going on with him couldn't be good. It couldn't be anything friendly.

Gali shifted, rolling onto his back, disturbing the sheet draped loosely around his waist. A sliver of moonlight caught on something shiny tucked beneath his pillow. My curiosity piqued, I reached out slowly, careful not to wake him as I pulled back the corner of the pillow. My fingers brushed against cold metal, and I recognized the familiar shape of a gun.

A gun hidden under his pillow. What did that mean? Was he expecting trouble? Did

he think we were in danger? I mean, danger lurked around every corner, but keeping a gun right under his pillow? That felt like too much — especially since he hadn't even mentioned it to me.

My mind raced with possibilities, each one worse than the last. Maybe he was still working with the Nightshade Wolves after all. Or, even worse, maybe this had something to do with El Lobo Negro. Maybe he hadn't truly cut ties with his past after all. I wouldn't blame him if he hadn't. I would blame him for lying to me, though.

I chewed at my lower lip, anxiety clawing at me from the inside. I didn't want to believe it, didn't want to think that Gali could lie to me like that. But what else explained why he'd been so secretive, so vague about who that man really was. I should pressed the issue further, even though Gali had looked a little annoyed.

I stole a glance at Gali, his face softened in sleep, looking almost boyishly innocent in the dim light. How much of him did I really know? Could I trust him without giving in to doubt?

He sighed in his sleep, turning towards me slightly. Automatically, my body gravitated closer, seeking warmth and comfort. I felt torn and conflicted. Part of me yearned to reach out, to touch him, to lose myself in the warmth of his embrace. But another part held me back, hesitant, uncertain. It knew doing that would be a mistake.

What if I touched him, and he woke up? Would he wake up and pull me close, holding me as he always did? Or would he wake up angry, defensive, lashing out at the intrusion?

I hated feeling this way, unsure, mistrustful. This wasn't how I wanted things to be between us. But I needed answers. And until then, I couldn't just pretend nothing was wrong.

I closed my eyes, willing sleep to claim me. But all I found was tossing and turning, my mind churning with doubt, my heart aching with worry and confusion.

Just as my eyelids grew heavy, and my breath began to deepen, Gali shifted beside me. I opened my eyes just in time to see him swing his legs out of bed, moving without making any noise in the darkness.

"What are you doing?" I whispered, propping myself up on my elbow, watching as he pulled on a pair of jeans and grabbed his gun from its hiding spot under the pillow. "Where are you going?"

Gali paused, looking over his shoulder at me. His expression was hard to read in the moonlight, but I thought I saw guilt flash across his face before he masked it. He was indeed hiding something from me. That much I knew.

"I can't sleep," he murmured, avoiding my gaze. "I'm just gonna... go get some fresh air." His answer couldn't have sounded more fake.

I sat up, rubbing the sleep from my eyes. "At midnight? Without telling me?"

Gali sighed, running a hand through his hair. "Norri, I don't want to argue right now. I just need some fresh air, okay? I'll be back soon."

He moved towards the door, but I shot out of bed, grabbing his arm before he could leave. I had to do something before it was too late.

"Wait," I insisted, my grip tight. "Tell me what's going on, Gali. Who was here earlier?"

Gali hesitated, his muscles tensing beneath my grasp. I could see the lie forming behind his eyes before he spoke. "It was just someone from work, Norri. An old



colleague checking in on me."

I arched an eyebrow, unconvinced by his explanation. "Work? You haven't worked for them in months, Gali. Why would they suddenly show up here?"

After we moved in here, he'd found work, but things didn't work out for him there.

Gali's jaw tightened, a muscle twitching. "It's complicated, Norri. You wouldn't understand."

I let go of his arm, stepping back as if burned. "Try me," I challenged. "Explain it to me."

Gali hesitated before sighing, his shoulders slumping. "Look, it doesn't matter, okay? He just wanted to talk about some stuff, that's all. Nothing for you to worry about."

His vagueness only served to fuel my suspicion. "Business? With your gun tucked into your waistband?" I gestured to the weapon peeking from the waistband of his jeans. I'd seen it when his 'friend' was just leaving, too. "You expect me to believe that? Gali, I deserve the truth."

Gali's expression darkened. "And what if I don't want you involved in this?"

I bristled, anger flaring within me. "Involved? I'm your mate! I deserve to know what's happening, especially when it involves dangerous men showing up at our house!"

Gali stepped forward, his voice dropping to a low growl. "This isn't about you being involved, Norri. It's about keeping you safe."

"And leaving me in the dark keeps me safe? Keeping secrets puts me in danger too,

Gali!"I shot back.

Gali closed the distance between us, taking both of my hands in his."Listen to me, Norri. Some things are better left unknown."

I shook my head, pulling my hands away."I won't stand for this, Gali. If you're hiding something important, I want to know. We're supposed to trust each other."

He sighed, rubbing a hand over his face."And we do, but you don't need to know everything I do."

"And I want to trust you, Gali! I do, but I can't just blindly believe everything you tell me. Not after... not after everything we've been through."My voice broke, the memories of my time in the cartel's clutches, my fears of what Gali might be keeping from me, threatening to drown me. I clutched at my hair, tugging at the roots in my frustration.

Gali ran a hand through his dark locks, his eyes never leaving mine."Fucking hell, Norri,"he hissed,"Why can't you just let it go? Why do you always have to push? Really, the only thing I'm trying to do is protect you and nothing else."

"From what, Gali?"I challenged, my voice rising."From you, it seems like! Or at least from the truth! Why won't you tell me who was here?"

"Enough,"Gali growled, his hands clenching into fists at his sides."You don't understand, Norri."

"Make me understand, then!"I snapped, my frustration boiling over."Talk to me! I'm your mate, Gali. Your partner. You shouldn't keep things from me!"

All of a sudden, Orion started to fuss in his crib, his cry piercing the tension between

us. I froze, looking towards his crib. I could see Gali hesitate for a moment before he sighed heavily.

"Just... just leave it, Norri," Gali said, running a hand down his face.

I glared at him, anger coursing through me. "No! I won't leave it! I won't be ignored anymore. Not by you." I turned on my heel and stalked off to Orion's crib. I scooped him up gently, cradling him in my arms. He whimpered, his little face scrunched up, tears welling in his big eyes. I rocked him, cooing softly, swaying back and forth until his cries subsided. Gali watched us, his expression softening as he looked at his son.

"You can't just ignore this, Gali," I whispered to him, continuing to sway with Orion, "I want to know what's really going on."

Gali hesitated before taking a few steps toward me. I stood my ground, defiant. I knew he wanted me to drop it, but I couldn't.

"I... I can't tell you, Norri," Gali started, his voice heavy with some hidden meaning.

"You can't or you won't?" I challenged him, holding Orion closer as he fidgeted, sensing the tension. Babies could sense stuff like this, even though they couldn't understand what was going on.

I couldn't stand seeing Gali shut me out. It hurt more than I could express. "Gali, this isn't right. Keeping things from me is killing me. You have to tell me the truth."

Gali's eyes flashed with sudden frustration. He moved to me in two strides, grabbing my shoulders, his grip firm. He'd never been violent to me like this.

"Because, damn it, I don't want you to be afraid," he said through gritted teeth. "Because I don't want you to die. Not after everything. Don't you get it, Norri? I

just want to protect you."His eyes pleaded with me, a vulnerability in their dark depths."That's all I want. For us."

His words resonated with me, echoing something in my chest, a yearning. I wanted the same, but I couldn't let that blind me from the truth, could I?

"I know,"I said softly,"but you can't shield me from everything, Gali. And you shouldn't have to."I sighed."Just tell me the truth."

Gali looked away, releasing my shoulders."It's... complicated. You would hate me even more than you already do."

Orion fidgeted in my arms, squirming against my hold. Gali looked down at him, his expression softening.

"I'll take him,"he murmured, his voice gentler now, reaching for our son.

I passed him, reluctantly. Gali held our baby close, his gaze fixed on our child. Orion immediately quietened, cooing at the contact, reaching for Gali's face.

"He's got your eyes," Gali murmured, glancing down at him, a soft smile tugging at his lips. When he looked at me, the warmth in his gaze faded. "He looks just like you." Then, turning back to our son, he added, "You know what they say, son — 'Never lie to your husband.'" His eyes flicked back to mine. He called me 'husband,' even though we hadn't married yet.

I sighed. I hated that he was avoiding answering me, but the moment was broken now, the chance lost."That's not what they say at all,"I countered, looking pointedly at Gali, hoping to prod him back to the issue. Gali just shrugged, rocking Orion without seeming phased by my words.

"Whatever it takes," Gali murmured to Orion, "you take care of him."

"Don't try to change the subject, Gali," I interrupted, frustration mounting inside me. "What are you hiding? Who was that man leaving?"

He looked up from Orion, his face closing off. "I already told you. An old friend, that's all."

I shook my head. "Bullshit," I said quietly. "I won't let you brush me off. Who was here, Gali? Someone dangerous? A... an old... someone from before?"

Gali

I placed Orion carefully in his crib, my heart clenching at the way he started to fuss without my presence. I turned back to Norri, my jaw tight, my patience at an end.

"Norri, I can't keep doing this," I said, my voice low and rough. "Arguing, fighting, second-guessing. I can't live like this. I thought that, when we moved in here when I took that job, it was over. That we could have a fresh start. A real life."

Norri's eyes shimmered with unshed tears, his face crumpling. "I want that too, Gali," he whispered, reaching for me. "More than anything. But how can we, if you're still hiding things? Still lying?"

I stepped back, avoiding his touch. "Lying? Fuck, Norri, when do you think I've lied to you?"

"When you don't tell me the whole truth," Norri shot back, his voice rising. "When you keep things from me. That's lying by omission."

I ran a hand through my hair, frustration building. "Goddammit, Norri! Don't you get it? The more you know, the more danger you're in. I'm trying to protect you! It's that simple."

"And what about me, Gali?" Norri demanded, his voice breaking. "What about my right to know what's happening? My right to choose how I face the danger? I'm not some fragile little omega who needs to be coddled. I refuse to be treated like that."

I shook my head, a bitter laugh escaping me. "No, you're not fragile, Norri. You're fucking infuriating is what you are. Stupid and reckless and determined to get yourself killed."

Norri reeled back as if I'd struck him, his face pale. "Is that what you think of me? That I'm stupid and reckless?" His voice trembled. "I'm just trying to be your partner, Gali. Trying to trust you, even when you make it impossible."

I closed my eyes, pinching the bridge of my nose again. It was the only thing somewhat quenching my rising frustration.

This wasn't what I wanted, what I'd fought so hard for. A future with Norri and our son, safe and happy. But he refused to let it go, refused to have faith in me.

I opened my eyes, meeting his gaze steadily. "Fine, Norri," I said, my tone hard, final. "You want the truth? I'll give you the truth."

I stared down Norri, his gaze unwavering, his expression hard and resolute. I'd kept this from him long enough. It was time for the truth, no matter how much he might despise me after.

"You want to know who that was? That man who visited today?" My voice was low and dangerous, each word weighted with meaning.

Norri tensed, his eyes widening in wary anticipation. He nodded, his throat bobbing with a nervous swallow. He knew that it was going to change our lives.

I stepped closer, looming over him. "It was El Lobo. The man who tortured you, threatened you and our son." I could feel the old rage bubbling up inside me at the mere mention of his name.

Norri recoiled slightly, his face paling. "El Lobo... here? But how...? I thought that your friend had reassured you that his boss would stop looking for us."

I clenched my jaw, fighting to control my temper. "He's still after us, Norri. He's not letting it go. Marcus made a deal and promised to make him back off, but he's failed and is probably dead right now."

Norri looked at me searchingly, his expression a mixture of fear and something else — betrayal, perhaps? He backed away slowly, shaking his head. "You... you shouldn't have kept this from me, Gali."

My chest constricted, a pang of regret piercing me. He was right. I should have told him. But I had been trying to spare him, trying to shoulder this burden alone.

"I didn't want you to worry," I said softly, reaching for him. He eluded my touch, his eyes shimmering with unshed tears. "I thought I could handle it. Keep you safe."

A single tear slipped down Norri's cheek, but his gaze hardened with determination. "I'm your mate," he said, his voice steady. "Your partner. I can handle it, Gali. I have to. For us, for Orion."

I sighed, running a hand over my face. He was right, as much as I hated to admit it. I couldn't shield him from everything.

"You're not wrong about that," I admitted, meeting his eyes. "I shouldn't have kept this secret. It won't happen again. I swear it."

Norri searched my face for a long moment before nodding, a fragile hope blooming in his expression. "Okay," he whispered. "Okay, Gali."

I pulled Norri into my arms again, holding him close as he trembled against me. His



scent enveloped me, soothing and arousing all at once. I breathed him in, trying to memorize the feeling of him in my arms. It could be our last time together.

"I'm really sorry," I murmured into his hair. "For keeping secrets, for not trusting you to handle the truth. You're stronger than I give you credit for."

Norri pulled back, cupping my face in his hands. His eyes searched mine, a mixture of fear and determination. "We'll get through this, Gali. I know we can. I won't let anything happen to our family."

I nodded, pressing a kiss to his forehead. "I know. And I won't let anything happen to you or Orion."

We held each other for a long moment, drawing strength from our embrace. But the weight of the situation pressed down on us, threatening to crush us.

I pulled away even though I didn't want to do it, my hands lingering on Norri's arms. "I have to go," I said softly. "I need to end this, once and for all. Before he comes for us again."

Norri's eyes widened, a flicker of fear passing through them. "Gali, no. You can't. It's too dangerous."

I shook my head, my jaw setting with determination. "I have to, Norri. For our son, for our future. I won't let him threaten us ever again."

Norri searched my face, his expression torn. He knew as well as I did that this was the only way. That I had to face El Lobo, and end this once and for all.

He nodded slowly, his eyes shimmering with tears. "Be careful," he whispered. "Come back to us, Gali. Promise me."

I pulled him into another tight hug, holding him. "I promise," I murmured against his hair. "I'll always come back to you."

With a final, lingering kiss, I pulled away and headed for the door. I paused, looking back at Norri one last time. He stood there, his arms wrapped around himself, his eyes shimmering with love and fear.

I gave him a reassuring smile, trying to project a confidence I didn't quite feel. "Lock the door behind me," I instructed. "Don't open it for anyone but me." If I come back, I almost added.

Norri nodded, a single tear slipping down his cheek. "I love you," he whispered.

"I love you too," I replied, my voice rough. "More than anything."

With that, I stepped out into the night, the door closing softly behind me. The cool air hit my face, a staggering contrast to the warmth of Norri's embrace.

I took a deep breath, steeling myself for what lay ahead. I walked down the street, my senses on high alert. Every shadow seemed to hide a threat, every sound a potential danger.

Gali

I stood at the edge of the warehouse roof, gazing out over the city skyline. The neon lights of New Haven twinkled below, an illusion of normalcy amidst the criminal underworld that thrived beneath its surface. My heart pounded in my chest as I considered what I was about to do, the gravity of my decision settling heavily upon me.

El Lobo had to die. There could be no other way forward for us - for Norri and Orion, and the future we hoped to build together. As long as the Black Wolf lived, breathed, and commanded the cartel, we would never be free from the shadow of fear and violence he cast over our lives. Even if he ceased actively pursuing us, the constant knowledge of his presence, the possibility of another attempt on our lives...it was a burden too heavy to bear.

My mind drifted to Norri, back in our house with Orion. The love in his eyes when he looked at me, the trust he placed in me even now after all we'd endured...I couldn't fail him again. Couldn't allow my past sins to define our future. El Lobo had made it impossible for us to simply walk away unscathed; there was only one path left open to us, one means of ensuring a life truly free of danger and oppression.

I thought of Raze then, my former second-in-command who'd betrayed me so brutally. He was dead, as he should be. Before betraying me, Raze had unwittingly given me the key to ending everything. By revealing the location of the abandoned warehouse where the cartel used to store illicit goods, he'd provided me with the perfect stage for the final act in this bloody drama.

The warehouse sat unused, far removed from the prying eyes of the law and civilians alike. Its layout was still fresh in my mind, every alcove, every potential hiding place memorized from countless clandestine meetings held within those decaying walls. It was a fitting place to bring matters to a head, a ghost town where the specter of El Lobo could finally be laid to rest.

I pulled out my phone, dialing a number I knew all too well. The line rang twice before it was picked up. I thought he wasn't going to. "Who is this?" The voice on the other end growled.

"Gali," I replied succinctly. No need for pleasantries or preamble. "Tell El Lobo I have information on a new threat moving into his territory. Tell him it's urgent, even though it's from me."

A pause followed, the sound of rustling papers and hushed voices. Then, "He'll meet you tomorrow night at the old warehouse on the docks. Come alone." Click. The call disconnected.

I smiled grimly, tucking my phone back into my pocket. El Lobo would come, drawn in by the tantalizing promise of new enemies ripe for conquest. His arrogance would be his undoing, just as it always had been. He'd think himself safe, invincible, secure in the belief that no one dared challenge his dominion over New Haven.

But I wasn't 'no one'. I was Gali, his right-hand man turned renegade, the alpha he should have killed long ago instead of exiling me. And tomorrow night, I would show him the folly of sparing my life once more. This time, I wouldn't miss.

Over the next several hours, I meticulously prepared the warehouse for my confrontation with El Lobo. Using old blueprints I'd managed to procure through a shady contact, I mapped out the best routes for setting traps and rigging explosives. Not to destroy the structure entirely — I needed somewhere to finish things with El

Lobo — but rather to control his movements once inside.

With careful precision, I installed trip wires and motion sensors, rigged up smoke grenades and flash bangs. Anything to disorient and confuse, to give me the advantage in close quarters. I even went so far as to plant small diversions around the perimeter of the building, loud noises, and simple obstacles designed to scatter any backup El Lobo might bring.

Let them try to reach him. By the time they realized their mistake, it would be far too late.

As night fell over the city, I stood once more at the edge of the rooftop, gazing down at the warehouse entrance. Anticipation thrummed through my veins. This was it, the moment of truth. Everything hinged on what transpired within these crumbling walls.

I closed my eyes, picturing Norri's face, feeling the warmth of his skin against mine as I held him close. For him, for our son, for the chance at a future without fear, I would do whatever it took. I would become the monster I once served, the specter that haunted the streets of New Haven.

And then I would slay the beast myself, once and for all.

Taking a deep breath, I descended into the shadows below. I crept through the dimly lit corridors of the warehouse, senses heightened, ready for anything. My footsteps echoed off the bare concrete, each step deliberate and calculated. The air was hard to breathe with dust and the faint scent of decay, making me wonder how long the place had been abandoned.

As I reached the main storage area, I paused, listening intently. Nothing stirred beyond the occasional skittering of rats in the rafters overhead. Satisfied I was alone, I began laying the final touches to my trap.

Carefully, I arranged crates and barrels to create a makeshift maze, a labyrinth of twists and turns that would force El Lobo and his men into tight, confined spaces. There, I could use my size and strength to my advantage, negating their superior numbers.

In strategic locations along the path, I placed small explosive charges connected by thin wires almost invisible to the naked eye. They were powerful enough to stun and disorient, giving me precious seconds to gain an upper hand, but not so destructive as to collapse the entire structure.

Once satisfied with the setup, I moved to the central chamber, the spot where I would face El Lobo head-on. Here, I had left the floor clear save for a few overturned crates, creating a small arena. In the far corner, a single window allowed in a thin shaft of moonlight, illuminating a patch of cracked concrete.

It was here that I would end this, under the cold light of the moon itself. A fitting place for an ending.

As the last preparations fell into place, I found myself reflecting on the path that led me to this point. From loyal enforcer to betrayed second-in-command to a man determined to break free of the cartel's stranglehold, it seemed like a lifetime ago that I first pledged myself to El Lobo's service.

I'd been young, ambitious, hungry for power and prestige. Under his tutelage, I'd risen quickly through the ranks until I was his most trusted lieutenant. But with each passing year, the toll of that lifestyle grew heavier. The blood on my hands, the lives destroyed in the name of the cartel... It ate away at me bit by bit until I couldn't bear it anymore — until I met Norri.

Leaving had seemed impossible, a death sentence. Yet when Norri entered my life, everything changed. His innocence, his pure love... It awakened something in me, a

desire to build a different kind of future. One free from violence, where Orion could grow up safe and loved.

But El Lobo refused to let me go. His paranoia, his obsession with crushing perceived threats... He couldn't stand the thought of losing his prized enforcer, his most effective tool of destruction.

So, he'd come after us, relentless, driven by rage and the need to assert dominance. Marcus' deal meant nothing; El Lobo only ever listened to himself. He would stop at nothing short of our total annihilation.

With a final check of my weapons, I settled into position, waiting for the inevitable arrival of El Lobo and his entourage. My heart raced, adrenaline already coursing through my system. Every muscle coiled, poised for action. The weight of the gun in my hand was both comforting and terrifying.

Would I walk out of here alive? Would Norri and Orion know peace?

Only one way to find out. Only one thing mattered now: seeing this through to the bitter end, no matter what it took.

I was ready for war. Bring it on, Black Wolf. Your reign of terror ends tonight.

Later, the sound of tires screeching to a halt outside snapped me back to the present. Engines died, doors slammed open and shut. Footsteps, many of them, echoing off the asphalt.

They were coming. It began now.

Showtime.

I crouched low behind a stack of crates, senses straining to catch any hint of movement or sound from the approaching figures. Their footsteps echoed through the cavernous space, growing louder as they drew nearer. The clink of metal — weapons being drawn. Low voices barking orders. Tension crackled in the air.

Suddenly, a spotlight pierced the darkness, its beam sweeping across the room. I pressed back into the shadow cast by my cover, hardly daring to breathe. The light danced over the room before settling on the center stage I had set up for the confrontation.

A deep, familiar voice cut through the tense silence. "Gali!" El Lobo called out, his tone equal parts amusement and menace. "You wanted to talk about a threat to my territory? Let's hear it."

I didn't immediately respond, letting the anticipation build. Let him think I was afraid and hesitant. In reality, I was steeling myself for the moment when our eyes would meet again.

"Gali," El Lobo snarled impatiently. "Get your ass out here and start talking!"

Slowly, deliberately, I rose from my hiding spot. I stepped into the light, allowing it to illuminate my face fully. For a long moment, neither of us spoke. The tension stretched taut between us, the air even harder to breathe now.

Then El Lobo laughed, a harsh, grating sound devoid of mirth. "Well, well," he drawled, circling around the center of the room, his guards fanning out behind him. "Look who decided to show up. Gali, the great renegade alpha. You really thought you could leave me, take my prisoner, and run? That I wouldn't come looking?"

"I don't owe you anything, El Lobo," I replied coolly, my stance relaxed yet



poised."Not my loyalty, nor explanations. You lost that right the day you came after my family."

El Lobo snorted derisively."Family? Is that what that little omega slut means to you? Don't fool yourself, Gali. You belong to the cartel. To ME. And I'll be damned if I let you run off to play house with some whore while my empire crumbles."

I smiled then, slow and dangerous."Ah, but you see, that's exactly what will happen. Because I'm done playing your games, boss. Done being your lackey and assassin."I spread my arms wide, taking in the warehouse around us."This ends tonight. Here."

El Lobo stilled, suspicion narrowing his eyes. Around us, his men shifted uneasily, their grips tightening on their weapons."What are you playing at, Gali?"He demanded.

"Just making sure you understand the stakes,"I said simply. Then I moved. Quick as a flash, I rolled behind the nearest stack of crates just as bullets began to fly, pinging off metal and concrete.

Shouts erupted around me as confusion reigned supreme. Explosions detonated, disorienting and forcing El Lobo's men into a panic. Smoke grenades sent up clouds of acrid smoke. Chaos erupted in an instant, giving me precious seconds to regroup.

I burst from my cover and dove at the nearest guard, tackling him to the ground. We grappled briefly before my fist connected with his jaw and he went limp beneath me.

Around us, El Lobo screamed for order even as the smoke thickened, reducing visibility to near zero. I used it to my advantage, striking and retreating like a ghost among them. Blood sprayed and bones shattered. One by one, I tore through his personal guard until only El Lobo remained standing alone amid the carnage.

He turned to face me slowly, a look of shock and disbelief etched upon his features. His eyes darted around at the fallen bodies of his men, the blood pooling black against the cracked concrete floor. The fight ended as quickly as it began, as intended.

"How..."He shook his head as if to clear it."How did you...?"

"You never saw me coming, boss,"I said softly, stalking towards him, a cruel smile playing about my lips."Your arrogance blinded you. Thought you could control everything, everyone. Even me."

El Lobo bared his teeth, a feral snarl twisting his mouth."We'll see about that,"he spat. His hand shot to the gun at his hip, drawing it out in a swift motion.

But I was faster still. My blade flashed in the moonlight and sank home before he could bring his weapon to bear, burying itself deep in his chest.

El Lobo gasped, staring down at the knife protruding from his sternum in shocked disbelief. Crimson bloomed across the front of his shirt as he staggered back.

"Should've killed me when you had the chance,"I taunted, advancing inexorably."Now it's too late."

With a final cry, I lunged forward, wrenching my blade free even as I drove it up under his ribs, piercing his heart.

El Lobo convulsed once, twice, then crumpled to the floor in a spreading pool of his own blood. I stood over him, chest heaving, covered in gore and grime.

It was over. Finally, after so many years of fear and pain, and bloodshed, it was finished. The Black Wolf lay slain at my feet.

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*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:22 am*

Norri

The night passed in agonizing slowness, each minute stretching into an eternity as I lay awake, staring at the ceiling above our bed. Orion slept peacefully beside me, his small form rising and falling gently with each breath. I envied his innocent ignorance, the way he could drift off without a care in the world while my mind raced without an end, consumed by fears and doubts.

Gali had left hours ago, stepping out into the darkness to confront the monster who haunted our lives. El Lobo, the cartel boss who'd tormented us both for so long. Gali was determined to end this once and for all, to secure a future where we could raise our son in safety and peace.

Part of me wanted to believe it would work, that he would come back triumphant and unscathed. That this nightmare would finally be over.

But another part, a cold, pragmatic voice in the back of my mind, whispered that nothing ever came easy in this life. Especially not when dealing with the likes of the cartel. Men like El Lobo didn't go quietly; they clawed and bit and fought tooth and nail right to the very end.

And Gali...my alpha, my love. Was he prepared for what awaited him? Did he truly understand the depths of cruelty and viciousness El Lobo was capable of? I mean, he should. He was cartel once, after all.

I rolled onto my side, curling around Orion protectively, breathing in his sweet scent to calm myself. He made soft cooing sounds in his sleep, seeking the warmth and

comfort of my body.

Gali had called me 'husband' earlier. We weren't actually married — not officially, anyway. Not like I imagined we would be someday, exchanging vows and rings in front of friends and family. But there was no denying the bond between us, the deep, soul-level connection forged in blood and passion and love. In every sense that mattered, he was mine and I was his.

So why had those words sent such a jolt through me? Were my insecurities really that profound, that a simple word could throw me into such turmoil?

No. There was more to it than that. Call it intuition or instinct, but something told me that man knew more than he let on. More than just our relationship status. He'd looked at me with such knowing eyes, almost pityingly. Like he pitied me for whatever was to come.

I shuddered and forced those troubling thoughts away. I couldn't afford to indulge in dark speculation now, not when every moment felt precious and fleeting. Instead, I focused on Orion, marveling at how much he looked like Gali. The same strong jawline, the stubborn set of his little chin...

Hours crept by with excruciating slowness. I changed Orion's diaper and burped him, singing silly lullabies until he drifted back to sleep again. Then I tidied the house, washing dishes and folding laundry and trying to keep my mind occupied.

By early afternoon, tension knotted my stomach into tight coils, winding tighter and tighter as the minutes ticked by. My phone remained silent, with no messages or calls from Gali.

What if something happened to him? What if--

I cut the thought off ruthlessly, refusing to entertain such scenarios. He promised he'd come back to us. And I believed him.

Didn't I?

Finally, just as the sun began its lazy descent towards the horizon, painting the sky in brilliant streaks of orange and pink, I heard the click of the lock turning, the sound of the door opening and closing.

"Gali?" I called out, leaping up from the couch where I'd been sitting with Orion.

Heavy footsteps moved further inside and then he was there, my alpha, my love, standing before me with a grim expression etched across his face.

"Oh thank god," I breathed, relief crashing over me in a tidal wave. Tears pricked at the corners of my eyes and I found myself moving forward, drawn to him even as a tiny part of me hesitated, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Because he wasn't smiling, wasn't laughing joyfully, or picking me up in his strong arms like I'd hoped. He simply stood there, looking haggard and exhausted and... different.

"What is it?" I probed, coming closer and reaching out to touch his arm. "Are you hurt?"

He shook his head slightly, then seemed to deflate inward, shoulders sagging under some unseen weight. "It's done," he said heavily, glancing towards the room where Orion lay sleeping. "El Lobo...he won't be bothering us anymore."

A chill ran through me, raising the fine hairs along my arms. I knew what he meant, the implication behind his carefully chosen words. But hearing him say it out loud,

seeing the exhaustion and something else... something darker in his gaze...

"You killed him." The realization fell from my lips before I could stop them. "You confronted him and..."

"Yes," Gali confirmed. "There was no other way. He would never have stopped coming after us otherwise."

I nodded slowly, a numb sort of understanding settling over me. Of course Gali had done it. Of course he'd taken that final, irrevocable step to protect us, to secure our safety and freedom. Because that was who he was, my fierce alpha protector.

But oh, what must it have cost him? To stand against the monster who'd terrorized us for so long, to face his own demons and fears and strike him down without mercy...

"I'm sorry," I whispered, stepping fully into his space and wrapping my arms around his waist, pressing my forehead to his chest. "I'm sorry you had to do that."

Gali's hands came up to cup my face tenderly, tilting my chin up to meet his gaze. His eyes were hard and distant, yet filled with a softness reserved only for me. For us.

"It's alright," he murmured, brushing a kiss against my brow. "It needed to happen. You know that. And now..." His gaze drifted once more to Orion. "Now maybe we can start living, truly living. No more hiding, no more fearing the Nightshade Wolves."

Tears spilled freely down my cheeks then, dripping onto the front of his shirt. I clung to him like he was my lifeline, my anchor in a storm-tossed sea.

"I love you," I choked out between sobs, the words muffled against his chest. "I love you so fucking much, Gali."

His hold tightened by reflex, crushing me to his chest in a bruising embrace."And I love you,"he growled lowly."More than life itself, Norri. More than anything in this whole damn world."

We stayed like that for several long moments, lost in each other, pouring everything unsaid into that singular embrace.

Then Orion started fussing from the other room and Gali pulled away with reluctance, a small smile tugging at the corner of his mouth."Go take care of him,"he urged, releasing me from his grip."Get him settled back down. I'll go wash up and join you both."

I hesitated, searching his face for any signs of distress or pain, but saw none. Only determination and quiet satisfaction. Nodding with a jerk, I turned and hurried down the hall to Orion.

As I lifted Orion from his crib, cradling him close and breathing in his sweet scent, I caught sight of Gali disappearing into the bathroom beyond the half-open bedroom door.

In that moment, watching the broad line of his shoulders beneath his shirt, the strong column of his throat, I felt something shift deep within me. A sense of rightness, of belonging, and completion unlike anything I'd ever known.

This was it. This was the family I'd always dreamed of having, the future I'd fought to build alongside my alpha.

Gali emerged from the bathroom a few minutes later, clean and fresh-scrubbed, the lines of strain and tension noticeably absent from his features.

Settling himself on the couch beside me after Orion fell asleep again, he reached out

to take him from my arms, nestling the baby securely in the crook of one muscular bicep while draping his free arm across my shoulders.

"We did it," I marveled quietly, snuggling deeper into his side. "After everything... we actually made it through."

"With flying colors," Gali agreed, nuzzling into my hair. "Though it feels like so much time has passed it's like Orion has grown overnight."

I laughed softly, tracing idle patterns across his thigh as I listened to the steady thrum of his heartbeat beneath my ear. It felt surreal, sitting here like this in peaceful domesticity when just hours ago he'd been engaged in deadly combat.

As Gali held Orion close, gazing down at his sleeping face with pure adoration, I found myself overwhelmed with emotion. In that moment, seeing my two most precious people together, safe and unharmed, it struck me just how far we'd come. The trials and tribulations we'd endured to reach this point...

Slowly, reverently, I leaned in and pressed a tender kiss to Gali's jawline, trailing soft pecks along the rough stubble of his cheek before finding his lips. He met me halfway, his mouth slanting hungrily over mine as his hand slid into my hair, holding me in place.

We kissed deeply, pouring months worth of longing and fear and love into that single perfect moment. Our tongues danced, twined, caressing, and claiming as tears streamed freely down both our faces. Orion cooed contentedly between us, unaware of the profound shift taking place around him.

When we finally parted, gasping for air, I rested my forehead against Gali's, marveling at the raw vulnerability in his expression. So rarely did I see him let his guard down like this, allowing his true self to shine through the stoic mask he wore



for the world.

"I thought I might never get to do that again," I whispered, my voice thick with barely restrained emotion. "Kiss you, feel you like this..."

Gali's grip tightened around both me and Orion, tucking us closer against his solid warmth. "Never," he vowed fervently, his eyes burning into mine with fierce intensity. "No more separations, no more hiding who we are to each other. From now on, we face whatever comes our way united as a family."

I nodded without saying anything, unable to speak past the lump lodged firmly in my throat. He was right. We'd wasted too much time cowering in the shadows, afraid to claim what was ours by right and law of the heart.

El Lobo may have tried to tear us apart with violence and intimidation, but he failed. Because in the end, love proved stronger than fear. Love conquered all.

And our love was the strongest force of all. An unbreakable bond tested by fire and tempered by sacrifice.

"I love you," I managed to choke out at last, the words inadequate yet necessary nonetheless. "More than anything, Gali. More than life itself."

His smile then, brilliant and incandescent, lit up the room brighter than any sunrise ever could. "As I love you," he returned fiercely, sealing his declaration with another searing kiss that left me dizzy and breathless.

Orion squirmed between us then, his little face scrunching up in displeasure at being jostled. Gali laughed softly against my lips, breaking the kiss with reluctance.

"He's got your stubborn streak already," he teased, bouncing our son. "Demanding

attention even now."

I swiped at my damp cheeks, grinning through my tears."Just like his father,"I agreed fondly."Always wanting what he wants when he wants it."My tone turned wry, playful.

Gali mock-scowled at me, his eyes dancing with mirth."Careful there, omega,"he warned, his voice low and teasing."Keep sassing me like that and I'll put that smart mouth of yours to better use."

Desire unfurled low in my belly at his heated promise, a delicious shiver racing down my spine. But practicality intervened before things could progress further.

"Not in front of the baby!"I scolded, extricating myself from Gali's embrace with great reluctance."Let's get him settled back down first. Then maybe we can continue this discussion in private."

Gali sighed with heaviness, though his eyes remained alight with wicked mischief."Fine,"he conceded grudgingly."Duty calls. But don't think we're done here, omega."

I smirked at him over my shoulder as I carried Orion to his crib, putting an extra sway in my hips."Oh, I know we're not. I'm counting on it actually."

His low groan of anticipation followed me down the hall, igniting a smoldering heat deep in my core. It seemed my alpha still had plenty of stamina left after his earlier exploits.

Good thing I liked a challenge. Because I intended to test his limits once Orion was fast asleep again.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:22 am*

Days Later...

The morning light filtered through the curtains, casting a warm glow across the bedroom. I lay awake beside Norri, watching him sleep, marveling at how peaceful he looked. The weight of responsibility pressed heavily upon my chest, a reminder of the duties that awaited me today.

After El Lobo's death, the power vacuum within the cartel left many factions vying for control. Some wanted to avenge their fallen leader, and others sought to carve out new territories for themselves. Chaos reigned supreme in the underworld of New Haven.

But I had bigger concerns than petty turf wars. I needed to ensure the safety and security of my family, no matter the cost. That meant taking charge and asserting dominance over those who might threaten what I held dear.

Rubbing a hand over my face, I slipped quietly from the bed, careful not to disturb Norri or Orion. Padding naked down the hallway, I made my way to the bathroom, needing a moment to gather my thoughts before facing the day ahead.

Under the spray of the shower, I let the hot water beat down upon my back, trying to wash away the lingering unease. Taking command of the Nightshade Wolves was a daunting prospect. They were a volatile bunch, prone to fits of violence and brutality. Maintaining order among them required a firm hand and unwavering resolve.

But I couldn't afford weakness, not if I hoped to protect Norri and Orion. I had to be the alpha they respected, feared even. The one who set the rules and enforced them

without mercy.

Stepping out of the shower, Itoweled off quickly before dressing in dark jeans and a black Henley shirt. In the kitchen, I brewed a pot of strong coffee, the rich aroma filling the air.

Norri stumbled in a short while later, yawning widely as he made his way toward the coffee maker. He poured himself a mug, leaning against the counter as he took a long sip.

"Morning," he greeted me sleepily, a small smile playing about his lips. "Sleep well?"

"As well as could be expected," I replied, pulling him close and pressing a kiss to his temple. "You?"

He nodded, nuzzling into my touch. "Like the dead. Guess all that stress finally caught up with me."

I snorted, running a hand through his tousled hair affectionately. "Guess so. Though I have a feeling you won't be getting much rest today, not with everything going on."

Norri tensed slightly in my arms, his eyes clouding with worry. "What do you mean? What's happening?"

Sighing, I released him reluctantly, moving to pour another mug of coffee. "The Wolves are fracturing. Factions are popping up everywhere, each wanting a piece of the pie now that El Lobo is gone."

"And you need to take control," Norri surmised grimly, understanding dawning in his expression. "To keep us safe."

"That's right," I confirmed, handing him his mug. "It's the only way. I can't risk some hothead deciding to come after us out of spite or greed."

Norri's fingers tightened around the ceramic, his knuckles turning white. "Gali...I don't like the idea of you putting yourself in harm's way again. Not after everything..."

I cupped his face in my hands, forcing him to meet my gaze. "Baby, I know. Believe me, nothing would please me more than to walk away from this life completely. To take you and Orion and disappear somewhere far away where none of this matters."

"But we both know that's not possible," I continued softly, brushing my thumbs over his cheekbones. "Not when the Wolves are still out there, when there are men who want to see us dead just because of who we are to each other."

A single tear escaped down Norri's cheek, but he didn't look away. "I hate this," he whispered brokenly. "Hate knowing you're putting yourself in danger for our sake."

"I'll be fine," I assured him, even as doubt coiled in my gut. "I've dealt with worse than a few rogue wolves. This is temporary, Norri. Just until I can establish enough authority to make threats and promises they understand."

He searched my face intently, looking for any sign of deception or false bravado. Finding none, he released a shaky breath, nodding with a jerk.

"You'd better come back to me," he warned. "No heroics, Gali. Promise me."

"I promise," I vowed solemnly, sealing my oath with a deep, searching kiss. "No matter what happens, I will always find my way back to you. Back to our son. That's a bond no force on earth can break."

Norri clung to me then, burying his face in the crook of my neck as he trembled

against me."I love you,"he choked out, the words muffled but no less heartfelt for it."So damn much sometimes it scares me."

Chest tight, I held him close, letting his fear and love wash over me."I love you too,"I murmured."More than anything. And I swear to you, omega, I will move heaven and earth to keep that love alive. For you, for Orion, for the future we're building together."

We stayed like that for several long moments, drawing strength from our embrace. When we finally parted, Norri looked determined, his jaw set with resolve.

"What do you need from me?"He asked, all traces of vulnerability vanished behind a mask of steely determination."How can I help?"

I smiled then, fierce pride swelling in my chest at his show of courage. My omega, my partner, ready to stand by my side no matter what challenges we faced.

"We stick to the plan,"I replied, grabbing my keys from the hook by the door."Keep Orion safe and secure here at home. Don't open the door for anyone but me. And if something feels off, if anyone tries to contact you... Call me immediately. Understand?"

Norri nodded, though his eyes flashed with frustration."Yes, love,"he agreed."But Gali... Please be careful. Come back to us whole and unharmed. Our family needs you."

My heart clenched at the raw need in his voice, the naked desperation. But I couldn't let it show, not now. I had to be strong for both of us.

"I will,"I promised, capturing his mouth in one last hard, claiming kiss. Then I was out the door, striding toward the waiting car and whatever trials awaited me beyond

its doors.

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 10:22 am*

Months Later...

Having just woken up, I stirred beneath the sheets, stretching languidly as consciousness slowly returned. Beside me, Gali slept like a rock, his features relaxed in a way I rarely saw outside the privacy of our bedroom.

Gazing at him, I marveled at how far we'd come since those dark days following El Lobo's death. The road hadn't been easy, navigating the treacherous landscape of the cartel world while trying to build a life together. But through it all, our love had remained constant, an unbreakable tether binding us even in the face of unimaginable adversity.

And today, we would make it official. A small ceremony with only our closest friends and family in attendance — Mrs. Hargrove, the landlady who'd become like a grandmother to us, and a handful of trusted associates from Gali's past life.

It wouldn't be the grand affair some might have expected for the new leader of the Nightshade Wolves taking an omega as his husband. But that wasn't who we were. We preferred simplicity, intimacy, and a celebration of our bond rather than outward displays of wealth or status.

A sudden cry pierced the quiet, followed by the rustling of blankets as Orion began to stir in his crib across the room. I smiled, pushing myself up on one elbow to peer over at my sleeping alpha.

"Duty calls, Daddy," I teased, running a finger down the bridge of his nose. "Our son requires your attention."



Gali grunted, his brow furrowing as he burrowed deeper into the pillow. "Five more minutes," he mumbled, keeping his eyes firmly closed. "Then I'll get him."

Laughing, I leaned down to press a lingering kiss to his temple before slipping from the bed. Crossing to the crib, I scooped Orion into my arms, marveling at how much he'd grown in just a few short months.

"Morning, little man," I cooed, nuzzling his sleep-warm cheek. "Ready to start a big day?"

Orion gurgled happily, waving chubby fists in the air as I carried him to the changing table. As I diapered and dressed him, my mind drifted to the events of the day ahead.

Gali had worked tirelessly to ensure our safety and security in the aftermath of El Lobo's demise. He'd taken control of the Nightshades, ruthlessly quelling any dissent or challenge to his authority. It hadn't been an easy transition, requiring countless late nights and dangerous meetings with high-ranking members.

But through it all, he never lost sight of his ultimate goal: providing a stable, loving home for our family. He was determined to give Orion the childhood he had never known.

And now, after months of planning and preparation, we stood on the precipice of a new beginning. Not just a wedding, but a declaration to the world of our commitment to each other, of the life we were building together.

As I finished dressing Orion, Gali emerged from the bedroom, looking rumpled but devastatingly handsome in a tailored suit that hugged his muscular frame.

"You two look dapper," he remarked, crossing to wrap his arms around us from behind. His lips brushed my neck, sending a shiver down my spine.

I leaned back into his embrace, sighing contentedly as Orion reached up to pat Gali's cheek with a damp hand. "We can't have Daddy feeling left out," I agreed, turning my head to capture his mouth in a quick kiss.

Breakfast passed in a domestic blur of feeding the baby and sipping coffee, stealing glances and smiles across the table. Before long, it was time to begin preparations for the ceremony.

Mrs. Hargrove arrived promptly at noon, bearing a basket of goodies and a wide grin. "Don't you two look a picture!" She exclaimed, enveloping us in warm hugs. "My babies, all grown up and getting married!"

Tears pricked my eyes at her joyful exclamation. Despite her gruff exterior, Mrs. Hargrove had become a true mother figure to me, offering unwavering support and tough love in equal measure.

Together, we fussed over the final details, adjusting flowers and straightening bowties. When Gali disappeared into the bedroom to check himself out in the mirror one more time, Mrs. Hargrove pulled me aside, her expression turning serious.

"I want you to know how proud I am of you both," she murmured, squeezing my hands. "Of the man you've become, the love you share. You've faced so many challenges, and overcome so much... And yet here you are, ready to commit yourselves to each other fully."

Emotion clogged my throat, making it difficult to speak. I nodded with my mouth shut, blinking back tears.

She smiled then, her eyes twinkling. "Now, no crying until the vows! We don't want you to ruin your pretty face until you say 'I do'!"

Laughing through my tears, I hugged her. "Thank you," I whispered. "For everything."

For being here, for supporting us..."

"Oh, hush now," she scolded gently, patting my back. "That's what family is for. And that's what you two are - family."

The ceremony itself passed in a blur of heartfelt vows and misty-eyed well-wishers. As Gali slid the ring onto my finger, his gaze locked with mine, brimming with love and promise, I felt a sense of completeness wash over me. This was where I belonged, with this man, with our son.

Later, as guests filtered out and we began the process of cleaning up, Orion decided to make his presence known most unexpectedly. While stacking chairs, a loud squelch sounded followed by a pungent odor wafting through the room.

"Uh oh," Gali groaned, wrinkling his nose. "Someone needs a change."

Grabbing our son, I carried him to a nearby couch, laughing as I began the arduous task of peeling off his soiled clothing.

"He's got your flair for drama, Daddy," I teased, struggling to contain Orion's wriggling form.

Gali snorted, reaching for a fresh outfit. "Can you blame him? With parents like us, he's bound to be a bit theatrical."

End of Book 4